Career Conversation Starters for Adult Learners

The discussion prompts in this document are adapted from the American School Counselor Association's Career Conversation Starters and are based on an extensive review of career counseling literature. The prompts provide an opportunity for adult learners to engage in conversations about how skills, interests, and behaviors are related to personal, academic, and career goals. They can be used with individuals or groups of learners.

General Discussion Prompts:

- Describe a time when you felt proud of something you accomplished (either alone or with a team).
- If you could learn about anything, what topic would you want to learn about. Why?
- Describe a time when you set a goal for yourself and stuck to it.
- Describe a time when you wanted something and had to wait a long time for it.
- What career options have you already explored? What type of technology (e.g., software) do you use regularly? How do you use it?
- How would you rate your time management, organizational, and study skills on a scale of 1-10? Explain your ratings.
- Describe your responsibilities at home.
- Describe a time you had difficulty learning something new. How did you overcome the challenge?
- Describe a time when you felt angry or disappointed, but you feel like you handled the situation well. What strategies seemed to work the best for you?
- Describe a time when you did not handle a problem well. What do you wish you had done better?
- In your life, you will likely work with people of different races, religions, ethnicities, and abilities. What do you think are some advantages of working with people who are different from you?
- Describe a time when you observed someone in a bad situation. How did you feel? What did you do?
- What are your goals for this year? What are your goals for the next five to ten years?

Transition to Employment Discussion Prompts:

- After you get a job in the industry sector of your choice, how do you plan to stay knowledgeable about the industry?
- How can continuing your education and training help you advance in your career?
- Being in a new position or starting a new career can be both stressful and wonderful. What feelings come up for you as you think about what your first day on the job might be like?
- As you consider being in your ideal occupation, what three things excite you most?
- Describe your decision-making process when you need to make a difficult choice.
- Describe a time when you gained experience by volunteering or doing extracurricular activities related to your occupation of choice. If you have not yet done this, what are some possible opportunities where you could seek experience?
- When you are asked to work alone on a project, how do you ensure you are producing high-quality work that meets expectations?
- Imagine that you and your work team have a rapidly approaching deadline for a large project.
    - To meet the deadline, everyone on the team needs to focus and work efficiently. You discover that one of your teammates is behind on his piece of the project. This will cause delays for everyone else, including you. They will need some help to get caught up but helping them could put your team even further behind. How would you feel. What might you suggest to them or the team?
- How would you describe what a mentor is? In what ways can a mentor help you develop professionally and personally?
- Describe a time when you worked well within a group. What did you learn from that experience?
- Describe a time when a group you were in did not work well together. What did you learn from that experience?
- Imagine you just received a performance evaluation, and you don't agree with your supervisor's comments. Your supervisor didn't seem to understand aspects of your work, and as a result, may have rated you lower than you deserved. Your annual raise is based on your performance evaluation, so you may receive less money because of the evaluation. How would you go about communicating this concern to your supervisor?
- Describe an activity where you worked with people of different races, abilities, sexual orientations, or religions. What did you learn from that experience?

Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training Discussion Prompts:

- What information helped you determine that pursuing postsecondary education or training is the right decision for you? Do you need any additional information to help confirm your decision?
- How do you see your postsecondary education contributing to your work success?
- Once you are in a career that you want, how might you stay up-to-date on the information and skills relevant to your job?
- Describe your strengths. How might your strengths help you achieve your goals while attending postsecondary education or training?
- What topics do you enjoy learning about? If you do not enjoy a topic that is required, how do you handle it?
- Describe how technology plays a role in your academic life and career.
- Imagine that you just enrolled in a course. Based on the syllabus and the instructor's description, you realize the course is going to be difficult. How might you prepare yourself? What steps would you take?
- Describe a time when you either had to work on a challenging project or with a frustrating person. How did you manage the situation? You will likely experience personal and academic challenges while in your postsecondary education or training. Who will you turn to for support during challenging times?
- How do you plan to maintain a healthy balance between your academic life and your personal life?
- What long-term rewards do you hope to gain by pursuing postsecondary education or training?
- Your postsecondary education or training program may require you to spend a lot of time working independently. What strategies could you use to complete work independently?