



POSTSECONDARY ACADEMIC

CAREER ↔ **CONVERSATIONS**



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For use by enrollment management staff, academic advisors, and academic support personnel in higher education

Building students' metacognition skills and developing students' understanding of how academics relate to their future career life is an important responsibility for academic support staff in higher education. By providing quality programs in which students explore academic options, assess their own learning and cognitive styles and have opportunities to gain an understanding of how their academic choices related to success in their chosen field, academic staff are a crucial link to students' postsecondary success and work-life success.

In 2021, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) published the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student. In 2016, the Colorado Department of Education partnered with ASCA to develop Career Conversation starters. These starters are conversational prompts that essentially align to each of the college- and career-readiness standards. Academic staff can use conversation starters for multiple purposes: (1) challenging students to consider how they are preparing for their future career through investment of effort in coursework, (2) assessment of students' academic preparation or commitment to a particular degree or program and (3) promoting academic growth and development of higher education students through workshops and small-group formats by using the prompts to promote discussion and critical thinking.

Tips for using these conversation starters:

- Remember that these are prompts to start a conversation and not the entire script or the whole scope of a conversation.
- Tailor the questions in whatever way you see fit for the students with whom you're working.
- When interviewing, you may replace underlined words such as this career with the actual title of the career as in "When you realized that you were interested in welding what did you do to get more information or learn about welding?"

Mindset/Behavior	Postsecondary Questions	Ideal Response
MINDSETS		
Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being (M 1.)	College student life can be stressful. How do you maintain a healthy balance between academics, personal life and other activities you enjoy?	Look for responses to include time spent on social supports, leisure activities, academics and other career development activities.
Sense of acceptance, respect, support and inclusion for self and others in the school environment (M 2.)	In what ways are you connected to your university/college/training program community? For example, have you attended activities on campus, belong to any clubs, get support from faculty and staff, have a peer group you enjoy?	Student is involved in campus activities, gets support from faculty and staff when needed and has friends on campus.
Positive attitude toward work and learning (M 3.)	What topics do you enjoy learning? If you do not enjoy a topic but it is required, how do you handle it?	Look for responses that include persistence and strategies to not give up on tasks/assignments/learning.
Self-confidence in ability to succeed (M 4.)	How likely are you to achieve your academic and career goals?	Student is able to envision meeting life goals (e.g. college graduation, graduate school, living situation, career, salary, etc.)
Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes (M. 5)	Describe your strengths and how they will help you achieve your goals during your time in college/university/training program.	Student is able to articulate at least two areas of strength contributing to positive work habits.

Mindset/Behavior	Postsecondary Questions	Ideal Response
<p>Understanding that postsecondary education and lifelong learning are necessary for long-term career success (M 6.)</p>	<p>How do you see your postsecondary education contributing to your work success?</p> <p>Once you are in the career you desire, how will you stay abreast of new information to keep you current in your work?</p>	<p>Student describes the connection between his/her academic learning and career of choice.</p> <p>Look for responses to include continued education beyond college (e.g. reading articles, belonging to professional organizations, attending workshops, taking additional college courses).</p>
BEHAVIOR: LEARNING STRATEGIES		
<p>Demonstrate critical-thinking skills to make informed decisions (B-LS 1.)</p>	<p>How did you choose your major/degree/training program? How did you or how are you going to make a career decision? What additional information do you need to make the best decision for yourself?</p>	<p>Student describes several sources of information to make important life decisions. Ability to relate personal values and skills to postsecondary and career choices is ideal.</p>
<p>Demonstrate creative approach to learning, tasks and problem solving (B-LS 2.)</p>	<p>What community or world challenges do you want to solve?</p>	<p>Look for responses where you can connect problems they see to their current postsecondary and career path.</p>
<p>Use time-management, organizational and study skills (B-LS 3.)</p>	<p>How would you describe your time-management and organizational skills? What strategies work for you?</p>	<p>Student describes specific and personalized time-management, organizational and study-skill strategies.</p>
<p>Apply self-motivation and self-direction to learning (B-LS 4.)</p>	<p>Think about a time when you were not learning what you wanted to learn in a class. What did you do?</p>	<p>Ideal response includes taking ownership of learning by researching topics on his/her own and asking questions.</p>
<p>Apply media and technology skills (B-LS 5.)</p>	<p>Describe how technology plays a role in your academic life and career of choice.</p>	<p>Student is able to describe multiple ways in which technology plays a role in life and career choices.</p>
<p>Set high standards of quality (B-LS 6.)</p>	<p>If someone were to randomly pull pieces of your work from various classes, how might they describe the effort you display overall in your academics and the pride you take in your work?</p>	<p>Ideal response includes a description of quality of work and strategies the student uses to achieve this quality. If quality is lower than desired, the student is able to articulate strategies to improve.</p>
<p>Identify long- and short-term academic, career and social/emotional goals (B-LS 7.)</p>	<p>What are your goals for this year? What about in the next five to 10 years?</p>	<p>Ideally student will touch on academic-, career-, and social/emotional-related goals.</p>
<p>Actively engage in challenging coursework (B-LS 8.)</p>	<p>Imagine you just enrolled in a course, and on the first day you realize based on the syllabus and the instructor's description that this course is going to be very difficult. How would you prepare yourself? What steps would you take? How do you approach courses like this?</p>	<p>Ideal response includes specific strategies to flourish and persist when challenged in classes.</p>
<p>Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions (B-LS 9.)</p>	<p>What information helped you determine going to this university/college/postsecondary program was the right decision for you?</p>	<p>An ideal response would include talking to people about postsecondary options, Internet searches and matching career interests/values to programs offered at colleges/universities/other training programs.</p>

Mindset/Behavior	Postsecondary Questions	Ideal Response
Participate in enrichment and extracurricular activities (B-LS 10.)	What types of extracurricular activities are you (or might you like to learn about becoming) involved in?	Ideal response includes activities at school and outside of school (e.g. volunteering, clubs, sports, etc.)
BEHAVIOR: SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS		
Demonstrate ability to assume responsibility (B-SMS 1.)	Describe a time when a leadership opportunity presented itself to you. What did you do?	Ideal response includes volunteering to lead.
Demonstrate self-discipline and self-control (B-SMS 2.)	Tell me about a time you had to work on a project or with a person that was frustrating for you. How did you handle it?	Student articulates strategies for managing frustration and effective communication skills.
Demonstrate ability to work independently (B-SMS 3.)	At your university/college/training program, you probably spend a lot of time working independently. What is that like for you?	Ideal response includes an appreciation for the importance of working independently when necessary.
Demonstrate ability to delay immediate gratification for long-term rewards (B-SMS 4.)	What long-term rewards do you hope to gain by going to college/university/postsecondary training?	Look for students to make the connection between persistence and long-term goals.
Demonstrate perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals (B-SMS 5.)	What short- and long-term goals do you have for yourself?	Student is able to articulate both short- and long-term goals.
Demonstrate ability to identify and overcome barriers to learning (B-SMS 6.)	What strategies do you use when you come across difficult coursework?	Ideal response includes strategies that work for the student.
Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem (B-SMS 7.)	You will likely experience personal and academic challenges while in your university/college/program. Who might you turn to for support during challenging times?	Student is able to identify people at school and in personal life he/she turns to when circumstances become challenging.
Demonstrate the ability to balance school, home and community activities (B-SMS 8.)	How do you maintain a healthy balance between academics, personal life and other activities you enjoy?	Look or responses to include time spent on social supports, leisure activities, academics and other career development activities.

The Career Conversations provide a guide for working with middle and high school students, parents and community members to address the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student. The Career Conversations questions are based on ecosystems theory, counseling theory and an extensive review of counseling and career counseling literature. The questions can be used to work with individuals and groups of students, parents and community members. The Career Conversations were developed by ASCA for the Colorado Department of Education.



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