



EMPLOYERS AND INDUSTRY-BASED
PARTNERS

CAREER



CONVERSATIONS



AMERICAN
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
ASSOCIATION

EMPLOYERS AND INDUSTRY-BASED PARTNERS

CAREER ↔ CONVERSATIONS

For use by employers, job coaches, mentors, apprenticeship supervisors

Creating a positive transition for students from academic life to the world of work is an important responsibility for employers and industry-based partners. When employers provide quality onboarding programs, novices' prior learning in the areas of academics, career development and employability skills are transferred into success in the workplace. Quality onboarding for apprentices, interns and new employees includes an orientation to the industry or company, work-specific orientation, professional development, mentorship or job coaching, and formative and summative feedback.

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 the ASCA to develop Career Conversation starters. These starters are conversational prompts that essentially align to each of the college- and career-readiness standards. Employers and industry-based partners can use these conversation starts for multiple purposes: (1) interviewing candidates for apprenticeships, internships or job openings; (2) mentoring students or new employees; and (3) promoting professional growth and development during formative and summative assessment (e.g., performance evaluations and job coaching sessions).

Tips for using these conversation starters:

- Remember these are prompts to start a conversation and not the entire script or the whole scope of a conversation.
- Tailor the questions for the individuals with whom you are 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 health care what did you do to get more information or learn about health care?"

Mindset/Behavior	Workforce Questions
MINDSETS	
Positive attitude toward work and learning (M 3.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What aspect of your education or training related to your career have you enjoyed the most? <i>An ideal response would reveal that the interviewee can articulate enthusiasm about either curriculum or technical aspects of training.</i> 2. As you consider being in your career on a daily basis, what three things excite you most? <i>An ideal response would demonstrate that the interviewee has imagined realistically and positively what a typical day in the career is like.</i> 3. Being in a new position or starting a new career can be stressful and wonderful. What feelings come up for you as you think about what your first day on the job might be like? <i>An ideal response will include some degree of apprehension but will also embody hope, enthusiasm and energy about work and learning specific aspects of the career.</i>
Understanding postsecondary education and life-long learning are necessary for long-term career success (M 6.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After you get a job in your career field, how do you plan to stay knowledgeable about the field? <i>An ideal response would include continuing education, degrees and professional development as appropriate.</i> 2. To achieve your career goals, how long are you willing to go to college or other type of training? 3. How might continuing your education and training help you advance in your career through promotions or leadership opportunities?

Mindset/Behavior	Workforce Questions
BEHAVIOR: LEARNING STRATEGIES	
<p>Demonstrate critical-thinking skills to make informed decisions (B-LS 1.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Describe a time when you had to make a difficult decision; what data or information did you use to make your decision? <i>An ideal response would include credible data sources rather than hearsay or gossip and a focus on fact finding and research prior to making the decision. The individual may have also consulted with a reliable mentor or other adult as appropriate.</i> When you have to make a difficult choice or a tough decision, describe your general decision-making process. <i>An ideal response would include some degree of brainstorming and researching all possible options, considering the impact of decisions, contemplating short- and long-term consequences and then making a decision. Finally, communicating the decision as clearly and honestly as possible to anyone who might be affected by the decision.</i>
<p>Apply self-motivation and self-direction to learning (B-LS 4.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> When you realized you were interested in this career, what did you do to get more information or learn about this career? <i>An ideal response will include personal research, seeking information from individuals in the field, asking teachers or school counselors for guidance, etc.</i> How did you seek experience through volunteering or extracurricular activities related to this career? <i>An ideal response will indicate the individual sought external opportunities such as volunteer work to enhance his/her understanding of the career and to better prepare to enter the career.</i>
BEHAVIOR: SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS	
<p>Demonstrate ability to work independently (B-SMS 3.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tell me about a time that you completed a work task by yourself with limited direction, supervision or support. When you are asked to work alone on a project, how do you ensure that what you are doing is high-quality work and meets expectations? Imagine your supervisor was on vacation for an entire week and you are fairly new to your job. How might you go about finding answers to questions that come up? <i>For all of these questions, ideal responses will reflect an element of self-motivated and self-initiated information seeking. In all, the interviewee should mention setting his/her own goals, developing tasks to complete, structuring time and then managing himself/herself. For question two and three, ideally the interviewee will collect data from multiple sources to ensure the project is on target to meet expectations and adjust accordingly</i>
<p>Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem (B-SMS 7.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine you and your work team have a deadline on a large project coming up quickly. To meet the deadline, everyone on the team needs to focus and work as efficiently as possible. You discover one of your teammates is behind on his piece of the project, which will cause delays for everyone else, including you. He will need some help to get caught up, but helping him could put all of you even further behind. How might you feel, and what might you suggest? <i>An ideal response will include a focus on problem solving and collaboration. Ideally, the interviewee would suggest including everyone and asking each person to pick up additional responsibilities. By evenly distributing and sharing the workload, the group can manage the setback and still meet the deadline.</i> Describe a time when you didn't handle a work problem very well; what do you wish you have done better? What did you learn from that experience that you were able to use in other situations? <i>An ideal response will include an honest reflection and personal responsibility. Most importantly, the individual has learned a new and realistic strategy he or she can employ when faced with the same situation in the future.</i>

Mindset/Behavior	Workforce Questions
<p>Demonstrate ability to manage transitions and ability to adapt to changing situations and responsibilities (B-SMS 10.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe a time when you did not have a typical day at work. Perhaps you had to make changes or your responsibilities were different that day. What happened, and how did you handle it? 2. Imagine you come to work and your supervisor explains she is moving to another state for a new job opportunity. You are disappointed because she has been very helpful and supportive of you. It may take a few weeks for the company to hire someone else. In the meantime, you will have to help pick up some of her workload, work extra hours each week and be supervised by someone you don't like as much. How might you handle this?
BEHAVIOR: SOCIAL SKILLS	
<p>Create relationships with adults that support success (B-SS 3.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you describe what a mentor is? In what ways can a mentor help you develop professionally? Personally? <i>An ideal response would include that mentoring is a formal, structured relationship where a more senior member of a profession assists in the development of a more junior member of a profession. Mentors help mentees develop goals, skills and knowledge and offer support and encouragement.</i> 2. If you are assigned a formal mentor on your worksite, how might you prepare for your mentoring meetings to ensure you will get the most possible from your mentorship interactions? <i>An ideal response should acknowledge that it is important for mentees to prepare for mentorship meetings by having questions written down that have arisen since the last meeting, following through on any assignments given by the mentor and bringing materials needed for note taking or other research.</i>
<p>Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills (B-SS 6.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe a time when you were in a group that worked well together. What did you learn from that experience? 2. Describe a time when a group you were in did not work well together. What did you learn from that experience? 3. How do you usually contribute to working groups, and are there any things you need to do differently when you are working in a group? <i>Ideal responses will include positive and negative experiences and an honest reflection on the role of the individual in success and failure of the group. Further, the response will include insight about a minimum of one or two ways to be more productive as a group member even if that includes not being the one to do all of the work.</i>
<p>Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams (B-SS 7.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe an activity you were involved in where you got to work with people from different races, differing abilities, sexual orientation, religions or ethnicities. What did you learn from that experience? <i>An ideal response would include a meaningful interaction with someone culturally different and two to three things that were learned about self or others.</i>

Mindset/Behavior	Workforce Questions
<p>Demonstrate advocacy skills and ability to assert self, when necessary (B-SS 8.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Imagine you just received a performance evaluation, and you don't quite 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 actually get less money because of the evaluation. How might you go about communicating this concern? 2. Lately, your co-worker, Tom, has been late a lot and leaving work early. He told you he is getting a divorce and is planning to move to another city soon. You have sympathy for his situation, but it is also causing you extra work to cover for him every morning and afternoon. How might you handle this situation? <p><i>An ideal response would include the interviewee speaking directly with the person he/she has the concern with (i.e., the supervisor in case one and Tom in case two). In the first case, the interviewee would thank the supervisor for his/her perspective and for meeting to discuss the evaluation again. Next, the interviewee would indicate that he/she would share with the supervisor the missing aspects of the job responsibilities not included in the performance evaluation and respectfully ask for reconsideration of the overall evaluation with these elements including how he/she might improve in those areas. For case two, the interviewee would show empathy for Tom but would also express the ways in which Tom's absences have caused an impact on his/her workload. He/she would ask Tom if there is some other arrangement that can be made so Tom's transition is not an ongoing workload burden on the interviewee.</i></p>

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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