Introduction

Welcome to the NYSED/CUNY CareerKit for HSE and ESL Learners!

Work plays a crucial role in the lives of all adults. We as teachers and counselors in adult literacy programs know this from our own experience as workers, and as professionals, we know the importance of education to the working lives of our students. Whether adult learners are looking for a first job or a better job or entrance to a career path, they have many questions.

What’s the next step in my work life? What are the options? What’s a good fit for me? How much will I earn with a high school equivalency diploma? How much can I earn with a college degree? What kind of education or training do I need to prepare myself for my next job? For the job after that? What do I need to know about college? How can I find out?

Now more than ever, adult literacy programs are working to equip students with the knowledge they need to plan and prepare for their next career steps. Recognizing that life circumstances and local economies often dictate which job a person takes—often out of necessity—we can provide tools and strategies for adult learners to see a broader employment picture and to consider and plan for other options. There is a lot to know.

More and more jobs that provide a living wage require at least some college education or formal training; and in most fields, an associates degree is fast becoming the minimum educational requirement. Our job in adult literacy is to help ensure that our students acquire the English language skills they need or earn a high school equivalency diploma—foundational to higher education and training and a career pathway to a more secure future. As we prepare students with the academic skills they need, we must also provide ways to expand their work-related knowledge and help them to prepare themselves for the job market. Different literacy programs will approach this work in different ways to meet their own needs and requirements.

This NYSED/CUNY CareerKit is designed to support a range of literacy programming as it intersects with career exploration, planning and preparation. Using a pedagogy of inquiry and discovery, the CareerKit presents a range of activities and resources that support the continued acquisition of basic language
and literacy skills in the broad context of work. It is designed to be used by literacy professionals who help students learn about and navigate career choices. Here “teacher” refers to all those who help students learn about careers, whether they are teachers, counselors, case managers or other literacy professionals. The activities take the form of practices already used in a language or a literacy/HSE class—reading and discussion, writing and revising essays, solving word problems, interpreting graphs and conducting research—all on the topic of work. Making the study of careers academic in nature supports the development of basic literacy skills and improved critical thinking. At the same time, students learn how to navigate career databases, interpret help wanted ads, assess job offers, analyze job outlooks and match their own interests to careers in rising industries.

This CareerKit has its foundation in labor market data. Students learn about the current labor market realities, allowing them to make choices for the here and now, as well as for tomorrow. They learn which sectors are growing and where the jobs are expected to be when they complete the necessary training or higher education. Conducting their own research, they learn how to find out about educational requirements, salaries and opportunities for advancement. Through graphs and text, they read about the big picture of various careers. Through video, narrative and panel discussions, they glimpse careers from the inside, hearing directly from workers sharing their experiences.

CAREER INSTRUCTION IN ADULT LITERACY

The NYSED/CUNY CareerKit is designed for adult literacy teachers, expert in reading, writing, ESL, math, science or social studies, but not necessarily experienced in career education. The CareerKit lessons help bridge student knowledge gaps about work, as teachers continue to build the academic skills they already teach in class. Alongside their students, they read about labor trends, career databases and pathways to promotion. This CareerKit is a resource intended to be used flexibly per instructional needs. While some of the activities are part of a series of related lessons, many can be used independently, adapted as teachers see fit. It is indeed our hope that teachers will modify and add to the existing lessons. Some programs are fortunate to have additional staff such as counselors who have expertise and experience in career development and local labor markets. They will of course have a great deal to contribute to the optimal use of these materials.

DEVELOPING BASIC SKILLS IN CAREER INSTRUCTION

Students in adult literacy classes must enhance their basic skills at the same time as they learn important content. The box below describes the range of skills and teaching processes that most literacy educators address and utilize.
In the NYSED/CUNY CareerKit, these skills and processes are addressed in the context of careers. For example, a reading about an ambulance driver or a line cook also addresses skill building in paraphrasing and note taking. Skills such as these help prepare students for the HSE exam while they learn about careers.

**WHICH STUDENTS IS THE NYSED/CUNY CareerKit PROJECT DESIGNED TO REACH?**

Many if not most students come to language and literacy classes with an eye toward careers—either finding a first job, retaining a job whose credentials have changed, or securing a better job. Some students know exactly the career they want to enter, but may not have the realistic information necessary to make informed decisions. They may change their minds about a career once they reflect on their own strengths and interests and learn about the career in detail. Others come with less formed career goals and are eager to learn about a variety of possibilities. They may become interested in a career they had not previously considered when they are exposed to information about other fields. Most students will need help with understanding and accessing the educational program needed to enter and move up in a particular career path. With thousands of careers to consider, students are often looking for ways of making sense of it all, and teachers often lack the resources to help students address their questions. The NYSED/CUNY CareerKit was created to be of assistance to teachers and counselors throughout New York State as they begin to respond to expectations that career pathway instruction become an integral component of adult literacy education.

The materials are ideally suited to upper level ESL and HSE students; however, teachers of lower level classes can adapt the readings or activities to make them more accessible to their students. Based on current NYS data, these lessons introduce students to today’s labor market realities.
THE CareerKit STRUCTURE

The **NYSED/CUNY CareerKit** starts with a large section entitled, Career Fundamentals. This broad overview is intended to be the starting place for all students. It is followed by individual sections providing language and literacy building resources in ten major industry sectors.

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<tr>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Products</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>The building of houses, office buildings, sewer pipes, power lines, highways and bridges. It employs people with general skills such as managing a building project and specialty skills such as carpenters, electricians and plumbers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Includes factories or mills that make a wide range of products, such as clothing, machines, electronics and cars.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>Provides medical services to people of all ages in hospitals, outpatient, nursing and rehabilitation facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Childcare</td>
<td>Provides education and training, in K–12 schools, colleges, universities and training centers. It also includes day care for younger children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community &amp; Social Services</td>
<td>Includes services such as substance abuse counseling, health education, mental health counseling and religious services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitality, Recreation &amp; the Arts</td>
<td>Provides food, fun, art and places to stay overnight including restaurants and hotels, theater, dance and music, as well as museums, parks and bowling alleys.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Provides the installation and maintenance of electronic equipment, such as phones, computers and computerized machines. Includes technical support, cable installers and programmers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Provides the sale of items to people or businesses, such as groceries, cars, furniture and electronics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation &amp; Warehousing</td>
<td>Provides the transportation of people and things from one place to another. This includes airlines, trains and buses, taxis, cargo ships and companies that deliver packages. Warehousing provides the storage of items for people and businesses, including the storage of clothing, food and business supplies. Most businesses need items transported or stored.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Production</td>
<td>The production of food and beverages, including those produced on farms, such as fruits, vegetables and meat, as well as those produced in factories, such as yogurt, crackers and wine.</td>
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RECOMMENDED USE OF THE CareerKit

We recommend that teachers begin with the Career Fundamentals section which will help their students to determine career pathways of interest, based on labor market realities, their skills and interests and the necessary academic or training requirements. With this foundation, teachers can then use the resource materials provided in the ten industry sections to help students gain a deeper understanding of specific labor market sectors which may be of individual interest. These materials have been piloted in several programs in New York State in various ways. Here are a few examples, and of course there are many more options.

- The teacher started with exercises in the Career Fundamentals section. Next, the teacher chose her students’ three most popular industry sectors. The three sectors were healthcare, education & childcare, and retail. Students spent several hours a week studying these sectors one by one—as part of their regular HSE class. The teacher learned the career content along with her students, integrating it with basic skills instruction.

- Another program tried a similar approach, but instead of embedding the career lessons in the class, three teachers working together were able to add hours on to the regular instructional program. In this case, students from an upper level ESL, a HSE and a Pre-HSE class gathered across levels for career instruction in their choice of one of three career areas. Teachers from each of the three classes chose one of the career areas to teach.

- A third program did a career assessment of the students after they had completed Career Fundamentals exercises. The teacher concluded that there was a wide diversity of student interest. For a few hours a week, with the assistance of tutor/mentors, small groups of students with similar career interests worked on selected exercises in the chosen sector. They created powerpoint presentations of the sector and presented their findings to the whole class.

- One teacher spent an entire 12 weeks of instruction on healthcare careers, expanding the lessons to include books on the topic and a range of essays. Visits to healthcare facilities and college departments were included. He reported that even students with no real career interest in this area found something of interest for themselves and their families.

These are four career content ideas that have been tried—there are many others, and adult literacy educators are very creative! Teachers often have a range of relevant career expertise to draw upon, and program directors are adept at figuring out good ways to include needed instructional emphases in their programs.
CAREERKITS OVER TIME

The NYSED/CUNY CareerKits are informed by labor market data so that students can make career decisions based, in part, on the availability of jobs. While many of the activities present information that is not time-sensitive, such as in activities that build self-awareness and develop research skills, some of the information, such as labor market data, is subject to labor market forces and will undoubtedly change over time. Modification of CareerKit activities is welcome, and it is recommended that programs remain current with labor market statistics by accessing data through the Bureau of Labor Statistics at www.bls.gov, The New York State Department of Labor at www.labor.ny.gov/stats/ or through a local labor relations board.

MODIFYING THESE LESSONS

These lessons are intended to be used either as is, or modified as teachers see fit. Teachers should feel free to use a reading for example, and change the questions, or adapt the questions for use with a different reading that better meets the needs of the students. A particular activity framework can be applied to a different topic. Teachers may need to alter the lesson depending upon the population, for example, for ESL students who may have had a successful career in a particular area, or for older students who may have had years of work experience to contribute to the discussion.

IDEAS THAT REOCCUR

The ideas below are worth repeating to students as they progress through the lessons.

1. **The process of studying one career is transferable to other careers**
   Some of the activities included are about work in general—about researching careers, preparing for interviews, assessing job offers. Other information uses one particular career as an example of how to learn about careers in all sectors—how to find out the average salary and educational requirements, for example. Not all students will be interested in all careers, so they should be urged to consider how one example might apply to their own career interests, and how the academic skill they are practicing is applicable beyond the example career. For example, how could researching the X-ray Technician career benefit a student who is interested in Sales? What literacy and research skills are being practiced that can be useful across fields?

2. **Speaking in generalities**
   Much of the information presented is intended to provide students with a broad understanding of careers. Information about a particular sector, for example, should be taken as a generalization and does not necessarily apply to every business or organization within the sector. Students should be reminded that not all businesses in a particular field require the same credentials, hours or duties, for example. They should be encouraged to investigate their career of interest and learn as much as they can about it, with the understanding that specific jobs will have their own special requirements and expectations.