



CAREER CONVERSATION STARTER

A guide for parents on career exploration conversations with your child to encourage him/her to begin thinking about, preparing for, and having purpose for the future.

Sparking Career Conversations with Your Child

Purpose:

“There has to be a way to increase awareness among students and parents of the multitude of rewarding careers and occupations that exist in America today. We can turn to school systems for help, but too many teachers, counselors, and administrators are themselves unaware of the robust opportunities available to today’s youth because we have devalued career exploration for the sake of sending everyone through one pathway—college.

To change the paradigm, we must help students start at a younger age to make career connections and begin the dialogue about what’s possible.” (p. 109–110)



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark C. Perna'.

Mark C. Perna
Founder, Author, and CEO

From the Author:

This career conversation starter guide is just that. It is a guide for you, as parents, to begin early career exploration conversations with your child to encourage him/her to begin thinking about, preparing for, and having purpose for the future. These conversations can start at any age and are imperative to helping your child find direction sooner rather than later, so that he/she can invest wisely and purposefully in further education.

Ideally, you will want to keep these conversations as low-key and low-pressure as possible. You’re planting seeds and ideas that will take time to come to fruition. I recommend integrating these conversations into everyday life as stress-free chats rather than making them a formal sit-down event that feels forced or impersonal.

Please feel free to ask the questions provided in the guide as is or adapt the questions to best serve your child’s age, unique needs, and family situation. You can also use the questions as a launch pad to create your own age-appropriate dialogue because you know your child best and this is meant to be adapted personally to him/her.

As you and your child explore the possibilities, there are many career exploration resources available. Websites like onetonline.org and others may give you a great starting point to research careers and their corresponding lifestyles.

It is my hope that this guide can help you begin a meaningful series of conversations that empower you and your child to focus, plan, and take action in the direction of a bright future!

Sparking Career Conversations with Your Child

“The branch is creaking, and it is time to truly inspire Why Generation members by capturing their hearts and minds with the insight of a great many options and opportunities available to them based on their own unique interests, talents, and abilities. It is time to make students more than “college and career ready”—we need to make them “career ready,” period.

This is a self-motivated path that leads to self-reliance and independence...and it all starts with a conversation.”
(p. 159)

1. TOPIC: LIFESTYLES AND EXPERIENCES

“If you apply yourself to learning and succeeding in school now, each of you can experience all these great things you love because you will learn the skills you need to get the kind of job to be able to afford the lifestyle you want.” (p. 173)

GOALS FOR PARENT(S):

- Encourage your child to think outside of the box regarding the type of lifestyle he/she desires.
- Together, think about people you know or people you see online or on TV whose lifestyle is attractive to your child.

QUESTIONS FOR CHILD:



- What type of lifestyle do you want to live when you are older?
- Where do you want to live?
- What will YOU need to do in order to get the lifestyle you want?

2. TOPIC: TALENTS & INTERESTS CREATE CAREERS

“Empowering students to select a pathway based on their unique interest is the key to helping them focus, plan, and take the necessary action in the direction of their “want to,” a chosen field based on both the career and lifestyle advantages that appeal directly to each student.” (p. 176)

GOAL FOR PARENT(S):

- Encourage your child to brainstorm how to connect his/her interests and talents to the many viable career opportunities that are available today.

QUESTIONS FOR CHILD:



- What do you enjoy doing?
- What do you do well?
- What are some of your interests, talents, goals, and career aspirations?



3. TOPIC: THE CAREER TREE

“One of the most powerful results of the Career Tree is the ongoing conversations it can generate between students and their parents about the kinds of careers that they want to pursue.” (p. 130)

GOALS FOR PARENT(S):

- Expose your child to the full range of viable career possibilities by looking at the many pathways, on-ramps, and final career destinations through every level of education — all of which can help create a competitive advantage.
- Create awareness of the careers that may not be as well-known or common as others.

QUESTIONS FOR CHILD:



- What exciting careers might utilize your interests and talents?
- In what types of jobs would you be able to pursue your passions and aspirations?



4. TOPIC: THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

“The long-term, big-picture goal matters but must be broken down into smaller steps for maximum achievement.” (p. 197)

GOAL FOR PARENT(S):

- Converse about the short-term steps and long-term plans to get to your child’s *Light at the End of the Tunnel* and to thrive.

QUESTIONS FOR CHILD:



- What professional field do you want to be working in when you are older?
- What accomplishments do you want to have achieved in 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, 25 years?



5. TOPIC: PLANNING CULTURE

“[A]...planning culture empowers individuals to figure out their future direction by setting a goal or destination, planning to reach that goal, sharing the plan with others, and continually recalibrating that plan.” (p. 137)

GOAL FOR PARENT(S):

- Talk with your child about connecting the “want-to” with the “how-to” and the importance of having a plan and writing out his/her goals.

QUESTIONS FOR CHILD:



- You now know what you want — HOW will you prepare yourself to get there?
- Who can you talk to, shadow, or ask to be your mentor who has already achieved what you desire?

6. TOPIC: BUILDING A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

“Exceptional performance can happen when students (at any age) engaged in any program, pathway or course of study take it upon themselves to dive deeply into the Root System to determine how to get where they want to go. Now that they know where they are going, they have to know how they are getting there by creating the plan to get there.” (p. 154)

GOAL FOR PARENT(S):

- Help your child to decipher how he/she is unique and different from others and explain how important it is to stand out from the crowd. (Use pages 154–155 to enhance your conversation)

QUESTIONS FOR CHILD:



- What qualities, attitudes, and ideas make you different from others?
- What do you have that others do not?
- What do you need to work on or learn?

7. TOPIC: EDUCATION WITH PURPOSE TO EMPLOYMENT WITH PASSION

“Whether college or other postsecondary training is your plan, pursuing your personal Education with Purpose will help you focus your time and energy, avoid unnecessary debt, and enjoy the satisfaction of reaching your goals faster.” (p. 170–171)

GOAL FOR PARENT(S):

- Discuss how important it is to go on to postsecondary training or college with a purpose so that your child invests wisely, gets it done, and gets going with the career that he/she desires.

QUESTIONS FOR CHILD:



- What is your purpose for pursuing postsecondary training or college?
- What will you do to get back on track with your desired goal if you get sidetracked or if you lose self-motivation?

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