



## Learning activities:

**Journaling Activity:** Journaling questions are offered to incorporate personal reflection using an individualized means of expression. Participants should be encouraged to choose a form of journaling that feels right for them, while also being supported to “test the waters” with a technique that might stretch a traditional comfort zone. The following alternatives to “traditional” journaling (writing) are offered as suggestions:

- Dictate ideas/thoughts and/or use the computer (with or without voice-recognition software)
- Create poems, lists, stream of consciousness, as a method of reflection
- Draw (cartoons, pictures, etc.)
- Use photography (taking pictures, cutting out magazines) to create collages


For younger audiences (such as middle school-aged), you may find it necessary to modify the suggested journal questions to better reflect age, experience, and environment.

Extension Activity: An extension activity is offered for facilitators who wish to continue the topic. This activity may involve the use of technology, field trips, research, and more.

## Through the Lens of Universal Design for Learning

The activities in this publication are career development “warm-ups” for youth. Certainly, they may be used as the basis for planning lessons focusing on more extensive





career and workforce development pursuits. The directions and extension activities have been specifically designed and created through a lens of universal design for learning. According to CAST (previously known as the Center for Applied Special Technology), universal design for learning is: a framework for designing educational environments that enable all learners to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for learning. This is accomplished by simultaneously reducing barriers to the curriculum while providing rich supports for learning.


As most youth development professionals recognize, young people come to pre-employment and employment training programs with a very wide variety of skills, talents, interests, and needs. For many youth, the typical classroom curriculum – which includes goals, instructional methods, classroom materials, and assessments – is cluttered with barriers and roadblocks, providing little support or opportunities to succeed for a wide range of learners. Rather than make extraordinary adjustments for particular students, universal design for learning lessens this conundrum.

As you work through these activities, consider incorporating some of the following strategies, which support universal design for learning:



- Seek opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning through multiple modalities (e.g., written, oral, graphic representations, and multi-media representations).
- Encourage the use of technology to enhance learning (access to multi-media materials) and performance (e.g., spell check and word prediction software).
- Include opportunities for students to complete “do-overs” based on your feedback.
  - Provide instructions describing the components or steps for completion for activities. You might consider having printed copies of directions, audio-taped instructions, and pictures. If you have access to a computer or laptop, instructions can be both seen and heard on the computer. Most computers today come equipped with accessibility software and are often pre-packaged with a magnifier, on-screen keyboard, narrator functions, and high contrast options.
- Encourage students to play an active role and present their own thoughts and opinions throughout the activities.
- Provide feedback to individual students in multiple forms (for example, face-to-face, email, online chat, telephone, etc.).
- Include opportunities for students to collaborate.




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- Provide opportunities for students to contact you to ask questions.
  - Promote a strengths-based learning process.

Regardless of any barrier to employment (including, but not limited to disability) the activities in this publication, coupled with the strategies and spirit of universal design for learning (and a sprinkle of creativity), are intended to help all youth prepare for career and personal success through the development of soft skills.

## Tips for Improving Access to this Curriculum for All Youth

Today's in- and out-of-school youth career development programs are a true microcosm of our local communities. Within one learning environment multiple categories of youth are often represented. This includes, but is not limited to, youth in the foster care system, at risk of dropping out of school, involved in the juvenile justice system, and/or for whom English may not be their primary language. The one population of youth that has the potential to overlap with all of the above-mentioned populations is youth with disabilities. The term disability applies to a broad array of differences, covering






everything from learning disabilities to significant mobility impairment. Disabilities can be both apparent and non-apparent. As a youth service professional, you likely already encounter and serve many youth with disabilities. For instance:

- 36% of high school dropouts have learning disabilities and 59% have emotional or behavioral disorders
- 75% of youth in the juvenile justice system have some type of disability
- 20 to 60% of young children entering foster care have a developmental disability or delay
- 30 to 40% of the 500,000 foster care youth receive special education services






If possible, prior to beginning the activities in this curriculum, take time to get to know your students. **Talk with all students openly about strengths and weaknesses.** Ask them to think about how they learn best and what they might need from you (or a supervisor) to facilitate their success. When you prepare to use these lessons remember – one size does not fit all.

In addition to these youth with disabilities, there may be other youth you work with for whom their disability has not been identified or has not been disclosed.

Successful youth service professionals recognize that disability is an aspect of diversity, and are prepared to support students from different backgrounds, cultures, and educational environments. Furthermore, they understand that all youth learn in different ways.





To meet the youth's needs, try to step out of your preferred method of teaching (or your personal comfort zone) and use a variety of instructional approaches such as: discussions, PowerPoint presentations, inquiry-based instruction, hands-on experiments, project/problem-based learning, or computer-aided instruction. This curriculum is designed to provide information to learners and instructors in a variety of ways. Instructors are encouraged to adapt activities to meet the needs of each class.

Providing variety of instruction not only will address various learning styles, but also can help learners become more flexible in their learning. While most learners do have a preferred style of learning, this does not mean they are strictly dependent on that style to learn. By exposing young people to a wide variety of learning styles and methods, you will enable them to become more flexible learners. Providing a variety of activities and access to learning will enable students of all ability levels to succeed.



Consider the following global strategies:

- Appreciate the individuality of each youth. Having young people recognize that you appreciate their individuality is even more important.
- Demonstrate that you are committed to meeting the needs of all students and that you are open to conversation and discussion about how to help them learn and succeed.
- Recognize that we all have our own learning styles and cultural assumptions. These styles and assumptions influence how we teach and what we expect from our students. Often times our preferred method of teaching is not a student's preferred (or required) method of learning.
- Prepare multiple examples to illustrate your points and help students move between abstract, theoretical, and concrete knowledge, specific experiences to expand everyone's learning. Use pair and group work to help students learn from each other

Consider the following inclusive teaching strategies:

- Get young people "doing" in addition to listening. Whether it is a group exercise, using a role play activity, or an individual paper and pencil exercise such as journaling or drawing, creating lessons that engage different learning styles and engage young people in a variety of ways allows everyone to access the curriculum.
- Repetition, repetition, repetition. It often takes repeated exposure to something before we remember it. Taking extra time to reinforce earlier topics in the context of the new ideas being discussed will help young people retain the important lessons and skills needed to be successfully





employed. You can be creative in the ways you repeat concepts or emphasize a point: when the concept is considered again, offer it from a different point of view or when the concept is demonstrated again, use a different exercise.

- Excitement is contagious. Demonstrating honesty, authenticity, and excitement for working with youth can often inspire the same qualities within the youth themselves as they engage with this curriculum. Your passion is infectious. As a youth service professional, it is important that you find ways to maintain your passion and excitement and recharge when necessary.
- Presume competence and instill confidence. Providing young people with confidence and an opportunity to succeed is one of the best gifts you can give. Have high expectations for all youth and help them to realize their potential as you support them to become independent decisionmakers for their future.

### **Possible Organizational Skills Accommodation**

- Use a recording device to allow the individual to listen to the information for review
- Color code papers, folders, or notebooks to help with organization
- Use post-it arrows to mark important pages or information in books
- Present material in multi-sensory ways, allowing for hands-on instruction
- For lengthier projects, encourage “check-ins” at different (and agreed upon) points

