PFL Academy

Teacher Guide: Chapter 15.1 — Career Exploration and Goal Setting

OVERVIEW

TIME	MATERIALS	PREREQUISITES
45-50 Minutes	Student Activity Packet, Career Path Planner	None

LESSON FLOW

5 min   **THE CHALLENGE**

- Read Miguel's career exploration scenario aloud or have students read silently.
- Discussion prompt: "Has anyone changed their mind about what career they want? What made you reconsider?"
- Preview how systematic exploration helps discover unexpected career paths.

10 min   **CORE CONCEPTS**

- Review the 5 key terms. Emphasize the difference between job (short-term) and career (long-term journey).
- Read the Background paragraph together.
- Quick check: Ask students to give examples of jobs vs. careers in the same industry (e.g., cashier vs. retail management career).

25-30 min **APPLY IT**

- **Part A (8-10 min):** Jobs vs. Careers scenarios. Have students work individually, then share reasoning with a partner.
- **Part B (8-10 min):** Self-Assessment. Give students quiet time to reflect. Emphasize that all skills count—not just academic ones.
- **Part C (8-10 min):** SMART Goal Development. Walk through each component. Use the hint box example as a model.

10 min   **CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- Complete in class or assign as homework.
- Review Q3 (self-assessment importance) and Q5 (reflection) to assess deeper understanding.
- Preview Day 2 Learning Lab: Creating comprehensive career development plans.

DIFFERENTIATION

Support

- Provide a pre-filled example of the jobs vs. careers analysis.
- Offer a word bank for the skills inventory section.
- Break down SMART goals into one component at a time.

Extension

- Research a specific career using O*NET and report on salary, outlook, and requirements.
- Create a 10-year career timeline with specific milestones.
- Interview a family member or neighbor about their career path and present findings.

- Pair students who struggle with writing for peer support.

Part A: Jobs vs. Careers Analysis

1. JOB. Alex views this as temporary, has no interest in advancement, and is using it only for income during college.

2. CAREER. Jordan has a long-term vision (nurse practitioner), is pursuing additional education, and has mapped out progression over 10 years.

3. CAREER. Taylor shows long-term commitment to hospitality, is pursuing relevant education, has been promoted, and has an entrepreneurial goal aligned with the industry.

Part B: Self-Assessment Inventory

Responses will vary. Look for: Realistic self-evaluation, appropriate categorization of hard vs. soft skills, and thoughtful reflection on work values that align with stated career interests.

Part C: SMART Goal Development

Evaluate SMART goals for: Specificity (not vague), Measurability (includes metrics or milestones), Achievability (realistic given student's situation), Relevance (connects to stated interests), and Time-bound (includes deadline). Award partial credit for goals that meet 3-4 criteria.

Check Your Understanding

1. B (Involves long-term growth and multiple positions over time)

2. C (Computer programming - it's a technical, teachable ability specific to certain jobs)

3. Self-assessment helps identify your interests, skills, and values before exploring careers. This ensures you research paths that align with who you are, increasing the likelihood of long-term satisfaction and success.

4. "A" stands for Achievable. It's important because goals must be realistic given your current situation and resources; otherwise, you may become discouraged or set yourself up for failure.

5. *Responses will vary. Look for specific, actionable steps such as: conducting an informational interview, using O*NET to research the career, job shadowing, joining a related club, or taking a relevant course.*

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconception	Clarification
"A career requires a college degree."	Careers exist in all fields—trades, arts, services. A career is defined by long-term growth and development, not the type of credential required.
"I should know my career by now."	Career exploration is an ongoing process. Many successful professionals changed career directions multiple times. The goal is to develop a plan, not have all the answers.
"Soft skills don't matter as much as hard skills."	Employers consistently rank soft skills (communication, teamwork, adaptability) as equally or more important than technical skills for career success.