

Dream Today, Job Tomorrow: Building a Foundation for Career Success

Lesson Authors

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Lesson Description

In this lesson, students will learn strategies that they can employ now to start preparing for their future dream job or career. Students will conduct an interview to collect anecdotal information about a real-life career progression experience. They will explore their current and potential human capital. Additionally, they will learn about hard and soft skills important to job success and identify ways their current talents, interests, and extracurricular activities can form the foundational building blocks of their future careers.

Grade Level

6–8, 9–12

Concepts

Career
Career exploration
Hard skills
Human capital
Informational interview
Job
Soft skills

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain the difference between a job and a career.
- Give examples of human capital.
- Inventory current human capital.
- Identify steps for improving their human capital.

Essential Question

How can I improve my human capital and prepare for my dream job/career?

Time Required

90 minutes



Materials

- *Visual 1: “Career Building Blocks”*
- *Visual 2: “Informational Interview Questions”*
- *Visual 3: “Closure”*
- *Handout 1: “Career Building Blocks,” one copy for each student*
- *Handout 2: “Building Blocks for My Dream Job/Career” (Parts A, B, and C), one copy for each student*
- *Handout 3: “Assessment,” one copy for each student*

Preparation

Interview guest: Invite someone to participate in an informational interview for students to learn about his or her job. This could be another teacher or staff member at your school, a parent, business partner, etc. The person could be interviewed in person or by using an online interactive platform. (Share Visual 2 with the guest a few days before the interview so that he or she may prepare in advance.)

Procedures

1. Ask the students one of the following questions:
 - If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
 - What kinds of jobs have you seen or heard about that you might want to know more about?
2. As students share their responses, write these jobs on the board and ask them why they think they want that job. Tell the students that these examples are what we might call dream jobs.
3. Tell the students that their dream jobs may be based on what they currently know about or have experienced; however, their dream jobs could actually be jobs that they don't know about or that don't even exist yet. Write the words “job” and “career” on the board. Discuss the following:
 - How would you define a job? (*Something you do to earn income.*)
 - Are a job and a career the same thing? (*Answers will vary.*)
4. Explain that **jobs** are things people do to earn income. **Careers** are based on working at jobs in the same occupation or profession for many years or having the same job over an extended period. Discuss the following:
 - What are examples of a job that is done for many years that may be a career? (*Teacher, police officer, doctor, firefighter, construction worker, electrician, carpenter, etc.*)
 - What is an example of a career and what jobs might make up that career? (*An athletics career might include being an assistant coach, a coach, and then an athletic director. A retail career might include work as a salesperson, a department manager, a store manager, and then a district manager. An education career might include being a teacher, a principal, and then a district-level administrator.*)
5. Tell the students that people make decisions over a lifetime about their education, jobs, and careers that affect their incomes and job opportunities. Explain that people choose jobs and careers for a variety of reasons. Some reasons may include that they enjoy doing a particular job, are good at that type of work, or are attracted to the potential income. Others may choose careers based on the jobs available in the area in which they live.



6. Explain that different careers require different education and training. A person might have the same job over a period of time, and that person may continue to receive additional education and/or training over their lifetime. Often, jobs and careers evolve over time as people develop new skills and more experience.
7. Tell the students that people often progress in their careers as they gain more **human capital**. (Define human capital as the knowledge and skills people have that they obtained through education, experience, and training.) Ask students to give examples of human capital. (*Answers will vary but may include a college degree, work experience, computer skills, etc.*)
8. Explain to the students that while job-specific training or education may not begin until they know what job or career they want to pursue, there are some things they can do now to prepare for their future regardless of the job or career they ultimately choose.
9. Ask the students how they are currently building human capital. (*Answers will vary but may include going to school and working toward a high school diploma, obtaining training such as a babysitting class or lifeguard training, gaining experience through volunteer and extracurricular activities, etc.*)
10. Explain that most jobs require both hard and soft skills. Define **hard skills** as specific, teachable abilities such as math, reading, writing, typing, etc. Define **soft skills** as interpersonal skills such as communication (written, verbal), teamwork, dependability, problem solving, leadership, time management, creativity, etc. Discuss the following:
 - How can you continue to work on developing hard skills to prepare for a career? (*Answers will vary but may include taking additional math, science, writing, and other course work.*)
 - How can you continue to work on developing soft skills to prepare for a career? (*Answers will vary but may include participating in organizations at and outside of school, such as student council, academic and service clubs, and Boy/Girl Scouts; volunteering; working at a part-time job.*)
11. Display Visual 1: “Career Building Blocks.” Tell the students that there are many components to building a career. Think of each of these components as human capital bricks that layer upon one another and serve as the building blocks for a career. Ask the students what forms the foundation (or the base) of the building blocks? (*Hard skills and soft skills.*)
12. Explain that **career exploration** involves gaining an understanding of how the building blocks fit together. One important step toward reaching a career goal or obtaining a dream job is to gather information about the necessary human capital. Tell the students that one way to do this is to conduct informational interviews. **Informational interviews** are meetings where people can seek information from someone about their job, experiences, and skills.
13. Distribute a copy of Handout 1: “Career Building Blocks” to each student. Tell the students that they will use the building block structure to compile responses during an informational interview with a guest.
14. Explain each building block of Visual 1 (which is the same as Handout 1):
 - Current job—the current job the person is doing
 - Other jobs—other jobs that may have been part of the person’s career
 - Education, training, or other preparation—this could include postsecondary training, a certificate program, or other relevant learning experiences



- School or extracurricular activities—activities through school, clubs, and/or community groups
- Volunteer work and student jobs—experiences as a volunteer or paid student jobs
- Soft skills—interpersonal skills such as communication (written, verbal), teamwork, dependability, problem solving, leadership, time management, creativity, etc.
- Hard skills—specific, teachable abilities such as math, writing, typing, etc.
- Advice for the future—feedback that the guest may have for you

15. Display Visual 2: “Informational Interview Questions.” Explain the following:

- These are the questions you will use to interview the guest.
- Please volunteer to be responsible for asking a question. (Or assign questions to students.)
- As the guest responds to each question, please take notes on Handout 1.
- The question number corresponds to the number within each block on Handout 1. For example, Q1 stands for question 1.
- After the assigned questions have been answered and Handout 1 is completed, there may be some time for additional questions.
- Questions related to salary and other similar questions are not appropriate for this discussion.
- The person you are interviewing is a guest and should be treated with respect.

16. Introduce the interview guest. Have the students conduct the interview by taking turns asking the questions they volunteered to ask or were assigned to ask. If clarification is needed to have a complete response to a question, ask the interview guest to clarify or provide more details. After students have completed the questions on Handout 1, allow them to ask any other questions that may help in understanding the job and career of the interview guest. Once the interview is complete, thank the interview guest for his or her time and for sharing his or her career experiences.

17. Debrief the interview process with the students. Remind students that they just completed an informational interview to learn more about a person’s job and career. Discuss the following:

- What kinds of jobs did this person have? How did this work experience add to his or her human capital? (*Answers will vary.*)
- How are these jobs related? (*Depending on the jobs, there may or may not be a relationship.*)
- Based on the jobs this person has had, what would you say his or her career is? (*Answers will vary.*)
- How did this person prepare for his or her career? (*Answers will vary but may include completed high school, acquired postsecondary education, participated in clubs, volunteered in the community, participated in specialized training, and so on.*)
- How did previous experiences and education prepare this person for his or her current role? (*Answers will vary but may include improved hard and soft skills, helped develop leadership skills, taught content specific to his or her career, or allowed him or her to practice skills in an informal setting.*)
- How did this person’s experiences in middle and high school help prepare this person for his or her current job or add to his or her human capital? (*Answers will vary but may include improved hard and soft skills, helped develop leadership, or allowed him or her to practice skills in an informal setting.*)



- What can you do to increase your human capital? (*Answers will vary but may include work hard in school, take challenging courses, participate in school clubs and clubs in the community, volunteer, and work part-time.*)
- How can the advice the interviewee provided help you begin increasing your human capital in school? (*Answers will vary.*)

18. Tell the students that they have had the opportunity to see that hard and soft skills form the base for a career, but that there are many building blocks that are important, too. Now they will have an opportunity to complete a plan for themselves. Distribute a copy of Handout 2: “Building Blocks for My Dream Job/Career” to each student. Explain the following:

- In Part A, identify something specific you have accomplished, a goal you have reached, or a success you have had. Then do a personal assessment of the human capital you have that helped you accomplish the goal or have success.
- Then in Part B, use the information from Part A to begin filling in your building blocks. You should also add any additional information to complete your personal building blocks.
- Finally, in Part C, create blueprints for your future building blocks. These building block blueprints will help you understand how to continue to develop your human capital.

19. After students complete Handout 2, discuss the following questions for debriefing:

- What accomplishment or success did you have? (*Answers will vary for each student—relates to Handout 2, Part A.*)
- What human capital did you apply to accomplish what you did or to gain success? (*Answers will vary—relates to Handout 2, Part A.*)
- What human capital did you gain from that accomplishment or success? (*Answers will vary—relates to Handout 2, Part A.*)
- What are some similarities between your foundational building blocks and those of the guest speaker? (*Answers will vary—relates to Handout 2, Part B.*)
- What did you identify as something you want to add to your building blocks? (*Answers will vary—relates to Handout 2, Part C.*)
- What other advice would you give yourself to prepare for your dream job? (*Answers will vary—relates to Handout 2, Part C.*)

Closure

20. Ask the students the following questions to close the lesson:

- What is the difference between a job and a career? (*A job is something you do to earn money. A career is based on working at jobs in the same occupation or profession for many years. Different careers require different education and training.*)
- What is human capital? (*Human capital is the knowledge and skills people have that they obtained through education, experience, and training.*)
- What are some examples of your human capital? (*Answers will vary but should include reading, writing, and math skills; an understanding of basic science; ability to work in groups, play an instrument, or play a sport, etc.*)



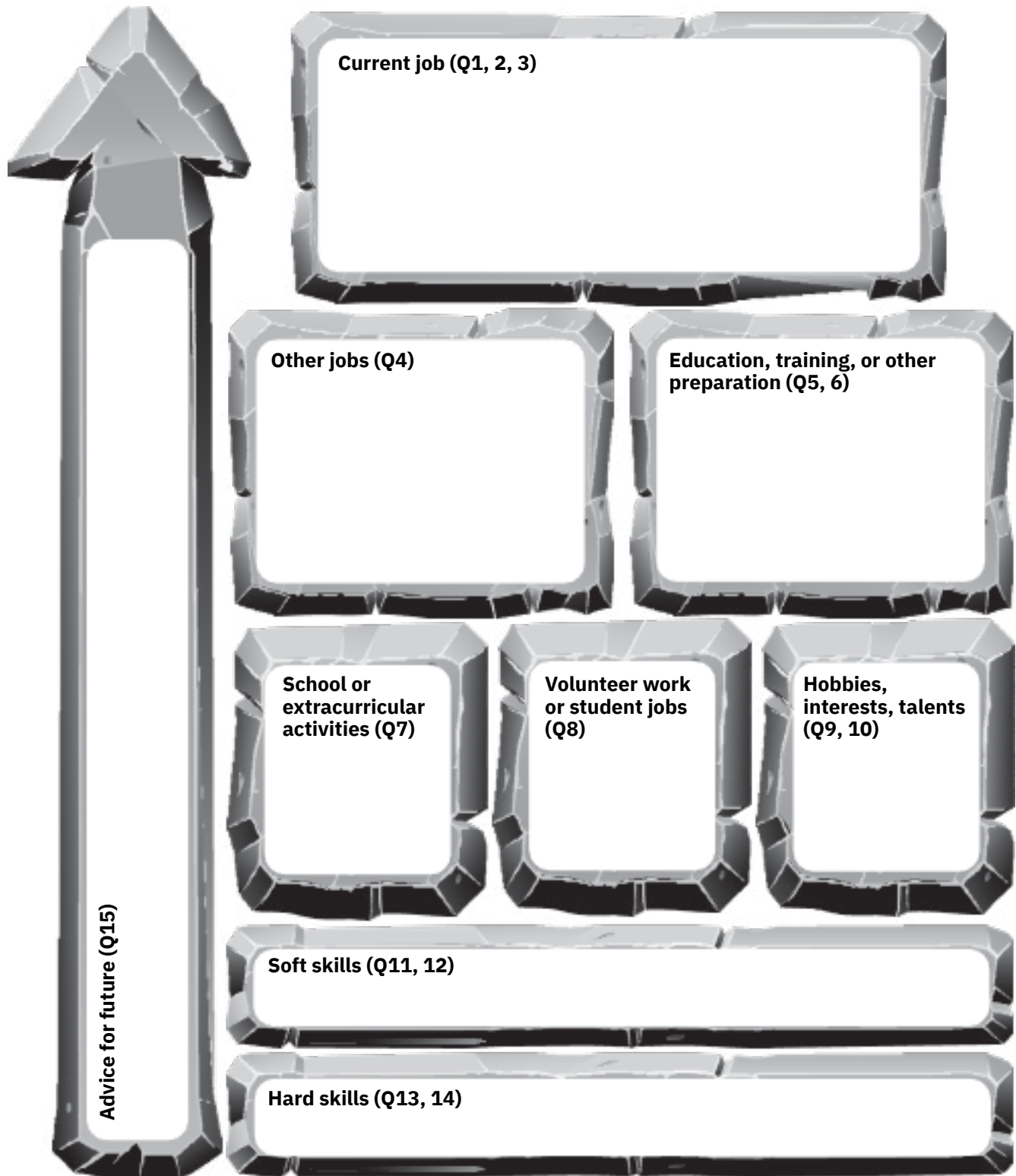
- What steps to develop your human capital did you identify? (*Answers will vary but should include taking challenging courses, participating in school and community organizations, practicing, and so on.*)

21. Display Visual 3: “Closure.” Tell the students they must write a 100-word summary to answer the essential question “How can I improve my human capital and prepare for my dream job/career?” They should include the following words as part of the summary: human capital, job, and career.

Assessment

22. Distribute a copy of Handout 3: “Assessment” to each student. Allow time for students to work. Use Handout 3: “Assessment—Answer Key” to review student answers.

Visual 1: Career Building Blocks



Visual 2: Informational Interview Questions


1. What is your current job title?
2. What do you do in this job?
3. How long have you done this job?
4. What were some of the jobs or internships you had as you worked your way up to your current position?
5. After high school, what education did you receive or what degree are you currently working toward?
6. What other training or preparation have you had throughout your career?
7. When you were a middle school or high school student, in what school or extracurricular activities were you involved?
8. When you were a middle school or high school student, what volunteer work or student jobs did you do?
9. What are your current or past hobbies, interests, and/or talents?
10. Are you able to use your hobbies, interests, and/or talents in your current job? If so, how?
11. What soft skills do you need in your current job?
12. How did your activities in middle school and high school help develop your soft skills?
13. What hard skills are important in your current job?
14. How did your activities in middle school and high school help develop your hard skills?
15. What advice would you give to someone my age about preparing for my future career?

Visual 3: Closure

Directions:

- Write a 100-word summary to answer the essential question “How can I improve my human capital and prepare for my dream job/career?”
- Include the following words as part of the summary: human capital, job, career

Handout 1: Career Building Blocks



Advice for future (Q15)

Current job (Q1, 2, 3)

Other jobs (Q4)

Education, training, or other preparation (Q5, 6)

School or extracurricular activities (Q7)

Volunteer work or student jobs (Q8)

Hobbies, interests, talents (Q9, 10)

Soft skills (Q11, 12)

Hard skills (Q13, 14)

Handout 2: Building Blocks for My Dream Job/Career

Part A

Directions: Respond to the following questions to begin identifying your current human capital (the knowledge and skills you have as a result of your education, experience, and training).

Think about something you do or did really well, an accomplishment you are proud of, or another success you have had. This could be something in school or from your extracurricular activities.

Describe the accomplishment or success in two or three sentences.

Identify the human capital you have used to gain success or accomplish this goal. Identify any new human capital you developed as a result of this success or accomplishment.

Part B

Directions: Use the information from Part A to begin completing your building blocks below. After you have added all information from Part A, add any additional information in the blank squares to complete your personal building blocks.

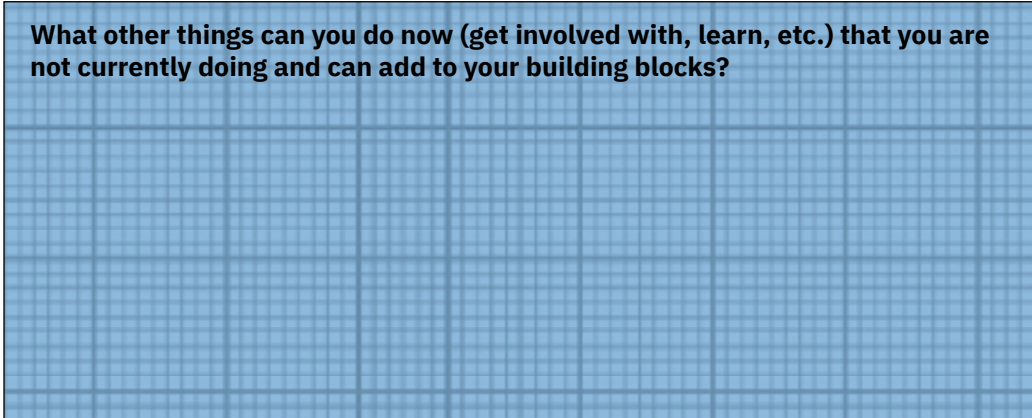


School or extracurricular activities	Volunteer work or student jobs	My hobbies, interests, talents
My soft skills		
My hard skills		

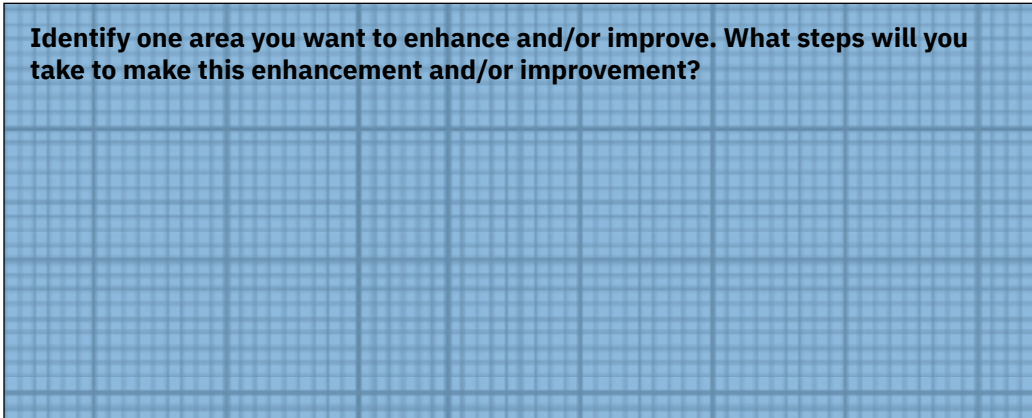
Part C

Directions: In this segment you will create building block blueprints for your future. These will assist you as you continue to develop your human capital.

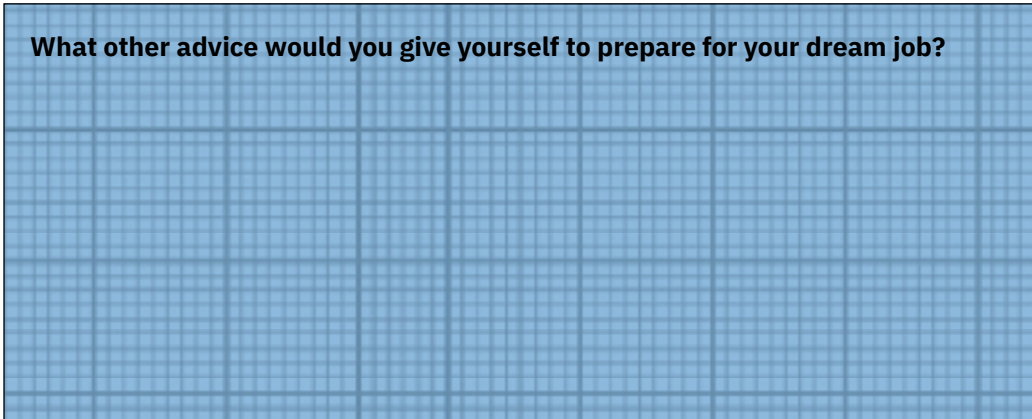
What other things can you do now (get involved with, learn, etc.) that you are not currently doing and can add to your building blocks?



Identify one area you want to enhance and/or improve. What steps will you take to make this enhancement and/or improvement?



What other advice would you give yourself to prepare for your dream job?



Handout 3: Assessment

Short Answer

1. Explain the difference between a job and a career.
2. Describe two ways in which you can prepare now for your future job.
3. Explain the difference between hard skills and soft skills.

Multiple Choice

4. What is human capital?
 - a. Certificates, diplomas, and/or degrees earned
 - b. The knowledge, skills, and training that make you valuable in the workplace
 - c. The amount of money you earn from working at a job
 - d. The number of jobs you have in the same occupation or profession over many years
5. How could you increase your human capital? Select all that apply.
 - a. By getting more education
 - b. By learning new job skills
 - c. By moving from job to job
 - d. By earning a higher salary
6. When do people make decisions about their education, jobs, and careers?
 - a. Over a lifetime
 - b. After high school graduation
 - c. When they start their first job
 - d. When changing jobs



Handout 3: Assessment—Answer Key

Short Answer

1. Explain the difference between a job and a career.

A job is something you do to earn income.

A career is based on working at jobs in the same occupation or profession for many years.

Different careers require different education and training.

2. Describe two ways in which you can prepare now for your future job.

Answers will vary but may include getting involved in extracurricular activities, doing volunteer work, developing soft and hard skills, etc.

3. Explain the difference between hard skills and soft skills.

Hard skills are specific, teachable abilities such as math, writing, typing, etc.

Soft skills are interpersonal skills such as communication (written, verbal), teamwork, dependability, problem solving, leadership, time management, creativity, etc.

Multiple Choice

4. What is human capital?

- a. Certificates, diplomas, and/or degrees earned
- b. *The knowledge, skills, and training that make you valuable in the workplace*
- c. The amount of money you earn from working at a job
- d. The number of jobs you have in the same occupation or profession over many years

5. How could you increase your human capital? Select all that apply.

- a. *By getting more education*
- b. By learning new job skills
- c. By moving from job to job
- d. By earning a higher salary

6. What is human capital?

- a. *Over a lifetime*
- b. After high school graduation
- c. When they start their first job
- d. When changing jobs