



SIX INSIGHTS FROM YOUTH on How to Create Career Content that Builds Confidence and Gets Young People to Act

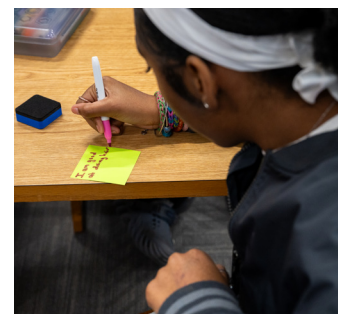


American Student Assistance® (ASA) and The DeBruce Foundation (DBF) joined forces to develop and deliver engaging career literacy resources with young people. The user experience within ASA's free skill-building and career experimentation platform, EvolveMe®, relies on students to self-direct their selection and completion of career exploration tasks including proprietary assessments and tools provided by DBF.

Part of ASA's suite of digital career readiness experiences for teens, EvolveMe, pairs effectively with DBF's youth-informed resource creation. The success of this collaborative approach can be seen in the 99% completion rate of DBF tasks in EvolveMe in 2024¹ as well as feedback from users. Students who engage with DBF's tasks on EvolveMe report that "it is easy to understand" "very cool" "really inspiring" "fun and informative" and "so good." Feedback helps fine-tune experiences and provides insights on what students think about career exploration, what they wish adults knew, and what it takes to get youth to act.

The six insights from student feedback.

REFRAME THE CAREER CONVERSATION. Rarely is a career journey the result of a single "one and done" decision but we learned it can feel that way to students who are regularly asked how they are going to make money or what they want to do for a career. Rather than match someone to a job, students want to understand the options and make choices and tradeoffs about lifestyle, income, preparation, and work they enjoy. This broader awareness helps them take not only the next step but also build the muscles that prepare them for the many future decisions and transitions in their journey ahead. Student comments after engaging with DBF resources on EvolveMe reflect this expanded mindset.



"It's helping me more to guide my life and what I want to do."

"Makes me wonder how I could expand my career path."

"There may be other options than what you have first."

"Life experience can help you find your dream job."



UNDERSTAND MISTAKES HAPPEN. Students tell us about the pressure they face to make the right choice, when in reality, mistakes are part of life and can ultimately open new doors. Stories about people of all ages and situations spark hope in students and remind them their choices make a difference. Stories about all kinds of perseverance really resonate.

“It gave me hope for any future mistakes I could make.”

“You can still accomplish great things even when you’ve gone through disagreeable and/or traumatic situations.”

“It shows me that there is always light in the dark.”

“Stay persistent. Not giving up pays off.”

FORGE CONNECTION THROUGH STORIES. DBF’s interactive experiences on EvolveMe profile a wide range of individuals. We learned that stories about someone else’s situation are easier for students to engage with than to start with their own. It brings less uncertainty and worry than being questioned about their own situation and choices. This distance allows for career literacy skills to be developed, which in turn makes students more capable and interested in engaging further.



“Mandy’s story inspires me to find a job I enjoy.”

“I think it was fun helping [story character] find a suitable job for her.”

“His story gives me many great ideas.”

“It is not as intimidating to look at a new career.”

“John makes me want to strive for my goals.”



GROW CONFIDENCE THROUGH AFFIRMATION. DBF’s career assessment, the Agile Work Profiler (AWP), supports a flexible approach to career exploration that affirms an individual’s value. Survey results provide students a ranked list of their current skills (which DBF calls Agilities) combining what they like to do and what they do well. The AWP is offered to students on EvolveMe along with interactive experiences that use DBF’s related digital career tools to explore careers by skill/Agility. When we motivate students to want to explore careers by showing them how their skills and interests are valued in the workplace, they can see the future as something to look forward to and move forward with greater intention. This increase in confidence can lead students to see multiple options that could work for them.



“Gives me the idea that there’s a lot of ability to include passion into a career.”

“There are better jobs potentially out there that use the same skills that my current job has.”

“I feel more confident in my major.”

“I should compare different occupations to the one I want to do as well as expand my horizons.”

“I realized there are many paths even within a field.”

BUILD FINANCIAL LITERACY. Students feel unprepared and uncertain about navigating their finances. Some already have significant financial responsibilities yet less than half (42 percent) are confident they know the level of income they would like to achieve in the future². Roughly 60 percent don’t know how to find out all relevant info on how much a job pays locally and nationally³. Responding to student unease, DBF deployed an “income estimator” experience on EvolveMe to help students better understand the connection between their lifestyle choices and the projected salaries of various careers with some users declaring this experience provided their “biggest insight.”



“I was able to see how my everyday life affects how much I would need to spend.”

“Living comfortably costs more than I thought.”

“I never knew what type of income I need for the lifestyle I want. So learning is great.”

“It was really an eye-opener to what I need to do for my future.”



DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUTH.

With the right story and the right facts, students gain new understanding quickly. DBF’s interactive experiences are designed to spark action-taking. The depth of student responses, even to a 60-90 second experience, shows how fast they can apply important insights to their own careers.



“Lila’s story gives me inspiration to work harder.”

“It’s inspiring. Makes me want to go.”

“Encourages me to do research about what might suit my needs better.”

“So many useful ideas in my career path.”

“Need to find something more immediately.”

“Honestly, that’s reigniting my willingness to studying networking.”

“It inspires me to start early.”

Both ASA and DBF prioritize listening to youth. EvolveMe was co-created with input from thousands of young people and reaches over a million students a year contributing to ongoing improvement and innovation. The DeBruce Foundation regularly develops resources in conjunction with the DeBruce Career Corps, a collective of young people from across the nation who co-design practical solutions such as this guide on [“How to Talk with Youth About Careers.”](#)



Youth are our future. They bring ideas, perspectives, and solutions that will lead us to an empowered workforce. We’re grateful to partner with ASA and youth across the nation to expand career pathways for all.

DR. LEIGH ANNE TAYLOR KNIGHT

Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer,
The DeBruce Foundation



We believe it is critically important to embrace the teen user’s point of view and to provide kids agency in the build process when developing any digital platforms they’ll use to navigate their futures. That’s exactly what we set out to do with EvolveMe, working with kids to co-create a resource capable of helping them plan for life after high school. The DeBruce Foundation has been an invaluable partner in ensuring that EvolveMe is truly tailored to what kids want and need.

CLAY COLARUSSO

Chief Marketing Officer and SVP of Digital Strategy,
American Student Assistance (ASA)

¹ ASA quarterly report (provided DBF; not public)

² DBF Internal Report (not publicized)

³ DBF Internal Report (not publicized)

