

Continuous Learning in a Professional Environment

Continuous learning is essential to industry development and personal growth and is facilitated in multiple ways within a professional environment. Students will learn the importance of self-evaluation and growing and developing skills throughout their career. Rather than adopting a stagnant mind-set that does not allow them to advance professional skills this lesson will explore the importance of continued education in the professional world, as it relates to college and career success. A professional who makes learning a continuous process is sought after by industry leaders across the professional community.

This lesson is expected to take two 50-minute class periods or 100-minutes total.

Lesson Framework

Learning Objectives

Each student will:

- Define professional self-evaluation techniques
- Explore the significance of continued education in relation to your college and career success
- Research and plan life-long learning in your chosen post-secondary and career pathway

NAF College and Career Ready Skills

Initiative and Self Direction

- Persistent
- Self-directed; takes initiative; resourceful
- Aware of own abilities and performance
- Takes responsibility for learning, seeks to learn

Academy Assessment Standards

Provides a WBL Program

- 4.1.a:** A three-to-four-year series of coordinated and sequenced work-based learning experiences that include activities within career preparation.

Instructional Materials

Student Resources

- Student Resource CL.1, Analysis Article
- Student Resource CL.2, Article Reflection
- Student Resource CL.3, Continued Education

Equipment and Supplies

- One computer or device per student
- Cloud or drive storage
- Printer access
- Large sheets of poster or sticky paper

Lesson Steps

Step	Min.	Activity
		CLASS PERIOD 1
1	20	Why is Continuous Learning Essential to Professional Success? Provide copies of Student Resource CL.1 Analysis Article for students to read as an introductory activity. Give students 10 minutes as class begins to read and make notes about the article. After reading the article, students will complete the short continuous learning self-evaluation also found on the provided student resource. Student answers from this self-assessment will set the background for class discussion.
2	10	Choose a Side After students read the initial article and answer the self-evaluation, get a sense of what students provided as answers by completing a “What Side” activity. Designate three spaces in the room that coordinate with the columns of Yes, Sometimes, and No from the student self-assessment. Instructors will read out the questions and students will go to the space designated for their answer. Have students share out their answers and discuss their answers in groups (using think, pair, share), about what traits they think are most important in being a continuous learner.
3	20	Small Group Discussion and Class Master List Students engage in small group discussion, answering questions from Student Resource CL.2 Article Reflection and preparing to share their answers with their peers during class. Give students 10 minutes to answer questions and come up with a list that reflects their views of a life-long learning process. After groups finish discussion, compile lists from each small group into one master list for the class. Each group will place their large piece of poster paper in a designated place in the room. In a round robin manner, each group visits other posters and highlights/check marks/circles elements of a life-long learner that they also have on their own group poster. Use the most common elements to compile a class master list of at least 10 identified characterizes of a life-long learner. This list and the self-

Step	Min.	Activity
		evaluation will be used during the following class period. Students should keep their self-evaluation until the next class period.
		CLASS PERIOD 2
4	50	<p>Continued Education and Career Success</p> <p>Continued education directly relates to career success. Student understanding of this concept is essential to lifelong learning and continued career success. Students will research the importance of continued education within their specific academy theme and examine the need for advancement and continuous learning. Using Student Resource CL.3 Continued Education have students research their desired career and examine the need for continued education.</p>

Extensions

Work-Based Learning

Alumni Panel: Invite a panel of alumni from the school or academy to speak with students about being a continuous learner in their profession. Alumni can share stories and examples of how learning is different outside of the school setting, their transition to learning professionally, and how their career has advanced because of continuous learning.

Technology Integration

News at your fingertips: Encourage students to download relevant news apps on their phone (or other portable device) and challenge them to read at least one article a day. Periodic class discussion on different news topics or current events that engage students can encourage a life-long, continuous learning lifestyle and demonstrate to students how this process can be part of their daily lives. Discussing topics related to your academy theme also helps students connect to the professional community of their interest early and gain perspective for their next steps to be career ready.

Cross-Curricular Integration

All Subjects: Teachers can encourage students to adopt a continuous learning mindset by connecting careers at all professional levels to daily classroom lessons. This allows students to understand the importance of connecting what is learned in the high school classroom to their future studies.

Article: Why Great Leaders are Continuous Learners (And How to Become One)

Just before his 75th birthday, TTI Chairman Bill J. Bonnstetter told our staff, “I believe my best is yet to come.” Embodying the spirit of continuous learning, Bill is a prime example of “Why Great Leaders Never Stop Training,” the headline of a recent blog on Inc. Bill knows he will never stop learning and growing as an entrepreneur and business leader, and to quote the blog’s author, Brent Gleeson, “If you think you are done learning, you will fail. Check that: You have failed.”

Some people are intrinsically motivated by the pursuit of knowledge, meaning that regardless of the effects said knowledge will produce, they are driven to consume as much information as possible, satisfying their hunger for truth. Meanwhile, others may view obtaining knowledge as a necessary means to satisfy a desired end. Regardless, to thrive as a leader of an agile organization, one requires an aptitude for continuous learning.

Perhaps you’re not yet the CEO of a booming corporation. Whether you’re a mid-level manager, department director, or just out of college, here are some things you can do to develop your own skills in continuous learning to pave your way to the top:

- Know what your key accountabilities are, what your supervisor expects of you and what you expect of yourself. It may even help to keep these posted in your workspace.
- Make a list of personal continuous learning goals you have. They could be professional, as in obtaining a specific certification, or personal, such as learning another language.
- Set reasonable expectations for your own progress, and relate your learning goals to specific activities you can accomplish on a regular basis.
- Read, read, read. Carefully read major publications in your field and also read about topics outside your area of expertise. As you read, identify at least one critical insight and determine how you can apply that knowledge to your daily work.
- Network with others by attending special events, seminars, workshops and conferences.
- Experiment with new processes for routine tasks by looking at things from a different angle or applying something new to an old task.
- Seek honest feedback from trusted mentors or peers and choose not to be defensive when you hear what they have to say.
- Ruminates on both your successes and your mistakes. Discover how you might be able to apply to same skills in a different setting, or what events within your control could be changed in the future.

Today’s workplace requires that successful employees keep pace and continually learn new procedures, strategies, and technologies to stay abreast of developments in their fields. In turn, hiring managers can seek these employees by identifying candidates who are motivated by the pursuit of knowledge or who have well-developed continuous learning skills.

Written by: Ashley Bowers, President, Domestic Division of ITT Success Insights

Self-Evaluation: Am I a Continuous Learner?

Directions: After reading the article, complete a short evaluation of your place as a continuous learner. Place a checkmark in the box that best describes your answer to the questions below.

I can/I like	Yes	Somewhat	No
Learning new information and can pick up on what is being taught with little trouble			
Keeping up with current events and news and find it enjoyable to be informed of what is happening in the world			
Using media outlets to stay informed and learn current information (social media, T.V/Print news, trending topics...)			
Notice when I am lacking information about a situation and seek more information before making judgments or decisions about that topic			
Accept feedback and constructive criticism with a positive attitude and an open to making necessary changes			
Open to learning from others and seek out learning opportunities from professional peers			
Ask questions when I do not understand something			
Develop professional goals that push me to learn and grow in my career			
Accept failure as a part of professional growth, learn from this to change future actions			
Set in my ways and generally do not enjoy change unless I initiate it			
Identify my strengths and weaknesses in workplace situations and understand when I need to seek expert advice			
Engage in opportunities to learn in the professional community			
Being a leader in my community, understanding that I need to always learn to lead others in the most effective way			
Curious and like discovery			
Able to learn in multiple ways, grasping information from many points-of-view			

Questions for Small Group Reflection

Directions: Complete the following reflection questions in your small group. You will need one piece of poster paper and a marker to record your answers to these questions.

1. As a group, write your original definition of a continuous, life-long learner.
2. What are the biggest challenges in adopting a life-long learner mindset?
3. Make a list of at least 10 characteristics/traits of life-long learners. Record these on your large sheet of poster paper and be ready to share with other groups when finished. Provide reasoning for your top 5 characteristics/traits that you will share with the class.

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Continued Education for My Profession

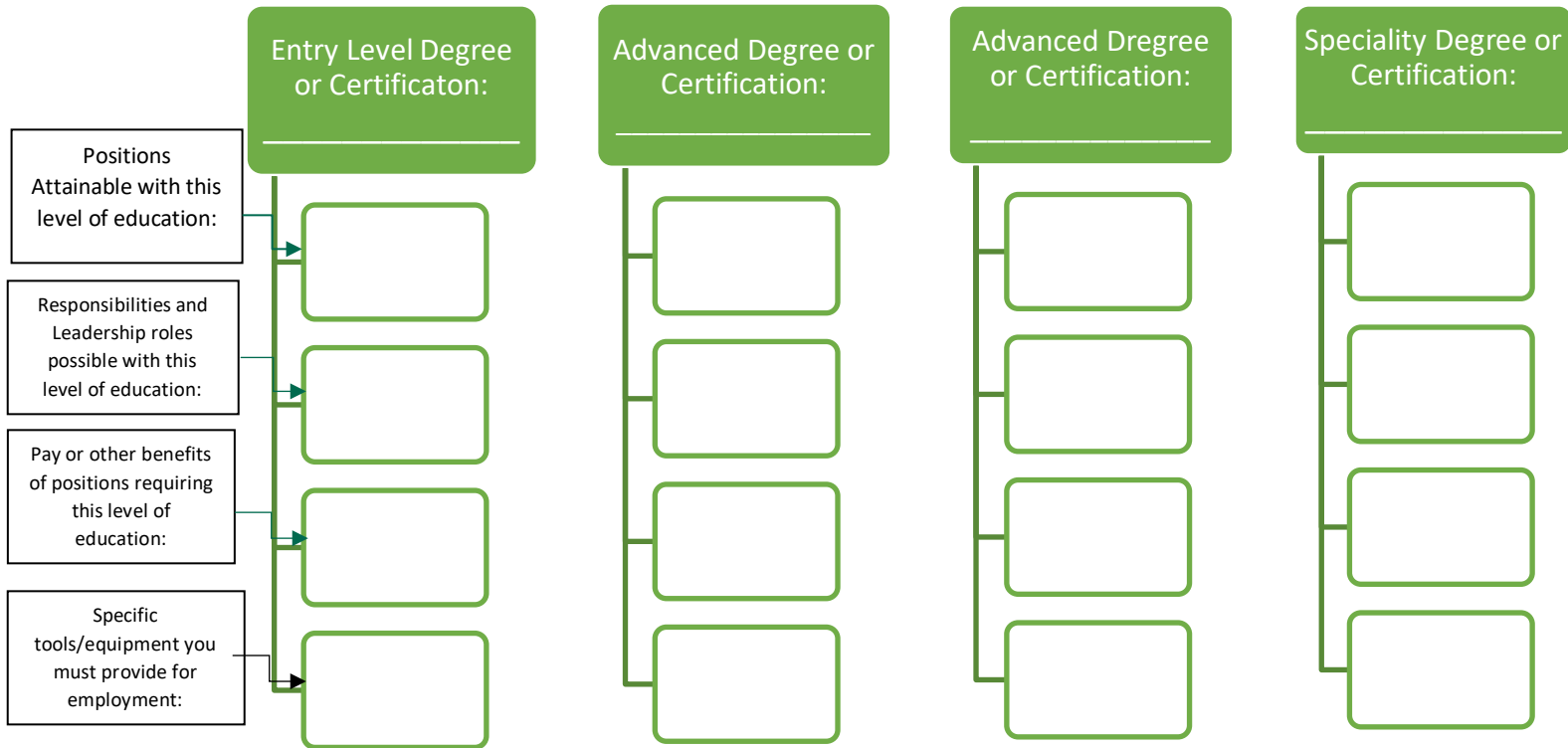
Name:

Date:

Academy Theme:

Profession:

Directions: In the dark green boxes below, add levels of education in specific degrees/certifications earned beyond an entry level degree/certification advancing in your chosen profession. Start your research by filling out the far-left column detailing the minimum education required for your position. If you need more room, redraw the diagram on a separate sheet of paper.



Justification: In the space below, explain what level of degree or certification you hope to achieve in your profession. Write a one-page statement based on your research and career goals.