

Eastside Literacy Talk Time Summer 2006

Topic: Jobs and Work

Let's get started...

When you were a child, what did you “want to become?” (What job did you want to do as an adult?) Write your answer on a small piece of paper. Do not write your name on the paper! Put all of the papers in the center of the table and try to guess who wrote each one.

Background:

Working is a very important part of the American lifestyle. Some people work at jobs and get paid, and some people volunteer, or work for little or no money. Some people work at home, and some people work outside of their homes.

In 1911, there was a tragic fire at a clothing factory (the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory) in New York City. Over 140 young women died because the factory did not have fire-safety precautions. There were no laws for factories to protect the safety of workers. Some women died in the fire. Some jumped out of the windows and died. After that many Americans worked to make worker-safety laws and started Unions to help protect workers.

In the U.S. today, there are many laws to keep workers safe on the job. In fact, there is a government department, the Department of Labor that manages and protects the rights and safety of workers.

(For more information about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, visit: <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/>)



In pairs for 5 minutes, brainstorm:

What are the most dangerous jobs today? Make a list of 3 of the most dangerous jobs. Do these jobs pay well? Why do you think people take risky jobs?

Share your answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

What was your first job? When did you start working? Where did you work?

Do you have a job now? If yes, what kind of job do you have? If no, have you ever had a job?

In the U.S., there are laws about hiring and firing that protect workers from discrimination (based on race, religion, gender, age, or disabilities.) Are there similar rules in your home country?

At what age do people usually start working in your home country? Is there a minimum age required to work?

At what age do people retire in your home country?

Is there a minimum wage?

How many hours a week do people work in your home country?

Can workers take sick-days or maternity or disability leave?

Do people take vacation time?

Do mothers and fathers both work outside of the home in your country?

Have you ever had trouble finding a job – either here or in your home country?

How do people get a job in your home country? Are there places that you can go to that can help you find a job?

How can people get a job in the U.S.?

Do people have part-time jobs in your home country? If yes, what are some part-time jobs?

What jobs in your home country are highly respected?

What jobs are not respected?

What is the worst job you ever had?

If you could have any job in the world, what job would you choose? Why?

New words and Idioms:

risky, discrimination, race, religion, gender, disabilities, maternity leave, minimum wage, part-time, full-time, qualifications, résumé, cover letter, application, references, workers' compensation, to be fired, to be canned, to be laid-off, to be hired, to be brought on board, to be promoted, salary, hourly wage, uniform, whistle blower, migrant worker, etc.