



GUIDE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS

How to Support Your Child's Career Exploration

PART A: CAREER CONCEPTS TO SHARE WITH YOUR CHILD

You want the best possible life for your child. An important part of life is finding and excelling in a career. Parents have a big influence on how a child thinks about careers. Here are four ideas you might consider and try to instill in your child.

1. Career exploration is important now. “In addition to working hard on your academics, let’s also focus on figuring out what career options might be a good fit for you.”



Parent Tip: Learning about career options will help your child make better choices about what education and training options are a good fit during and after high school.

2. Keep career and education options flexible. “Let’s explore all the options for careers and different kinds of education and training. If four-year college is the best choice, let’s make sure it is backed by a career interest and leads to a job supporting the cost of the education. But let’s also have a Plan B.”



Parent Tip: As a parent, it's important to help your student seriously start thinking about career options while they are in middle school and high school and then help them decide on the best education and training options to pursue upon completion of high school. Just remember, there is more than one path to career success and happiness for your child.

3. High school is perfect for career exploration, not making a final decision. “There is probably not one “perfect” job out there, so don’t stress about having it all figured out right now.”



Parent Tip: Today’s youth can get stressed out trying to figure out the perfect career. That can lead to paralysis and shutting down. Youth need to take the pressure off and realize there are many options that could be fulfilling. What’s really important is to learn more about their own likes, interests, and aptitudes, and the best way to learn is by getting new experiences. The goal is to match up your personal interests and aptitudes with real career opportunities.

4. Career Navigation is a lifelong journey. “Even when you find a good first career, you can’t just coast for the rest of your life. You’ll need to also be navigating your career to figure out where to go next and how to keep building your market value.”



Parent Tip: Career navigation skills are something your child will need to use throughout his/her adult life. Career planning is not a “one-and-done” activity. Encourage your child to realize that further navigation within the career field is absolutely necessary. Life is about facing challenges and growing through new opportunities.

CAREER PLANNING

KNOW YOURSELF

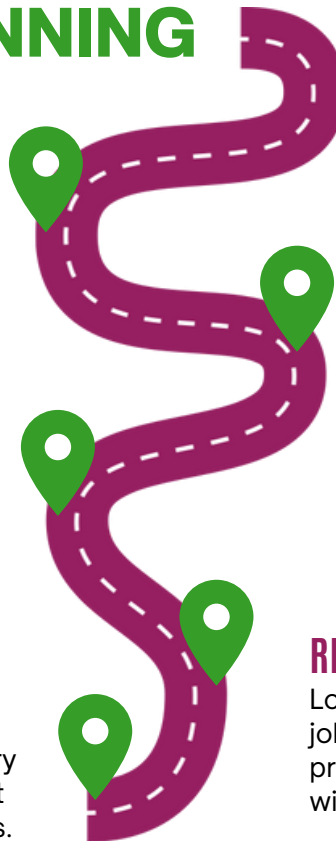
Identify your values, strengths, and skills and how they relate to your career goals.

TRY OUT CAREERS

Interview a professional, participate in a job shadow or internship, and network.

WORK YOUR PLAN

Apply to the job, post-secondary training or education option that aligns with your career interests.



RESEARCH CAREERS

Know the required education or training; the job outlook; and the potential earning and advancement opportunities.

RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

Look at all the options (on-the-job training, apprenticeship, or programs and costs) aligned with your career interests.

Members of **Career Ready Central PA**, a regional organization whose mission is to “implement a comprehensive career education strategy to create and share resources and opportunities for schools, students, families and business that will produce a skilled, sustainable workforce,” developed this brochure. Career Ready Central PA members represent area school districts, universities, workforce development agencies and nonprofit organizations. Learn more at www.pathtocareers.org.

PART B: HELP CULTIVATE YOUR CHILD'S CAREER INTERESTS

1. Encourage your child to work hard and finish high school.

In today's world, earning a high school diploma is essential. A high school diploma is necessary if your child wants to pursue any kind of additional education, training or apprenticeship programs beyond high school and even for jobs that provide on-the-job training.

2. Connect with your student's school counselor.

Contact the school counselor's office and ask about the school's career development program, what your child's identified interests are, and what kind of activities and opportunities you should encourage your child to pursue.

3. Find resources.

When you find out the career areas that your child is exploring, try to find books, magazines, television shows, or on-line videos that might support that interest.

4. Discover career contacts.

Brainstorm if there is anyone you, your friends, or family members might know that work in the career field your child is interested in. When you start asking around, you might be surprised the contacts you discover. In whatever career field your child wants to pursue, building a network of contacts is an important skill and it is the best way to learn about a career and to find jobs.

5. Stay involved during course scheduling.

Look at your high school's course catalog to see what kind of elective courses, clubs, and activities that relate to your child's career interest. (Many high school course catalogs are being organized to emphasize career pathways.)

6. Look for career-related classes.

Explore the program offerings at your local high school career department and SUN Area Technical Institute to learn about programs that may relate to your child's career interests. Students can earn nine or more college credits at the technical school as well as prepare for a well-paying job.

7. Find out about online tools and websites.

Go online or use PA Career Zone (www.pacareerzone.org) to find career-related videos. Watch a few videos that might relate to your child's areas of interest. After each video, ask your child:

- What did you like about what you saw?
- What did you not like?
- Could you see yourself working in that career? Why or why not?
- What questions do you still have about that career?

8. Look for career-related opportunities.

Job Shadowing: Your school district may be offering job shadows for students, or you might be able to arrange job shadows yourself. This would mean having your child take off school for an afternoon, with prior permission, and visit a work-site and shadow a working professional to see what their work entails.

Mentorship or Internship Experience: During junior and senior years, ask to have your child sign up for a “mentorship” or “internship” experience, where they spend 10-20 hours visiting a place of business, learning first-hand about the business and the education and training pathways needed to access that career.

Summer or After School Career Camps: Many school districts, colleges, and local organizations offer career camps after school or over the summer months. Check with your guidance office for more information about local career camps.

Information on local work-based learning experiences can be found at www.pathtocareers.org!



9. Industry Certifications.

Check your local high school and SUN Area Technical Institute (www.sun-tech.org) for programs where your child could earn an industry credential. These types of credentials can add value to a graduate’s skill set and resume prior to entering the workforce or postsecondary study.

10. Stay involved during course scheduling.

During your senior year, providing graduation requirements are met, seniors may take courses at local colleges, attend technical courses at SUN Area Technical Institute, enroll in an apprenticeship program, or engage in a work-based learning experience. See your school counselor more information about your senior year.

