

Helping Your Child With Career Planning

Because your children's career choices will affect not only them, but you, you have a right and a responsibility to help develop their career plans, beginning at an early age. Career development is an ongoing process, starting at birth and continuing through adulthood. Consider using some of the following suggestions:

√ In the Elementary School Years

- Familiarize yourself with the 6 Career Paths that your child's comprehensive guidance and counseling program is teaching them: Health Path, Business Path, Creative Path, Nature Path, Helping Path, and the Fixing/Building/Technology Path.
- Point out examples of people providing services and creating products within your own community, making an effort to include both men and women in a variety of occupations.. Ask your child what Career Path s/he thinks the person is in.
- Delegate household chores to your child, praising positive work skills and attitudes. Ask your child what Career Path their chores might fall into. Point out relationships between home chores and careers that require the same skills.
- Listen for whether your children consider certain kinds of work "masculine" or "feminine" and help them see beyond the stereotypes. Try not to assign jobs at home by sex. Avoid labels such as "sissy" or "tomboy" in talking about the way children behave. Look closely at your own expectations for your sons and daughters. Do they truly foster equal aspirations and choices?
- Encourage children to ask the question, "What will I be when I grow up?" Allow them to consider all possible job choices and Career Paths, even if some seem questionable to you. Give them toys that promote role playing of many different jobs. Make decisions "with" your children, rather than "for" them.
- Help children select leisure reading material that shows different sexes, races and ethnic backgrounds in a variety of Career Paths and social settings.
- Participate in your school's career education efforts as a guest speaker, activity leader or field trip sponsor.
- Express interest in your children's school work...it is *real* work to them. Help children understand the importance of school by showing them how subjects like reading, writing and arithmetic are

used in most occupations and in daily living.

√ In the Junior High Years

- Build upon your knowledge of the Career Paths presented during the elementary school years, and familiarize yourself with the 16 Career Clusters: Architecture & Construction; Manufacturing; Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics; Transportation, Distribution & Logistics; Arts, A/V Technology & Communications; Health Science; Education & Training; Government & Public Administration; Hospitality & Tourism; Human Services; Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security; Business Management & Administration; Finance; Information Technology; Marketing; and Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources.
- Discuss your career and volunteer activities with your children and their friends. Share information about how your work satisfies your personal, economic and social needs, as well as what Career Clusters they fall into. Discuss your responsibilities and the kinds of decisions you make at work, how you work with others, what skills and knowledge you use to get the job done, the jobs you have held before and why you left them, and your job goals for the future. If possible, take your children to work with you to observe all that you have described firsthand.
- Discuss children's skills, abilities, interests, values and goals with them as they select academic courses and extra-curricular activities. What Career Clusters are they leaning toward in their choices? Encourage a positive attitude toward education. Help them look at all types of post-secondary options for their future, including college, technical schools, the armed forces, apprenticeships—there are many routes to a successful career.
- Encourage children to participate in community service opportunities. Many learning experiences are sponsored by clubs, religious associations, health care agencies and volunteer organizations.

- “Hands on” activities are especially important for junior high students. Arrange for them to observe, talk with, work alongside and receive instruction from adults working in their areas of interest. Help them meet a wide range of workers – especially those in jobs considered “non-traditional”.
- Build financial understanding in children by explaining everyday tax, market and banking concepts, and by involving them in economic choices and guided money management.
- Encourage children to work part-time outside the home. Not only will they actively be exploring career possibilities, but they will also discover the sense of pride and accomplishment that comes from working and a job well done.
- Participate in creating a personal plan to study with your child and his/her school counselor before the end of 8th grade. Discuss the results of various assessments, including academic and interest inventories, as course selections are made. How do these choices relate to their favorite Career Clusters and educational goals?
- Encourage your child to consult teachers and counselors for additional assistance in identifying interests and abilities, and to seek guidance in applying this knowledge about themselves in the world of work.
- If possible, arrange for young people to visit area career centers, technical schools, colleges and universities. All types of post-secondary educational opportunities should be explored, including apprenticeships, community colleges and the armed forces.
- In addition to helping arrange career “shadowing” and other exploration experiences for young people, offer to sponsor such activities at your own workplace.
- Encourage young adults to obtain and maintain job commitments, paid or unpaid, for at least a few months before leaving high school. Options might include summer or after-school jobs, school-sponsored internships, clubs, and organizations, work experience programs and regularly scheduled volunteer service.

√ **In the High School Years**

- Work with your professional school counselor to review and revise the personal plan of study. This is especially important in course selection and goal setting for post-secondary options. Discuss the 32 Career Pathways and which seem to be the best fit for your child and his/her goals. Young people may need help seeing the links between present choices and future outcomes. You can assist them in developing guidelines for choosing school courses, post-secondary options and employment opportunities.
- Promote the understanding in young people that they will need not only specific job skills, but also adaptable skills for occupational success.
- Give young adults certain economic obligations, such as saving for education, special trips or items. Perhaps they could be required to use their earnings to fill the gas tank or purchase sports equipment. Help them develop financial plans and timelines.
- Help young people see themselves as worthy individuals, giving them more responsibility for making independent decisions.

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