



# Central Pennsylvania Career Pathways Partnership

## GUIDE FOR ELEMENTARY AND INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL PARENTS: OVERVIEW OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

### PARTNERING WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL FOR CAREER EXPLORATION

In the Central Susquehanna Valley region, the Central Pennsylvania Career Pathways Partnership is working with school districts, business and industry, community organizations, and postsecondary partners to improve the transition of area youth into skilled, well-paying careers.

Career Development Education is the process of helping children and adolescents learn about careers, their own aptitudes and interests, and dig deeper into career awareness so they can make a more informed choice about what they want to pursue after graduating high school.

#### The four areas of the Pennsylvania Career Education and Work Standards are:

- **Career Awareness and Preparation** involves learning about jobs, work and career concepts, learning about personal aptitudes and interests, exploring career fields and occupations within those fields.
- **Career Acquisition** involves learning about job searches, job resources, interviewing, and building a career portfolio/plan. Students can try out career interests through school-based programs, clubs, activities, and work-based learning experiences.
- **Career Retention** involves learning the attitude, habits, and skills needed to obtain and advance in a job.
- **Entrepreneurship** involves learning about starting a business as well as the entrepreneurial mind-set.

#### Tips for Helping Your Child

Parents have a big influence on how a child thinks about careers. Here are some ideas you might consider and try to instill in your child.

1. Be intentional about discovering who you are and what career options might be a good fit. That will help you make better choices about what education and training options are best after you finish high school.

2. Explore all the options for careers as well as the different levels of education and training available. If four-year college is the best choice, make sure it is backed by a career interest and leads to a job supporting the cost of the education. Also have a Plan B or C. Encourage your child to aim high, but do not cut off their other options based on your own personal preferences or experiences. For many students, a four-year college degree can lead to a great career. Keep in mind that about 50 percent of the family-sustaining jobs in Pennsylvania require skills training or a two-year degree, but not a four-year college degree.

As a parent, it is 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 required for their chosen career path. Just remember, there is more than one path to career success and happiness for your child.

3. There is more than one “perfect” job out there, so don’t stress about having it all figured out right now. There are many options that could be fulfilling. The goal is to match up your personal interests and aptitudes with real career opportunities.
4. Even when you find a good first career, career navigation skills are something you will need to use over and over throughout your adult life.
5. Career planning is not a “one-and-done” activity. In today’s world of work, careers are constantly evolving, shifting, and sometimes disappearing with the rise of new technology, automation and global completion. The average adult will conduct about 17 job searches over their lifetime. So, encourage your child to think about their first career, but realize that further navigation within the career field is necessary. At some point, another major shift to a different career might be necessary and that’s ok. Life is about facing challenges and growing through new opportunities.
6. Share your personal career journey and decision making process with your child. Include stories illustrating how you realized your interests and passions.

## **Middle School**

At the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level, your child, working with a school counselor or teacher, will **create a first-version of an Academic & Career Plan** (aka “Career Plan”). This plan is really a tool to plan further career exploration and help your 8<sup>th</sup> grader think about high school academic and technical courses, extra-curricular experiences, and what additional education and training they may want to access after high school graduation. The Academic and Career Plan can be updated as often as necessary, but at least every year. The purpose of the plan is to help students connect what they’re learning today with what they might want to do in the future for that first career.

*Hint: Have your child show you the results from any of the career interest assessments your child has taken. You could also ask your child's school counselor for the results. Ask about what's coming next and how you can support your child's exploration process.*

Throughout middle school and high school your child may take a **variety of personality and career interest assessments**, all to help your child learn more about themselves and what kinds of careers might be a good match. Assessments are meant to help guide students and should not be viewed as absolutes or "binding" them to specific careers.

## **High School**

At the high school level, it is also recommended that your child take **career-related elective courses** to further explore their area of career interest. Be aware that your high school may have articulation agreements with area colleges such as Bloomsburg, Bucknell, and Susquehanna universities. Those agreements allow high school students to take college courses at a free or discounted rate. Taking college courses related to career interests is another way for students to explore their future field of study.

In addition to considering your child's coursework, your child may have the opportunity to participate in work-based learning experiences. These experiences help students learn about the world of work and assist students in determining their career interests. Schools may also offer training to earn industry certifications. These credentials may give the student an advantage in the workforce.

**SUN Area Technical Institute** is a senior year option that is part of the Lewisburg, Midd-West, Mifflinburg, Selinsgrove, and Shikellamy School Districts. SUN Tech offers special skills-intensive training programs related to a particular career field. Attending SUN Tech can enhance students career experiences while providing industry credentials, but it does not cut off opportunities for college. In fact, students can earn between 9 to 16 college credits at SUN Area Technical Institute through SOAR and Penn College of Technology PC Now programs. For more information visit [www.sun-tech.org](http://www.sun-tech.org) for more information.

## **Explore Career Options Using Online Tools**

Visit PA Career Zone ([www.PACareerZone.org](http://www.PACareerZone.org)), a free career exploration website sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The website offers free information and support for career and college exploration. Ask your child if they have already done this activity at school, if not help your child learn about themselves with three PA Career Zone on-line tools:

The Career Interest Profile; The Skills Profile; and The Work Importance Profile.

Your school district may have also purchased access to other systems (three popular systems are Career Cruising (Xello), Smart Futures and Naviance) allowing students research careers, complete interest inventories, conduct college searches, and even create career portfolios.



Path to Careers is a web-based computer program that helps connect your child with career exploration in local business and industry. Schools register so educators and students alike can easily learn about local businesses and then connect with them in ways that allow them to see, feel, and understand first-hand the opportunities that exist and the skills and abilities it takes to secure them.

Learn more about Path to Careers and the CPCPP by visiting [www.pathtocareers.org](http://www.pathtocareers.org).

