A Parents’ Guide to Helping Your Children with the Career-Planning Process

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Featuring Kuder® Navigator and the States’ 16 Career Clusters
Helping Your Children with the Career-Planning Process

You’ve probably found a lot of areas in which your schooling didn’t prepare you for parenthood, and now you’ve found one more – knowing how to help your children with career planning! National polls tell us that parents are the primary influence on the career development of their children – their choices about education in and after high school and about their work.

It may seem at first glance that we end up in one occupation or another through chance. Though there is an element of chance, there is also a step-by-step process of planning that can be very helpful. Following this process will increase the likelihood that your child will make choices that are more satisfying. So, the purpose of this guide is to tell you about that process and to suggest ways that you, as a parent or significant adult in a young person’s life, can help. This process can be represented by this graphic:

1. Realize that career choices must be made
2. Learn what you like to do and what you can do well
3. Identify some occupations to consider seriously
4. Get detailed information about some occupations
5. Choose a short list of occupations
6. Plan for future education
7. Get a job

RESOURCES
Kuder® Navigator
People
Parents, Teachers, Counselors, Mentors
1. **Realize career choices must be made.**

Children do not yet know what future decisions they will face related to career planning. Neither do they know that seemingly small choices—such as deciding to take General Mathematics rather than Algebra to fill a math requirement—are important. So, the first step in good career planning is to learn that it is desirable to start thinking about career planning in the elementary and middle school years and to start making tentative choices. Of course, those can and probably will change. These early choices do, however, form the beginning of a chain of choices that is very important. What can you do during the elementary school years to help your child be ready for and understand something about the choices that are ahead? Here are a few suggestions:

- Take every opportunity to teach decision making through planning for family events, such as a party or a vacation. Once learned, this attitude of “planfulness” will carry over to other areas of life.
- Take every opportunity to commend your child for good work or behavior. Having a strong self-concept and a sense of being able to control one’s life successfully is an important ingredient of successful career planning.
- Talk about your own work at home. Most children cannot explain what their parents do for a living.
- Take your child to work with you occasionally and point out not only what you do but what other workers do.
- Encourage your child to talk with adult relatives and friends about the kind of work they do.
- Help your child understand that all kinds of work are needed in our society and are honorable.
- If available at your school, use *Kuder® Galaxy* (an elementary career awareness experience, [www.kudergalaxy.com](http://www.kudergalaxy.com)) with your child.
- Familiarize yourself with the way in which occupations are organized in *Kuder* systems. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) initiated a federal career clusters project. Sixteen career clusters representing career opportunities for the 21st century economy were identified.
These 16 industry-based clusters (now the States’ 16 Career Clusters managed by the States’ Career Cluster Initiative) can be grouped into six broad fields of endeavor as shown in the graphic above. Students in grades PK-6 are introduced to the six career fields displayed at the top of this graphic. Students in seventh grade through adulthood use the 16 career clusters to explore occupations and build their high school educational plans around one or more of these. Almost 1,000 occupations and over 1,300 postsecondary instructional programs are assigned to these clusters.

The States’ 16 Career Clusters

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources: Careers in the planning, implementation, production, management, processing, and/or marketing of agricultural commodities and services, including food, fiber, wood products, natural resources, horticulture, and other plant and animal products, and related professional, technical, and educational services.

Architecture and Construction: Careers in designing, planning, managing, building, and maintaining the built environment. People employed in this cluster work on new structures, restorations, additions, alterations, and repairs.

Arts, A/V Technology, and Communications: Careers in designing, producing, exhibiting, performing, writing, and publishing multimedia content including visual and performing arts and design, journalism, and entertainment services. Many people enjoy hobbies and avocations in this cluster rather than full-time employment.
Business Management and Administration: Careers encompass planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating business functions essential to efficient and productive business operations.

Education and Training: Careers in planning, managing, and providing education and training services, and related learning support services.

Finance: Careers in financial and investment planning, banking, insurance, and business financial management.

Government and Public Administration: Careers in executing governmental functions to include governance, national security, foreign service, planning, revenue and taxation, regulation, and management and administration at the local, state, and federal levels.

Health Science: Careers in planning, managing, and providing diagnostic, therapeutic, and information and environmental services in health care.

Hospitality and Tourism: Careers in the management, marketing, and operations of restaurants and other food services, lodging, attractions, recreation events, and travel-related services.

Human Services: Careers in pathways related to families and human needs.

Information Technology: Careers in design, development, support and management of hardware, software, multimedia, and systems integration services.

Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security: Careers in planning, managing, and providing legal, public safety, protective services, and homeland security, including professional and technical support services.

Manufacturing: Careers in planning, managing, and performing the processing of materials into intermediate or final products and related professional and technical support activities such as production planning and control, maintenance, and manufacturing/process engineering.

Marketing: Careers in planning, managing, and performing marketing activities to reach organizational objectives.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: Careers in planning, managing, and providing scientific research and professional and technical services (including physical science, social science, and engineering) including laboratory and testing services, and research and development services.

Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics: Careers in the planning, management, and movement of people, materials, and goods, by road, pipeline, air, rail, and water and related professional and technical support services such as transportation infrastructure planning and management, logistics services, mobile equipment, and facility maintenance.
2. **Learn what you like to do and what you can do well.**

People who study why some are happy with their work and others are not, tell us that the most important thing to know is what you like to do, that is, your interests. In other words, if people can perform tasks that they like to do when on the job, they are much more likely to be happy with their work and to do well at it. By the middle school years, a child’s interests are in the process of being formed. The older the child is the more settled these interests become. Here are some ways you can help your child realize what his or her strongest interests are:

- **Expose your child to a wide variety of activities** – activities in which he or she can work with people in some way, can work with numbers and information, can work with tools and equipment, and can work with thoughts and ideas. Those who analyze the things that people do at work tell us that work activities are made up of these four: working with people face to face; working with numbers, facts, and records; working with tools, machines, and equipment; and working with the mind and imagination.

- When your child discovers an interest in some kind of activity and does well at it, give him or her some kind of reward. This may be as simple as a good word, a high five, or some tangible present. Help your child understand what that interest is.

- Help your child think about how an interest or skill that he or she has can be used in a job.

- As you help your child with homework, point out how some of the things he or she is learning in school can be applied to work. This linkage is especially important for subjects in which your child achieves good grades.

- Encourage your child to take the *Kuder® Career Search with Person Match*, an assessment of interests, and the *Kuder® Skills Assessment*, a self-rating of skills. Both of these are available on the Internet within *Kuder® Navigator* (www.kudernavigator.com) or your a custom version of this *Kuder* system being used at your child’s school.
Review the results of the *Kuder Career Search* with your child, and ask your child’s school counselor to add to your understanding of the report. Your child may print out this report (see sample above), or may give you his or her personal user name so that you can look at your child’s portfolio, which contains these results.

These results can help you and your child to know which of the “clusters” of occupations described on pages four and five to explore first. They also can help in planning for courses in high school that will develop the skills needed to do work in that area.
Review the results of the *Kuder Skills Assessment* with your child (see sample report below). These results can help you and your child identify the areas of greatest skill. Remember, though, that skills can be developed through course work and life experience, and that these results will change. It is best to consider your child’s interests first and then make plans to build the skills needed to go into occupations suggested by those interests.

**Kuder® Skills Assessment**

**Skills**

This skills assessment measures your beliefs about doing different work-related activities. Jobs are divided into the 16 groups – called career clusters – below. Jobs are grouped in this way because they have similar characteristics. For example, all the jobs in the Architecture and Construction cluster are jobs for people who have creative, mechanical, and construction skills, among others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Cluster</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality and Tourism</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Science</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Audio-Video Technology, and Communications</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Services</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government and Public Administration</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and Construction</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Management and Administration</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Identify occupations to consider seriously.**

There is no one right occupation for your child, but there are many occupations that can suit his or her interests and skills. With all the changes that are taking place rapidly in the 21st century, it is good to have several possible choices. Though there are about 1,000 occupations, it is easy to shorten the list of possibilities after getting the results of the *Kuder Career Search* interest assessment. Here are some ways to do that:

- Look at your child’s portfolio within *Kuder Navigator* ([www.kudernavigator.com](http://www.kudernavigator.com)) or your state’s customized version of that system. You will need to sign on as a parent and, in order to access the portfolio, you will need to have your son or daughter’s user name for the system. The score report from the *Kuder Career Search* is included under the Assessments section of the portfolio. From the report, select the name of the cluster with the highest score, and explore its related pathways, if applicable, and associated occupations by education level. This list of occupations will be a good starting point for discussion of possible future choices. Over time, you and your child will remove and add occupations as you learn more about them using *Kuder Navigator* and other sources.

- If your child has taken multiple assessments (i.e., interest, skills, and values assessments) in *Kuder Navigator*, look at the list of occupations suggested by these three as well. Especially, pay attention to those occupations that are suggested by two or even all three of these research-based assessments.

- Add the names of other occupations to that list that you and your child have thought of as possibilities.

4. **Get detailed information about some occupations.**

Now is the time to get more detailed information about the occupations you identified in Step 3. Try these activities:

- Sign on to *Kuder Navigator* ([www.kudernavigator.com](http://www.kudernavigator.com)) or your school’s custom *Kuder* system with your child. Read the descriptions of occupations suggested by the *Kuder Career Search* with your son or daughter. For most occupations you will also have access to a short video. This video will help your child understand the day-to-day work tasks of the job.

- Help your child record the names of those occupations that you and your child are favoring in their portfolio. Do this by clicking on the star that appears with the description of each occupation.
5. **Choose a short list of occupations.**

It is important to shorten the list of favorite occupations before or during the early high school years in order to make a four-year course plan related to those tentative choices. This step may be the most difficult one. Here are some things that can help:

- Help your child find a couple of people in your community who work in each of the occupations being seriously considered. Set up an appointment to spend a half hour with each of these and to have what is called an “information interview.” In this interview, your child should ask questions about what the person does at work every day, what he or she likes and dislikes about the work, how much training it took, and what the future of the occupation may be.

- Using *Kuder Navigator* or your school’s custom *Kuder* system, find out how much and what kind (apprenticeship, career-technology school, community college, four-year college) of education is needed after high school to enter each occupation being considered.

- Find out what the U.S. Department of Labor is predicting about the future of each occupation. Will the demand for workers in this field grow or decline? Also, find out what the typical salary is for people who work in each occupation. This information is provided in each occupational description area in *Kuder Navigator*.

- After learning about daily work tasks, educational requirements, future job demand, and income, help your child relate his or her interests, goals, and emerging values to each occupation being considered.

- Finally, help your child shorten the list of possibilities (which may later be changed) to three.

Though both parents and counselors often get it backwards, young people do need to decide about their occupational goals before planning their courses in high school and their education beyond high school. Once your child has shortened the list of favored occupations to three, it will be possible to plan for education beyond high school and select courses for high school that would be most helpful. Here are some ways to do that:

• Using *Kuder Navigator* or your school’s custom *Kuder* system, find out which of the 16 career clusters each of the three occupations belongs to.

• Look at the suggested four-year high school plan for each of the clusters by using the section in *Kuder Navigator* called Plan for Education and selecting Make an Education Plan.

• Assist your child to select courses for the entire four years of high school, or at least for the next school year. Your child’s counselor can also view this plan and you may want to schedule a face-to-face interview with the counselor to discuss the plan.

• Make a tentative decision with your child about the kind of education beyond high school he or she wants and is needed for the occupations of choice. (The U.S. Department of Labor indicates that about 20 percent of the jobs in the early 21st century will require a four-year college degree; 65 percent will require up to two years of training after high school in a community college, career-technology school, or apprenticeship; and 15 percent can be entered with a high school diploma.)

• Be sure that the four-year high school plan includes courses required by a four-year college (if this is the choice made in the previous step) as well as courses that prepare your child for work.

• Using *Kuder Navigator* or your school’s custom *Kuder* system, help your child find schools to attend after high school that offer the major(s) needed for the occupations selected. The school comparison function allows you to compare the features of up to three selected schools side by side.

• Help your child get through all the steps of planning for further education after high school: identifying schools, visiting these campuses, taking the necessary entrance examination, completing applications, assessing financial need, and applying for financial aid. *Kuder Navigator* has an extensive section on financial aid. Students can make notes in their portfolios about their progress in all of these steps.
Cheer up! After all of this work, your child will finally get a job and become financially independent. This step requires that he or she keep a portfolio (the Kuder systems offer one online for a lifetime) that includes assessment results; education plans; favorite clusters, occupations, schools, and scholarships; and job-seeking tools, including résumés, cover letters, and references. Data stored in this personal portfolio plus additional content added by uploading documents or images can be displayed as a public e-Portfolio for prospective employers. You can help with the step of getting a job, too, in these ways:

- As human “networking” is the best way to get a job, encourage your young person to talk with relatives and family friends about the kind of job he or she is looking for.
- Help your son or daughter understand what employers expect of an employee. More people are fired because they do not practice good work habits (being consistent in attendance, being on time, getting along with the boss and co-workers) than because they can’t do the tasks required in the job.
- Encourage your son or daughter to use the web sites and searches provided in Kuder Navigator to identify possible employers. Also, encourage him or her to develop an attractive and up-to-date e-Portfolio by use of this capability within Kuder Navigator.

Of course, when you get through with this whole process, it may start all over again! Especially in the 21st century, people will have many employers and several different kinds of jobs. For that reason, they need to keep their portfolios updated, and they need to understand the process we have just described. The combination of these two things will help them make the many changes they may need to make over their life span.

Start your free parent account today at www.kudernavigator.com and follow your child’s career planning process!
About Kuder, Inc.

Kuder, Inc. (Kuder) was founded in 1997 to provide career options to students and adults through self-assessment and education. Kuder’s suite of solutions is based on the vision of Dr. Frederic Kuder, a pioneer in the career development industry. Since the creation of paper assessments by Dr. Kuder in 1938, the Kuder suite has grown and developed in response to changing needs and technology. Kuder offers customized online solutions for career planners at all life stages, while facilitating communication and collaboration between key stakeholders in economic prosperity – education, business, industry, and state agencies. Kuder’s faculty conducts ongoing research to ensure that our solutions are reliable and effective.

The new Kuder® Career Planning System (KCPS) suite of solutions offers comprehensive education and career planning tools and resources to help address the needs of a diverse population of users. Components of the KCPS include Kuder® Galaxy for grades PK-5; Kuder® Navigator for middle school and high school students; and Kuder® Journey for postsecondary students and adults. Each solution is backed by a powerful Administrative Database Management System to track progress, facilitate curriculum planning, support data-driven decision making, and communicate directly with system users. A comprehensive curriculum series, professional development, and training and support services complete the Kuder suite of solutions.

Our Mission

To raise student aspirations and to provide career options to students and adults through self-assessment and education.

Our Goals

• Guide students and parents through successful 8th grade and post-high school transitions.
• Increase retention and graduation rates.
• Provide career planning guidance and development to last a lifetime.