

Middle Years to Careers

CAREER CONVERSATION STARTERS

for Middle School Families

Exploring Interests and Strengths

Middle school is a perfect time for children to learn more about themselves including their interests, what they're good at, what they enjoy doing, and what they don't like as much. This helps children to find a good career fit more easily in the future. You can ask your middle schooler questions like:

What are some things you really enjoy? Why?

What is your favorite class? Why? What have you enjoyed learning about recently?

What do you think you're good at? How do you know you're good at it? Were you told by someone? Is it easy for you?

Have you done any activities where you've learned about some careers that seem interesting and may show off things you are you good at doing? How do you feel about your results from these activities?

What activities have you done in school where you've learned about your interests or skills or talents? What did you learn about yourself?

What don't you like or what don't you think you're good at? Why?

TRY ACTIVITIES AS A FAMILY:

Complete surveys and brain games. Your child's school likely offers some and you can also find a free interest-based survey at www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip

Explore Ohio Means Jobs resources by visiting go.osu.edu/omjresource

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Exploring Careers

As middle schoolers are learning about their interests and talents, they can also begin to learn more about careers that might be a good match for them in the future. Many schools help kids figure out how to learn about these careers or they help to identify “career clusters” (larger groupings of careers based on shared qualities, e.g., health sciences, human services, etc.). At home, you can support career exploration by asking your middle schooler:

*Have you learned about any careers that sound interesting to you?
What about it sounds interesting?*

*What jobs do you think you might be good at? Why? What have you learned about this career?
How does this career match with your strengths/interests?*

*Do you know someone who does this job?
What do you think someone in this job does every day?*

How much education is needed to enter this career? What courses can you take in middle/high school that would help prepare you for this career or at least help you see if you like it?

ACTIVITIES TO TRY AT HOME:

Explore the career clusters and examples of courses available for different careers by visiting go.osu.edu/odecareerpaths. You can click on PowerPoints and PDF handouts to explore careers in each cluster.

Explore videos of careers online. You can search YouTube using the phrase “a day in the life of” prior to the career name and at mynextmove.org by searching under the ‘career clusters.’ Many careers listed offer a video.



Ohio Statewide
Family Engagement Center
—at The Ohio State University

The Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center is part of The Ohio State University's Center on Education and Training for Employment, a translational research center within the College of Education and Human Ecology.

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Exploring Community Resources

You can make connections with businesses and organizations in the community that can help your middle schoolers develop important career-related skills or learn more about careers they find interesting. Sometimes these groups may offer opportunities for kids to engage in hands-on learning either after school or over the summer. It can be helpful to talk about these types of opportunities with your child. Ask your middle schooler:

Does your school offer any opportunities to participate in job shadowing experiences in the community? If so, are you interested in this?

Have you heard of any activities going on outside of school that sound fun or interesting to you?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR OR PRINCIPAL:

Do you know about any businesses or organizations in the community that offer opportunities for kids to engage in hands-on, career-related learning?

Are there any camps or summer programs to support their development (e.g., cooking camps, welding camps)?

Are there opportunities for my child to attend career fairs?

Do you know of any connections for my child to gain experience participating in a job shadow? Does the school offer a job shadow program for students?