

Middle Years to Careers



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY GUIDE

for Middle School Career Development

Guide 2: Promoting Career Exploration

PRESENTED BY



Ohio Statewide
**Family
Engagement
Center**

at The Ohio State University

Guide 2: Promoting Career Exploration

GRADES:



Career Awareness

Career Exploration

Career Planning

Student career exploration is a step towards their future careers

As a middle school teacher or counselor, you can provide helpful support to students and their families as they explore careers. The goal is not to make decisions, but to have fun exploring options and to learn along the way!

This guide, the second of three, will provide ideas for engaging with families to support students exploring a wide range of careers. The first guide helps you connect with families and students about career-related self-awareness activities they can try out during middle school, and the third guide helps you connect families with community resources such as job shadowing opportunities.

Why is career exploration important for middle schoolers?

Middle school marks the starting point for many of the academic plans and decisions students and their families will make throughout the course of their studies. Ideally, students choose electives and courses that align with their interests and skills and build on those choices as they go through middle and high school. After

learning about their interests, strengths, skills, and abilities, middle school students learn about careers that align with their interests and skills. Families are allies and valuable sources of knowledge regarding each child's interests and skills. Their experiences, beliefs, and expectations should be considered and valued by those who are leading the career development process within your school.

How to use this guide

You can use this guide for ideas and to capture notes about your next steps, to ensure you are engaging families every step of the way towards supporting student career development! When schools, families, and members of the community form partnerships to support students in career development, all students have opportunities to succeed. To see our latest "Middle Years to Careers" resources, visit: <https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/middle-years-to-careers/>.

Image above borrowed from the Ohio Department of Education's [Career Connections Framework](#)

Family Engagement Activities Promoting Career Exploration

1

IDEA:

Ask families about their experiences and knowledge regarding career exploration.

EXAMPLES:

Get to know how the families in your school support career exploration at home with their child through informal conversations or surveys.

Ask families: “What do career conversations look like in your home? Does your child seem excited about learning about any specific professions? How have these conversations been going?”

Incorporate career-related survey items in communications sent to families each year to gather a baseline of their understanding and expectations of the career exploration process.

Try these survey questions: “I talk to my child about how their interests and strengths connect to future careers.”

Or “I feel comfortable talking with my child about careers they find interesting.”

When meeting with families to discuss course planning, help them connect the dots between courses and future opportunities! Be sure to ask them about their aspirations for their child.

Ask families: “Knowing all you know about your child’s strengths and interests, what type of future do you envision for your child after high school? Which middle and high school courses do you think would be a good fit for your child in the coming years?”

NOTES:

Family Engagement Activities Promoting Career Exploration

3 IDEA:

Promote a shared understanding of the ways that career exploration is tied to future goals and finances.

EXAMPLES:

Provide demonstrations of how families can explore job boards with their children to view real-world examples that share requirements for education, certifications, and experience.

Learn from families about the ways they discuss finances with their children.

Ask families: *“What strategies have worked for you in talking with your child about spending, saving, and budgeting?”*

Or *“Do you feel as though your child sees a connection between careers and finances?”*

Share resources, such as [Money Talks](#), with families to encourage conversations about finances in the home.

NOTES:

Student Engagement Activities Promoting Career Exploration

1 IDEA:

Schools can learn about students’ prior knowledge and expectations regarding career planning.

EXAMPLES:

Aid students in identifying the careers they are already interested in pursuing and discuss how they overlap with their career interests and skill assessment results.

Ask students: “What careers were you interested in before you completed this career assessment? Do you think those careers match well with your results? Why or why not?”

Have students reflect on what they believe is needed to get a job in their field of interest and inquire about whether they know anyone that is pursuing these careers.

Ask students: “Have you thought about what classes you should take in middle school and high school to prepare for this career? Have you thought about how much schooling is required to pursue this career?”

Learn from students about conversations that are taking place at home regarding career exploration.

Ask students: “Have you talked with your family about your career interests and aspirations? What do those conversations look like?”

You can encourage students to talk with their families about interests and careers through fun activities, [like this interview worksheet](#) for a student and their parent/caregiver.

NOTES:

Student Engagement Activities Promoting Career Exploration

2

IDEA:

Encourage students to explore occupational requirements associated with careers of interest (e.g., education, certifications, skills, knowledge, abilities).

EXAMPLES:

Assist students in exploring their careers through platforms such as [O*Net Online](#) or other, similar platforms. They can reflect on education requirements, required skills and abilities, expected earning, and work values for careers of interest.

Encourage students to continue career exploration activities at home with their families.

Prompt them to say: *“Today, I learned about some new careers that might match my interests and strengths. Can I share with you what I learned? Can you think of similar careers I should explore?”*

Demonstrate how students can locate occupations on job boards (e.g., [indeed.com](#), [ziprecruiter.com](#), and others) to see what employers are requiring for years of experience, certifications, etc.

Provide students with online resources for career exploration such as searching for ‘a day in the life of **X** occupation’ to access informational videos (e.g., YouTube, Road Trip Nation, O*Net Online).

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