

Parent Primer

On Career Exploration

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Parents Make a Difference!

Who Has The Most Influence Over Teens Making Career Decisions? Parents Do!

Research over the past 20 years indicates that parents play a major role in raising career aspirations for their sons and daughters. Without parental approval or support, teens are less likely to pursue diverse career possibilities. It's important for parents to learn about the many opportunities in today's schools to help students prepare for careers and postsecondary education. Parents can provide support to their teen as they begin the career development process.

Career awareness should begin during the elementary years. Learning about jobs in the community and understanding that one day they will find their way into the workplace are important concepts. In the middle school years, students should begin to explore their interests and abilities and connect them to careers. As they mature, their interests may change, but this is a good starting place.

There are many ways that parents contribute to their teen's early career development. Parents are often the primary source of their teen's work values and attitudes.

- Career decision-making skills have been linked to early childhood experiences, family attitudes and practices regarding careers, and role modeling by parents.
- Parent expectations and support contributes significantly in helping their teen have the maturity to make career decisions.

Many school counselors have reported that if parents participate in the decision-making process for selecting courses, students will choose a more rigorous curriculum. Many parents are not aware of graduation requirements or what classes will benefit students in terms of career options. Take this opportunity to learn more about your teen's career interests by becoming familiar with career assessments used in schools and the importance of career and education plans.

Note: For the purpose of this publication, the term 'parents' refers to any caretaker or guardian assisting a child or teen with making career decisions.

Why Career Exploration?

Ask your teen what they want to be when they grow up. Most likely you'll hear doctor, lawyer, professional athlete, model, actor, rock and roll singer, etc. The younger the teen, the more unrealistic the choice may be. In most cases, they don't know what these occupations do, but there is some aspect that captures their interest.

For the most part, teens' initial career plans are uninformed, unrealistic, or unlikely to succeed. This is where career exploration can help.

- **Career exploration provides a reality check.** It helps them to explore occupations and learn about the job descriptions and requirements.
- **Career exploration expands your teen's horizon.** How many occupations can your teen list and describe? Career exploration exposes them to occupations they didn't even know existed.
- **Career exploration saves time and money.** When teens choose education and training that matches their abilities, they are less likely to change college majors and more likely to complete their education. Others may choose areas in which interest and motivation are lost once they are employed. This could result in overall dissatisfaction with their career.

Recent legislation requires that all students entering the sixth grade in 2006-2007 take a career and education planning course in the seventh or eighth grade. As part of the course they will develop a career and education plan that will include the results of their interests and career exploration, four-year high school plan of study, high school major area of interest, and future career goals. It is important to note that this is a starting place for planning for the future. As students mature or have more experiences, their interests and goals may change. They will have the opportunity each year during the registration process to make changes to their career and education plan to include course selections and major areas of interest.

Schools try to meet the career needs of students, but many times school counselors and teachers just don't have the time or resources to provide individualized career guidance. This is where you can step in and act as an advisor. You may feel that you are uninformed in the process and unable to provide the guidance that your teen needs. This publication will help you better understand what is happening in the labor market and how you might help your teen make more informed choices about their future.

What Are Career Clusters And Why Are They Important?

A career cluster consists of occupations that have been grouped according to common knowledge and skills. While students will want to learn more about individual occupations, it is also a good idea to identify clusters in which they are most interested. There are many occupations within each cluster that require different levels of training and education. After researching occupations, students will usually find that their interests fall within one to three career clusters. Identification of a career cluster will help students identify their Major Area of Interest (MAI*) for high school. A MAI consists of sequential elective courses in a career and technical program, fine and performing arts, or academic content area. The MAI is selected by the student as part of the personalized academic and career plan required in the middle school's career and education planning course. Students may revise their MAI each year as part of the annual course registration process and should update their education plan to reflect these changes.*

The 16 Career Clusters and Sample Careers are:

Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources (*Forester, Biological/Agricultural Technician, Landscape Gardener, Veterinarian, Zoologist or Animal Scientist*)

Architecture & Construction (*Carpenter, Electrician, Plumber, Construction Manager, Architect*)

Arts, Audio/Video Technology, & Communication (*Actor, Broadcast Technician, Photographer, Public Relations Specialist, Graphic Designer*)

Business, Management & Administration (*Accountant, Administrative Services Manager, Medical Secretary, Human Resources Manager, Management Analyst*)

Education & Training (*Fitness Trainer, Teacher, School Counselor, Principal, Special Education Teacher*)

Financial Services (*Bank Teller, Financial Analyst, Insurance Claim Examiner, Loan Officer, Actuary*)

Government & Public Administration (*Municipal Clerk, Social Services Manager, Government Service Executive, Legislator, Urban and Regional Planner*)

Health Science (*Dental Hygienist, Emergency Medical Technician, Nurse, Physician, Pharmacist*)

Hospitality & Tourism (*Food Services Manager, Travel Agent, Meetings and Convention Planner, Chef, Tour Guide*)

Human Services (*Social Services Technician, Clergy, Clinical Psychologist, Social Worker, Parole and Probation Officer*)

Information Technology (*Computer and Information Systems Manager, Computer Equipment Technician, Computer Programmer, Database Administrator, Analyst*)

Law, Public Safety & Security (*Correctional Officer, Court Reporter, Fire Fighter, Forensic Science Technician, Lawyer*)

Manufacturing (*Civil Engineering Technician, Machinist, Electronic Engineering Technician, Industrial Machinery Mechanic, Welder/Cutter*)

Marketing, Sales, & Service (*Advertising Sales Agent, Interior Designer, Marketing Manager, Real Estate Sales Agent, Wholesale and Retail Buyer*)

Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics (*Aeronautical Engineer, Chemist, Civil Engineer, Geophysicist, Meteorologist*)

Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics (*Postal Mail Carrier, Air Traffic Controller, Automobile Mechanic, Flight Attendant, Heavy Truck driver*)

***Do not confuse MAI with a college major. Students do not select a college major as part of this process.**

The Steps to Making Career Decisions

The best way to begin career exploration with your teen is by talking about your own career. What do you do in your job? What decisions did you make that led you to this point in your career? Teens aren't always overly interested when parents begin to share their wisdom with them. As a parent, you want to help guide your teen as much as possible when making decisions that will impact their careers, but the questions are, "When do I begin?" and "How much do I offer?" There are many critical points where your teen will need your assistance.

You can begin to discuss career exploration as early as elementary age to help build self-confidence and career awareness. A good activity to use with your child, regardless of age, is to discuss occupations that you observe in everyday life and what those jobs may entail. Teaching your child responsibilities and the importance of completing tasks at an early age are skills they will use regardless of which career they choose to follow.

The career decision-making process described below includes activities that can begin in middle school and continue into high school and postsecondary education.

You can help your teen complete each of the steps.

Step 1: Learn More About Your Teen.

Encourage your teen to take interest and ability assessments. These are available at www.flchoices.org. Review the results of the assessments with your teen. Discuss his/her interests and dreams to help determine goals for the future.

Step 2: Identify Some Possibilities.

Help your teen explore a wide range of occupations in a variety of clusters that match the results of his/her assessments. Review postsecondary opportunities that may include colleges, community colleges, technical centers, the military, and apprenticeships. Assist your teen in narrowing the list of occupations by using criteria such as education level, salary, working conditions, etc.

Step 3: Evaluate Your Teen's Options.

You and your teen may also want to consider lifestyle implications and the overall impact on life for each option. For instance, will the job require irregular hours? Will the salary support the lifestyle your teen wants? How much education does the occupation require? It's important for your teen to understand the relationship between lifestyle, occupational choice, and educational pursuits. Help your teen understand and balance the difference between wants and needs.

Step 4: Make A Choice.

Encourage your teen to explore a variety of career areas. The economy, demographics, and technology will continue to change the workplace. Some jobs become obsolete while other new jobs emerge. Some occupations may maintain the same title, but they may change or evolve so drastically that they no longer resemble what they were a decade earlier. As the workplace continues to change, it will be more important to focus on groups of similar skills and how they can be transferred from one occupation to another. Help your teen to build a budget so that he/she understands what expense items will come out of a monthly income.

Step 5: Create An Action Plan.

Planning and organization give direction to your teen's future. Assist your teen in outlining activities and develop a timetable to complete them. Your teen should develop a career and education plan in

Florida CHOICES Planner with the steps needed to achieve the career goal. It is a good idea for your teen to seek out opportunities for part-time work, job shadowing, volunteering, attending career fairs, and other activities that will help you learn more about the workplace. If you haven't already started a savings plan for college, you may want to investigate financial aid and scholarship options. Financial aid should be considered as early as eighth grade. Why? Many of the scholarships are based on achievement and required courses through the high school years.

Step 6: Take Action.

Encourage your teen to follow their timeline and review short and long-term goals and take steps to reach them. Encourage your teen to take challenging courses in math, reading, writing, computer skills, and science.

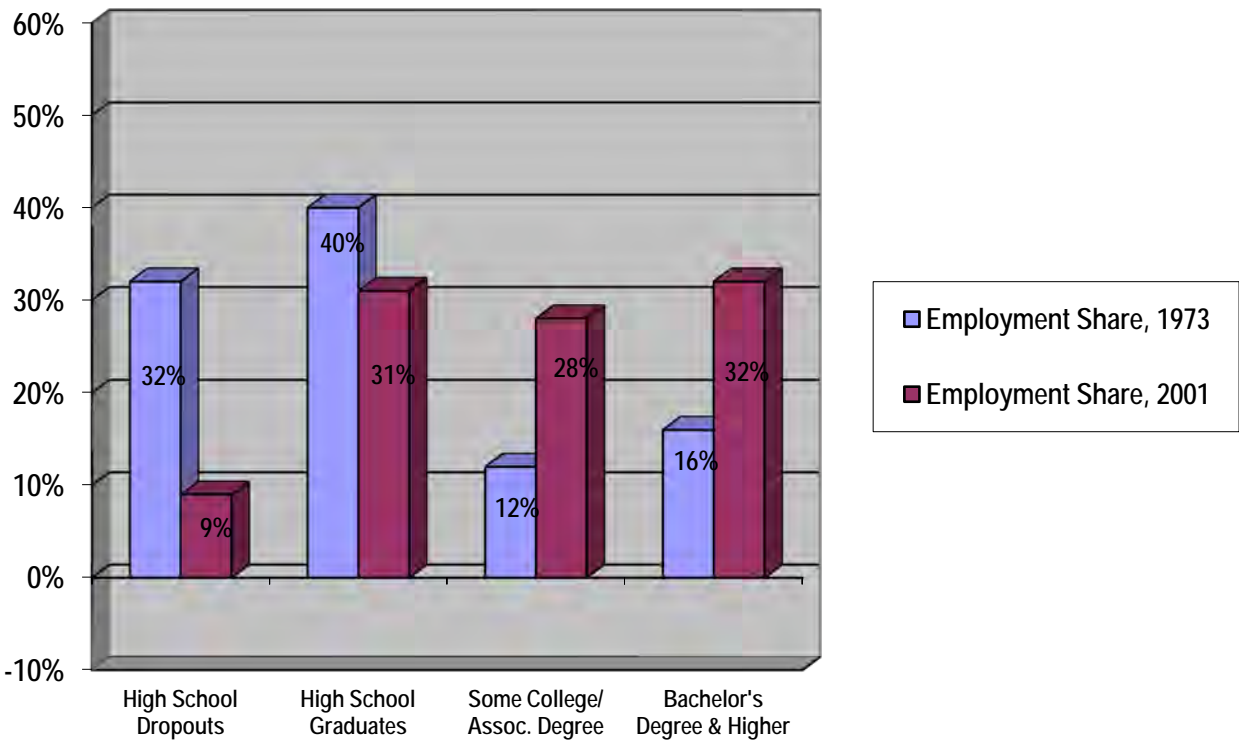
Step 7: Review and Revise.

As your teen matures and gains more experiences, his/her interests may change. Course selection in high school can determine your teen's course of action after graduation. For instance, if your teen wants to go to college and she/he hasn't taken the required courses, remedial courses may be necessary. You pay for these courses but the student doesn't get college credit for them. Help your teen to stay on target by taking the necessary courses. Remember that all plans should be flexible in case your teen wants to change some of the goals she/he set earlier.

Workforce and Workplace Changes

In the workplace of the 21st century, workers will need to be better educated to fill new jobs and more flexible to respond to the changing knowledge and skill requirements of existing jobs. Even as working parents, you may not be aware of current job projections and workplace trends that impact your teen's education and future careers. We read in the news every day about businesses filing bankruptcy or closing, company layoffs and downsizing, and jobs being transferred to foreign countries. If you have been impacted by any of these changes, you know first-hand about competitiveness in the job market. One thing we can be sure of, technology, the economy, and social issues will continue to change the workplace.

Changes in the Distribution of Education in Jobs 1973 v. 2001



Employers Are Looking For Employees With These Skills And Qualities. *Does Your Teen Have Them?*

During the past two decades, the skills needed to succeed in the workplace have changed significantly. Basic skills such as reading, writing, and math are a must. Technical skills are also important, but employers have begun to recognize that there is another set of skills that are crucial to a worker's ability to work "smarter, not harder." Frequently, these are referred to as "soft skills." What are employers saying that it takes to be successful?

Reading Skills - Can your teen use a variety of written materials to obtain and apply information?

Writing Skills - Does your teen communicate ideas and information through writing?

Speaking/Listening Skills - Does your teen speak clearly and listen carefully?

Mathematic Skills - Can your teen perform basic computations and use math to solve problems?

Learning Skills - Does your teen use effective learning techniques to acquire new knowledge and skills?

Problem Solving Skills/Decision Making Skills - Can your teen choose a best response among several options, compare advantages and disadvantages of alternative approaches, decide if and what additional information is needed to make a decision, and justify a decision once it is made?

Creative Thinking Skills - Can your teen develop or invent novel ideas, use known information in new and innovative ways, make something interesting out of something ordinary?

Team Work/Interpersonal/Social Skills - Can your teen work with others to solve a problem, create something, or complete a task? Does your teen share ideas and listen to the ideas of others? Does your teen cooperate with group decisions and do a fair share of the work?

Technical Skills - Can your teen operate a computer; access the internet, use useful software such as word processing, graphics, and spreadsheets? Does your teen enjoy working on mechanical or technical tasks or playing electronic games? Is your teen interested in the way things work?

Responsibility - Does your teen perform assigned tasks without being reminded?

Initiative - Does your teen volunteer for additional responsibility? Can your teen recognize what needs to be done and do it?

Reliability/Punctuality - Can your teen be counted on to do what has been promised? Will your teen give advance notice if unable to do as promised? Is your teen always on time to school, meetings, and appointments?

What Jobs Are In Demand In Florida?

Consider these labor market facts:

- Florida employers want better educated and higher-skilled workers as the economy continues to be more knowledge-based and less product based.
- Health care, education, information technology, and manufacturing are areas that will have a large amount of job openings.
- Services will continue to be the fastest growing major industry and will generate the most jobs through 2014.
- Medical careers dominate the list of top paying careers.

There are hundreds of job classifications in Florida. These lists include many high demand jobs. You will see that most of these “opportunities” require some type of postsecondary training. Even though some jobs require a college degree, there are many certificate-type programs available at a technical center or community college that may qualify a person for an entry level position in the same area.

Jobs That Require a Certificate or Two-Year Associate’s Degree

<u>Occupation Title</u>	<u>Wages Ave./Hr.</u>	<u>Education Level</u>
Computer and Information Systems Managers	48.00	Associate’s Degree
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	38.00	Associate’s Degree
Computer Support Specialists	19.00	Certificate
Computer Systems Analysts	31.00	Associate’s Degree
Construction Managers	42.00	Associate’s Degree
Database Administrators	29.00	Associate’s Degree
Dental Hygienists	25.00	Associate’s Degree
Financial Analysts	32.00	Associate’s Degree
Fire Fighters	21.00	Certificate
Interior Designers	24.00	Certificate
Licensed Practical Nurses	18.00	Certificate
Loan Officers/Counselors	28.00	Associate’s Degree
Network Systems and Computer Systems Administrators	30.00	Certificate
Network Systems and Data Communications Analysts	28.00	Certificate
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	21.00	Certificate
Personal Financial Advisors	35.00	Associate’s Degree
Police Patrol Officers	23.00	Certificate
Public Relations Specialists	23.00	Associate’s Degree
Registered Nurses	27.00	Associate’s Degree
Respiratory Therapists	21.00	Associate’s Degree
Sales Managers	54.00	Associate’s Degree

Certificate – Requires specialized training at a career and technical school or community college.

Associate's Degree – Requires graduation from a 2 year college.

Jobs That Require Four or More Years of College

Occupation Title	Wages Ave./Hr.	Education level
Anesthesiologists	92.00	Doctoral Degree
Architects	35.00	Master's Degree
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary	35.00	Master's Degree
Elementary School Teachers	45,445.00*	Bachelor's Degree
Environmental Engineers	33.00	Bachelor's Degree
Family and General Practitioners	77.00	Doctoral Degree
Health and Safety Engineers	37.00	Bachelor's Degree
Internists, General	84.00	Doctoral Degree
Kindergarten Teachers	45,170.00*	Bachelor's Degree
Lawyers	52.00	Doctoral Degree
Management Analysts	38.00	Bachelor's Degree
Medical Scientists	37.00	Master's Degree
Obstetricians and Gynecologists	87.00	Doctoral Degree
Occupational Therapists	31.00	Bachelor's Degree
Pediatricians	75.00	Doctoral Degree
Pharmacists	45.00	Doctoral Degree
Physical Therapists	33.00	Master's Degree
Physicians and Surgeons	73.00	Doctoral Degree
Secondary School Teachers	48,441.00*	Bachelor's Degree

Bachelor's Degree - Requires graduation from a 4-year college or university.

Master's Degree - Requires training beyond a bachelors degree.

Doctoral Degree -Requires advanced training beyond a master's degree. Also referred to as a First Professional Degree, a program that trains students for a specific profession and licensing requirements. Some examples: dentistry (DDS, DMD), Law (LLB, JD), medicine (MD) and veterinary medicine (DVM).

Average Hourly Wages - The wages are statewide averages so they may be lower or higher in certain parts of the state. These are not necessarily the wages paid for an entry level position. Wages vary by experience, responsibility, performance, length of time at a particular company, and geographic area.

*Teacher wages vary according to contract and hours worked, so wages are shown for an average 10 month contract. Wages are based on education and years of experience.

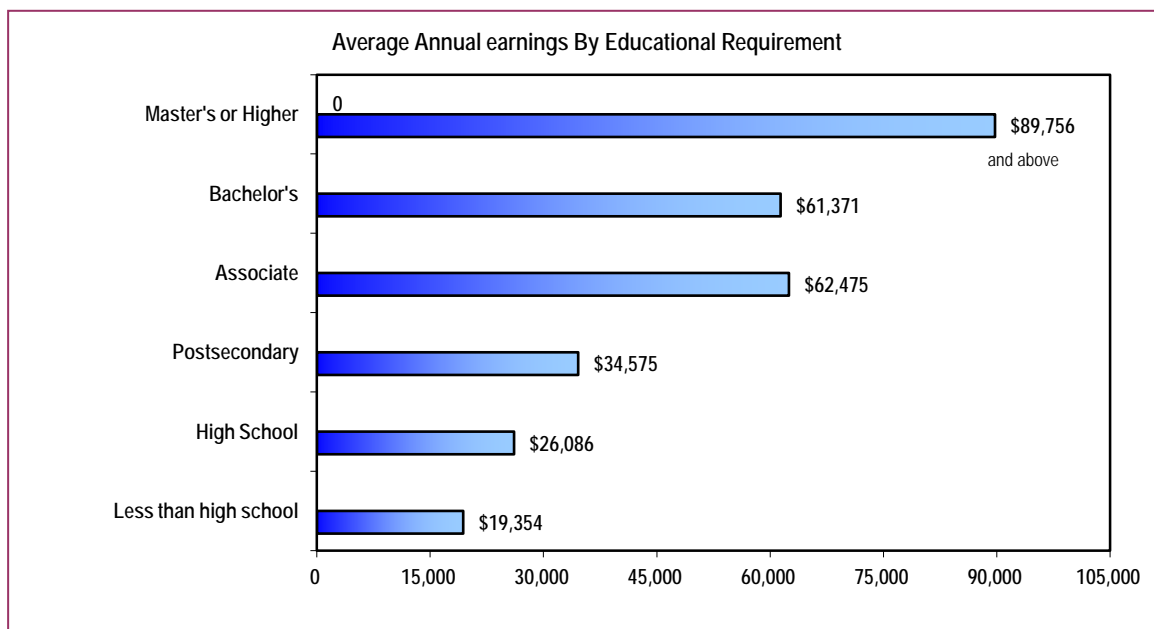
Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics

How Can Your Teen Prepare For This Changing Workplace?

1. Use CHOICES Planner (www.flchoices.org) to develop a career and education plan for high school that includes high school courses, graduation, and postsecondary plans.
2. Develop skills in using and interpreting labor market information and job projections.
3. Understand that the more education you obtain, the more job options become available.
4. Broaden focus of exploration from one occupation to career clusters.
5. Focus on developing and identifying skills that can be transferred from one job to another.
6. Develop employability skills that include resume writing, searching for a job, and interviewing.
7. Get as much education and experience related to his or her career interests while still in high school. This can be accomplished in many ways, including major areas of interest, elective classes, extracurricular activities, volunteer work, job shadowing, internships, and part-time jobs.

You can help your teen to make informed decisions about education and training after high school. They should be aware of job opportunities available with a high school diploma and those that require more education.

While there are many things to consider when making career choices such as interests and abilities, the chart below shows that the more education you obtain, the higher the salary. This criterion should be balanced with lifestyle expectations. Help your teen develop a budget using the average wage of an occupation he/she is considering. Will this choice support the lifestyle your teen wants?



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Labor Market Statistics

Note: These are wages for everyone working in an occupation that requires a specific educational level, not the wages of everyone with that type of degree or training. Many workers who have master's degrees work in occupations that only require a bachelor's degree.

Listed below are some educational options to consider:

Apprenticeship

Students can learn a skilled trade by combining classroom training at career and technical centers with paid on-the-job training. Most apprenticeships take two to five years to complete, depending on the trade. Go to <http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/apprenticeship/> for more information.

Military

There are five branches in the military: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. Serving in the military can provide many educational opportunities. There are over 2,000 job specialties for enlisted personnel and over 1,500 jobs for officers. Some of the opportunities include mechanics, electronics, and business. Many people learn skills and receive training that they can immediately translate into careers in the civilian workforce.

Career and Technical Centers

Students can begin to learn some job skills while still in high school and continue training at a career and technical center. Programs vary in length and classes may be offered during the day and at night. Many courses are linked to apprenticeship programs. In many areas, students are awarded certificates in a field of expertise or are prepared for necessary licensure.

Community/State College

Community or State colleges have a wide variety of classes and programs. These programs can be completed in two years or less. Some high schools allow you to take dual enrollment classes and get college credit at the same time. Some students have earned an Associate's Degree even before they graduate from high school. After completing these programs, your teen can go directly to work or continue their education at a university.

University

Most universities offer four-year (Bachelor's Degree) programs of study and in addition advanced degrees such as a Master's Degree or a Doctoral Degree. Most professional careers require at least a four-year college degree.

On-the-Job Training

Your student can acquire some skills in high school that will allow him/her to go directly to work. Getting a job right after high school is an option, but consider that 85 percent of all new jobs will require education beyond high school.

High School Graduation Options

In Florida, students may choose from three graduation programs in order to be awarded a standard high school diploma:

- the traditional 24-credit program
- a three-year, 18-credit college preparatory program
- a three-year, 18-credit career preparatory program

Graduation requirements may vary from year to year as new policies are developed. When a student enters the ninth grade, those policies in effect that year will determine their graduation requirements from high school. All of these graduation paths include opportunities to take rigorous academic courses designed to prepare students for their future academic and career choices. All students, regardless of graduation program, must still earn a specific grade point average on a 4.0 scale and achieve passing scores on the 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in order to graduate with a standard diploma. However, the two, three-year programs are significantly different from the 24 credit program. The right graduation program for a particular student is the one that best fits the abilities, interests, and goals of the individual student. Families should consider the educational benefits of each program and choose the program that will best prepare the student for his or her postsecondary education or career plan. Check with your child's counselor to determine their graduation requirements based on the year they entered ninth grade as those policies may be different.

Get an Early Start on College Credit

Advanced Placement (AP): Courses are available in 23 subjects. Certain scores are required on AP exams in order for students to receive credit.

International Baccalaureate (IB): Students can get up to 30 credits toward a college degree by successfully passing IB examinations. The Department of Education determines passing scores and the courses for which students can receive credit.

Dual Enrollment Program: If eligible, your teen should consider taking college or technical courses while they are still in high school. Dual enrollment is a program that allows high school students to earn college or technical credits toward a postsecondary diploma, certificate, or degree at a Florida public institution. It will also count as credit toward a high school diploma. School counselors can provide information on eligibility criteria.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP): Students can earn college credit by taking general or subject examinations in this program. A maximum of 45 CLEP credits may be accepted by a public community college or university.

Early Admissions Program: Eligible high school students may enroll full time at a community college or university and receive high school credit and college credit at the same time.

Tech Prep: A college prep program that leads to an Associate's Degree, two-year certificate or apprenticeship. It combines at least two years of high school education with two years of postsecondary education to prepare students for technical careers in one or more occupational fields. Students can also earn college credit through Dual Enrollment.

Parent's Overview of Financial Aid

Does the expense of higher education make it seem out of reach for your teen? There are many ways to support college and any other postsecondary option that your teen may choose. Financial aid is available to every Floridian. It can help pay for training beyond high school and make even the most expensive school affordable. Before you start exploring the options for financial aid, there are a few things you need to know:

- Financial aid money comes from state and federal governments, banks, the schools themselves, and private donors.
- You must apply for financial aid. It is not part of the school's admission process.
- Aid is based on a variety of factors, including family income, tuition, academic skill, etc.

Financial Aid Myths

College Is Just Too Expensive

While it is true that college costs are rising, it is a good investment for the future. All postsecondary education, not just a college education, is the ticket to good career opportunities. Your teen can make a big contribution toward the cost of college by making good grades while in high school. Good grades can help them to qualify for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

We Make Too Much to Qualify for Aid

Aid is intended to make college affordable for students in a variety of financial situations. Financial aid administrators take into account not only income but also other family members in college, home mortgage costs, and other expenses. Aid is awarded to many families who thought they earned too much money. Also

consider low-interest loans and have your teen apply for scholarships based on academic achievement, talent, merit or other criteria.

I'm not a Straight "A" Student, so I Won't Get Aid

Most scholarships consider grades, but most awards of federal aid are based on financial need.

Private Schools Are Out of Reach for My Student

The key is to pick schools that meet educational, career, and personal needs. Then consider cost. While private schools are more expensive than public schools, the family contribution expected is the same. So higher school expenses also mean a better chance of demonstrating financial need.

Types of Financial Aid

Scholarships – Assistance based on academic performance and/or financial need. This money does not have to be repaid. The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program has several award levels which can pay as much as 100 percent of tuition and fees at a Florida public institution and an equivalent amount at a private institution.

Loans – A low interest loan that does not accrue interest or require payment until after the student leaves school, for example: Federal Stafford Loan, Federal Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS), Federal Consolidated Loan.

Grants – Financial aid that does not have to be repaid. The grant amount is based on need, cost of attendance, and enrollment status.

Work-study – Money earned through part-time employment while attending a postsecondary school. Students work up to 20 hours a week during the academic year.

Private Aid – Financial assistance from a private business or other organization. Many Fortune 500 companies provide aid to students.

Special Aid – Aid for special groups of students, such as veterans, minorities, handicapped, etc. The Federal Department of Veteran's Affairs provides funds for training veterans.

Timing Is Everything!

Early planning and research is critical to finding sources of financial aid. Admission applications should be sent in as early as October or November of your teen's senior year. Applications for federal aid should be submitted in January. Other scholarships may have different application deadlines. Most students who receive aid get a combination, put together in a financial aid "package" by the financial aid office at the school or college they have chosen. High school counselors are also knowledgeable about financial aid and can help students put together applications for a variety of scholarships.

Financial Aid Search Tools

www.flchoices.org

Florida CHOICES Planner – Florida's career information delivery system available to all Floridians.

www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org

This is the site for the Florida Office of Student Financial Assistance and includes information about the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

www.fafsa.ed.gov

Look here for the free application for the Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) that will start the entire process for applying for financial aid.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is career development and why is it important?

Career development is a life-long process that includes exploring, choosing, and implementing decisions about education, occupation, and related life roles. Students will develop knowledge and skills that will help them to manage their career throughout life.

Should I tell my teen what I think would be the best career choice for him/her?

You can help your teen to understand themselves and provide support, but the choice must be theirs.

I don't have any expertise in career guidance. Shouldn't I just leave that up to the school?

Parents are the primary influence on their teen's interests, beliefs, values, knowledge, and self-concept. Support and encourage areas of interest and talent. Parents can instill a sense of respect for all types of work and workers. Be sure to talk about your own job. Help your teen to experience activities that would expose them to different kinds of work.

How can I support my teen's career development?

1. Parents can influence the way their teen sees themselves. If their interests are supported, teens are more likely to develop them further.
2. Help them to explore occupations so that they learn more about things they like and dislike in different work activities.
3. Support interests that are different from your own. Don't discourage your teen from certain career areas even if it is something you wouldn't be interested in or feel comfortable trying.
4. Parents don't need to point out weaknesses. This only makes the teen feel bad about themselves. Allow them to discover their own strengths and weaknesses.

How can I be a good role model for my teen in their career development?

Be proud of the work you do and the contribution you make to the family and community. If possible, allow your teen to visit you at your job. Many workplaces set aside a day for parents to bring their sons and daughters to work.

OK, I understand the importance of career planning. Where do we start?

Self-awareness should be the first step in making career decisions. Interest assessments, work experiences, job shadowing, even observing people at work can help your teens to learn about the things they like and dislike about work. Interest inventories can help them narrow down their interests and relate them to occupations. Careers that closely match a person's interests are more likely to be satisfying.

How can my teen determine his/her abilities?

Abilities are those physical and mental activities that you seem to do easily. It's not necessarily what you know but your ability to do or learn certain things. Sometimes, additional education will help you enhance your abilities. Ability assessments can help you determine your strong areas and how to match those abilities to occupations. Schools often have the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) administered to 10th grade students. While this instrument is helpful to military recruiters, the ASVAB results can also be used by school counselors to assist students with examining different career options.

How can my teen acquire skills that can help prepare them for the workplace?

Skills are activities that can be learned or developed by education and/or training. Career and technical education courses taken in high school can help your teen develop skills and workforce experience. Part-time jobs can also give them work experience. Every job will require them to do certain activities or tasks, and each task will require a variety of skills. Their skills will continue to increase over their lifetime.

What are values?

Values are the principles that people use to determine how much something means to them. For example, you value your personal time, so you may not want a job that requires travel or weekend work. If you don't want a stressful or risky job, you may not want to consider being a police officer or firefighter. If prestige is important to you, you may want a job that will cause people to look up to you and respect you.

How can I contribute to my teen's work skills and values?

Let your teen know that the work we do is important and necessary. Teach them the value of reliability, honor, dignity, and effort in the work world and in their own self respect. Household chores, volunteering, and part-time work can help young people develop these traits. These experiences teach responsibility, decision-making skills, and that there are consequences to the choices we make.

Should my teen have decided what they want to do by the time they graduate from high school?

It is not uncommon that an 18 year old will be uncertain about what they want in a career. It is better for her to understand herself well, so that she can consider a number of occupations that reflect her interests. Statistics show that people between 18 and 36 years of age change jobs approximately 10 times. We usually evaluate our choices, and if they don't fit our needs, we make adjustments. Career choices are not always permanent.

How can I help my teen understand how career choice impacts lifestyle?

Does your teen value a lifestyle that includes travel, luxury cars, an expensive home, and lots of other personal possessions? If so, a career that will support this lifestyle is very important. Labor market information will give salary levels that can be expected, but depending upon the occupation, a person's motivation can help determine their potential for earning money. Early on it's wise for a person to decide what he/she wants to achieve in life and how he/she wants to live.

No one in my family has ever attended college and we've done just fine. Why should I encourage my teen to go to college?

Science and technology are making many jobs disappear and even changing the ones that exist. Our teens must be more educated and skilled than previous generations. With training and education, they can match and even surpass our successes.

My daughter wants to be a carpenter or work in some area of construction. I feel that is work more suited for men. How should I advise her?

It's an old belief that men are better at some things and women are better at others. This belief has caused many women in the past to hold lower status or lower paying jobs than men with the same amount of education. Times have changed and you will see men and women in all areas of the workforce. For example, there are many female electricians, plumbers, and carpenters as well as doctors, lawyers, and stockbrokers. On the other hand, men are choosing occupations that have been dominated by women in the past such as nurse, administrative assistant, and hair stylist. It's more important to find a job that will match her interests rather than excluding a choice because of gender.

What resources are being used in schools to get information about careers?

The Florida Department of Education supports Florida CHOICES Planner (www.flchoices.org), a career and education exploration program. Online assessments are available for interests, abilities, values, and transferable skills. The results from these assessments can be linked to occupations, programs of study, and postsecondary schools. Most Florida schools use CHOICES Planner with their students. Ask your teen if they have used CHOICES Planner. If not, go online at home, a public library, or other places that a computer can be accessed and use the program together.

This is an excellent way to begin a career plan/portfolio that can include information from the assessments, career and education searches, goals, and exact plans to reach those goals. There is a wealth of information for students to view such as work-place know-how skills, interviewing techniques, and building a resume. In addition, career and education materials can be found at public, school, and church libraries. If you have access to a computer, there are multiple sites that can help you explore. Be sure that you know the counselors or career specialists at your teen's school. They can also share information with you.

How can my teen experience different careers?

It might be a good idea for your teen to "try out" some different careers. Hospitals, libraries, churches, professional and civic associations all have multiple opportunities for volunteers. Many high schools offer programs like Youth Apprenticeship, Tech Prep, and job shadowing. Colleges and universities may provide co-op and internship programs. Part-time or temporary jobs will also help your teen experience different careers.

Why should my teen explore career clusters? Don't you have to decide on one job eventually?

Teens might believe there is only one career for them, and if that career doesn't work out, they may feel they are inadequate and a failure. Many different careers require similar tasks and skills. If their interests and abilities match one cluster, there are many occupations within that cluster that may match their interests and skills.

My son's school requires that parents sign off on a four-year program of study for high school. How can I help my teen make educational choices that will help them in their career development?

Encourage courses in math, science, and language. Students need a solid foundation in these courses regardless of whether they go directly to work or continue their education past high school. Challenge them to take higher level courses. They will have more options available past high school.

Specially for Teens with Special Needs

If your son or daughter has special needs due to a disability, there is even more to think about. It is important for teens with special needs and their parents to be well informed in order to make meaningful decisions throughout the educational process. Some students with disabilities have a "504 Accommodations Plan" that indicates accommodations needed to ensure equal access. Students with disabilities who are served through exceptional student education (ESE) have an individual educational plan (IEP) to describe the student's educational program, including accommodations, special classes, services, and supports needed to ensure a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Information (including guides and brochures) for families is available from the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Clearinghouse Information Center at <http://www.fldoe.org/eese/>.

Accommodations and Modifications

Students with disabilities may need accommodations and/or modifications to access school programs. Accommodations change the way students are instructed or tested. Modifications change the outcomes or what the student is expected to learn.

Diploma Options

Some students with disabilities are eligible for a Special Diploma (Option 1 or Option 2) if a standard diploma does not meet their needs. Teens with disabilities and their families need information about diploma options as well as their possible limitations. Diploma decisions can impact future education and employment. Current information should be used so that informed choices can be made by the young adult and the family.

Self-Determination/Self-Advocacy

It is important for students with disabilities to develop skills in self-determination and self-advocacy. Parents can help their teen develop these skills by:

- providing opportunities for making decisions in a variety of settings
- encouraging their participation in IEP or 504 Plan meetings with the goal of leading the meetings
- communicating the importance of self-identification (i.e., as an individual with a disability) and requesting accommodations/services if needed
- listening to and assisting with their plans for the future

High Expectations

It is important to have high expectations and to help your teen develop skills and work toward self-determined goals. High expectations (with support and encouragement) lead to greater accomplishments. However, low expectations can have negative effects (young adult may not try or "give up").

Avoid Stereotypes

There are many possibilities for the future in all areas of life, including education and employment. Individuals with disabilities have a wide range of choices and accommodations are available if needed. So, families should help keep options open by avoiding stereotypes in language, activities, employment, and planning for the future.

Mentoring and Job Shadowing

Does your teen have a mentor who has a disability? Has your teen participated in job shadowing where they spend time with an employee with a disability in a career of interest? Activities such as these provide the teen with the opportunity to meet successful employees with disabilities in career fields that interest them. Teens can learn about education and experience required for different careers as well as accommodations that are used in the workplace.

Service Agencies

There are many agencies that serve adults with disabilities, such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and Division of Blind Services that can provide support such as job placement, job coaching, and assistive technology. If your teen is not currently a client and needs assistance, sign up for services with appropriate agencies as soon as possible (some agencies have waiting lists).

Agency contact information:

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, <http://www.rehabworks.org>, 800/451-4327 (Voice/TDD)

Agency for Persons with Disabilities, <http://apd.myflorida.com>, (see website map for district office phone numbers.)

Division of Blind Services, <http://dbs.myflorida.com>, 800/342-1828; 850/245-0300

Other/Summary

Parents are important partners throughout the career development process. Representatives from school districts, technical centers, community colleges, universities, and service agencies are also important partners throughout the steps of career awareness, exploration, and placement.

When it comes to helping your teen with their career planning . . . Florida CHOICES Planner Makes Planning the Future Easy!

Florida CHOICES Planner will:

- Identify skills they may have right now
- Discover their interests and abilities
- Determine what values are important to them in a job
- Match their interests and needs to:
 - Over 650+ careers
 - Over 7,000+ postsecondary schools
 - Over 2,000+ scholarship opportunities
- Build a resume
- Learn job search techniques
- And much more

Go to CHOICES Planner at www.flchoices.org and get started!

A Dozen Things You Should Do!

The Parent Primer includes lots of information and tips on how to help your teen with making career and education decisions. The list below is a summary of things you can do to support your teen's career planning at school and home.

- Discuss your job with your teen. Describe how you made that career decision, what you like or dislike about your job, and what you could have done to improve your career decisions.
- Review the results of your teen's career assessments that they may have taken at school. Ensure that your teen has explored occupations at school or even at home with Florida CHOICES Planner at www.flchoices.org.
- Help your teen set short and long term goals.
- Have periodic talks with your teen to discuss their career interests. Remember, exposure to different careers and workplaces can develop or change interests.
- Offer guidance but remember your goal is to help your teen find his/her own way. Resist pushing them toward a career you find interesting. Let him/her make the choice.
- Be positive. Help your teen build self-confidence and to see themselves with a successful and satisfying future.
- Help your teen to select courses that will help to prepare them for the occupation they have chosen and for postsecondary education.
- Set high expectations for your teen in their class work and extracurricular activities.
- Encourage your teen to plan for postsecondary education whether the choice is a career and technical institute, community college, or university. The majority of jobs in the future will require additional training and education past high school.
- Start a savings plan as early as possible to help pay the cost of postsecondary education.
- Explore scholarships and financial aid options. Ask the school counselor to share the information about state scholarships and other local financial aid.
- Keep the lines of communication open with your teen. Career planning is not a one-time discussion

The following websites were used to develop the information for this guide:

www.fldoe.org Florida Department of Education

www.floridajobs.org Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.acrnetwork.org America's Career Resource Network, State Parent Resources

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