

Parent Guide

Exploring Interests and Goals with Your Child



What Will I Be?

This guide will let you know what your child is learning in school about preparing for high school graduation and further education. It will also support you as you help your child prepare for the future.



It is important for you to work through this guide for several reasons:

- It shows your child that you care.
- It tells your child, "I expect you to succeed in school and in life. I expect you to go on for more education. I know you can do it."
- Research shows that when parents pay attention to what goes on in school, their children do better in school and have a more positive attitude about it.
- Having high expectations for your children will help them make better choices during their teenage years. They are more likely to stay away from drugs and violence. They are more likely to get good grades.

Some points to keep in mind:

1. Your child is unique. There is no one else on this planet exactly like your child.
2. The best career for your child is the one that suits him best.
3. There are many different ways your child can reach his or her dreams.
4. If a plan is not working, don't give up.
5. Let your child know that you will be there to listen and help.
6. Believe in your child. Show your child you care. Work together.

Important terms

Career: a long-term job. Careers fall into categories (types) such as arts and entertainment, science and technology, business, education, social services or health sciences.

Long-term Goal: something that will take months or years to accomplish.

Self-esteem: what you think of yourself.

Self-awareness: knowing what you are good at, what you like to do, and what you want or do not want.

Short-term Goal: something a person can accomplish in the next few days or weeks. Short-term goals are like steps leading up to a long-term goal.

Skill: something that someone is good at. When you get good at things you like, it can lead to a career.

Self-Awareness and Careers



How does your child feel about herself? Does she feel capable? Does she believe in herself? Is she confident about her abilities? Is she excited to learn and try new things? Is she hopeful about the future?

Believing in yourself is a first step toward success in school and a promising future. You play an important role in your child's self-confidence and image of herself. Self-confidence comes with achievement. By helping your child set goals and achieve them, you are helping her begin to understand her abilities and feel good about them. In doing so, you will also help your child identify her strengths, which could help her begin to dream about a future career.

Parent Activities

1. Make a list of people who can support your child on her life journey. Those people may be teachers, coaches, relatives or family friends. For each person, write their name, relationship and the type of support that person can provide.
2. How can you help your child feel good about herself? Can you sign her up for a class or teach her something you know (cooking, playing ball, speaking Spanish)? Can you praise her when she tries something or listens better? See if you can think of five things you can do.
3. Think of three comments you can make this week that would help your child recognize her strengths. Try to say supportive things to your child every week.

Activities to Do with Your Child

1. Getting involved at school can help your child learn new skills, understand herself better and think about careers. Sit down together and ask your child if she wants to volunteer at school. Your child could tutor younger kids, help in the office, work in the library, help the custodian, assist with a book sale, help the school nurse. If your child is interested, contact the school office.
2. Talk with your child about careers. Ask your child to imagine herself as an adult. Think together about five careers (jobs) your child might want to have some day.
3. On different sheets of paper, copy the following, leaving a space after each.
My child's school skills
My child's personal strengths
My child's family strengths
My child's talents
My child's other special qualities

My school skills
My personal strengths
My family strengths
My talents
My other special qualities

Fill out the first list and ask your child to fill out the second list. Then, show each other your lists. Talk about those things that are the same or different on your lists. What did you both learn?

Questions to Ask Your Child

- What do you like to do at school? What are your favorite things to do outside of school?
- What do you want to do for a job? What do you want your life to be like?
- What do you think you are good at?
- Is there anything you would like to learn to do more or better? Or is there something you would like me to teach you or help you practice.
- What are you proud of about yourself? (If your child says, "I don't know," ask her to think about it for a day or two. Then, ask her again.)

You did it!

You are already on your way to helping your child think about who he wants to become.

Go to the next section to learn about setting and reaching goals.

Setting Goals



The key to reaching a goal is to keep trying. Many things can happen to a child on their way to achieving a goal. He might fail a test, miss the bus, make a bad choice or lose a game. History books are full of examples of famous people who failed many times, but eventually reached their dream by staying with their goal. Often, the only difference between the person who achieves a goal and the person who does not is that the achiever does not give up despite the barriers or setbacks.

Learning to stay with a goal until it's reached is an important skill that will help your child lead a rewarding life. As a parent, you can help your child recognize that achieving a meaningful goal is not easy. There are barriers along the way. When a child encounters a problem, they need to understand how to work through it.

Parent Activities

1. Start using “goal language” around your house: short-term goals, long-term goals, planning, determination and barrier.
2. Try to think about goals in your life, such as exercising, saving money or getting your kids to behave better. What are your barriers? How can you work around them? When you have thought about goal-setting for yourself, you will be able to help your child better in the future.

Activities to Do with Your Child

1. Help your child choose a long-term goal, like being able to make seven out of 10 lay-up shots. Have your child close his eyes and imagine himself reaching the goal. Then, help your child think of short-term goals—like practicing lay-ups for 20 minutes three days a week—that can lead up to that long-term goal. Now, help your child try to meet those goals.
2. Plan to reach a goal together. Then celebrate. For example, plan to read 20 minutes daily for a whole week. When you succeed, go out to lunch and talk about it. Or plan to clean part of your home together and then sit down to play a game in the clean area.

Questions to Ask Your Child

- Ask your child to remember when he really wanted to accomplish something, like learning to read or playing ball: What did you do to get there? How did you feel when you reached your goal?
- Ask your child about his short-term and long-term goals now: Is that something you really might be able to do? Do you think you can meet that goal in that amount of time? What if something gets in the way of that goal? How can you get around it? Is there any way I can help?

You are accomplishing something important: helping your child understand and set goals.

In the next section, you and your child will think about future careers.

Career Awareness and Choices



You can help your child make good choices that can lead to a career. These choices may include studying, staying in school, or following up on interests by practicing skills or getting experience. Help your child understand that he has choices, and that there are consequences for each decision he makes.

Discuss possible careers for your child by asking him what he likes to do and what he thinks his talents and skills are. Set up short- and long-term goals to help your child create a plan to reach his dreams.

Parent Activities

1. Use career language with your child such as career, job, job skills, or interest, and point out if your child is good with numbers, computers, people, words, or working with his hands. (Remember, it is important to keep your child's options open at a young age and not rule out certain kinds of careers that may interest him.)
2. Think about two choices you made in your own life and what the consequences have been. What other choices could you have made? Now, think about two choices you would like to make and why.

Activities to Do with Your Child

1. Take your child to work with you one day. Tell your child the names of the different jobs, the education or training that was required and what those people do. (Note: If your primary job is a homemaker, you also have work your child can experience with you. You see people with different jobs in stores, restaurants, while riding public transportation or driving and at appointments.)
2. Hold your child responsible for her choices and help her see the consequences of her actions. Does a choice lead to getting better at something, getting a good or bad grade, making a friend or getting in trouble?
3. Help your child practice planning, making choices and completing projects at home. Make them fun ones, like building or fixing something with you, creating a gift, planning meals or planning a party or holiday activities.
4. Help your child think about adult lives in terms of careers. Imagine life in those careers. Have your child choose at least three professions and think about a typical day (or night) on the job and what your child may like or not like about it. You can make it into a brainstorm party with popcorn or another snack to share while you think about these jobs as a team.

Questions to Ask Your Child

- When your child admires someone famous, ask your child about what that person may have had to do to have that career. Where did the person go to college? What other things, like lots of practice, did the person need to do to become what he or she is today? You and your child can learn more about that person at the library or online.
- Ask your child what areas of work (arts and entertainment, science and technology, business, education, social services, or health sciences) interest your child. Then, ask which specific jobs are interesting within those areas.
- Ask your child what he wants to be when he grows up.

Good job!

Look on the next page for some general tips on raising a successful child.

Help Your Child to Succeed



Read

- Read to, with, and in front of your child.
- Encourage your child to read.
- Take your child to the library.
- Take a reading class or get a reading tutor (you can get help for free) if you need help learning to read or becoming a better reader.

Teach

- Work through problems together.
- Show your child how to do things that you know how to do, such as cooking, building, repairing, crafts, etc.
- Do daily math together such as calculating distance or mileage, measuring ingredients for a recipe, or deciding which product is cheaper or has fewer calories per serving.

Monitor and pay attention

- Make sure your child does homework before playing or watching television.
- Help your child or find a tutor if you see that he is struggling.
- Know what he is doing in school.
- Know what he is viewing and what video games he is playing.
- Watch television or movies together and limit viewing if you think your child is becoming upset or violent.
- Pay attention to who his friends are, where he goes and when, and what he does.
- Set reasonable boundaries.

Build responsibility

- Model responsible behavior and honesty.
- Encourage your child to do housework and school homework without being reminded.
- Help your child learn to use the internet safely.
- Show your child gently but firmly that he needs to be responsible for his words and actions.

Communicate

- Talk with (not at) your child.
- Ask questions. Listen. Watch.
- Show that you care through your responses to what your child says and does.
- Express your love and pride daily.

About Us



Get Ready

The Get Ready program provides students with college planning information, academic skills and first-hand career and college experiences. The program helps to prepare elementary, middle and high school students to complete school and pursue post-secondary education. The Get Ready program is primarily funded by the U.S. Department of Education through a federal grant program called GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) and is administered in Minnesota by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

Minnesota Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to post-secondary education. The agency serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on post-secondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant program, which is administered by the agency, is a need-based tuition assistance program for Minnesota students. The agency also oversees tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 college savings program, licensing and an early awareness outreach initiative for youth. Through collaboration with systems and institutions, the agency assists in the development of the state's education technology infrastructure and shared library resources.

This document can be made available in an alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling (651) 642-0567.

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