



[PTA Goes To Work]

Parent Guide

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor,
Employment & Training Administration

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We know you want your child to grow up to be a successful, happy adult. But, speaking for parents who have “lived and learned,” we also know that simply *wanting* good things for our children isn’t enough. We have to help them find their way—help them think about the many possibilities life holds for them, and give them tools and information to take control of their futures. Whether your child is in elementary, middle, or high school, working on a GED, or a recent graduate, you will need to help plan an educational pathway that leads to a career that matches their interests and offers financial security. It is never too early to begin helping your child plan their career. The PTA and the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration have partnered to offer some proven strategies and ideas for career and educational planning through a national effort known as **PTA Goes To Work**.

A web-based career planning toolkit has been created that offers many resources, which can be downloaded at www.pta.org and reproduced. It includes:

- **Parent Guide** (English) and **Guía de Padres** (Spanish)
- **Student Guide** (English) and **Guía de Estudiante** (Spanish)
- **Career Voyages** website flier (English)
- Downloadable copies of **InDemand Magazine**, connecting today’s students with the careers of tomorrow (English)
- **Registered Apprenticeship Trends in Seven Industries** brochure (English)
- **We’ll Show You the Road to Your Professional Success/Te mostramos el camino a tu éxito profesional** brochure (English/Spanish combined)
- **What is Job Corps?** flier (English) and **¿Que es Job Corps?** (Spanish)

Building a Strong Foundation

Elementary school is not too early to lay a strong foundation for career exploration and preparation. The earlier you are involved in your child’s development, both at home and in school, the more likely he or she will be successful in life. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Help your child develop routines.

- Have regular homework and reading time.
- Make sure your child has a regular bedtime and gets plenty of rest.
- Give your child age-appropriate chores.
- Make sure your child has a nutritious breakfast before school.

2. Instill a love of reading in your child.

- Begin reading to your child at an early age.
- Let your child see you read.
- Limit screen time (i.e., television, video games, computer).
- Take your child to the library and help him or her find interesting books at the appropriate reading level.

3. Have high expectations for learning and behavior, at home and at school.

- When you expect the best, your child will rise to those expectations.
- Help your child take responsibility for his or her choices.
- Teach your child how to set and achieve goals.
- Make sure your child knows you think he or she is a valuable, capable person and that you know he or she can succeed.

4. Develop good relationships at school.

- Introduce yourself at the beginning of the school year and continue to communicate regularly with your child's teacher through notes, by phone or email.
- Arrange a time to observe the teaching in your child's classroom, if possible.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Join the PTA and become involved in the school community.

5. Match your child's interests with career possibilities.

- If your child likes art, discuss how adults use art to design houses, clothing, magazine ads, movie sets, and even toys. Explain that people also use art when they draw cartoons, arrange flowers, or take photos for magazines and books.
- If your child likes to be outdoors, talk about outdoor careers like landscape architecture, forestry, archaeology, construction work, marine biology, and commercial fishing.
- If your child is very social, discuss how people who like to talk and work with people may choose to work as a teacher, lawyer, customer service representative, receptionist, hotel manager, or convention planner.
- If your child likes to help people, talk about different ways he or she can do that in a career such as teaching, medicine, athletic training, social work, or childcare.
- If your child loves math, talk to him or her about becoming an accountant, computer programmer, engineer, or statistician. You should also remind your child that almost all careers use basic math, so it is a very important skill to develop.
- If your child likes to keep others safe, talk to him or her about a career as a police officer, forensic scientist, detective, investigator, parole officer, security guard, or bailiff.

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For an interactive look at how children's interests relate to job possibilities, go to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Kids' Page at www.bls.gov/k12.

Making the Most of Middle School

Middle school students need more space and independence to discover new interests and build skills and knowledge. They also need continued support and guidance from parents. Here are some ways to help your child make this transition and stay on the right track:

- **Attend an open house.** Help your child become familiar with his or her new building, classrooms, and lockers.
- **Meet with your child's school guidance counselor.** Ask the counselor's advice on how to help your child transition into his or her new school.
- **Expose your child to a broad range of experiences and programs.** Help him or her explore new interests and start to consider future plans.
- **Set ground rules for your child.** Make sure your child knows what time to wake up, when to be ready for school, and when to do homework after school. Also let your child know that he or she is expected to do his or her best in school.
- **Stay aware of your child's homework and school demands.** It is important for you to keep track of your child's homework assignments and deadlines. However, check, but do not do your child's homework. Encourage your child to do his or her best work on homework assignments.
- **Monitor your child's progress.** Be aware of your child's progress on schoolwork, tests, and grades, so you can address any potential problems or issues before they become larger.
- **Remember your child's next transition—high school.** Make sure that your child is aware of the classes and programs he or she will need to take in middle school to prepare for high school and beyond.

Whether or not your child is thinking about college, decisions your child makes as early as 8th grade can have a major impact on his or her future.

Whether or not your child is thinking about college, decisions your child makes as early as 8th grade can have a major impact on his or her future. Young people must use this time to:

- Develop good study habits.
- Master strong reading, math and computer skills.
- Explore science learning opportunities.
- Establish high expectations for learning and good conduct—both at home and at school.
- Develop good communication skills.
- Confront personal roadblocks.

High School—The Future is Now

Whether your child goes to work right after high school, enters college or chooses some other option like joining the Armed Forces or Job Corps, it is always good to prepare ahead. He or she will have many serious decisions to make, and by being involved and informed, you can help make the path a little smoother. Consider this:

- 48 of the 50 fastest growing jobs in the United States require some type of education beyond high school.
- People who don't have post-secondary training are three times more likely to be unemployed than those who do.
- People who have some training after high school make more money and have better opportunities for career advancement than those who have only a high school diploma.
- Freshmen without a career goal or academic major when they enter college are more likely to drop out.
- If your child has started thinking seriously about his or her future before graduating, their chances for success during post-secondary education (technical training or college) increases.

Making High Schools Work

We all have a stake in the success of our youth, whether we have school-age children of our own or not. Drawing from the work of leading researchers and educators from around the country, the *Alliance for Excellent Education* has identified ten key elements that every high school should have in place to ensure they are successful. This checklist can help you, together with other parents, school leaders, and community members, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the high schools in your community:

1. Challenging classes are available to **every** student.
2. Relationships can be formed between **all** students and school staff.
3. Extra help is available for those who need it.
4. Connections are made between book learning and the real world.
5. Family and community involvement is encouraged and valued.
6. The learning environment is safe from physical harm, verbal abuse, and other threats.
7. Every teacher is qualified to teach in their subject; knows how to teach all kinds of children; and is given the time and support to plan lessons, review student performance, and improve their skills.
8. School leadership is capable of providing instructional leadership and support and is able to manage the day-to-day operations of the school.
9. Every teacher and student has the tools and resources they need (e.g. books, laboratory equipment, technology, etc.) to be successful in school.
10. All community members have access to user-friendly information that gives a clear picture of how well students are doing (e.g., dropout rates, student performance on state standards).

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Source: *Elements of a Successful High School*. 2006. The Alliance for Excellent Education, www.all4ed.org.

Making High School Count

Whether or not you have a college degree, the job market today requires a workforce that is prepared to take on the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Preparing your child to enter the workforce starts with you helping them make the most of their high school years. Below are some things that your child will need to do to be successful in high school and get prepared for life after high school:

Get Involved

Getting ready for college or the workforce isn't all academic. Your child should find something he or she really likes doing, and learn to do it well. Colleges and employers are attracted to young people who are responsible and have shown a commitment to learning.

Do the Work

Whether your child plans to go to college or directly into the workforce, he or she should plan to study and work hard throughout all four years of high school.

Get Help

Is your child having trouble in a class? Many schools have peer tutors, students in upper grades who'll help for free. Your child should talk to his or her teachers or counselors and let them know if he or she needs extra help.

Read

Your child should read something—magazines, books, graphic novels, newsletters—at least 30 minutes every day, beyond study and homework. Your child's strength in reading is essential no matter what he or she decides to do.

Get the College-Bound Facts

How will your child know all the right moves to get into college? He or she should ask someone who has done it. You and your child should get to know the school counselors. Your child may want to talk to a career planner at a local college, or a trusted teacher. Research on the internet can also be helpful.

Family Support

If you haven't been to college yourself, you may think you can't help your child. That's not true. You can talk to his or her counselors and help your child stay on the right path. Your support will be critical as he or she begins to make important decisions about the future.

Mentors

Even though you are supportive of your child's ambitions, the encouragement of other adults who can lend their enthusiasm will also help ensure your child succeeds.

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Adapted from *Discover 10 Ways to Jump-Start College Planning: Help Your Child Take the Right Steps Now*. 2007.
The College Board, www.collegeboard.com.

Planning to Get Ahead

The 21st century workforce focuses on occupations that require skills and education in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math. Knowledge of these subjects will likely prove critical to your child's future. Parents and youth should:

- Use the tools and information in this toolkit to talk about careers and the educational needs associated with them.
- Talk to the school's guidance counselor about specific career interests and work together to map out a comprehensive plan that connects academic goals with career interests and goals.
- Understand **all** the requirements needed for graduation, entering college, and workforce development programs.
- Ask about local community colleges or universities with concurrent enrollment programs. This allows high school students to take both credit and non-credit post-secondary classes, while still earning a high school diploma.
- Consider enrollment in more advanced courses such as Advance Placement (AP®) or International Baccalaureate® (IB) courses in a foreign language, science, and math. These opportunities can help them gain college credit and prepare them for what is expected in the next phase of their career.
- Look into activities that will help them gain the skills and experience necessary to prepare them for the workforce, including:
 - Ongoing community service
 - School clubs that expose them to additional learning opportunities
 - Summer work experiences
 - Internships
 - Pre-apprenticeships
 - Training programs
- Use a self-assessment tool to help determine likes and dislikes associated with particular careers, and to help the child settle on a possible career pathway. There are numerous assessment and online tools you can use, including O*NET™ OnLine at www.online.onetcenter.org. Together, you can map your child's school and work achievements, and align their goals and interests with the demands and desires of employers in the workforce.

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Addressing Special Needs

In addition to the steps above, parents of children with disabilities must also:

- Be clear on how your child's disability affects his or her education, employment, and daily living options.
- Know your child's rights and responsibilities under various disability-related laws.
- Gain access to programs, services, support, and accommodations available for young people with disabilities.
- Understand how individualized planning tools can assist your child in achieving transitional goals and objectives.

What's Hot in the New Workforce?

One of the goals of **PTA Goes To Work** is to help students and parents prepare for careers in high growth and high demand industries. These businesses and industries are where experts project a substantial number of new jobs will be available and will contribute significantly to the growth of the 21st century economy. Further, high growth industries are continually transformed by technology and innovation, and require developing new skills sets for workers throughout their careers.

The U.S. Department of Labor has worked with a number of high growth industries to better understand the career opportunities they offer. More information about high growth, high demand industries is included in many of the materials we are providing. The following illustrates various business sectors that have partnered with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) under the President's High Growth Job Training and Community-Based Job Training Grant Initiatives.

HIGH GROWTH INDUSTRIES

Advanced Manufacturing invents and creates products people need and want. Whether it is clothing, computers, food, medicine, or cosmetics, virtually everything we use on a daily basis is manufactured.

Aerospace offers hundreds of high technology companies along with NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration) and other Federal agencies that work collaboratively in major sectors of aerospace, including commercial air, space exploration, national defense, and research and development.

Automotive includes jobs ranging from automobile service technicians to commercial sales representatives.

Construction is the second-largest industry in the nation, and is becoming increasingly high-tech. This industry, consisting of mostly small, privately-owned firms, accounts for nearly 10 percent of all businesses. There is a need for bright, talented people to fill the jobs at architecture and engineering firms and construction companies.

Energy is an industry with job growth that is booming. Along with an increased demand for traditional energy sources, there is increased emphasis on renewable resources like wind and solar energy. The range of jobs is almost unlimited. The most common entry-level field jobs usually require little or no previous training or experience. Other entry-level positions, such as engineering technician, usually require at least a two-year Associate's degree in engineering technology. Within just a few years, engineers with four-year degrees may earn six-figure salaries.

Financial Services is a large and diverse industry. Jobs are available in a wide range of corporations and government agencies, as well as in banks and other financial institutions. This career field allows employees to apply their math skills with strategic financial planning, quantitative analysis, investment management, and sales.

Education & Training Pays, 2006

Earnings for workers 25 and older by educational attainment; earnings for full-time wages and salary workers

Education Level	Median Weekly Earnings (\$USD)
Doctoral Degree	\$1,441
Professional Degree	\$1,474
Master's Degree	\$1,140
Bachelor's Degree	\$962
Associate Degree	\$721
Some College	\$674
High School Grad	\$595
Some High School	\$419

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

Health Care careers are always evolving. New research findings, technologies, and discoveries in the medical profession all add fresh and ever-changing dimensions to this industry. People looking for a challenge and variety, and who want to make a difference by helping people, can accomplish all that and more in the health care sector.

Homeland Security encompasses a broad range of activities and occupations including emergency preparedness and response, border and transportation security, infrastructure protection, information analysis, and homeland defense. Many homeland security jobs and career opportunities are with federal, state, and local government agencies, but there are also many other opportunities with private companies and nonprofit organizations.

Hospitality consists of sectors such as hotel/lodging and restaurant/food service. This industry is growing rapidly, which means there are many great career opportunities coming in the years ahead. Jobs will be plentiful for first-time job seekers and those seeking part-time or alternative work schedules.

Information Technology is critical to all facets of work in all industries and sectors, and is an industry in its own right. America continues to suffer from a shortage of qualified IT workers with flexible and portable skills who can readily adapt and respond to ever-changing IT demands and processes.

To succeed in the workforce, U.S. firms are in need of skilled workers who are flexible, knowledgeable, and scientifically and mathematically proficient.

Retail is a dynamic field with diverse career ladders, a wide range of employee benefits, and on-the-job training. This sector is driven increasingly by high-end technology and requires advanced skills for certain positions.

Transportation including air, road, rail, and water systems is an economically necessary industry that transports people, goods and services globally each day. Almost every industry in today's economy requires drivers, operators, dispatchers, attendants, mechanics, and engineers in the transportation sector.

OTHER EMERGING HIGH GROWTH INDUSTRIES

Biotechnology consists of life sciences, technology, and manufacturing, and is an industry in which new discoveries are occurring every day. Because the industry is experiencing such rapid growth, biotechnology firms often demand more skilled workers than are available, and are projected to need more workers than are currently enrolled in existing training programs.

Geospatial Technology combines interests in the earth, space, and technology into one emerging field, where new "offshoot" opportunities are emerging daily. Geospatial technology professionals, technologists, and technicians work in a wide range of related scientific and technical fields, such as agriculture, archeology, biology, cartography, ecology, environmental sciences, forestry and range, geodesy, geography, geology, hydrology and water resources, land appraisal and real estate, medicine, transportation, urban planning and development, and more.

Nanotechnology is the group of emerging technologies in which matter is measured on the nanometer scale (down to individual atoms in size), and is manipulated to produce unique materials and products. Today, much of the work in nanotechnology involves basic research and development (R&D) sponsored and supported by corporate, university, and federal collaborations. Within the next 10 years, the National Science Foundation (NSF) estimates that the need for nanotechnology workers will rise from 20 thousand to 2 million globally. Work in the field of nanotechnology requires specialized education and training, but the job and career rewards are substantial.

For more information about these industries, visit the Career Voyages website at www.careervoyages.gov. This website is designed to meet the unique needs of students, parents, and teachers. Students may be surprised to find many of their interests will lead them to a career in one of these high growth industries. Another good source of information is the *In Demand Magazine*, which is on the website at www.careervoyages.gov/indemandmagazine-main.cfm. Each issue provides interesting and relevant information about career opportunities, education, and the skills needed for various careers. It also offers resources to explore careers and tips about how to build a successful future.

What Skills are Needed?

To succeed in the workforce, U.S. firms are in need of skilled workers who are flexible, knowledgeable, and scientifically and mathematically proficient. Careers in the fastest growing industries are usually held by “knowledgeable” workers who have had rigorous training, although many of these jobs do not require a four-year degree. Even more interesting, workers change jobs so frequently that industry leaders are saying they can’t find enough workers with the right skills for these good-paying jobs.

There has been a significant change in the types of technical and specific workplace skills required to compete in the 21st century economy. More than ever, information technology is driving the nation’s economy, which is why it is important to have strong computer skills. The 21st century worker must also have advanced math and reading skills, as well as the ability to analyze, solve problems, and communicate effectively—both orally and in writing.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs require post-secondary education and training.

The Need for an Increased Focus on Math and Science

In 1983, the landmark *A Nation at Risk* report, recommended that high school students be required to take a minimum of three years of math and science to graduate. Yet, 20 years later, only 22 states and the District of Columbia had implemented this requirement to graduate in the class of 2006.

It is important to know that AP students are much more likely than their peers to graduate from college in four years or less. Sadly, according to the College Board, there were nearly 500 thousand U.S. high school students in 2004 whose PSAT scores indicated that they were ready for AP Calculus, but did not take the course.

Here are more facts that demonstrate the need for more students to enroll in higher level math and science courses:

- America’s share of the world’s science and engineering doctorates is predicted to fall to 15 percent by 2010.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs requiring science, engineering or technical training will increase 24 percent between 2004 and 2014 to 6.3 million.
- An applicant for a production associate’s job at a modern automobile plant has to have the math skills equivalent to the most basic achievement level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math test to meet company proficiency requirements, a threshold that almost half of 17-year-olds do not meet.

DOL worked with partners from business and industry, as well as with job analysts and other experts to develop a competency model. The competency model represents the skills, knowledge, and abilities essential for successful performance in an industry or occupation. Learn more about occupation-specific skills at www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/default.aspx.

Multiple Pathways to Career Preparation

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs require post-secondary education and training. During high school, vocational training may be available through career academies, many of which have dual or concurrent enrollment arrangements with post-secondary education institutions. This is a great way to prepare for work and college, and often provides valuable links to employers.

Vocational Training Schools and Community Colleges

Technical training schools offer a wide variety of job training options in areas such as cosmetology, mechanical and automotive repair, paralegal services, travel services, secretarial, and medical assistance. Depending on location, they may be connected to a high school or a stand alone school that serves both youth and adult students. The typical academic preparation vocational courses are short, lasting from five to 12 months, although some training programs can take two or three years to complete.

Community colleges generally offer two-year studies with students earning an Associate's degree upon completion. This coursework usually prepares people for a technical occupation and includes occupational, general education, and elective courses (e.g., accounting, dental hygienist, computer programmer/analyst.) However, many community colleges have transfer agreements with four-year, post-secondary institutions for students who would like to continue their education. For more information about community colleges, visit www.careervoyages.gov/commcolleges-main.cfm.

Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities offer undergraduate and graduate programs leading to Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degrees. Their influence often extends far beyond the campus training curriculum and develops some of the nation's most highly-skilled workers. These institutions serve as a catalyst for many of the research and technology advancements that fuel regional and national economic growth. To learn more about four-year degrees, visit www.careervoyages.gov/4yearcolleges-main.cfm.

Many young people plan to attain post-secondary education. The skills your child can acquire at these institutions of higher education will contribute to their success in any occupation. However, not everyone desires or is capable of following the same road map. As much as you may want your child to graduate from high school and head to a four-year college or university, it's not necessarily the best or right choice for them. There are many other opportunities available to help prepare your child for a high-paying, rewarding career.

Military Service

Today's military is more advanced technologically and offers many more high-tech occupations than in the past. There are over 4,100 different job paths from pharmacy to journalism to electronics. That means military service people often enter the private sector as experienced and highly sought-after candidates. See www.todaysmilitary.com for more information and online tools to assist young people in exploring the options and benefits of military service.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is known as the other four-year degree. Apprenticeship is a highly-flexible training model that combines on-the-job learning with related classroom instruction, and paid employees receive technical and practical training in highly-skilled occupations. Apprentices enter into agreements with a program sponsor, which may be an employee association, employer, or employer group. The program sponsor assumes the responsibility of training, which includes working and learning under a mentor. Apprentices often earn college credit through their apprenticeship program. For more information on apprenticeship programs, talk to your school's guidance counselor or visit www.doleta.gov/OA/.

Industry-Recognized Credentials

Industry-recognized credentials are often used to meet the needs of business and industry to assist employees in meeting certification requirements for their job. Certificate programs show that a particular person has completed coursework in a focused area of study (e.g., advanced organizational leadership, customer service, or landscape specialist.) Some examples include credentials offered by the National Retail Federation for customer service and the Manufacturing Skills Standard Council's production training credential. For more information on these programs, go to www.careeronestop.org/Credentialing/CredentialingHome.asp.

Let's get started!

Never again do parents have to go about this alone! Your child's career guidance counselor, the local library, and business leaders can help you and your child find out more about career opportunities in your area. You can also connect with the local One-Stop Career Centers to find out about workforce information, education, and employment opportunities. The Department of Labor's Employment & Training Administration supports this national network of One-Stop Career Centers. The Centers offer a full range of basic information about workforce program services for both workers and employers. You can locate the nearest One-Stop Career Center by calling the DOL's toll-free helpline at (877) US2-JOBS (872-5627) or TTY (877) 889-5627.

We hope that this Parent Guide has sparked some interest in helping you to prepare your child for an exciting career in the 21st century workforce. We are not done yet though! The PTA and the U.S. Department of Labor plan to provide additional information on scholarships, college planning, choosing the best financial aid packages, and important career and education terminology on the **PTA Goes to Work** website at www.pta.org.

Special thanks are extended to the following organizations that supported the development of this Career Planning resource:

- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration
- U.S. Department of Education
- ACT
- America's Career Resource Network
- Mapping Your Future
- The State's Career Clusters Initiative
- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Center for Workforce Preparation
- The College Board

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