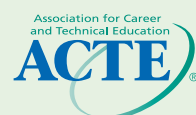




Resources for Career Development

Middle School to
Postsecondary and Beyond



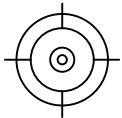
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Introduction

The [ACTE Quality CTE Program of Study Framework®](#) (2018) identifies student career development as one of its 12 high-quality CTE elements. “This element addresses strategies that help students gain career knowledge and engage in education and career planning and decision-making, including career counseling, career assessments, curricula that help students learn about careers, information about educational opportunities and workforce trends, and job search information and placement services” ([ACTE, 2018](#)).



This document provides resources for students, families, and school counselors related to sub-element e) “students in the program of study and their parents/guardians (as appropriate) are provided accurate and timely information on further education and training options, including application procedures, enrollment, financing, and their projected educational, employment and earnings outcomes.”

This document was developed by a team of staff from ACTE and Xello in collaboration with leaders of [ACTE’s Counseling and Career Development Division](#).

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If you are a school counselor or college and career counselor and would like to suggest resources to add to this document, please email Laura Scott at lscott@acteonline.org.

About Xello

Xello's mission is to help anyone, anywhere in the world create a successful future through self-knowledge, exploration and planning.

What started as a small, three-person company over 25 years ago, has evolved into an award-winning, K-12 future readiness platform used globally by nearly eight million students and educators. Learn more at <https://xello.world>.

How to Use This Document

For Students & Families, Sections 1 and 3 of this document provide both state-specific and nationwide resources related to CTE, career exploration, and postsecondary education and training. Section 2 of the document includes checklists that students and families can utilize during two transitional periods in the educational process: the middle to high school transition and the high school to postsecondary transition.

For School Counselors (including College and Career Counselors), this document is designed to serve as a starting-point for those new to working on student career development activities or with CTE programs, or for those who may be interested in improving their practice related to student career development. Sections 1 and 3 provide both state-specific and nationwide resources related to CTE, career exploration, and postsecondary education and training. Section 2 of the document includes checklists that counselors can utilize to help students during two transitional periods in the educational process: the middle to high school transition and the high school to postsecondary transition. Finally, Section 4 provides sample lesson plans and activities that can be used with students from 6th through 12th grade.

Why Student Career Development Matters

Federal & State Legislative Priorities

Strategies that help students gain career knowledge and engage in education and career planning and decision-making have been a major focus of CTE programs in recent years, both before and since reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act in 2018. The current version of the law, which is informally known as Perkins V, expanded the definition of “career guidance and academic counseling” to include sharing a broader array of information with students and families—not only postsecondary, financial aid and career options but also opportunities for dual enrollment, work-based learning and more—as well as providing support services for special populations. The law also encourages greater sharing of data, information and resources for career guidance and exploration among education and workforce development partners. In addition, it allows Perkins funding to be used to support students as early as grade 5 (down from grade 7 in the previous iteration of the law). This enables Perkins grants to do more to support career planning and exploration in the middle grades.

Career exploration through work-based learning has been another critical focus area for Perkins V through state and local Perkins plans, accountability, and required and optional uses of funding. Most notably, student participation in work-based learning is one option among several that states were presented with for measuring program quality on the secondary level.

In response to this focus in the Perkins V legislation, states have been prioritizing career development in several ways in their Perkins

plans. Twenty-two states signaled that career advisement on the secondary level is a priority through mechanisms like the required comprehensive local needs assessment and use of state leadership funds ([Advance CTE, 2020](#)). In addition, 90% of states enable Perkins funding to support middle grades, and about half of states are enabling funds to reach down to grade 5. For work-based learning, 24 states factor work-based learning into decisions to approve new or existing CTE programs and 27 states have chosen work-based learning for at least one of their program quality indicators.

In state-level policy, 22 states enacted new policies related to career counseling, guidance and planning in 2022 ([Advance CTE & ACTE, 2023](#)). This includes policies related to encouraging and expanding use of individual career and academic plans; ensuring that students, families and counselors have access to information about various CTE pathways and opportunities such as dual enrollment and work-based learning; and increasing FAFSA completion. In addition, 48 states enacted new policies supporting work-based learning and industry partnerships.

Policymakers are particularly interested in student career development because of its potential to benefit special populations, historically marginalized groups and other learners.

Providing more and better information, targeted guidance and opportunities for exploration can help students identify their interests, strengths and goals earlier and embark on pathways toward achieving those goals. In addition, research demonstrates that middle grades are a time when students can particularly benefit from career exploration ([Advance CTE & ACTE, 2020](#)). At this age, learners are forming their vocational identities and beginning to plan more realistically for high school coursework, postsecondary education and careers. For high school students who are considering postsecondary education, research also shows that targeted advising can help students complete the FAFSA ([Hodara, 2017](#)) and transition more successfully to college ([Jenkins, Lahr & Mazzariello, 2021](#)).

The *ACTE Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*[®] ([ACTE, 2018](#)) includes student career development as one of its 12 high-quality CTE elements. Educators and administrators who are interested in learning more can explore the [framework](#) and use the [self-evaluation instrument](#) to assess their program's current practices.

Section 1.

State Resources List

This section of the document provides links to state-specific resources related to CTE in the K-12 and postsecondary settings across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For each of the states highlighted in this document, we have attempted to include resources in each of the following categories:

ACTE state fact sheet

Updated annually, ACTE's state fact sheets summarize data on CTE participation and its impact on the state's skills gap(s).

State WBL resource

Work-based learning describes a continuum of experiences that prepare students for careers. Each state has its own definitions for the types of experiences that comprise the WBL continuum and criteria for if and how those experiences may count as academic credit.

List of CTE programs and/or CTE staff

CTE course offerings typically vary by school and district/county.

CTE Programs of study (POS)

Federally defined in Perkins V as a coordinated, non-duplicative sequence of academic and technical content at the secondary and postsecondary level that:

- incorporates challenging, state-identified academic standards;
- addresses academic and technical knowledge, as well as employability skills;
- is aligned to the needs of industries in the state, region, Tribal community, or local area;
- progresses in content specificity;
- has multiple "entry and exit points" that allow for credentialing; and
- ultimately culminates in the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential.

CTE delivery system information

At the local level, CTE is delivered at the middle school, high school, postsecondary and/or adult levels. It may be offered by the following institutions:

- **Middle schools**, which offer CTE programs and/or career exploration experiences for students in the middle grades.
- **Comprehensive high schools**, which provide both academic and CTE courses for secondary learners.
- **Career academies**, which are small learning communities, usually within a comprehensive high school, that integrate academic and CTE courses around a career theme.
- **Area CTE/technical centers**, which are facilities that offer CTE programs for learners from across schools, school districts, counties or educational service areas. These shared-time centers may serve secondary, postsecondary and/or adult students.
- **CTE/vocational-technical high schools**, which provide both academic and CTE courses, with a greater emphasis on CTE than is typical of comprehensive high schools.
- **Community/technical colleges**, which offer CTE programs to postsecondary and adult learners that lead to postsecondary certificates, associate degrees and/or industry credentials.
- **Four-year colleges/universities**, which offer CTE programs to postsecondary and adult learners that lead to postsecondary certificates, associate degrees and/or industry credentials. In addition, CTE educators may receive preparation to teach CTE or gain ongoing professional development through programs at four-year institutions.
- **Correctional/juvenile justice facilities**, which offer CTE programs to individuals involved in the justice system.

Community college locator/list

In many states, postsecondary career and technical education is delivered through a state community college system. Programs offered may vary by location.

Financial aid resource

Paying for postsecondary education and training can be a strain on many individuals and families. Many states have state-specific scholarships available to in-state residents.

Alabama

- [CTE in Alabama: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Handbook 2023](#)
- [CTE Clusters & Programs](#)
- [State Department of Education CTE Course Catalog](#)
- [CTE Courses of Study](#)
- [Community College System](#)
- [Commission on Higher Education Student Financial Assistance](#)

Arkansas

- [CTE in Arkansas: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Instructor Manual](#)
- [Division of CTE Directory](#)
- [CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [High School Career Centers](#)
- [Community College System](#)
- [Scholarship Search](#)

Alaska

- [CTE in Alaska: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Guide](#)
- [State Staff CTE Directory](#)
- [CTE Standards](#)
- Community Colleges: [Iliisaġvik College](#), [Kodiak College](#), [Mat-Su College](#) & [UAF Community & Technical College](#)
- [The Alaska Community Foundation Scholarship Opportunities](#)
- [Alaska Performance Scholarship](#)

California

- [CTE in California: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work Experience Education Information](#)
- [CTE Leadership Office Staff Directory](#)
- [Career Resource Network](#)
- [Community Colleges—Find a College tool](#)
- [CalJobs Search Tool](#)
- [Student Aid Commission](#)

Arizona

- [CTE in Arizona: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [CTE Work-Based Learning Guide](#)
- [Department of Education CTE Contacts](#)
- [Approved CTE Program List](#)
- [CTE Course Sequences](#)
- [CTE Districts Centers List & Map](#)
- [Community College System](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Programs](#)

Colorado

- [CTE in Colorado: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Information](#)
- [State CTE Staff Directory](#)
- [Career Cluster Model](#)
- [CTE Pathways](#)
- [K-12 CTE Programs](#)
- [Community College List](#)
- [Opportunity Scholarship](#)

Connecticut

- [CTE in Connecticut: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- [Department of Education CTE Info](#)
- [CTE Career Clusters, Programs of Study & Sample Occupations](#)
- [Technical High Schools](#)
- [State Colleges & Universities Campuses](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Office](#)

Florida

- [CTE in Florida: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- [Department of Education Career & Adult Education Division Directory](#)
- [2024-25 CTE Curriculum Frameworks](#)
- [Map of Technical Colleges/CTE Centers](#)
- [Community College Directory](#)
- [Financial Aid & Scholarships](#)

Delaware

- [CTE in Delaware: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Policies & Procedures](#)
- [Department of Education CTE Office](#)
- [Pathways Programs](#)
- [Technical Community College Campuses](#)
- [SEED Scholarship Information](#)

Georgia

- [CTAE in Georgia: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Information](#)
- [Department of Education CTAE Staff Contact List](#)
- [Approved Programs of Study](#)
- [Technical College System](#)
- [Scholarships & Grants—GA Futures](#)

District of Columbia

- [CTE in Washington DC: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Website](#)
- [CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [Office of the State Superintendent of Education CTE Directory](#)
- [University of the District of Columbia Community College](#)
- [Scholarships & Grants](#)

Hawaii

- [CTE in Hawaii: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Framework](#)
- [Department of Education CTE Information](#)
- [CTE Pathways & Programs](#)
- [Career Pathway System Handbook](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Office of Hawaiian Affairs Scholarships](#)

Idaho

- [CTE in Idaho: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [IdahoLeader Initiative Work-Based Learning Information](#)
- [Division of Career Technical Education Directory](#)
- [CTE Programs](#)
- [Map of Career Technical Centers](#)
- [Community & Technical Colleges](#)
- [Opportunity Scholarship](#)

Iowa

- [CTE in Iowa: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Information](#)
- [State CTE Staff Contact Information](#)
- [CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [CTE Content Areas](#)
- [Regional Planning Partnerships & Regional Centers](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Scholarships & Grants](#)

Illinois

- [CTE in Illinois: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- [CTE Information & Directories](#)
- [Programs of Study](#)
- [State CTE Course Catalog 2024](#)
- [Community College List](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Programs](#)

Kansas

- [CTE in Kansas: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Digital Reference Guide](#)
- [Secondary CTE State Contacts](#)
- [Career Clusters & Pathways](#)
- [Career Cluster Guidance Handbook](#)
- [Community & Technical Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Indiana

- [CTE in Indiana: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Office of Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeship](#)
- [State CTE Staff](#)
- [Next Level Programs of Study](#)
- [Learn More Indiana College Search Tool](#)
- [21st Century Scholars Program](#)

Kentucky

- [CTE in Kentucky: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- [CTE Program Areas](#)
- [CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [Tech System Directory](#)
- [Community & Technical Colleges](#)
- [Higher Education Assistance Authority](#)

Louisiana

- [CTE in Louisiana: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Guidelines](#)
- [State CTE Team](#)
- [Jump Start Graduation Pathways](#)
- [Community & Technical Colleges](#)
- [Student Scholarships & Grants](#)

Massachusetts

- [CTE in Massachusetts: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Plan Resource Guide](#)
- [State-Approved CTE Programs](#)
- [College, Career & Technical Education Liaisons](#)
- [Pathways Strategies](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Maine

- [CTE in Maine: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Internship Agreement Guidance](#)
- [Department of Education CTE Contacts](#)
- [CTE Programs & Standards](#)
- [CTE Centers & Regions](#)
- [CTE FAQs](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Michigan

- [CTE in Michigan: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Tool Kit](#)
- [State CTE Staff Directory](#)
- [CTE Quick Reference Guide](#)
- [Office of CTE Overview](#)
- [CTE Delivery Systems](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [MI Student Aid](#)

Maryland

- [CTE in Maryland: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Continuum](#)
- [Office of College & Career Pathways](#)
- [CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [Career Clusters](#)
- [CTE Program Locator](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Programs](#)

Minnesota

- [CTE in Minnesota: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Handbook](#)
- [CTE Staff Directory](#)
- [Programs of Study](#)
- [State Colleges & Universities](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Mississippi

- [CTE in Mississippi: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- [Department of Education CTE Staff](#)
- [Secondary Career Pathways](#)
- [CTE Curriculum](#)
- [Community College Directory](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Nebraska

- [CTE in Nebraska: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Workplace Experiences for Nebraska](#)
- [Department of Education OCTAE Staff](#)
- [State Model Programs of Study](#)
- [CTE Model & Career Clusters](#)
- [Community College Map & List](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Missouri

- [CTE in Missouri: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Career Pathways](#)
- [Department of Elementary & Secondary Education CTE Webpage](#)
- [2022-2023 Missouri Career Education Program Directory](#)
- [College & Degree Search Tool](#)
- [Grants & Scholarships](#)

Nevada

- [CTE in Nevada: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Guide to Work-Based Learning](#)
- [CTE Course Catalog](#)
- [CTE Program Directory](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Montana

- [CTE in Montana: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- [Office of Public Instruction CTE Staff](#)
- [Secondary Programs of Study](#)
- [Montana Ready](#)
- [Two-Year Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

New Hampshire

- [CTE in New Hampshire: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Resources](#)
- [Bureau of Career Development](#)
- [CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [CTE Centers](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Charitable Foundation Scholarships](#)

New Jersey

- [CTE in New Jersey: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Handbook](#)
- [Office of Career Readiness Staff](#)
- [Secondary Career Clusters](#)
- [County Vocational-Technical Schools](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

North Carolina

- [CTE in North Carolina: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Information](#)
- [CTE Program Areas](#)
- [CTE Curriculum](#)
- [CTE Regional Coordinators & District Administrators](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Community Foundation Scholarship Opportunities](#)

New Mexico

- [CTE in New Mexico: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Career Awareness Websites & Resources](#)
- [College & Career Readiness Bureau Staff](#)
- [Career Clusters Guide](#)
- [CTE Approved Programs of Study](#)
- [CTE Regions & Priorities](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

North Dakota

- [CTE in North Dakota: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Guidance](#)
- [State CTE Staff](#)
- [CTE Coordinated Plans of Study](#)
- [CTE Courses of Study](#)
- [Career & Technology Centers](#)
- [Public Postsecondary Institutions](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

New York

- [CTE in New York: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- [Education Department CTE Contacts](#)
- [State-Approved Secondary CTE Programs](#)
- [CTE Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [SUNY Community Colleges](#)
- [CUNY Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Ohio

- [CTE in Ohio: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Resources](#)
- [Career Tech Contacts & Resources](#)
- [Career Pathways](#)
- [Career Fields & Courses](#)
- [CTE Centers List](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Oklahoma

- [CTE in Oklahoma: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning](#)
- [Career Clusters](#)
- [CTE Courses & Pathways](#)
- [Programs by Tech Center District & Campus](#)
- [OKCareerGuide](#)
- [Colleges & Universities](#)
- [OkCollegeStart—Financial Aid](#)

Rhode Island

- [CTE in Rhode Island: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Criteria & Resources](#)
- [CTE Career Coordinator List](#)
- [Approved CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [CTE Program Locations](#)
- [Community College of Rhode Island Locations](#)
- [Help for Students](#)

Oregon

- [CTE in Oregon: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Perkins V Work-Based Learning Handbook](#)
- [High-Quality CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [CTE Approved Programs & Courses by School](#)
- [Career Connected Learning System](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Student Aid](#)

South Carolina

- [CTE in South Carolina: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Resources](#)
- [State CTE Personnel Contact Information](#)
- [Career Cluster Guides](#)
- [CTE Programs](#)
- [CTE Centers](#)
- [Technical College System](#)
- [Scholarships & Grants](#)

Pennsylvania

- [CTE in Pennsylvania: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Toolkit](#)
- [Secondary Program of Study Pathways](#)
- [CTE Industry-Recognized Credentials by Career Cluster](#)
- [CTE Centers Map](#)
- [Community College List](#)
- [State Grant Program](#)

South Dakota

- [CTE in South Dakota: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Toolkit](#)
- [CTE Regional Contacts](#)
- [CTE Career Clusters](#)
- [CTE Approved Courses](#)
- [Technical Colleges](#)
- [Financial Aid & Scholarship Info](#)

Tennessee

- [CTE in Tennessee: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Policy Guide](#)
- [CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [College, Career & Technical Education Overview](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Colleges of Applied Technology](#)
- [College for TN Financial Aid Info](#)

Vermont

- [CTE in Vermont: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- [CTE Official State Website](#)
- [CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [Colleges & Universities](#)
- [Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Texas

- [CTE in Texas: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning](#)
- [Statewide Program of Study Contacts](#)
- [Statewide & Regional CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [CTE Resources for Counselors](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [State of Texas Financial Aid](#)

Virginia

- [CTE in Virginia: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [High-Quality Work-Based Learning](#)
- [List of CTE Administrators](#)
- [List of Regional CTE Centers](#)
- [Community College Locator](#)
- [State Council of Higher Education Degree/Certificate Search](#)
- [Financial Aid Opportunities](#)

Utah

- [CTE in Utah: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#)
- [CTE State Office Organizational Chart](#)
- [CTE Career Pathways List](#)
- [CTE Career Pathway Course Charts](#)
- [Technical College Directory](#)
- [Scholarships & Aid Programs](#)

Washington

- [CTE in Washington: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Statewide Course Equivalencies](#)
- [Work-Based Learning](#)
- [State CTE Staff Contacts](#)
- [List of CTE Skill Centers](#)
- [CTE Programs of Study](#)
- [Community & Technical Colleges Search Tool](#)
- [Career Bridge](#)
- [Student Achievement Council—Financial Aid](#)

West Virginia

- [CTE in West Virginia: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Simulated Workplace](#)
- [State CTE Official Website](#)
- [Career Exploration & Student Engagement](#)
- [2024-25 CTE Content Standards](#)
- [CTE High School Programs of Study](#)
- [Community & Technical College System](#)
- [Student Financial Aid](#)

Wisconsin

- [CTE in Wisconsin: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Information](#)
- [State CTE Staff Directory](#)
- [Career Clusters & Pathways](#)
- [Technical Colleges](#)
- [Financial Aid Programs](#)

Wyoming

- [CTE in Wyoming: ACTE State Fact Sheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Guide](#)
- [State CTE Contact Information](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Resource Links](#)

Section 2. Transition Checklists

The term **transition planning** is likely familiar to school counselors and families of students with disabilities. Section [300.320](#) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that individualized education programs (IEPs) address transition planning no later than by age 16. Transition plans for students with disabilities include the needs, strengths, and skills required for a student to move from the public high school setting into postsecondary life ([PACER, 2023](#)).

School-aged students typically experience two significant transitions:

1. The transition from middle school to high school (in this case, 8th to 9th grade), and;
2. The transition from high school to post-secondary education, training, and/or employment.

The checklists below aim to assist counselors and students as they approach these two important milestones in the educational journey. These lists are designed to serve as a reference and starting point and should be adapted by students, families, and counselors to best fit their needs.

This document (and the following checklists) focuses on a broader definition of transition as “a change or shift from one state, subjects, place, etc. to another” ([Merriam-Webster, 2023](#)).

Middle School (7th or 8th grade) → High School (8th or 9th grade)

Student Checklist

- Complete an interest inventory
- Participate in high school visit/orientation
- Develop an academic plan for high school
 - Review HS course offerings
 - Complete and submit course selection sheet
- As desired, apply for alternate high school options (lottery-based programs, content-specific programs, academies)
 - Update resume/portfolio
 - Request letters of recommendation, as needed

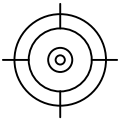
High School (12th grade) → Postsecondary/Employment

Student Checklist

- Review graduation requirements
 - Ensure that course requirements are met
 - Pay any required class dues/fees
- Prepare for and take/retake postsecondary entrance exams (ACT, WorkKeys, SAT, ASVAB)
- Attend college & career fairs
- Apply to postsecondary choices
 - Update resume and/or portfolio
 - Request letters of recommendation
- Prepare a financial plan
 - Complete FAFSA
 - Apply for scholarships
- Review and update career goals
- Participate in work-based learning activities

Section 3. Nationwide Resources

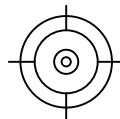
Career Awareness & Exploration



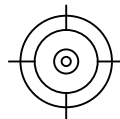
Career awareness activities help students learn about career options. **Career exploration activities** help students continue their awareness journey, with some opportunity for them to apply skills that they have learned.

- [ACTE Sector Sheets](#)—ACTE’s Sector Sheets describe CTE’s role in growing the qualified workforce for vital industry sectors.
- [Career One-Stop](#)—Learn about careers, find career information, and locate career resources and advice. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor.
- [ACTE’s Taking Business to School Series](#)—Sponsored by Xello, this series of publication briefs and resources to delve deeper into topics within [ACTE’s Quality CTE Program of Study Framework: Business and Community Partnerships](#).
- [Youth.gov—Career Exploration & Skill Development](#)—Youth.gov is the U.S. government website that helps you create, maintain, and strengthen effective youth programs.
- [ACTE’s CTE Working Wonders](#)—Explore career pathways and salary information provided by industry associations and other ACTE partners.

Postsecondary Education & Training



Community/technical colleges offer CTE programs to postsecondary and adult learners that lead to postsecondary certificates, associate degrees and/or industry credentials.



Four-year colleges/universities offer CTE programs to postsecondary and adult learners that lead to postsecondary certificates, associate degrees and/or industry credentials. In addition, CTE educators may receive preparation to teach CTE or gain ongoing professional development through programs at four-year institutions.

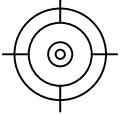
College/Program Locators & Resources

- [AACC Community College Finder](#)
- [Council for Higher Education Accreditation database](#)
- [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#)
- [BigFuture—Resources for Parents](#)

Scholarship Finders

- [Horatio Alger Association Scholarship](#)
- [BigFuture Scholarship Search](#)
- [U.S. News Scholarship Finder](#)

Resources for Special Populations



Perkins V defines the following learner groups as special populations:

- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults
- Individuals preparing for careers that are non-traditional for their gender
- Single parents, including single pregnant women
- Out-of-workforce individuals
- English learners
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system
- Youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is on active duty

States and local recipients of Perkins funding must report disaggregated data for these learner groups. There are additional provisions in the law about providing funding and services to special populations.

- [Military OneSource—Children, Youth & Teens Resources](#)
- [Housing Insecurity & College](#)
- [First in the Family](#)
- [Transition Guide—Post-Secondary Education & Training—I'm Determined \(imdetermined.org\)](#)
- [Transition Guide—Employment—I'm Determined \(imdetermined.org\)](#)
- [Disclosure Decisions to Get the Job Worksheet](#)

Section 4. Lesson Plans

Career Exploration Activities

The pages that follow contain three lessons excerpted from Xello’s eBook titled “Career Exploration Activities: 9 Engaging Career Exploration Activities to Introduce in Your K-12 Classrooms”.

Elementary School

- [Career Discovery: Tools for a Job \(pp. 17 - 19\)](#)

Middle School

- [Interview a Professional \(pp. 20 - 22\)](#)

High School

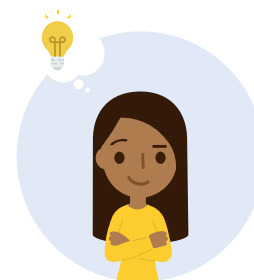
- [Job Shadowing \(pp. 23 - 25\)](#)

[Download the full Xello eBook](#)



Are you looking to implement career exploration activities into your classroom? You've come to the right place.

Our step-by-step lessons will help you feel prepared as you introduce students to career exploration, which will in turn boost their confidence as learners and help them acquire future-ready skills.



But First, What is Career Exploration?

Career exploration is just that: exploring the many careers, possibilities, and pathways that the world has to offer.

You may be thinking: “But [65% of children](#) entering elementary school will end up in jobs that don't even exist yet!”

Our response? Exactly.

It's important for students to be in tune with their interests, strengths, and preferred school subjects. When students have a good understanding of themselves, they can start solving the puzzle of what they want their future to look like. They can then prepare for this future by setting goals, choosing courses, and focusing on extracurricular activities that support that dream.

When educators embed career exploration into the framework of every child's education, students begin connecting the dots between what they're learning and how it's applicable to their future.

We use the term “explore” because, as educators know, kids and young adults are on a journey to discover who they are not only as a student, but as a contributing member to society. And when they have a good understanding of the working world, they can imagine how they might fit into it someday.



So now that we've talked high-level, let's get down to what career exploration actually looks like in the classroom.

Career Exploration IS

- ✓ Scaffolded and age-appropriate for learners of all abilities.
- ✓ The reflection and development of one's own interests, strengths, skills, values, and preferences.
- ✓ Learning about fields of study, industries, and specific occupations.
- ✓ Creating short and long term goals to achieve post-graduation success.
- ✓ Recognizing that everyone's pathway may be different, and determining what fit is best.
- ✓ Understanding the connection between school courses and the working world.

Career Exploration IS NOT

- ✗ Predicting what career a child will choose.
- ✗ Guiltting students into completing assignments in order to be successful down the road.
- ✗ Pigeon-holing oneself into a career pathway due to grades or parental pressure.
- ✗ Telling students that they must go to college to have a fulfilling career.

Since you are one of their guides on this exploratory journey, equip yourself with the knowledge that, like any adventure, there will be twists and turns along the way. But by prioritizing your students' needs and development, you will be positioning them for a better future.



CASE STUDY

How the School District of Lancaster Uses Xello to Engage Students in Future Readiness Activities

[Read Their Story](#)



Further Benefits to Career Exploration

Need further convincing that career exploration positively impacts students? Below are additional results to investing in college and career readiness programs, implementing future-ready activities, and partnering with families:



- ✓ Improved engagement
- ✓ Strengthened self-esteem
- ✓ Higher graduation rates
- ✓ Refined executive functioning skills
- ✓ Higher achievement levels
- ✓ Reduce absenteeism
- ✓ Matured social-emotional learning skills

How to Make the Most of Our Career Exploration Activities

We have created three age-appropriate career exploration activities for students in elementary, middle, and high school. For each activity we've provided a focus, instructional planning suggestions, and lesson delivery instructions. Following each activity, we've recommended enrichment opportunities to increase students' depth-of-knowledge.

We have also aligned Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Mindsets & Behaviors to each lesson. Please note that the CCSS have been chosen for a particular grade level, but you can adjust the standards accordingly.

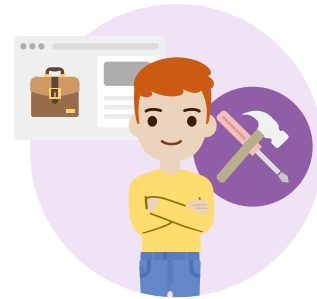
Like any cooking recipe, lesson plans are a jumping off point. We encourage you to make the activities your own, altering what you see fit to best engage your students.

Let's get started!



Activity Overview

Students will learn that every career has tools to get the job done. Students will use critical thinking skills, as well as possible research, to determine what tools are used for which jobs.



Common Core State Standards	ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours
<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4</p> <p>Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question</p>	<p>B-LS 1.</p> <p>Critical-thinking skills to make informed decisions</p>

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- Presentation slides with each slide showcasing a different tool (example: baking sheet of cookies, bulldozer, stethoscope, space shuttle)
- Career Book (suggestions: [The ABCs of What I Can Be](#), [Clothesline Clues to Jobs People Do](#), and [Whose Tools are These?](#))
- Student computers or construction paper, writing utensils, crayons, and markers





Lesson Delivery

Step 1

With your class, determine the definition of a job. Tell students that every job has tools to help them be successful. Ask them what a tool is and for examples of tools.

Step 2

Read one of the suggested books above to help students start connecting tools to careers.

Step 3

Brainstorm with your class what tools are needed for different people at school. Roles to consider:

- Students
- Teachers
- Cafeteria workers
- Principals
- Assistants
- Custodians
- Specials/Arts teachers



Step 4

Before you present the slideshow, set the expectation that all guessers need to raise their hand and not shout out the answer. Slide by slide, ask the class what job matches the tool on the screen. Feel free to include some ones that have multiple answers, such as a handsaw or swimming goggles! This will generate discussion, and students can practice being respectful of other ideas.



Lesson Delivery

Step 5

After working through the slide show, students will make “slides” of their own. If they know how to do one on the computer, they can create one matching your model. Alternatively, they can hand-draw their tools on a piece of paper.

Step 6

Finally, have students present one-by-one to the class to see what careers and tools are being showcased!

Enrichment Opportunities

- 1 Switching slides with other classes in the building to learn about other jobs not discussed in your room.
- 2 Creating slides for a character in a book. What tools and accessories best describe who they are, what they believe in, and what they do?



Interview a Professional



Activity Overview

Students will proactively seek a family friend or school staff member to gather information about a career.



Common Core State Standards	ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours
<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D</p> <p>Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D</p> <p>Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.</p>	<p>B-SS 3.</p> <p>Positive relationships with adults to support success</p>

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- Q&A worksheet, half filled with questions and half blank for students to write in their own
- Secure a list of teachers willing to be interviewed by students.





Lesson Delivery

Step 1

Assign a quick-write to students, having them generate a list of adults they know and what jobs they hold.

Step 2

Introduce the activity: Students will be interviewing a professional, preferably not someone from their immediate family. Students can use the adults from the quick-write as a jumping off point, or can choose someone entirely different.

Step 3

Pass out the Q&A worksheet with detailed questions, including:

- What educational requirements were needed to acquire your job?
- What was your personal career path?
- What are your day-to-day responsibilities?
- What are some aspects you like about your career?
- What are some challenges within your role?





Lesson Delivery

Step 4

Give students time to brainstorm some remaining questions to ask, although they may be more inspired during the actual interview.

Step 5

Once all interviews have been conducted, there are a lot of options on how to continue. Students could share their findings in small groups, switch completed interviews to read with classmates, or share two things they learned with the class, using specific examples. This could also become a full-blown presentation, complete with visuals, note cards, and direct quotes.



Enrichment Opportunities

- 1 Encourage a “dress up” or “show-and-tell” day to make career presentations come to life.
- 2 If students use Xello, have them compare and contrast their interview to the profession’s description on Xello.

Job Shadowing



Activity Overview

Students will seek out job shadowing opportunities in order to get hands-on experience at a job site.



Common Core State Standards	ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours
<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.D</p> <p>Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.</p>	<p>M 5.</p> <p>Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes</p> <p>B-SS 3.</p> <p>Positive relationships with adults to support success</p> <p>B-SS 3.</p> <p>Positive relationships with adults to support success</p>

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- All students should have access to a device to research and email.
- Video on Job Shadowing (such as [this one](#)).

This activity may spread into two days, depending on the amount of time needed for research.





Lesson Delivery

Step 1

Watch a video on job shadowing in, such as the one suggested above.

Step 2

As a class, review the benefits of job shadowing.

Step 3

Students should choose a career they are interested in pursuing.

Step 4

Next, task students with brainstorming trusted adults they know in that profession. They may also research local companies in the community to find additional opportunities.

Step 5

Students will craft an email requesting a job shadowing opportunity. They may need to locate or acquire the appropriate email address after school in order to complete this step.



Lesson Delivery

Step 6

Remind students of formal email etiquette. Students may need to send a practice email or receive teacher approval before pressing “Send.” Email etiquette includes:

- Emailing from school email address
- Short and focused subject line
- Salutations
- Proper grammar and spelling
- Block paragraphs
- Link to resume, if applicable

Enrichment Opportunities

1

Task (as a grade-level or building initiative) students to actually shadow a parent, family member, or family friend at their place of employment! Students can report back on responsibilities, needed skills, and key takeaways.

2

Organize students to volunteer running the school spirit store, selling tickets and concessions, and ushering at school plays. This will give students real-life experience with responsibilities and interacting with customers.

