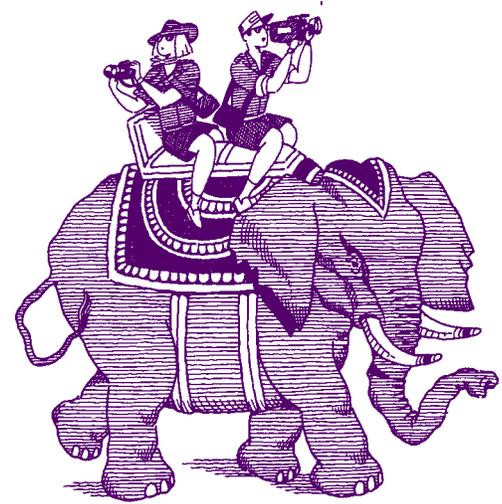


12 Ways Parents Can Help Their Children Prepare For Satisfying Roles in the World of Work

The experts tell us that parents are the strongest influences on their children in terms of values, beliefs, and career planning. They're also the second greatest beneficiaries of their children's career satisfaction. To be truly effective in helping in this area, however, parents themselves need to be involved and informed—especially in our new global workplace.

Here are a dozen ways you can truly help your child in middle school and beyond get on track for choosing, preparing for, and gaining compatible careers in our rapidly-changing employment climate.



1) Get a Handle On Your Child's Study Skills

If your child's study skills are less than wonderful, now is the time to ask teachers or other professionals for suggestions on books or courses that could help.

2) Know the Influencers

Get to know your child's teachers and counselors, as well as other staff who can help you with all your efforts concerning your child—study skills, enrichment, and career exploration in the middle school years and class and college selection and career development in the high school years.

3) Promote Participation

Motivate your child to do his or her best in and out of school. In school, encourage participation in math, science, English, communications, and computer class. Outside of school, encourage involvement in a variety of extracurricular activities, including volunteering. Not only will more experiences broaden your child's interests, but the skills gained can also apply to the world of work. Participation in sports and other group activities teaches teamwork, discipline, and goal-setting; volunteer activities and part-time jobs can help build skills needed in a future career.

4) Be a Career Education Advocate

Volunteer to help organize a Career Day at your child's school where parents and other professionals can come together to discuss with the students the day-to-day details of their jobs. You can also arrange for educators to come to talk about educational options or business leaders to talk to the students about what traits, skills, and experience they look for in their potential employees.

5) Ask About Assessments

Talk to your child's counselor about self-scoring assessments that can be used to help uncover your child's strengths, interests, motivational factors, and potential career areas. Early assessments can give your child a feel for a career area; high school assessments can help your child get more specific, making college decisions more related to a particular employment path.

6) Investigate Educational Options Early

Check into all the after-high school educational choices by the time your child reaches the eighth or ninth grade so that your child can plan to meet the requirements of the desired path. Tech Prep, for example, a relatively new educational option that leads to a two or four-year college degree, may no longer be an option for students after they've reached the tenth grade.

7) Check Out Some Helpful Resources

Enjoy some time together exploring work-related Web sites that can help your child learn the specifics (educational requirements, skills, salary ranges) of jobs that sound interesting. For starters, visit the Department of Labor's America's Job Bank at <http://www.AJB.dni.us>, which lists over 750,000 job openings by region and job skills. If you don't have access to the Internet, ask your school guidance counselor if you can check out her copy of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Be sure to review the PrepWorks CD for dozens of helpful resources as well.

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8) Share the Experience

Talk with your child about your own occupational experiences. Set good work habit examples by showing a strong work ethic—including promptness, respect, and responsibility. Arrange job shadowing experiences for your child—opportunities for him or her to spend a day at work with you, a friend, or a relative who has a job your child finds interesting.

9) Teach Some Basic Life Skills

Help your child learn more about the expenses involved in everyday living: have him/her research monthly rates for apartment rent, utilities and car insurance, and monthly gas, food, clothing, and entertainment costs in cities where your child would like to live. Then compare this amount to the average salary (minus taxes) of the job your child is working toward. This exercise will not only help your child get a handle on the type of expenses incurred when living independently but it will also help your child learn if the salary range of the job he/she is exploring will support his/her desired standard of living. (See the Budgeting Game on the PrepWorks CD for assistance in teaching teens about how much money it really takes to be self sufficient.)

10) Create a “Career Folder”

Systematically monitor your child’s progress by storing your child’s school and work-related documents in a file folder. The file may include report cards, letters of recommendation and records of volunteer and/or work experiences, test results from standardized and proficiency tests, a four-year educational planner for high school, career interest materials, awards, a list of extracurricular activities, letters of achievement from teachers, and anything that will be useful for a résumé or college application.

11) Review and Update Plans Yearly

Once in high school, review your child’s educational and career plans with him/her and with the school’s guidance counselor on a regular basis to be sure your child is working towards the uncovered goals. Make adjustments as needed.

12) Be Patient

Your child’s awareness of the world of work will not happen overnight. Your enthusiasm for his or her participation won’t guarantee instant success. But by starting early you’ll both be that much more informed and able to make changes as you both discover more about your child’s potential career interests. Look for everyday opportunities that will allow you to talk about the working world and your child’s evolving interests; watch newspapers, magazines, radio and television programs, and movies for topics that might spark family discussions about employment ideas. Guide your child through this process of growing awareness, and help him/her make the proper plans now. You’ll both benefit handsomely later.

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