

College and Career Readiness

The sooner you encourage your teen to look at the future with wonder and hope, the more readily they will seek a connection between what they learn in school and how it helps them confidently ask and answer such questions as: Who am I? Where do I want to go? How will I get there?

Your unique knowledge of your teen will help you guide them in exploring these questions.

Families at Home

You are your teen's most important advocate for thinking and planning for the future. The many tips in the family engagement model below will help you to get your teen ready for a career and the steps needed to begin—including a college or trade school, depending upon the career chosen. Here are a few ideas more directly related to helping your teen think ahead to a career.



Have your teen consider what is interesting to them and what they are curious about, even if it is different from their peers around them. Interest leads to motivation.



Make it safe for your teen to consider a wide variety of possibilities—try not to shoot down any ideas just because it isn't what you would pick.



Help teens choose culturally and family-relevant books (including biographies, etc.) that will open their imagination to different ways they can serve others as they mature. When appropriate, encourage them to speak to trusted adults about different types of interests and work, including the joys and difficulties involved in what they do to serve their families or serve in an occupation.



Encourage your teen to be an eager learner, but also encourage ways to apply learning by developing simple skills that build confidence—from something as simple as helping with chores around the house to more complex skills in any area of interest. This helps build all the competencies, including social/emotional.



Talk with your teen about the value of effort and hard work, no matter what the task is. Model and praise persistence toward goals, even small ones.



Encourage your teen to keep a journal to write out hopes, dreams, thoughts, feelings, and more, even if only writing once in a while. Youth who keep a journal of their own impressions can use it as a tool to build confidence in their own decisions, to rebound in times of difficulty, and to grow in resilience and social/emotional competency.



Help from School

Teachers and counselors in your teen’s school will also want to help them make plans for the future, whether that is how to thrive in the next school grade or in their plans after graduation. The school may include classroom activities which highlight careers for them to consider, including making connections between learning and how knowledge can be used in the world beyond the classroom. The school may also provide opportunities for your teen to begin a plan of study, choosing certain subjects to give more attention or to develop an ongoing career plan.

Ask your teen’s teachers what is done at school to help the students learn about career options.

Ask your teen’s teachers how they help students connect school learning with everyday life, including possible future occupations or areas of service.

Ask teachers, counselors, or other leaders what your teen needs to do to prepare for a chosen or potential future path—selecting the right classes and activities to be on track may begin as early as sixth grade.

Talk with your teen frequently about the future and how important attitudes and actions right now may be in reaching goals and dreams.

Ask how the school provides all students with academic supports (e.g., supplemental interventions) when needed to enable them to succeed in rigorous courses designed for college and career readiness.

Ask how the school provides all students with information, guidance, and support to secure financial assistance and scholarships for college or other postsecondary education.

Ask how the school helps to build students’ cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and social/emotional competencies.



