

A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child with the Career Planning Process



By: JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey, Ed.D.



Helping Your Child with the Career Planning Process

You've probably found a lot of areas in which your schooling didn't prepare you for parenthood, and now you've found one more – knowing how to help your child with career planning! National polls tell us that parents are the primary influence on the career development of their children – their choices about education in and after high school and about their work.

It may seem at first glance that we end up in one occupation or another through chance. Though there is an element of chance, there is also a step-by-step process of planning that can be very helpful. Following this process will increase the likelihood that your child will make choices that are more satisfying. So the purpose of this guide is to tell you about that process and to suggest ways that you, as a parent or significant adult in a young person's life, can help. This process is demonstrated in **Figure 1** below.

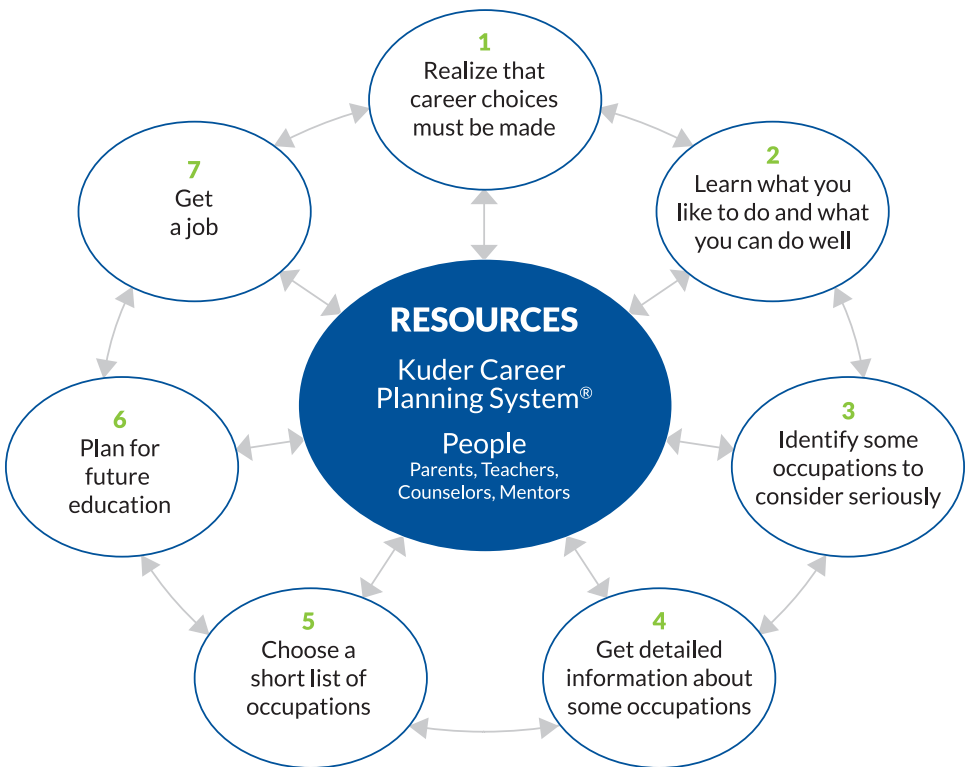


Figure 1
The Career Planning Process

1. Realize career choices must be made.

Children do not yet know what future decisions they will face related to career planning. Nor do they know that seemingly small choices – such as deciding to take general mathematics rather than algebra to fill a math requirement – are important. So the first step in good career planning is to learn that it is desirable to start thinking about career planning in the elementary and middle school years and to start making tentative choices. Of course, these can and probably will change. These early choices do, however, form the beginning of a chain of choices that is very important.



What can you do during the elementary school years to help your child prepare for the choices that are ahead? Here are a few suggestions:

- Take every opportunity to teach decision making through planning for family events, such as a party or a vacation. This attitude of “planfulness” will carry over to other areas of life.
- Commend your child for good work or behavior. Having a strong self-concept and a sense of being able to control one’s life successfully is an important ingredient of successful career planning.
- Talk about your job. Most children can’t explain what their parents do for a living.
- Take your child to work with you occasionally. Point out not only what you do but what others do.
- Encourage your child to talk with adult relatives and friends about their work.
- Help your child understand that all kinds of work are needed in our society and are honorable.
- Familiarize yourself with the way in which occupations are organized. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education initiated a federal career clusters project. Sixteen career clusters representing career opportunities for the 21st century economy were identified. These industry-based clusters are known as the **National Career Clusters®** and managed by Advance CTE. National Career Clusters are grouped into broad fields as shown in **Figure 2**.

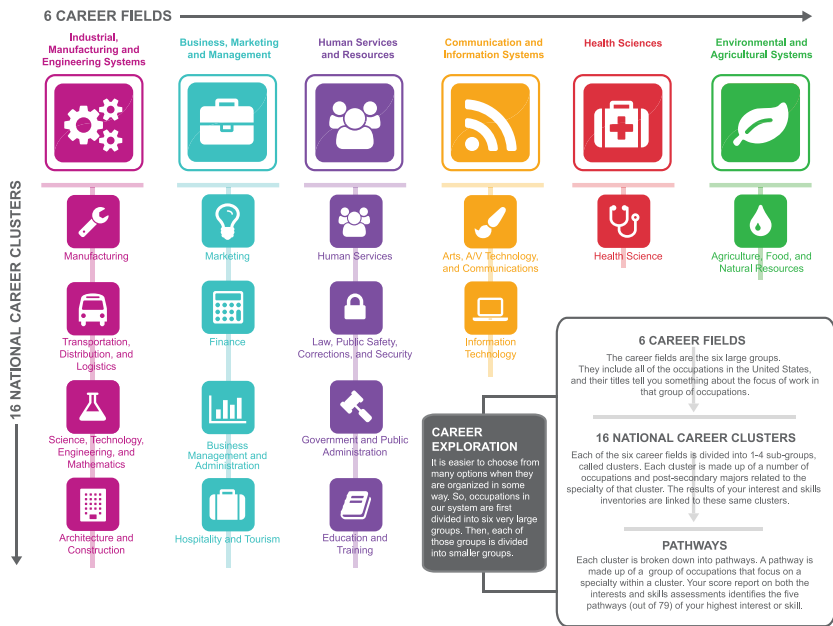


Figure 2
Career Fields, Clusters, and Pathways

- Students in grades PK-6 are introduced to the six career fields shown at the top of the graphic. Students in grades 7-12 use the National Career Clusters and the career pathways (sub-groups of occupations within clusters) to help explore occupations and build education plans. The occupations contained in each of the clusters are broken down into smaller groups, called **career pathways**. The occupations within a pathway are typically similar to each other and form a specialty within a cluster. Altogether, there are 79 pathways.

The 16 National Career Clusters

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources: Careers in the planning, implementation, production, management, processing, and/or marketing of agricultural commodities and services, including food, fiber, wood products, natural resources, horticulture, and other plant and animal products, and related professional, technical, and educational services.

Architecture and Construction: Careers in designing, planning, managing, building, and maintaining the built environment. People employed in this cluster work on new structures, restorations, additions, alterations, and repairs.

Arts, A/V Technology, and Communications: Careers in designing, producing, exhibiting, performing, writing, and publishing multimedia content including visual and performing arts and design, journalism, and entertainment services. Many people enjoy hobbies and avocations in this cluster rather than full-time employment.

Business Management and Administration: Careers encompass planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating business functions essential to efficient and productive business operations.

Education and Training: Careers in planning, managing, and providing education and training services, and related learning support services.

Finance: Careers in financial and investment planning, banking, insurance, and business financial management.

Government and Public Administration: Careers in executing governmental functions including governance, national security, foreign service, planning, revenue and taxation, regulation, and management and administration at the local, state, and federal levels.

Health Science: Careers in planning, managing, and providing diagnostic, therapeutic, and information and environmental services in health care.

Hospitality and Tourism: Careers in the management, marketing, and operations of restaurants and other food services, lodging, attractions, recreation events, and travel-related services.

Human Services: Careers in pathways related to families and human needs.

Information Technology: Careers in design, development, support and management of hardware, software, multimedia, and systems integration services.

Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security: Careers in planning, managing, and providing legal, public safety, protective services, and homeland security, including professional and technical support services.

Manufacturing: Careers in planning, managing, and performing the processing of materials into intermediate or final products and related professional and technical support activities such as production planning and control, maintenance, and manufacturing/process engineering.

Marketing: Careers in planning, managing, and performing marketing activities to reach organizational objectives.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: Careers in planning, managing, and providing scientific research and professional and technical services (including physical science, social science, and engineering) including laboratory and testing services, and research and development services.

Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics: Careers in planning, management, and movement of people, materials, and goods by road, pipeline, air, rail, and water and related professional and technical support services such as transportation infrastructure planning and management, logistics, mobile equipment, and facility maintenance.

2. Learn what you like to do and what you can do well.

People who study why some are happy with their work and others are not tell us that the most important thing to know is what you like to do; that is, your interests. In other words, if people can perform tasks that they like to do when on the job, they are much more likely to be happy with their work and to do well at it. By the middle school years, a child's interests are in the process of being formed. The older the child is the more settled these interests become. Here are some ways you can help your child discover his or her strongest interests:



- Expose your child to a wide variety of activities in which he or she can work with people in some way, can work with numbers and information, can work with tools and equipment, and can work with thoughts and ideas. Those who analyze the things that people do at work tell us that work activities include: working with people face to face; working with numbers, facts, and records; working with tools, machines, and equipment; and working with the mind and imagination.
- When your child discovers an interest in some kind of activity and does well at it, give him or her some kind of reward. This may be as simple as a good word, a high five, or a tangible present. Help your child understand what that interest is.
- Help your child make the connection between a personal interest or skill and how it can be used in a job.
- As you help your child with homework, point out how some of the things he or she is learning in school can be applied to work. This linkage is especially important for subjects in which your child achieves good grades.

Encourage your child to take the Kuder Career Interests Assessment® (KCIA), which measures interests, and the Kuder Skills Confidence Assessment® (KSCA), a self-rating of skills. Both of these are available online in Kuder Navigator®.

When your child takes the KCIA (interests assessment), he or she will receive a report that has four parts:

- **A listing of the five career pathways of highest interest (see Figure 3).** These pathways contain the occupations that would best fit your child's interests. Navigator provides a list of these occupations and complete descriptions of them, including a video about each. Students can also access a **National Career Cluster Ranking**. Pay special attention to the top three clusters. In most cases, the five pathways of highest interest are contained within these clusters. Navigator provides a description of each cluster, including a video, and details the occupations contained in each pathway under the cluster at all educational entry levels.
- **A list of occupations that relate to your child's interests (see Figure 4).** Because these lists can be very long, the system encourages your child to filter the list by an educational level that he or she plans to pursue. The list of occupations provided, then, is a combination of those that relate to the measured interests and can be entered at the selected educational level. In Navigator it is possible to change that level in order to see which occupations could become a reality if more (or less) education were attained.
- **A listing of sample education plans related to the top interests (see Figure 5).** Based on their top interests, students can review sample plans of study (ed plans). These outline recommended coursework to consider taking in high school and postsecondary education to attain a career in a particular career cluster or pathway.
- **A section called Person Match (see Figure 6).** In this section of the report, four real people – adults who have taken the same interest assessment and who say that they are satisfied in their jobs – whose interest assessment scores are most like those of your child have been identified out of a pool of about 1,000. Navigator displays a Q&A in which each of the four people discuss their work. These “Person Matches” suggest occupations that relate to your child's interests.

The KSCA measures your child's self-rating of skills related to work in the same 16 clusters and 79 pathways. The report of the results of this assessment are parallel to that of the interest assessment except that the profile presented represents your child's estimate of skills possessed or capability to learn them rather than interests. The more important of these two reports is the report of interests. Skills to support these interests can be learned through coursework and experience.

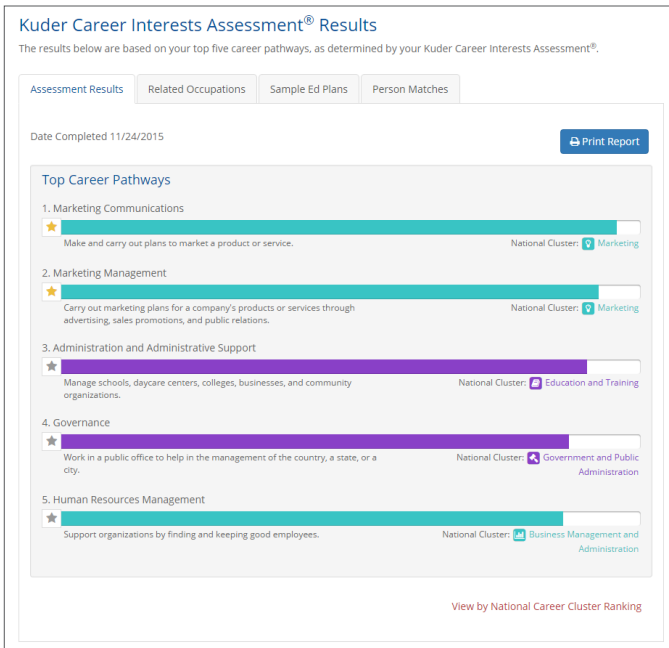


Figure 3
KCIA Assessment Results (Career Pathways)

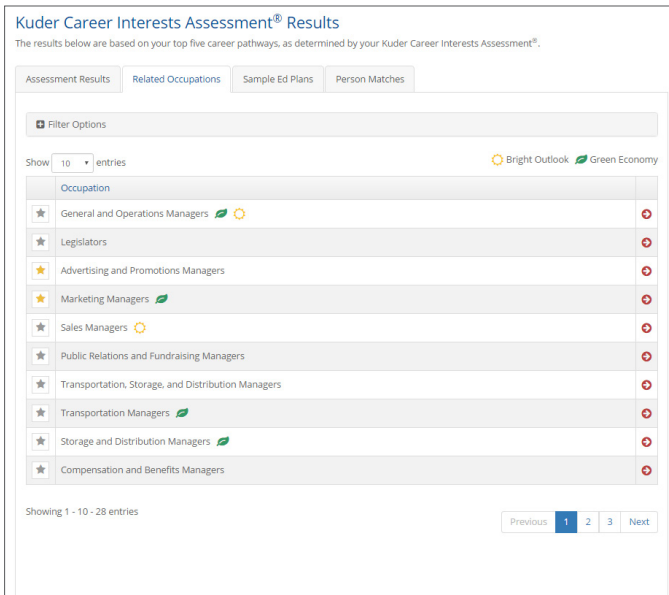


Figure 4
KCIA Related Occupations

EDUCATION LEVEL		English/Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies/Sciences	Other Required Courses	Career and Technical Courses and/or Degree/Major Courses for Construction Pathway	SAMPLE Occupations Relating to This Pathway	
Architecture and Construction: Construction Career Pathway Plan of Study for ► Learners ► Counselors ► Teachers/Faculty <i>This Career Pathway Plan of Study focuses on the Construction Pathway of the Architecture and Construction Career Cluster and can serve as a guide, along with other career planning materials, as learners continue on a career path. Courses listed within this plan are only recommended coursework and should be individualized to meet each learner's educational and career goals. *The Plan of Study used for learners at an educational institution, should be customized with course titles and appropriate high school graduation requirements as well as college entrance requirements.</i>									
INTERMEDIATE Interest Inventory Administered and Plan of Study Initiated for all Learners									
SECONDARY	9	English/Language Arts I	Algebra I	Earth or Life/Physical Science	State History Civics or World/History	All plans of study should meet local and state high school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements. Certain local student organization activities such as SkillsUSA are also important including public speaking, record keeping and work-based experiences.	- Introduction to the Built Environment - The Language of Architecture and Construction - Information Technology Applications - Safety, Health and the Workplace Environment - Principles of Construction	► Carpenter ► Concrete Finisher ► Construction Engineer ► Construction Foreman/Manager ► Construction Inspector ► Contractor ► Design Builder ► Drywall Installer ► Electrician ► Electronic Systems Technician ► Equipment and Material Manager ► General Contractor/Builder	
	10	English/Language Arts II	Geometry	Biology	U.S. History				
	11	English/Language Arts III (Technical Writing)	Algebra II	Physics	Economics Psychology				
POSTSECONDARY College Placement Assessments-Academic/Career Advice Provided									
POSTSECONDARY	12	English/Language Arts IV (or Statistics)	Calculus/Trigonometry Math (or Statistics)	Chemistry			- Applications in Construction	► Hearing, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic ► Mason ► Painter ► Paperhanger ► Plumber ► Project Estimator ► Project Inspector ► Project Manager ► Roofer ► Safety Director ► Sheet Metal Worker ► Specialty Contractor ► Superintendent ► Tile and Marble Setter	
	Articulation/Dual Credit: Approved Postsecondary courses may be taken toward the secondary level for articulation/dual credit purposes.								
	Year 13	English Composition (English Literature)	Algebra Trigonometry	Physics	American Government or History Psychology/ Interpersonal Skills	All plans of study need to meet learner/ career goals with regard to required degrees, licenses, certifications or journey worker status. Certain local student organization activities may also be important to include.	- Advanced Plan Reading - Construction Ethics and Legal Issues		
	Year 14	Speech/Communication	Business Accounting Pre-Calculus or Calculus	Environmental Science	Sociology Business Law			- Technical Applications in the Construction Industry - Construction Internship	
Year 15	Continue courses in the area of specialization.								
Year 16									

Figure 5
KCIA Sample Ed Plans

Kuder Career Interests Assessment® Results			
The results below are based on your top five career pathways, as determined by your Kuder Career Interests Assessment®.			
Assessment Results	Related Occupations	Sample Ed Plans	Person Matches
Job Title	National Career Cluster	Pathway	
Vice President, Security Company	Business Management and Administration	General Management	
Attorney, Family Law	Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security	Legal Services	
Coordinator of Adult and Information Services, Public Library	Education and Training	Professional Support Services	
Owner, Staffing Services Company	Business Management and Administration	Human Resources Management	

Figure 6
KCIA Person Matches

Review the results of the KCIA with your child, and ask your child's school counselor to assist you in interpreting them. Your child may print out his or her results, or may give you access through your Kuder Navigator Parent Account to these results.

The assessment results can help you and your child to know which of the clusters of occupations or pathways within them to explore first. They also can help in planning for courses in high school that will develop the skills needed to do work in that area.

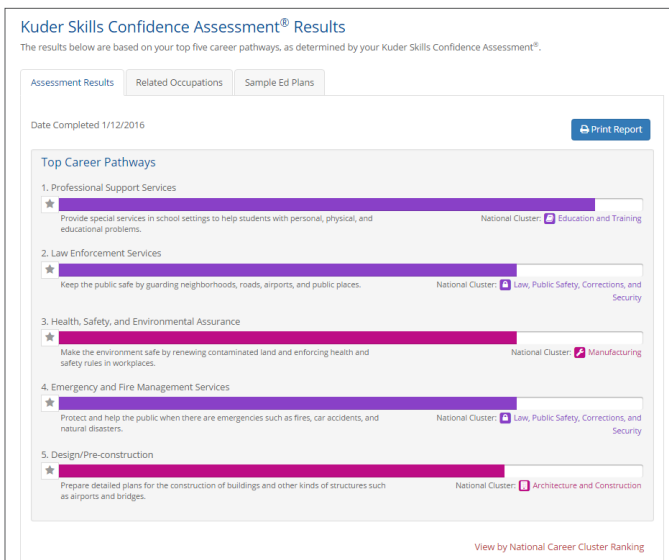


Figure 7
KSCA Assessment Results (Career Pathways)

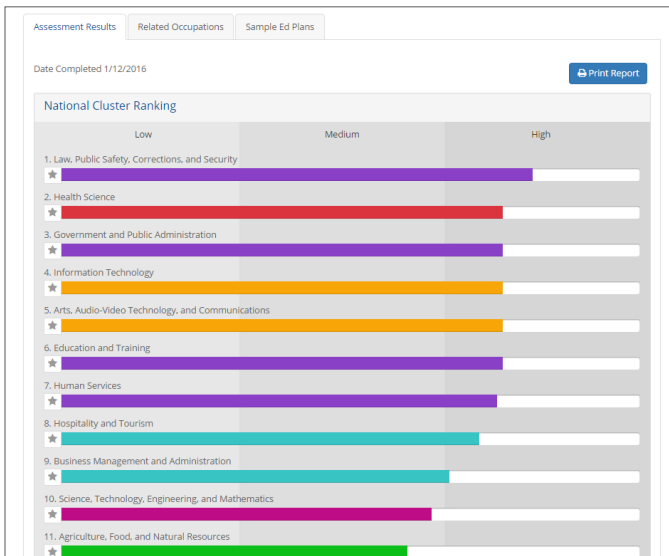


Figure 8
KSCA Assessment Results (Career Clusters)

Review the results of the KSCA with your child (**Figures 7 and 8**). These results can your child identify the areas of greatest skill. Remember, though, that skills can be developed through coursework and life experience, and that these results will change. It is best to consider your child’s interests first and then make plans to build the skills needed for occupations suggested by those interests.

3. Identify occupations to consider seriously.

There is no one right occupation for your child, but there are many occupations that can suit his or her interests and skills. With all the changes that are taking place rapidly today, it is good to have several possible choices. Though there are about 1,000 occupations, it is easy to shorten the list of possibilities after getting the results of the KCIA (interest assessment). Here are some ways to do that:

- Look at your child's results in Navigator (www.mycareershines.org) or the school's custom Kuder system. You will need to sign on as a parent and, in order to access the results. Through their account, your child will need to provide with your parent access. Then, you can create your parent account.
- The results of the KCIA are included under the **Assessment Results** section. View the results to see the titles of groups of occupations, or pathways, which are the closest match for your child's interests. Click on the title of the pathway to read its definition and see which occupations belong to it. The icon at the end of each bar tells you which cluster the pathway belongs to. If you click on that icon, you can learn more about the cluster and all of its pathways and occupations.
- This list of **Related Occupations** will be a good starting point for discussion of possible future choices. Over time, your child, with your guidance, can build a favorite occupations list and save it to his or her My Portfolio Items. You child can remove and add occupations as he or she learns more about them. If your child has taken all of the Navigator assessments (measuring interests, skills, and work values), pay attention to occupations that are suggested by two or even all three.
- Add the names of other occupations to that list that you and your child have thought of as possibilities.

4. Get detailed information about some occupations.

Now is the time to get more detailed information about the occupations you identified in Step 3. Try these activities:

- Sign on to Navigator or the school's custom Kuder system. Read the descriptions of occupations suggested by the KCIA with your child. For most occupations you will also have access to a short video. This video will help your child understand the day-to-day work tasks of the job.
- Have your child save the names of occupations that he or she favors in their portfolio. Do this by clicking on the star next to the occupation's description.

5. Choose a short list of occupations.

It is important to shorten the list of favorite occupations before or during the early high school years in order to make a four-year education plan (courses) related to those tentative choices. This step may be the most difficult one. Here are some things that can help:

- Assist your child in finding a few people in your community who work in the occupations he or she is considering. Set up an appointment to spend a half hour with each for an “information interview.” In this interview, your child should ask questions about what the person does at work every day, what he or she likes and dislikes about the work, how much training it took, and what the future of the occupation may be.
- Using Navigator or the school’s custom Kuder system, find out how much and what kind of education (apprenticeship, career-technology school, community college, four-year college) is needed after high school to enter each occupation being considered.
- Find out what the U.S. Department of Labor is predicting about the future of each occupation. Will the demand for workers in this field grow or decline? Also, find out what the typical salary is for people who work in each occupation. This information is provided in each occupational description area in Navigator.
- After learning about daily work tasks, educational requirements, future job demand, and income, help your child relate his or her interests, goals, and emerging values to each occupation being considered.
- Finally, help your child shorten the list of possibilities (which may later be changed) to three.



6. Plan for future education.

Though both parents and school counselors often get it backwards, young people do need to decide about their occupational goals before planning their courses in high school and their education beyond high school. Once your child has shortened the list of favored occupations to three, it will be possible to plan for education beyond high school and select courses for high school that would be most helpful. Here are some ways to do that:



- Using Navigator or the school's custom Kuder system, learn which clusters and pathways are associated with each of your child's favored occupations.
- Look at a suggested four-year high school plan for relevant clusters by selecting the **Ed Plans** feature in Navigator.
- Assist your child to select courses for the entire four years of high school, or at least for the next school year. Your child's school counselor can also view this plan. You may want to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the school counselor to discuss the plan.
- Make a tentative decision with your child about the kind of education beyond high school he or she wants and is needed for the occupations of choice.
- Be sure your child's four-year high school plan includes courses required by a four-year college (if this is the choice made in the previous step) as well as courses that prepare him or her for work.
- Using Navigator or the school's custom Kuder system, help your child find schools to attend after high school that offer the major(s) needed for the occupations selected. The school comparison function allows you to compare the features of up to three schools side by side.
- Help your child get through all the steps of planning for further education after high school: identifying schools, visiting campuses, taking the necessary entrance examination, completing applications, assessing financial need, and applying for financial aid. Navigator includes extensive information on financial aid including tools to help with the **FAFSA**. Your child can make notes using the **Note Taker** about the progress in all of these steps.

7. Get a job.

Cheer up! After all of this work, your child will finally get a job and become financially independent. This step requires that he or she keep a portfolio (the Kuder system offers one online for a lifetime) that includes assessment results; education plans; favorite clusters and pathways, occupations, schools, and scholarships; and job-seeking tools, including resumes, cover letters, and references. Data stored in this personal portfolio plus additional content added by uploading documents or images can be displayed as a public portfolio, the **e-Profile** within Navigator, for prospective employers or used in college applications.



You can help with the step of getting a job, too, in these ways:

- As “networking” is the best way to get a job, encourage your young person to talk with relatives and family friends about the kind of job he or she is looking for.
- Help your child understand what employers expect of an employee. More people are fired because they do not practice good work habits (being consistent in attendance, being on time, getting along with the boss and co-workers) than because they can’t do the tasks required in the job.
- Encourage your child to use the websites and searches provided in Navigator to identify possible employers. Also, encourage him or her to develop an attractive and up-to-date e-Profile in Navigator.

Of course, when you get through with this whole process, it may start all over again! Especially in the 21st century, people will have many employers and several different kinds of jobs. For that reason, they need to keep their portfolios updated, and they need to understand the process we have just described. The combination of these two things will help them make the many changes they may need to make over their life span.

Work with your child to start your free parent account today and follow your child’s career planning process!

About Kuder, Inc.

Kuder, Inc. (Kuder) was founded in 1997 to provide career options to students and adults through self-assessment and education. Kuder's products and services are based on the vision of Dr. Frederic Kuder, a pioneer in the career development industry. Since the creation of paper assessments by Dr. Kuder in 1938, the Kuder suite has grown and developed in response to changing needs and technology. Kuder offers customized online solutions for career planners at all life states while facilitating communication and collaboration between key stakeholders in economic prosperity – education, business, industry, and government agencies. Kuder's faculty conducts ongoing research to ensure that our solutions are reliable and effective.

The Kuder Career Planning System® (KCPS) offers comprehensive education and career planning tools and resources to help address the needs of a diverse population of users. Components of the KCPS include Kuder Galaxy® for grades PK-5, Kuder Navigator® for middle school and high school students, and Kuder Journey® for postsecondary students and adults. Each is backed by a powerful administrative database to track progress, facilitate curriculum planning, support data-driven decision making, and communicate directly with system users. Kuder also offers a complete line of curricula, professional development, needs assessment, and training services.

About the Author

JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey, Ed.D. has enjoyed a long and varied career in the field of career development, including positions as a high school counselor, director of guidance, university professor, career counselor in a university counseling center, developer of DISCOVER® (a computer-based career planning system), and executive director of the ACT® Educational Technology Center. She is currently the executive director of product development for Kuder, Inc. (Kuder). She has authored and co-authored many journal articles and several books, including a popular textbook for training counselors, *Career Interventions in the 21st Century*. She has also developed national and international versions of the Career Development Facilitator curriculum, including the versions used to train career development advisors in Japan and in the U.S. national prison system. She is a past president of the National Career Development Association and recipient of its Eminent Career Award.



302 Visions Parkway | Adel, IA 50003 | 800.314.8972 | info@kuder.com
Client Engagement (Support): 877.999.6227 | clientengagement@kuder.com