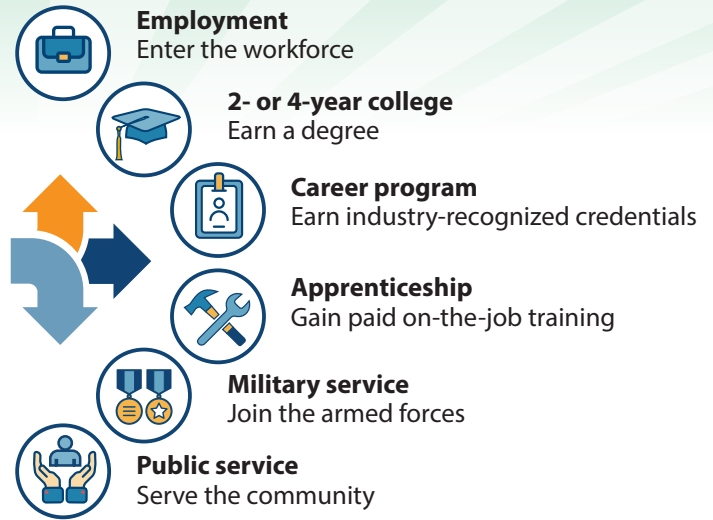


What planning activities can help my student prepare for life after high school?

There are many pathways to success in life. But no matter the path a student chooses, parents and caregivers should start planning early to ensure their child is prepared for life beyond high school.

To guide families, we draw on research to highlight **planning activities** in middle school and high school that can help prepare students for college and careers.

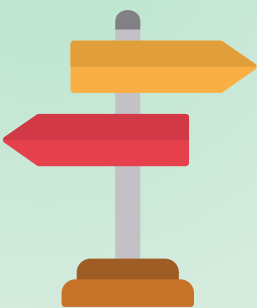
Pathways to Success After High School



Promising practices to plan for successful pathways after high school

This resource is part of a **college and career readiness series for families** from the [Regional Educational Laboratories](#) at the U.S. Department of Education. The planning activities featured are just some of the evidence-based or promising practices available to support college and career readiness.

College and career advising



College and career advising can help students learn about pathways that fit their interests. Advising also can help students identify the steps to attain their goals.¹

A variety of people can provide college and career advising:

- School counselors
- Academic advisors
- Teachers
- Family members
- Business leaders
- Community members



Individualized career plans



By grade 9, students should create an **individualized career plan**, also known as an individual plan of study. This plan maps out a student's academic and career goals and the actions students will take to achieve them.

Students should work with adults to tailor this plan to their interests and skills and to refine the plan over time.²

Career planning components may include:

- Goal setting
- Personal strength assessments
- Career interest assessments
- Career exploration activities
- Career information/forecasts
- Multi-year course plans
- Skill development
- Service learning goals and achievements



Career planning also can help students explore which jobs are expected to be in demand in the future and how much the jobs may pay—crucial in today's rapidly changing economy.³



Read more about it

- [How Individual Plans of Study Can Support Students' College and Career Readiness and Success](#) (REL Central)
- [High-Quality Advising: Building Systems for Implementing Individualized Career Plans](#) (REL Southwest)
- [Education and Career Planning in High School: A National Study of School and Student Characteristics and College-Going Behaviors](#) (REL West)

What if my student has an individualized education program (IEP)?



Many features of IEPs may help students with disabilities plan for their futures.⁴ These features include:

- Identifying college and career goals that map to the student's unique needs and aspirations.
- Bridging a student's IEP with postsecondary goals.
- Identifying meaningful opportunities for developing college- and career-ready skills.
- Monitoring a student's progress.

Guiding questions for parents and caregivers



Use the following questions to guide conversations with your student:

- What jobs and career paths fit my student's interests, skills, and talents?
- What are my student's goals and hopes for their future?
- What steps does my student need to take to achieve their goals?
- Are the careers my student is interested in expected to be in demand in the future and pay a living wage?

References

- ¹ [Four Pillars of Support for High School Students' College and Career Readiness](#) (REL Appalachia, 2022); [Preparing a Career-Ready Student](#) (REL Southeast, 2018); [Career Readiness: How Do We Counsel](#) (REL Southeast, 2021).
- ² [How Individual Plans of Study Can Support Students' College and Career Readiness and Success](#) (REL Central, 2023); [Preparing Students for a Bright Future: Individual Learning Plans](#) (REL Southwest, 2020).
- ³ [Ready, Steady, Grow: Preparing Students for Changing Career Requirements](#) (REL Mid-Atlantic, 2018).
- ⁴ [Five Steps for Developing Effective Transition Plans for High School Students With Autism Spectrum Disorder](#) (Szidon et al, 2015).

Learn more



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