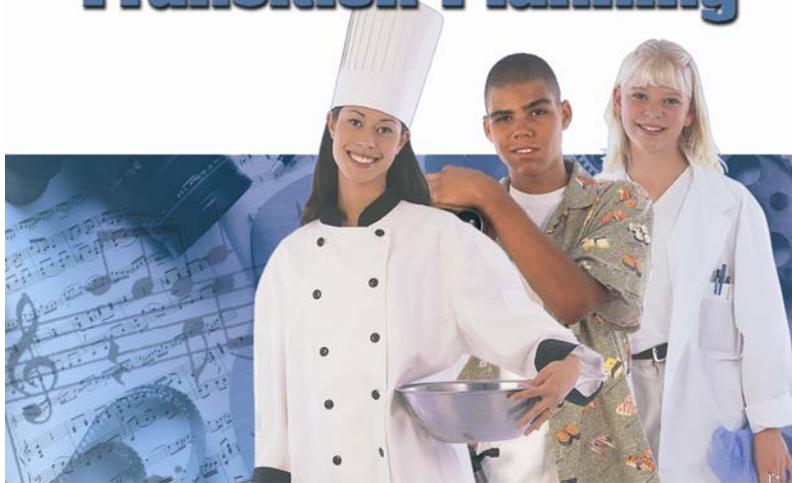


More Successful Transition Planning



20 Top Questions and Ways to Answer Them

Using

Choices[®]
EXPLORER

BRIDGES
Explore • Plan • Achieve

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Knowledge of the World of Work

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1

I am thinking about a career in _____. What do workers actually do; what are the requirements and benefits?

To the student: It is important to be sure the career you are considering is actually what you think it is. What day-to-day tasks would you perform? What abilities and skills are required? Will you be satisfied with the salary and working conditions? Completing activities to be sure you know the details of careers you are considering will prevent being disappointed later on. If you know the program you want to pursue after high school, you can use it to find possible careers.

To the teacher: Students often have too little or inaccurate information about careers they are considering. Activities that help verify or reject these ideas by providing accurate and thorough information are critical. And letting them gather the information is much preferable to other approaches, such as looking it up for them or correcting their misperceptions.

90-Minute Activity

1. Type a career name in the Search box.
2. Locate and click on it in the search results.
3. Read all five sections of the article: What They Do, Salary and Outlook, Education, Interview and Get Started.
4. Complete all three activities under Get Started.
5. List the new things you learned about the career.
6. Make another list of the things you do and do not like about the career.
7. Discuss your lists with a teacher or family member. Tell them why the career appears to be a good or poor match for you.

90-Minute Activity

1. Click Learn.
2. Click Alphabetical List under Find Majors by. Select a letter, then click on an article.
3. In the box to the right, click Related Careers.
4. Select at least two related careers and read all five sections: What They Do, Salary and Outlook, Education, Interview and Get Started.
5. Complete all three activities under Get Started for the career that seems like the best fit for you.
6. List the new things you learned about the career.
7. Make another list of the things you do and do not like about the career.
8. Discuss your lists with a teacher or family member. Tell them why the career appears to be a good or poor match for you.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to locate information about the requirements and rewards of preferred occupations.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities: Ask students to identify post-secondary education programs related to the course being taught. Examine the classified section of the local newspaper to identify occupations related to the course being taught.

2

If I major in _____, what careers will that prepare me for?

To the student: Before picking a major, it is a good idea to know the careers that are most likely to result. Some programs, such as business, prepare people for many different careers. People with other majors, such as chemistry, are apt to enter a smaller number of careers. But it is also smart to think about the high school subjects you like and are good at. By looking at what comes both before and after a program, you'll make a better career decision.

To the teacher: Choosing a program is often – but not always – an important step in career planning. Students need to know that preparation for some careers requires a specific pattern of education. Several paths may be taken for other careers. Finally, like careers, majors are best selected when students consider what they like and are good at doing.

90-Minute Activity

1. Click Learn.
2. Select one of the 14 major zones that interests you.
3. Click on the major you are considering.
4. Read the Profile and Talking to Students sections to be sure this is the major you are thinking of.
5. Look at Related Careers. Pick two that interest you.
6. Read all five sections of the career articles: What They Do, Salary and Outlook, Education, Interview and Get Started.
7. Complete all three activities under Get Started.
8. Create a like and dislike chart for each occupation.
9. Discuss your work with a teacher or parent.

90-Minute Activity

1. Click Learn.
2. Under Your School Subjects, click on the school subject that you like most and have done best in.
3. Click on one of the articles.
4. Read the Profile and Talking to Students sections to be sure this is the major you are thinking of.
5. Look at Related Careers. Pick two that interest you.
6. Read all five sections of the career articles: What They Do, Salary and Outlook, Education, Interview and Get Started.
7. Complete all three activities under Get Started.
8. Create a like and dislike chart for each occupation.
9. If you also did the activity above, compare the two charts.
10. Do they suggest more than one major? Discuss your work with a teacher or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will learn about college programs and how preparation in one program may lead to several career opportunities.”
- “(Name) will identify high school courses related to careers and college programs.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities: Describe two post-secondary majors that students who like and do well in this course might consider.

3

Everyone keeps asking, “What are you going to be?” I just don’t know. What should I do?

To the student: It’s OK to be unsure about your career. When people who know you ask, tell them you are working on it. You may want to ask them what they think are the best careers. Or maybe they know someone you could interview about a career you are considering. Remember that you need to learn about both careers and yourself. Actually, the more you learn about careers, the easier it will be to decide which are right for you.

To the teacher: Career planning is made easier when built on a good understanding of the world of work – clusters of occupations, industry structures, tasks, requirements and rewards. As they learn about careers, students will also be learning about themselves, particularly their preferences, strengths and needs. Helping them learn how to find career information quickly and easily is a major contribution that will serve them throughout their lives.

Variable Time Activity

1. Enter “research a company” in the Search box at the top right of the screen. Click Go.
2. Click on the first entry and read the Introduction and How To sections. Focus on the Industry and Company sections of How To.
3. Next, read the Resources section. Ask your teacher or librarian for help in identifying information about industries or companies that interest you.
4. Make a short list of companies you would like to visit and discuss the list with a teacher or parent.
5. Use the phone book or contact the local chamber of commerce for names of people to call for an appointment.
6. Before you go, make a list of questions you want to ask.
7. After the interviews, decide whether there are jobs at the companies you visited that you would like to consider in your career.

Variable Time Activity

1. Click on Work. Scroll down and click on Job Hunting.
2. Click on How to Arrange a Job Shadow or Informational Interview and read the Introduction.
3. Click on the How To section for specific suggestions on identifying a company, arranging the interview and preparing for it. Ask a teacher for help and suggestions.
4. Click on Resources and then choose Questions to ask at the Informational Interview.
5. After completing at least two job shadows, make a list of the tasks you saw the workers doing, how much preparation is required for the jobs, and which parts you did and did not like. Print and discuss the results with a teacher or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate the ability to locate and discuss information about occupations.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- List five or more careers where the content of this course is used in performing tasks.
- Using a comparison of two occupations, have students identify all the relationships to class content.
- Examine the classified section of the local newspaper to identify occupations related to the course being taught.

4

If I want to go to college or university, what courses do I need to take in high school?

To the student: You are wise to make the connection between courses in high school and getting into university. Most universities expect that you will have taken certain courses. If you want to major in a certain subject, you will probably need to take additional courses. Most university courses will be more difficult than anything you take in high school. So, it is a good idea to take upper level courses in English, math and science. They are more challenging, but also more like university courses. Pick up a course catalogue from your teacher or guidance counsellor. It usually has a list of courses most universities require.

To the teacher: Many students need help understanding the importance of course selection in high school. They also need encouragement to take more challenging sections of courses and explanations why this is important. Taking courses required by most universities keeps options open. Such courses also result in more salable skills for the job market.

60-Minute Activity

1. Click on Learn. In the Student Planner box on the right of the screen, click Introduction. Then select the tab for 9th Grade. It contains a list of the minimum courses most four-year universities expect you to take in high school. Read the list carefully and then go back and read the information on the rest of the tabs in this section.
2. On the Learn page, choose a major zone you might be interested in studying.
3. Click on one of the articles. Read the information under both the Profile and Talking to Students tabs.
4. Check out the Related Careers box and the Experience and Interests section in the Getting Ready box. They can give you clues whether you would like this area of study.
5. If you decide the program is interesting, add it to your portfolio. Keep a list of the ones you save and discuss them with a teacher or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will identify and plan high school courses that match post-secondary and/or career requirements.”
- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to develop a college planning timeline for discussion with a teacher or parent.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Identify university entrance requirements satisfied by this course.
- Discuss the requirements and activities of this course in relation to content of courses at the post-secondary level.

5

**If I don't want to go to university,
what careers are still open to me?**

To the student: There are a whole lot of careers available to high school graduates. Many careers are entered through apprenticeships, short courses at trade schools or by correspondence. Employers also offer training to their workers.

To the teacher: Many students need help identifying careers that don't require four-year degrees. Help them identify local resources for post-secondary education. Provide information about financial aid. Discuss the relationships between earnings and education. Discuss the pros and cons of postponing further education.

30-Minute Activity

1. Click Work.
2. Choose a career zone and select a career.
3. Read the What They Do and Salary and Outlook sections.
4. Check if there is a Multimedia box on the right with a video showing what the occupation is like.
5. If you like what you have learned so far, click on Education to see the requirements.
6. If training beyond high school is required, go to one or more of the websites for the career (listed in the Get Started section) and find sources for training programs. Then search for locations near you.
7. If you are still interested in this occupation, add it to your portfolio and discuss it with a teacher or parent.
8. Repeat from step two.

60-Minute Activity

1. Click Work.
2. Click Apprenticeships under the Going to Work heading for a list of apprenticeable occupations.
3. Click a career that interests you and read all the sections, watch the video, etc. As you find careers that might satisfy your needs, add them to your portfolio or print them.
4. Discuss the list with a teacher or parent. Be sure to find out about local training programs.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will identify careers where apprenticeships are the typical entry path."
- "Given a career goal, (name) will identify locally available educational options."
- For interested parents: Send "products" home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Interview a variety of people about their educational experiences since high school.
- Develop a career ladder in a career area, showing education and earnings for each "rung."

6

I know what I like. How do I find careers that match my interests and values?

To the student: Knowing what you like is important. You can use that information in several ways. What work tasks do you like? What school subjects do you enjoy? What work values are important to you? When you try any of these activities, the result will be lists of careers (occupations) you might like.

To the teacher: Helping students with these activities can be a useful way to begin the transition planning process. These activities can help students see the relevance between school activities and what they want to do later on. By asking them questions about the results of those activities, you point out some very important connections between school and life. Combining two or more activities typically yields shorter, more lasting indications of career preferences.

45-Minute Activity

1. Click Work, then Career Finder. Click Start Now.
2. Answer each question under interests and skills.
3. First, check to see which interests and skills you rated highest and lowest. (If you have questions, ask your teacher to help you understand your results.)
4. Second, look at the list of occupations that best match your skill and interest ratings. Print the list.
5. Click on a few occupations to see how they match your ratings.
6. If you want to know more about an occupation, click on it, then click the "More information about..." link on the left. Print out at least two.

20-Minute Activity

1. Click Work.
2. Under Your School Subjects, read the list of school subjects and click one you enjoy.
3. Click on at least one career related to that subject. Read about it and print it out if you are interested. If not, keep looking until you find one to print out.
4. Go back and do the same thing with another school subject. Print out two careers of interest.

20-Minute Activity

1. Click Work.
2. Read the list of career zones and click one you might enjoy.
3. Read the list of occupations in that zone and click one to learn more. Print out at least one occupation from each of two zones.

20-Minute Activity

1. Enter a personal interest such as "football" in the Search box at the top right of the screen.
2. Click at least one listing to learn more. If it is interesting, print it out. If not, try another. Keep trying until you have printed two occupations of interest.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will learn about different types of interests and how to use resources to identify matching occupations."
- "(Name) will demonstrate ability to relate preferences and interests to a wide range of occupations."
- For interested parents: Send "products" home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Describe the differences in two of the occupations you read about. (Written work, class presentation, etc.)
- What arithmetic/math/reading/writing/listening/teamwork is required of workers in those occupations?

7

How do I figure out what I would be good at doing?

To the student: What you are good at doing is just as important as what you like to do. It helps to look at both things separately. Actually, there are two kinds of ability. The basic skills you learn in school – reading, writing, math, etc. – make up the first kind. Then there is the special knowledge and skill required by the careers you are thinking about.

To the teacher: Helping students balance skills and interests may require considerable tact. One approach is to begin by asking students to look at the requirements of careers they are considering. Then, ask them to self-rate on the most important skills, followed by standardized assessments of the same skills. Search for occupations based on assessment results. When self-ratings and assessment results differ markedly, situational assessment may be required. You and the student first need to agree that the selected activity will allow them to demonstrate the skill in question.

45-Minute Activity

1. Click Work, then Career Finder. Click Start Now. Answer the Interests questions and click Next.
2. Answer the Skills questions and print your answers using the Print This link. Then click Next. Write examples of things you have done that show your skills in each area.
3. Look at the top two occupations that best match your skills. Which skills might you need to improve? How might you improve them? Do you have skills above what is needed for those occupations? If so, would you be bored doing that job after a little while?
4. Repeat step three with careers you are considering.
5. Discuss your answers with a teacher or parent.

45-Minute Activity

1. Enter a career or interest word in the Search box at the top right of the screen. Click Go.
2. Click a career title from the results list. Complete the activities in the Get Started section of the career article.
3. Was it difficult for you to get the right answers? Did it take a long time? Would you find it difficult to do these activities several times a day?
4. Repeat these steps for two more careers you are considering. Then, discuss the results with someone.

60-Minute Activity

1. Search for a career and click on it.
2. Click the Education tab and read about the training programs and courses that are typically required. Are these subjects in which you do well?
3. Now read the information in the At a Glance box and the Related Majors box. Do you think you would do well in these subjects?
4. Finally, click on a video in the Multimedia box (if there is one) and listen for descriptions of training and knowledge requirements.
5. When you are done with these activities, make a list of the skills and knowledge requirements and discuss them with someone who works in the career to be sure your list is complete and accurate.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will learn about different skills required in careers and use resources to identify matching occupations.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts are “products” that demonstrate competencies and completion of IEP activities.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- What school subjects and post-secondary programs address the skills students want/need to learn?
- Write a paper discussing the skills needed in two careers you are considering and ways you can learn those skills.

8

I know there are some things that I am not very good at. What changes do I have to make? What things can I avoid or work around in my career planning?

To the student: It is good to be able to see both strengths and weaknesses; everyone has them! Sometimes you can plan a career to avoid things you don't do well. Other times, it is better to improve a skill because it is the only thing that will make a plan work. Good career planning means looking at both strengths and weaknesses.

To the teacher: Helping students recognize their strengths and weaknesses is important in getting them on a path that leads to enjoyment and not frustration. Help students see their strengths and encourage them to continue working on their weaknesses. Early discoveries and realizations in career planning can keep students focused on their efforts in school. Remind students that gaps can be addressed in several ways: change goal, change self, accommodation.

45-Minute Activity

1. Click Work, then Career Finder. Click Start Now.
2. Be sure to look carefully at the "What are your skills?" questions as this will help you avoid careers that would emphasize your weaknesses. Complete the quiz.
3. Look at the career suggestions that match your skills and interests.
4. Select an occupation and examine the Skills graph to be sure your skills are close to or better than the occupation requires.
5. Examine the rest of the list to find occupations that match your skills the closest.

30-Minute Activity

1. Click Learn.
2. Click on Major Finder. Click Start Now.
3. Click the areas that interest you, then click Continue.
4. Click on a suggested major.
5. Read the profile to see if it matches your talents and abilities.
6. Repeat this activity several times until you find one that is the best match.

20-Minute Activity

1. Do a search by using words or phrases that describe talents/hobbies/interests. (example: video games, biking)
2. Scroll through the search results until you find that sounds interesting.
3. Click on a career and print the information.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will research career opportunities that do not emphasize recognized weaknesses."
- "(Name) will examine careers in the areas where talents and hobbies may support career efforts."
- For interested parents: Send "products" home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Assist students with understanding that everyone has weaknesses. Show students how many more opportunities present themselves when they have better skills.
- Examine career articles and help students understand skills and aptitudes and how important they are in choosing a career in which they can be successful.

9

How do my work behaviours match up with those required of most workers?

To the student: Poor behaviours cause more problems for workers than do poor skills. So it is smart to think about what employers expect. Work behaviours are what people do on the job. They can be seen and observed. One set of behaviours relate to what you do to get a job. Another set of behaviours include those needed to keep the job. You show work behaviours on a job. You also show them at school, and at home.

To the teacher: Helping students improve and expand their repertoire of skills is a valuable part of career planning. Bridges products focus on job-getting behaviours with some attention to “soft” skills needed to keep jobs, such as managing bosses. The self-rating activity focuses on job-keeping behaviours. Remember: behaviours are not always consistent between settings. In general, the more severe the disability, the less transferable the behaviour.

60-Minute Activity

1. Click Work, then Job Hunting.
2. First, read the four articles on resumes under the Applying for Work section. At the bottom of each article, there are several websites containing more information about resumes. Some jobs don't require resumes, but it is a good way to get ready for an interview.
3. Under Looking for Jobs, read the article called Researching a Company, as it should come before you decide to apply for any job.
4. Finally, read the articles under Interview Advice. Use your work from resumes and researching a company to write out questions you want to ask and those you will likely be expected to answer in an interview.
5. Ask a teacher or parent to practise a job interview with them. Tape it and play it back to see how you did.

60-Minute Activity

1. Click Work, then Surviving in the Workplace. Read at least these articles: Dressing for Success, Achieving Success on the Job and How to Monitor Your Performance. All three stress the importance of being in charge of your behaviour. The more you take charge of yourself, the less other people boss you around.
2. Make a list of the suggestions in these articles and then rate yourself. Do you follow those suggestions in school?
3. On any jobs you may have? When doing chores at home? Discuss your answers with a teacher and a parent. Do they agree?

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will research and practise steps in preparation for job seeking.”
- “(Name) will self-rate critical work behaviours and discuss areas that need improvement with a teacher or parent.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Help students understand the relationships between work behaviours, school and work.

10

What skills do I need to live independently?

To the student: Success in working and living independently are related. It is difficult to live on your own without a job. And it is difficult to keep a job if you don't take care of the other parts of your life. Independent living doesn't mean living by yourself. Instead, it means taking care of things outside work that can interfere with job success. It is like being sure to get enough sleep and having your clothes ready so you get to school on time and ready to learn.

To the teacher: Students, families and staff can use these activities to compare views of student readiness for independent living. The *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA)* featured on the next page of this guide is an evaluation of youth independent living skills. Instructional materials are included. All assessments, scored reports and instructional materials are free of charge. Staff should visit the site and read "Important Information for Agencies and Organizations" and "Data and Reports" before using the programs with students.

Self-Rating Activity

Rate your independent living behaviours. Use this scale:

Not like me Somewhat like me Just like me

Social Living Competencies:

- | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| 1. Uses leisure time so that they are: | | | | |
| a. Appropriately engaged and not at loose ends | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |
| b. Satisfied and reasonably content with leisure time activity | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |
| 2. Manages money so that spending does not exceed income | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |
| 3. Demonstrates acceptable grooming and appearance consistent with setting | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |
| 4. Manages legal problems to avoid wage attachments or adverse publicity as representative of employer | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |

Community Living Competencies:

- | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| 1. Finds and maintains housing | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |
| 2. Secures medical services: | | | | |
| a. Has a personal physician or has links to public health service | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |
| b. Takes reasonable care of health, exercise and dietary needs | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |
| 3. Is mobile in community, using personal or public transportation for work, personal or recreational travel | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |

General or Personal Living Competencies:

- | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| 1. Copes with family/marital relationships so that they do not interfere with employment | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |
| 2. Demonstrates personal adjustment and stability to ensure employability | 1..... | 2..... | 3..... | 4..... 5 |

Also ask a teacher and parent to rate you. Discuss any differences in the ratings.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will self-rate independent living skills and discuss areas that need improvement with a teacher or parent."
- "(Name) will demonstrate knowledge of social, personal and community living skill areas."
- For interested parents: Send "products" home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Help students understand the relationships between independent living skills, school, school subjects and work.

ALSCA Activity

1. Log on to: **<https://www.caseyliveskills.org/ACLSA/default.htm>**
2. Click the tab marked Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment. Scroll down and click “proceed to assessments.”
3. Select the assessment you and your teacher have chosen, then click Begin. You will be asked for two more pieces of information. Your teacher will tell you what to enter.
4. Follow the instructions and answer all the questions.
5. When you are finished, your teacher will give you feedback about how you answered the questions. You will also learn how your answers compare with those other people who know you well gave.

11

What information do I need about careers and myself before choosing an occupation or job?

To the student: Choosing an occupation or job should indeed be based on good information. Actually, two sets of information are needed. First, you need information about at least two occupations. For each, you need to know the requirements made of workers in each occupation. You also need to know the rewards that generally come from working in the occupations. The second type of information you need is about yourself. It also includes the skills and abilities that an employer will expect of you.

To the teacher: Age, transition date and disability influence career goal selection. Broader career clusters (e.g. business, health services) are appropriate for younger students. When transition is imminent, occupational decisions (e.g. receptionist, health aide) may be needed. For students with very severe limitations, decisions may involve positions with specific employers, job modifications, etc. In the activities below, the term “occupation” is used to describe all levels. Check student work to be sure they have corresponding information about careers and themselves.

60-Minute Activity

1. Click Work.
2. Scroll down and click Career Planning, then Career Planning Guide.
3. Go to page 119, Career and Life Inspections. The activities will help you develop your skills in gathering career information.
4. Do the activities on Job Card A (page 120) and Job Card B (page 122). Then do one of the activities in Job Card C (page 123).
5. Look at what you have saved from previous Choices Explorer activities. Are the descriptions of occupations in which you are interested complete? If not, go back and use your new skills.
6. Print out copies of your work. Show them to a teacher or parent.

30-Minute Activity

1. Sort the printouts you kept from previous sessions with Choices Explorer. Put everything you saved about careers in one pile. Put information from the assessments you did on yourself in the other pile.
2. Make a list of all the occupations you still think are interesting to you. Did you print out each of the tabs, such as What They Do and Salary and Outlook? Did you try the real-life problems? Did you watch the career videos? If need be, go back and get more information.
3. Now, look in the other pile. It should contain results of Career Finder and careers that matched, as well as a list of favourite school subjects and careers that matched. You may also have information from Major Finder and the careers that matched.
4. How do the two piles match up? Do the same careers, school subjects and majors show up? Do the careers from pile one show up in Career Finder? Discuss your findings with a teacher or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to contrast two occupations of interest.”
- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to gather and organize information about career-related preferences and abilities.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- What school subjects and post-secondary programs address the skills students want/need to learn?
- Write a paper discussing the skills needed in two careers you are considering and ways you can learn those skills.

12

After learning about careers and myself, how can I organize the information to help me decide between my options?

To the student: You have gathered the information about yourself and careers that interest you. Next, you need a way to organize information to help you make some decisions. That means comparing each career you are interested in with your abilities and interests. There are always some gaps. We can only do something about gaps or problems after we figure out what they are. And the whole purpose of transition planning is to identify and address gaps.

To the teacher: Students need lots of help understanding three things about career/person matching. First, although both employees and employers have to be reasonably happy, perfect matches are rare indeed. Second, gaps can be addressed in several ways. Finally, both people and occupations change; therefore, matching and gap analysis are constants. These truths about career decision making are not easily learned. They require practice – and support from others such as you.

90-Minute Activity

1. Click on Work.
2. Scroll down and click Career Planning, then Career Planning Guide.
3. Scroll down to page 129 and read the introduction to Making Connections to the World.
4. Complete Job Card A (page 130). It will show you how to make simple decisions. Those are ones where there are only two choices.
5. Now complete Job Card B (page 132). It explains the idea of responsible decision-making skills.
6. Job Card C (page 133) will help you understand how to compare the information about careers that interest you and information you have gathered about yourself. This activity begins by having you compare that information to someone else. After you have completed it, share the results with a teacher, parent or another student. Did you put checkmarks next to the same items they would? Notice that no one career is a perfect match for Waldo.
7. Print out the worksheet on page 135. Complete the same activity for yourself. Use the information you have gathered about careers and yourself.
8. When you are finished, make a list of all the areas where there are no checkmarks. Don't worry if there are lots of such areas. What counts is if you can and want to do something about them. Which might you change with extra time, training and work? Can you think of a way to remove the gap in some other way?
9. Repeat steps six to eight with another career.
10. Show your work to a teacher, counsellor or family member.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to identify specific gaps that can be addressed in their IEP before transition.”
- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to search for accommodations for gaps that cannot be overcome.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Saved session files or printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Give students examples of how other people address gaps – both by overcoming and working around them.
- Meet with students several times over the course of several weeks/months to help them with these activities.

13

What information do I need about schools and myself before deciding on college or training?

To the student: The best place to start is with you and your career goals. Will they require more skills and training than you will have after transition? How long are you willing to continue your education? How do you learn best? The answers to these questions will help you choose between the many types of educational programs.

To the teacher: Students may need help seeing university as a step along the way, not an end in itself. It helps to know about programs and careers that typically result. Changing programs is less likely and costly if the student knows these connections. Note, however, that using the word “university” to describe post-secondary education may put off students. Instead, help them understand the many types of educational programs. They may begin with a different type of program that better meets their goals and abilities. Make sure they know about trade schools, apprenticeships, OJT, etc.

60-Minute Activity

1. Click Learn.
2. Important: In Choices Explorer, “major” includes any course of study. That means what you learn in apprenticeships, trade schools and in on-the-job training as well as in college.
3. Find the results of activities you may have done earlier in Major Finder, Alphabetical List of Majors, major zones, etc. Make a list of the majors in which you are interested.
4. The first type of information you need about each major on your list is whether the training is provided by an apprenticeship, a university or some other type of program. Include the typical training time required.
5. For each major, list some careers that people enter after their training. List the careers that are of the greatest interest to you.
6. The next type of information you need is a list of high school courses related to the major. Would you be happy studying these subjects a lot while training?
7. Print your list of majors, along with the careers they prepare you for, course lengths, related school subjects and the location of schools offering the majors.
8. Discuss the list with a teacher, counsellor or parent.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to identify a range of post-secondary education opportunities related to career goals.”
- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to organize and present information about training options to staff and family.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Show students the range of training options (e.g. college, apprenticeship) for the subject matter being taught.
- Show how subject matter of high school courses serves as a foundation for more specialized training.

14

After learning about schools and myself, how can I organize the information to help me decide between my options?

To the student: OK, you've gathered information about training opportunities and yourself. Now you need a way to lay out the information to help you make some decisions. That means comparing what you want for training with what is available. The match between those two things is not going to be perfect. But you can't do anything about gaps until you find out what they are. And the whole purpose of transition planning is to identify and address gaps.

To the teacher: Students need help with their plans for post-secondary education. First, they need to understand that education after high school is likely to be more focused on a subject or major. Second, many students assume that the help provided through special education in high school will continue. Finally, students need specific suggestions about areas they can strengthen and focus on to improve their chances for success. Students first need to agree that the selected activity will allow them to demonstrate the skill in question.

90-Minute Activity

1. In a previous activity, you made a list of majors and related careers. Find that list and review it again. If you want to make any changes, look at Choices Explorer to get additional information.
2. Make a worksheet with three columns. Label the columns: Major, What I Want/Need, and Gaps.
3. Make a section in column one for these categories of information: Name, Training Type, Training Time, Related Careers and High School Courses.
4. Complete this column with the information you have on one major.
5. In column two, write your preferences for the type of training shown, whether the time it takes for the training is satisfactory, whether the related careers are really interesting to you, and how well you like and do in the related high school courses.
6. For each section, go back and look at the information in the first two columns. Are there gaps (differences) that are important? If so, put "yes" in column three. Otherwise, put "no." Remember, a gap only means it is something you would want to work on if you pick that school.
7. Look at any sections that have "yes" in column three. Can you think of ways to change that to a "no" by improving a skill? By selecting another training site?
8. Repeat steps three to six for other majors of interest.
9. It is very important that you discuss your worksheets with a teacher, counselor or family member.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will demonstrate ability to search for post-secondary education opportunities of various lengths and types."
- "(Name) will demonstrate ability to identify problems that might arise in selecting educational goals after transition."
- For interested parents: Send "products" home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Show students relationships between current subjects and those being considered as post-transition majors.
- Meet with students several times over the course of several weeks/months to help them with these activities.

15

If I decide to get a job right out of high school, how can I pick one that will help me with long-range goals?

To the student: Starting out at the bottom of your career ladder is fine. Just be sure it is the right ladder! Nearly any job can help you get ahead. A steady, successful job history is valuable for anyone. But you do better if your first job experiences are related to your long-range goals.

To the teacher: Be sure students understand the idea of a career ladder. There are many jobs where previous experience is nearly as important as formal training. Other careers require both formal training and experience. Encourage students to learn about the steps required for their long-range goals. In addition, stress the value of having demonstrated the ability to hold jobs with good work behaviours.

90-Minute Activity

1. Click Work.
2. Find the career zone that contains the career that is your long-range goal. Click on that career and then on Education to be sure that it requires more preparation than you will have when you leave high school.
3. Go back to the list of careers in that zone and locate ones that you might get without further education. (For example, Hotel Desk Clerk is in the same zone as Hotel Manager.)
4. Look at the video for the entry career, if available, under the Multimedia heading. Check out the real-life activities and websites in the Get Started section to be sure this is a job you would like.
5. Interview someone who has a job that you want someday. Ask them how they began and what jobs you might get after high school that would be a good start. Also ask what school subjects are important and whether you could come back for a job shadow.
6. Discuss your findings with a teacher or parent.

90-Minute Activity

1. Click Work.
2. Scroll down and click Surviving in the Workplace. Read several articles, such as the ones about evaluating your performance, teamwork, cross-training, and dealing with difficult workers.
3. Click Work. Scroll down and click Career Planning. Read the articles about job skills and good planning.
4. Make a list of the key points in the articles. Pay special attention to sections that address getting started. Show the list to a teacher or parent and get their suggestions for the most important points.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- “(Name) will demonstrate ability to identify entry-level jobs consistent with long-range goals.”
- For interested parents: Send “products” home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Show students career ladders related to the subject being taught. Emphasize how skills and experience relate.
- When you arrange for outside speakers in a specialty, encourage them to discuss various pathways that can be taken.

16

How can I show students the relationships between the subjects I teach and their career goals?

To the student: It helps to see how a subject you are taking is related to what you want to do. Sometimes that is easy but sometimes it isn't. Since carpenters measure, it is easy to see how fractions are related. It may be harder to see how other courses are connected to what you want to do. These activities will help.

To the teacher: "Relevance" is important to many students. If they can make a connection to the subject being taught, they tend to work harder and perform better. Those relationships are easier to establish for some subjects than others. However, all subjects develop basic skills in reading, writing, thinking and/or math. First, look for the obvious relationships between subject and career. Next, examine the relationships between high school courses and post-secondary requirements. Finally, relate basic skills to student career plans. All courses will appear on at least one list.

Staff Activity

1. Click Work.
2. Under Your School Subjects, click on the subject you teach. Review and print the list of careers that is displayed. They are examples of those for which the subject is important.
3. Make the list available to show students.

Staff Activity

1. Click Learn.
2. Under Your School Subjects, click on the subject or subject area you teach.
3. Review the list of majors displayed and select the ones that seem most closely related.
4. Look at the Related Careers box, if available, on the right to see a list of occupations related to that major.
5. Print either or both of the lists from steps three and four. Highlight the careers and majors that seem most closely related to the subject being taught.
6. Ask students to list the careers and/or college majors they are considering and compare them to the lists.

Staff Activity

1. Click Learn. Scroll down and click Preparing for College, then click 9th Grade in the Student Planner box along the right.
2. Review the list of courses typically required for college. If the subject being researched is listed, print the list to show students.
3. Ask students to list the college majors they are considering and identify whether the course being taken is related.

Need to record this in the IEP? Here are some suggestions:

- "(Name) will compare courses/subjects and occupations being considered."
- "(Name) will show the required courses and career pathways for occupations being considered."
- For interested parents: Send "products" home for discussion. Students can e-mail them directly from Choices Explorer!
- Printouts demonstrate both competency and achievement of IEP objectives.

Connections to Classroom Activities:

- Ask students to identify post-secondary education programs related to the course being taught.
- Examine the classified section of the local newspaper to identify occupations related to the course being taught.

17

Many of my students have difficulty reading. How can I use Choices Explorer with them?

To the teacher: This is a very good question that applies to most career exploration and assessment tools used in special education. Unfortunately, it also applies to most jobs and post-secondary training options.

Chances are good that if reading is a problem, it is already a major component in IEPs for your students. Therefore, our focus here will be on helping you anticipate when a student is likely to encounter reading-related difficulty using Bridges products and what you can do about it.

We all need to keep in mind that no single exploration or assessment approach is sufficiently valid and reliable to be used exclusively as the basis for career decision making. So combine career exploration in the classroom with job shadows, interviews, etc. And cross-check computerized and paper-based assessment techniques with work samples and work-based learning experiences. Your students need that protection.

General Comments

Let's begin with some general comments on reading levels:

1. Choices Explorer content is checked for reading requirements. The Flesch-Kincaid reading test found in Microsoft Word is used. In general, shorter words and shorter sentences results in a lower reading grade score. The same components are used to identify a "reading ease" score. (Check out "Readability" under Microsoft Word Help to see how these scores are calculated.) Caution: The formula used by Word stops at grade level 12. So when you see that number, the actual level could be higher!
2. Content written for students in Choices Explorer is aimed at a reading level of just under 9th grade. Occupational names themselves sometimes exceed this goal. Other Bridges products are designed for lower reading requirements.
3. Frequently, the tested reading level of a student won't predict their ability to comprehend material shown to be at the same – or even lower – grade level. The degree of familiarity with the subject matter is one reason. The abstract concepts involved in even short words is another, for instance: "value" and "ability."

Accommodation Ideas

Accommodation suggestions when students can't read assigned activities:

1. Observe the student as they begin. If they seem to be having difficulty, decide whether it is using the computer or understanding the text. If the problem is related to reading, see the suggestions below.
2. Ask the student to make a list of all the words or sentences they don't understand. By using copy and paste, they can create the list in a word processor and then use the thesaurus to look them up. (This makes a good activity assignment, too.)
3. Have the student work with someone else on the assignment and share the reading.

For many students, accommodation needs to be learned and practised. Encouraging them to think about ways around problems is very valuable. (But we'll also keep working on accessibility!)

Is it a computer-use problem, or a reading issue?

Teachers need to distinguish between the two. See *Questions Teachers Ask – Question 18* for details and suggestions about the computer skills needed to use Bridges products.

18

Some students have difficulty using a computer. How can I use Choices Explorer with them?

To the teacher: Fortunately, this is a problem for fewer and fewer students of all ability levels. Widespread availability of computer literacy courses in middle and high schools generally include students with special needs. If they have completed such courses, they are likely to be able to use all Bridges products without difficulty.

If problems do arise, the first step is to categorize them into one of three broad problem groups:

- A. Physical ability to enter and extract information
- B. Knowledge and skill in use of hardware and software
- C. Problems in cognition that impair following instructions or using output

Each of these problems is addressed in the next section. In each category, the most desirable approach is instruction to increase proficiency. Next comes adaptive equipment or rehabilitation technology. Assistance from another person should be a last resort.

Strategies

A. Physical ability to enter and extract data. Major operating systems (e.g. Macintosh, Microsoft) pay increasing attention to accommodation issues. For example, the latest versions of Windows come with alternatives for data entry (on-screen keyboard), screen enlarger and screen reader. A number of vendors address the same functions with a wide range of approaches that meet the needs of most students. Using a search engine will locate resources in your area. However, with just the three Windows tools mentioned above, users can have total access to Choices Explorer.

B. Knowledge and skill in use of hardware and software. Computer usage at most schools is via networks where hardware support (on/off, printer maintenance, Internet access, etc.) is not expected of students. Therefore knowledge and skill primarily relates to software. Bridges products minimize the need for complicated commands by making extensive use of icons and auto-save functions. Being able to use copy, paste, save, find and search functions nearly completes user requirements. See *Questions Teachers Ask – Question 17* for a discussion of reading issues.

C. Cognition problems. Most such problems occur when students try to read information such as on-screen instructions or output. See below for suggestions.

Additional Resources

No-cost suggestions for addressing computer usage issues:

A. Physical abilities: When students have difficulty using a standard keyboard but can use a mouse or other pointing device, try the on-screen keyboard (Windows). It allows typing by just pointing and clicking. Results appear wherever the cursor is located. This works particularly well when text, including username and password, must be entered. Students with limited vision can use the screen enlarger to expand the size of everything underneath the cursor. When a person's learning style is primarily aural, the screen reader will speak highlighted text. (Speech quality can be enhanced using www.readplease.com).

B. Knowledge and skill in computer usage: Some students will benefit from knowing a few simple shortcut commands. Skill in using Find is universally helpful. Here are two websites that have a range of commands and useful lessons:

http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/windows_XP_shortcuts.htm

<http://www.nald.ca/nald-nb/english/innosucc/facilit/Computer/Title.htm>

C. Cognition problems. While learning ability may be the source of problems students have during career exploration, learning style may also be an issue. Even with accommodations and instruction as suggested above, students may not gain a full understanding of career information from materials that are primarily visual in nature. Assessment of learning styles can be addressed at many Internet sites. Here is one:

<http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/ILSpa.html>

For many students, both accommodation and remediation need focus.

Is it a reading problem, or a computer-use issue?

Teachers need to distinguish between the two. See *Questions Teachers Ask – Question 17* for details and suggestions about the reading skills needed to use Bridges products.

19

How can I get families appropriately involved in transition planning?

To the teacher: Involving families is not only helpful, it is required. Families have perspectives not available to school staff. They also have resources and opportunities that enrich the transition planning process. The first step in family involvement is to keep them informed about transition planning and career related activities. Each of the activities in this booklet contains suggestions for sharing results of activities with parents.

Some parents will be well versed about careers and occupational requirements. Others will have only limited career information. Sending home results of student activities updates their knowledge of the world of work and their student's preferences and needs. Sometimes parents worry that career planning results in narrowing career options. Actually, transition planning broadens career options and provides information needed for informed decision making. Better informed parents will be more appropriately involved parents!

Staff/Parent Activity

1. Select Parent Guide from the column on the right side of the home page.
2. From the three columns of activities for parents, select an article relevant to current student/parent interest and need.
3. Review the article and the related activity at the bottom of each article. Print your selection(s) and give to the parent.
4. Follow up as needed. Ask the parent to bring results for inclusion in the student's transition records and to present results of the activity at the IEP meeting.

Staff Activity

1. Go to www.careerparent.com
2. At the bottom of the screen, there are three groups of items of interest to students of various ages. Select the group for your student. Then select Activity.
3. Each activity is described in terms of time required, preparation, what gets done, etc. If you find the activity relevant to your student's present situation, help them with it.
4. When the activity is completed, be sure to get the results included in the student's transition records at school. Talk with a teacher about other activities you could assist with.
5. Subscribe to this free online magazine.

The above activity is designed to increase parental involvement in transition planning:

- It involves sharing information between parent and student.
- It is likely to clarify differences in viewpoint between student and family – a first step to resolving those differences.
- It is also likely to clarify differences in viewpoint between IEP team members – a first step in transition planning.

20

Can transition activities be part of lesson plans for my courses?

To the teacher: Of course. And transition activities are appropriate for all students. Most are thinking about what they will do after high school. Those who deny it often feel unable to come up with a career plan and will (silently? reluctantly?) welcome the connection between course work and what they will do after graduation.

Choices Explorer contains many lesson plans. Locating them is as easy as clicking Professional Tools. The lesson plans are organized into nine categories:

Careers Class
Business
Theater, Art & Music

Math
Physical Education
Foreign Languages

English and ESL
Social Studies
Science and Technology

Most of the categories have at least one subdivision. For instance, Business is further divided into Entrepreneurship, Business Research and Business Communication. In turn, the Business Research option has four student activities. Each lesson plan includes an overview, list of required materials, suggested strategies and examples. Most lesson plans can be completed in one or two class periods. Some require field trips. All incorporate aspects of career planning.

Also note the “real-life” series of activities that accompany each career article on the Student side of Choices Explorer. By clicking the Get Started tab for any career, a student can experience examples of math, communication and decision-making activities workers in that career might face. At least one of these skill areas is required in every course. Ask students to select a career they are considering and then complete at least one of the activities. Then, they can share their reactions with the class or another student.

Student Worksheets

Many of the questions addressed in this booklet have at least one printable student worksheet and can be used in an IEP or in a paper-based portfolio. Download these supplementary worksheets from the web at www.bridges.com/worksheets.



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