

## Helping Your Children Become “Career Ready”

The information included in this section has been adapted from the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC): 2024 *Guide for Parents and Caregivers About Career Education in BC*. FNEC and FNSA appreciate MECC’s permission to borrow parts of that guide for this section.

**“Career education” is about preparing children to set and follow a career path that is right for them – and parents can have a profound influence on their children’s career planning success.**

- ▶ Families have an essential role in inspiring children and helping them navigate an ever-changing world of work.
- ▶ The role of families in shaping their children’s future employment choices begins at an early age. Then, as students move through school, teens and families can explore new and interesting career pathways together.

### Planning for a Future Career is a Journey

**Career planning and preparation can be a long and winding path. Sometimes it is complicated to know the best way forward.**

- ☐ Work and career opportunities continue to change. Career education is therefore evolving all the time.
- ☐ There are an expanding range of options for post-secondary education and training.
- ☐ There is an increasing amount of career information available.
- ☐ Career education cannot be a one-size-fits-all model. Helping students prepare to meet their career goals must be customized to match the unique needs of each student.

**Given these factors, it is useful when students, families, and school staff make the career journey together.**

- ▶ Beginning when they are young, families can start helping children understand the possibilities open to them. Families can help children identify their talents and passions – which are at the heart of their career journey.
- ▶ As children grow into teenagers, their understanding of careers and the world of work grows, and is often shaped by who and what are part of their lives.
- ▶ Family members, friends, teachers and employers all play an important role in encouraging students to explore options for their futures.
- ▶ And your role, as a parent, is the foundation for it all.

## Defining Jobs, Work, and Careers

In this paper, you will find references to different terms.

- ▶ A **job** is a specific position you hold within an organization or as someone who is self-employed (e.g. a small business owner, a school secretary, an Education Director, etc.).
- ▶ An **occupation** is a type of work (such as nurse, teacher, accountant, carver, IT Technician ...).
- ▶ A **career** encompasses a lifelong journey.
  - A career may include one or more jobs. For example, a nurse could work for a health clinic, and then in a school, and then in a hospital.
  - A career may include one or more occupations. For example, a social worker could return to school to become a teacher.

## Career Education in the School System

Many schools teach career education. For example, BC schools are expected to help students grow through their career journey by integrating personal and career exploration into every level of education.

- ▶ Students are introduced to a variety of occupations at a young age.
- ▶ As they progress to higher grades, students are exposed to more occupations, and they participate in activities to show how a variety of occupations might match their interests and skills.
- ▶ Students eventually begin developing education and career plans that will help them reach their goals.

To support this growth, schools may offer career counselling, career resources, and information fairs and events.

Students can also take specific career-related courses. If you want to know more, ask your school for details.

## What Can Families Do to Help?

Here are a few questions to help you start a conversation with your children about their education and career choices.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> What are your goals?   | <input type="checkbox"/> What interests you? What do you like to spend your time doing? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What do you think are your unique strengths and special talents? |   |

- ☐ Do you want to stay in your community to work after high school? Do you want to live in a few different places over time?
- ☐ Do you like working inside, on-the-land, on-the water ...?
- ☐ What do you want to contribute to your community? To the world?

**You can also share the following messages with your children.**

It is ok if you are not certain what you want to do right now. Most people don’t have an exact career path right away, and people often change occupations several times throughout their lives. That is completely normal.

- ▶ Most people spend two-thirds of our lives working – on average, 80,000 hours! It’s important to choose an occupation that will help you feel fulfilled and make you feel good about yourself.
- ▶ Thinking about a career path involves considering what will make you feel satisfied and happy in your work. While money may be one important consideration, it is also important to think about your values, what kind of life you want to lead, where you want to live, who you’ll spend time with, and in what kinds of environments.
- ▶ There are many paths you can choose to create the kind of life and future you’re envisioning for yourself. There are many learning options after secondary school. You could try university, a community college, or an apprenticeship. There are many different opportunities for people who have all kinds of goals and interests.
- ▶ Remember, you’re not deciding your entire future right now. You’re simply choosing a path to start down. You can always change course as you go through life. And it’s always a good idea to have a backup plan, whether it’s for a chosen program, school, or career journey.

## Career Conversations and Activities For Every Age

In the early years of career education, career conversations can be attached to any activity at any time.

- ▶ When you’re travelling through your community or through town, talk about the people who work in all kinds of jobs. What seems to grab your child’s attention?
- ▶ If you’re reading a book or watching a show together, talk about the jobs the characters are doing.
- ▶ Whether you’re sitting down for a planned discussion, chatting while you’re out going places, or helping with homework or a project, look for opportunities to talk about your child’s interests and what types of careers might match those interests.
- ▶ Consider looking up information online together to learn more.
- ▶ Encourage your children to try new things and ask lots of questions.

### In Elementary School

- ▶ Find out about your child’s passions. What do they like to do? What do they talk about a lot?
- ▶ Expose your child to new experiences and chat informally about different kinds of jobs.
- ▶ Review your child’s report card, or ask their teachers about their special strengths and what they seem to enjoy most in the classroom.

#### Sample Conversation Starters

- ▶ While reading a book, ask your child to name the main character’s interests and talk about what kinds of jobs might match those interests. Or point to illustrations in the book and try to brainstorm together a range of careers that relate to those illustrations (e.g. a tree = tree planter, landscaper, forester; a car = mechanic, race car driver, car designer, etc.). Then ask: *Would any of those jobs interest you? Why or why not?*
- ▶ If you are travelling somewhere, point out different buildings and ask your child if they know what kinds of jobs people do in those building (e.g. a hospital = doctors, nurses, administrators, etc.; a bank = tellers, financial planners, etc.). Then ask: *Would you like to do any of those kinds of jobs?*

### In Grades 7 – 9

- ▶ Find out if your child’s interests have changed since leaving elementary school.
- ▶ Continue to talk about a variety of different career options.
- ▶ If you can, attend field trips and open houses, and participate in other activities that can expose your child to options and ideas for their future.
- ▶ Find relevant posts on social media that you can share with your child. Invite your child’s feedback about what you share.
- ▶ Use extra-curricular activities as a way to start conversations about what excites your child and what talents they have. Do they excel in leadership, working well with others, making things, creating art, writing ...?
- ▶ Stay up-to-date on career education activities at the school so you can have follow-up conversations at home.
- ▶ Introduce your child to friends and other community members who are open to talking about their career paths.

**Sample Conversation Starters**

- ▶ If you watch TV or movies together, make a point of commenting on the characters’ interests, passions, or jobs. Ask your child if they like similar things. This can be a great way to learn about their evolving likes and dislikes, which will impact their choices. Then ask: *Are you interested in learning more about this job? If yes, maybe we can learn more about it from the Internet.*
- ▶ Find a social media clip or meme that relates to a career or industry your child is interested in. Share it with your child. Then ask: *What do you think about the post? Do you have any questions about the career they were talking about?*

**In Grades 10 – 12**

- ▶ Encourage your child to explore a diverse range of career options and look at a variety of resources to help start planning next steps.
- ▶ Encourage your child to meet with their career educator or career counsellor / advisor, if one is available.
- ▶ Encourage your child to create a vision board to help them visualize their interests and goals. They can do this by cutting and pasting together images that represent their vision for the future.
- ▶ Help your child research post-secondary opportunities that match their interests, skills and abilities.
- ▶ Attend relevant events and information sessions with your child whenever possible. Then talk about what you saw and heard.
- ▶ Begin talking about funding for post-secondary and what steps they want to take next.

**Sample Conversation Starters**

- ▶ If you drive your child (and their friends) to activities, take the opportunity to chat about their goals and interests, and their plans for after graduation. Ask the teens: *What are your thoughts about your next steps after high school?*
- ▶ Together, research potential learning opportunities by visiting post-secondary institutions’ websites. Many offer virtual video tours and introductions to their programs. Talk with your children: *What are your thoughts on the video tour you watched? Could you picture yourself there?*

## What Else is Possible?

- ▶ If you can, take your child to see post-secondary campuses. Find out if the school offers any related opportunities. There is nothing more inspiring than seeing a setting first-hand. Talk about: *How did you like the campus tour? What were your favourite places to explore?*
- ▶ Contact your child’s school to ask about what career projects and activities are happening in classrooms. If they are offered, attend parent information sessions, career fairs, and post-secondary information events.
- ▶ Reach out and get to know your child’s teachers and school staff. They can pass on valuable information about career and work experience opportunities and post-secondary options.
- ▶ Help your child find opportunities to gain real-world experience and build skills outside of the classroom through volunteering, work experience programs, and part-time work. Trying things is the best way to find out what interests us.
- ▶ Look into potential scholarships, grants and awards.

### Being a coach in your child’s career education process means asking yourself how you can:

- ▶ help your child discover and explore their values, skills and interests, all of which may change over time.
- ▶ help them explore potential occupations and learning options.
- ▶ help them set and pursue goals.
- ▶ introduce them to people and resources that match their interests.
- ▶ encourage them to consider various opportunities to gain knowledge and experience.
- ▶ help them research post-secondary learning paths.
- ▶ More information about planning for post-secondary education and careers is available in the FNEsc and FNSA publication: *Guiding Your Education Journey: A Handbook for First Nations Families*. That Handbook is intended to provide information to help families make the best decisions possible about what courses to take – especially in Grades 10, 11, and 12, and to help families plan for post-secondary education and training.

