

A GUIDE TO CAREER CONVERSATIONS



GUIDING PRE-TEENS (Grades 7-8)

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Exploring pathway options and casual work

In Grades 7-8, older children may be taking on their first casual job and will be starting to think about course choices for high school.

By this age, the older child will have been exposed to a variety of career impressions, depending on the depth of opportunities provided at home, school and in the community. At this age, the impact of social media can also affect views on careers.

Continuing to encourage the older child to try new activities is a good way to build self-confidence and practice skills and behaviours that will help them to be successful at future jobs. The Grade 7-8 child will also be starting to look ahead at courses to be selected in high school. Helping the child to identify their likes and dislikes can help to start the conversation about courses needed for career paths.

HOW THE “WORLD OF WORK” IS EXPERIENCED AT THIS AGE

At this age, the pre-teen will be more engaged with social media and technology. As such, celebrities, sports stars and other information about career choices start to influence their impressions of workplaces. Speaking with peers about careers becomes more important to discuss viewpoints.

In the community and at home, children may have their first work experiences. These may be delivering flyers, babysitting and shoveling driveways. Some children receive an allowance for completing household tasks. This exposes children to the concept of being paid for work.

At school and in organized activities, children continue to build and become adept at skills and behaviours that will allow them to apply for part-time jobs. Career conversations will be more focused as guidance counsellors help students select courses for high school.



WHAT IS HAPPENING AT SCHOOL

Through school projects and classroom assignments, students are developing soft skills such as time management, teamwork, conflict resolution, leadership, flexibility and communication.

In addition to extracurricular activities, programs offered by Skills Ontario, Skills Canada, Junior Achievement, and many others may be available. Assemblies and field trips offer an opportunity to deepen the conversation about careers.

In Grade 7, students start to record their goals and learning in a web-based Individual Pathways Plan (IPP). The IPP becomes the main planning tool for students as they move towards the next step after school.

In October to January of Grade 8, there will be information nights or assemblies about high schools, as well as school visits.

HOW YOU CAN HELP



Encourage your older children to:

Select community workshops that may help children with skill building.

Seek out new extracurricular options available at Grade 7-8.

Initiate conversations with teachers/guidance counsellors to learn about career path information.

Stay open-minded and realize that they can change their minds about a career path, but they should select courses that give them the most options.

Praise older children on skill improvement and help them identify their strengths. Resist suggesting careers you want them to choose. Allow pre-teens to guide the career conversation and provide information to help them realize the practical side of their choices.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

Keep communication channels open. As your child gets older, they may need more prompting. Ask open-ended questions about their day and their interests.

Register children in First Aid courses, babysitting courses and other community workshops that build skills and provide opportunities for part-time employment.

Attend Parent/Teacher interviews and speak with extracurricular leaders to get their feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of your child.

Allowing children to bring friends on outings may be a good strategy to continue outings to libraries, museums, art galleries, concerts, arts and culture events.

Research the different course options available in high school and how it impacts future career paths. Attending parent information nights can help to understand the prerequisites needed for future career paths.

WHAT EDUCATORS CAN DO:

Seek out the programs offered by Skills Ontario/Canada, Junior Achievement and other community programs geared to Grade 7-8 students and invite them to be involved with your students.

Continue to seek out community activities that help children learn about a wide variety of career sectors (museums, art shows, sporting events, STEM programs, musical performances, cultural events) and have a discussion about what careers are possible within these areas.

Encourage students to see the connection between the skills and behaviours learned at school and how they matter in the world of work.

Consider incorporating design thinking into lesson planning and curriculum design to foster innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship skill development.

Be available for discussions on course selection options with students before and after the school day so more in-depth conversations can be had about career pathways.

WHAT OTHER TRUSTED ADVISORS CAN DO:

Allow for time to speak one-on-one with children. Compliment children on what they do well. Interact with parents to pass on observations of what the child seemed to enjoy most.

Encourage the children to see the connection between the skills and behaviours being developed through extracurricular activities and getting a job / being successful in the workplace when they are older.

When possible, include an opportunity for discussion before and after an activity to encourage conversation.

Explain to children that making mistakes and not doing things perfectly is part of learning new skills. Encourage them to see the lessons learned and reflect on how they may act/react next time.

Compliment children on what they do well and start open conversations about careers that might apply to their strengths.

Encourage older children to:

Take babysitting courses, first aid and CPR courses as a way of attaining certifications for part-time jobs.

Ask questions about the courses and levels they need to take to pursue certain career paths in high school.

Continue to improve communication skills such as public speaking as a beginning to understanding its importance in first job interviews.

Be curious about careers and ask questions whenever necessary.

Share what they enjoy most at school.

Take advantage of workshops in the community to help towards attaining skills for first jobs.

Research the educational and skill requirements of a career they are interested in.

Understand they can change their minds about a career path, but that basic skills can apply to many jobs.

AND A LAST WORD FROM THE EXPERTS... ON GUIDING PRE-TEENS (Grades 7-8)

Why do YOU need to help with this career investigation business?

There are five simple reasons why parents should be involved:

- 1. You will benefit in the long-run.** You're the one who may help foot your child's educational bill some day. It's your home that your child may want to return to when s/he is 28 years old, unable to pay her/his bills. If you can help your child make smart educational and career decisions, you'll be able to enjoy—not support—her/him in the future.
- 2. Career exploration provides a much-needed reality check.** It helps kids understand what potential occupations are like, what skills and education they require and what lifestyles they permit.
- 3. The school counselor can't do it all.** Swamped with too many students and responsibilities, most counselors have little time to provide individualized career exploration assistance.
- 4. Career exploration expands kids' horizons.** Most kids can't name more than twenty occupations. Career exploration exposes them to occupations and worlds they may never have dreamed of before.
- 5. Your child can't do it alone.** The process can seem overwhelming without a parent or mentor to break it down and provide support, guidance and perspective. Most kids can't conceive of life beyond age 25, anyway, so their long-term planning leaves much to be desired. Left to their own devices, many choose by not choosing— limiting their options by focusing on the present rather than planning for the future.

CURIOUS TO KNOW MORE?

Explore the Texas Workforce Commission LMIC publication, [STARTING THE CONVERSATION: Talking to Your Children about Career Exploration.](#)

Excerpt from [Career Investigation](#), LMIC, Texas Workforce Commission, 2013