



**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAREER STUDIES**  
**Planning and Implementation Toolkit**

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## WHAT IS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAREER STUDIES?

Elementary career studies emphasize career awareness and exploration – not career choice. Career exploration at the elementary school level should allow children to become more self-aware of their skills, abilities and interests and how those traits relate to future career goals. The goal of elementary career studies is to provide:

- Equal access to career exploration
- Opportunities to explore interests, abilities, values and goals
- Develop the mindset that learning is lifelong for any career they pursue

Elementary school career studies are a critical component of transition readiness as students explore the connection between education and future career goals. Because Kentucky offers a wide range of options for students to earn dual credit, articulated credit, industry certificates and real-world experience at the high school level, it is critical to provide a strong foundation for students to build upon. Integrating career studies across the curriculum allows students to connect the classroom to the real world and provides opportunities to discover their unique interests, aptitudes and values. Students build upon this foundation and continue to shape their identity through during middle school, preparing them to create a well-informed Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to guide educational decisions as they transition to high school.

Although research on elementary career studies is limited, ACTE’s [Career Exploration in Middle School](#) highlights the potential benefits (e.g., higher aspirations for underrepresented youth, engagement in school, increased capacity to plan for the future) of early career work. It is also recognized as a principle of a K-12 or P-20 career development system in [Broadening the Path: Design Principles for Middle Grades CTE](#), a joint publication of Advance CTE and the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE).

Elementary School Career Studies Is NOT	Elementary School Career Studies IS
Tracking students into pathways based on predetermined criteria.	Providing equitable access to the breadth of career options by introducing students to the 16 career clusters.
Requiring students to choose one career.	Providing opportunities to build self-awareness by exploring skills, tasks and topics relevant to a specific career cluster.
Choosing a career instead of college.	Recognizing that almost all career paths require ongoing education and experience.
A separate class or replacement for academic content.	Connecting academic content to real-world careers.

## CAREER EXPLORATION CONTINUUM

Kindergarten – 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade
<p>Students are introduced to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the reasons people work</li> <li>• careers in their local community</li> </ul>	<p>Students are introduced to the concept that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• everyone has unique skills, interests and abilities that can influence their choice of careers</li> <li>• many careers share common skill sets, e.g., the health care cluster includes doctors, nurses and therapists, and are grouped using the <a href="#">16 Career Cluster Framework</a></li> <li>• academic content impacts future jobs/careers.</li> </ul>	<p>Students explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities in the world of work outside of the classroom using the <a href="#">16 Career Cluster Framework</a></li> <li>• opportunities to engage with the knowledge and skills related to career clusters</li> <li>• the impact of personal skills, interests and abilities in choosing a career</li> <li>• the role of academic content in future jobs/careers.</li> <li>• opportunities for further exploration and discovery in middle and high school</li> </ul>

### USING THESE TOOLS

These tools included in this toolkit may be used by schools or districts to determine student access to career studies instruction and experiences. They are not meant to promote or require any instructional framework for career exploration. Because each school is unique, how these standards are implemented will vary. Use these tools to prompt thinking and provide guidance to support effective implementation of the *Kentucky Academic Standards for Career Studies*.

**SCHOOL REVIEW** – Use this tool to determine the current state of career studies instruction. If you are unsure of terminology, the Middle School Career Experiences provides clarification.

**PLANNING TOOL** – Once the assessment is complete, this tool may be used to create an implementation plan aligned across grade levels.

**GLOSSARY** – The glossary provides definitions of terminology used within the document.

## SCHOOL REVIEW

**Directions:** Work with a small group to identify student access to career studies instruction. You may wish to begin with one grade band and then scale the work. It may be helpful to use color to highlight patterns or gaps. **EXAMPLE:**

Students are introduced to:	NEVER	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reasons people work.</li> </ul>		K		1st
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Careers in the local community.</li> </ul>			K	1st

### KINDERGARTEN and FIRST GRADE

Students are introduced to:	NEVER	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reasons people work.</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Careers in the local community.</li> </ul>				

### SECOND and THIRD GRADE

Students are introduced to the concept that:	NEVER	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone has unique skills, interests and abilities that can influence their choice of careers.</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many careers share common skill sets, e.g., the health care cluster includes doctors, nurses and therapists, and are grouped using the <a href="#">16 Career Cluster Framework</a>.</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic content impacts future jobs/careers.</li> </ul>				

## FOURTH and FIFTH GRADE

Students explore:	NEVER	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
• Opportunities in the world of work outside of the classroom using the <a href="#">16 Career Cluster Framework</a> .				
• Opportunities to engage with the knowledge and skills related to career clusters.				
• The impact of personal skills, interests and abilities in choosing a career.				
• The role of academic content in future jobs/careers.				
• Opportunities for further exploration and discovery in middle and high school.				

REAL-WORLD LEARNING EXPERIENCES	NEVER	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
<b>Career Portfolio</b>				
<b>Guest Speaker(s)</b>				
<b>Career Fair - led by Business &amp; Industry</b>				
<b>Business and Industry Tour</b>				
<b>Tour of CTE School or Program – <i>Observation only. No hands-on experience.</i></b>				
<b>Problem Based Learning Project:</b> Student(s) research a problem or issue relevant to a career cluster.				
<b>Career Cluster Exploratory Activity:</b> Students engage with knowledge or skills related to a career cluster.				
<b>Career Exploration Exhibit:</b> Students present products from Exploratory Tasks or PBLs to an authentic audience, e.g. parents, community members, or younger students.				
<b>School Based Enterprise or Entrepreneurship:</b> Students provide goods or services (greenhouse, store, communications, e.g., announcements, newsletters, webpage, etc., planning and development teams, e.g., school/community events, etc.)				

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	+ / -	RESOURCE
Teachers understand the <b>Career Studies</b> standards for their grade band.		<a href="#">Career Studies Standards</a> <a href="#">Career Studies Professional Learning Materials</a>
Teachers understand that <b>Career Clusters</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are a contextual framework for learning skills specific to a career.</li> <li>• Each contain several career pathways.</li> </ul>		<a href="#">Career Cluster FAQ</a> <a href="#">Career Clusters: Advance CTE</a>
Teachers understand that <b>Career Pathways</b> are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A group of occupations within a career cluster that use similar skills.</li> <li>• Show how to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in each career cluster.</li> </ul>		<a href="#">Career Cluster FAQ</a> <a href="#">Career Clusters: Advance CTE</a>
Teachers use engaging instructional routines to introduce students to the 16 career clusters.		<a href="#">Exploratory Activity Link</a> <a href="#">Content Connections</a>
Teachers are familiar with elective options for students at the middle school.		
Teachers understand that middle school students will develop <b>Individual Learning Plans (ILP)</b> to direct both academic and career plans.		<a href="#">Individual Learning Plan</a>
Teachers are familiar with Career Pathway options for students at the local high school and/or technology centers.		
Teachers understand high school students can earn Industry Certifications and Dual/Articulated credit in both general and technical courses.		<a href="#">Dual Credit FAQ</a> <a href="#">Industry Certifications FAQ</a>
Teachers understand high school students can participate in <b>Work Based Learning</b> opportunities such as internship, clinical experience and cooperative education.		<a href="#">Work-Based Learning FAQ</a>

## PLANNING TOOL

Once you've identified the extent of career studies instruction in your school, consider opportunities you may want to provide for your students. Use the following planning tool to determine specific details for those experiences you decide to use.

GRADE	IDENTIFIED NEEDS	ACTION	Funding Needs / Sources



Grade	EXPLORATORY EXPERIENCES	NOTES	Funding Needs / Sources
	<b>Career Exploration or Research</b>		
	<b>Guest Speaker(s)</b>		
	<b>Exploratory Tasks</b>		
	<b>Career Fair</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led by business and industry</li> </ul>		
	<b>Business and Industry Tour</b>		
	<b>Tour of CTE School or Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstration and discussion</li> </ul>		
	<b>Career Problem Based Learning Project</b> Student(s) research a problem or issue relevant to a career.		
	<b>Career Exploration Exhibit</b> Student(s) research, learn and demonstrate a skill related to a career.		
	<b>School-Based Enterprise or Entrepreneurship</b>		
	<b>Tour of CTE School or Program</b> (with hands on component)		

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	When	Where	By Whom	Resources
Teachers understand the <b>Career Studies</b> standards for their grade band.				<a href="#">Career Studies Standards</a> <a href="#">Career Studies Professional Learning Materials</a>
Teachers understand that <b>Career Clusters</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are a contextual framework for learning skills specific to a career.</li> <li>• Each contain several career pathways.</li> </ul>				<a href="#">Career Cluster FAQ</a> <a href="#">Career Clusters: Advance CTE</a>
Teachers understand that <b>Career Pathways</b> are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A group of occupations within a career cluster that use similar skills.</li> <li>• Show how to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in each career cluster.</li> </ul>				<a href="#">Career Cluster FAQ</a> <a href="#">Career Clusters: Advance CTE</a>
Teachers use engaging instructional routines to introduce students to the 16 career clusters.				<a href="#">Exploratory Task Link</a> <a href="#">Content Connections</a>
Teachers are familiar with elective options for students at the middle school.				
Teachers understand that middle school students will develop <b>Individual Learning Plans (ILP)</b> to direct both academic and career plans.				<a href="#">Individual Learning Plan</a>
Teachers are familiar with Career Pathway options for students at the local high school and/or technology centers.				
Teachers understand high school students can earn Industry Certifications and Dual/Articulated credit in both general and technical courses.				<a href="#">Dual Credit FAQ</a> <a href="#">Industry Certifications FAQ</a>
Teachers understand high school students can participate in <b>Work Based Learning</b> opportunities such as internship, clinical experience and cooperative education.				<a href="#">Work-Based Learning FAQ</a>

## SAMPLE Elementary Model

Consider developing a systemic plan to guide career studies. The following sample distributes the 16 Career Clusters among each of the grade bands. During the month, teachers engage students in short, intentional activities to expose them to a career(s) within that cluster. When application, teachers make explicit connections between content and skills, tasks or knowledge common to the cluster. At the end of the month, students reflect on their interest in the career cluster through drawing, writing or, for Intermediate grades, using the *Is a Career Cluster for Me?* checklist found in the Career Cluster Activities.

	<b>K</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
September	Health Science	Business Management & Administration	Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
October	Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	Information Technology	Government & Public Administration	Information Technology	Government & Public Administration
November	Hospitality & Tourism	Government & Public Administration	Human Services	Manufacturing	Human Services	Manufacturing
December	Education & Training	Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	Health Science	Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	Health Science	Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
January	Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	Manufacturing	Hospitality & Tourism	Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	Hospitality & Tourism	Arts, A/V Technology & Communications
February	Finance	Marketing	Architecture & Construction	Finance	Architecture & Construction	Finance
March	Hospitality & Tourism	Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	Education & Training	Business Management & Administration	Education & Training	Business Management & Administration
April	Information Technology	Architecture & Construction	Marketing	Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	Marketing	Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources

<b>May</b>	<b>K-3 Culminating Activity such as:</b>	<b>Grades 4-5 Culminating Activity such as:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Hat Day</li> <li>• Career Dress-up Day</li> <li>• Career Fair led by business partners or older students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Presentation or Demonstration</li> <li>• Career Fair led by business partners or older students</li> <li>• Field Trip</li> </ul>

## GLOSSARY

### **apprenticeship**

Apprentice means a worker at least 16 years old, except where a higher minimum age standard is otherwise fixed by law, who is employed to learn an apprenticeable occupation, which:

1. Is customarily learned in a practical way through a structured, systematic program of supervised training on the job;
2. Is clearly identified and commonly recognized or accepted throughout an industry;
3. Requires 2,000 or more work hours of work experience to learn;
4. Requires related instruction to supplement the on-the-job experience training;
5. Involves manual, mechanical and/or technical skills applicable in like occupations throughout an industry; and
6. Is recognized by the registrant entity and/or the U.S. Office of Apprenticeship as meeting the five criteria listed above.

### **articulated credit**

Articulated credit is awarded to a student for high school work after they enroll at a postsecondary institution providing a set of requirements are met.

### **Career Cluster**

Career Clusters are a framework that serves as an organizing tool for career technical education (CTE) programs, curriculum design and instruction. There are 16 Career Clusters that represent more than 80 pathways to help learners navigate their way to greater success in college and career.

### **career inventory**

A career inventory is a survey designed to identify interests, skills and aptitudes and match the user to potential Career Pathways.

### **Career Pathway**

A Career Pathway is a roadmap leading to a chosen career and includes:

- Occupations within the pathway;
- General and technical courses for both secondary and postsecondary;
- Dual and articulated credit opportunities;
- Related industry certificates, apprenticeships, associates and bachelor's degrees; and
- Entry and exit points for semi-, mid- and high-level skilled careers to support life-long learning.

### **clinical rotations**

Clinical rotations are a form of work-based learning for students enrolled in a health care program. It allows students to develop skills related to their program of study.

### **cooperative education**

Cooperative education is a paid educational program consisting of in-school instruction combined with program related on-the-job work experience in a business or industrial establishment. These are planned experiences supervised by the school and the employer to ensure that each phase contributes to the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and Career Pathway.

<b>CTSO</b>	Career and technical student organizations
<b>dual credit</b>	In dual credit, a student is enrolled in a course which allows her or him to earn high school credit and college credit simultaneously. This course may be taught on a college campus or on a high school campus, but it will be in conjunction with a college or university.
<b>entrepreneurship</b>	Entrepreneurship education allows students to develop a deeper understanding of economic principles and to apply classroom learning by organizing and operating a business enterprise. An entrepreneurship education program should involve students developing individual entrepreneurship projects in which they assume all risks in expectation of gaining a profit and/or further knowledge. An entrepreneurship program may be a component of a specific course within the curriculum or be a stand-alone course for credit. Entrepreneurship education may be offered in any career and technical education program.
<b>exploratory task</b>	Exploratory tasks are classroom activities that allow students to experience skills, knowledge and aptitudes related to specific Career Pathways.
<b>individual learning plan</b>	Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a planning tool for students in grades 6-12 designed to guide educational decisions based on the interests and plans of the individual.
<b>industry certificate</b>	Industry certifications are credentials recognized by business and industry that demonstrate mastery of necessary knowledge and/or skills.
<b>internship</b>	A student internship is a type of work-based experience learning program for high school students who have completed extensive school-based preparation relating to an identified area of career and academic interest in the Individual Learning Plan. Internships are usually one-time experiences that should lead to course credit and/or pay.
<b>job shadow</b>	Job shadowing is learning through observation and is a way to form partnerships between employers and the local schools. Shadowing is an opportunity for a student to spend a limited amount of time with an individual in a chosen occupation in order to become familiar with the duties associated with that occupation, the physical setting of the occupation, and the compatibility of the occupation with his or her own career goals.
<b>mentorship</b>	Mentorship is a component of work-based learning in which a volunteer from the business/industrial community helps students become aware of career opportunities and work ethics in a one-to-one relationship that goes beyond the formal obligations of a teaching or supervisory role.

<b>program of study</b>	A program of study for a Career Pathway is a coherent, unduplicated sequence of rigorous academic and career/technical courses including dual credit opportunities, leading to postsecondary degrees and industry-recognized certifications and/or licensures.
<b>school-based enterprise</b>	A school-based enterprise (SBE) is a simulated or actual business conducted within a school. It is designed to replicate a specific business or segment of an industry and assist students in acquiring work experience related to their chosen Career Cluster.
<b>service learning</b>	Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities.
<b>stakeholder</b>	An individual who engages in or has a vested interest in career and technical education.
<b>TRACK</b>	Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky
<b>work-based learning</b>	Work-based learning (WBL) is an effective teaching approach used to engage students in real-life occupational experiences. It incorporates structured, work-based learning activities into the curriculum, allowing a student to apply knowledge and skills learned in class and connect these learning experiences in the workplace. Work-based learning provides students with the opportunity to engage and interact with employers, while learning to demonstrate essential employability and technical skills necessary for today's workforce.