



Exploratory Tasks:

Where will your journey take you?

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Research has identified middle school as a time when students can benefit the most from career exploration, engaging them at a time when they are at a higher risk for disengaging from learning due to challenges in forming identity, coping with puberty and navigating new environments. It capitalizes on their developing abilities to think abstractly, and their preferences for teamwork and active learning through relevant real-life scenarios.

Career Exploration in Middle School: Setting Students on the Path to Success



PURPOSE

The goal of these tasks is to connect academic content and skills to relevant real-world career exploration activities. Providing a wide variety of experiences for students to discover personal interests, skills and aptitudes will support their ability to make better informed decisions regarding future academic and career goals.

These **OPTIONAL** tasks are designed to provide ideas for independent or collaborative research that:

- Allow for student choice based on career interests;
- Provide an opportunity for students to explore tasks related to a career interest;
- Connect to local and/or global issues;
- Generate ideas for problem-based learning projects;
- Reinforce the role of science, math, reading, writing, geography, history and technology; and
- Support the develop of an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

These tasks are designed using the **National Career Clusters Framework**, which includes **16 Career Clusters**. Each cluster is divided into **Career Pathways** that help students discover their interests and passions and empowers them to choose the right educational pathway.

For each pathway, there is an **Exploratory Task** related to knowledge or skills that are foundational for related careers. Most pathways will include an additional **Extension** activity for students to explore if time allows.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

These tasks can be used alone or in conjunction with a school's current career exploration program. Questions to consider include:

- How do we ensure all students have opportunities to engage in career exploration?
- Will teachers integrate these where they connect to their content or will we set aside dedicated instructional time, e.g., enrichment periods, short-term rotations, etc.?
- How do we involve secondary educators and community partners?

INSTRUCTIONAL USE

STANDARDS

These tasks align to the *Kentucky Academic Standards for Career Studies*. Depending on the pathway and product, you'll find connections to standards in other content areas.

OBJECTIVE

Your objective will determine how these are used, e.g. connecting content standards to real-world tasks or as a means of career exploration. If your objective is connecting content standards to real-world tasks, all students will work on the same task. However, if career exploration is your objective, students may be working on different tasks.

Prior to use, students should have taken the [Career Clusters Interest Survey](#) to identify their top three career clusters.

TIME

Instructional time for most tasks will be 1-3 class periods.

MATERIALS

These tasks were designed to require minimal supplies, e.g., paper, pencil, access to a computer, etc.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Many of these tasks require students to research unfamiliar topics. To support them in this process, the topics are in ***bold italics*** for students to use as they research.

MODIFICATIONS

These tasks may be modified, e.g., product or audience, to meet the instructional needs of your students. Research is student driven, but you may provide links or materials at your discretion.

ASSESSMENT

Students will have little background knowledge of these real-world topics and errors and misconceptions are expected. Because of that, assessment should focus on essential skills, e.g., practicing problem solving real-world problems, prioritizing goals to complete a task, engaging in collaborative discussions, etc.

LIMITATIONS and BOUNDARIES

- These tasks are not standards, rather opportunities for students to engage in career-related activities to guide Individual Learning Plan (ILP) development.
- These tasks do not constitute a course, but may be used to supplement middle school career exploration courses.
- As written, the tasks require no tools and/or equipment with potential safety concerns. Instead students use research and technology to explore the task.
- ***Any modification(s) requiring use of hand/power tools require instruction by a certified career and technical education (CTE) instructor and is outside the boundaries of these tasks.***

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Because students are using research and technology to explore the career, no additional certification is needed other than what is required for the course in which the tasks are integrated.