

FAMILY GUIDE TO MIDDLE SCHOOL CAREER STUDIES

Midde School Career Studies IS NOT

Tracking students into pathways based on predetermined criteria.

Requiring students to choose one career.

Choosing a career instead of college.

Middle School Career Studies IS

Encouraging students to explore a variety of career clusters related to individual interests.

Providing opportunities to explore authentic skills, tasks and topics relevant to a specific Career Cluster.

Recognizing that almost all career paths require ongoing education and experience.

Why middle school career studies?

Research has identified middle school as a time when students can benefit the most from career exploration, a process of building self-awareness, learning about potential careers and developing a plan for reaching future goals.

Career exploration engages middle school students at a time when they are most at risk for disengaging from learning due to challenges in forming identity, coping with puberty and navigating new environments.

What are middle school students learning?

The [*Kentucky Academic Standards \(KAS\) for Career Studies*](#) outline the minimum content Kentucky students should learn within each grade band. The standards address what is to be learned but do not direct how learning experiences are to be designed or what resources should be used.

The *KAS for Career Studies* are organized by three domains:

Essential Skills

These standards address skills necessary for success in the workplace, e.g., adaptability, diligence, initiative, knowledge, reliability, staying drug-free and effective communication.

Careers

These standards guide students to discover personal interests, skills and values as they explore Career Clusters. Students use Career Pathways to develop individual learning plans (ILPs) to plan their high school course of study.

Financial Literacy

These standards address topics such as credit, debt, saving, investing, and the connection between careers, education and income.

Vocational Education PAST

For a few students

For a few jobs

6-7 “program areas”

Instead of academics

High school focused

Career & Technical Education NOW

For ALL students

For ALL careers

16 career clusters
representing ALL sectors of
business and industry

Aligns with and supports
academics

High school, postsecondary
and business and industry
partnerships

What opportunities are available to students when they enter high school?

Students have numerous opportunities to get a solid start in their future careers that include:

Dual Credit

A student is enrolled in a course that allows him or her to earn high school and college credit at the same time.

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses

A student earns college credits while in high school by taking an AP class and successfully passing an end-of-course (AP) exam.

Articulated Credit

Articulated credit is awarded to a student who successfully completes a CTE course after they enroll at a participating postsecondary institution.

Industry Certifications

An industry certification is evidence of the skills or knowledge related to an occupation, industry or technology. They are recognized by business and industry and are required for a wide variety of occupations. To earn a certification, students need to enroll in related courses and usually need to pass a test.

Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning provides an opportunity for students to engage and interact with employers. Examples include service learning, job shadowing, cooperative education, internships and apprenticeships.

What are Career Clusters and Career Pathways?

Career Clusters

- The 16 national clusters provide a framework to organize career and technical education (CTE) programs.
- Careers within each cluster share related skills and knowledge.

Career Pathways

- Each cluster is divided into Career Pathways that represent virtually every career opportunity available within today’s public and private workforce sectors.
- A pathway provides a series of manageable steps, including general and technical courses and industry certifications, to guide students through high school and college.