

# **A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child with the Career Planning Process**



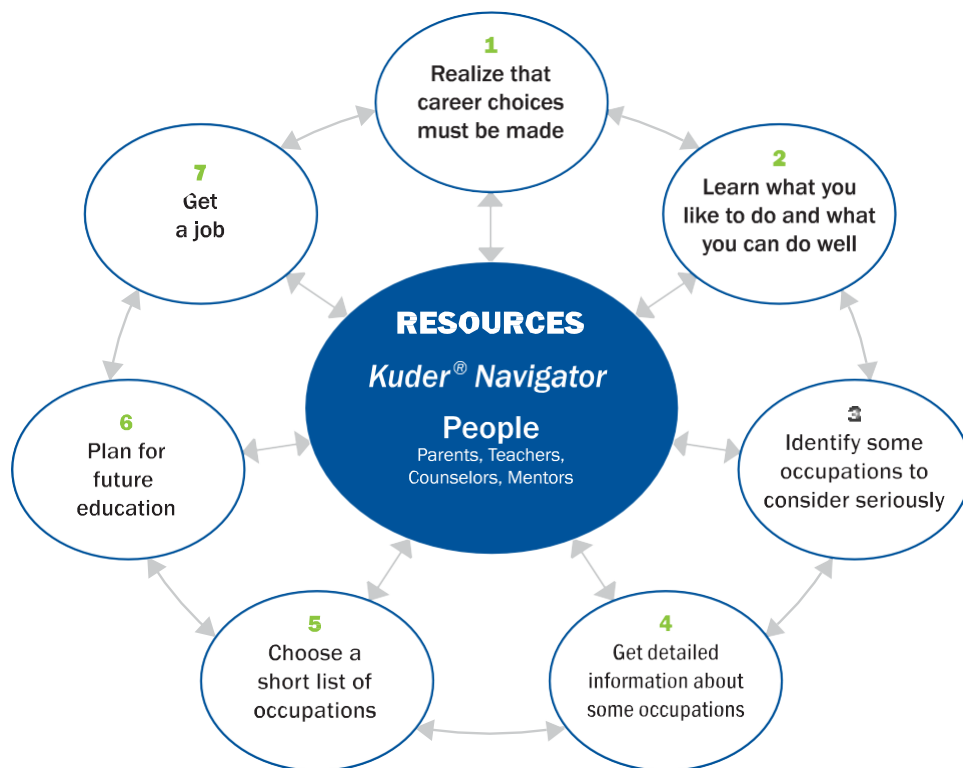
*JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey, Ed.D.*



## Helping Your Child with the Career Planning Process

You've probably found a lot of areas in which your schooling didn't prepare you for parenthood, and now you've found one more – knowing how to help your child with career planning! National polls tell us that parents are the primary influence on the career development of their children – their choices about education in and after high school and about their work.

It may seem at first glance that we end up in one occupation or another through chance. Though there is an element of chance, there is also a step-by-step process of planning that can be very helpful. Following this process will increase the likelihood that your child will make choices that are more satisfying. So the purpose of this guide is to tell you about that process and to suggest ways that you, as a parent or significant adult in a young person's life, can help. This process is demonstrated in **Figure 1** below.



**Figure 1**  
The Career-Planning Process

## 1. Realize career choices must be made.

Children do not yet know what future decisions they will face related to career planning. Nor do they know that seemingly small choices – such as deciding to take general mathematics rather than algebra to fill a math requirement – are important. So the first step in good career planning is to learn that it is desirable to start thinking



about career planning in the elementary and middle school years and to start making tentative choices. Of course, these can and probably will change. These early choices do, however, form the beginning of a chain of choices that is very important. What can you do during the elementary school years to help your child prepare for the choices that are ahead? Here are a few suggestions:

- Take every opportunity to teach decision making through planning for family events, such as a party or a vacation. This attitude of “planfulness” will carry over to other areas of life.
- Commend your child for good work or behavior. Having a strong self-concept and a sense of being able to control one’s life successfully is an important ingredient of successful career planning.
- Talk about your job. Most children can’t explain what their parents do for a living.
- Take your child to work with you occasionally. Point out not only what you do but what others do.
- Encourage your child to talk with adult relatives and friends about their work.
- Help your child understand that all kinds of work are needed in our society and are honorable.
- Familiarize yourself with the way in which occupations are organized. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education initiated a federal career clusters project. Sixteen career clusters representing career opportunities for the 21st century economy were identified. These industry-based clusters are now known as the **16 National career clusters** and managed by the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium. National clusters are grouped into broad fields of endeavor as shown in **Figure 2** on the following page. Students in grades PK-6 are introduced to the six career fields shown at the top of the graphic. Students in grades 7-12 use the National clusters and

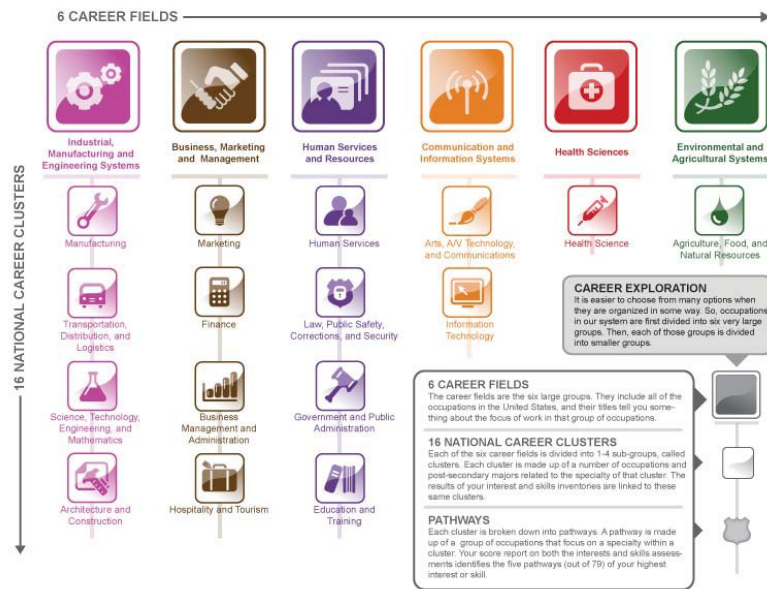


Figure 4  
Career Clusters

the career pathways (sub-groups of occupations within clusters) to help explore occupations and build high school education plans. The occupations contained in each of the National clusters are broken down into smaller groups, called **career pathways**. The occupations within a pathway are typically similar to each other and form a specialty within a cluster. Altogether, there are 79 pathways.

### The 16 National Career Clusters

**Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources:** Careers in the planning, implementation, production, management, processing, and/or marketing of agricultural commodities and services, including food, fiber, wood products, natural resources, horticulture, and other plant and animal products, and related professional, technical, and educational services.

**Architecture and Construction:** Careers in designing, planning, managing, building, and maintaining the built environment. People employed in this cluster work on new structures, restorations, additions, alterations, and repairs.

**Arts, A/V Technology, and Communications:** Careers in designing, producing, exhibiting, performing, writing, and publishing multimedia content including visual and performing arts and design, journalism, and entertainment services. Many people enjoy hobbies and avocations in this cluster rather than full-time employment.

**Business Management and Administration:** Careers encompass planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating business functions essential to efficient and productive business operations.

**Education and Training:** Careers in planning, managing, and providing education and training services, and related learning support services.

**Finance:** Careers in financial and investment planning, banking, insurance, and business financial management.

**Government and Public Administration:** Careers in executing governmental functions including governance, national security, foreign service, planning, revenue and taxation, regulation, and management and administration at the local, state, and federal levels.

**Health Science:** Careers in planning, managing, and providing diagnostic, therapeutic, and information and environmental services in health care.

**Hospitality and Tourism:** Careers in the management, marketing, and operations of restaurants and other food services, lodging, attractions, recreation events, and travel-related services.

**Human Services:** Careers in pathways related to families and human needs.

**Information Technology:** Careers in design, development, support and management of hardware, software, multimedia, and systems integration services.

**Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security:** Careers in planning, managing, and providing legal, public safety, protective services, and homeland security, including professional and technical support services.

**Manufacturing:** Careers in planning, managing, and performing the processing of materials into intermediate or final products and related professional and technical support activities such as production planning and control, maintenance, and manufacturing/process engineering.

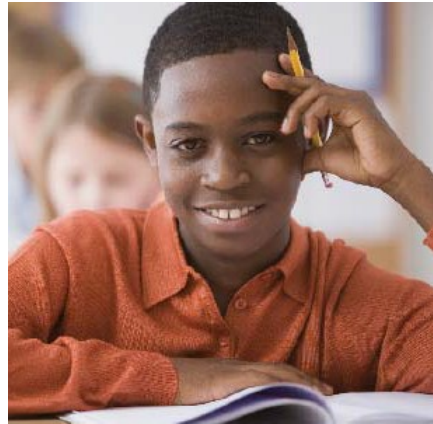
**Marketing:** Careers in planning, managing, and performing marketing activities to reach organizational objectives.

**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics:** Careers in planning, managing, and providing scientific research and professional and technical services (including physical science, social science, and engineering) including laboratory and testing services, and research and development services.

**Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics:** Careers in planning, management, and movement of people, materials, and goods by road, pipeline, air, rail, and water and related professional and technical support services such as transportation infrastructure planning and management, logistics, mobile equipment, and facility maintenance.

## **2. Learn what you like to do and what you can do well.**

People who study why some are happy with their work and others are not tell us that the most important thing to know is what you like to do; that is, your interests. In other words, if people can perform tasks that they like to do when on the job, they are much more likely to be happy with their work and to do well at it. By the middle



school years, a child's interests are in the process of being formed. The older the child is the more settled these interests become. Here are some ways you can help your child discover his or her strongest interests:

- Expose your child to a wide variety of activities in which he or she can work with people in some way, can work with numbers and information, can work with tools and equipment, and can work with thoughts and ideas. Those who analyze the things that people do at work tell us that work activities include: working with people face to face; working with numbers, facts, and records; working with tools, machines, and equipment; and working with the mind and imagination.
- When your child discovers an interest in some kind of activity and does well at it, give him or her some kind of reward. This may be as simple as a good word, a high five, or a tangible present. Help your child understand what that interest is.
- Help your child make the connection between a personal interest or skill and how it can be used in a job.
- As you help your child with homework, point out how some of the things he or she is learning in school can be applied to work. This linkage is especially important for subjects in which your child achieves good grades.
- Encourage your child to take the Kuder Career Interests Assessment® (KCIA), which measures interests, and the Kuder Skills Confidence Assessment® (KSCA), a self-rating of skills. Both of these are available online in Kuder Navigator® (<http://www.nebraskacareerconnections.org>) or the school's custom Kuder system.

When your child takes the KCIA (interests assessment), he or she will receive a report that has four parts:

- **A listing of the five career pathways of highest interest (see Figure 3).** These pathways contain the occupations that would best fit your child's interests. Navigator provides a list of these occupations and complete descriptions of them, including a video about each.
- **A listing of all 16 career clusters (See Figure 4) in the order of your child's interest in them.** Pay special attention to the top three clusters. In most cases, the five pathways in the first report are contained within these clusters. Navigator provides a description of each cluster, including a video, and details the occupations contained in each pathway under the cluster at all educational entry levels.
- **A section called Person Match (see Figure 5).** In this section of the report, four real people – adults who have taken the same interest assessment and who say that they are satisfied in their jobs – whose interest assessment scores are most like those of your child have been identified out of a pool of about 1,000. Navigator displays a Q&A in which each of the four people discuss their work. These “Person Matches” suggest occupations that relate to your child's interests.
- **A list of occupations that relate to your child's interests (see Figure 6).** Because these lists can be very long, the system prompts your child to choose an educational level that he or she plans to pursue. The list of occupations provided, then, is a combination of those that relate to the measured interests and can be entered at the selected educational level. In Navigator it is possible to change that level in order to see which occupations could become a reality if more (or less) education were attained.

The KSCA measures your child's self-rating of skills related to work in the same 16 clusters and 79 pathways. The report of the results of this assessment are parallel to that of the interest inventory, as shown in **Figure 7** and **Figure 8**, except that the profile presented represents your child's estimate of skills possessed or capability to learn them rather than interests. The more important of these two reports is the report of interests. Skills to support these interests can be learned through coursework and experience.

## Review Your Interests Results

Sara Jones, this is a report that, based on your interests, suggests occupations that you should seriously consider. Now you are seeing the titles of small groups of occupations (called *pathways*) that are the closest match for your interests.

### Top Career Pathways

If you click on the title of the pathway you can get its definition and find out which occupations belong to it.

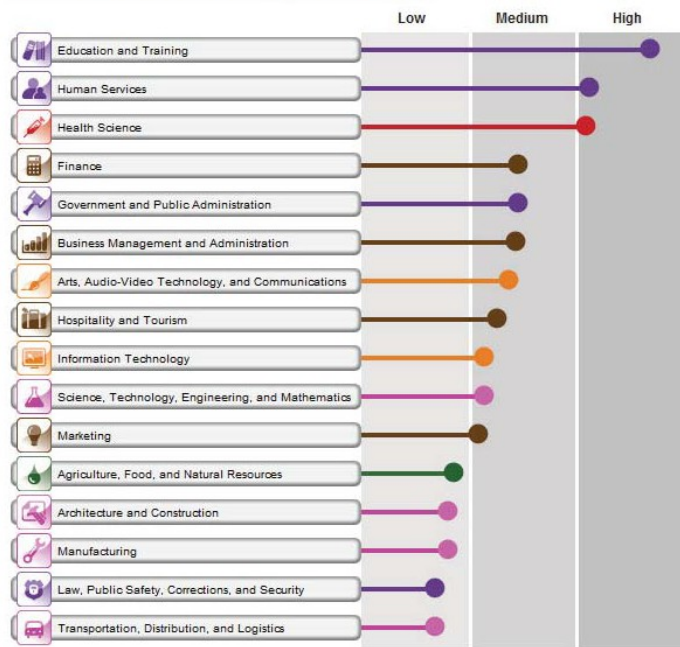
If you hover over the icon at the end of each bar, you can find out which cluster the pathway belongs to. If you click on that icon, you can learn more about the cluster and all of its pathways and occupations.



**Figure 3**  
Kuder Career Interests Assessment  
Top Career Pathways

## Review Your Cluster Ranking

This display shows your level of interest in each of the 16 National career clusters. These clusters organize occupations by industry. The pathways that you have seen are sub-groups of these clusters. If you do not find occupations that you want to pursue in your top five pathways, look at all the occupations in the clusters to which your pathways belong.



**Figure 4**  
Kuder Career Interests Assessment  
Cluster Ranking











## Person Matches

We have selected four people from our pool of "real people" whose interests are very much like yours. Though this does not mean that you should choose the same work that they did, you may be interested in what they chose and how they like it.

### List of Your Person Matches

Click on any title to learn more about your Person Matches and the associated pathway or cluster.

PERSON MATCH	PATHWAY	CLUSTER
<a href="#">Public Attorney</a>		
<a href="#">Elementary Classroom Teacher</a>		
<a href="#">Archivist</a>		
<a href="#">Registered Nurse</a>		

**Figure 3**  
**Kuder Career Interests Assessment**  
**Person Matches**

Review the results of the KCIA (interests assessment) with your child, and ask your child's school counselor to assist you in interpreting them. Your child may print out his or her results (see the examples on the previous page), or may give you his or her personal user name so that you can look at your child's portfolio, which contains these results.

The assessment results can help you and your child to know which of the clusters of occupations or pathways within them, described on pages four and five to explore first. They also can help in planning for courses in high school that will develop

## Occupations Suggested by the *Kuder® Career Interests Assessment*

View a list of occupations suggested by your interests assessment results. This list could be very long so you may narrow the results using the filter options below. As you do so, only occupations that fit your selection will appear on the list.

+ Filter Options

### List of Occupations

Click on the title of any occupation to see its description. Click on the star next to the occupation to save it to your favorite occupations list in your portfolio.

OCCUPATION	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Adult Basic and Secondary Education and Literacy Teachers and Instructors</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Audio-Visual and Multimedia Collections Specialists</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Career/Technical Education Teachers, Middle School</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Child, Family, and School Social Workers</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">City and Regional Planning Aides</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Coaches and Scouts</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Directors, Religious Activities and Education</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Emergency Management Directors</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Health Educators</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Interpreters and Translators</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Legislators</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Library Technicians</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Music Directors</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Music Directors and Composers</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Poets, Lyricists and Creative Writers</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists</a>

**Figure 6**  
**Kuder Career Interests Assessment**  
**List of Occupations**

Review the results of the KSCA with your child (see the examples in **Figure 7** and **Figure 8**). These results can help you and your child identify the areas of greatest skill. Remember, though, that skills can be developed through coursework and life experience, and that these results will change. It is best to consider your child's interests first and then make plans to build the skills needed for occupations suggested by those interests.

### Review Your Skills Results

**Sara Jones**, this is a report that, based on the skills you believe you have or can acquire, suggests occupations that you should seriously consider. Now you are seeing titles of small groups of occupations (called pathways) that are the closest match for your skills.

#### Top Career Pathways

If you click on the title of the pathway you can get its definition and find out which occupations belong to it.

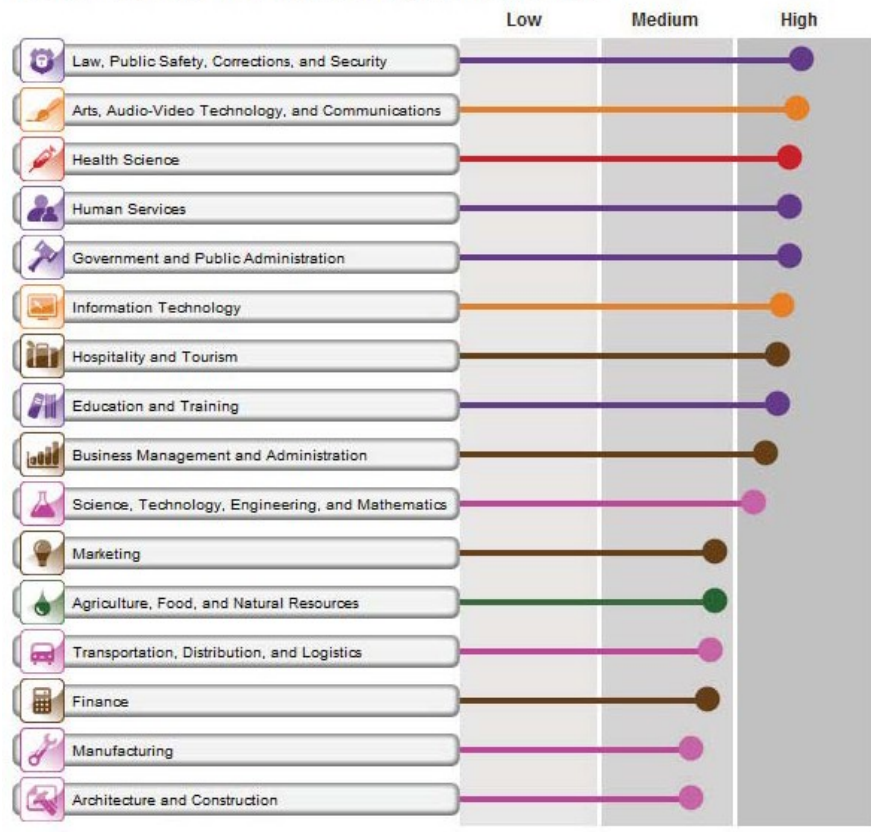
If you hover over the icon at the end of each bar, you can find out which cluster the pathway belongs to. If you click on that icon, you can learn more about the cluster and all of its pathways and occupations.



**Figure 7**  
**Kuder Skills Confidence Assessment**  
**Top Career Pathways**

## Review Your Cluster Ranking

This display shows your level of perceived skill in each of the 16 National career clusters. These clusters organize occupations by industry. The pathways that you have seen are sub-groups of these clusters. If you do not find occupations that you want to pursue in your top five pathways, look at all the occupations in the clusters to which your pathways belong.



**Figure 8**  
**Kuder Skills Confidence Assessment**  
**Cluster Ranking**

### 3. Identify occupations to consider seriously.

There is no one right occupation for your child, but there are many occupations that can suit his or her interests and skills. With all the changes that are taking place rapidly in the 21st century, it is good to have several possible choices. Though there are about 1,000 occupations, it is easy to shorten the list of possibilities after getting the results of the KCIA (interest assessment). Here are some ways to do that:

- Look at your child's portfolio in Navigator ([www.nebraskacareerconnections.org](http://www.nebraskacareerconnections.org)) or the school's custom Kuder system. You will need to sign on as a parent and, in order to access the portfolio, you will need to have your child's user name for the system.
- The results of the KCIA are included under the **Assessment Results** section of the portfolio. Select **View** to see the titles of groups of occupations, or pathways, which are the closest match for your child's interests. Click on the title of the pathway to read its definition and see which occupations belong to it. If you hover over the icon at the end of each bar, you can find out which cluster the pathway belongs to. If you click on that icon, you can learn more about the cluster and all of its pathways and occupations.
- This list of occupations will be a good starting point for discussion of possible future choices. Over time, you and your child will remove and add occupations as you learn more about them. If your child has taken all of the Navigator assessments (measuring interests, skills, and work values), pay attention to occupations that are suggested by two or even all three.
- Add the names of other occupations to that list that you and your child have thought of as possibilities.

### 4. Get detailed information about some occupations.

Now is the time to get more detailed information about the occupations you identified in Step 3. Try these activities:

- Sign on to Navigator (<http://www.nebraskacareerconnections.org>) or the school's custom Kuder system. Read the descriptions of occupations suggested by the KCIA with your child. For most occupations you will also have access to a short video. This video will help your child understand the day-to-day work tasks of the job.
- Have your child save the names of occupations that he or she favors in their portfolio. Do this by clicking on the star next to the occupation's description.

## 5. Choose a short list of occupations.

It is important to shorten the list of favorite occupations before or during the early high school years in order to make a four-year course plan related to those tentative choices. This step may be the most difficult one. Here are some things that can help:



- Assist your child in finding a few people in your community who work in the occupations he or she is considering. Set up an appointment to spend a half hour with each for an “information interview.” In this interview, your child should ask questions about what the person does at work every day, what he or she likes and dislikes about the work, how much training it took, and what the future of the occupation may be.
- Using Navigator or the school’s custom Kuder system, find out how much and what kind of education (apprenticeship, career-technology school, community college, four-year college) is needed after high school to enter each occupation being considered.
- Find out what the U.S. Department of Labor is predicting about the future of each occupation. Will the demand for workers in this field grow or decline? Also, find out what the typical salary is for people who work in each occupation. This information is provided in each occupational description area in Navigator.
- After learning about daily work tasks, educational requirements, future job demand, and income, help your child relate his or her interests, goals, and emerging values to each occupation being considered.
- Finally, help your child shorten the list of possibilities (which may later be changed) to three.

## 6. Plan for future education.

Though both parents and school counselors often get it backwards, young people do need to decide about their occupational goals before planning their courses in high school and their education beyond high school. Once your child has shortened the list of favored occupations to three, it will be possible to plan for education beyond high school and select courses for high school that would be most helpful. Here are some ways to do that:



- Using Navigator or the school's custom Kuder system, learn which clusters and pathways are associated with each of your child's favored occupations.
- Look at a suggested four-year high school plan for relevant clusters by selecting the **Create an Education Plan** feature in Navigator under the Plan for Education tab.
- Assist your child to select courses for the entire four years of high school, or at least for the next school year. Your child's school counselor can also view this plan. You may want to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the school counselor to discuss the plan.
- Make a tentative decision with your child about the kind of education beyond high school he or she wants and is needed for the occupations of choice.
- Be sure your child's four-year high school plan includes courses required by a four-year college (if this is the choice made in the previous step) as well as courses that prepare him or her for work.
- Using Navigator or the school's custom Kuder system, help your child find schools to attend after high school that offer the major(s) needed for the occupations selected. The school comparison function allows you to compare the features of up to three schools side by side.
- Help your child get through all the steps of planning for further education after high school: identifying schools, visiting campuses, taking the necessary entrance examination, completing applications, assessing financial need, and applying for financial aid. Navigator includes extensive information on financial aid. Your child can make notes in his or her portfolio about their progress in all of these steps.

## 7. Get a job.

Cheer up! After all of this work, your child will finally get a job and become financially independent. This step requires that he or she keep a portfolio (the Kuder system offers one online for a lifetime) that includes assessment results; education plans; favorite clusters and pathways, occupations, schools, and scholarships; and job-seeking tools, including resumes, cover letters, and references. Data stored in this personal portfolio plus additional content added by uploading documents or images can be displayed as a public e-Portfolio for prospective employers. You can help with the step of getting a job, too, in these ways:



- As “networking” is the best way to get a job, encourage your young person to talk with relatives and family friends about the kind of job he or she is looking for.
- Help your child understand what employers expect of an employee. More people are fired because they do not practice good work habits (being consistent in attendance, being on time, getting along with the boss and co-workers) than because they can’t do the tasks required in the job.
- Encourage your child to use the websites and searches provided in Navigator to identify possible employers. Also, encourage him or her to develop an attractive and up-to-date e-Portfolio in Navigator.

Of course, when you get through with this whole process, it may start all over again! Especially in the 21st century, people will have many employers and several different kinds of jobs. For that reason, they need to keep their portfolios updated, and they need to understand the process we have just described. The combination of these two things will help them make the many changes they may need to make over their life span.

Start your free parent account today at [www.nebraskacareerconnections.org](http://www.nebraskacareerconnections.org) and follow your child’s career planning process!



## About Kuder, Inc.

Kuder, Inc. (Kuder) was founded in 1997 to provide career options to students and adults through self-assessment and education. Kuder's products and services are based on the vision of Dr. Frederic Kuder, a pioneer in the career development industry. Since the creation of paper assessments by Dr. Kuder in 1938, the Kuder suite has grown and developed in response to changing needs and technology. Kuder offers customized online solutions for career planners at all life states while facilitating communication and collaboration between key stakeholders in economic prosperity – education, business, industry, and government agencies. Kuder's faculty conducts ongoing research to ensure that our solutions are reliable and effective.

The Kuder Career Planning System® (KCPS) offers comprehensive education and career planning tools and resources to help address the needs of a diverse population of users. Components of the KCPS include Kuder Galaxy® for grades PK-5, Kuder Navigator® for middle school and high school students, and Kuder Journey® for postsecondary students and adults. Each is backed by a powerful administrative database to track progress, facilitate curriculum planning, support data-driven decision making, and communicate directly with system users. Kuder also offers a complete line of curricula, professional development, needs assessment, and training services.

## About the Author

JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey, Ed.D. is a senior consultant and developer at Kuder. She has enjoyed a long and varied career in the field of career development, including positions as a high school counselor, director of guidance, university professor, career counselor in a university counseling center, developer of DISCOVER® (a computer-based career planning system), and executive director of the ACT® Educational Technology Center. Dr. Harris-Bowlsbey has authored and co-authored many journal articles and several books, including a popular textbook for training counselors, *Career Interventions in the 21st Century*. She has also developed national and international versions of the Career Development Facilitator curriculum, including the versions used to train career development advisors in Japan and the U.S. prison system. Dr. Harris-Bowlsbey is a past president of the National Career Development Association and recipient of its Eminent Career Award.



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