

Pre-Production



1. Get Them Ready

Like in any movie there is always a love story. In this case it is between your teenager and his/her career. In order for them to be successful, they must love, or at least enjoy, their chosen occupation.

Think back to when you completed high school. There was very little information available about the connection between education and training and its impact on future job opportunities, career growth potential, earnings etc. There was little information to help you make decisions using interests as a link to occupations and the training that would be needed. The majority of the time, only the most focused students chose a field of study based on their interest in the subject matter.

You probably can actually remember one or two of your classmates who fit that description. Others may have made choices because they thought the graduation requirements or a particular degree program were easier than others. Some classmates selected college majors because of a favorite teacher in high school. When graduation time came, except for a few specific disciplines, there was almost no knowledge of what the job market held in store in relation to what they studied. Most of us got some type of job but it may or may not have had anything to do directly with our college degree. This process is sometimes referred to as the "accidental theory of career development"!

Today, however, your children don't have to follow the accidental theory of career development. But how does a parent communicate this information to their

children? There are new counseling and information tools that weren't available when most of today's parents were in high school. Texas CARES is one of those tools.

As your children begin the career exploration process, assure them that their interests will expand, and they may even change their minds about liking or disliking certain tasks they perform while in volunteer work, part-time jobs, extra-curricular activities at school, etc. What is most important is that your children learn to incorporate those experiences and perceptions of career exploration. Share with your child your own experiences of work interests, work values and your career path.

Career development is a life-long process. A valuable lesson you can teach your children is that their career plans will grow, change, and evolve just as they will.

Help your children start to think about how to plan their future, rather than just letting the future plan them!

Pre-Production Notes

Have conversations with your teen that point out discrepancies between what they think and reality. A reminder may be in order that what they see on television is not necessarily real life! (page 4 of *Career Success*)

Discuss the impact of salary on lifestyle wants and needs. Conduct a budget exercise. (page 5)

What does your teen want to do? (page 6)

Discuss a career's salary range. What is the actual amount of training required for a job? Where would they get that training? (pages 11-29)

Remember, it's never too early for you and your children to begin the career exploration process. Together you can explore things such as salary levels, training alternatives, whether it's a "hot job" (which is dependent on what you and your children consider "hot", whether it is salary, growth or job openings, or one that just sounds really interesting) or a job on the endangered species list, like "telegraph operator". Now is the time when other issues and questions that surround an occupation can be explored.

Production

2. Set A Target

It's not essential to sit down and go through the whole career exploration process in one sequential procedure. You and your teenager may spend time reviewing and revisiting interests, work activities, occupations and training alternatives over and over again, until all the pieces fit in a way that makes sense. Their decisions should really reflect what they would like to do for a living and why. However, make a firm commitment to set time to accomplishing these activities. Remember you are directing them.

So how will the subject of career development come up between you and your teenager? Unless you have taken your teen to work, they probably have little information about your job. Do they know about how you got your first job? What did you learn? How? Talk about each job and how they prepared for the next one, etc. Have you discussed what you like most and least about your job? Expand to include education and training. How has your job changed?

When asking your children about their interests, abilities and

skills, don't be surprised when you hear answers like, "nothing", "none", "I don't know". Many times teens are not aware of their interests, abilities, skills, but they certainly do know what doesn't interest them, the

things they don't excel at, and things they don't do well. Don't worry! Remember in career exploration, it's just as important for them to know what doesn't interest them, or where their skills sets are lacking, as it is to know what they like and things they do well. To help your teenager recognize their strengths and skills, unique attributes and talents, create a list with your teen to share and discuss. It will help them realize things in themselves they didn't see. See the sample list below.

Even though job satisfaction is an individual thing, knowing what your teenager does and does not like to do now may help eliminate some job possibilities and increase interest in others. For example, some jobs are better for those who like to work alone; some jobs require working well with others. Some persons work best in a structured environment, others in a more creative one. Job satisfaction is more likely if the setting of the job is

compatible with the individuals' personality and values.

You or your teen can obtain information about specific careers from the library, government agencies, the school counselor, or you can find it all in the computerized Career Information Delivery System (CIDS): Texas CARES or the Career Information Hotline: 1-800-822-PLAN.)

For example, what if your teenager is interested in mathematics but doesn't know how to use that knowledge and those skills in specific jobs? Would your teenager know he or she could become an engineer, a cashier, or accountant? How would your teenager know which one of these occupations would be best?

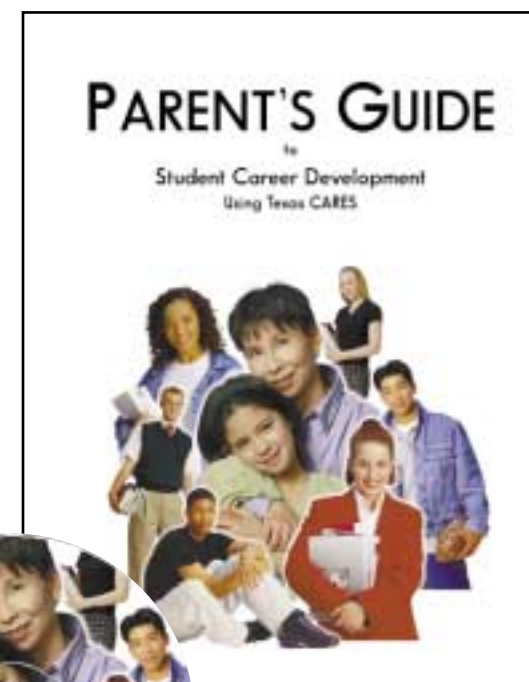
Your teenager's school guidance counselor can also help you track the connection between the courses/school subjects your teenager is studying in school and the occupations they are exploring. Many times students don't realize how courses they are currently taking in school relate, whether directly or indirectly, to an occupation. They may not realize that geometry is a subject used daily by hairdressers, wallpaper hangers and many other occupations.

Take time to discuss the following with your teen:

- Their favorite and least favorite school subjects
- Their favorite activities and hobbies
- Their possible personal interests

Ask your teen:

- What school subjects come easily, or are easily mastered?
- What school subjects are difficult?
- Is it just this school year, or all through out his/her school years?
- What school subjects do they like and dislike?



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Post-Production

3. Hit the Target

All evidence points to some type of education after high school as being important in your teenager's future success. While no one would disagree with the importance of more education past high school, the choice of where to go, and what to study leaves you and your teen with hard decisions to make unless you are armed with a working knowledge of available alternatives to make informed choices.

Parents and teenagers choose training after high school for many different reasons. Not surprisingly, the reasons your teen may choose a school or a particular type of training may vary greatly from your reasons. It is not unusual for a student to select a school because their friends are planning to attend, because it is close/far to home, or because they are trying to stay close to a girlfriend or boyfriend. You, on the other hand, may suggest a school because that's where you attended! The bottom line is that there are no formal rules governing the selection of post secondary education.

A four-year college doesn't have to be an automatic choice for everybody. There are community and technical colleges, private vocational and technical schools, apprenticeship programs, as well as traditional four-year institutions to choose from. Some institutions, especially community and technical colleges, have fields of study more directly focused on specific job skills and employability. Nonetheless many students and their parents view four-year college attendance as the sole method of achieving ultimate labor market success.

Regardless of the value and importance of college, sending your teen to school is not cheap. The average student and their parents incur debts as part of the college experience. Each college has its own tuition, room and board cost structure and they are not all the same. Let's look at the University of Texas as an example. The average annual tuition, fees, room and board for a freshman at UT Austin was \$7,162 in 1998. The level of median borrower indebtedness of UT Austin students was \$15,124. With ever-increasing time to graduation, tuition cost and skyrocketing student debt, it benefits both students and parents to make informed choices on their student's educational investments. (Note: The Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation office pub-

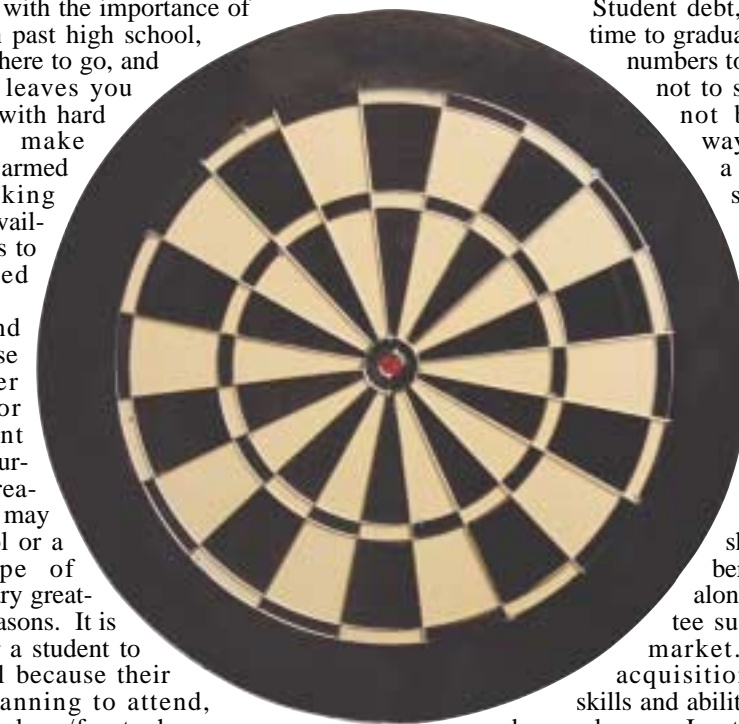
lishes these types of data for all Texas public schools. They can be accessed through the Internet at <http://www.tgslc.org>).

Student debt, tuition costs and time to graduation are important numbers to consider. That is not to say your teen will not benefit in other ways from attending a college or university. Your teenager will certainly obtain a broader academic education, receive exposure to many different subjects and life experiences, develop critical thinking skills and establish life-long friendships. But remember, a college degree alone does not guarantee success in the labor market. It is also the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by employers. In other words, it does matter what and where they study! Results from the CDR Automated Student Follow Up System suggest that getting a job related to the chosen field of study actually negates race/ethnic and gender bias in earnings.

The process of deciding what education to pursue is like buying a car or truck. Before your purchase, you have to do some research. You need to know a little about the world of automobiles and auto dealers, and a little bit about yourself and your driving habits if you want to ensure the best car for you at the best possible price. You can find answers to your questions by talking with friends, studying specific cars and reading consumer report information about their performance, costs and so on.

Deciding which school to attend and what field of study to pursue requires similar research. Your teenagers need to know about the world of work so they don't train for an occupation that will not exist in a few years. They need to know about the different types of schools in order to have a good match to their needs. And your teenagers need to know about their interests, what they are good at and what kind of lifestyle they want to achieve. All of these factors enter into their decision about what to study and where.

A career decision does not have to be accidental! You can direct your teen to explore, evaluate and finally make a decision on what career to pursue and how to attain the necessary training. You can use Career Success to help you help your teen.



Post-Production Notes

Your teen has other educational options other than a four-year college. These include: two-year colleges, technical schools, military, apprenticeships, volunteer work, and others. For more information see page 30.