

Your Future Starts Now: Exploring Careers

Michelle Seay, M.Ed. and Lauren Edwards, M. Ed. | May 2020



As you navigate through your secondary years of school, you will most likely be asked the generic and predictable question: “So... what do you want to be when you grow up?” Some students have an exact answer to what job they’d like to attain as an adult and some students have absolutely no clue. Guess what? Both are okay! Luckily, there are many resources available to both students who know their interests and students who need to do some more research before deciding.

“Why Should I Worry About A Career Now? I’m Still Young!”

All the more reason to begin! The education system has evolved and has become tailored to meeting the needs of students both in the present and for their future. For instance, when making your schedule for high school, your counselors work with you on creating a “4 year plan.” This plan includes classes that are tailored to your personal interests and can benefit you in college as well as future career!

According to America’s Promise Alliance, studies show that students with “a better understanding of the working world can more easily envision how they fit successfully into that world. Knowing the preparation they will need for specific careers, participants also become better able to set realistic goals for themselves and pursue them.” Wouldn’t that be awesome to start learning your future career before you’re even old enough to have a job?!

Getting a head start on exploring your career options has many benefits! For example, if you start exploring different types of careers you might be interested in while still in middle school or high school, you will already have a pretty solid idea of what you’d like to major in in college! That will decrease the likelihood of you wanting to switch majors, which then prolongs your time in college and can increase college costs. On the other hand, trying out a few classes while in high school can also help you determine if that’s really NOT what you want to do when you graduate.

Furthermore, to graduate from a public Texas high school you must have an endorsement or a cluster or concentration of courses in a certain career field or interest. Exploring careers can help you to determine which endorsement you want to pursue.

Explore Your Interests & Learn

Through your school you may take a career interest survey like the Eduthings Career/Interest Profiler composed of 56 statements with a likert scale ("like," "dislike," or "don't know"). Like numerous other career surveys, this profiler takes your responses and matches them with six workplace personality types found on the Holland World of Work Map: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and/or conventional. These are descriptions discovered by Dr. John Holland, a psychologist who studied different work environments and the typical personalities of the employees there. He found that people are happier and more productive in a comfortable work environment that matches their personalities.

The Career Key Map of Holland RIASEC Types/Work Groups and U.S. Department of Education's 16 Career Clusters (in blue)



For more info go to www.careerkey.org 2019 © Career Key, Inc.

Of course, most people are a combination of his six descriptions with at least one dominant type. Let's say your results say that you are conventional for the most part along with investigative. The Eduthings Career/Interest Profiler then lists different occupations that fall in these two categories with links to more information about those careers including job descriptions, the level of education and training needed, skills and abilities required to do the work, possible salary ranges and its related high school endorsement pathway. This information can help you identify which classes you may choose to take in high school and college.

The weekend or especially the summer is an excellent time to check out numerous websites that will help you **explore not only careers but colleges too** that offer majors or programs of study to help you prepare for the careers of your choice. Some are general career sites like EducationPlanner.org (<http://www.educationplanner.org>). But, others are more specific to Texas and will give you information about popular and trending careers in the state such as Jobs Y'all (<https://jobsyall.com>) and Texas Career Check (<https://texascareercheck.com>). Provided by the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Career Check site offers a variety of resources to assist you with exploring careers, education and military options. It even includes Texas high school graduation plan information and a link to the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) sponsored by the U. S. Department of Labor/Employment and Training Association.

Put Your Interests Into Action

In addition to its own interest profiler, one of the unique and valuable features of Texas Career Check is the Texas Reality Check (<https://texasrealitycheck.com>). This survey helps you determine whether you'll be able to **afford the lifestyle** that you want. Using the Lifestyle Calculator, you determine how much your desired living expenses will cost and how much your take-home paycheck will need to be to pay for them. Are you planning on living at home with your parents, or in an apartment or a house? How many bedrooms is that apartment you dream of? Depending on where you desire to live in Texas, the Lifestyle calculator estimates the cost. For example, living in a two-bedroom apartment in the Houston metroplex may cost you \$948 a month, again depending on its location versus \$0 if your parents allow you to live rent free at home. Next,

you have to consider the cost of utilities for your chosen home. Whereas Internet and cable may be a choice,

- ☐ electricity (\$194)
- ☐ gas and water (\$70)
- ☐ some type of phone (\$47)

basic utilities are a must and may cost you at a minimum of \$311 a month in addition to your rent. Add those expenses to the cost of food, transportation, clothing, health care, personal care, entertainment, student loans, other family members, and miscellaneous items and the amount you put aside in savings--everyone needs an emergency/future planning fund--and you have your total monthly expenses. Your goal is to make sure that your desired occupation will help you earn more than you have to spend every month! Oh, and don't forget federal income taxes on that annual or yearly salary! So, yes, it's important to think about not only what you'd like to do for a job or career but also where and how you want to live in the future, and you can play with the Texas Reality Check to help you begin to visualize those dreams.

Amuse Yourself With Your Career Search

Exploring careers can be both adventurous and fun! You can watch videos of various jobs, investigate different areas of the country, analyze options on the Periodic Table of STEM occupations, and quiz yourself with different games on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website (<https://www.bls.gov/k12/games>).

- ★ Name that State
- ★ Spot the Difference
- ★ Word Search
- ★ Memory
- ★ Crossword
- ★ Anagram

See what's available but keep in mind that new types of jobs are created every year, especially as technology changes, and that many people have several careers in their lifetimes. This is just the beginning.

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