

Careers

*It Pays
to Explore!*



Career Awareness Model

A Guide to a Sequential, Cohort-Based Approach



The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) recognizes that career information and awareness play a significant role in promoting the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce in Texas. In the next 20 years, many high-skill, high-wage jobs that are critical to the Texas economy will require postsecondary education. High school Programs of Study can be the gateway to these jobs in biotech labs, healthcare, and high-tech manufacturing.

The information and model contained in this guide are based on best practices found nationally and in Texas high schools that were identified as having outstanding efforts in providing both students and parents with information about possible careers and activities to support student engagement. The Council is pleased to distribute this guide, which includes a model for the provision of information about careers and opportunities after high school. This sequential, cohort-based *Career Awareness Model* complements and is compatible with many aspects of the Achieve Texas College and Career Initiative. The guide and the model can be located on the Council's website at www.governor.state.tx.us/twic.

Established in Texas Government Code Chapter 2308, the Texas Workforce Investment Council advises the Governor and the Legislature on the development of a highly educated and highly skilled workforce. It assists with strategic planning for and evaluation of Texas' workforce development system and advocates for a workforce system that provides quality workforce education and training opportunities for all Texans.



EXPLORING CAREERS: OPENING DOORS TO OPPORTUNITY



Career readiness in a dynamic global economy requires adaptability and lifelong learning. Students who are able to effectively navigate the pathways that connect education to employment are prepared to achieve fulfilling and successful careers. Key academic knowledge must be mastered along with technical competencies that vary from one career to another and change over time.

Today, students must decide between numerous complex and interconnected academic and career choices. Multiple pathways pass through various

postsecondary education opportunities and lead to a variety of industries with continuously evolving occupations. All of these pathways require a rigorous educational foundation that prepares all students for some postsecondary education, as well as the ability to continually advance their skills in the future.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the U.S. ranked 22 out of 27 OECD countries on high school graduation in 2010. Students drop out of high school for numerous reasons. However, the 2011 Pathways to Prosperity Project report, *Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century*, suggests a major reason is that many students do not see a clear connection between their program of study and concrete labor market opportunities. An understanding of career opportunities and educational pathways helps students realize the relevance of core math, science, and English courses and motivates the acquisition of additional academic and career technical education skills.

Students can make better decisions about their futures if they understand the career options available to them after high school and college. The educational requirements of these options include: industry certification, an associate degree, four or more years of college, an apprenticeship, or military training. Integrating career information and pathways with a strong academic foundation can be the gateway to high-wage jobs where employer demand exists for skilled workers.

Developing a Replicable Model of Career Awareness

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) was created in 1993 by the 73rd Texas Legislature. As an advisory body to the Governor and the Legislature, the Council assists with strategic planning for and evaluation of Texas' workforce development system. The Council advocates for a workforce system that provides quality workforce education and training opportunities. The 19-member Council includes representatives from business, organized labor, education, community-based organizations and a representative from each of the Council's five member state agencies.

In 2010, Council staff interviewed teachers and administrators at Texas high schools that were identified as having outstanding practices in college and career counseling. The interview questions focused on promising practices related to the provision of information and support in decision making that enable counselors, students, and parents to understand and value career options and pathways. These practices were compared to determine common elements across schools and then validated against national models. Finally, the most prevalent elements from the programs were used to develop a framework that can be replicated by schools and districts across Texas. The methodology is detailed in the report, *Research Findings: Raising Awareness of Career Technical Education in Texas Schools*. A workgroup of stakeholders was convened to provide feedback on the model.

A Sequential and Cohort-Based Approach

The *Career Awareness Model* provides a compilation of nationally validated, best-practice approaches to integrate available resources and align activities to optimize student outcomes. Recommended implementation is sequential and cohort-based, over a four-year time period. Activities include the provision of career information, individual career counseling, selection of a Program of Study and related career pathway, individual graduation plans, career portfolios, open houses, and college and career events.

The model provides the framework through which students and their parents are provided information and guidance about high school programs, related postsecondary educational opportunities, and future careers. Parents are involved in the career counseling process and encouraged to monitor and assist their children with college and career planning and choices. By the end of the third year, students are familiar with the available classes and Programs of Study at the school, know about occupation options, and have an active career portfolio aligned with their graduation plans.

Career Awareness Model

Schedule

The model consists of specific activities for each cohort of students, and their parents, as they progress through the four school years, from the 9th to the 12th grade.

Components

The model displayed on the following three pages includes elements that detail the activities to be implemented. The standard associated with each element describes how the element is implemented and to what level. The elements and standards are divided into two sections: activities for the students (S) and activities for the parents (P). These two sections are further subdivided by the years of program implementation (1, 2, or 3).

Year 1 (9th Grade) Goal: Provision of Information and Options

Introduce options for Programs of Study and courses.

Student

Parent

Engage: Career and Education Options

Engage: Relevance and Fostering Support

Element S1.1

Students explore career possibilities and learn about education and training requirements using career and interest inventories and an online program such as Career Cruising, Kuder, Pitsco, Bridges, etc.

Standard for S1.1

The feedback provided by the inventories and online programs is interpreted with students to discuss career and academic goals, corresponding course options, and as initial guidance in selecting a pathway as part of a Program of Study. If the Program of Study was previously selected in the 8th grade or earlier, this activity can be used to verify, reacquaint, or update the Program of Study.

Element S1.2

Teachers provide career information in their classes, posters can be displayed throughout the school, or career videos can be offered.

Standard for S1.2

Teachers can provide detailed career information (e.g., descriptions, salary ranges, working conditions, educational requirements, current and projected demand) and use posters or web-based materials to inspire students. Information for the Career Clusters that corresponds to the classes offered in the school and a local point of contact for further information are prominently displayed. Students are aware of and have access to information about the Career Clusters, classes offered through the school, or careers that correspond to the classes offered. Information is available through the counseling office, teachers, or online. Students are provided with a local point of contact for more information and opportunities to develop career/academic goals and to discuss course options.

Element P1.1

Parents are engaged to encourage supportive involvement through an open house or similar event that features an information session showcasing Career Clusters, Programs of Study, and career options in demand occupations.

Standard for P1.1

The event welcomes parents and community members, and features an information session at least once during the year. Information is tailored to the adults to illustrate career and educational opportunities and promote parent-student discussion. Parents are encouraged to participate in their students' career counseling.

Element P1.2

The school or district provides a website for parents (parent portal, Bridges, ConnectEDU, etc.). This site can be part of the school's existing website or an independent application.

Standard for P1.2

Parents are informed of and encouraged to use the website which allows them to access their children's career portfolios, and to monitor and assist their students with college and career planning.

Year 2 (10th Grade) Goal: Facilitate Decision Making to Refine Program of Study and Career Pathway

Support student decision making in career goals and further refine the Program of Study and career pathway.

Student

Parent

**Advance:
Career Information and Guidance**

Element S2.1

Students receive individual career counseling (specific for a career and possible career pathway) and develop an individual Program of Study to support their graduation plan. Students revisit and revise their Program of Study as needed.

Standard for S2.1

Using students' career goals or plans, counselors and appropriate personnel provide specific career information and ensure alignment between career goals and course selection. Students select a Program of Study that supports their career goals. The Program of Study is an active document and is considered when selecting academic and elective courses, as well as extracurricular activities, etc.

Element S2.2

Students receive course descriptions, including both academic and career and technical education, in course guides, brochures, etc. These demonstrate links to potential occupations.

Standard for S2.2

Students receive material that details available classes with specific career information for associated occupations. Materials contain resources for more information.

**Advance:
Involvement and Decision Making**

Element P2.1

Course guides (or other material) are available for parents to review.

Standard for P2.1

Parents are notified that materials exist detailing available classes, specific career information for associated occupations, and Program of Study. The materials contain a local point of contact for more information and encouragement to talk with their children about career opportunities. These materials can be available in print or online.

Element P2.2

Parents are notified and have the opportunity to be involved in their students' career counseling. Parents are contacted prior to their children's choice of a Program of Study—and if students make any subsequent changes to their Program of Study.

Standard for P2.2

During the initial selection of Program of Study and after any subsequent modifications, parents are notified and asked to discuss possible ramifications with their children. Parents are provided with links to labor market information and resources for information to facilitate discussion, as they are a critical source of career information for their children.

Years 3 and 4 (11th and 12th Grades) Goal: Support Completion of High School Diploma and Transition to Postsecondary Education

Provide a bridge from the Program of Study courses to high school diploma completion and enrollment in postsecondary education or training.

Student

Parent

**Transition:
Postsecondary and Career Opportunities**

**Transition:
Supporting Next Steps**

Element S3.1

Students create a career portfolio using an online program such as Career Cruising, Kuder, etc.

Standard for S3.1

Students create and maintain an active career portfolio based on career exploration and Program of Study planning activities completed in years 1 and 2. The portfolio is aligned with the students' Program of Study and contain the graduation plan, Program of Study, career and interest inventories, resume, work/volunteer experiences, awards, research about careers, and postsecondary education options.

Element S3.2

Job shadowing or work-based internship.

Standard for S3.2

Students have the opportunity to either job shadow or undertake a work-based internship related to their selected Program of Study and/or Career Cluster at least once during the year. Detailed career information should be provided to students in advance of these events.

Element P3.1

College and career events are targeted toward parents to promote career choices through student achievement and concrete linkages to postsecondary opportunities (military, apprenticeship, community college, and university).

Standard for P3.1

Parents have the opportunity to attend a college and career event at least once during each year. Information is tailored to promote parent-student discussion and subsequent decisions about postsecondary opportunities and careers. Parents are encouraged to participate in their children's career counseling and offered the opportunity to request a meeting with school staff if more information is needed.

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