

# Introduction and Structure

This career development curriculum is designed to guide high school students through a purposeful journey of self-discovery and career exploration, providing the foundation for making informed decisions about their educational and professional paths.

## WHY CAREER DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

The world of work is constantly evolving, with new careers emerging and traditional pathways shifting. Now, more than ever, it's essential to understand not just what careers exist, but who you are and what matters most to you. This curriculum will help students build the self-awareness and research skills necessary to navigate their career journey with confidence and purpose. This work is supported by both national professional standards and state-level requirements that recognize the critical importance of career development in education.

According to the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) position statement on The School Counselor and Career Development, career development is a core component of a comprehensive school counseling program and an essential part of the counselor's role in supporting student growth. By offering meaningful career development programming, school counselors empower students to make informed choices and develop the readiness needed for lifelong success. This book is designed to help bring that mission to life by equipping you with a framework to confidently deliver career development programming that truly makes a difference for your students.

This book is organized into two complementary sections that work together to help students discover careers that align with who they are and what they want from life. Included are an introductory Opening Lesson to set the stage for why research and planning are essential for making informed career decisions and a Final Lesson that allows students to synthesize everything they've learned by envisioning their future selves in their desired careers.

### **Opening Lesson: Let's Plan a Trip!**

Before diving into self-exploration, students complete an engaging introductory activity that connects career planning to something familiar—planning a trip. This lesson helps students understand why research and planning are essential for making informed career decisions.

## **Part One: Exploring Self**

Before students can identify the right career path, they need to understand themselves. The first four lessons guide students through a comprehensive self-assessment, with each topic following a two-part approach: first, students will learn what each concept means and why it matters for career planning; second, they'll reflect on and identify their own unique profile in each area.

The Extension Lesson in this section will direct students to complete the Exploring Self Reflection Worksheet. This worksheet is meant to provide a space for students to reflect on each of the Exploring Self lessons. The worksheet should be given to students as the exit ticket for each Extension Lesson within the Exploring Self section. As students answer the reflection question in each section, they will also list two careers they matched with following their self-exploration assessment. This will allow students to see patterns and make connections as they work through each lesson. After finishing the Exploring Self lessons, students will select two careers that they want to further research. These two careers will be listed on the Exploring Careers Worksheet used for Part Two. You may choose to provide physical copies or make this available digitally through your learning management system or shared drives.

## **Part Two: Exploring Careers**

With a clear understanding of themselves, students are ready to investigate the world of work. The next several lessons teach students how to research and evaluate career options, following the same two-part approach: first, they'll learn what each career element means and why it's important to consider when choosing a career; second, they'll research and explore two careers they're interested in, applying what they have learned to real-world career investigation. Through this systematic approach, students will develop the research skills needed to evaluate any career while building detailed knowledge about careers that match their interests, passions, values, personality, and skills.

As students are introduced to each career element in the Exploring Careers section of this text, they will research the specific career element information for their two careers and record it on the Exploring Careers Worksheet. This will serve as the exit ticket for the Extension lesson. Completing this worksheet allows students to compare the elements of careers, and to ultimately reflect on the elements that are their top priority. You may choose to provide physical copies or make this available digitally through your learning management system or shared drives.

## **Final Lesson: Integrating Career and Life Goals**

The Final Project—bringing it all together. The culminating activity allows students to synthesize everything they've learned by envisioning their future self in their desired career. By creating this detailed vision of their future, they'll identify their career and lifestyle preferences, set realistic expectations for their goals, and demonstrate their ability to connect self-knowledge with career information, the essential foundation for making informed decisions about their path forward.

# How to Use This Book

This curriculum is designed to be flexible and accessible, allowing you to adapt lessons to fit your students' needs, your classroom structure, and your available resources. Each of the topics includes two distinct lessons:

**Foundational Lesson** (30-40 minutes)—These lessons build core understanding and can be completed without technology. Through reflection, discussion, and hands-on activities, students develop essential concepts and self-awareness.

**Extension Lesson** (30-40 minutes)—These lessons deepen learning through active research and exploration. Students apply what they've learned by investigating real-world career information and resources online.

This career development curriculum is designed with flexibility in mind, recognizing that technology access varies widely across schools and districts. The lessons are structured to ensure all students can benefit from essential career exploration concepts while providing enhanced opportunities for those with technology access.

## FOUNDATIONAL LESSONS: TECHNOLOGY OPTIONAL

The foundational lessons in each unit can be completed successfully without technology. These core lessons focus on building self-awareness, understanding career concepts, and developing essential skills through activities.

## EXTENSION LESSONS: TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED

The extension lessons are designed to deepen student learning through active career research and exploration. These lessons require access to computers, tablets, or other devices with internet connectivity. Students will be directed to websites to complete research, but many schools have their own Career Information System that you may direct students to instead.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- For schools with consistent technology access: Consider integrating foundational and extension lessons seamlessly, allowing students to move directly from building conceptual understanding to hands-on research and exploration.
- For schools with limited technology access: Consider scheduling extension lessons during computer lab time, coordinating with your school's media specialist,

or allowing students to complete technology-based activities as homework if they have home internet access.

- For schools with no technology access: The foundational lessons provide a complete career development curriculum on their own. You may wish to supplement with printed career materials, guest speakers from local industries, and field trips to provide real-world career exposure.

The flexibility of this curriculum ensures that all students can engage in meaningful career development, meeting them where they are, while providing opportunities for extended learning when resources allow. This curriculum can also be adapted for implementation in small groups rather than a classroom setting.

## **EACH LESSON INCLUDES:**

### **ASCA Student Standards**

Each lesson aligns with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, demonstrating how the activity supports comprehensive school counseling program goals in the career development domain. Every lesson in this curriculum identifies the relevant mindsets and behaviors being addressed, helping school counselors document how their career development programming contributes to students' overall growth and success. This alignment also ensures that lessons meet professional standards and can be integrated seamlessly into your comprehensive school counseling program.

### **Learning Objectives**

Clear, measurable objectives outline exactly what students will know and be able to do by the end of the lesson, helping both educators and students focus on key outcomes.

### **Materials**

A complete list of required resources ensures you can prepare everything needed before the lesson begins. Foundational lessons typically require basic classroom supplies, while extension lessons note technology requirements. Many of the materials listed include printed out worksheets. You may find it helpful to print the worksheets as a packet for each student and collecting the packets after each lesson.

### **Bell Ringer**

Each lesson opens with an engaging prompt that students can complete independently as they arrive. Display the bell ringer on your whiteboard or in a slide deck and instruct students to follow the directions and work quietly until you're ready to begin. Encourage students to share with an elbow partner and then ask for volunteers to share with the class. This activity settles the class, activates prior knowledge, and creates a focused learning environment from the moment students enter. Plus, many provide fun and engaging conversations!

## Direct Instruction, Activity

Step-by-step guidance walks you through the lesson's main activity, including discussion prompts, activity instructions, and facilitation tips. The procedures are designed to be clear and practical, allowing you to focus on student interaction rather than deciphering instructions.

## Exit Ticket

Each lesson concludes with a brief assignment that serves multiple purposes.

- **For Foundational lessons:** Each foundational lesson will have its own exit ticket that can vary from turning in a worksheet to answering reflection questions. This can be done through a physical paper or through your learning management system. It is up to you how you collect information. Do what works best for you!
- **For Extension lessons—Exploring Self section:** Exit tickets contribute directly to each student's Exploring Self Reflection Worksheet, a cumulative document on which students compile their self-discovery findings. You may choose to provide physical copies or make this available digitally through your learning management system or shared drives.
- **For Extension lessons—Exploring Careers section:** Exit tickets feed into the Exploring Careers Worksheet, where students organize and analyze information about careers they're investigating. This structured approach helps students compare career options systematically. As stated above, you may choose physical copies or make it available digitally through your learning management system or shared drives.

By using exit tickets as building blocks for larger projects, students see how each lesson connects to their overall career exploration journey.

## GETTING STARTED

Whether your students are just beginning to think about their future or refining existing career ideas, this curriculum will equip them with the self-knowledge and research skills to make informed, confident decisions about their futures. This engaging and hands-on curriculum will allow you to guide students through meaningful self-discovery while building the critical thinking and planning skills they'll use throughout their lives.

## Exploring Self Reflection Worksheet

Following the completion of each Exploring Self lesson, answer the reflection question within each box. Then log two careers from your research that match your reflection to record and further research.

Exploring Self Lesson	Reflection	Career 1	Career 2
<b>Interests &amp; Passions</b>	Explain how these careers align with what you learned about yourself from the inventory results.		
<b>Values</b>	What two work values seem most represented based on your sorted personal values?		
<b>Personality</b>	What energizes you? What drains you? What did you learn about your personality and how that relates to a future career?		
<b>Skills</b>	Based on the careers that matched your skills, which skill do you think is your strongest, and how could you continue building or applying that skill in school or outside activities?		

## Exploring Careers Worksheet

List two careers that you are interested in learning more about. As the exit ticket for each career element lesson, answer the question(s) for each career.

Career Element	Career 1:	Career 2:
<b>Job Duties</b>	What are three job duties you are most excited about for this career?  1.  2.  3.	What are three job duties you are most excited about for this career?  1.  2.  3.
<b>Career &amp; Lifestyle Fit</b>	Salary range:  Work environment:	Salary range:  Work environment:
<b>Education &amp; Advancement</b>	What are the educational requirements for this career? What does advancement within this career look like?	What are the educational requirements for this career? What does advancement within this career look like?
<b>Career Demand</b>	What is the demand for this career: high, steady, or declining demand?	What is the demand for this career: high, steady, or declining demand?

# Let's Plan a Trip!

## ASCA Student Standards

M 6: Understanding that postsecondary education and lifelong learning are necessary for long-term success

B-LS 1: Critical thinking skills to make informed decisions

B-LS 9: Decision-making informed by gathering evidence, getting others' perspectives and recognizing personal bias

B-SS 7: Leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse groups

## Learning Objectives

- Students will understand why doing research prior to planning something is important and compare this to doing research on themselves, careers, and postsecondary options.
- Students will see the comparison of skills related to planning a trip and planning a career.

## Materials

- Four envelopes (one for each group containing varying information for planning the vacation)
- Four Planning a Trip worksheets (one for each group)
- If your students have technology access: one computer per group, or each student can have their own device
- If your students do not have technology access: posters or large sheets for students to write on

## Bell Ringer

What did you want to be when you were younger? And why?

## Direct Instruction

The goal of this lesson is to provide students with an understanding of why planning and doing research can help them create a solid foundation for career and postsecondary planning. It is like planning for a trip—the more research you have done and the more information you have, the better your trip will fit your needs. Having

a foundation or a baseline will allow students to be adaptable and make informed decisions based on what they have learned or know about themselves. The skills used to research a trip are the same they would use for researching a career.

Consider some reflections questions before you give them the activity:

- What skills do you feel are needed to plan a trip *and* to plan your career?
- What are some things that can go wrong with both?

### **Activity**

Students will be instructed to plan a dream vacation for you as their teacher. The teacher will select the best vacation planned for them by the groups. The teacher will split students into smaller groups and give each group a worksheet with different levels of information. Groups will not know the information given to the other groups. Groups will have approximately 15–20 minutes to complete their worksheets.

If students have access to technology, allow them to create a slide deck with the planned trip. If students do not have access to technology, give them paper and supplies to create a trip.

#### **4 Different Groups:**

We have selected a location, but feel free to change it to a location that makes sense for your area.

##### **1. Go on a trip**

- a. Want to rent a house
- b. Stay for 5 days, 4 nights

##### **2. Go on a trip to a beach**

- a. Want to rent a house
- b. Stay for 5 days, 4 nights
- c. Should be 15 minutes or less from the beach

##### **3. Go on a trip to a beach in Florida**

- a. Want to rent a house
- b. Stay for 5 days, 4 nights
- c. Travel by airplane
- d. Should be 15 minutes or less from the beach
- e. Want to go on a guided boat tour

##### **4. Go on a trip to a beach in Destin, Florida**

- a. Want to rent a house
- b. Stay for 5 days, 4 nights
- c. Travel by airplane
- d. Should be 15 minutes or less from the beach
- e. Want to go on a guided boat tour
- f. Eight guests

After the 15–20 minutes are up, students will present to the class details about the vacation they planned. Start with Group 1 (least amount of information) and move to Group 4 (most information). After all groups present, the teacher will give details of their dream vacation (Group 4’s information).

### **Group Reflection Questions**

- As we listen to each group’s dream vacation plan, and notice that each group has varying details, what do you notice about the level of ease that groups with more information had in their planning?
- How might your career goals and planning be impacted by the amount of information and resources available to you now?

### **Exit Ticket**

Students will complete the pre-assessment.