



Preparing Kids for Their Life's Road Trip

Michele Wulff is a former public school educator of 30 years and a 2007 recipient of the peer award "Excellence in Teaching Economics." As an economic education coordinator with the Kansas City Fed, she works to heighten financial literacy throughout the seven states of the Tenth District.

Remember being asked the age-old question "What do you want to be when you grow up" during your formative years? Did the career you aspired to then change as you made your way through elementary, middle, high school and even college? Kids today may have even more difficulty choosing an occupation as additional career opportunities have evolved and expanded in our complex world. So how do you prepare them for one of the most critical life decisions they will make?

Because the most fulfilling careers are based on interests that individuals are passionate about, start with a discussion on professions that connect with kids' interests. If they love to build, investigate the career choices of architect, construction worker or carpenter. If they enjoy helping others, discuss teaching, nursing or counseling. If they are into technology, explore the jobs of computer programmer, technician or software developer. If your child dwells on a dream of becoming a ballerina or a pro hockey player, don't dismiss their aspiration. Instead, point out related career areas, such as dance instructor or coach. Try our Career Interest Assessment (CIA) on Page 30 to get your child on the road to possible career fields.

Share your own world of work by inviting them to visit your workplace and observe your job in action. The national "Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day" is an excellent opportunity for them to learn and

explore. See if other relatives or friends might be willing to show or tell them about their daily work routine as well. Kids can get the feel of different work environments and decide if they have an interest in pursuing those fields as a result.

Widen their scope by increasing their exposure to professions they may not be familiar with. Read age appropriate books on a variety of occupations with your child, and discuss successful people in various fields that they've seen in the media. Use the Kids.gov website listed in the resources section to watch "Career Spotlight" clips of various jobs. Try the website career games to pique their interest. Your goal should be to open up their world to new job possibilities.

Many high schools have a career counselor, whose role is to introduce students to occupations and give information regarding job possibilities. Find out if your child's school has this service and make an appointment with your child to discuss their potential job options, based on skills that have been assessed. Then act on the counselor's recommendations and continue the discussion at home.

When your child seems serious about a particular career, it's time to use the "road trip" analogy. Tell them that learning and training for a career is like preparing for a road trip. The family wouldn't start out on a trip without knowing where they were going and how to get there. So the child should begin by gathering facts about their career, including the skills necessary, work requirements and salary level. Before leaving on their adventure, the family would prepare by filling the tank with gas. So the child should pursue the appropriate education and training to fill their "tank" with knowledge related to the chosen career path.

What about roadblocks and detours along the way? The child should be ready to take a new road if their career travel plans are upended through financial issues or a change of heart.

As your child nears the end of the educational path for their future profession, urge them to look into internships in their job field. This work-related experience is invaluable, both as a resume builder and a taste of the real world of work. And often an internship can lead to a real job offer.

Above all, make sure your child is aware that the learning doesn't stop once they've been hired. They should be prepared for continuing professional education and on-the-job training to learn new job techniques and keep their skills sharp. Because industries are constantly changing, they will need to be flexible and adapt to new trends in their field as they travel their life's road trip.



Financial Education Resources

The Kansas City Fed is committed to promoting economic and financial literacy and greater knowledge of the Federal Reserve's role by providing resources for teachers, students and the public. Visit our website at KansasCityFed.org for more information.

Federal Reserve Resources

"The Money Circle" Theme 2, Lessons 1 & 2

These lessons discuss career education, training and income potential. Students research a chosen job to learn qualifications and salary, then weigh the costs and benefits associated with choosing this career. They also explore the concept of standard of living as it relates to income potential. For ages 14-18. Look under the high-school level classroom resource section at KansasCityFed.org/education

"Barbie in the Labor Force"

This lesson looks at the occupations of women historically, using a timeline that notes the introduction of Barbie career dolls from 1959-2012. For ages 14-18. (www.stlouisfed.org/education_resources/barbie-in-the-labor-force)

Career Website Resources

<http://kids.usa.gov/jobs/index.shtml>

This website is kid-friendly and matches interests and hobbies to possible careers. It includes "Career Spotlight" clips and information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. For ages 10-18.

<http://www.pacareerzone.org/>

This website highlights "job families" of related careers, listing training levels, possible college majors, projected openings and salaries. For ages 12-18.

<http://www.knowitall.org/kidswork>

This website is set up as a virtual community workplace to explore jobs. Virtually visit a hospital, theater and other businesses to discover the jobs involved and hear real people explain their careers. For ages 10-18.

Fiction Books

"The Berenstain Bears: Jobs Around Town" by Stan and Jan Berenstain
The bear cubs explore a variety of jobs in bear country as they begin to consider their future careers. For ages 4-8.

Nonfiction Books

"A Day in the Life" series: The Kids' Career Library

From architect to zookeeper, this series explains career options using real people and their experiences. For ages 8-12.

"Teens' Guide to College and Career Planning" by Peterson's

A guide to help teens make decisions regarding education and careers that best suit their skills, needs and wants.

Take the CIA Challenge!

Wondering how to decide on your future career? Try our **Career Interest Assessment (CIA)** to see where your talents, skills and interests might lead you in choosing an occupation. Check off the activities in each category that you would enjoy.

Real World Activities

- Repair a car
- Arrest lawbreakers
- Build furniture

Social Activities

- Teach children
- Be a hospital volunteer
- Make people laugh

Investigation Activities

- Do math problems
- Perform science experiments
- Learn about environmental problems

Business Activities

- Sell goods and services
- Take charge of a project
- Be the boss of other workers

Artistic Activities

- Design clothing
- Write a story or play
- Act in a performance

Everyday Activities

- Organize a work area
- Balance a budget
- Operate business machines

Now match the activities you checked with careers in that field.
Good luck in your career exploration!

Real World careers: mechanic, firefighter, police officer, chef, carpenter, military

Social careers: counselor, teacher, social worker, nurse, minister, comedian

Investigation careers: computer programmer, doctor, pharmacist, scientist, engineer, mathematician

Business careers: business owner, manager, sales person, travel agent, real estate agent

Artistic careers: musician, artist, photographer, author, actor, interior designer

Everyday careers: administrative assistant, accountant, banker, computer technician, dental assistant

(Checklist adapted from the Career Interest Program Prentice-Hall, Inc. 2001)

