

OVER 5,000 PATHWAYS TO A FUTURE CAREER



WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Join Career Bridge and Newspapers In Education over the next four weeks as we explore the pathways to a future career. After all, the end goal of education isn't a report card — it's a career! If you plan right, it will be one you enjoy, in a growing field that also pays the bills. Today, we'll focus on exploring work and careers.

What is the difference between work and a career? Many people define work as the job you do to make money. You may only do the job for a short time, and it may not be your favorite type of work, but you are building skills and earning an income. A career, on the other hand, centers on you, not your employer or money. You may have several careers in your lifetime. These careers are pursued based on your passions and skills. If you're thinking, "I'm still in high school; what can I do now for work, let alone to plan my career?" the answer is: a lot! In fact, right now is the best time to do it. Here are some tips for career planning.

EXPLORE CAREERS

Researching a career and spending time in the workplace will help you see connections to what you're studying in school and make learning come alive. Get started by asking your neighbors and parents about their jobs. Use Career Bridge to explore careers online. Take the pressure off choosing one career by learning about several. Here's how:

- **Consider careers that sound interesting.** If you've heard about a career that appeals to you, now is the time to get the facts. Think about what you like to do *and* what you're good at. The best career will combine both. Is there a school subject, hobby or artistic talent where you excel?
- **Ask questions!** Talk to friends and family to find out what they do, and what they like about it. This can help you decide what you might enjoy doing.
- **Go to work with someone whose job interests you.** Ask people you know if you can shadow them at work. You'll be surprised how much you can learn in just one work day!
- **Take a test drive with a Career and Technical Education class.** Whether it's agriculture, technology, arts, finance, health care or marketing, you're sure to find a class that fits your interests and helps you dig deeper into a future career.

EXPLORE WORK

Don't wait until you graduate to explore work. The more you explore, the more you'll learn what you like and don't like. Jobs put your learning into action. Plus you might make some money! Ask your parents and friends for job ideas. Consider these options:

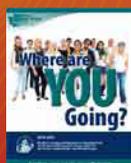
- **After-school or weekend job.** This might not be the work you'll do in your career, but you'll learn solid skills that carry over, whether it's basic accounting, customer service or time management.
- **Volunteer work.** If you're able to offer your time without getting paid, you can get experience, references, recommendation letters or even a future job.
- **School clubs or organizations.** Take advantage of leadership opportunities and explore interests that may direct your career path.
- **Baby sitting or pet sitting.** This can be a fun way to earn extra money, be your own boss and learn responsibility.
- **Ask neighbors for odd jobs.** Maybe a neighbor needs help with yard work, housecleaning or computer help. Think about how you can put your skills to work. The possibilities are endless!

Join us next week as we map the path to a career with a future.

Career Bridge is a free, state website with over 5,000 education programs. Learn more at CareerBridge.wa.gov.



Take the career quiz on CareerBridge.wa.gov. See how your interests match up with a career!



To learn more or register for Newspapers In Education, please email us at nie@seattletimes.com or call 206/652-6290.

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When you have a list of careers that interest you, it's time to do some research. Thinking through these steps now will help you get where you want to be faster.

FIRST, GET THE BALANCE RIGHT

Finding the right career means balancing your interests in work with your need to earn an income as an adult. Future goals around family, travel and where you want to live also factor into your career choice. For example, a career in traveling sales might not be best for someone who wants to be near family or doesn't like driving. Think about the lifestyle you want (from housing and clothing to cars and vacations) and how much money you will need to pay for it. Use the Self-Sufficiency Calculator to discover the true cost of living where you live (thecalculator.org).

SECOND, RESEARCH YOUR POTENTIAL SALARY

Some jobs pay more than others. Other jobs can lead to better-paying jobs once you have more experience or additional education, otherwise known as climbing the career ladder. Learn what entry-level jobs will be your first steps. Education and experience will move you along a career path into advanced positions in related fields. What do jobs in your career field pay? What are the opportunities for growth? Which job sits at the base of your targeted career field? For example, starting out as a medical assistant, you can continue to take classes and advance your way into a job as a registered nurse. Identifying career ladders will help you to map your career to top positions.

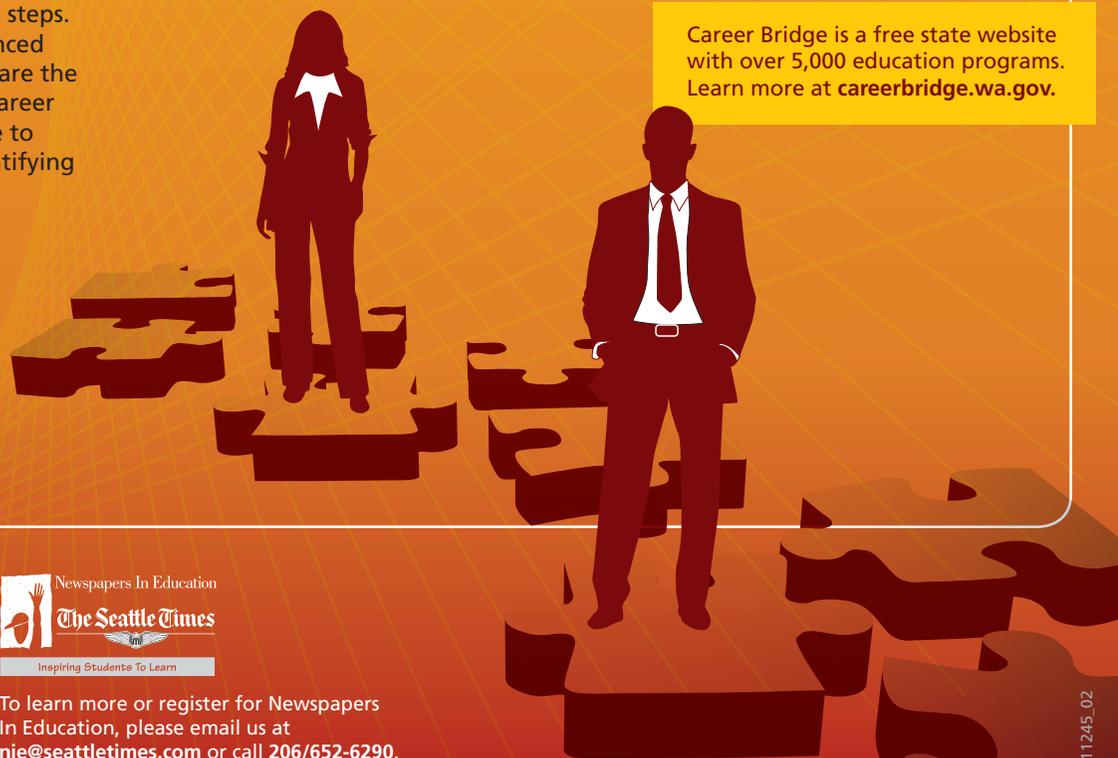
Learn more about what jobs pay at careerbridge.wa.gov. Click on **View Job Trends** to view earnings and employment outlook.

THIRD, LOOK FOR EDUCATION AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Most careers are grouped within one of 16 career clusters, such as Health Science or Finance. You can explore these career clusters in Career Bridge's Explore Careers area. Take the career quiz to see which career clusters match your interests and how jobs are related. You'll also find more than 5,000 Washington education programs on Career Bridge to help you prepare for a career. Right now, you can explore potential careers and gain valuable work skills through your school's career and technical education classes in marketing, agriculture, technology and more.

Join us next week as we chart a course for your career plans after high school.

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CHARTING A COURSE BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

When you are ready to chart a career path after high school, there are multiple pathways you can take. First, you need to know what you like to do now, what you want to do in the future and what you want to learn more about. Your options after high school include:

- Going directly from high school to a four-year college or university. This option works well if you like academics and the colleges or universities you apply to offer programs that will lead to careers you are interested in. Just like how you would explore jobs and careers, get in touch with family, friends and neighbors who are a year or two older than you to ask about their experiences applying to four-year colleges and universities.
- Attending a community or technical college. Located around the state, these colleges offer two-year academic programs that lead to an associate's degree. This can be a more affordable way to get your first two years of a four-year degree and also enjoy a smaller setting close to home.
- Community and technical colleges also offer professional and technical degree and certificate programs that prepare you for a specific career. There are a wide variety of community college programs offering job-specific certifications ranging from culinary arts to health care to information technology.
- Attending private career schools. These schools offer professional and technical programs in specialized fields, similar to community or technical colleges. However, private career schools are independent, private businesses operating to train individuals for a specific career or skill.
- Entering an apprenticeship. Traditionally, apprenticeships operated in the construction trades, but the field has expanded. Much like an internship, apprenticeships allow you to work and learn at the same time and have a hands-on focus.

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for your career plans after high school.

Before you enroll in a program, be a good consumer:
Use careerbridge.wa.gov and get Performance Results. Find out:

- What percentage of students complete the program
- How much the education costs
- If graduates got the jobs and careers they desired
- What they earned

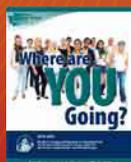
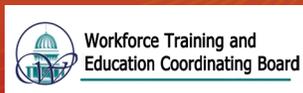
HOW DO I CHOOSE?

Ask yourself these questions when choosing an education pathway:

- How do you want to use your education? In other words, what is your career goal?
- What type of education experience do you wish to have, such as living away from home or in a big city, or working while in school?
- How long of a program do you want to do before starting your career?
- How much money do you need or want to make starting out in a job?
- How much debt can you afford to have when you are done?

Ending your education after high school. Warning: This is a bad idea! While a four-year university may not be for you right now, if you want to earn a livable wage, you will need to continue on with school — whether it's a one-year certificate, two-year degree or a high-paying apprenticeship. Don't sell yourself short. Train for a field that's in demand and pays well.

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PAY FOR SCHOOL

YOU CAN AFFORD EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

College costs can be daunting, but you can afford education beyond high school. In fact, you really can't afford not to. There are multiple pathways after high school including community and technical colleges, apprenticeships, military and volunteer service.

Career Bridge can help you find financial resources. Click on "Pay for School" to see grants, scholarships, work study, loans and more.

- Apprenticeships: careerbridge.wa.gov, enter "apprenticeship" in the search field
- Military careers: usmilitary.com
- Volunteer service: americorps.gov and peacecorps.gov

FOCUS ON FINANCIAL AID

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used by most schools to determine your eligibility for financial aid. Financial aid can make a big difference in paying for your education, so make time to fill out the form with your family. This form can take time, but the potential payoff is large.

- Get help filling out financial aid forms at collegegoalsundaywa.org
- Get information about FAFSA at fafsa.ed.gov
- Get information on scholarships and grants at thewashboard.org

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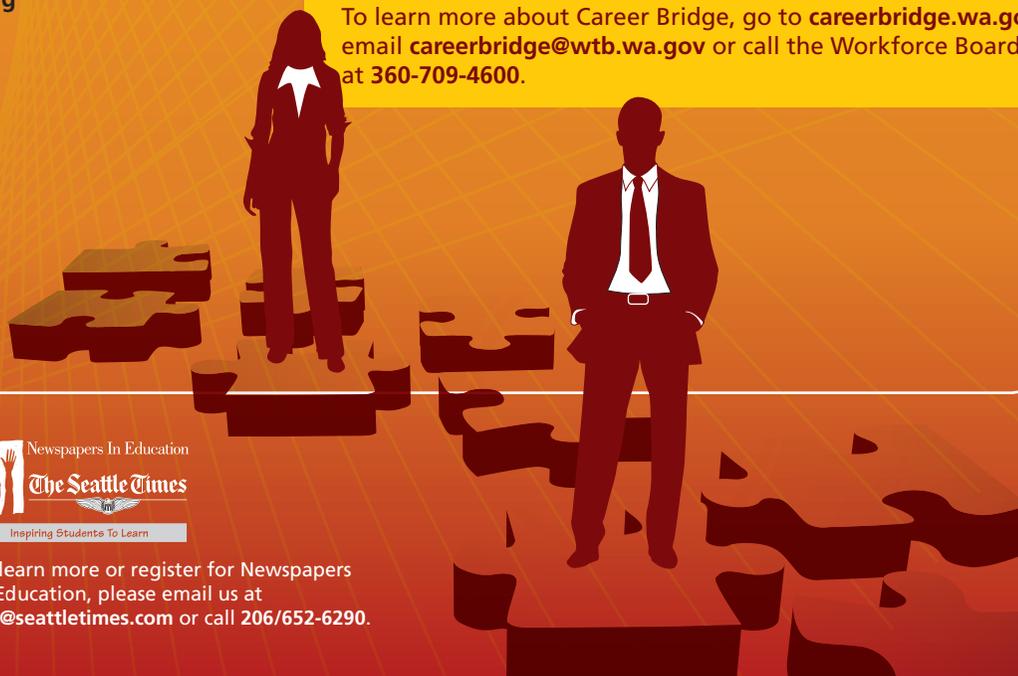
WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Planning ahead before you graduate helps you map your career. Look for programs in high school, such as Advanced Placement and Running Start, that can provide college credit later and move you toward your goals. Test drive your career interests and get high school credits at the same time with Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes. Whether it's agriculture or marketing, health care or IT, certain sequences of CTE classes allow you:

- to qualify for college credits
- to earn a credential to put on your resume
- to participate in a Program of Study (when available)

You can also choose from a variety of hands-on, career-focused classes that interest you at your local Skills Center (washingtontskillscenters.org).

To learn more about Career Bridge, go to careerbridge.wa.gov, email careerbridge@wtb.wa.gov or call the Workforce Board at 360-709-4600.



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