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# Unit 7: Elementary

## College & Career Readiness in Elementary Grades



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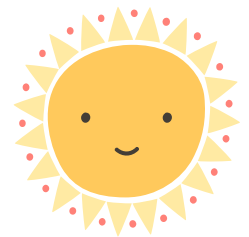
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# 1) MAKING THE CASE FOR CCR IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



It probably doesn't come as a surprise to anyone reading this that the process of preparing for postsecondary education and opportunities is a long and involved process. And, unfortunately, most of the time, this preparation doesn't even begin until students have reached high school. Which is simply too late.

For a few years now, there has been a push to bring college and career preparation down into the middle grades, which is definitely a move in the right direction. If we want high school students to have the best chances at a successful launch into postsecondary experiences, then beginning that work before they walk through the door as a freshman or sophomore is necessary. This toolkit was originally written with such a goal in mind to feature new resources available to practitioners so that you could bring this prep work to your middle school aged students.



**Now, nearly three years later, we are facing a new challenge — to begin this work even earlier.**

“As the need for postsecondary education becomes even greater, early career interventions at the elementary level will become even more critical” (Mariani et al., 2016, p. 359).

In the realm of career and college readiness, the conversation around beginning this work in the elementary grades has been gaining momentum. It is still fairly early in this movement, but there are considerable resources appearing that are aimed specifically at CCR in K-5, as well as research identifying the need for more research and data, support, resources, and curriculum if CCR is to be widely implemented in K-5 learning contexts.

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While it may seem early to begin discussions around future planning and preparation with 5-8 year olds, isn't it something that we already do in some ways? It's very common to see Career Days in elementary school, to teach lessons about acts of community service and workers in the community, or even to host a College Spirit Day. Efforts toward implementing more intentional college and career readiness in elementary grades, does not at all mean that it will look the same as what we do with middle or high school students. In fact, CCR should look fairly different at each of these stages.

"It is evident that the early exposure to career awareness and interventions beginning at the elementary level is critical to the college and career readiness of students. Since career development involves a life-long process that begins during early childhood, there is a clear need for evidence-based college and career readiness interventions for elementary students" (Mariani et al., 2016, p. 358).

Bringing career and college readiness down into the elementary grades will help to provide an even stronger foundation on which students (and their families) can later build a successful launch into postsecondary experiences and the future that awaits them. Imagine it adding an additional 3-5 years of career and college exposure and exploration and what an incredible foundation that would create for youth to later reference and build upon as they begin planning and making decisions about their future education and work.

## Is It Too Early?

**The short answer? No, it is not too early to begin laying a foundation for college and career readiness in elementary school.** Early learning facilitates later learning. "Students who already know more about a topic often have an easier time learning additional information on the same topic, and early exposure to knowledge can stimulate students to want to learn more" (Dougherty, 2013, p. 1).

Furthermore, "learning is cumulative. In a well-designed curriculum, learning in the upper grades builds on learning in the lower grades" (Dougherty, 2013, p. 1). Therefore if we introduce college and career topics to students in elementary grades, we are providing them a solid foundation on which to build learning and interest in later years. The more students are exposed to ideas and conversations surrounding college and career readiness, the more prepared they will be when it comes time to apply that knowledge toward making decisions about their future.

"During the elementary years, students are at a crucial period when career beliefs and aspirations are being developed. While scarce, studies exist citing the significance of career-related decisions occurring during the elementary years. One study cited a large number of participants aged 9-10 who believed they already made decisions related to career aspirations. In another study, adults aged 40-55 explained that they made career-related decisions about their current professions during early childhood" (Pulliam & Bartek, 2018, p. 355).

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“Though elementary school [practitioners] may think college and career preparation is outside the scope of their responsibilities, it is critically important for [practitioners] to start conversations about the future early so that students begin to understand why school is important and why educators should raise the bar for their success” (Collins, 2019, par. 3).

Research by Cahill and Furey (2017) shows that parents, as well as educators, are in support of this initiative to bring CCR topics into elementary learning environments for a variety of reasons.

“Parents noted that from a very young age, children talk about growing up and have dreams and hopes for the future. As well, educators expressed that it is never too early to talk about career development as career choice and career decision making are complex processes. Both parents and educators felt a need to start early with a natural process appropriate for the children’s age and developmental levels. They also emphasized how important it was for children to be exposed to multiple opportunities for careers and work roles” (p. 17).

The study conducted as part of their research cites a high level of support for this type of learning from both educators and families (Cahill & Furey, 2017, p. 19):

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**100% of educators** strongly or somewhat agreed with the importance of children viewing and learning about workers in their communities

**96.3% of educators** either strongly or somewhat agreed that young children learn skills very early in life that will help them manage their lifelong learning, careers, and work

**77.7% of parents** believed that children should learn about the world of work at preschool and primary school

**96.6% of parents** believed that children should learn about workers in their communities

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**For more information in support of starting early with CCR in elementary grades, check out the following resources:**

- [The Early Years - Career Development for Young Children: A Guide for Educators](#), Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counseling
- [Operation Occupation: A College and Career Intervention for Elementary Students](#), American School Counselor Association
- [College and Career Readiness: The Importance of Early Learning](#), ACT Research & Policy
- [Fostering a College-Going Culture in Elementary School](#), Edutopia

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## Goals of CCR in Elementary Grades

In this unit, we are aiming to get really clear on what college and career readiness can and should look like in elementary school, and it may be different than what you are expecting. Let's start by debunking a concerning myth about the goals of career and college readiness in early education.

The goal of CCR in elementary education is NOT focused on having 5-11 year olds choose a career. This misconception lends itself to the notion of it being "too early" to start working with elementary-aged students on career and college readiness for fear that they are not yet old enough to comprehend or navigate the weight of career- and college-related decisions. Instead, the goal of CCR in elementary grades is about "providing opportunities that expose them to examples of potential careers. It's about helping students see themselves in potential careers that maybe they didn't even know existed and getting them involved in exploration and self-discovery. It's about helping them realize they can achieve their dreams" (Xello, 'Teachers: Here's Why It's Not Too Early...', 2021, para. 3).

**The primary goal of this work in elementary grades should be to lay a strong foundation for CCR that can be built upon when students progress to middle and high school.** This lends itself well to an overall goal of college and career readiness offering students (of all ages) as many opportunities available to them as possible upon graduation from high school. Tacking on an additional 5 years' worth of exposure, information, and experiences related to college and career possibilities is a worthy cause considering how many students enter high school without much idea of the numerous opportunities available to them, yet, are expected to make critical decisions about their future on only 2 years of information and experience (assuming students begin applying to postsecondary education institutions in their junior year of high school).



## "WE KNOW BETTER NOW"

"Five year olds aren't equipped to make long-term, life-defining decisions, which is why elementary school students have long been excluded from college and career readiness (CCR) curriculum. The rationale goes that you can't really know yourself and your skills well enough until you're in middle school, when secondary school pathway decisions are made.

### We know better now.

Does a 2nd grader need to know the difference between majoring in biomedical and chemical engineering in college? Of course not. But they can begin to think about how the things that they like to do (and are good at) can translate to a job someday.

Plus, exposing kids from an early age to careers beyond the ones around them (parents, teachers, friends, movies) opens the door to future readiness and broadens their world view of work."

(Hudson, 2021, Introductory section)

We are well-versed in activities and prompts that ask young students **'What do you want to be when you grow up?'** but the missing piece is a follow-up question: **'How will you get there?'** Continuing the conversation around career pathways and understanding that all jobs require specific skills, knowledge, and experiences takes a very common elementary school topic of study and broadens it to create a stronger foundation that can be built upon in later years. Again, the goal is NOT to have young children locking in a specific career pathway, but to expose them further to ideas and knowledge that will help them later on in life when it comes time to actually begin making these decisions.

In the elementary grades, it is essential to begin "sharing information and building awareness about higher education and career readiness opportunities...For many students, the idea of college is not discussed in the home. Providing younger students with an opportunity to build a foundation of awareness about postsecondary education is critical. Building enthusiasm for educational attainment and an individual's lifelong responsibility for career readiness can never start soon enough" (American College Application Campaign [ACAC], 2019, p. 5).



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## Elementary CCR in OST: Think Outside the Box

In your OST program, you may already be doing some of the work of bringing college and career readiness to your youth without even realizing it! If you are focused on building 21st century skills with your students or following curriculum or activities to help your students become more self-aware, these are all important building blocks to CCR success in later years. Here are two suggestions for where to begin that look outside the box of traditional, more direct CCR activities (don't worry, we will get to those in a later section!):

1) **Focus on broader skill development:** Looking beyond simple career-related activities into the underlying skills that make a successful career-person or adult can be a great place to begin. Focusing on activities and initiatives that foster 21st century skills, the 4Cs, or character development instead of straightforward career or work options can be of immense value to students. This may also be a nice supplement to the learning experiences they may be receiving in school.

2) **Help students craft a story of themselves:** A critical component of college and career readiness that is often neglected in teachings or discussions is self-awareness and self-knowledge. How well do your students know themselves? Can they rely on this self-knowledge and awareness to help them make influential decisions about their life? "Expanding their experiences will help them craft a better story of themselves as they grow up" (Hudson, 2021, What Does CCR Look Like... section, para. 2).

**Invite students to begin thinking about the questions:**

- **What am I good at?**
- **What do I like to do?**
- **What am I interested in?**



## BENEFITS OF BEGINNING CCR IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

In the article, [Families: What Does CCR Mean for Your Elementary-Aged Children?](#) (2021), Hudson identifies the following list of benefits to students for starting even earlier with CCR activities and concepts.

- 1) Articulated aspirations:** Children, even in pre-k & kindergarten, can express their occupational dreams which offers an opportunity to discuss careers and socialize children around career readiness at a young age.
- 2) Reduced Gender Stereotyping:** Gender stereotyping, even in occupations, begins at a young age. Exposing students to a diverse variety of people doing a variety of jobs can help to broaden young children's perspectives.
- 3) Improved outcomes:** Generally speaking, youth who have even a basic understanding of the processes and complexities of career development will experience better academic and wellness outcomes.
- 4) Increased Self-Awareness:** Discussing possible career options and helping students to consider their interests and the kind of life they imagine possible for themselves can go a long way toward improving their self-awareness, which, with ongoing efforts will strengthen as they grow, providing a solid foundation from which to build on when they get older and are ready for actual research and planning around their career interests.
- 5) Deeper Understanding of Careers:** "By giving young students the opportunity to see the big picture—how interests, skills, and abilities relate to careers, plus what careers are available and what they involve, including salaries, tasks, and more—they can start to think about their futures in an informed way."
- 6) Learning How to Set Goals:** Working with students on short and long-term goal setting, yes, even in kindergarten or first grade, can help them develop the skills and knowledge related to goal setting that they will need to employ as they age. With enough practice they will become adept at setting and tracking milestones and creating goals that are measurable and age-appropriate.

\*Adapted from source



## BENEFITS OF BEGINNING CCR IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

In another article, [Teachers: Here's Why It's Not Too Early to Start Introducing College and Career Readiness Activities for Your Elementary Students](#) (Xello, 2021), even more benefits are identified, this time with a lens on more all around success.

- 1) **It helps teachers** think about and align what they are teaching with the skills that their students will need to be successful once they graduate high school.
- 2) **It ensures that students know what being college-ready looks like**, which can affect their course selections once they get into middle/high school and their overall engagement in learning throughout their schooling.
- 3) **It builds a college-going culture**, which is especially important for students who are the first in their family to attend college. It's really easy for first-generation students to see college as something that exists for other people if they are not taught that they, too, can attend.
- 4) **It expands students' understanding on what career options are out in the world**. Unless they are introduced to new careers at school, students mostly only know about the careers of their family and friends.

As stated in the previous section regarding the initiative to include elementary-aged youth in college and career readiness - we know better now. We know that creating a strong foundation of 21st century skills, self-awareness, and exposure to a wide range of career and postsecondary education pathways has a positive impact on later decision-making and CCR experiences when students reach middle and high school (and beyond). The main benefit of incorporating CCR activities into elementary grades is that it gives students a better chance to take advantage of the opportunities that become available to them later in life.

There are likely even more benefits to starting early with college and career readiness, however, at the time of publication, there has been minimal research conducted on this topic and most research that has been done states a clear need for additional research, experimentation, and validation. So if you are here, and seriously considering integrating this work into your programs and offerings, consider yourself ahead of the curve! You may even be able to use this to your advantage and partner with local universities or researchers interested in this work to help you, not only figure out what this could look like for your organization, but also to contribute to the body of research that is so desperately needed to validate this work and initiative for early exposure to these CCR concepts.

# THE 8 COMPONENTS OF COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

The National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA), which is a division of The College Board, has identified 8 components of college and career readiness. “NOSCA’s Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling are the road map for this work. They outline an effective path toward creating a college-going culture in schools, districts, and communities” (National Office for School Counselor Advocacy [NOSCA] , 2012, introduction section).

These 8 components are designed to be integrated throughout elementary, middle, and high school and there are 3 separate and distinct guides to aid in guidance and implementation. “The three guides illustrate how school counselors can use the Eight Components to establish a college-going culture across the K–12 pipeline, promote college and career readiness for all students, and close gaps between low-performing or traditionally underrepresented students and their peers” (NOSCA, 2012, introduction section).

- [Elementary School Counselor’s Guide](#)
- [Middle School Counselor’s Guide](#)
- [High School Counselor’s Guide](#)

“The Eight Components are about focusing on critical issues and making sure all of your decisions and actions are directly linked to helping all of your students prepare for success in college and their chosen careers” (NOSCA, 2012, p. 2).

The primary goal of the framework is to ensure that efforts of administration, counselors, teachers, and providers build upon each other as students move through the K-12 pipeline and that each individual component reinforces the others. “They are interconnected, and actions related to one component can lay a foundation for improvements in multiple areas” (NOSCA, 2012, p. 2).

The table on the following pages compiles the basic information about six of the eight components and is populated with information taken directly from the [Elementary School Counselor’s Guide](#). Upon recommendation from NOSCA, elementary and middle school practitioners should focus on components 1–6, while high school practitioners should address all components, 1–8. As such, the final two components have been left out of this table since the focus here is on elementary practices. (For more information on those two components, please refer to the [High School Counselor’s Guide](#)).



## NOSCA’S 8 COMPONENTS OF COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS COUNSELING

1. **College Aspirations**
2. **Academic Planning for College & Career Readiness**
3. **Enrichment & Extracurricular Engagement**
4. **College & Career Exploration and Selection Processes**
5. **College and Career Assessments**
6. **College Affordability Planning**
7. **College & Career Admission Processes**
8. **Transition from High School Graduation to College Enrollment**

# THE 8 COMPONENTS OF COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS




## College Aspirations

### Goal

Build a college-going culture based on early college awareness by nurturing in students the confidence to aspire to college and the resilience to overcome challenges along the way. Maintain high expectations by providing adequate supports, building social capital and conveying the conviction that all students can succeed in college. (p. 4)

### Why it matters

Students who gain early and solid foundations as learners are more likely to attain the academic and social rewards that indicate school success. They also are more likely to believe that college is a realistic goal and to succeed. School communities that intentionally raise the aspirations of all students are preparing their students to graduate college and career ready.



## Academic Planning for College & Career Readiness

### Goal

Advance students' planning, preparation, participation and performance in a rigorous academic program that connects to their college and career aspirations and goals. (p. 6)

### Why it matters

Students who acquire a solid academic foundation are more prepared to engage in rigorous and challenging coursework as they progress through middle and high school. School communities that intentionally focus on grade-level proficiency in math and reading help increase the likelihood that students will graduate college and career ready.



## Enrichment & Extracurricular Engagement

### Goal

Ensure equitable exposure to a wide range of extracurricular and enrichment opportunities that build leadership, nurture talents and interests, and increase engagement with school. (p. 8)

### Why it matters

Engagement in enrichment and extracurricular activities can enhance students' academic performance. Early awareness and exposure to a wide range of enrichment and extracurricular activities form a foundation upon which students can build their future aspirations and interests.



## College & Career Exploration & Selection Process

### Goal

Provide early and ongoing exposure to experiences and information necessary to make informed decisions when selecting a college or career that connects to academic preparation and future aspirations. (p. 10)

### Why it matters

Students who engage in early and ongoing college and career exploration opportunities are more likely to participate in the preparation and planning necessary for future goal setting.

# THE 8 COMPONENTS OF COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

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## College & Career Assessments

### Goal

Promote preparation, participation and performance in college and career assessments by all students. (p. 12)

### Why it matters

Introducing students to developmentally appropriate interest inventories and assessments can spark curiosity about strengths and talents, build self-awareness, and lay a foundation for the ongoing exploration necessary for building aspirations and goal setting. Students' early planning can grow into habits that are critical for success in college and career readiness.

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## College Affordability Planning

### Goal

Provide students and families with comprehensive information about college costs, options for paying for college, and the financial aid and scholarship processes and eligibility requirements, so they are able to plan for and afford a college education. (p. 14)

### Why it matters

Understanding basic finance and how to use and manage money are essential skills that build a foundation for financial literacy. Students who apply their knowledge of everyday financial decisions and engage in meaningful activities related to finance are equipped to increase and expand their financial literacy and financial aid knowledge in future years.



It is important to note that although this particular framework has a focus on school counseling in the K-12 pipeline, these principles can guide the work of anyone working with youth in grades K-12, regardless of whether they are working from inside or outside formal education institutions. Just because this resource heavily mentions the terms counselors and counseling does not mean you need to be formally trained as a school counselor in order to use this work to help you identify the kinds of activities and approaches you'd like to take with students enrolled in your youth-serving programs.

## 2) BUILDING CCR CULTURE IN ELEMENTARY GRADES



As we discussed in [Unit 1: Overarching Principles of College and Career Readiness](#) (p. 2), college and career readiness culture (also known as ‘college-going culture’) refers to the “environment, attitudes, and practices in schools and communities that encourage students and their families to obtain the information, tools, and perspective to enhance access to and success in postsecondary education” (Berkeley Center for Educational Partnerships, n.d., College-Going Culture section). As a reminder, the big picture goal of establishing such a culture is for youth to believe that they can have a great future and that they can plan and prepare for many options following high school.

Berkeley identifies three fundamentals of college-going culture:

1. **As early as elementary school**, students begin to learn about **options for their futures** and the education required for certain careers, with a specific focus starting in middle school.
2. [Programs and practitioners] **convey the expectation that all students can prepare** for the opportunity to attend and be successful in postsecondary education.
3. Schools, [programs], families, and communities all **reinforce the same message of high expectations** for a student’s future (Berkeley CEP, n.d., College-Going Culture section).

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# ACTIVITY: IDENTIFYING YOUR CULTURE COMPONENTS

Any type of culture, even one with a focus on college-going, consists of “underlying values, beliefs, and meanings which are deeply held, static, and enduring” (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006, p. 3) and a great starting point for building college and career readiness culture with your elementary-aged youth is for you - the organization, program, and practitioners - to identify the core components of your culture, or what you’d like them to be.

This activity has an accompanying Activity Guide with worksheet that can be accessed here: [Activity Guide: Identifying Your Culture Components](#).

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## PART ONE

Respond to the following prompts to begin the process of identifying the core components of, not only your CCR culture, but your overall program culture:

1. All youth who participate in our program are expected to \_\_\_\_\_?
2. All practitioners who work at this organization or program are expected to \_\_\_\_\_?
3. A person cannot walk through our program space without seeing \_\_\_\_\_?

If you don’t have established responses to these prompts, use this activity as an opportunity to begin shaping what your CCR culture will look like. If you do already have some established focus or core components of your overall program or organization, you should definitely aim to incorporate those values and beliefs into your CCR culture.

## PART TWO

This extension activity invites your youth and families to participate in the process of establishing and understanding your CCR culture. Giving these key stakeholders a voice in this process will create a positive experience for those who will benefit most from the implementation of CCR in your program and help them to feel more invested in the success of the initiative.

Use these guiding questions with families and student participants:

- What is our program’s culture?
  - + What do we **believe**? What do we **say**? What do we **see**? What do we **do**?
- What are the expectations for all youth and staff?
- What are the conversations taking place in all areas of our environment / space?
- What do you see when you walk through rooms or hallways?
- What are the traditions of our program?
- What is celebrated?

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## Benefits of Establishing a CCR Culture in Elementary Grades

In their guide, [Kindergarten to College Roadmap to College: Guide to Creating a College-Going Culture](#), the San Francisco Unified School District identifies the following benefits of establishing a college-going culture in elementary grades:

1. Students who decide early on to go to college get there more often.
2. Families who have college information or resources are more likely to send their children to college.
3. Schools that are intentional about creating a college-going culture send more students to college.
4. Low- and moderate-income children with a college savings account in their name (regardless of the amount) are 7 times more likely to enroll in college than children with no savings, and are 4 times more likely to graduate (p. 2).



Perhaps the most impactful benefit of establishing a CCR culture in your K-5 programs might be simply providing more time for building awareness, exposure to CCR concepts and activities, and engaging youth in opportunities to explore career possibilities and the pathways that lead to them. Again, if we wait until students are in upper middle grades to begin exposing them to the wide world of work, it's already too late. There's so much knowledge and information to share, especially as the world of work changes with technological and societal advancements, that we are doing students a disservice by not starting to share with them as early as possible - in developmentally appropriate ways, of course!

## What Does CCR Culture Look Like in Elementary Grades?

It should come as no surprise that college and career readiness activities will look different for students of different ages (or at least they should!) and the same holds true for the culture surrounding college and career readiness. You can follow this straightforward guidance on the different approaches to building a CCR culture in elementary / middle school vs. high school:

1. **K-8 activities and culture** should be focused on **Awareness & Exploration**
2. **9-12 activities and culture** should be focused on **Planning, Preparation, & Experience**

In elementary grades, establishing a CCR culture may not look and sound like traditional CCR activities with a heavy emphasis on future planning, decision making, and the progression through an educational pathway toward a career. And it shouldn't. In elementary grades, the culture and activities will be more subtle and may be disguised within other focus areas.



## "AWFULLY BUSY LEARNERS"

"Elementary students are awfully busy learners. They're doing the important job of laying the foundation upon which the rest of their education will be built.

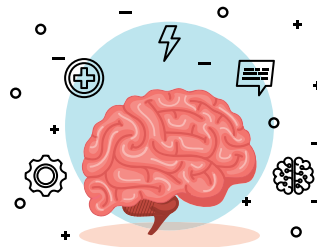
They're working to understand basic math and literacy concepts, of course, but there's much more going on. They're discovering how to interact with their peers. They're beginning to understand how to learn and how they learn best. They are becoming social creatures, encountering differences for the first time, and discovering things that pique their interests. They are capable of setting goals.

All of this, though it seems far afield of the specifics of college and career planning that older students do as they approach graduation, is very important."

*(SchooLinks, 2021, CCR - in Elementary School? section)*

Much of what elementary-aged students are learning falls under the umbrella of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and providing opportunities to practice these skills in K-5 settings ensures we are creating a strong foundation on which students can build upon later in life. Many of these skills are in high demand in the modern workforce and are particularly useful for college and career readiness, such as:

- Self-efficacy
- Teamwork
- Goal-setting
- Effective Communication
- Empathy
- Decision-making



The Colorado Department of Education has developed their Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) Quality Indicators, with elementary school indicators included, and you will notice a similar focus on SEL or 21st century skills. These indicators guide a multi-year process that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic, and postsecondary opportunities. You can [read more about the background and evolution of ICAP here](#).

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The following summaries of each of the [ICAP Quality Indicators for Elementary School](#) offer a helpful starting place for considering the variety of concepts and focus areas that are required for a well-rounded college and career readiness program or initiative in elementary grades:

- 1. Self-Awareness:** These elements lead students through exploration of how their unique interests, talents, and aspirations play a role in decision-making and interpersonal relationships as well as how their thoughts and feelings can enhance excitement about life and learning.
- 2. Career Awareness:** Understanding the difference between jobs, occupations, and careers and increasing awareness of a variety of local, regional, national and global career pathways and opportunities.
- 3. Postsecondary Aspirations:** Career exploration centered on students' passions, interests, dreams, visions of their future self, and perceived options.
- 4. Postsecondary Options:** Increase awareness on the wide variety of postsecondary and career opportunities available. Understand how use of tools such as career clusters, personality assessments, and learning style inventories can be used to determine and highlight individual strengths and capabilities.
- 5. Environmental Expectations:** Consider how school, family, community, culture, and world view might influence students' career development and postsecondary plans.
- 6. Academic Planning:** Apply the skills and knowledge necessary to map out and pass academic courses required to achieve postsecondary goals.
- 7. Employability Skills:** Defining, developing, and refining skills that increase the likelihood of becoming and staying successfully employed and responsible citizens.
- 8. Personal Financial Literacy:** Be aware of the cost of postsecondary options and types of financial resources that are available.

It is easy to see how the culture that supports these types of approaches and a particular focus on SEL and 21st century skills as CCR skills can set the tone and lay a foundation for future-readiness.

According to Pulliam and Bartek (2018), the following three areas of focus for elementary practitioners were developed by the [National Career Development Association](#) (NCDA) to guide the design of college and career readiness activities and programs:

- Self-knowledge
- Educational and occupational exploration
- Career planning

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Paisley & Hubbard (1994) provide some examples of what this might look like in action for each grade in K-6:

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- **Kindergarten** students will be able to describe what they like to do
- **First-grade** students will be able to identify workers in various settings
- **Second-grade** students will be able to describe skills needed to complete a task at home or school
- **Third-grade** students will be able to define what the term future means
- **Fourth-grade** students will be able to imagine what their lives might be like in the future
- **Fifth-grade** students will be able to discuss stereotypes associated with certain jobs
- **Sixth-grade** students will be able to identify their own personal strengths and weaknesses

(as cited in Pulliam & Bartek, 2018, p. 358)

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**NOTE:** It is worth noting that a reference to these elementary areas of focus cannot be found at the time of publication on the NCDA site or through a web search. However, they do align nicely, and in elementary-friendly language, with the [National Career Development Guidelines](#) published by the organization.

If you are looking for more support for integrating 21st century skill-building into your program as a foundation for college and career readiness, you may want to review the [21st Century Skills Early Learning Framework](#) from Partnership for 21st Century Learning. The goal of this framework, and accompanying guide, is to provide practical guidance and specific examples of 21st century skills and knowledge for early learners to adults working in formal and informal educational settings.

In their [K-12 Guide to College and Career Readiness](#), Paper, a company who offers 24/7 tutoring, after-school enrichment, and college and career readiness support to school districts and K-12 learning communities, emphasizes the importance of implementing student-centered learning practices to foster 21st century / SEL skills. Some of these practices include:

- **Project-Based Learning (PBL):** [Project-based learning](#) is a dynamic classroom approach in which students actively explore real-world problems and challenges and acquire transferable knowledge and has been shown to increase student ownership and agency
- **Flipped Classrooms:** In a [flipped classroom](#), content is introduced through independent work rather than during in-class time. This can lead to more student agency and increased collaboration.

- **Blended Learning:** This approach integrates virtual and face-to-face environments and can be particularly effective for students who are historically disadvantaged. [Read more about Blended Learning here](#). (Paper, K-12 Guide, 'Prioritize social-emotional...' section).

While you may not be issuing formal assignments to young students in your OST program, there is still value in reviewing these practices to see where within your program's activities you might be able to grant youth more self-agency, autonomy, and opportunity to learn more about themselves in a self-directed manner. Activities designed to empower students to know themselves better create a strong foundation for the establishment of CCR culture and future learning.

## IN SUMMARY ★

Creating spaces for them to dream as big as possible and providing an environment that encourages social and emotional learning and exploration are two of the most important things that educators and school communities can do to set students up for resonant, relevant, and rigorous college and career readiness.

(SchoolLinks, 2021, CCR - in Elementary School? section)



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# HOW TO ESTABLISH A CCR CULTURE IN YOUR ELEMENTARY PROGRAM

Now that you have some insight into what college and career readiness culture can look like in the elementary grades, you may be wondering how to get started. This section will focus on ideas to help you take action toward establishing a culture of college and career readiness, or future readiness, in your elementary program.

**1) Identify Culture Components:** Firstly, if you haven't already completed the [Identifying Your Culture Components activity](#) from the beginning of this section, start there! This activity will lay the groundwork for all of your CCR activities and initiatives.

**2) Establish an Open Dialogue:** By discussing a variety of careers and colleges early and often with students you can help make these concepts and opportunities less abstract and more tangible for young learners.

**3) Enlist Outside Support:** Regularly invite guest speakers from a wide variety of career sectors and industries to speak to students and share about their experiences and careers; this can also be done virtually through Zoom or Skype. You can also invite in former students to talk about their experiences navigating college-ready decisions and choices with students.

**4) Encourage Student Goals:** To help set solid goals for their future, students may be asked to create a one-page plan with their parents or guardians to answer these questions:

- What career would you like to pursue when you are older?
- What college would you like to attend?
- How will you make your dreams come true?

Plans will likely change, but this at least helps them get started envisioning their future for themselves and provides an initial roadmap for setting future goals and taking action toward those goals.

**5) Celebrate Current and Future Success:** To help encourage students to keep moving forward on their learning journey and pursuit of college and career readiness, consider hosting a college reception that features a mini ceremony where students can read aloud and share their college plan to an audience made up of fellow students, parents, and maybe community members.

Additionally, be sure to find ways to encourage, support, and celebrate the exciting new learning and progress students (and staff) are making here and now.

## 6) Incorporate Discussions about College and Careers into your Existing Lessons:

Infusing dialogue about college and careers into the lessons and units you already teach is a natural and, generally speaking, easy way to help students think about the future and see themselves as college goers or inside particular careers.

You can easily integrate opportunities to highlight careers and fields of study into nearly any lesson by thinking of careers that align with the topic of your lesson. Involving students in the brainstorming of these careers and fields will also help to connect their learning to the real world.

7) **Encourage Self-Exploration within your Program:** Opportunities for students to discover new things about themselves are an important part of learning and skill development. Facilitating opportunities for self-exploration in the classroom doesn't have to solely focus on the future. By allowing for student choice on assignments, methods, or processes you are creating opportunities for students to learn more about themselves and their preferences. Seek out ways to allow for choice throughout your curriculum.

You may also want to incorporate opportunities for self-exploration and expression through writing or vlogging. The following journal prompts can be used for this purpose:

- What is your favorite activity outside of school?
- What subject do you like best in school?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What is something you're really good at?
- What makes you unique?
- What is a dream you have for your life?
- What do you like best about school?

**These ideas are adapted from [Fostering a College-Going Culture in Elementary School and Teachers: Here's Why It's Not Too Early to Start Introducing College and Career Readiness Activities for Your Elementary Students](#)**

**For more information on college and career readiness culture, the following resources may be helpful:**

- [Kindergarten to College Roadmap to College: Guide to Creating a College Going Culture](#), San Francisco USD
- [A Complete Guide to Building a College and Career Readiness Framework](#), SchoolLinks
- [K-12 Guide to College and Career Readiness](#), Paper.co
- [Oregon Goes to College: College-Going Culture Toolkit](#), Oregon GEARUP

### 3) WHAT CAREER & COLLEGE READINESS CAN LOOK LIKE IN ELEMENTARY GRADES



**The secret about college and career readiness is that it is really life readiness.** The goal of modern day career and college readiness initiatives and programs is to prepare students to thrive in their lives following high school.

“Readiness for college and careers is multifaceted, encompassing academic readiness, as well as knowledge, abilities, and dispositions that impact academic achievement” (Mishkind, 2014, p. 6). We can begin building and fostering these skills and abilities in K-5 learning environments; in fact, this is something you might already be doing inside your programs.



“Definitions of college and career readiness vary from state to state, but there is widespread consensus that, in a rapidly changing and uncertain world, **approaches to college and career readiness must expand beyond its traditional role of preparing students for standardized tests and providing support as they apply for jobs or college admissions.**”

(Paper, K-12 Guide, ‘What is CCR?’ section).

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## Foundational Skills for College & Career Readiness Success

Across state definitions of college and career readiness, there is general consensus that the following skills and abilities are crucial to success in life beyond high school:

- **Written and Verbal Communication:** Clear communication—whether expressed in written or verbal formats—is important no matter which postsecondary or career pathway students decide to take.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students should be able to readily apply their background knowledge and experiences when evaluating new information, forming opinions, and solving problems.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** People with a high degree of emotional intelligence are adept at understanding and dealing with their own feelings as well as identifying and influencing other people’s emotions. Naturally, this type of intelligence is key to interpersonal success—whether in a college class or the workplace. 
- **Financial Literacy:** Financial literacy, or the ability to manage funds responsibly and effectively, impacts virtually every student. This skill helps learners manage the inevitable financial peaks and valleys of life.
- **Time Management:** Solid time-management skills can make all the difference as students grapple with the comparatively unstructured nature of higher education and fast-paced careers. 
- **Stress Management:** This skill allows learners to tackle various challenges—and setbacks—with a healthy, growth-oriented mindset.
- **Listening and Speaking:** One of the most important skills for students to focus on is listening and speaking. “It’s really about giving students a structure to discuss and carry on conversations -- that is the key skill. Examples of this are: talking on topic (efficiently and authentically), listening deeply, responding to others, asking questions, and posing follow-up comments or questions. The important thing to come away with here is that a silent classroom is not teaching career readiness. In fact, it’s stifling it. So get the kids talking, encourage them to keep in touch -- and teach career readiness by permitting deep conversations” (Wolpert-Gawron, 2015, ‘Most Important Skill...’ section).

\*Credit to [What is College and Career Readiness? Pointers for Educators](#) by Paper and [Career Readiness: Starting Early with Young Learners](#) by Heather Wolpert-Gawron



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# Career Readiness in Elementary Grades

"Career development for young children (preschool, primary, and early elementary) is about helping them in the here-and-now, the present, to develop a healthy sense of self and the competencies that will enable them to reach their full potential" (Cahill & Furey, 2017, p. 6).

It is commonplace for career-based activities to appear in elementary learning spaces. Career Days, 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' type activities, and an introduction to careers found in the community (police, fire, teachers, construction workers) are likely all activities that we've seen in elementary classrooms and / or after-school programs. However, moving from these generalized career-focused activities into a more intentional career readiness initiative will take a little more effort.

## AS A REMINDER...

This toolkit places **career first and of higher importance than college** because a satisfying and sustaining career is the ultimate goal and college may, or may not, be a part of the pathway to that career. So the same importance is found here, as we consider what these types of activities could look like in the early grades. **If you only have capacity to implement one aspect of CCR, start with career readiness.**

"Career development, like other kinds of development (e.g., intellectual, physical, social, and emotional) is a lifelong process that involves constant growth, change, and adaptation. Career development is not just about jobs, work and careers, rather it is about life stories. Children actively explore their worlds and begin to construct possibilities for present and future selves. These life stories include a sense of self (self-identity), life roles, skills and knowledge, and are shaped by everyday events and experiences, as well as by interests, attitudes, beliefs, and role models." (Cahill & Furey, 2017, p. 12).

### **OST programs are primed for this type of approach to career readiness and development.**

We aim to create learning spaces and opportunities that foster self-construction in youth. We value the individual. We are granted more flexibility than formal education institutions to support individual interests and self-identity, as well as equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in the world.

"The world of work today is dynamic and requires flexible, adaptive, creative, and multi-faceted problem-solvers ... Additionally, children learning today need to become original thinkers, to think outside-the-box — learning that stimulates imagination, uses discovery-based thinking, and synthesizes and weaves together information conceptually" (Cahill & Furey, 2017, p. 11).

As children begin to explore and establish their self-identity, interests, and skills, they can begin to envision themselves in a variety of jobs and occupations. When this exploration is reinforced by loving, caring adults, children stand a better chance of developing a positive self-identity that encompasses their natural curiosity, confidence in themselves and their abilities, and risk-taking skills which will all act in service of the lifetime of learning ahead of them and their belief in themselves.

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## The Importance of Play

"Opportunities and learning activities centered around curiosity, play, imaginative thinking, and discovery are important for career readiness in young children. As you might have realized, these types of opportunities are at the center of many OST programs, providing fertile ground for meaningful early career exploration experiences.

"Through play, young children explore their environments as they move through various life roles (child, student, adolescent, worker, parent, and others) and adapt skills to cope with educational, career, and personal tasks. The roots of adaptability start early in children's development and play a large part throughout their life adjustment and career planning, and are ingredients of risk-taking, problem-solving, decision-making, planning, transitions and change, and overcoming obstacles and setbacks" (Cahill & Furey, 2017, p. 12).

## Get Children Talking About Careers

Creating opportunities for young learners to think about and discuss future possible careers is a cornerstone of this work. Sure, it is highly likely that the career a kindergarten student identifies as their ideal career will change before they are old enough to begin making steps toward that career, but it also may not change.

Regardless, exposure to and conversations about a variety of careers can help young students learn more about themselves, what they like, and what they might need to do in the future to get the job they want. "While elementary school students may not make the connection between the activities they choose to do and career readiness, children at this age are learning about the world around them and how people fit into that world through their different job roles" (Muston, 2022, 'Discovering Interests...' section).

Talking with elementary youth about the jobs and workers they encounter in their everyday lives plays to their natural curiosity. Discussing how people use their unique talents and strengths to do their jobs can help students begin to consider their own talents and strengths and how they might be able to use them in a future career.

Simple questions such as these can help even the youngest students begin thinking about jobs and careers:

- What does that person do in their job?
- Why is this job important?
- Is this job something you might like to do one day?

**"Career-related learning at an early age is not intended to have children make premature choices over future careers; rather it is a process that encourages children to broadly consider a multitude of options that are available and not to restrict or limit their possibilities for their future aspirations."**

**(Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004, as cited in Cahill & Furey, 2017, p. 14).**

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## Work Toward Building Universal Skills

We can't possibly know what the jobs of the future will be for our elementary aged students, but we do know that there is a trend toward specific 'employability skills' that will help students be prepared for a wide variety of the unknown careers awaiting them in the future. These skills are also known as 21st century skills, soft skills, and, sometimes, college and career ready skills.

In the elementary grades, instead of focusing on any specific subject matter knowledge, efforts should be focused on fostering the foundational skills we mentioned in the previous section. "Research on the future of work shows that employability or foundational skills—such as the ability to think critically, problem solve, work collaboratively, and communicate effectively—are essential in helping prepare all workers for the coming workforce changes. Employability skills are valuable because they can transfer across multiple industries and occupations" (JFF, n.d., p. 3). If you focus your effort on instilling these skills in your students, you will be laying a strong foundation for them on which they can build later in their school careers and beyond.

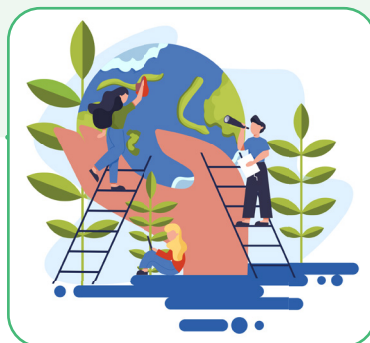
The following data points from the [Institute for the Future](#) & Dell Technologies report, [The Next Era of Human|Machine Partnerships: Emerging Technologies' Impact on Society & Work in 2023](#), help to illuminate how the world of work is shifting and changing and the impact that will have on today's learners in their future careers and lives.

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**1. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says that today's learners will have 8 to 10 jobs by the time they are 38 years old** (p. 14)

**2. Not only will workers have many jobs, the tasks and duties of the jobs they'll perform will be markedly different from what they studied... [it is] estimated that around 85% of the jobs that today's learners will be doing in 2030 haven't been invented yet** (p. 14)

**3. By 2030, workers will create new work infrastructures to acquire the skills and knowledge** they will need to execute their work successfully. "They will routinely improvise, learn from each other, and make their own way. Some will rely on past work experiences, frameworks, or mental models. Others will experiment across different platforms, discovering their own workarounds and pioneering their own innovations" (p.14)



# Top 10 skills of 2025



Analytical thinking and innovation



Active learning and learning strategies



Complex problem-solving



Critical thinking and analysis



Creativity, originality and initiative



Leadership and social influence



Technology use, monitoring and control



Technology design and programming







Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility



Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation

## Type of skill

-  Problem-solving
-  Self-management
-  Working with people
-  Technology use and development

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## Ways to Build Universal Employability Skills

### Complex problem solving

- Provide project-based and problem-based learning opportunities that allow students to identify a real-world problem and create and test solutions
- Allow students to learn at their own pace and support them in troubleshooting when they encounter a stumbling block (how to identify the problem, how to seek help, how to be a problem-solver, not just a problem-finder)

### Critical thinking

- Teach students how to differentiate between credible and noncredible sources of information
- Integrate critical thinking, research, and writing skills across activities and content areas

### Collaboration

- Create opportunities for youth to work together on projects where they can plan, delegate, communicate and hold each other accountable for working toward a common goal
- Support students in identifying and solving problems that arise in group work scenarios, but allow them to take the lead

### Life Skills

- Skills such as time management and personal organization will be critical in the future of work, of particular importance for remote work, self-management, freelancing, etc.

\*from [How to Prepare Students for Jobs of the Future](#) by Connections Academy



# SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE FOR CAREER READINESS IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

The [Colorado Department of Education](#) has developed the following outline of suggested topics for each grade level PK-5 as part of their [Elementary Career Conversation / Development](#) initiative. This may be helpful in developing a pathway focused on more intentional career readiness within your elementary program(s).

## Pre-K & Kindergarten

- **Community Helpers**
- **Helper Vehicles**
- **Career Play**

## 1st Grade

- **Tools of the Trade**
- **Clothing of the Trade**
- **Career Vocabulary**

## 2nd Grade

- **Career Vocabulary**
- **Career Clusters**
- **Typical Day on the Job**

## 3rd Grade

- **Career Pathways**
- **Relating Work & School**

## 4th Grade

- **Postsecondary Life**
- **Career Pathways**
- **Relating Work & School**
- **Technology & Career Exploration**

## 5th Grade

- **Postsecondary Life**
- **Exploring all Aspects of Career**
- **Salary**
- **Typical Day on the Job**
- **Related Careers**
- **Training Required**

## ACTIVITIES FOR CAREER READINESS IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

1. **Supplement:** [Career & College Readiness Activity Checklist](#)
2. [ACAC's College and Career Awareness Activities for Elementary and Middle School Students](#)
  - The current version includes activities and lessons for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, elementary and middle school students.
  - This material is intended for school counselors and college access professionals who work with students to identify interests and lay the academic foundation for their careers and life
  - **NOTE:** *This link initiates an automatic download of a Word document.*
3. [Career Activities Workbook](#), Texas Workforce Commission
  - A career-related elementary level activities workbook designed around the building blocks of the elementary National Career Development Guidelines with a goal of raising career awareness
4. [Career Readiness Curriculum](#), McKeesport Area School District
  - Career readiness lesson plans for K-5 grade students
5. [Exercise Your Mind](#), Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)
  - Activity book for elementary students that allows them to study different career paths through a variety of guided activities
6. [20 Career Activities for Elementary Students](#), Teaching Expertise
7. [Cool Careers Feud Game](#), Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction
  - Through a game format using teams, students will discover that what they are doing now impacts their future goals and career pathway.
8. [From Kindergarten to College Roadmap to College: Guide to Creating a College Going Culture](#), San Francisco Unified School District
  - Suggested CCR activities begin on page 10 and feature activities for elementary and middle grades
9. [Hands-On Career Awareness Activities for Early Elementary Students: Career Stations](#), National Career Development Association (NCDA)
  - Teacher-developed guidance for introducing various career pathways to K-2 students through a hands-on "stations" approach featuring developmentally appropriate and safe exploration activities

**10. With All Your Power, What Will You Do? A Strengths-Based Career Unit for Elementary Students**, National Career Development Association (NCDA)

- This resource provides an overview of a 4th grade unit of study centered around identifying personal assets and strengths as a lens for possible future career options.
- Full lesson plans and accompanying materials are available by contacting the author (email provided in article)

**11.21 Strategies for K-12 Career Development**, National Career Development Association (NCDA)

- This resource outlines 21 different strategies for practitioners working with elementary, middle, and high school students.
- Some only would require minor adjustments to make the strategy more or less sophisticated and appropriate for other levels.

## **Additional Resources for Career Readiness in Elementary Grades**

### **Operation Occupation: A College and Career Readiness Intervention for Elementary Students**

- The CCR unit, titled "Operation Occupation," was developed for fifth grade students to align with certain ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success
- Lesson overview and aligning standards, as well as a pre/post assessment sample for both teachers and students can be found here

### **Career Town Game on Xello**

- This game is a non-violent mystery that underlines the variety of work and workers in a community and the importance of every worker in a community

### **Virginia Career VIEW** (Vital Information for Education and Work)

- This website provides interactive games, activities, and other resources for integrating career studies in grades K-5

### **DiscoverU**, Community Center for Education Results (CCER)

- An annual, week-long initiative in Washington State designed for educators and youth-serving organizations to lead college and career activities that help students explore their futures; each day centers around a theme that the whole community can participate in.
- [DiscoverU Educators Guide](#) - contains valuable resources and ideas across all grade levels for college and career activities
- [DiscoverU Tools & Resources](#) - links to curated tools, resources, and activities that align with theme days

### **Career Exploration for Elementary Students: Considering it for Your Classroom?**, Xello



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### [CareerGirls.org](#)

- A comprehensive video-based career exploration and readiness tool for girls. It's free to use and free of ads. Resources for career exploration, college prep, and educators.
  - [Career Girls Teachers Toolkit](#)
  - [Career Girls Family & Parents Toolkit](#)

### [Career Education Guide: Kindergarten to Grade 7, CareerEd](#)

- This Playbook – which has a PDF available for free download – aims to provide educators with a roadmap for creating effective career exploration programming. It includes implementation guides, case studies and program sustainability resources.

### [K-12 Career Exploration Lessons](#), Mississippi Department of Education

- A series of lesson plans for each grade from K-12 to help schools establish a career education program.

### [The Early Years: Career Development for Young Children](#), Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counseling (CERIC)

- Based on research findings that it's not too early to think about career development for young children, CERIC published two free, downloadable PDF guides to support career development in children ages 3-8.
  - [A Guide for Educators](#)
  - [A Guide for Parents / Guardians](#)

### [5 Ways to Talk with Young Children about Work and Careers](#), Career Wise

### [5 Podcasts to Help Kids Start Learning about Careers](#), Career Wise

### [Career Cluster Resources](#), Delaware Career Resource Network

- Lesson plans, activities and other resources for integrating career studies in K-12 organized by grade bands

### [Elementary Career Readiness Resource Round Up](#), Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

### [Putting Afterschool to Work: Career Exploration in Out of School Settings](#), Advance CTE



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# College Readiness in Elementary Grades

In recent years, there seems to be a trend for incorporating things like College Day or College Week into elementary school activities and there are many cute ideas to be found around the Internet for these types of “college readiness” activities. And while these types of activities are a great start, and certainly included in this section, it is important to also create meaningful opportunities for students to learn more about college and how it relates to their experiences in school today, as well as how it relates to their possible careers in the future.



This is one of the reasons that this toolkit takes a career-first approach, college is just one piece of a larger puzzle that is focused on making a living, supporting oneself, and living a fulfilling life. While having a goal of attending college (or really any postsecondary education institution or program) is important for young learners, **it is not the end goal**. If we don't look beyond college, into preparing students for what comes after college throughout their entire school career, we are failing them. In many ways, college / postsecondary education is just the beginning and we have to acknowledge this and make it our job to look ahead even further so that our students learn how to keep looking forward too.

To this end, in the elementary grades, career readiness (if done well) will also foster college readiness simultaneously. As young learners are embarking on a self-exploration journey and learning about careers that interest them, a very natural part of that process will be learning about what education and experience is needed to pursue those careers. With a little bit of additional planning, OST providers will find lots of opportunities to tie-in college awareness experiences to the other CCR activities they are implementing.

“Introducing students to career and college exploration in elementary school will provide them the opportunity to establish a foundation for more in-depth conversations and exploration about their futures in later years. At this stage, a [practitioner’s] role should include the following:

- Guiding students to identify personal interests
- Supporting students in linking their interests to possible careers
- Encouraging students to express their initial thoughts about college
- Prompting students to list some characteristics they might look for in a college
- Helping students understand basic college-related terms
- Encouraging students to incorporate aids that match their preferred learning styles”

(National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), 2017, Elementary Curriculum, p. 6)

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## Awareness of College

The core objective of college readiness in the elementary grades is all about awareness. The goal, of course, is not to have 4th graders learning about college applications and selecting their college. Instead, the goal is for students to understand that their attitude about school and their future matters and will impact their future success.

As they approach middle school, it is especially important that students understand how the K-12 education pipeline works and how the decisions you begin making in middle school can impact the opportunities you have in high school and college. This is particularly true for course selection given the way that courses in middle and high school are scaffolded and sequenced. When students get to middle school, it is the first time they are given a choice about the classes they take and these choices impact their educational trajectory. Therefore, making students aware of upcoming choices and the consequences and outcomes of those choices regarding activities and coursework is an important part of the 'college awareness' aspect of CCR in elementary school (particularly in the upper grades).

“For example, the math you take in middle school determines if you reach calculus by 12th grade — a common expectation of elite colleges. That means finishing Algebra I in eighth grade. Even a foreign language pick in sixth grade has a college prep purpose...choosing French ‘because it sounds pretty’ could have consequences later. ‘You have many, many more options if you take Spanish,’ because classes are taught often while French may be offered only once. ‘And what if it’s at the same time as A.P. bio?’

...colleges want Advanced Placement courses on transcripts but high school students can’t just sign up. They must prepare with honors courses in middle school, which means strong work in elementary school. ‘You have to set the groundwork now’” (Pappano, 2015, para. 32-33).

It is important that students, and their families, understand that establishing good work habits, regular attendance, and positive mindsets about school and learning in elementary school is crucial to their success and perseverance throughout the rest of their K-12 education, into and throughout college or postsecondary education, and into their careers.

## Theming Your Learning Space for Early College Awareness

One “low-hanging fruit” way to bring more college awareness into your learning space is by forgoing the traditional decorating themes typically found in elementary learning spaces in favor of a collegiate theme. So instead of outfitting your space with something like safari or superhero themed decor, think of college pennants, school colors, and mascots featured from your own alma mater, local colleges or universities, or a wider variety of higher ed institutions.

While you may be able to order ‘decorations’ representing these schools online, you might consider reaching out to the schools directly to ask them for materials. “They say you can’t get

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what you don't ask for. Reach out to contacts within the admissions office to share your goal of exposing your students to college access. Tell them about yourself, your classroom culture, and your students. They may be happy to send you materials to help promote their institution" (Osuba, n.d., 'Theming Your Classroom...' section).

You may choose to expand this opportunity by researching colleges with students offering them a chance to determine which schools they would like displayed and what makes each one special. Be sure to include diverse education options too, such as vocational or trade schools as well as community colleges. If there are multiple learning institutions your students are interested in, you might consider rotating through them each quarter, or decorating different areas of the space each with a different school.

## College Day / College Week

As mentioned earlier, College Days or College Weeks have gained popularity in elementary schools in recent years. This idea is one that can be implemented very simply by combining it with other Spirit Week activities (College Day) or in a more complex way such as creating actual 'courses' students can opt into during a full week (or longer) of similar activities aimed at increasing interest in and awareness of attending college.

### Four Ideas for an Engaging College Week

**1) College Week Dress Up Days:** During college week, have each day feature a different opportunity for students to dress up. Here are a few theme ideas.

- **Your Future Starts Now** - wear your favorite (current) school shirt
- **Your Future is Bright** - wear sunglasses and bright colors
- **Dress for Success** - Wear a nice outfit you would wear on an interview
- **College Day** - Wear a college, technical school, or armed forces shirt or outfit
- **Career Day** - Dress as what you want to be when you grow up
- **College is No Sweat** - Wear your favorite sweatpants and sweatshirt
- **College Roomates** - Find a friend & dress alike
- **Future Self Friday** - Dress up as your future self and show us your plans

**2) Real College Student Conversations:** Create opportunities for real conversations with actual college students. By inviting a fairly big group of current college students (around 25) to visit your program (may be less depending on the size of your program) you can foster collegiate conversations between your students and the visitors.

- Invite family members and community members to participate. It is cost-effective and will help to build or strengthen family and community relationships.

## Four Ideas for an Engaging College Week

- Prepare your students by engaging them in brainstorming possible questions to ask based on the things they are most curious about.
- Prepare the college students by inviting them to think through the questions they might have had about college life when they were in elementary school or to craft stories about what the process of getting to and working through college has been like for them.

**3) Take College Day to College:** Instead of (or in addition to) hosting College Day at your site, you may be able to collaborate with a nearby college or university (a community or junior college may be your best chance of making this happen).

- Activities might include having youth visit the campus, participate in short “courses” throughout the day presented by faculty members, and perhaps have lunch in the cafeteria or eatery on campus.
- See an example of this type of collaboration in the article [College Day: A Corridor from Elementary School to Academia](#).

**4) A Taste of College in Elementary School:** Beyond the typical “college spirit” kinds of activities, you can take a college day event to new heights by offering 2-3 day college-style “courses” that students can elect into.

- [College Day: A Corridor from Elementary School to Academia](#) highlights a school-based College Day event where “teachers, support staff, nurse, and counselor selected a course to teach for two 90-minute sessions for mixed third and fourth grade students.” “The instruction was at a very high level, with all classes creating a product from the class. Students were engaged, asked higher-level questions, and were motivated to learn” (Education World, n.d., para. 5).
- Teachers designed courses based on their personal interests or backgrounds that had some educational purpose and produced some type of tangible output such as making and labeling bug skeletons in an entomology course, making family trees in a course called ‘Discovering Your Roots’, writing poetry, or producing one-act plays.



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## College Visits Well Before College

Instead of waiting to take students to visit colleges until just before their senior year of high school, when they need to be applying and making selections, why not begin much earlier and provide many more chances to visit potential campuses?

You may be able to request campus tours for your students as a field trip. If you aren't able to get in for an official college tour of the campus, consider inquiring through the university's school of education for possible tours and an opportunity for pre-service teachers to share why they decided to become a teacher and what they're learning in their classes. This might be of special interest to young learners to see where and how teachers learn to become teachers.

If you can't make a field trip work or easily get to a college campus, virtual visits are always a possibility. Try one of the following resources for virtual campus visits:

- [You Visit](#)
- [The College Tour](#)
- [Virtual Tours](#), Princeton Review
- [Campus Tours](#)

Outside of formal (or informal) campus tours, you may also consider taking students to experience the happenings on a college campus such as plays, orchestra concerts, community or cultural events, etc.. These types of experiences will also benefit students by helping them to see college campuses and begin to picture themselves there. If you can incorporate conversation and discussion about the campus and the school and what else happens there beyond the specific experience you came for, all the better!



# ACTIVITIES FOR COLLEGE READINESS IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

1. **Supplement:** [Career & College Readiness Activity Checklist](#)
2. [ACAC's College and Career Awareness Activities for Elementary and Middle School Students](#)
  - The current version includes activities and lessons for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, elementary and middle school students.
  - This material is intended for school counselors and college access professionals who work with students to identify interests and lay the academic foundation for their careers and life
  - **NOTE:** *This link initiates an automatic download of a Word document.*
3. **Share about your own college experience**
  - Talk with students about your college experience
  - Use photos if possible. Young kids will love to see photos of you in your younger years.
4. **Research Local Colleges & Universities**
  - For upper elementary age students, they can conduct simple research on schools that are in their own state or their community. Provide students a list of local learning institutions and their websites and have them research one or many schools to identify the following information:
    - Location
    - Majors / Minors / Fields of Study offered
    - Cost of Tuition (in-state vs out-of-state)
    - Extracurricular activities and organizations
    - School Colors & Mascot
    - Acceptance rate
5. [K-12 College-Going Culture Toolkit](#), Michigan College Access Network
  - Elementary School Activities and Resources, pp. 11-24
    - College Knowledge / Aspirations
    - Financial Literacy
    - Academic Preparation
    - Career Exploration
    - Activity Templates
6. **From [Kindergarten to College Roadmap to College: Guide to Creating a College Going Culture](#)**, San Francisco Unified School District
  - Suggested CCR activities begin on page 10 and feature activities for elementary and middle grades

7. **[From Early College Awareness Activities: Bringing Higher Education to Younger Students](#)**, Ever-Fi
  - Career Day College Interviews: Plan a day for guest speakers to come visit your students and talk with them about, not only their careers, but how they got to this point in their careers. What kinds of education did they need, where did they obtain that education, how did they pay for their education, how are they continuing their education throughout their job - these are all good questions to add to the interviews.
8. **[College Week Activities for Elementary](#)**, Longwing Learning
  - List of activities to implement during a College Week at your school / learning space
9. **[College Visit KWLR Chart](#)**, New York Department of Education
  - Can be used with students before, during, and after a college visit to identify and describe what they Know, Want to Know, Learned, and Reflect on their experience
10. **[Step by Step: College Awareness and Planning for Families, Counselors, and Communities](#)**, National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)
  - A curriculum presented in 4 sections: Elementary, Middle, Early High School, Late High School
  - All 4 guides (and more!) are available as FREE downloads, but you will need to register on the site to access the downloads
  - **[Link to Elementary Guide Download](#)**
11. **[I'm Going to College](#)**, Northwestern Education Loan Association
  - College-bound curriculum for elementary and middle school

## Additional Resources for College Readiness in Elementary Grades

1. **[When should students start thinking about college?](#)**, JLV College Counseling
2. **[Think College Now Elementary](#)** is a college-focused elementary school located in Oakland, California. With a mission to provide all students with “the tools to choose their life’s path and desired occupation with an equitable opportunity to attend college and pursue their dreams” this school is certainly thinking outside the traditional box of beginning college and career readiness in high school.
3. **[The College Readiness Battle is Won or Lost in Elementary School](#)**, Thomas B. Fordham Institute
4. **[What is College Readiness?](#)**, Western Governors University
5. **[College and Career Readiness in OST Learning Resources](#)**, American Youth Policy Forum
6. **[Oregon Goes to College: Visits for Younger Students Toolkit](#)**, Oregon GEARUP



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# Financial Literacy for Future Readiness in Elementary Grades

In addition to intentional and age-appropriate activities focused on college and career readiness in elementary school, financial literacy has recently become an area of focus that is complementary to CCR topics and in preparing students for their future lives.



"Practical, real world skill-sets around personal finances were not necessarily emphasized in the curriculum in previous generations, but in recent years, financial literacy for students has moved to the forefront of discussions with hopes of addressing the gap in the current curriculum."

(Leszcynski, n.d., para. 1)

"Attitudes around financial planning are changing, so the current curriculum needs to reflect that. Having a comprehensive, in depth financial literacy component more widely available for students will better equip them with the tools they need for their future."

(Leszcynski, n.d., para. 3)

There are a few notable challenges to including a financial literacy component in your program's curriculum:

- **Time:** With so many demands on our limited time (and potentially, limited resources) how can we find space for one more thing?
- **Where and When to Start:** Financial literacy is a broad and far-reaching topic; how do we know where to begin? Where is the most appropriate starting point for elementary school children? When should this type of instruction or awareness-building begin?
- **It Needs to be Engaging:** The topic of financial literacy can be so boring and uninspiring! How do we find or create activities that are meaningful AND interesting or engaging for our students?

Don't worry! Remember, this topic is becoming more popular in modern day K-12 classrooms which means that there is a growing body of research available to support best practices and new activities and curriculum being developed specifically to support learning in this area for this age group.

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In the article, *The Importance of Financial Literacy in K-12*, Paulina Leszcynski identifies two straightforward ways to address the aforementioned challenges:

**1. Find a curriculum that works for you.**

- Begin by asking yourself / your team the following questions:
  - + How much time do we have available to teach the information?
  - + Is the curriculum aligned with standards?
  - + Does the curriculum offer flexibility?
  - + Can we adapt this particular curriculum to fit our students' needs?
- Identify your goals for integrating a financial literacy component into your CCR initiative or program.
- Find a curriculum or series of lesson plans that will help you reach your goals. Begin by reviewing the curriculum resources included in this section.

**2. Seek out supplemental resources.**

- Since financial literacy has been gaining popularity in K-12 classrooms and programs, it will be easier than ever before to find resources that support your goals surrounding financial literacy education in your program.
- To help with this step, we have curated a list of financial literacy resources specifically focused on youth in elementary grades. This would be a great place to start looking at the kinds of things that are available for use in your program.

## Financial Literacy Resources for K-6

1. [Maryland Financial Literacy Education Standards](#), MD State Dept. of Education (MSDE)
2. [Kiddynomics: An Economics Curriculum for Young Learners](#) | Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
  - [Learn More](#) or [Watch Video](#)
  - A set of lessons designed to introduce young children to the economic way of thinking
  - In this curriculum, students are introduced to basic personal finance and economic concepts, such as scarcity, choice, goods, services, saving, spending, and banks. They explore these concepts through popular children's literature to reinforce reading fluency.
3. [Junior Achievement BizTown Curriculum & Learning Experience](#) | Junior Achievement
  - Combines in-class learning with a day-long visit to a simulated town. This popular learning experience allows elementary school students to operate banks, manage restaurants, write checks, and vote for mayor. Students are able to connect the dots between what they learn in school and the real world.
  - Recommended for grades 4–6. The learning experience is available for classroom-based, self-guided, or remote classroom implementation. It includes 12 teacher-led sessions prior to the simulation and 1 session following the simulation, with a culminating 4–5 hour visit to a hands-on simulated community or a virtual simulation.

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4. [\*\*Financial Fitness for Life | Council for Economic Education\*\*](#)
    - Personal finance lessons and activities for Grades K-12 available for purchase in book format. The website contains supplementary material.
  5. [\*\*EconEdLink | Council for Economic Education\*\*](#)
    - Personal finance and economics resources for K-2 and 3-5 classrooms
  6. [\*\*Vault - Financial Literacy for Kids | Ever-Fi\*\*](#)
    - FREE Financial Literacy activities for elementary students in grades 4-6
  7. [\*\*Maryland Council on Economic Education\*\*](#)
    - Free resources and training to teachers to improve the quality of financial literacy instruction
    - Interactive Hands-on student programs that offer transformational learning
  8. [\*\*Best Children’s Books for Money Lessons | U.S. News\*\*](#)
  9. [\*\*Book-Based Resources for Teaching Economics & Personal Finance | Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis\*\*](#)
    - [Lesson Plans and Parent Q+A sheets for many picture books centered on saving, spending, savings goals, making careful decisions, and other personal finance and economic concepts.](#)

## 4) ENGAGING FAMILIES IN CCR IN ELEMENTARY GRADES



“The adult world of work is a complex, ever-evolving place. When parents, educators, and educational technology work together to make the on-ramp to the future as long as possible, we can help set our kids up for success – whatever that looks like to them” (Hudson, 2021, ‘What Role Do Parents Play...’ section).

According to research by Henderson & Mapp (2002), “studies found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students at all ages. Although there is less research on the effects of community involvement, it also suggests benefits for schools, families, and students, including improved achievement and behavior” (p. 24).

### These benefits include:

- Higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests or rating scales
- Enrollment in more challenging academic programs
- More classes passed and credits earned
- Better attendance
- Improved behavior at home and at school
- Better social skills and adaptation to school

**NOTE:** It is worth noting that the research specifically mentions that **it takes more than just engaged parents to produce high student achievement.** However, the benefits identified here are some of the most important for future readiness.

## TIPS FOR ELEMENTARY PARENTS & FAMILIES

The [Career and College Success division](#) of Denver Public Schools has the following helpful tips for parents and family members of elementary aged students that allow them to support the CCR efforts of their child's educators.

- 1) **Read to your child** every day and / or have them read to you when they are able.
- 2) **Talk with your child** about their day, what they did in school, their homework, and how they like to learn.
- 3) Do your best to make sure your child is **on time to school every day**. Attending school every day has a positive impact on learning for all ages.
- 4) **Work as a partner with your child's teacher(s)** to help support your child's learning and achievement as best you can.
- 5) **Nurture your child's interest and passions**, as these have the potential to become pathways into new learning and possible professions.
- 6) **Talk with your child about their future**. Discuss your hopes and dreams for their future and their own hopes, dreams, and aspirations.
- 7) **Cultivate curiosity**. Children are naturally curious and this trait can be beneficial to them as they age. You can help encourage their curiosity by exploring the world around you - go on walks together, observe a construction site, visit the museum, zoo, or aquarium, or cook a meal together.
- 8) **"Support a growth mindset**: children should be challenged in new ways, pushed to try various skills and activities, and taught to approach mistakes or failures as learning opportunities for next time" (Denver Public Schools, n.d., 'Tips for Elementary Parents & Caregivers' section).

**NOTE:** Although this list was created by Denver Public Schools for their constituents, it is widely applicable information that can be used by your organization to provide support to families and engage them in the CCR efforts of your program.

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## Developing Success Skills & Traits with Family Support

There are specific skills for success (some of which were identified previously in the Foundational Skills for CCR Success section) that will require support from families to become the cornerstones of the foundation you are working to build for future success in your students.

The following skills and the accompanying guidance for each one have been developed by the [Fort Bend Independent School District](#) in Texas as part of their College & Career Readiness Starts in Elementary School initiative:

**1. Personal Responsibility: The student exhibits good work habits.**

- Help your child by increasing responsibility around the house and encouraging doing schoolwork.

**2. Career Development Skills**

- Awareness of the relationship between school and work.
- Skills to understand and use career information
- Awareness of the benefits of academic achievement.
- Awareness of different occupations and the changing gender roles.
- Awareness of the career planning process.

**3. Interpersonal Skills: The student interacts positively with those around him/her.**

- Help your child by exposing them to experiences that require that they work and play with others.
- Limit passive activities (electronics)

**4. Decision Making: The student understands the decision-making process.**

- Encourage your child to make decisions on their own.
- Consider giving them a small spending budget or responsibility for organizing a family day out – anything that involves planning and choices.

**5. Academic Awareness**

- Create early awareness that connects academic performance — doing homework, coming to school on time, and habits as a learner (being helpful, having a positive attitude, listening and communicating) — to getting better grades and attaining grade-level promotion.

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## Involving Families in College Day / Week

One of the ideas shared in the previous section, What Career and College Readiness Can Look Like in Elementary Grades, was to host a College Day or College Week for your students that involves a variety of activities to get students interested in and thinking about the postsecondary education options available to them. Hosting a College Day/Week event for students is a great way to involve families in the CCR initiatives you implement for elementary students!

- Family members can participate as **guest speakers** and share stories of their own experiences in college
- Invite family members to **host / run a table or booth** with information about specific local colleges or about other aspects of college life
- Involve families in spirit day / college day activities to show their own college pride and school spirit by **wearing their college colors or swag from their school**
- You can also **host additional events for parents and family members** during this day or week as a way to provide specific ideas to them for how to best support their child(ren) in their CCR journey

## Guidance for Families on Future Readiness in Elementary School

The best way to engage families in your college and career readiness efforts is to provide concrete information to them about the kind of support you are looking for and the most effective ways that they can help support their child. This section includes guidance specifically aimed at parents and family members to help them understand and support the college and career ready efforts you have initiated with their child.

**Although the following content is directed at families, there are three ways that you can use the information provided in this section:**

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**1) Use the information provided directly with students** to support the CCR efforts and initiatives taking place within your program by developing activities and lessons for your staff to implement.

**2) Develop a professional development training for your staff or volunteers** on ways to engage with students about CCR and support the overarching goals of your CCR initiative.

**3) Plan and host a family night event** featuring presentations and activities aimed at sharing the information directly with families.

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# FAMILY GUIDE TO GETTING YOUR CHILD FUTURE READY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The following guidance and suggested activities are meant to be shared with families so that they know how best to support their child and the CCR efforts of your program. The information provided will help them understand the most direct actions they can take to help prepare their elementary-aged child(ren) for their future(s).

All of this guidance can be found in the supplementary resource, [Family Guide: Getting Your Child Future Ready in Elementary School](#), exactly as it is here. This supplementary guide has been written to be shared directly with families and is available as a downloadable PDF that can be printed and distributed, used to guide presentations, or sent as a direct link to families in your program.

## How to Help Your Elementary School Child Explore Careers

### 1. Help them explore their interests.

- Through school subjects or projects
- Through hobbies or extracurricular activities
- Talk with them about their favorite subjects, activities, and what they want to be when they grow up.

### 2. Introduce your child to a variety of careers.

- Watch Day-in-the-Life type videos together on YouTube that feature different careers and discuss how these people work and what their contributions to society are.
  - + Point out the working people you encounter on a daily basis - such as a sales clerk, baker, teacher, police officer, etc. - and explain how important their role is in society at does that person do in their job?
- The following questions are good ones to help guide the conversation with your child:
  - + What does that person do in their job?
  - + Why is this job important?
  - + Is this job something you might like to do one day?

### 3. Help your child develop life and work skills.

- “Encourage your child to make decisions and learn how to resolve problems at every age. Give your child responsibilities, such as planning meals or organizing a family outing, help them to set goals, and work towards achieving them. Teaching your child these habits and skills will help them develop skills for their future career” (Exploring Future Careers, NYC Department of Education).

### 4. Discuss your own work experiences with your child.

- Talk with them about the different roles you fill at work, how you work with other people, why your job is important
- If possible, take them to work with you for a day to show them what the environment is like and the various responsibilities you and your co-workers carry out in a day



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# How to Help Your Elementary School Child Start Thinking of College

## 1. Talk about college with your child

- Play off their natural curiosity about school and structure and purpose of full-time education that they are encountering as they begin their education journeys
- Talk to them about your time in college, or invite them to speak to relatives and family friends about their experiences as well.
  - + Conversations with as many people as possible about college and career will be beneficial in introducing your child to a variety of opinions and stories about each person’s unique experiences.



## 2. Visit a college or university

- Take your children to visit a college campus to help your child become familiar with the idea of what a campus is and what it looks like, this might help them to envision themselves on a college campus when they are older.
- This doesn’t have to be in the form of a formal tour of the campus. Instead, look for other opportunities such as going to see a play, checking out a community event or festival held on campus, or simply taking a drive or walk through campus. Many colleges offer summer camps for young children on campus throughout the summer, if you have the means, this may also be a good option.
- If you don’t live close to a college or university, sit down with the computer and allow your child to help you navigate through virtual tours of campuses. Encourage them to describe why they are selecting the colleges they pick and talk with them about the different things you see on the virtual visit. Allow them to ask questions and share their opinions about each place. Try one of the following resources:
  - + [You Visit](#)
  - + [The College Tour](#)
  - + [Virtual Tours](#), Princeton Review
  - + [Campus Tours](#)

## 3. Work to strengthen your child’s executive skills

- “Executive skills are the mental processes that help us function efficiently and effectively, such as organization, task initiation, emotional control and staying focused. Helping your child strengthen these areas will improve their performance in school and make for a smoother overall path through college and life” (“5 Ways,” n.d.)
- Helping children develop good habits such as punctuality, organization, collaboration and cooperation, and time management will help put them on a path to being a good college student

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#### 4. Emphasize the importance of regular attendance

- Attendance is a strong indicator of academic success and talking to your child about the importance of going to school every day is one way that you can help lay a strong foundation on which to build future success.

#### 5. Read to and with your child. Encourage them to read on their own, when they are able.

- Reading can help to build vocabulary and critical thinking skills in children, which will help them as they later prepare for college by taking the SAT/ACT exams and writing college essays.
- Children who practice reading become confident readers which will develop their interests, ignite their imagination, and provide purposeful relaxation.
- Also be sure to be a reading model for your child and let them see you reading, enjoying books, and visiting the library or bookstore.

#### 6. Be involved in your child's education

- Attending parent-teacher conferences, monitoring your child's progress through report cards and progress reports, tracking assignments, and discussing with your child their thoughts, feelings, and experiences at school will help ensure that you are in the loop and keep things from falling through the cracks.
- Expressing an interest in your child's education and academic progress and building connections with them about these pieces will help them to be more invested in their own success.
- Let them know you are proud of them, as long as they do their best and seek out help when they need it. This will go a long way to helping them build confidence in themselves even when they struggle, which will help keep them invested in continuing to make progress.

#### 7. Find enjoyable extracurricular activities for your child to participate in

- Starting this early and allowing your child to try on many different activities (not at once!) in their early years will help them begin to explore their own interests and start to identify their passions.
- Colleges definitely are interested in students who are involved in and passionate about meaningful activities
- Starting this journey early may mean that by the time your child reaches high school, they will be able to enter leadership roles within these activities, such as team captain, editor of the school paper, or soloist in the choir or orchestra.



**\*from [5 Ways to Get Your Elementary Schooler Thinking about College, College? Definitely!](#)**

# COLLEGE & CAREER CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR FAMILIES

Providing discussion questions can be a great way to engage families and by providing a script to parents, you are making it easier for them to start having these conversations with their children. The following questions can be given to parents and families for them to discuss with their children.

**IDEA: If you are implementing a Career & College Week, you can "assign" a set of these questions each day to families as "homework"!**

## MONDAY

### COLLEGE

Where did you go to college? What made you choose that school?

### CAREER

What did you want to be when you were young?

## TUESDAY

### COLLEGE

What was your major / minor? What was your favorite class & why?

### CAREER

What made you decide to go into your current field?

## WEDNESDAY

### COLLEGE

What activities were you involved in during college? Did you work during college?

### CAREER

What skill has been the most valuable to you in your career? Where did you learn that skill?

## THURSDAY

### COLLEGE

Talk about daily college life (where you lived, class schedule, studying, fun activities)

### CAREER

Is continuous / lifelong learning an important part of what you do? Why? How do you continue to learn?

## FRIDAY

### COLLEGE

What are / were some of the traditions at your college? What were the school colors & mascot?

### CAREER

What are the most satisfying parts of your career?

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## Additional Resources for Families

1. [Parental Involvement in Your Child's Education: The Key to Student Success](#), Research Shows, Annie E. Casey Foundation
2. [Exploring Future Careers](#), NYC Public Schools

## 5) PITFALLS TO AVOID WHEN IMPLEMENTING CCR IN ELEMENTARY GRADES



For all of the increased interest in bringing college and career readiness activities and programs into the elementary grades, there is still a significant amount of skepticism and criticism about such initiatives. Most of this hesitation comes from concerns about **two major pitfalls** that could be encountered in the implementation of CCR initiatives in elementary grades:

- 1. Seeding competition among students and families**
- 2. Causing or increasing anxiety in students**

The New York Times article, [Is Your First Grader College Ready?](#) highlights some of the common concerns brought forth by elementary school CCR initiatives:

“Reaching out to children years ahead of serious college consideration can seed brand awareness for the university. Or amp up an already anxiety-laced process.

‘Children need to make mistakes and find themselves in dead ends and cul-de-sacs,’ said Joan Almon, a founder of the Alliance for Childhood who worries that the early focus cuts short self-exploration. ‘I’m concerned that we are putting so much pressure around college that by the time they get there they are already burned out.’

Some agree. A number of colleges refuse to host tours for children in grades below high school, expressing sentiments similar to those on the Boston College website, which notes a “desire not to contribute to the college admissions frenzy” (Pappano, 2015).

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While these concerns are certainly valid, there are a few steps you can take to ensure that your program’s CCR initiatives for your youngest learners steer clear of these commonly perceived pitfalls while still offering meaningful and high-quality experiences that help build the strong future-ready foundation your students deserve.

**1. Have Fun!**

By creating a curriculum and activities that are fun and engaging you will help to cut down on creating any additional pressures for your students and their families.

**2. Keep It Age Appropriate**

Remember that you are working with young learners, ages 5-12, and be sure that you are developing meaningful activities that are appropriate. That means students aren’t filling out practice college applications, or learning details about the FAFSA, or pushing young students to make any type of commitment or complex decisions about their future.

**3. Exploration & Awareness are the Goals**

Maintain a focus on exploration and awareness activities that broaden the knowledge of your students and their families and all the possibilities that lie ahead for them. Avoid any kind of pressure about decisions to come later. Students in grades K-6 won’t have all the information, or experience, to know how to make those decisions we commonly associate with college and career readiness, nor should they ever be put in a position to feel like they have to.

The goals of this whole initiative are to help young learners become dreamers who can imagine limitless possibilities for their future lives; to help create space for and design activities that foster self-knowledge and self-awareness because the better our young learners know themselves, the better off they will be in the future; to explore their interests and become aware of the opportunities that exist - and the ones that might not exist yet; and to build as strong a foundation as possible on which to build later in their educational journeys.



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## General Resources for CCR in Elementary Grades in OST

1. [Maryland College and Career Ready Resources](#), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)
2. [Office of College and Career Pathways](#), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)
3. [College and Career Readiness](#), Baltimore City Public Schools
4. [College & Career Planning](#), NYC Department of Education
5. [The Importance of College and Career Experiences in Out-of-School Time Programs](#), ActNow Illinois
  - A guide to facilitating engaging College and Career Readiness activities in your after-school program
6. [Fueling the Next Generation: Career Education and the Elementary Classroom](#), National Career Development Association (NCDA)
  - This FREE, recorded webinar “discusses best practices for teaching career development in the elementary classroom, as well as offer ideas for doing so in alignment with rigorous state standards, daily activities and routines, and CTE partnerships. Such ideas are applicable to all educators, counselors, and curriculum directors working with k-12 students and staff”.
7. [Career Conversations: Elementary](#), American School Counselor Association & Colorado Department of Education
  - The Career Conversations provide a guide for working with elementary, middle and high school students, parents and community members to address the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student. The Career Conversations questions are based on ecosystems theory, counseling theory and an extensive review of counseling and career counseling literature. The questions can be used to work with individuals and groups of students, parents and community members. The Career Conversations were developed by ASCA for the Colorado Department of Education.
8. [Supporting Early Career Development of Transgender and Gender Expansive Children in Elementary School](#)
9. [Afterschool Programming as a Lever to Enhance and Provide Career Readiness Opportunities](#), American Institutes for Research (AIR)
10. [Three New Briefs Show City Afterschool, Summer Investments Improve Workforce Development](#), College and Career Readiness, National League of Cities (NLC)
11. [Oregon Goes to College: Toolkits and Resources for Educators](#), Oregon GEARUP

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**The Career and College Readiness Toolkit is an initiative of the Maryland Out of School Time Network. To learn more and find more resources, visit [www.mostnetwork.org/initiatives/CCR](http://www.mostnetwork.org/initiatives/CCR).**