

Help your child to understand how very important his or her school work will be in later decisions. Show them



how such subjects as reading, arithmetic and communications are used in all occupations. In short, help them understand that there are more important reasons for going to school than simply going to school.

Encourage your child to engage in part-time work outside the home. *If such work is done for pay, you can talk with your child about the basic elements of the free enterprise system. Whether or not the work is for pay, it can be valuable in two ways: 1) It can help your child explore career interests and 2) It can help your child discover the sense of accomplishment and self-pride that can come from work.*

Encourage your child to talk with teachers and counsellors about career plans. *After such visits, talk with your children about what they have learned. Feel free to tell them what you think. In doing so, make it clear that you are expressing your opinion, not telling them what to do with their lives. Don't refuse to discuss such matters with your children, just because you do not know the answers.*

Visit the school your child attends. *If your child has been discussing career plans with a teacher or counsellor at school, seek that person out and ask questions such as, "Do you think this career is suitable in view of my child's strengths and weaknesses?" or "What is the employment outlook for this career?" You will often learn a lot about your child and you will certainly help the teachers and counsellors to help your children more if you are willing to talk to them.*

Help your child to understand that it will be equally important to acquire a set of specific job skills and a set of adaptable skills for occupational success. *For example, if your child is preparing for a career in journalism, it would also be wise to pursue a broad base of academic subjects that might be used in fields other than journalism.*

Be a partner in the process. *A great way to be a career partner is to empower, encourage and guide, but not direct your children. What you should do is serve as a sounding board and brainstorm ideas with them. This can be a difficult process, but well worth it when your child finds a satisfying career path in the end*



Career Development Services Unit (CDS)
HEART Trust/NTA
Gordon Town Road
Kingston 6
Tel: 970-2139/977-1700-5
Fax: 702-3135
Website: <http://cds.heart-nta.org>

How Parents Can Help Their Children with Their Career Decision Making

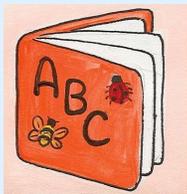


Career decision-making is a process, not an event that occurs at a given time. This process begins in the pre-school years and continues throughout all of adult life.

As a parent you will be expected to provide assistance to your child when that time comes to choose a career. But while parents should not outright make that decision for their child/children, there are a few things that can be done to help your child along the way. Here are some tips:

Encourage your child to ask and think about the question, "What will I be when I grow up?" In the early years, children's hopes are often expressed in fantasy terms, especially during play. You will hear things such as, "I'm a boy so I'm Superman, or you're a girl so you're Superwoman." Don't criticize such statements. Your child is exploring who he or she is becoming. It will help you to understand him or her better, if you let your child talk in this way. Provide toys that encourage experimentation through play with many different jobs.

Don't discourage your child from planning careers at an early age. It is better to ask, "Why does this appeal to you?" than to say something like, "You wouldn't like to do that," or "That's completely unrealistic." Until major action decisions have to be made, it is better to let your child think about any/all possible job choices.



Try to help your child think about alternate choices. The question, "If for some reason, you couldn't do this, what other things would you want to do?" is a good one to raise. It will help you learn more about your child, and will also help him or her to broaden the basis for career decision-making. Talking about your alternate career choices will also help. For example, discuss jobs you've had in the past, or changes you might be considering in your present occupation.



Try to eliminate gender bias in thinking about your child's future. Your daughter may wish to enter an occupation you may think of as "masculine", or your son enter one that you consider "feminine." Do not discourage them from thinking about such occupations. Times are changing, and they will need extra measures of your emotional support. For example, if the child next door discourages your daughter from being a doctor because "girls are nurses," take your daughter to a female doctor if you can. If you can't, point out women who are in traditionally male jobs. Say things like, "A person's gender really doesn't matter, its ability that counts, and what you are interested in."

Don't hesitate to respond when your child asks, "What do you think I should be when I grow up?" Try to make it clear that it is more important that he or she is happy, than become what you would like. However, you can point out particular talents that he or she possesses and discuss the jobs that these would be helpful in.

Tell your child about the work that you do. Try to do so in a positive way, so that your child will gain respect for you by respecting what you do. Do not encourage or discourage your child from considering your occupation. The important thing is that your child sees that through your work, you are making contributions to society.

Encourage your child to ask people about their jobs. Make use of your family/friends that are in the occupations your child is considering. Emphasize to your child that he or she should seek information, not advice, from such persons. If your child is particularly interested, ask a friend if your child can visit him/her on the job to see what it entails.

Take your child on field trips to see various people at work. This is very helpful in letting children acquire a realistic view of a variety of jobs.

Help your child explore hobbies and other leisure-time activities that are productive and useful. Sometimes such activities can lead to career choices. However, whether they do or not is unimportant. What is important is that they can help your child see himself or herself as one who can accomplish something successful.

