

Career Development Reference Guide

MICHIGAN
Department
of Education

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Michigan Career
Development Model



They can't be what they can't see.

Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan

MCDM supports the following goals:

- Expand early childhood learning opportunities
- Improve early literacy achievement
- Improve the health, safety, and wellness of all learners
- Expand secondary learning opportunities for all students
- Increase the percentage of all students who graduate from high school
- Increase the percentage of adults with a postsecondary credential
- Increase the numbers of certified teachers in areas of shortage
- Provide adequate and equitable school funding



The 2018 MCDM vision and guidance was originally created with input from:

- Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)
- Michigan Occupational Deans Association Council (MODAC)
- Michigan Association for Career and Technical Education (MI ACTE)
- Michigan Career Educational Planning District (CEPD) Administration Council
- Michigan Department of Talent and Economic Development (TED)
- Michigan College Access Network (MCAN)
- Michigan School Counselor Association (MSCA)

Acknowledgements

The MCDM was updated with the guidance and collaboration with local, regional, and state stakeholders including:

- Local and intermediate school districts and regional service agencies
- Postsecondary and community college partners
- Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
- MDE - Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE)
- Michigan School Counselor Association (MSCA)
- Michigan College Access Network (MCAN)
- MDE - Office of Educational Supports (OES)
- Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO)
- Michigan Health Council
- Michigan Farm Bureau
- Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD)
- United States ARMY
- Boys and Girls Club
- Youth Solutions
- Michigan Career Development Association (MichCDA)
- Early Childhood Administrators Network (ECAN)
- MiSTEM Network
- TalentFirst
- Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Leader Collaborative
- Kalamazoo Promise
- Michigan Works! Association

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Michigan Career Development Model

The Michigan Career Development Model (MCDM) is a framework, guided by legislation, that engages school communities, students, and their support networks in intentional and meaningful career awareness, exploration, and preparation for all students.

Legislation

In 2018, the [MCL 380.1166a](#) was enacted that requires school districts to take an active role in assisting students as they prepare for and plan their future education and careers. Districts must incorporate K-12 grade level career development education as indicated below.

- Define learning targets and themes for each grade level.
- Include instruction for pupils in grades K to 12.
- Incorporate career development education embedded within core instruction.
- Include strategies for engaging parents and community business and industry interests.
- Ensure curriculum incorporates grade-appropriate instruction on career development in each grade level in grades K to 12.

Purpose

Career development is designed to assist students in answering the following questions:

- **Who am I?**
- **Where am I going?**
- **How will I get there?**
- **Who can help?**

The MCDM model is divided into grade bands for early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school, and postsecondary. While early childhood and postsecondary are recommended, K-12 grade-appropriate career development is required by [Michigan law](#). The learning targets and instruction should be embedded across the curriculum and include strategies for engaging families and connecting with business and industry. Suggested instructional strategies are provided to assist schools in developing a local or regional model and are meant to allow flexibility in delivery.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) recommends that districts utilize their school improvement team to incorporate the career development model.

Profile of a Graduate

A [Michigan high school graduate](#) should have the ability to:

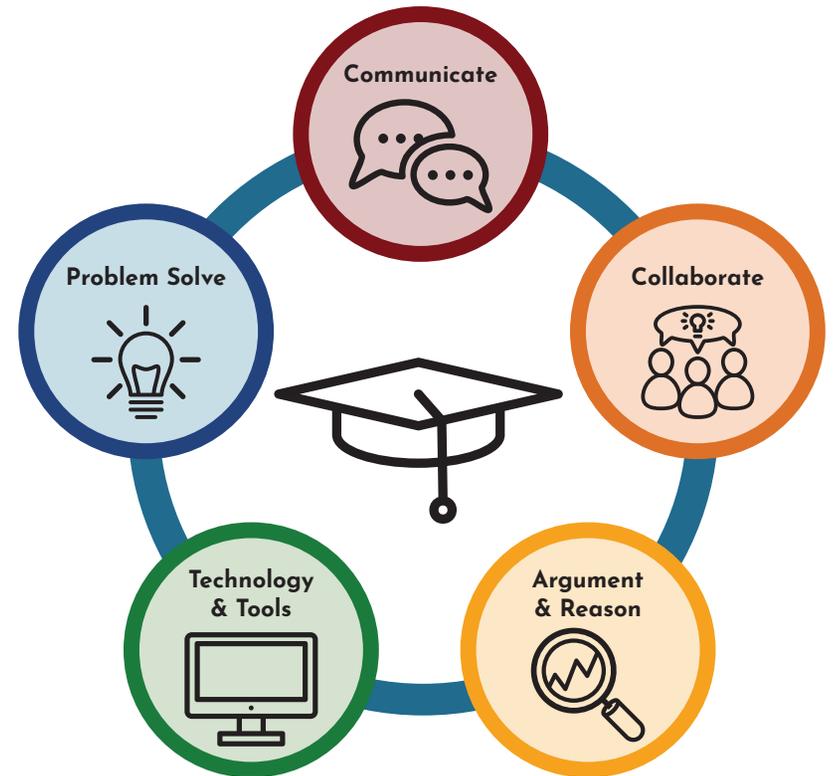
- Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences.
- Collaborate with others to reach a shared goal.
- Use Argument and Reason to do research, construct arguments, and critique the reasoning of others.
- Use Technology and Tools strategically in learning and communicating.
- Problem Solve, construct explanations, and design creative and innovative solutions.

Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC)

A Michigan high school graduate must meet the [Michigan Merit Curriculum \(MMC\) Graduation Requirements](#). The MMC specifies that all students who earn a diploma, at a minimum, have demonstrated proficiency with the content outlined by the state academic standards or guidelines. Since districts are responsible for awarding diplomas, they are also responsible for providing all students the opportunity to learn the content outlined by the standards. As the skills for college and the workplace have merged, the MMC, if properly implemented, will prepare students with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the global economy and an emerging workforce.

District-Wide Culture of Career Development

Creating a culture of career development begins at the district level with an all-encompassing team from early childhood, K-12 education, postsecondary, business, and community partners. Each member plays an important role and contributes to the success of all students.



Team Member	Role
Board of Education	Approve district philosophy and policies. Provide support and resource allocation.
Superintendent	Obtain district-wide buy-in and support systemic career development, remove administrative obstacles, and integrate continuous improvement.
School Principal	Obtain school-wide buy-in, provide time for staff collaboration, professional development, and accountability through the school improvement process.
Curriculum Director	Develop and integrate a career readiness plan across the curriculum, including a framework of best practices.
Early Childhood Educator	Integrate career-related play and themes to help young children develop foundational knowledge around jobs and careers. Provide families and caregivers with career awareness and out-of-school activities.
K-12 Teacher	Integrate career readiness components into the classroom.
Counselor	Integrate career readiness practices into a comprehensive counseling program.
Career Readiness Mentor	Support staff and students with resources, activities/events, educational development plans (EDP), and more.
Career and Technical Education Administrator	Advise staff, students, and families of career and technical education (CTE) opportunities for high-skill, in-demand, high-wage occupations, including how to earn credentials and college credit while in high school.
Human Resources	Include career development tasks in all staff job descriptions and evaluations. Work in partnership with the bargaining unit/union leadership to set clear expectations.
District Financial Officer	Collaborate with district leaders to integrate all relevant funding sources, including federal, state, local, and private sources, to sustain and scale up career development.
Bargaining Unit and Union Leadership	Work to support embedding career development across the curriculum at all levels.
Community, Business, and Industry Partners, and Postsecondary Institutions	Contribute an additional perspective regarding how to prepare students for success in career, college, and life. Collaborate with the district to expose students to career opportunities and with staff to build relevance within instruction and out-of-school-time activities.
Student Representatives	Contribute insight on career development needs and what students find most beneficial.
Family Representatives	Provide input to the district regarding career development from a family perspective. Assist with out-of-school opportunities and support for career development.

Adapted from [Wayne-Westland Community Schools “College and Career Readiness Resource Guide”, July 2023.](#)

They can't be what they can't see.

District-Wide Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
<p>Create and prioritize a district-wide culture of career development to support career planning and decision-making for all students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a career readiness advisory committee comprised of district, school, family, community, and industry partners. • Set a vision and define a career development culture to build shared understanding within the district. • Employ career counselors, career navigators, and/or career mentors. • Include student career development in the job description as an expectation for all staff. • Include career development activities and data in the district’s annual report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student, family, and staff perception data • Number of meetings documented with agendas and meeting minutes • Budget for career development staff or number of staff or full-time employee (FTE) • Number of staff employed with specific career development tasks in the job description • Annual Report • Number and type of observed lessons with embedded career development model components
<p>Collaborate district-wide to facilitate systemic career development implementation and improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take inventory of current career development practices, including overlapping initiatives, and create a continuous improvement plan to address gaps. • Crosswalk systemic frameworks and guidelines to integrate career development with continuous improvement goals. • Develop scope and sequence for each grade band, including strategies, resources, lessons, and metrics. • Schedule regular district-wide counselor collaboration meetings with career development progress as a key agenda item. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of hours of district-wide collaborative planning time • Number of meetings documented with agendas and meeting minutes • Dollars budgeted toward career development implementation • Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process utilization to monitor outcomes with data

District-Wide Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
Provide opportunities for staff to engage in career readiness professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate staff externships or industry tours to establish content relevancy and to connect classroom instruction to occupations and career zones/clusters/pathways. Dedicate time for career development guest speakers at district-wide professional development or staff meetings. Enable staff attendance at professional association conferences or trainings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff survey results that capture reflection and next steps after career-related professional development Sign-in sheet for internal MCDM professional development Attendance confirmation at conference or training Number of lessons that embed lessons learned through career-related professional learning
Develop and maintain relationships with business and community partners to enrich student exposure to career opportunities and to build relevance within instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in networking opportunities to build a list of local community and industry experts willing to provide career enrichment activities to staff and students. Invite industry experts to co-teach career-related lessons, be a guest speaker in the classroom, at a staff meeting, or district-wide professional development. Encourage employers to provide job shadow experiences and work-based learning (WBL) placements and to participate in career fairs, mock interviews, and panel discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of external partners involved with district career development activities Number of opportunities offered or students engaged in WBL Number of career awareness or exploration activities that connect students with business and industry partners Staff and students perceptions of career opportunities

Culture of Continuous Improvement

Local educational agencies can create a career-ready culture by integrating career development into district-wide continuous improvement processes and initiatives.

Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process



The [Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process \(MICIP\)](#) is a pathway for improving student outcomes by assessing whole child needs to develop plans and coordinate funding. Improving student career readiness outcomes requires intentional implementation of a comprehensive, integrated, district-wide career development plan. The MCDM is available in the MICIP platform to assist the district improvement teams in writing career development goals, linking those goals to other district initiatives, identifying, and braiding funding sources, and focusing on continuous improvement. Sample data templates are in MICIP for ease in utilizing career development metrics to measure progress toward goals. Examples of strategies, activities, and metrics by grade band are included in this reference guide. Review the [MICIP Overview](#) slides for more details on the process.

Michigan Strategy Bank



[Michigan Strategy Bank \(MSB\)](#) is an electronic clearinghouse of strategies created by educators for educators. MSB is designed to connect educational data systems, promote best practices, and provide information regarding the implementation of strategies. District career development or school improvement teams may use the MSB to locate best practices and strategies for career development model implementation. Access to the strategy bank requires specific permissions and may only be accessed by approved district personnel.

Career Development Cycle

“Career development is a lifelong process of managing and navigating toward a personal vision of the future. More than just a college major or a job, career development is holistic and lifelong, constantly changing as a person changes and situations change. Career development influences include interests, abilities, values, personality, background, and circumstances.”

[Condition of Career Readiness in the United States](#)

Know Yourself

- Interests
- Strengths
- Values

Explore Options

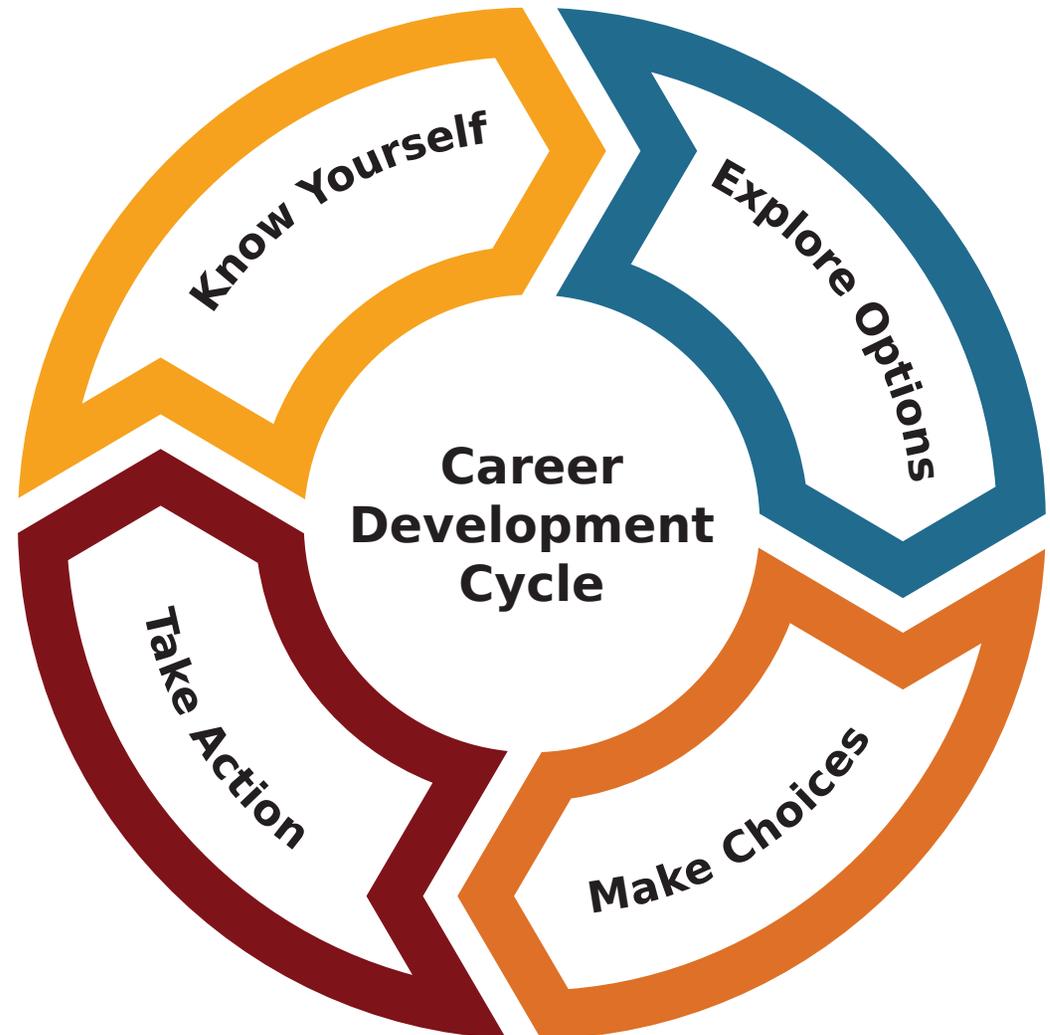
- Career Pathways
- Labor Market Trends
- Postsecondary

Make Choices

- Plan
- Goal Setting
- Decision Making

Take Action

- Increase Knowledge and Skills
- Market Self
- Employment



Adapted from the Kansas Career Development Cycle

They can't be what they can't see.

Who am I?

- Self-Awareness
- Interests
- Skills
- Abilities
- Values
- Personality
- Background
- Circumstances

Where am I going?

- Job-Awareness
- Career Zones
- Career Clusters
- Career Pathways
- Labor Market Trends
- Postsecondary
- Employment
- Entrepreneurship
- Military

How will I get there?

- Plan
- Goals
- Knowledge
- Technical Skills
- Employability Skills
- Work-Based Learning
- Apprenticeships
- Market Self

Who can help?

- Self
- Family
- Friend
- Teacher
- Counselor
- Coach
- Mentor
- Employer
- Network

Important Terms to Know

Career Awareness

Career awareness helps students discover their interests and strengths and provides exposure to a wide range of career possibilities.

Career Exploration

Career exploration allows students to investigate careers and make connections between their learning and occupation options that align with their interests and life goals.

Career Preparation

Career preparation is a more focused examination of career pathways, labor market demand, and postsecondary opportunities that support students in refining their career aspirations. At this stage, students are building pathway-specific skills and are empowered to make decisions, take action, and move toward their goals.

Career Training

Career training involves collaboration with industry and postsecondary partners to build student competency and skills in a specific occupation.

Career Zones

The six Michigan Career zones are broad groupings of careers that share similar characteristics and whose employment requirements call for many common interests, strengths, and competencies.

Career Clusters

Michigan has seventeen subgroups from the six career zones, including occupations organized around knowledge and skills with common characteristics and job duties. The career clusters are based on the [National Career Clusters® Framework](#) and are useful when developing programs of study bridging secondary and postsecondary systems and for creating individual student plans of study for a complete range of career options.

Career Pathways

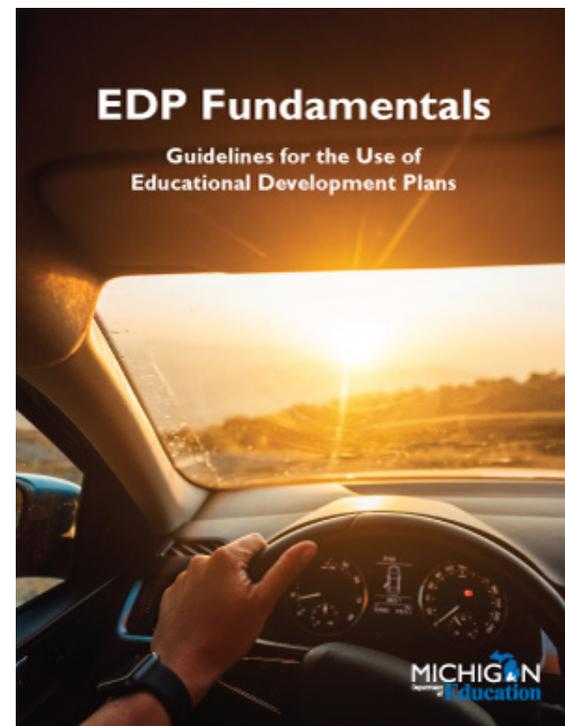
A career pathway is a group of related career specialties or occupations within the career cluster. There are 79 career pathways in Michigan.

Educational Development Plan (EDP)

An Educational Development Plan is a living document based on the student’s evolving interests, skills, abilities, and values. The EDP is developed cooperatively between the student, school staff members, and family members to identify career goals and make an action plan to reach those goals. By going through the EDP process, students will:

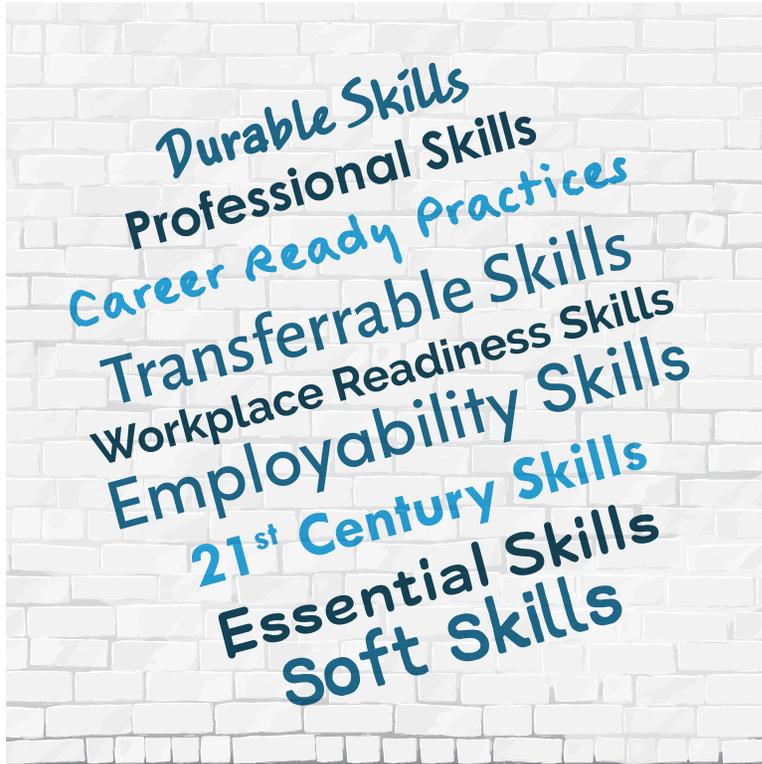
- Learn about themselves
- Explore career options and use labor market information to learn about in-demand occupations
- Make connections between the skills being learned to the skills needed in a future world of work
- Make informed decisions to select courses and experiences that align with their chosen career field
- Understand the relevance between high school and preparation for entering college or the workforce
- Establish and reflect upon career and life goals

Students must initiate the EDP in 7th grade, review it during 8th grade, and update it annually. The specific requirements and suggested best practices are outlined in the [EDP Fundamentals Guide \(michigan.gov\)](https://michigan.gov/education).



Talent Portfolio

The talent portfolio is a collection of artifacts that allows a student to “show what they know” and shall include a record of the student’s experiences, proficiencies, certifications, digital badges, and accomplishments that demonstrate talents or marketable skills. Michigan legislation allows districts to make local decisions about implementation but requires that the talent portfolio be initiated in 7th grade and updated annually. More detailed information can be found in the [EDP Fundamentals Guide \(michigan.gov\)](https://michigan.gov/education).



"...integrating Durable Skills in K-12 education will help ensure a broader group of learners ultimately find success in their careers and communities."

[The High Demand for Durable Skills- America Succeeds](#)

Employability Skills

Employability skills may also be referred to as durable skills, soft skills, 21st Century skills, professional skills, transferrable skills, workforce readiness skills, essential skills, or career-ready practices.

Employability Skills Framework

The U.S. Department of Education compiled the [Employability Skills Framework](#) and developed related tools, media, and resources.

Career Ready Practices

The [Career Ready Practices](#) address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are important to becoming career-ready. They can be practiced, observed, and evaluated in school-based settings as well as in the community and workplace.

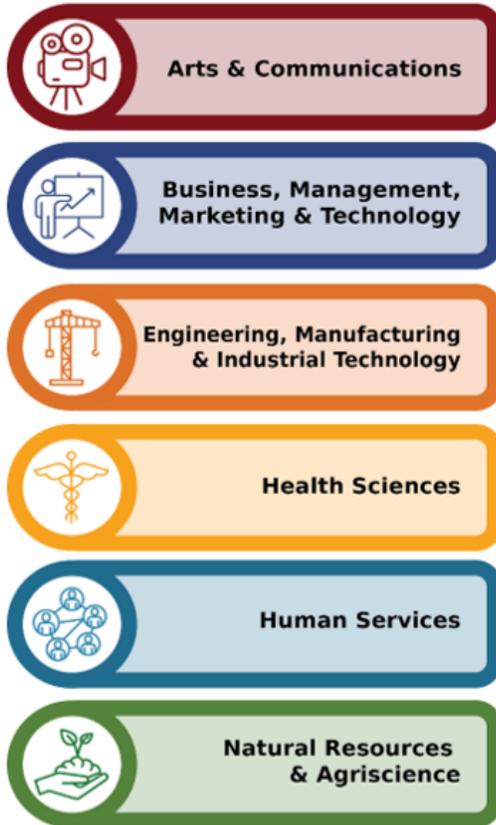
Skills to Pay the Bills

["Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success"](#) is a curriculum developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) focused on teaching "soft" or workforce readiness skills to youth, including youth with disabilities.

Michigan Career Zones, Clusters, and Pathways

Michigan has adopted six career zones, 17 career clusters, and 79 career pathways. The early childhood and elementary school years are the ideal times to introduce the career zones to students and families. These are broad categories, or zones, of careers that have similarities and allow students to connect learning to careers. Middle school students explore a broader view of occupational options in the career clusters which are job groupings with similar skill sets, interests, abilities, and activities. High school students investigate the more specific career pathways to identify career options and develop a plan that will prepare them for the transition to postsecondary education, training, and careers.

Six Career Zones



Seventeen Career Clusters



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Career Cluster	Career Pathways
Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	A/V Technology & Film • Journalism & Broadcasting • Performing Arts • Printing Technology • Telecommunications • Visual Arts
Business Management & Administration	Administrative Support • Business Information Management • General Management • Human Resources Management • Operations Management
Finance	Accounting • Banking Services • Business Finance • Insurance • Securities & Investments
Information Technology	Information Support & Services • Network Systems • Programming & Software Development • Web & Digital Communications
Marketing	Marketing Communications • Marketing Management • Marketing Research • Merchandising • Professional Sales
Architecture & Construction	Construction • Design/Pre-Construction • Maintenance/Operations
Energy	Energy Efficiency • Utilities • Wholesale • Oil and Gas Exploration, Extraction, Wholesaling • Electric Manufacturing
Manufacturing	Health, Safety & Environmental Assurance • Logistics & Inventory Control • Maintenance, Installation & Repair • Manufacturing Production Process Dev. • Production • Quality Assurance
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	Engineering & Technology • Science & Mathematics
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	Facility & Mobile Equipment Maintenance • Health, Safety & Environmental Management • Logistics Planning & Management Services • Sales & Service • Transportation Operations • Transportation Systems/Infrastructure Planning, Management & Regulation • Warehousing & Distribution Center Operations
Health Science	Biotechnology Research & Development • Diagnostic Services • Health Informatics • Support Services • Therapeutic Services
Education & Training	Administration & Administrative Support • Professional Support Services • Teaching/Training
Government & Public Administration	Foreign Service • Governance • National Security • Planning • Public Management & Administration • Regulation • Revenue & Taxation
Hospitality & Tourism	Lodging • Recreation, Amusements & Attractions • Restaurants & Food/Beverage Services • Travel & Tourism
Human Services	Consumer Services • Counseling & Mental Health Services • Early Childhood Development & Services • Family & Community Services • Personal Care Services
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	Correction Services • Emergency & Fire Management Services • Law Enforcement Services • Legal Services • Security & Protective Services
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	Agribusiness Systems • Animal Systems • Environmental Service Systems • Food Products & Processing Systems • Natural Resources Systems • Plant Systems • Power, Structural & Technical Systems

Early Childhood

It is never too early to begin intentional career awareness activities. Families, teachers, and caregivers can help young children develop foundational knowledge around jobs and careers to expand their view of possibilities beyond their immediate environment. Early childhood is a time when children learn through play; by incorporating career-related themes they will begin to see possible futures.

 Legislatively Required Recommended

Early Childhood - Career Awareness

Target 1: Career Zones

Introduce students and families to the six Michigan career zones.

Target 2: Career Awareness

Connect learning to Michigan career zones through career awareness activities.

Target 3: Family Engagement

Engage students and families in classroom and out-of-school activities to support career awareness.

“Children can only aspire to future pathways in which they see their gender, race/ethnicity, and disabilities reflected. For this reason, beginning in preschool, children need opportunities to see themselves represented in a wide range of occupations.”

[Condition of Career Readiness in the United States, Coalition for Career Development Center \(2022\)](#)

Six Career Zones



Early Childhood Targets Career Awareness	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
<p>Target 1: Career Zones Introduce students and families to the six Michigan career zones.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize play, imagination, and fantasy to understand the world of work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite families to participate in the classroom and provide take-home activities. Provide opportunities for dramatic play activities with a wide range of career-related uniforms and props (Indicator 1a). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of exposure opportunities offered throughout the year
<p>Target 2: Career Awareness Connect learning to Michigan career zones through career awareness activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate career language when utilizing supportive strategies as suggested in the Early Childhood Standards of Quality 2022. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan opportunities for children to explore, investigate, and ask questions about the world of work (Indicator 1b). “Wonder” aloud and model the process of gathering information about jobs in the community (Indicator 1c). Read career-related books to promote conversations about jobs and dispel career stereotypes (Indicator 2c). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of activities that include career language and/or examples
<p>Target 3: Family Engagement Engage students and families in classroom and out-of-school activities to support career awareness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide families with opportunities in the classroom and beyond to explore careers in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize events such as “Touch a Truck” and include a Career Awareness component, such as matching the worker to the truck coloring sheet (Indicator 5b). Offer a library or list of career-related children’s books for families to borrow or purchase to extend learning at home (Indicator 5a). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of families who participated in events Number of times career zone information was presented to families

Elementary

Career awareness at the elementary level helps students develop a sense of self, discover an awareness of personal interests and strengths, and explore the world of work beyond jobs held by family members. The goal is to provide students with a wide range of experiences that build confidence, challenge job stereotypes, and expand their view of the immense possibilities.

⚖️ Legislatively Required Recommended

Elementary - Career Awareness ⚖️

Target 1: Career Zones

Familiarize students and families with the six Michigan career zones and provide opportunities for career discovery.

Target 2: Academic Connections

Connect academic content to Michigan career zones and embed across curriculum.

Target 3: Career Awareness

Engage students in career awareness activities.

Target 4: Family Engagement

Provide family engagement opportunities including out-of-school activities to support career awareness.

“Through career awareness children become knowledgeable about themselves, other people, and the world of work and workers. Career awareness experiences enable students to accommodate and assimilate accurate information about themselves and other people into their thinking.”

How Early Is Too Early to Begin Life Career Planning? The Importance of the Elementary School Years. *Journal of Career Development.*

Six Career Zones



Elementary Targets Career Awareness	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
Building Level Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a culture of career awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize curriculum mapping across grades to assign career zones to specific grades to ensure equal exposure. • Provide time for staff to add a career twist to the current classroom activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours of professional development dedicated to career development
Target 1: Career Zones Familiarize students and families with the six Michigan career zones and provide opportunities for career discovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize community to share about careers. • Expose students to jobs beyond their immediate environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite guest speakers to share about their job and to lead career-related projects. • Take career-related field trips. • Introduce a career zone each month in the parent newsletter; include characteristics of the skills in each zone that families may see in their child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of events or interactions that include career zone information • Family survey results
Target 2: Academic Connection Connect academic content to Michigan career zones and embed it across the curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate career awareness into academic content. • Challenge gender stereotypes about jobs and school subjects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate a book list of career-related stories. • Use Michigan eLibrary resources. • Design project-based learning with intentional career connections using the MiSTEM Toolbox. • Meet role models from different careers to address school subject and job stereotypes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of intentional connections identified by content area or grade • Student survey results
Target 3: Career Awareness Engage students in career awareness activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional and targeted activities that provide an awareness of career zones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize classroom jobs to create a mock workplace. • Implement a job title challenge where students search for job titles at home, school, and in the community and classify by career zone. • Utilize career games for brain breaks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of activities per classroom related to careers • Student survey results

Elementary Targets Career Awareness	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
<p>Target 4: Family Engagement Provide family engagement opportunities, including out-of-school activities, to support career awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host career awareness activities for families and provide extension opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with organizations to provide out-of-school time career related activities. Organize a family game night that connects academics to careers. Share K-12 outreach programming with families. Share career zone extension activities for home use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of events hosted Percentage of family participation Parent survey results



Middle School

Middle school is the perfect time for career exploration, self-discovery, experiential learning opportunities and seeing the relevancy between learning and future careers. Rather than locking in a specific career choice, middle school exploration allows students to consider possible roles for their future selves.

⚖️ Legislatively Required Recommended

Middle School - Career Exploration ⚖️

Target 1: Career Clusters

Introduce the 17 Michigan career clusters to students and families.

Target 2: Academic Connections

Connect academic content in all classes to the Michigan career clusters and embed across curriculum.

Target 3: Career Exploration

Acquire career, postsecondary, and employment knowledge.

Target 4: Family Engagement

Provide family engagement opportunities to support career exploration.

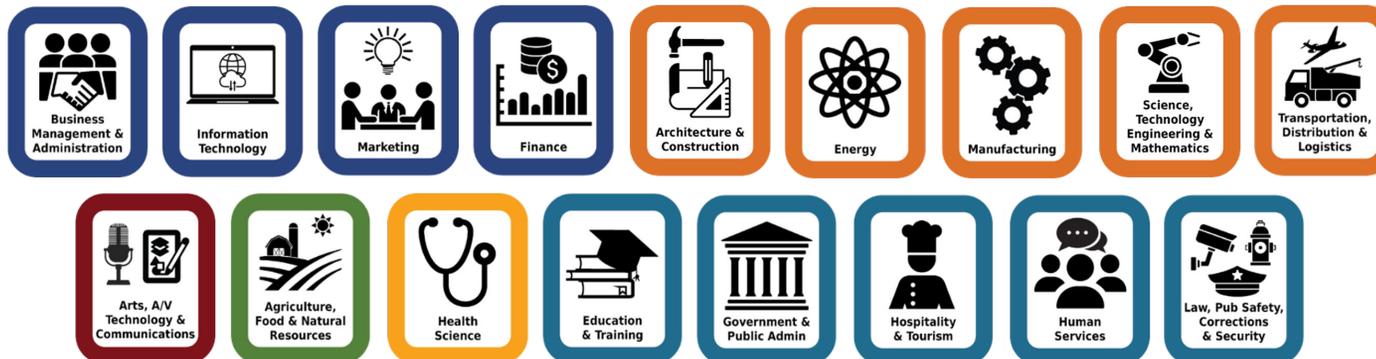
Target 5: Career Interests

Use inventories to generate self-awareness and identify personal motivations related to work, income, and lifestyle.

Target 6: Career Planning

Initiate an Educational Development Plan (EDP) and provide orientation to the purpose of the Talent Portfolio; review and revise each year.

Seventeen Career Clusters



They can't be what they can't see.

“Research has identified middle school as a time when students can benefit the most from career exploration, a process of building self-awareness, learning about potential careers, and developing a plan for reaching future goals.”

Career Exploration in Middle School: Setting Students on the Path to Success

Middle School Targets Career Exploration	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
Building Level Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and prioritize a culture of career exploration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District collaboration to create the EDP form and process. • Provide work time for teachers to collaborate and to identify how to include a career component in current lessons. • Train staff to utilize career exploration software and electronic resources. • Hold school-wide events like assemblies, career days, and project showcases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours of professional development embedding career exploration across the curriculum • Number of school-wide events related to career development
Target 1: Career Clusters Introduce the 17 Michigan career clusters to students and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review career zones and expand to include career clusters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a pacing plan to transition from zones to clusters. • Determine related activities by grade band or teacher team. • Organize cluster-specific events such as field trips, industry tours, or job shadows. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of touchpoints, activities, or interactions with each cluster

Middle School Targets Career Exploration	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
<p>Target 2: Academic Connections Connect academic content in all classes to the Michigan career clusters and embed it across the curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate career readiness, exploration, and relevancy into academic subject matter. Align class standards to employability skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use career-related reading materials to enhance instruction and for student book lists. Utilize project-based learning to solve real-world problems, explore careers, and develop employability skills. Expose students to skills relevant to the workplace by aligning emotional, technical, and academic skills to the class standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of career-related resources Hours of professional development to implement the strategies Number of student projects completed
<p>Target 3: Career Exploration Acquire career, postsecondary, and employment knowledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare possible careers by conducting research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access the Occupational Outlook Handbook to explore occupations, job skills, work environment, education/training, pay, and job outlook. Utilize career exploration software. Engage with guest speakers, participate in career fairs, and visit CTE programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career exploration software usage data Number of events related to exploration Student survey data
<p>Target 4: Family Engagement Provide family engagement opportunities to support career exploration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer intentional opportunities for families, mentors, and community networks to support students' career development journey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host a family night featuring career development events/activities. Share and explain the student's EDP at a student-led conference. Invite parents and industry professionals to share about their careers by participating in career days, career chats and/or class projects. Share K-12 outreach programming with families, such as MCWT.org. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of events hosted Percentage of family participation Parent survey Number of participating industry partners

Middle School Targets Career Exploration	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
<p>Target 5: Career Interests Use inventories to generate self-awareness and identify personal motivations related to work, income, and lifestyle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students identify interests, skills, abilities, and values, and consider possible future selves and the vast range of career possibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the O*NET Interest Profiler or other personal interest inventory. Implement interests, skills, and work values interests, skills, and work values assessments as part of self-discovery, such as those found at CareerOneStop. Counsel and assist students in interpreting results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of inventories completed by students Percentage of self-awareness activities Time spent assisting students with self-discovery
<p>Target 6: Career Planning Initiate an Educational Development Plan (EDP) and provide orientation to the purpose of the Talent Portfolio; review and revise each year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a career development process with fidelity. Communicate the importance and purpose of the EDP and Talent Portfolio to students and families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize a career counselor, navigator, or mentor to introduce students to the EDP process and purpose. Develop Talent Portfolio requirements and identify an electronic platform. Host a career workshop to explain the EDP and Talent Portfolio to students and families. Guide students and families in the course selection process to connect career goals with classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of EDPs initiated in 7th grade Percentage of EDPs completed in 8th grade Number of students and families given guidance on class selection

“Many strong career exploration programs are built in a whole-school model, where exposing students to future options becomes part of the school’s mission and daily routine.”

[Career Exploration in the Middle Grades-A Playbook for Educators](#)

High School

In high school, students update self-assessments, refine evolving career goals, and engage in deeper career exploration. Students shift to a more focused pathway that aligns with their career aspirations and increases their knowledge by researching labor market demand and postsecondary opportunities. This is the time for building pathway specific skills, employability skills, and cultivating a Talent Portfolio which will showcase proficiencies, certifications, experiences, and accomplishments. With guidance and support, students are empowered to make decisions, take action, and achieve their goals.

⚖️ Legislatively Required Recommended

High School - Career Preparation ⚖️

Target 1: Career Clusters and Pathways

Provide students and families with opportunities for in-depth exploration of the Michigan career clusters and the related career pathways.

Target 2: Academic Connections

Connect academic content in all classes to Michigan career clusters and career pathways and embed them across the curriculum to establish relevancy.

Target 3: Career Preparation

Increase student knowledge about career options, job outlooks, training, and education opportunities; demonstrate career-ready practices (also referred to as employability skills or soft skills).

Target 4: Family Engagement

Provide family engagement opportunities to support career preparation.

Target 5: Career Assessments

Use career assessments to identify student interests, skills, aptitudes, and values and assist students in applying the results to their career goals.

Target 6: Career Planning

Assist students in making informed choices about education, career, and lifestyle options.

Target 7: Educational Development Plan (EDP)

Ensure students review and revise the [EDP](#) each year to identify evolving career development goals and related academic requirements, including [MI Merit Curriculum](#) requirements that may be fulfilled through [career and technical education](#). [MCL380.1278a](#), [MCL380.1278b](#)

Target 8: Talent Portfolio

Gather and record information in a Talent Portfolio to showcase the student experiences, proficiencies, certifications, and accomplishments to demonstrate marketable skills to a prospective employer or admissions committee.

“Career ready describes the capacity of young people to approach labor market entry and imagine career progression from an informed and confident perspective based on critical engagement with the world of work.”

[What is Career Readiness? Coalition for Career Development Center](#)

High School Targets Career Preparation	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
Building Level Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and prioritize a culture of Career Preparation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ career counselors, navigators, or mentors to assist students with career decision-making, planning, and course selection. • Provide work time for staff to insert a career component in current lessons. • Hold school-wide events such as assemblies, career days, and project showcases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of staff employed who are dedicated to career development • Amount of time spent developing personalized education and career plans with students • Number of events focused on career development
Target 1: Career Clusters/Pathways Provide students and families with opportunities for in-depth exploration of the Michigan career clusters and related career pathways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review career clusters and introduce specific career pathways to assist students in narrowing career goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect students with career investigation resources such as Pathfinder. • Offer regional career days, job fairs, business tours, and other career-related field trips. • Partner with CTE programs, postsecondary, and businesses to provide exploration of career options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of career-related events offered to students and families • Percentage of student and family participation

High School Targets Career Preparation	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
<p>Target 2: Academic Connections Connect academic content in all classes to Michigan career clusters and career pathways and embed across the curriculum to establish relevancy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed career-related activities or a career component into current lessons across the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize MI Merit Curriculum flexibility options to meet graduation requirements. Encourage academic teachers to connect content area curriculum to careers by participating in externships or other career-related professional development. Update classroom activities to connect with careers. (i.e., create a resume for a character in a book and role-play an interview as that character). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of students utilizing MMC options Number of hours of professional development Number of activities updated to include a career component
<p>Target 3: Career Preparation Increase student knowledge about career options, job outlooks, training, and education opportunities; demonstrate career ready practices (also referred to as employability skills or soft skills).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist students with meaningful job and career research. Implement intentional employability training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students examine labor market information to identify regional in-demand, high-wage opportunities. Conduct informational interviews of industry partners in a chosen field. Connect students with career investigation links, tools, and resources such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook and Career Development Resources. Provide students with the opportunity to explore and demonstrate career ready practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of events related to career preparation Student survey results Data reflecting student behavior related to key skills needed for workplace success
<p>Target 4: Family Engagement Provide family engagement opportunities to support career preparation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer intentional opportunities for families, mentors, and community networks to support students' career preparation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host career preparation activities and events. Provide information about education and training options. Offer extended learning experiences. Establish networking opportunities with business and community organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of families participating in career activities or events Parent survey results Number of community partners involved in networking

High School Targets Career Preparation	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
<p>Target 5: Career Assessments Use career assessments to identify student interests, skills, aptitudes, and values and assist students in applying the results to their career goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use multiple assessments to match interests and skill sets to career fields and update evolving career goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize career exploration software or online resources and assessments such as My Next Move. Guide students in career decision-making and goal-setting based on updated assessment results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact time utilizing career software Percentage of students utilizing career assessments Number of students or student contact time documented in career counselor or navigator logs
<p>Target 6: Career Planning Assist students in making informed choices about education, career, and lifestyle options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement individual career counseling for each student at each grade level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a grade-level plan for career counseling using career navigators, counselors, and Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) staff. Meet with students regularly to review and update education and career goals. Offer college and industry visits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselor or career navigator log Number of student interactions around career goals or self-awareness activities Number of college and/or industry visits



High School Targets Career Preparation	Sample Strategies	Related Activity Examples	Suggested Metrics
<p>Target 7: Educational Development Plan (EDP) Ensure students review and revise the EDP during each year to identify evolving career development goals and the related academic requirements including MI Merit Curriculum requirements that may be fulfilled through career and technical education. MCL 380.1278a, MCL 380.1278b</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the EDP annually and reinforce the relevance of continuous education and career planning. Utilize EDP results and career goals to guide student course selection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with students to review and update education and career plans. Gather EDP data to map course offerings and elective options to meet student needs. Invite guest speakers to share their career journey and how it evolved over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of completed and updated EDPs by grade level (see sample MICIP data template) Number of new courses offered or courses by cluster Student survey results
<p>Target 8: Talent Portfolio Gather and record information in a Talent Portfolio to showcase the student experiences, proficiencies, certifications, and accomplishments to demonstrate marketable skills to a prospective employer or admissions committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist students in building work experiences, refining talents, and honing abilities needed in future careers. Capture evidence of skills and experiences to showcase student accomplishments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate how community service, extracurricular activities, clubs, and hobbies are valuable skill-building opportunities. Engage students in work-based learning. Offer industry-recognized credentials and explain how they relate to college credit. Institute mock interviews with business volunteers. Implement an intentional plan for students to cultivate a rich talent portfolio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student survey results Student participation data Students participating in work-based learning Earned credentials data Percentage of students with a completed talent portfolio

Postsecondary

Career preparation does not end in the final year of high school; it is an ongoing practice that continues throughout adulthood. As students transition into postsecondary education and training, they continue to refine and adapt their career goals to prepare for employment and continued advancement.

⚖️ Legislatively Required Recommended

Postsecondary - Career Training Beyond High School

Target 1: Personalized Career Activities

Create a personalized plan based on guided pathways to connect student interests, strengths, and goals to postsecondary options.

Target 2: Career Planning

Include career planning and academic advising in the guided postsecondary student experience; educate families about their role in the student's success.

Target 3: Career Preparation

Identify and direct students in resume building opportunities including student life activities, volunteer experiences, internships, networking, and development of employability skills.

Target 4: Talent Portfolio Evolution

Recognize the high school transcript, credentials earned, and prior learning as an important component of the student's academic experience.

While colleges are taking steps to better support the underprepared students who arrive on their doorsteps, they are also strengthening connections with K-12 to align expectations for college readiness and build awareness of the importance of Guided Pathways before students leave high school.

[Guided Pathways, Michigan Center for Student Success](#)

Postsecondary Career Training Beyond High School	Sample Strategies	Postsecondary Led Activities	Employer Led Activities
<p>Postsecondary and Employer Collaboration Build collaboration between postsecondary institutions and business and industry leading to partnerships for student success.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership to offer U.S. Department of Labor registered apprenticeships and internship opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate relationships with employers to give students opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and job placement. Engage business and industry partners in career and technical education (CTE) programs at the postsecondary level. Develop best practice-informed guidance for advisors and counselors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with postsecondary to provide flexible, blended learning options and tuition reimbursement, or create a formal employer-led or union-led learning program. Promote a climate where all employees have opportunities to reskill or upskill.
<p>Target 1: Personalized Career Activities Create a personalized plan based on guided pathways to connect student interests, strengths, and goals to postsecondary options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and communicate guided pathways and work with students to align academic majors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect student majors with related guided pathways in the college catalog. Host guided pathway exploration events. Develop marketing materials to promote jobs and employment by guided pathways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide self-assessment information for employees to identify strengths, weaknesses, interests, and values. Establish career exploration options within the workplace.
<p>Target 2: Career Planning Include career planning and academic advising in the guided postsecondary student experience; educate families about their role in the student's success.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide academic advising for all students and require academic advising for new students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer parent/family sessions on how to support students during new student orientation. Develop a process for connecting undecided students with career services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist employees in developing a career action plan with written strategies for short- and long-term career goals. Advise employees of advancement opportunities, provide succession coaching, and have examples of dedicated career pathways.

Postsecondary Career Training Beyond High School	Sample Strategies	Postsecondary Led Activities	Employer Led Activities
<p>Target 3: Career Preparation Identify and direct students in resume-building opportunities, including student life activities, volunteer experiences, internships, networking, and development of employability skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer activities focused on Career Preparation such as mock interviews and resume development assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with student organizations to offer student-led career preparation events. Connect students with employers for internships, apprenticeships, and volunteer opportunities. Establish opportunities for students to shadow and connect with employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide trainings on specific employability and managerial skills. Establish onboarding procedures, formal mentorship programs, and provide skill coaching. Send employees to offsite skill development workshops and ask the employee to share the learning outcome with other staff.
<p>Target 4: Talent Portfolio Evolution Recognize the high school transcript, credentials earned, and prior learning as an important component of the student's academic experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with academic advisors to ensure the high school transcript, prior learning, and credentials are used as part of the college academic advising experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training for academic advisors on digital badges and how to use high school transcripts for multiple measures placement. Host portfolio presentation workshops highlighting potential credit opportunities and/or career search resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage employees to continue to maintain professional portfolios, websites, or social media sites. Provide opportunities for recognition of professional achievements, and to allow for advancement within the company.

National Resources

The **O*NET Program** is the nation's primary source of occupational information. Resources include the [Career Exploration Tools](#), [O*NET OnLine](#), [O*NET Interest Profiler™](#), and [My Next Move](#).

The [Career Exploration Tools](#) are a set of self-directed career exploration/assessment tools.

[O*NET OnLine](#) features searches for finding occupations, job duties, related activities, soft skills, and technology skills by career. In addition, this page includes the ability to browse by O*Net data and includes the O*Net Resource Center with links to more resources.

[O*NET Interest Profiler™](#) is a vocational interest inventory designed for use in educational planning, career exploration, and career guidance.

The [My Next Move](#) website will help answer the question "What do you want to do for a living?" This site allows for career searches by keyword and by industry. Information can also be searched by career cluster, career outlook, by interest, and according to required job preparation.

My Future™ helps young adults plan their next steps in life by bringing together the most recently available information about colleges, careers and military service opportunities from the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Defense, Education and Labor. Developed by the Department of Defense, myfuture.com™ features career, college and military content, allowing users to explore all possibilities and gain insight into each option.

The **Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)** is a searchable online publication with occupation information including an occupation summary, what they do, work environment, how to become one, pay, job outlook, state and area data, and similar occupations. Searches include links to [@CareerOneStop](#) day-in-the-life career videos. The OOH is published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and is also available on the app CareerInfo for iOS and Android devices.

CareerOneStop is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. Users can explore career options, find training and education information, and do job search planning. The brochure, infographic, and presentation below detail the resources and electronic tools available.

- [CareerOneStop Overview Brochure](#) (PDF)
- [CareerOneStop Infographic](#) (PDF)
- [CareerOneStop PowerPoint](#) (PPT)

Career Advisors

The [CareerOneStop Overview Video for Workforce Professionals](#) offers a quick tour of key CareerOneStop resources for career advisors and other workforce professionals. Complete [career advisor resources](#), including an on-demand webinar series, step-by-step how-to guides, toolkits, and curriculum. The [GetMyFuture](#) website is designed for youth ages 16-24 to explore careers, education, and employment. Check out the [GetMyFuture Brochure](#) (PDF) and [GetMyFuture Poster](#) (PDF) for more details.

Career Assessment Toolkit

Self-assessment is a key component of career exploration. The toolkit resources include:

- [Career Assessment Toolkit Presentation](#)
- [Career Assessment Toolkit URL List](#)
- [Interest Assessment](#)
- [Skills Matcher](#)
- [Work Values Matcher](#)

Explore Careers

Visit the [Occupation Profile](#) to see details and watch a career video about any of more than 900 careers. Get wages, employment trends, skills needed, and more for any occupation. Searchable data reports include:

- Fastest-Growing Careers
- Careers with the Most Openings
- Careers with the Largest Employment
- Careers with Declining Employment

Credential Center

Utilize the [CareerOneStop Credential Finder](#) to search by certification name, organization, industry, or occupation.

Mobile Apps

The [Mobile Tools Brochure](#) (PDF) provides an overview of the new CareerOneStop mobile tools.

Apprenticeship USA is the one-stop source to connect career seekers, employers, and education partners with apprenticeship resources. Discover apprenticeships across industries, how programs are started by employers, and how to become an apprentice. Check out the [Explore Apprenticeships Fact Sheet](#) for more information.

Michigan Resources

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) - Workforce Development's

Pure Michigan Talent Connect - Career Exploration ([mitalent.org](#)) website includes information for the job seeker, employer, career exploration, veteran, and skilled trades. [Pathfinder.mitalent.org](#) is Michigan's free online career exploration tool that provides information on in-demand careers and the degrees or credentials needed to pursue them. Pathfinder helps students, their parents and guidance staff to make informed choices about educational and career options, as well as help with the creation of educational development plans. Find out more about how to use this tool by visiting the [How It Works](#) page or reviewing the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). The use of this tool assists districts in fulfilling the requirements of [MCL380.1293](#).

Michigan's Hot 50 Job Outlook includes high-demand, high-wage careers that show a favorable mix of long-term job growth, projected annual job openings, and median wages. This site includes a printable poster as well as links to [Michigan Works! Association](#) and [Michigan Labor Market Information](#).

#GoOpen Michigan is a library of openly licensed educational resources shared by Michigan educators. Free resources, lesson plans, assessments, templates, and other materials are shared on [#GoOpen Michigan](#). Explore career development resources by searching the MCDM curated collection or by using [#MCDM](#) and [#careerdevelopment](#). Educators can also discover content by using related grade band or subject matter hashtags.

Mel.org Career Awareness eResources

The career development resources in the [Michigan eLibrary \(MeL.org\)](#) are free to all citizens in Michigan. They include high quality digital content that is easy to share via all learning management systems and are simple to use.

- The [PebbleGo](#) resource designed for K-2 students introduces young learners to several jobs in the community.
- [Primary Search](#), the resource for elementary publications such as Scholastic News, Science World, Weekly Reader, and Zoobooks, gives students the opportunity to read about real people doing real jobs around the world.
- The [eBook K-8 Collection](#) has hundreds of eBooks that can be searched for by individual careers or military pursuits.
- The [eBook High School Collection](#) has hundreds of eBooks that can be searched for by individual careers.

[EBSCO LearningExpress](#) allows students to take a deep dive into several careers, explaining in detail everything there is to know about a particular job.

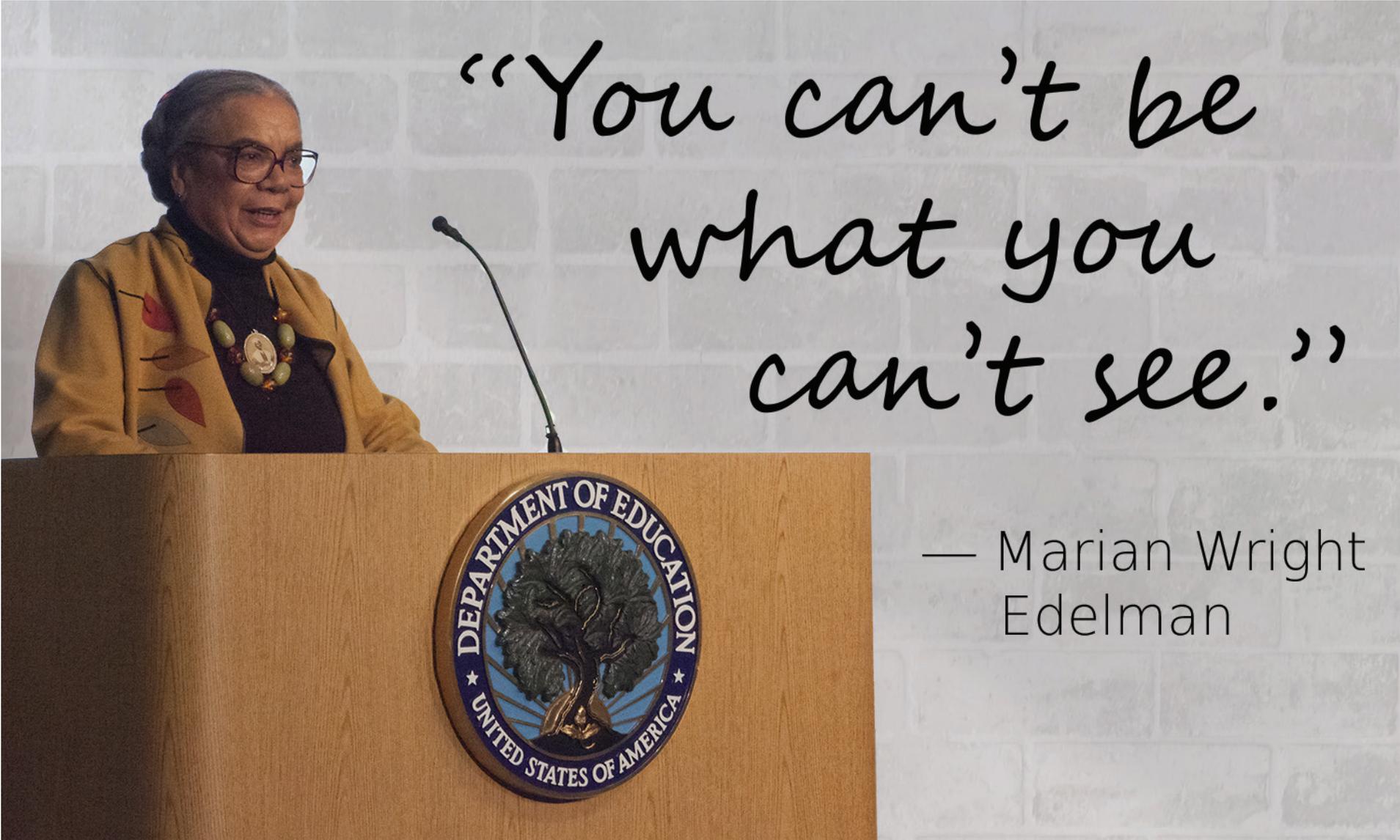
- [Prepare for College](#)
 - ACT, AP, PSAT, SAT practice tests
 - School Finder
 - Scholarship Finder
- [Career Exploration](#)
 - Career Test Prep
 - Enter the Military
 - ASVAB practice tests
 - Build Workplace Skills
- [Job & Career Accelerator](#)
 - Career Exploration
 - » Hundreds of video clips showing real people on the job
 - » Career Search Tool
 - » Current wages & trends
 - » Criteria (academics & skills) needed for individual jobs
 - Career eBook Library

The [Michigan Career Development Association \(MichCDA\)](#) offers a cultivated list of career development links and resources on the [MCDCA resource page](#). For career development professionals, the National Career Development Association has collected, organized, curated, and published a listing of free, current, and credible Internet resources which can be found at the [NCDA Internet Sites for Career Planning](#).

[Michigan Virtual](#) offers free courses for teachers to learn more about career development.

- [Elementary Career Awareness eResources in MeL](#) (2 SCECHs)
- [Secondary Career Preparation eResources in MeL](#) (3 SCECHs)
- [#GoOpen:Open Educational Resources in Michigan](#) (4 SCECHs)

The [Michigan Career Development Model webpage](#) includes more information, resources, and graphics that can be downloaded.

A photograph of Marian Wright Edelman speaking at a wooden podium. She is wearing glasses and a yellow jacket with a red flower design. The podium features the seal of the Department of Education, United States of America, which includes a tree. The background is a light-colored brick wall. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a quote in a black, handwritten-style font.

“You can’t be
what you
can’t see.”

— Marian Wright
Edelman

[The Michigan Department of Education does not discriminate](#) on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.