



NEVADA
Department of
Education



CCR DIPLOMA COUNSELOR GUIDE

Advancing Student Success
with the College and Career Ready Diploma



UPDATED JUNE 2025

CCR DIPLOMA COUNSELOR GUIDE

(Excerpt)

Suggested citation: Nevada Department of Education. (2025). *Advancing student success with the College and Career Ready Diploma: CCR Diploma counselor guide*.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Nevada Department of Education extends its sincere appreciation to Ingrid Cepeda, Marina McHatton, and Anna Reynolds for their leadership, expertise, and dedication to the development of this guide. We also wish to thank the many middle and high school counselors across Nevada whose thoughtful feedback and real-world insights informed and strengthened this resource. Special thanks to the project team at WestEd for their consultation and collaboration throughout this process. These collective efforts, grounded in a deep commitment to the success of every student, have helped create a guide that will empower learners to achieve their college and career goals.

MIDDLE SCHOOL COLLEGE AND CAREER READY (GRADES 6-8)

Middle school is a crucial period for students to begin exploring their academic and career interests. College and career exploration in middle school has been shown to be effective in improving student motivation, academic achievement, career readiness, and long-term postsecondary success. The early exposure to career pathways and college planning helps students make informed decisions about their education and career goals.¹⁶

Counselors and College and Career Ready team educators guide students in identifying potential pathways and developing essential skills through extracurricular and hands-on experiences. This phase emphasizes foundational academic planning and durable skills (soft skills) development, preparing students for informed decision-making as they approach high school.

Guiding Questions

1. What subjects or activities spark your interest, and how might they connect to a future career?
2. Which skills would you like to develop in middle school?

¹⁶ Lapan, R. T., Tucker, B., Kim, S. K., & Kosciulek, J. (2017); Schaefer, M. B., & Rivera, L. M. (2012).

MIDDLE SCHOOL CCR STRANDS	KEY STUDENT TOPICS	
 ACADEMIC AND CAREER PLANNING	1	What's a CCR Diploma & Why Does It Matter for Your Future? ↗ Review state graduation requirements and understand the importance of course credits and GPA
	2	Discover Your Dream Jobs: What Careers Match Your Interests? ↗ Take career interest and aptitude surveys and navigate career exploration platforms
	3	High School Choices: Exploring Your Path to Success ↗ Review high school course options and pathways and begin a 4-year plan
 SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERIENCE	1	Level Up Your Future—Fun Hobbies & Activities That Make a Difference ↗ Access and participate in a range of hobbies and extracurricular activities
	2	Boost Your Skills: Track Your Growth with Reflection & Journals ↗ Practice and develop soft skills and self-assessment habits such as reflective journals and logs
	3	Level Up Your Learning: Join Fun & Helpful Academic Programs ↗ Exposure to/enrollment in academic support and enrichment programs
 POSTSECONDARY PREPARATION AND SUPPORT	1	Plan for Success—Exploring Your Future College & Career Pathways ↗ Learn about the broad spectrum of postsecondary options and pathways
	2	Ready, Set, High School! Exploring Your Next Big Adventure ↗ Explore opportunities at local high schools
	3	Beyond the Classroom: Exploring Careers Through Industry Tours ↗ Explore local industry/professional workplaces and businesses



Academic and Career Planning Middle School (Grades 6-8)

This section focused on academic and career planning that occurs in middle school serves as a cornerstone for students' journeys toward becoming self-aware, goal-oriented, and prepared for the multifaceted challenges of college and career paths. By planning in middle school, students have the opportunity to engage in reflection and discovery about their academic and career interests while gaining a deep understanding of the opportunities and pathways available both in high school and beyond. Through these early academic and career planning activities, the toolkit encourages counselors to help students build a solid foundation for making informed decisions, setting realistic goals, and preparing for the transition into high school with confidence and clarity.

Middle school students should:

- ✓ Understand the CCR diploma, its requirements, benefits and opportunities.

TOPIC 1

- ✓ Explore and identify interests related to potential career paths. **TOPIC 2**

- ✓ Be aware of high school options (courses, diplomas, pathways) and how to pursue them. **TOPIC 3**



TOPIC

1

What's a CCR Diploma & Why Does It Matter for Your Future?

Within this topic students review state CCR Diploma Graduation requirements, learn the importance of credits, and understand how GPA impacts their educational outcomes and future opportunities. This knowledge base is crucial for ensuring students meet graduation criteria and strategically plan their educational journey.

Role of the Counselor and CCR Team

- To support this endeavor, counselors and CCR team members will communicate the intricacies of high school graduation requirements, electives, and CTE courses. By demonstrating the connection between these decisions and potential career outcomes, counselors foster informed decision-making among students.
- Students can be supported in this process via group workshops in classrooms or grade-level meetings, in 1:1 counseling sessions, as well as alongside their caregivers in family engagement events:
 - Lead informational sessions about graduation and CCR diploma requirements
 - Facilitate discussion and meaning-making about key terms and requirements
 - Walkthrough and guide students to develop a personalized checklist and plan

Hands On Activity: **Build Your CCR Pathway**

This group activity provides an opportunity to learn at-a-glance information about the CCR diploma using the CCR Diploma Information Sheet, with details about the course of study and required credits and GPA, required assessments, diplomas, seals and endorsements pertaining to the CCR Diploma.

OBJECTIVE

Engage middle school students in understanding the Nevada College & Career Ready (CCR) Diploma by making the diploma requirements interactive and relatable.

DURATION

15-20 minutes

MATERIALS

- [CCR Diploma Requirements Sheet](#)

Step 1 BUILDING YOUR CCR DIPLOMA PUZZLE (10-12 MINUTES)



Setup

1. Create requirement cards for each CCR Diploma requirement, such as:
 - **Core subjects** (English, Math, Science, Social Studies)
 - **Advanced coursework options** (AP, IB, CTE, Dual Enrollment, Work-Based Learning)
 - **Endorsements** (College-Ready, Career-Ready)
 - **GPA requirement** (3.25)
 - **Assessments** (ACT, Civics Test)
 - **State Seals** (Biliteracy, STEM, Financial Literacy, etc.)



Activity

1. Divide students into small groups (2-4 students per group).
2. Each group receives a set of CCR Diploma puzzle pieces (each piece represents a diploma requirement).
3. Challenge: Their task is to correctly assemble the “CCR Diploma Puzzle” by placing the pieces in the right categories.
 - Example categories: Required Courses, Assessments, Advanced Coursework, Endorsements & Seals.
4. Once completed, each group explains their reasoning, discussing which pieces were easy or difficult to place.

Step 2

REAL LIFE CONNECTIONS

(5-8 MINUTES)



Facilitator Questions

- Which part of the diploma requirements surprised you the most?
- What part of the CCR diploma do you think would be the hardest to achieve? The easiest?
- How do you think earning this diploma could help you in college or a career?
- Connect to real-life examples of students who used CCR diploma endorsements to get scholarships, college credit, or jobs.



Reflection

- Ask students to design their “ideal high school path” using a blank roadmap template.
- They choose:
 - The classes they’d take
 - The endorsements they’d pursue
 - The skills they’d gain for their career

Why This Works for Middle Schoolers:

- ✓ Makes requirements interactive instead of just listing them.
- ✓ Encourages collaborative problem solving and critical thinking.
- ✓ Allows students to personalize their learning pathway while making real-world connections.



TOPIC

2

Discover Your Dream Jobs: What Careers Match Your Interests?

Within this topic, students engage in career interest and aptitude surveys assess their skills, interests, and preferences, matching them with careers that align with their strengths and goals.¹⁷ Surveys can provide valuable insights, helping students understand themselves better and explore how their choices connect to various career paths. To deepen their exploration, students should engage with online career exploration platforms to research a wide range of career opportunities and pathways.

Role of the Counselor and CCR Team

- Educators can support and guide students to access, navigate, and make meaning from the various survey tools and platforms in classroom and workshop settings.
- In addition team members can collaborate to develop and lead career days/fairs and guest speaker events during the school day as well as in family engagement spaces. Through their support, students can deeply engage with the material, enhancing their understanding and enthusiasm for future possibilities.

¹⁷ NDE's Guide to Work-Based Learning.



Hands On Activity: Future You & Your Career Path

OBJECTIVE

Help middle school students envision their future careers and explore how their high school choices can support their goals using the My Next Move tool.

DURATION

15-20 minutes

MATERIALS

- Writing materials
- Sticky notes, index card or other medium

Step 1

FUTURE YOU VISUALIZATION (5-7 MINUTES)



Activity

1. Ask students to imagine themselves at high school graduation and think about their future.
2. Provide prompts:
 - *What career or job interests you?*
 - *Where would you like to be living?*
 - *Do you see yourself going to college, learning a trade, or starting a business?*
 - *What skills do you think you'll need to be successful?*



Engagement

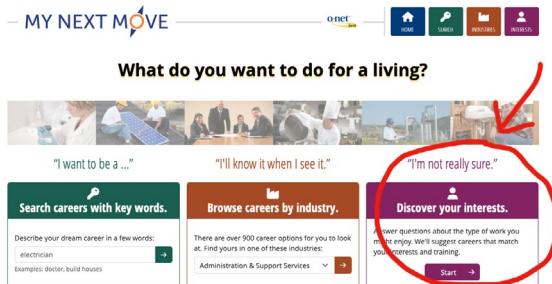
1. Have students write or draw their ideal future self on a sticky note, index card or other medium.

Step 2

EXPLORE CAREER OPTIONS WITH MY NEXT MOVE (10 MINUTES)



1. Introduce My Next Move (<https://www.mynextmove.org>) an interactive career exploration tool.
2. Have students navigate to the website individually or in small groups to explore the 'Discover your interest' section of the website by clicking start ->.



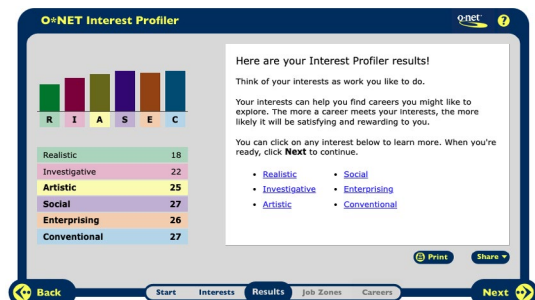
3. You will find this screen (the O'Net interest profiler), click on Next button:



4. The **O*NET Interest Profiler** has 60 questions about work activities that some people do on their jobs. Read each question carefully and decide how you would feel about doing each type of work:



5. Follow the prompts responding to all 60 kinds of things that people do at various jobs.
 - a. Once you finish, you will see your O*Net Interest Profiler. You can share or print your interest profiler which can help you find careers you might like to explore. The more a career meets your interests, the more likely it will be satisfying and rewarding to you.
 - b. Check out the link for your top interest score (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional). Does that interest sound like you? If not, check out another top interest.



- c. Now move to the **Job Zone** by clicking **Next** to connect your interest to careers. To explore this next section, you will need to think about how much education, training and experience you will need.
- d. Consider the 'Future You' you were considering at the beginning of this conversation. Did you envision yourself going to college? Starting a job? Each O*NET career is in one of five Job Zones, which are groups of careers that need the same level of experience, education, and training.
- e. Different careers need different amounts of preparation. You will be asked to pick a Job Zone. Using your Job Zone and your interests, the Interest Profiler will help you identify and explore careers that might be right for you.
- f. When picking your Job Zone, you can choose your:
 - **Current Job Zone**—choose the Job Zone that matches the kind of experience, education, and training you have now *OR*
 - **Future Job Zone**—choose the Job Zone that matches the amount of experience, education, and training you plan to get in the future.
- g. In both cases, your Job Zone will include careers that you might like to do.
- h. Don't worry about making the wrong choice; you can explore a different Job Zone later. Explore and learn more about the experience, education and training needed by clicking on the links.



Task

1. Each student chooses one career that interests them and writes down:
 - A brief description of the career.
 - One required skill or qualification.
 - One high school class or experience that could help them prepare.

Step 3

CONNECTING THE DOTS DISCUSSION

(5 MINUTES)



Activity

1. Students pair up and share their career choice and what they learned.
2. Facilitator asks:
 - *What surprised you about your career choice?*
 - *Did you find a new career option you hadn't considered?*
 - *What high school courses or experiences do you think will help you prepare for this path?*
3. Conclude by emphasizing how high school diploma pathways, endorsements, and electives can support different career goals.

Why This Works for Middle Schoolers:

- ✓ Encourages self-reflection and future planning.
- ✓ Introduces real-world career exploration tools.
- ✓ Connects career goals to high school preparation in a meaningful way.

Additional Ideas for career exploration:

- + [Middle School Career Conversations](#) - this tool to be used to create or enhance career discussion in advisory, CTE or general coursework.



Bonus Reflection

1. Ask students to complete a career interest survey.



TOPIC

3

High School Choices: Exploring Your Path to Success

Within this topic, students connect their career interest with the programs of study available at their local high schools. By discovering what high schools offer, students can begin or strengthen their plans for their next step. To deepen understanding of opportunities, students could also explore higher education programs that match the amount of experience, education, and training you plan to get in the future from the Future Job Zone activity in Topic 2.

Role of the Counselor and CCR Team

Educators can support students to set goals and deepen their high school/college/career awareness.

Hands On Activity: Jumpstart Your Future: Exploring High School Pathways & the CCR Diploma

OBJECTIVE

Help middle school students explore how Nevada's College & Career Ready (CCR) Diploma and local programs of study can connect to their career interests and set them up for future success.

DURATION

15-20 minutes

MATERIALS

- [Nevada Course Catalog 25-26](#)
- [CCR Diploma Academic Plan Template](#)

Step 1 CAREER CONNECTIONS RECAP (5-7 MINUTES)



1. Ask students to think back to their career interest exploration (Topic 2).
2. Provide prompts:
 - *What career stood out to you?*
 - *What skills does the career require?*
 - *Do you know what type of education or training is needed for the career?*



1. Have students write or draw their ideal future self on a sticky note, index card or other medium.
 - a. Have students share one career they explored and one thing that surprised them about it.
 - b. If available, display a few local labor market statistics to show in-demand careers in Nevada.
 - c. Transition into high school preparation:
"Now that you have an idea of careers that interest you, let's explore how high school programs and the CCR Diploma can help you get there!"

Step 2

DISCOVER LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

(10 MINUTES)



Setup

1. **Introduction to Local Programs:** Explain that high schools offer Programs of Study that align with different careers, including:

- **Career & Technical Education (CTE) pathways** (e.g., healthcare, business, IT, engineering, culinary arts).
- **Advanced coursework** (e.g., AP, IB, dual-credit college courses).
- **Work-based learning opportunities** (internships, apprenticeships).



Activity

1. Provide the [NDE CTE course catalog](#) and also refer to **local high school course catalogs** (or direct students to a school district website).
2. Students **match one of their career interests** to a local high school CTE program that could help them prepare for that field.
3. They write or discuss:
 - *What program could help them?*
 - *What skills would they learn?*
 - *How might it help them after high school?*

Step 3

BUILD YOUR CCR PATHWAY

(5-8 MINUTES)



Setup

1. **Reiterate the CCR Diploma:** Share that the **CCR Diploma** gives students a head start by preparing them for college and careers. Requirements include:

- ✓ Advanced coursework (AP, IB, dual-credit, or CTE).
- ✓ College-ready or career-ready endorsements.
- ✓ A 3.25 GPA.



Activity

1. **Students map their career pathway.**

Using the career from Topic 1 and Topic 2 (or another one), discover what courses you would take in high school to pursue this career:

- *What are the college-focused courses that you could take in high school?* (AP/IB/Dual Enrollment)
- *What are the career-focused courses that you could take in high school?* (CTE, Work-Based Learning)

2. Ask students to write down one question you have about pursuing a CCR Diploma.



Discussion

1. Ask students:

- *What excites you about the CCR Diploma?*
- *What questions do you have?*
- *How do you think this could help your future?*

Why This Works for Middle Schoolers:

- ✓ Connects previous learning (careers) to actionable high school plans
- ✓ Makes diploma pathways and programs of study tangible
- ✓ Encourages students to take ownership of their future



Skill Development and Exposure Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Engaging in extracurricular activities, clubs, and hands-on learning experiences during middle school plays a crucial role in shaping students' personal and academic growth. These experiences serve as a foundation for building essential skills, confidence, and real-world experience that will support their success in high school, college, and future careers. By participating in a variety of activities, students can explore their interests, develop soft skills such as communication and teamwork, and cultivate self-awareness through reflection and goal-setting. Additionally, access to academic support and enrichment programs enhances their learning, providing opportunities to challenge themselves and expand their knowledge. This section encourages students to take advantage of diverse opportunities that will help them discover their strengths, develop lifelong skills, and prepare for future success.

Middle school students should:

- ✓ Access and participate in a range of hobbies and extracurricular activities. **TOPIC 1**
- ✓ Practice and develop soft skills and self-assessment habits such as reflective journals and logs. **TOPIC 2**
- ✓ Have exposure to/enrollment in academic support and enrichment programs. **TOPIC 3**

Level Up Your Future—Fun Hobbies & Activities That Make a Difference

Engaging in extracurricular activities is essential for developing teamwork, leadership, and collaboration skills that support students' long-term success. By participating in community service projects, school clubs, and interest-based groups, students enhance their communication abilities and build meaningful connections. Additionally, publicizing local and school-based extracurricular opportunities ensures that students and caregivers are aware of various ways to get involved and strengthen their skills beyond the classroom.

Role of the Counselor and CCR Team

- To support this endeavor, counselors and CCR team members will provide community service requirements and/or opportunities to build teamwork and leadership skills, promote a variety of clubs, collaborative projects, and student interest groups during school hours and after school to foster skills in communication and collaboration and publicize extracurricular opportunities from the community and with various partners to students and caregivers
- Students can be supported in this process via group workshops in classrooms or grade-level meetings, in 1:1 counseling sessions, as well as alongside their caregivers in family engagement events:
 - Lead informational sessions about opportunities extracurricular activities, build soft skills and engage in academic and enrichment activities.
 - Facilitate discussion and meaning-making about key terms and opportunities.



Hands On Activity: Making a Difference - Teamwork & Leadership in Action

This group activity helps middle school students explore ways to give back to their community while building teamwork and leadership skills. Through interactive brainstorming and problem-solving challenges, students will discover local service opportunities, collaborate on creative solutions, and reflect on what it means to be a leader. By the end of the activity, they'll leave with actionable steps to make a positive impact in their school and beyond!

OBJECTIVES

- Help students discover ways to engage in community service.
- Build teamwork and leadership skills through collaborative projects.
- Inform students and caregivers about extracurricular opportunities.

DURATION

15-20 minutes

MATERIALS

- [Handout](#)
- List of local volunteer opportunities (e.g., school-based clubs, city programs, or nonprofit partnerships).

Step 1 WHAT'S IN YOUR COMMUNITY? (15 MIN)



1. **Warm-up** (5 minutes) - Ask students to brainstorm and list places in the community where they or their families go often (e.g., libraries, parks, food banks, senior centers, animal shelters).



1. **Small Group Discussion** (10 minutes)
 - Divide students into groups of 3-4 and assign each group a category (e.g., environment, helping others, education, arts).
 - Have them brainstorm one way they could help in that category (e.g., park clean-up, tutoring younger kids, making cards for seniors).
 - Groups share their ideas with the class.

Step 2

LEADERSHIP & TEAMWORK IN ACTION

(20 MIN)

Activity

1. **Scenario Challenge** (10 minutes) -
Provide each group with a real-world challenge that requires teamwork and leadership, such as:
 - Organizing a fundraiser for a local cause
 - Creating a campaign to reduce school waste
 - Planning a school event to help new students feel welcome
 - Assign roles (leader, communicator, problem solver, planner) and ask them to map out 3 steps to tackle the challenge.

Reflection

1. **Class Share & Reflection** (10 minutes) -
Each group presents their plan, and the class discusses what makes a good leader and team player.

Step 3 (Optional/Homework)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXPLORATION

- + Be aware of local volunteer opportunities and provide students with a list if available (e.g., school-based clubs, city programs, or nonprofit partnerships).
- + Have them interview a family member or friend about a past community service experience and share takeaways in the next class.
- + Wrap-Up: Encourage students to choose one action step they can take this month to get involved in their community.

Why This Works for Middle Schoolers:

- ✓ **Develops teamwork and leadership skills**—Encourages students to collaborate, problem-solve, and take on leadership roles in real-world scenarios.
- ✓ **Makes community service meaningful and accessible**—Helps students see how they can make a difference in their local community through small, impactful actions.
- ✓ **Encourages self-reflection and personal growth**—Guides students in recognizing their strengths, values, and the role they can play in shaping a better community.



TOPIC

2

Boost Your Skills: Track Your Growth with Reflection & Journals

Developing strong self-reflection skills and effective study habits is essential for academic and personal growth. Through engaging workshops, students will explore strategies to manage their time wisely, improve their learning techniques, and set personal goals for success. By fostering these skills, students will gain the confidence and tools needed to take ownership of their education and future.

Role of the Counselor and CCR Team

- To support this endeavor, counselors and CCR team members will provide opportunities to develop self reflection skills that can support effective study habits and time management.
- Students can be supported in this process via group workshops in classrooms or grade-level meetings, in 1:1 counseling sessions, as well as alongside their caregivers in family engagement events:
 - Lead informational sessions about opportunities for extracurricular activities, build soft skills and engage in academic and enrichment activities.
 - Facilitate discussion and meaning-making about key terms and opportunities.

Hands On Activity: **Study Smarter:** **Self-Reflection & Study Skills for Success**

This group activity is an interactive workshop designed to help middle school students develop self-awareness, improve study habits, and manage their time effectively. Through guided journaling, group discussions, and hands-on planning activities, students will reflect on their learning strengths, identify areas for improvement, and create a personalized study plan. By the end of the session, they will leave with practical strategies and a clear action plan to boost their academic success.

OBJECTIVES

- Help students develop self-reflection skills to assess their learning and personal growth.
- Provide practical strategies for effective study habits and time management.
- Encourage goal-setting and self-awareness to improve academic performance.

DURATION

25 minutes

MATERIALS

- Notebook or paper for journaling (Step 1)
- Whiteboard/chart paper & markers (Step 2)
- [Handout](#) (list of questions/prompts) (Step 1)
 - Self-Reflection Journal - list of questions/prompts (Step 1)
 - Study Planner Template - blank weekly schedule (Step 2)
 - Goal-Setting Worksheet - space to write goals & accountability check-in) (Step 3)

Step 1

SELF-REFLECTION JOURNAL (15 MIN)

Activity

1. Warm-up (5 minutes)

- Ask students:
"Think about a time when you did really well on a school assignment. What helped you succeed?"
- Have them share responses in pairs.

Reflection

1. Journaling (10 minutes) - Provide a Self-Reflection Handout with prompts like:

- *What are my strengths as a student?*
- *What challenges do I face in studying or managing my time?*
- *What is one thing I can improve in my study habits?*

2. Students write their responses and discuss in small groups.

Step 2

STUDY HABITS & TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

(20 MIN)



Brainstorm

1. **Group Brainstorm** (10 minutes) -
On a whiteboard or chart paper, create two columns: “*Good Study Habits*” and “*Bad Study Habits*.”
 - Have students call out ideas and categorize them together.



Activity

1. **Time-Blocking Challenge** (10 minutes) -
Give students a Study Planner Template and ask them to plan out a study schedule for a big test next week. Encourage them to include:
 - Breaks
 - Review time
 - Fun activities
 - Sleep/rest time

Step 3 (Optional/Homework)

GOAL-SETTING & ACTION PLAN



Activity

1. Each student writes one personal study goal for the next two weeks.
2. They choose an accountability partner to check in with.



Wrap-Up

1. Ask students:
 - *What is one new study habit you will try this week?*
 - *How will you track their progress?*

Why This Works for Middle Schoolers:

- ✓ **Builds self-awareness and personal responsibility**—Helps students reflect on their learning strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement.
- ✓ **Teaches essential study and time management skills**—Provides practical strategies to help students organize their time, develop better habits, and prepare for academic success.
- ✓ **Encourages goal-setting and accountability**—Supports students in setting achievable goals, tracking their progress, and taking ownership of their learning journey.



TOPIC

3

Level Up Your Learning: Join Fun & Helpful Academic Programs

Exploring academic support and enrichment programs like Upward Bound, AVID, and other regional opportunities can open doors to new learning experiences and future success. These programs provide valuable resources, mentorship, and skill-building activities to help students stay on track academically while preparing for high school and beyond. Through engaging presentations and hands-on application support, students will discover exciting ways to enhance their education and take charge of their future.

Role of the Counselor and CCR Team

- To support this endeavor, counselors and CCR team members will provide opportunities to learn about academic and enrichment programs and activities.
- Students can be supported in this process via group workshops in classrooms or grade-level meetings, in 1:1 counseling sessions, as well as alongside their caregivers in family engagement events:
 - Lead informational sessions about academic and enrichment opportunities, and learn more about what is available and what students need.
 - Facilitate discussion and meaning-making about key terms and opportunities.



Hands On Activity: Find Your Fit - Discover Awesome Academic Programs

This group activity is an interactive workshop designed to introduce middle school students to enrichment opportunities like Upward Bound, AVID, and/or local/regional/state programs. Through engaging activities, students will match their academic needs with the right programs, discuss how these opportunities can support their goals, and receive guidance on how to apply. By the end of the session, students will have a clear understanding of available resources and a personal action plan to take the next step toward enrollment.

OBJECTIVES

- Introduce students to enrichment programs like Upward Bound, AVID, and other opportunities.
- Help students identify which programs align with their academic goals.
- Provide guidance on how to apply and enroll in these programs.

DURATION

30 minutes

MATERIALS

- **Program Overview Handout** (brief descriptions of programs, eligibility, and benefits). (Step 1)
- **Matching Cards** with student needs and program descriptions. (Step 2)
- **Program Application Checklist Handout** (steps to apply, key dates, required documents). (Step 3)

Step 1

WHAT'S OUT THERE?

(10 MIN)



1. **Warm-up Discussion** (5 minutes) -
Ask students: *"What helps you succeed in school? What kind of support would make learning easier or more fun?"*



1. **Program Overview** (5 minutes) -
Give a brief, engaging explanation of programs like Upward Bound, AVID, and other local/state opportunities (use a Program Overview Handout with short descriptions).
 - Ask study to share a highlight of key benefits like college prep, tutoring, mentorship, field trips, and scholarships.

Step 2

WHICH PROGRAM IS RIGHT FOR ME?

(10 MIN)



1. **Interactive Matching Game** (5 minutes) -
Create cards with different student needs (e.g., *"I want to go to college but don't know where to start"* or *"I need help staying organized in school"*).
 - Students match needs to the program that best fits.



1. **Small Group Discussion** (5 minutes) -
Have students discuss which programs interest them and why.

Step 3

HOW DO I APPLY?

(10 MIN)



1. Application Planning (5 minutes)

- Walk through basic steps of applying (deadlines, forms, personal statements).
- Distribute a Program Application Checklist Handout to help students get started.



1. Next Steps Reflection (5 minutes)

Students set one action step (e.g., talk to a counselor, visit a program website, or bring home an application for a caregiver to review).



1. Ask students: *What's one program you're excited about? What's your next step?*
2. Encourage students to bring home handouts and discuss with caregiver.

Why This Works for Middle Schoolers:

- ✓ **Expands awareness of academic support opportunities**—Helps students discover programs that provide tutoring, mentorship, and enrichment to support their learning.
- ✓ **Connects students to real-world benefits of academic programs**—Shows how programs like Upward Bound and AVID can help with college prep, scholarships, and skill-building.
- ✓ **Empowers students to take the next step**—Encourages students to reflect on their academic needs, match with the right programs, and start the application process with confidence.



Postsecondary Preparation and Support Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Middle school is a critical time for students to start exploring postsecondary education and career pathways that align with their interests and goals. By learning about college options, career and technical education (CTE) programs, apprenticeships, and other training opportunities, students gain a deeper understanding of the steps needed to achieve their aspirations. Counselors will support students in navigating these choices through interactive workshops, guided discussions, and hands-on experiences such as visits to local high schools, colleges, and workplaces. Additionally, students will receive resources on academic preparation, financial aid, and career exploration to ensure they are ready to make informed decisions about their future. This early exposure empowers students to take charge of their postsecondary journey with confidence and clarity.

Middle school students should:

- ✓ Understand the broad spectrum of postsecondary options and pathways
- ✓ Have exposure to and increased understanding of programs and opportunities at local high schools and colleges
- ✓ Have exposure to a local industry/ professional workplaces and businesses with an increased understanding of the basic functions and careers associated with the workplace



TOPIC

1

Plan for Success—Exploring Your Future College & Career Pathways

Planning for the future starts early, and middle school is the perfect time for students and caregivers to explore academic and career pathways together. Information sessions will provide valuable insights on college options, career and technical education (CTE) programs, and the importance of academic planning to keep students on track for success. By understanding available opportunities and setting goals now, families can help students make informed decisions that open doors to a wide range of postsecondary possibilities.

Role of the Counselor and CCR Team

- To support this endeavor, counselors and CCR team members will provide information sessions for caregivers and students on the importance of early academic and career planning.
- Students can be supported in this process via group workshops in classrooms or grade-level meetings, in 1:1 counseling sessions, as well as alongside their caregivers in family engagement events:
 - Lead informational sessions about opportunities about the importance of college and career planning.
 - Facilitate discussion and meaning-making about key terms and opportunities.

Hands On Activity: **Be Future Ready - Explore Your Path to Success**

This group activity helps middle school students through an interactive workshop designed to help middle school students discover the many postsecondary options available to them, including college, career and technical education (CTE), apprenticeships, and workforce opportunities. Through engaging activities, students will explore different career pathways, learn the importance of academic planning, and set personal goals to stay on track for future success. By the end of the session, they will have a clearer understanding of their options and practical steps to start preparing for their journey beyond high school. Students can explore ways to give back to their community while building teamwork and leadership skills. Through interactive brainstorming and problem-solving challenges, students will discover local service opportunities, collaborate on creative solutions, and reflect on what it means to be a leader. By the end of the activity, they'll leave with actionable steps to make a positive impact in their school and beyond!

OBJECTIVES

- Help students explore a variety of postsecondary options, including college, career and technical education (CTE), apprenticeships, and workforce opportunities.
- Introduce the importance of academic planning to stay on track for future goals.
- Encourage students to start thinking about their interests and how they connect to different career pathways.

DURATION

30 minutes

MATERIALS

- [Middle School Academic Planner Handout](#)
 - Postsecondary Pathways Handout - simple descriptions of each pathway with examples of related careers (Step 1)
 - Career Match-Up Cards - cards with different careers and pathways for matching (Step 2)
 - Middle School Academic Planner Handout - space for goal setting and academic planning tips (Step 2)

Step 1

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS? (10 MIN)



1. **Warm-up Discussion** (5 minutes) -
Ask students: *"What do you want to do after high school? What careers or jobs interest you?"*



1. **Postsecondary Pathways Overview** (5 minutes) - Provide a Pathways Handout that includes:
 - Four-Year College/University
 - Community College & Transfer Programs
 - Career & Technical Education (CTE) Programs
 - Apprenticeships & Workforce Training
 - Military & Public Service
 - Briefly explain how each option can lead to different careers and opportunities.

Step 2

MAPPING MY PATH (15 MIN)



1. **Career Match-Up Game** (5 minutes)
 - Write different careers on index cards and different postsecondary pathways on the board (or hand out separate sheets).
 - Have students match the career to the best pathway(s) (e.g., "Electrician" → Apprenticeship or CTE program).
 - Discuss how some careers have multiple paths.



1. **Career Match-Up Game** (5 minutes) -
Introduce a Middle School Academic Planner Handout that highlights:
 - Why grades & study habits matter now
 - Key courses that help prepare for high school success
 - Setting goals for high school and beyond
 - Students complete one short-term goal (something they can do this year) and one long-term goal (something they want to achieve after high school).

Step 3

NEXT STEPS & TAKEAWAYS (5 MIN)



Activity

1. **Class Discussion:** Ask students:
 - “What is one thing you learned today that you didn’t know before?”
 - “What is one step you can take now to start preparing for your future?”
2. Encourage students to share their goals with a caregiver and revisit their academic plan throughout middle and high school.



Wrap-Up

1. Encourage students to choose one action step they can take this month to get involved in their community.

Why This Works for Middle Schoolers:

- ✓ **Introduces students to a variety of future pathways**—Helps them explore options beyond high school, including college, CTE, apprenticeships, and workforce opportunities.
- ✓ **Makes academic planning meaningful and relevant**—Shows students how their grades, study habits, and course choices impact their future goals.
- ✓ **Encourages goal-setting and proactive decision-making**—Empowers students to take ownership of their career exploration and start planning for success early.



TOPIC

2

Ready, Set, High School! Exploring Your Next Big Adventure

Transitioning from middle school to high school—and eventually to college—can feel overwhelming, but early exposure to these environments helps students feel more confident and prepared. Coordinated visits to local high schools and colleges give students a firsthand look at academic expectations, campus life, and available support services. These experiences help demystify the transition process, allowing students to envision their future pathways and take proactive steps toward their educational goals.

Role of the Counselor and CCR Team

- To support this endeavor, counselors and CCR team members will coordinate visits to local high schools or colleges to demystify the transition process.
- Students can be supported in this process via group workshops in classrooms or grade-level meetings, in 1:1 counseling sessions, as well as alongside their caregivers in family engagement events:
 - Lead informational sessions about opportunities in local high school programs, and support students and caregivers in understanding the preparation for high school.
 - Facilitate discussion and meaning-making about key terms and opportunities.

Hands On Activity:

Next Stop: High School!

Your Guide to a Smooth Transition

This group activity is an interactive workshop designed to help middle school students feel confident and prepared for their transition to high school or college. Through engaging activities, students will explore what to expect, ask questions, and create a personal transition plan to set themselves up for success. By the end of the session, they will have a clearer understanding of their next steps and feel more excited about their academic journey ahead.

OBJECTIVES

- Help students understand what to expect in high school and college.
- Reduce anxiety and build confidence about transitioning to new academic environments.
- Provide tools and resources to help students prepare for a smooth transition.

DURATION

30 minutes

MATERIALS

- **Expectation vs. Reality Worksheet** (space for students to write what they think vs. what is actually true). (Step 1)
- **Campus Tour Video, Slides and/or Peer Ambassador** (optional, if available). (Step 2)

Step 1

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT

(10 MIN)



1. **Warm-up** (5 minutes) - Ask students:
 - *What are you most excited about when it comes to high school or college?*
 - *What are you most nervous about?*
2. Write responses on the board.



1. **Expectation vs. Reality** (5 minutes) - Hand out an Expectation vs. Reality Worksheet, where students list what they think high school/college will be like and then compare it with real facts provided by the counselor.

Step 2

EXPLORE YOUR FUTURE SCHOOL (15 MIN)



Activity

1. Virtual or Guided Tour (10 minutes)

- Show a short video or slideshow of a local high school or college campus, highlighting classrooms, extracurricular activities, and support services.
- If possible, invite a high school student or college ambassador to share their experience.



Reflection

1. Transition Questions (5 minutes)

- Ask students to write down a remaining question they have about high school/college.
- Collect and answer some as a group or assign as a follow-up activity.

Step 3

MY TRANSITION PLAN (5 MIN)



Activity

1. Students revisit the [Middle School Academic Planner Handout](#), adding a new goal to strengthen the one they wrote in the last activity. Ask students to identify one action step that could start them on their goal that supports their preparation for high school or college.
2. Share responses in pairs or small groups.



Wrap-Up

1. Ask students: *"What's one thing you learned today that made you feel more prepared?"*
2. Encourage students to share the handouts with caregivers and visit school websites for more information.

Why This Works for Middle Schoolers:

- ✓ **Reduces anxiety and builds confidence**—Helps students feel more comfortable with the transition to high school by addressing concerns and providing clear expectations.
- ✓ **Makes the high school experience feel real and accessible**—Gives students a preview of what to expect through interactive discussions, virtual tours, and peer insights.
- ✓ **Encourages proactive planning for success**—Guides students in setting personal goals and identifying action steps to start their high school journey with confidence.



TOPIC

3

Beyond the Classroom: Exploring Careers Through Industry Tours

Industry tours provide students with a valuable opportunity to see real-world workplaces, connect classroom learning to career possibilities, and gain insight into different industries. By engaging in these experiences, students can explore career interests, understand workplace expectations, and start envisioning their future paths. To ensure a meaningful experience, both students and hosts will be guided on what to expect, how to ask thoughtful questions, and how to engage professionally during the tour.

Role of the Counselor and CCR Team

- To support this endeavor, counselors and CCR team members will coordinate an in-person or virtual tour to a local business or workplace. In advance, they will have developed an understanding of related careers to the site and associated education or training required.
- Students can be supported in this process via group workshops in classrooms or grade-level meetings to prepare for the visit. Caregivers should be appropriately notified that students are leaving campus.
 - Lead informational sessions about the purpose and impact of industry site visits.
 - Facilitate discussion and meaning-making about key terms and opportunities.

 Hands On Activity:

Your Future at Work: Preparing for an Industry Tour

This group activity is an interactive workshop designed to help middle school students make the most of their workplace visits. Through engaging discussions, guided note-taking activities, and reflection exercises, students will learn how to observe, ask meaningful questions, and connect what they see to potential career paths. By the end of the session, they will feel confident and prepared to explore real-world workplaces and gain valuable insights into different career opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

- Help students prepare for an industry tour by understanding workplace expectations and how to engage professionally.
- Provide a structured way for students to take notes and reflect on what they learn during the visit.
- Facilitate post-tour discussions to reinforce key takeaways and career insights.

DURATION

30 minutes

MATERIALS

- [Handout](#)
 - Workplace Etiquette & Questions Guide - list of expectations & sample questions (Step 1)
 - Tour Observation Notes Sheet - space for students to write key takeaways (Step 2)
 - Reflection Worksheet - space for students to write what they learned and what careers interested them (Step 3)

Step 1

WHAT TO EXPECT & HOW TO ENGAGE

(10 MIN)



Discussion

1. **Warm-up Discussion** (5 minutes) -
Ask students: *“What do you think a workplace looks like? What do professionals do all day?”* List responses on the board.



Activity

1. **Industry Tour Do's & Don'ts** (5 minutes)
 - a. Discuss workplace expectations (e.g., being respectful, asking thoughtful questions, dressing appropriately).
 - b. Hand out a “Workplace Etiquette & Questions Guide” with:
 - Examples of professional behaviors during the tour.
 - A list of 5-10 sample questions they can ask employees.

Step 2

TAKING NOTES LIKE A PRO (10 MIN)



Activity

1. **Industry Tour Note-Taking Challenge** (10 minutes)
 - a. Provide students with a Tour Observation Notes Sheet that includes:
 - *What do you notice?*
(Describe the work environment)
 - *What careers do you see?*
(List job titles and roles observed)
 - *What skills are important?*
(What skills do employees use?)
 - *One question I want to ask is...*
 - b. Encourage students to bring this sheet on the tour and use it to record observations.
 - c. Challenge students to have all of the questions answered by the end of the visit.

Step 3

REFLECT & DISCUSS (10 MIN)



Reflection

1. **Small Group Reflection** (5 minutes) - After the tour, students pair up and discuss:
 - *"What surprised you the most?"*
 - *"What job or career seemed the most interesting to you?"*
 - *"What skills do you think you need for that job?"*
2. **Class Share & Takeaways** (5 minutes) - Write key student reflections on the board and discuss how this tour changed their perspective on careers.



Wrap-Up

1. **Wrap-Up & Takeaways:**
 - Encourage students to take home their notes and reflections to discuss with caregivers.
 - Highlight that career exploration is ongoing—this is just the first step toward finding a path that excites them!

Why This Works for Middle Schoolers:

- ✓ **Connects classroom learning to real-world careers**—Helps students see how the skills they learn in school apply to actual jobs and industries.
- ✓ **Makes career pathways feel real and accessible**—Provides first hand exposure to different workplaces, showing students the steps needed to pursue various career options.
- ✓ **Encourages students to take ownership of their future**—Inspires students to think about their interests, set goals, and explore career pathways that align with their strengths.