

## Career & College Readiness Curriculum

The ICAN curriculum program for middle school equips learners with the knowledge, skills, and self-awareness needed to explore career interests, set academic and personal goals, and make informed decisions about their future. This program fosters a connection between students' current learning and real-world opportunities, empowering them to navigate high school transitions confidently and prepare for lifelong success.

The ICAN program provides opportunities for career exploration, skill development, and goal-setting, helping students gain awareness of various career pathways, understand the importance of academic preparation, and build essential skills such as problem-solving, communication, and adaptability. By the end of the curriculum, students will have the tools to develop a personal plan for high school and beyond, aligned with their interests, strengths, and aspirations.

The following pages provide a summary of lesson goals, student outcomes, and lesson activities.

## Curriculum Lessons

### Grade 6

- Exploring Career Clusters
- Connecting Interests to Careers
- Education After High School
- College is For All
- Differences & Benefits of College
- Money Management Basics
- Understanding Learning Styles and Effective Study Habits

### Grade 7

- Investigating Career Paths within Career Clusters
- Connecting Skills to Careers
- Exploring Levels of Education & Training
- My First Apartment: Budgeting for Success
- Developing Personalized Study Plans Based on Learning Styles
- Getting Involved: Community Service and Extracurricular Activities

### Grade 8

- Big Picture: Thinking About the Future
- Assess, Improve, Succeed: Mapping Your Skills for Career Growth
- College Fit
- Building a Real-Life Budget
- Financial Aid Basics (FAFSA)
- Charting Your Path: Four-Year Plans
- Building Your Skillset: The Key to Future Careers
- Transition to High School

## Lesson Goal

Students will take a closer look at several career clusters, such as health sciences, engineering, and arts, to explore the variety of jobs within each field. Through activities like research projects and group discussions, students will analyze the skills, tasks, and work environments involved in these careers. The lesson emphasizes how interests and strengths align with career clusters, encouraging students to reflect on which clusters appeal to them for future exploration.

## What should students learn from the lesson?

- Identify the variety of jobs within specific career clusters (e.g., health sciences, engineering, arts)
- Analyze the skills, tasks, and work environments associated with different careers
- Reflect on their interests and strengths and explore how these align with potential career clusters

## What is the in-class activity?

- Discussion of career clusters as class
- In groups, students will explore one cluster through research, create a mini-presentation or poster and present findings to the class
- Students will do a personal reflection after the group presentations

## What is the takeaway for students?

Students will understand that interests and strengths can help guide them to explore different career paths. Understanding the variety of jobs in these fields allows you to start thinking about your future today.

## Materials Needed:

- Computer
- Career Cluster Research Worksheet
- PowerPoint
- Personal Reflection Worksheet

## Lesson Goal

Students will complete an interest inventory to identify their personal interests, strengths, and hobbies. They will explore how these interests align with various career clusters, learning that careers are often connected to the things they enjoy doing. Through discussions and interactive activities, students will reflect on potential career paths that match their interests and begin setting personal goals for future learning and exploration.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Identify their personal interests in activities, hobbies, and school subjects
- Understand that interests can connect to future careers
- Recognize the value of self-awareness in discovering potential career paths

### What is the in-class activity?

- Students will complete an interest inventory or career assessment
- Students will take part in a group discussion on activities and jobs
- Group or class discussion on common interests and connections to jobs
- Students will reflect on their personal connection to the class discussion

### What is the takeaway for students?

- **Self-Awareness:** They will leave with a better understanding of what they enjoy doing and how that connects to potential career paths.
- **Encouragement to Explore:** Students will realize that it's okay if they don't know exactly what they want to be yet, and they should explore activities and subjects they enjoy.
- **Personal Reflection:** They will be asked to reflect and write in their journals (or on a worksheet) two things they learned about themselves and one career they would like to learn more about.

### Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint
- Interest Inventory Worksheet
- Group Post-Its or Chart Paper
- Markers or Highlighters

## Lesson Goal

The lesson goal is to introduce students to post-secondary education and training. Students will make the connection that post-secondary education is needed to help prepare for their career choice. Students will also be able to identify a variety of apprenticeship and college programs available in the state.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Definition of post-secondary education and college
- Identify and define five places where students can go for post-secondary education
- Find different apprenticeships and colleges located in the state
- Identify where they might like to go for their post-secondary education and training

### What is the in-class activity?

- Define post-secondary education and training
- Learn options available after high school
- Research apprenticeships and colleges in the state

### What is the takeaway for students?

- Students will learn that post-secondary education is needed for their career preparation
- Students will be able to identify the post-secondary education needed for their career area
- Students will be able to identify the different post-secondary education options in the state

### Materials Needed:

- Computer
- PowerPoint
- This or That Worksheet
- Career Post-Secondary Education Levels Worksheet
- Writing Utensil



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# College is for All

Grade 6

Prerequisite:

Education After High School

## Lesson Goal

The lesson goal is for students to see that college is obtainable for all students. No matter their skills, ability, background, or status all students can pursue college. Students will learn that college means a variety of pathways (military, apprenticeship, community college, and university). Students will reflect on their interests and start to match them with different pathways.

## What should students learn from the lesson?

- Different college pathways
- Connecting their interests to pathway

## What is the in-class activity?

- Dispelling myths about who college is for
- Matching their skills to different college pathways

## What is the takeaway for students?

- Students will learn that college is obtainable for all
- Students will use their interests to further explore college pathways that might be a good fit for them
- Students will reflect on the importance of college

## Materials Needed:

- Computer
- College Pathways Adventure Worksheet
- PowerPoint
- Writing Utensil

## Lesson Goal

The lesson goal is to highlight differences between the types of post-secondary education and training options available to students. Students will gain an understanding that they can select the option that matches their preferences. Students will also learn some of the benefits of attending any of the college pathways available to them, beyond preparing for their career.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- The differences between apprenticeship, community college, and university
- Students can select a college pathway that matches their preferences
- The benefits of college beyond preparing for their career

### What is the in-class activity?

- Differentiate between the types of colleges
- Match their preferences with a college option for themselves
- Learn additional benefits of going to college

### What is the takeaway for students?

- Students will learn the differences between apprenticeship, community college, and university
- Students will select a post-secondary pathway that matches their preferences
- Students will learn the benefits of going to post-secondary education and training

### Materials Needed:

- Computer
- PowerPoint
- Handout
- Writing Utensil

## Lesson Goal

By the end of this lesson, students will understand the basics of money management, including earning, saving, spending, and budgeting.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- The basics of money management, including the importance of earning, saving, and spending wisely, and budgeting.
- The difference between needs and wants, fixed and variable expenses
- Why saving for the future or emergencies is essential

### What is the in-class activity?

- Classroom Store Activity
- Engage in group discussions and budget planning
- Class reflection on financial goals and choices

### What is the takeaway for students?

- Students leave with a basic understanding of financial literacy, including how to manage income, plan savings, and spend wisely.
- Students will recognize the value of distinguishing between wants and needs
- Students will gain practical experience balancing a simple budget

### Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint
- Printed Money
- Budgeting Worksheet
- Notebook and Writing Utensil

# Understanding Learning Styles & Effective Study Habits

Grade 6  
Prerequisite:  
None

## Lesson Goal

Students will explore the three main learning styles—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—and discover how aligning their study habits with their learning style can enhance retention and academic performance. By completing a learning styles quiz and engaging in tailored activities, students will gain awareness of their strengths and learn strategies to study more effectively.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Understand the three primary learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic
- Identify their personal learning style through a quiz
- Learn effective study strategies that align with each learning style
- Reflect on how adopting specific study habits can improve academic performance

### What is the in-class activity?

- Students will take a learning styles quiz to determine dominant learning style
- Students will take part in a class discussion of learning styles
- Students will work in groups based on learning style and test strategies
- Students will do a whole-class reflection
- Students will do a personal reflection

### What is the takeaway for students?

Students will leave with a better understanding of their personal learning preferences and concrete strategies they can apply in their studies. They will realize that by adapting their study habits to suit their learning style, they can improve academic performance and make studying more enjoyable.

### Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint
- Learning Styles Quiz
- Study Strategies Worksheet
- Reflection Worksheet
- Small whiteboards or paper
- Props for kinesthetic activities (fidget tools, flashcards, or manipulatives)



# Investigating Career Paths within Career Clusters

Grade 7  
Prerequisite:  
None

## Lesson Goal

Students will dive deeper into specific career clusters, researching different career paths within fields such as technology, business, and public service. They will explore the education, certifications, or apprenticeships required for various careers and reflect on how people advance within these fields. The lesson encourages students to set personal goals for future learning and career planning by identifying clusters that align with their evolving interests and abilities.

## What should students learn from the lesson?

- Identify and explore different career clusters and careers within those fields.
- Understand the education and training (such as college degrees, certifications, apprenticeships) required for different careers.
- Evaluate potential career paths that align with their interests and abilities.
- Set personal learning and career goals for future planning.

## What is the in-class activity?

- Students will be introduced to career clusters
- Students will explore career clusters in groups or pairs
- Students will research specific careers utilizing research tools and resources
- Students will present their findings to the class
- Students will engage in classroom discussion after each presentation
- Students will do a reflection on their personal learning and goal setting

## What is the takeaway for students?

- **Key Reflection:** Students will leave with a better understanding of career clusters, the training required for specific careers, and career paths that align with their interests.
- **Next Steps:** They will have identified at least one career or cluster that interests them and set personal learning or career goals for the future.

## Materials Needed:

- Computer
- PowerPoint
- Career Cluster Overview Worksheet
- Career Research Outline
- Personal Learning & Career Goals Worksheet
- Poster Paper or Whiteboard
- Markers or Pens
- Career Information sources
- ICAN Career Cluster Guide

## Lesson Goal

Students will engage in detailed interest inventories to assess their evolving interests, skills, and values. They will analyze how their personal preferences connect to specific careers and career clusters, and explore the education and training needed for those fields. The lesson encourages students to reflect on how their interests can shape future career goals and create action steps to continue developing relevant skills and knowledge.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Identify their strengths, interests, and skills and connect them to career pathways
- Understand the concept of career pathways (e.g., STEM, Arts, Business) and how personal interests align with them
- Begin exploring specific careers related to their interests to encourage future planning

### What is the in-class activity?

- Students will take an interest inventory assessment
- Students will take part in a class discussion on career pathways
- Students will take part in career research
- Students will engage in a career matching activity
- Students will do a personal reflection activity

### What is the takeaway for students?

- **Career Awareness:** Students will leave with an understanding of different career pathways and how their personal interests connect to those careers.
- **Exploration Mindset:** They will know it's okay to explore multiple interests as they discover what they enjoy.

### Materials Needed:

- 7th-grade interest inventory
- Computer
- ICAN Career Cluster Guide
- Career Matching Cards
- Personal Reflection Worksheet

## Lesson Goal

The lesson goal is to introduce students to post-secondary education and training. Students will define what post-secondary education and training is and understand the importance of post-secondary education for career preparation. Students will learn about all the post-secondary education options that are available and how to determine what level to pursue. Students will also research their career cluster of interest and learn the different levels of education needed for different careers.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Definition of education and training, post-secondary education, and college
- The different options available for post-secondary education
- How to decide which level of education and training they should pursue
- The importance of post-secondary education and training

### What is the in-class activity?

- Students will define post-secondary education and training
- Students will be able to make decisions about what they want for their post-secondary education
- Students will research post-secondary education options for career clusters

### What is the takeaway for students?

- Students will understand the importance of post-secondary education
- Students will be able to identify the post-secondary education needed for their career area
- Students will be able to identify the different post-secondary education options available

### Materials Needed:

- Computer
- PowerPoint
- This or That Worksheet
- Career Post-Secondary Education Levels Worksheet
- Writing Utensil

# My First Apartment: Budgeting for Success

Grade 7  
Prerequisite:  
None

## Lesson Goal

By the end of this lesson, students will understand how to create and manage a budget for living in their first apartment, including costs for rent, utilities, groceries, transportation, and entertainment.

## What should students learn from the lesson?

Students should learn how to create and manage a budget that balances income and expenses. They will understand essential living costs, including rent, utilities, groceries, transportation, and entertainment. The lesson will also cover the difference between fixed and variable expenses, the importance of savings, and how to adjust for unexpected costs. Students will gain practical skills to make informed financial decisions, prioritize spending, and plan for future needs.

## What is the in-class activity?

Students will participate in a budget simulation where they create a monthly budget for living in their first apartment. Each student or group will receive:

- A scenario (income level and starting savings)
- Sample apartment listings with rent prices
- A list of expenses (utilities, groceries, transportation, etc.)
- Unexpected expense cards (car repair, medical bill, etc.) to challenge their budgeting

Students will use these materials to allocate their income across categories and complete a budgeting worksheet. In small groups, students will also discuss ways to adjust their budgets to manage an unexpected expense. Each group will present their final budget to the class, explaining their choices.

## What is the takeaway for students?

Students will leave the lesson with a clear understanding of how to budget for independent living. They will know how to categorize and prioritize expenses, maintain a savings plan, and adjust for unforeseen challenges. This practical experience will help them feel more confident about managing money in the future and develop skills they can apply in real-world situations, such as planning for emergencies and setting financial goals.

## Materials Needed:

- Budgeting Worksheet
- Sample Apartment Listings
- List of Expenses
- PowerPoint
- Calculator

## Lesson Goal

Students will identify their learning styles through a quiz and explore how these styles impact their study habits. They will analyze a variety of study techniques tailored to different learning styles—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. The lesson will culminate with students developing personalized study plans that align with their learning preferences and academic goals. This will foster self-awareness about how they learn best and provide practical strategies to enhance their academic success.

## What should students learn from the lesson?

- Identify their primary learning style through a quiz
- Understand how different study techniques align with specific learning styles
- Create a personalized study plan that incorporates strategies suitable for their learning style
- Set study-related goals for improving their academic performance and habits

## What is the in-class activity?

- Students will take a learning styles quiz to determine dominant learning style
- Students will take part in a class discussion of learning styles
- Students will create a personalized study plan
- Students will do a whole-class reflection
- Students will do a personal reflection

## What is the takeaway for students?

Students leave with a personalized study plan tailored to their learning style, equipped with strategies that align with how they learn best. They also gain a greater sense of self-awareness, empowering them to take control of their study habits and academic success.

## Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint
- Learning Styles Quiz
- Study Strategies Analysis Worksheet
- Personalized Study Plan Template
- Reflection Worksheet
- Markers, sticky notes, and highlighters
- Props for kinesthetic activities (fidget tools, flashcards, or manipulatives)
- Notebook paper or journal

## Lesson Goal

This lesson introduces students to the importance of community service and extracurricular activities in personal growth and social development. Students will explore how involvement in these activities can help them build friendships, develop new skills, and contribute to their community. Through discussions, videos, and group activities, they will identify ways to get involved and create a plan to pursue a specific opportunity.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Understand the value of community service and extracurricular activities for personal development
- Learn about various ways to get involved (volunteering, clubs, sports, and events)
- Identify an activity or opportunity they are interested in pursuing
- Create a plan to get involved, including steps and goals

### What is the in-class activity?

- Discussion of community service and extracurricular activities
- Short video on various community activities with follow-up discussion
- Group Brainstorm - Ways to Get Involved and Share Out
- Self-Reflection through interest survey and Partner Share
- Students will create a personal involvement plan
- Whole class reflection

### What is the takeaway for students?

Students will leave the lesson with a clear idea of one community service opportunity or extracurricular activity they want to pursue, along with a personalized plan for getting involved. They'll understand that these activities can help them develop valuable skills, build friendships, and contribute to their community.

### Materials Needed:

- Computer
- PowerPoint
- Community Service Brainstorm Worksheet
- Extracurricular Interests Survey
- My Involvement Plan Template
- Sticky Notes or Index Cards
- Whiteboard & Markers
- Community Service Video

# The Big Picture

## Thinking About the Future

Grade 8

Prerequisite:  
None

### Lesson Goal

The goal of this lesson is to have students look at the next 40-50 years of their lives and gain a perspective of this “Big Picture”. Students will consider their high school years in connection with post-secondary education along with a 40 year working career until retirement.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Students will learn why it is important to look at the “Big Picture” of their lives in terms of preparing for post-secondary education and training, and their 40 year working career
- Students will learn why post-secondary education and training is important to consider while in high school
- Student will learn about how the choices they make now in high school can affect them in post-secondary education and training, and their work career

### What is the in-class activity?

- The PowerPoint will drive the lesson with some slides presenting interactive questions reviewing material and proposing thoughtful, engagement by students.

### What is the takeaway for students?

- It’s important to do some long range thinking “The Big Picture”
- Choices they are making now will impact their post-secondary options and their work career.
- Post-secondary education and training choices impact career options, financial security, and overall lifestyle after high school.

### Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint
- Projector
- Blank Paper/Pencil

## Lesson Goal

The lesson goal is to introduce skills to students and how they can transfer to careers. Students will learn the different types of skills (transferable skills, hard skills, and soft skills), why these skills are important and how to develop them.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Definition of a skill
- The 3 different types of skills – transferable skills, hard skills, soft skills
- The importance of skills now and in the world of work
- How to continue developing skills
- Identifying how skills developed in school transfer to world of work

### What is the in-class activity?

- Define skills and provide examples
- Discussion on the skills they have
- Identify transferable skills they use in school and how those relate to their career

### What is the takeaway for students?

- Students understand the importance of skill development for their future career success
- Students have an understanding of the skills they are developing now have a direct relationship to their future career

### Materials Needed:

- Computer
- PowerPoint
- Can You Spot the Skills Worksheet
- Writing utensil





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# Assess, Improve, Succeed: Mapping Your Skills for Career Growth

Grade 8

Prerequisite:  
Building Your Skillset

## Lesson Goal

The lesson goal is to have students analyze their skills and rate their current proficiency in a variety of work skills. Students will also research skills needed in their career interests and develop a plan to continue to improve or work on new skills.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Their proficiency in a variety of work skills
- Skills needed for their career areas of interest
- How to develop a plan to continue improving skills

### What is the in-class activity?

- Skills inventory
- Creating a plan for skill improvement

### What is the takeaway for students?

- Students understand the importance of skill development for their future career success
- Students have an understanding of the skills they are developing now have a direct relationship to their future career

### Materials Needed:

- Computer
- PowerPoint
- Future Career Skills Success Worksheet
- Writing utensil
- Skills inventory website (CIS or CareerOneStop)

## Lesson Goal

The lesson goal is to introduce students to college fit. Students will define college fit as well as the factors that go into college fit (academic, social, and financial). Students will learn the importance of college fit and how to determine if a college is a good fit.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Definition of college fit, academic fit, social fit, and financial fit
- Explain the importance of college fit
- Know how to find their college fit

### What is the in-class activity?

- Define college fit, academic fit, social fit, and financial fit
- Identify which college path is the best fit based on needs and interests

### What is the takeaway for students?

- Students will understand the importance of college fit
- Students will be able to define college fit, academic fit, social fit, and financial fit
- Students will be able to identify and explain why a college is a good fit based on interests and needs

### Materials Needed:

- Computer
- College Fit PowerPoint
- Where Should I Go Worksheet
- Writing Utensil

## Lesson Goal

The goal of the lesson is for students to understand how to create and manage a personal budget, balancing income and expenses while accounting for savings and unexpected expenses. Students will learn how to make thoughtful financial decisions, prioritize spending, and adjust their budget when faced with financial surprises. By the end of the lesson, they will have the practical skills to plan and adapt for independent living.

## What should students learn from the lesson?

- Students will understand how to budget for independent living
- Students will know how to categorize and prioritize expenses, maintain a savings plan and adjust for unforeseen challenges
- Students will feel more confident about managing money in the future
- Students will develop skills they can apply in real-world situations

## What is the in-class activity?

Students will engage in a budget simulation activity. Working in pairs or small groups, they will receive a scenario card with an income amount and a list of apartment options with varying rent prices. Using their income, they must create a budget by allocating money to necessary expenses like rent, utilities, groceries, and savings. Partway through the activity, each group will receive an Unexpected Expense Card (such as a car repair or medical bill) and will need to adjust their budget accordingly.

Afterward, students will present their budget to the class, explaining their financial choices and how they managed the unexpected expense.

## What is the takeaway for students?

- Students will leave with practical budgeting skills, knowing how to balance a budget, prioritize spending, and adjust for unexpected expenses.
- Students will understand the importance of balancing income with expenses, saving for emergencies, and making smart financial decisions.

## Materials Needed:

- Budget worksheet
- PowerPoint
- Unexpected Expenses Cards
- Writing Utensil

## Lesson Goal

The lesson goal is to introduce students to financial aid. Students will understand that there are costs associated with attending any form of post-secondary education. They will learn about ways to help pay for college. Students will learn the main terms associated with financial aid. Students will be introduced to the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and know what it is used for.

## What should students learn from the lesson?

- Definition of cost of attendance, financial aid, gift aid, self-help aid
- Have an awareness of the FAFSA and its importance
- The costs associated with college

## What is the in-class activity?

- Students will define the main terms of financial aid (cost of attendance, financial aid, gift aid, self-help aid, FAFSA)
- Students will learn what the FAFSA is and its importance
- Students will gain a basic understanding of how to obtain financial aid
- Students will reflect on how they can get financial aid in the future

## What is the takeaway for students?

- Students will define the main terms associated with paying for college
- Students will learn what the FAFSA is and its importance
- Students will gain a basic understanding of how to obtain financial aid
- Students will reflect on how they can get financial aid in the future

## Materials Needed:

- Computer
- PowerPoint
- Financial Aid Basics Reflection Worksheet
- Writing Utensil

## Lesson Goal

This lesson goal is to introduce 4 year plans to 8th grade students as they begin to think about high school transitions and courses they can take throughout high school. Students will be introduced to all the different course types and offerings at the high school. Students will also learn about ways to earn college credit while in high school, the requirements to take college credits in high school, and who makes a good candidate to take college credits.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Purpose of a 4 year plan
- The importance of aligning your courses in high school with your career interests
- How to build a 4 year plan
- The components of a 4 year plan and the courses to include
- The different types of courses to include on a 4 year plan: high school graduation requirements, career courses, college prep courses, non-negotiable courses, other electives
- How to earn college credit while in high school

### What is the in-class activity?

- Define a 4 year plan and what is included
- Students will walk through a demonstration of sample 4 year plan

### What is the takeaway for students?

- Students understand the importance of a 4 year plan when deciding what classes to take in high school
- Students have a completed 4 year plan
- Students will gain knowledge of the course offerings at their high school by working with the course manual

### Materials Needed:

- Computer
- Powerpoint
- Career Clusters/Pathways Planner
- Blank 4 year planner
- Course manual
- Graduation requirements
- Writing utensil

## Lesson Goal

The lesson goal is to help make the transition to high school easier and more successful to students. Students will compare the differences between middle school and high school. They will also examine common challenges students face when going to high school and discuss ways to overcome the challenges. Students will learn about the resources available to them in school to help them be successful. Students will learn about different strategies to have a successful high school transition.

### What should students learn from the lesson?

- Difference between middle school and high school
- Learn about common transition challenges
- Identify solutions to high school transitions
- Learn about resources available to students in high school
- Identify strategies for a successful high school transition

### What is the in-class activity?

- Compare middle school to high school
- Learn about common transition challenges and solutions
- Participate in a high school life scenario role play

### What is the takeaway for students?

- Students will learn that while there are challenges that come from transitions there are solutions to those challenges
- Students will be able to identify resources in the high school to help them
- Students will be able to list strategies to help with their high school transition
- Students will build collaboration and social skills essential for high school success

### Materials Needed:

- Computer
- PowerPoint
- Scenarios