What path will YOU take?

**Education**

Most jobs require education beyond high school. The level of education you will need will depend on the job you want.

Career and technical schools offer programs ranging from 6 to 18 months to prepare for careers in fields like plumbing, electrical, auto mechanical, culinary, cosmetology, etc.

Two-year colleges offer associate's degrees. You can enter the workforce with a degree in fields like healthcare or information technology. You can also transfer to a college or university to earn a bachelor's degree.

In Florida, state colleges have formal 2+2 agreements with local universities. These relationships give students the option to complete the first two years of their bachelor's degree at a state college and the second two years at a university. This can help families save money on a four-year degree.

A bachelor's degree from a four-year college or university can prepare you for jobs in fields such as business, education, or engineering. You can also continue on to graduate school to study fields like law or medicine.

While earning your bachelor's degree, you will build a broader body of knowledge, which can offer you more flexibility to change careers throughout your life.

**Get the Support You Need**

There are many options for what you can do after high school, so making a decision can seem intimidating. Use this guide to start planning your next steps early on.

As you take this journey, your plan might change along the way. That's okay! You can always turn to the tools in this guide to revisit and revise plans as needed.

**Service**

If you enlist in the U.S. military, you will receive training and learn skills that can transfer to a career. You will also have the opportunity to continue your education later using GI Bill benefits.

AmeriCorps offers another opportunity for service. You can participate in projects that serve communities in need, like home building or disaster cleanup. You will also receive an education award you can use to go back to school.

**Employment**

Entering the workforce is another option for students. To increase your earning potential, consider looking at apprenticeship programs, or working for a family business.

Florida's state colleges offer courses in different career clusters. This can help you explore a field that interests you without needing to know the exact job you want. Clusters may vary slightly from one college to another, but they generally fall into the following categories.

Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources

Architecture & Construction

Arts, A/V Technology & Communication

Business Management & Administration

Education & Training

Energy

Engineering & Technology Education

Finance

Government & Public Administration

Health Sciences

Hospitality & Tourism

Human Services

Information Technology

Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security

Manufacturing

Marketing, Sales, & Service

Transportation Distribution, & Logistics

**Career Clusters**

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7th-9th Grade
Expose
It’s never too early to start thinking about your future! Focus on building skills that will be useful no matter what path you take, and look for opportunities to expose yourself to post-high school options.

Develop good study skills and focus on getting good grades.

Notice which subjects you enjoy the most, and/or which you are the strongest in, and get extra help in subjects you struggle with.

Research options for high school, and consider magnet schools or career academies.

Start learning about jobs and careers through family friends, books, and through free resources like MyCareerShines and Launch My Career. You can also look into opportunities to shadow a family member or friend at their job to learn more about it.

5th-7th Grade
Explore
In 9th and 10th grade, start exploring different options for life after high school and thinking about which one might be right for you. This can help you plan what classes you want to take in high school or what activities you participate in.

Start taking advanced classes in subject areas that interest you. Consider options like AP, Honors, and dual enrollment.

Study for the PSAT, and take it in the fall.

The state of Florida offers Bright Futures scholarships to students who meet certain GPA, SAT/ACT, and service hour requirements. Start researching those requirements now.

Start visiting colleges that interest you. Find out if your school or a community organization sponsors college visits.

Use online tools like Khan Academy to research colleges and universities that interest you.

Research scholarship opportunities available nationally and in your local community. Will you need to complete community service hours, participate in extracurricular activities, or achieve a certain GPA to qualify?

You might find that you have many interests, and you don’t know which you’d like to pursue. That’s okay! Participate in activities and academic opportunities that allow you to experiment with different skills to learn more about who you are and what you’re good at.

Focus on your grades! Since you will likely apply to colleges in the fall of your senior year, grades from your junior year will be the most recent ones they will see.

The FAFSA opens on October 1. Go to www.fafsa.ed.gov to find out if you qualify for free money for college!