

Why Are Career Clusters and Career Pathways Important?

It is not easy to prepare students for tomorrow's jobs. Technological advances and global competition mean that students must be ready to continually update their knowledge and skills to compete.

Counselors and teachers are using the Career Clusters and Pathways framework to help students to understand the connections between what they learn in school and their future career. Career Pathways provide this connection by highlighting the path from high school to college and careers.

Careers with common features are in the same Cluster. Career Pathways are smaller, more specific groups of occupations within a Cluster. All 16 Clusters and 40 Pathways are explained on page 11 and shown on pages 12-13.

The Career Clusters and Pathways are part of a framework adopted by the Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, and many employers. The framework helps teen and adult learners to connect education to the skills needed in the workplace. This framework is used in *MnCareers*, on ISEEK, in the Minnesota Career Information System, and in many other career exploration tools.

Students and job seekers at all levels can use the framework to plan for future education and required knowledge. Younger students can concentrate on the general skills needed in all Career Clusters (see page 2), while older students and job seekers ready to enter college or the workforce can train in the technical skills and career knowledge needed for Pathways within a specific Career Cluster.

Career Clusters & Pathways in High Schools

Exploring careers through Career Pathways is helpful if you are planning to go to college or are headed straight to the workplace. Understanding what employers expect for each Career Cluster and Pathway helps a job seeker or student to know what skills and experience to have before applying for jobs.

Knowing about Pathways can also help when choosing a college that has Programs of Study matching your interests. Many high schools in Minnesota are partnering with local employers and colleges to design at least one Program of Study.

For more information about the Career Cluster and Pathways framework, go to ISEEK.org.

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