



## Design Your Path to Your Promise



# Parent User Guide

Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator: Promising Progressive  
Career Pathways from School to Careers

# Parent/Guardian as the College and Career Catalyst

**Kalamazoo Public Schools Mission:** To nurture the dreams of all students and empower all students to contribute to a better world.

## The Home Advantage in College and Career Planning

From sparking curiosity to guiding choices, families play a vital role in shaping students' post-high school pathways.

- Parents and guardians play a key role in guiding middle and high school students toward college and career decisions by acting as role models, motivators, supporters, and planning partners.
- In middle school, they foster early interest in careers and education by encouraging exploration, building study habits, and discussing future goals.
- In high school, parents and guardians play a hands-on role, helping students weigh their options and select courses that match their goals. They also guide students through applications, financial aid, and career or training opportunities to set them up for success after graduation.
- Research shows that parent involvement, even though simple actions like talking about education expectations and attending school events, increases college enrollment and persistence.
- Families also provide emotional support, balancing guidance with growing student independence, as teens take ownership of their decisions.

When parents stay informed, collaborate with schools, and encourage exploration, students are more prepared to make confident and meaningful academic, career, and life choices after graduation.

DID  
YOU?  
KNOW

To learn more about how you can support the student in your life with career and college planning, review some [Healthy Swaps](#) you can practice as a parent or guardian.

Early career conversations between parents or guardians and middle schoolers can have a powerful impact on students' future career decisions. Research shows that when parents regularly talk with their children about work, interests, and aspirations and provide emotional support; middle school students develop confidence and self-efficacy in making career decisions. These skills are linked to greater career satisfaction over time. [Learn more](#) about how parents, guardians, and school counselors positively impact students' career journeys.

# Your Student's Future Begins Here!

**What is the Kalamazoo Promise?** The Kalamazoo Promise is a unique and powerful scholarship for Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) students that covers up to 100% of the cost of college degrees and credentials at approved training centers, as well as public and private universities and colleges in Michigan. Learn more about [The Kalamazoo Promise](#).

## How can I help my student use the Labor Market Navigator (LMN) for Kalamazoo Public Schools to Maximize the Kalamazoo Promise?

This step-by-step guide will help you guide your student in using the Kalamazoo LMN to navigate their career journey with clarity and confidence, explore post-secondary options, and identify funding opportunities to support their Michigan Educational Development Plan (EDP) and career goals.

Benefit	What It Means for Students and Families
Clarity	Stop guessing! Know which jobs are growing, the preparation needed, what they pay, and the credentials required or degrees employers are seeking.
Goal-Focused Education	Your student can select a CTE or other program of study that leads to strong, in-demand careers in the Kalamazoo region.
Control	Students and families become drivers of educational choices. They may use the data to choose courses, internships, apprenticeships, and certifications/degrees that align with their goals.
Smarter Course Selection	When a career path requires a specific certification or degree (e.g., programs offered at Kalamazoo Valley Community College), Promise funds can support specific training, often providing a faster and more affordable route to a high-quality job than a four-year degree.
Confidence	Students and families feel secure in their post-high school decisions, whether they choose to attend college, technical school, or start their post-high school career. Students can also do both!
Efficient Time Management	Since The Kalamazoo Promise funds are available for ten years after graduation, the maps help students plan their educational and progressive career path from start to finish and guide them in adjusting and progressing along the way.
Connection to the Kalamazoo Promise	Your student will maximize the benefits of The Kalamazoo Promise by making smart, informed decisions about progressive course pathways and relevant experiences in planning their future career.

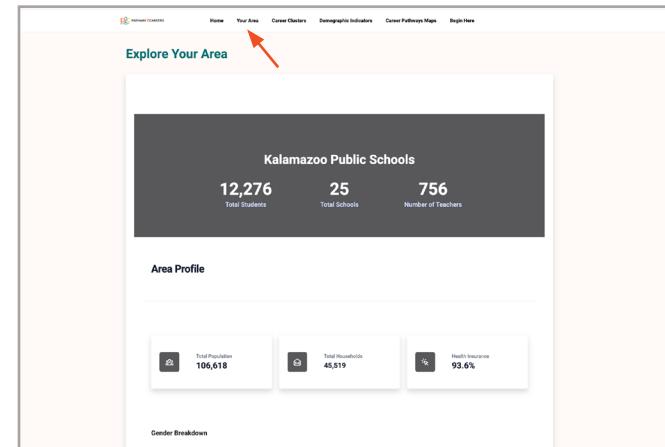
## What is the Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator?

The Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator (LMN) is an online resource designed just for students in the Kalamazoo Public Schools system. The LMN provides regional information on projected job growth for high-value careers, median wages, and required credentials in Kalamazoo County, presented in clear, easy-to-understand data dashboards and pathway maps supporting your aspirations, goals, and post-secondary dreams.

Think of the Kalamazoo LMN as your personal, data-driven GPS for the world of work.

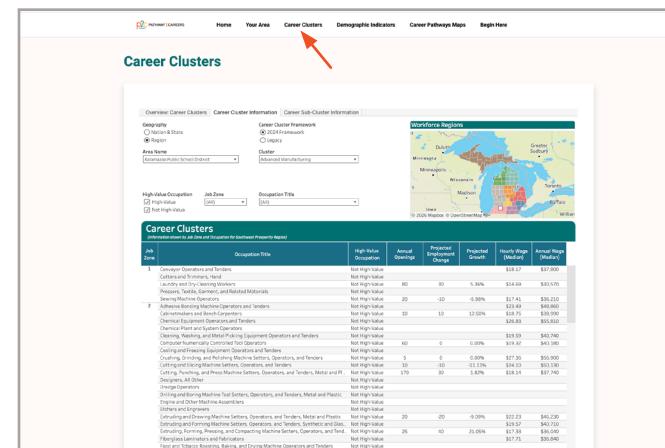
## Your Area:

The Kalamazoo LMN *Your Area* tab provides students with a clear picture of their local workforce region through easy-to-understand census data. It highlights key information such as population data, median household income, and average commuting distance for workers in the area. This snapshot helps students understand the community they live in, the economic landscape around them, and the factors that shape local career opportunities.



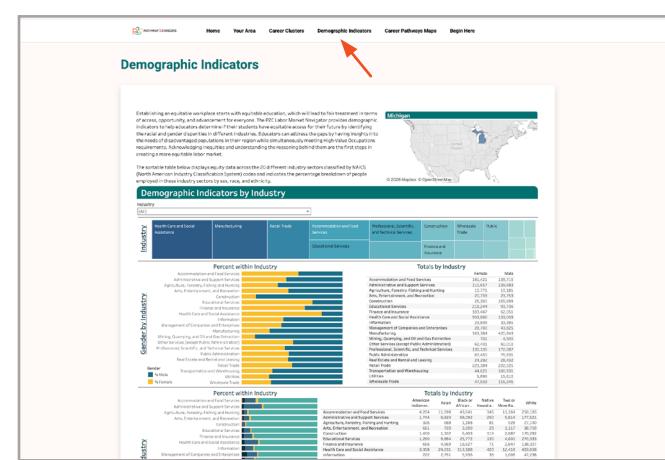
## Career Clusters:

The *Career Clusters* tab helps students explore different career areas by grouping jobs into fourteen career clusters and more specific sub-clusters. This organization allows students to browse career opportunities that match their interests, skills, and future goals. By exploring sub-clusters, students can see how career clusters break down into specialized roles, helping them understand which education or training leads to their ideal career.



## Demographic Indicators:

The *Demographic Indicators* tab provides a clear view of the local workforce, displaying data on gender balance, diversity, and other population trends. This information highlights where opportunities exist, including non-traditional but high-demand pathways, such as females entering fields like electrical engineering. By understanding these trends, students can identify careers where their strengths and perspectives are needed and valued.



## Career Pathways Maps:

The *Career Pathways Maps* tab allows students to connect middle and high school course selection, Career and Technical Education (CTE), Early Middle College, Dual Enrollment, and Education for the Arts (EFA), and apprenticeships to local careers and future educational degree or certification pathways. The maps illustrate which jobs are in demand in the region, what education or credentials are needed, and median wages. The maps make it easy for students to plan smart course schedules, explore career options early, and take steps now that align with future goals. Explore and learn more about [The Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator](#).

## Preparation Starts Now

### Why is early career preparation critical?

Preparing early opens doors to learning valuable skills and networking, supporting students to confidently enter the world of work. Early preparation supports:

- Closing the Skills Gap:** Many rewarding careers, such as information technology and construction, require specialized technical expertise rather than a four-year degree. The earlier students identify these pathways, the sooner they can prepare by choosing the right CTE program of study, certifications, or work-based learning experiences.
- Maximizing Your Student's Time:** High school is the perfect time to explore career fields risk-free through job shadowing, work-based learning experiences, summer jobs, electives, clubs, and extracurriculars. The LMN and Kalamazoo Promising Progressive Career Pathways Maps help students prioritize which experiences will matter most on a resume. For example, if a student in an HVAC program of study has a goal of working in the industry, applying for an apprenticeship with a local HVAC company can lead students directly into the workforce after the apprenticeship is completed.
- Securing Your Student's Financial Future:** Getting an early start on planning for a career allows students to gain experience and develop workplace skills sooner, helping them reach financial independence more quickly. By understanding the typical entry-level and median wages in their chosen fields, students can set clear, achievable salary and lifestyle goals, plan expenses, and make informed decisions about education, training, and career opportunities.



# Local Workforce Data: Understanding the Kalamazoo Promising Progressive Career Pathways Maps

## Why Use Local Workforce Data?

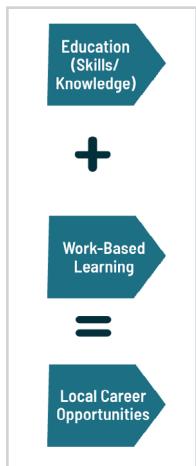
Because employers in your community need your student's talent and skills!

**Bottom Line:** Using local workforce data ensures career decisions are based on real, tangible opportunities available in the Kalamazoo area.

## What are the Kalamazoo Promising Progressive Career Pathways Maps?

The Kalamazoo Promising Progressive Career Pathway Maps help your student connect their high school coursework to local, in-demand careers and the education needed to pursue them. These maps identify available careers in the Kalamazoo region, their median wages, and the required education level, allowing students to plan their studies, seek in- and out-of-school experiences find resources, and explore work-based learning opportunities.

Every map is built around three key elements:

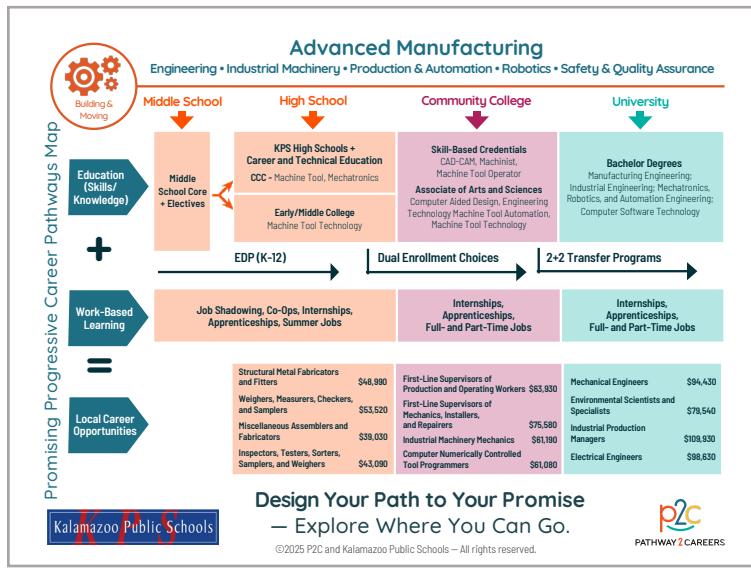


- **Job Titles & Median Wages:** See the specific job titles available in that field, along with the median annual salary.
- **Education Requirements:** Students and families will know exactly what kind of education is needed, whether it's a high school diploma, industry certification, associate's degree (2 years), bachelor's degree (4 years), or advanced degrees (6+ years).
- **Entry Points:** The maps offer students multiple ways to begin their journey. Students do not always need a four-year degree to begin a career. Many pathways provide earn and learn opportunities, allowing students to work in a part-time job or apprenticeship while continuing their education.

## Guiding Their Future: A Parent or Guardian's Guide to the Kalamazoo Promising Progressive Career Pathways Maps

1. **Encourage Your Student to Explore Careers by Cluster:** Students can start with a career cluster that is aligned with their EDP (e.g., Agriculture, Construction, Marketing & Sales).
2. **Help Them Identify a Target Career Pathway:** Students and families can explore career pathways that offer strong earning potential and promising growth in the region. They can select the role that best matches their interests and long-term goals, which then becomes their destination as they map out the education and training steps needed to reach it.
3. **Tracing the Steps Backward:** Once you choose a target career pathway, look at the post-secondary education, certification, or training it requires. Then work backward from that goal to identify each step along the way, including what program of study to choose in high school, which post-secondary path to follow, in- and out-of-school experiences (i.e. Career and Technical Education, apprenticeships, Dual Enrollment), and the milestones you will need to meet. This process supports clear short-term goals for today and long-term goals for the future.

**4. Find Your Student's Entry Point:** Students can look for "bridge" jobs or part-time roles that allow them to get their foot in the door in an industry, gain work experience, and learn about workplace processes while saving money for further education. For example, a student interested in healthcare might work as a medical assistant or a pharmacy technician, gaining hands-on experience and learning how a clinic or a pharmacy operates while completing relevant certifications or courses.

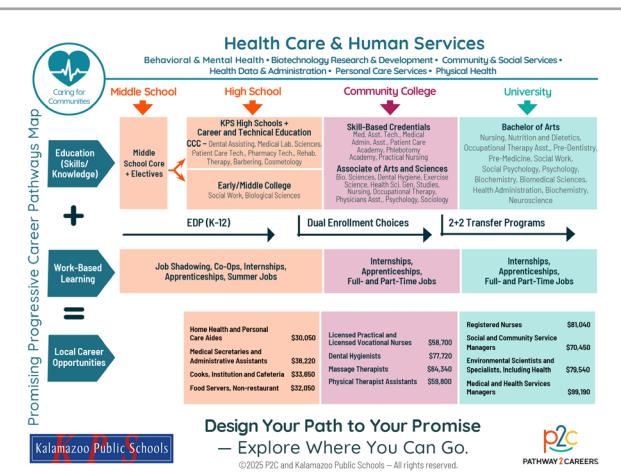
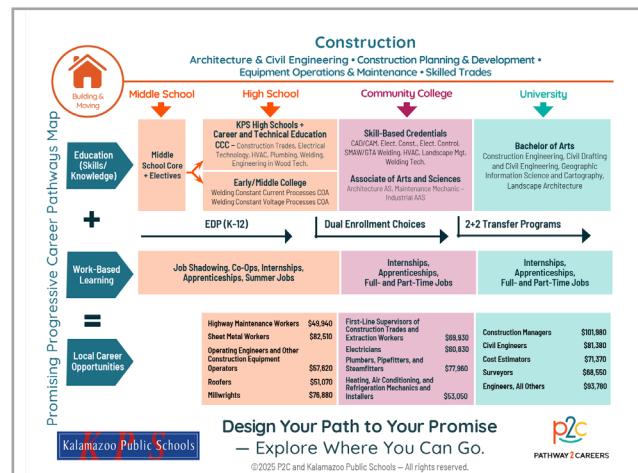


Across the top row, moving from left to right, the education pathways available within a specific career cluster are displayed. These opportunities begin in middle school and continue through high school, then progress into community college programs, university majors, and degrees.

Row two highlights work-based learning opportunities that students can begin exploring in middle school. Activities like job shadowing or volunteering offer an authentic career experience before formal employment. As students get older, these work-based learning opportunities expand, allowing them to gain valuable hands-on skills and experience over time.

The bottom row displays local job examples and their median wages. Notice how earnings typically increase at each level of education (from high school to university). This data helps you strategically choose your postsecondary education pathway by showing whether it provides a clear financial advantage. Explore the Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator for a complete list of occupations, including growth rates, potential wages, projected openings, and other relevant demographic information.

**Try This:** Sit down with your student and select two different career maps. Compare the median wages, education requirements, and long-term career outlook for each option. Then discuss how each pathway aligns with their interests, strengths, and future goals, and help them identify any steps they can take now to get started. Finally, reach out to professionals in the community network that offer job shadowing experiences in a career that interests them or is aligned with their EDP.



## What courses should your student take on their career journey?

Starting in middle school, students can choose elective courses that build their knowledge, skills, and abilities in a specific career field. In high school, they may further this preparation by adding career-connected pathways and dual enrollment, setting them up to pursue postsecondary programs or majors successfully.

- The courses in the top row are required middle school courses, along with electives.
- The courses in the middle row are high school choices that students can make to fulfill graduation requirements while preparing for a future career.
- Along the bottom row are a combination of high school CTE courses you can take, apprenticeship programs and certifications, as well as college-level dual enrollment courses that will help you prepare for a college-level credential or degree. If this is the career field they want to pursue, there are also community college and university majors that provide access to high-value careers in the Kalamazoo community.

## How do students take advantage of college and career exploration resources?

As the first Promise community in the country, your student has access to a wide range of programs and tools designed to help them prepare for and step into rewarding future careers. Whether they plan to pursue a two or four-year degree, attain a certification, or enter into the workforce, these resources can place your student on the *right path in the right direction*. To learn more about any of the resources, click the link to go to a specific page.


**Advanced Manufacturing**  
 Design Your Path to Your Promise — Here's How You Can Get There.

MIDDLE SCHOOL	English Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	World Language	Enrichment	Career Readiness	Elective Focus
	English	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math or Accelerated Math	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	Social Studies	Mandarin Chinese	Physical Ed./Band, Orchestra, or Choir	Life Skills	Tech Smart
	English	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math or Accelerated Math	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	Social Studies	Spanish for Begin. (Elective)	Physical Ed./Band, Orchestra, or Choir	Life Skills	Tech Smart
	English	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math or Algebra	Science/Robotics	Social Studies	Spanish Intermediate	Physical Ed./Band, Orchestra, or Choir	Life Skills	Tech Smart

HIGH SCHOOL	English Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	World Language	Enrichment	Career Readiness	Elective Focus
	English 9 / Honors English	Algebra I and Geometry	Environ. Science & Biology (CEB)	World History	Mandarin Chinese	PE	Tech Smart	
	English 10 / Honors English	Geometry or Algebra II	Biology (DEES) or Chemistry or Physics	US History	Mandarin Chinese	Health	College/Career Readiness	
	English 11 or Honors or AP	Algebra II or Pre-Calculus	Physics or Chemistry or Earth Science	Gov or AP Gov	Mandarin Chinese / French	Drafting	Economics	Band, Orchestra, or Choir and other career-related programs below.
	College Eng. 12 or Honors Eng.	Pre-Calculus or AP Calculus	Astronomy or Geology	Social Studies Elective	Mandarin Chinese / French	Fine Arts	Electronics & Robotics	

Grade	Possible Career-Connected Pathway Choices	Dual Enrollment Courses	Postsecondary Programs/Majors for Occupations in This Career Cluster
9	Computer Science/Software Engineering	Information Technology	• Beginning Computer Skills • Fundamentals of Tech • Fundamentals of Machine Tool Ops • Basics of Mechanical Science • Trends in Manufacturing • CAD Design
10-12	Electronics & Robotics I and II	Drafting: General, Architectural, and Mechanical	• Certificates and Associate's Degrees • Bachelor's and Advanced Degrees • Machinist Certificate • CAD-CAM Certificate • Machine Tool Operator, CDA • CNC Operator, COA • Computer Aided Design, AAS • Engineering Technology, AAS • Machine Tool Tech., AAS
10-12	Computerized Manufacturing	Mechatronics: Robotics & Automation	
11-12	Statistics	Machine Tools	

Kalamazoo Public Schools
©2025 P2C and Kalamazoo Public Schools — All rights reserved.



**Kalamazoo Public Schools**  
 College and Career Awareness & Exploration Resources

**Higher Education**


**Michigan State University**  
 Michigan State University is a public research university located in East Lansing, Michigan.


**Western Michigan University**  
 Western Michigan University is a public research university located in Kalamazoo, Michigan.


**Kalamazoo Valley Community College**  
 Kalamazoo Valley Community College offers a wide range of academic and vocational programs.


**Kalamazoo College**  
 Kalamazoo College offers a wide range of academic and vocational programs.


**KALAMAZOO COLLEGE**  
 Kalamazoo Valley Community College offers a wide range of academic and vocational programs.


**Western Michigan University**  
 Western Michigan University is a public research university located in Kalamazoo, Michigan.


**Kalamazoo Public Schools**  
 Kalamazoo Public Schools is a public school district located in Kalamazoo, Michigan.


**Michigan Department of Education**  
 The Michigan Department of Education is responsible for public education in the state of Michigan.

**Local Career Training Programs**


**Michigan Department of Education**  
 The Michigan Department of Education is responsible for public education in the state of Michigan.


**Michigan Department of Education**  
 The Michigan Department of Education is responsible for public education in the state of Michigan.


**Michigan Department of Education**  
 The Michigan Department of Education is responsible for public education in the state of Michigan.


**Michigan Department of Education**  
 The Michigan Department of Education is responsible for public education in the state of Michigan.


**Michigan Department of Education**  
 The Michigan Department of Education is responsible for public education in the state of Michigan.


**Michigan Department of Education**  
 The Michigan Department of Education is responsible for public education in the state of Michigan.

©2025 P2C and Kalamazoo Public Schools — All rights reserved.



**College & Career Exploration and Resources**

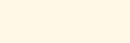

**xello**  
 xello is a platform that helps students explore career options and build their resumes.


**CollegeBoard**  
 CollegeBoard is a non-profit organization that provides test preparation, college admissions, and financial aid services.


**EBSCO Learning**  
 EBSCO Learning provides online platforms for academic skill development, standardized test preparation, and career-oriented digital content.


**careeronestop**  
 careeronestop is a resource for job seekers to explore training and career opportunities.

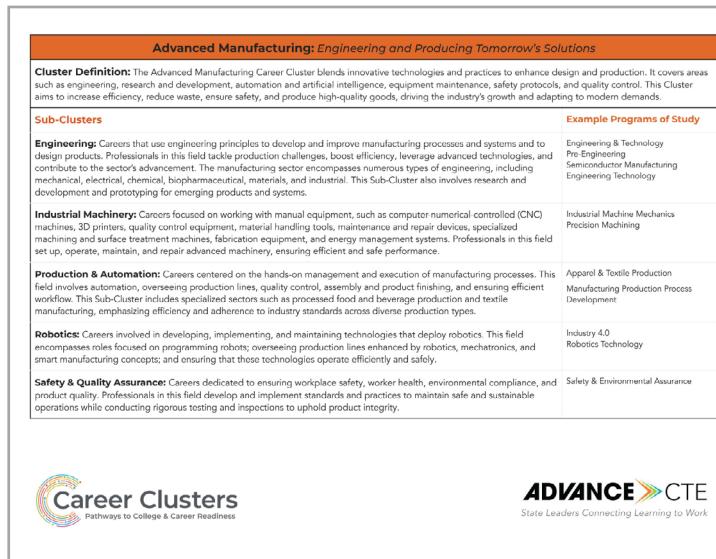
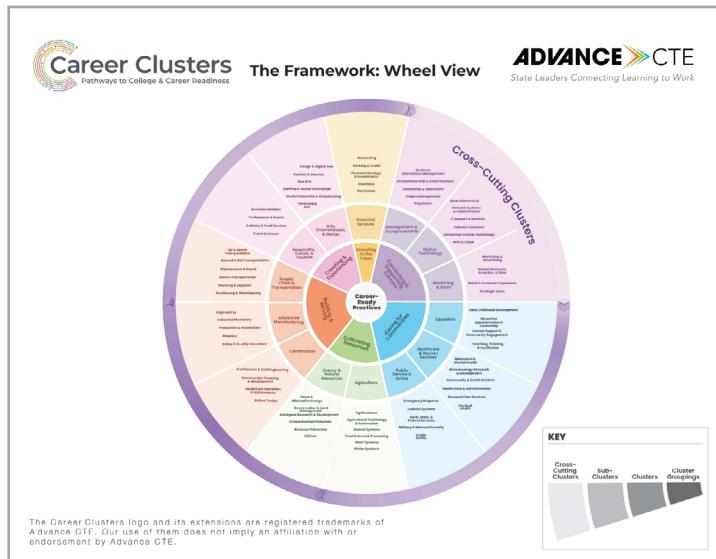

**APPRENTICESHIPUSA**  
 APPRENTICESHIPUSA is a resource for apprenticeship programs.


**ASVAB**  
 ASVAB is a military aptitude battery that measures developed abilities and helps predict future academic and occupational success in the military.

Kalamazoo Public Schools
©2026 by Pathway2Careers. All rights reserved.


## How can I learn more about Career Clusters?

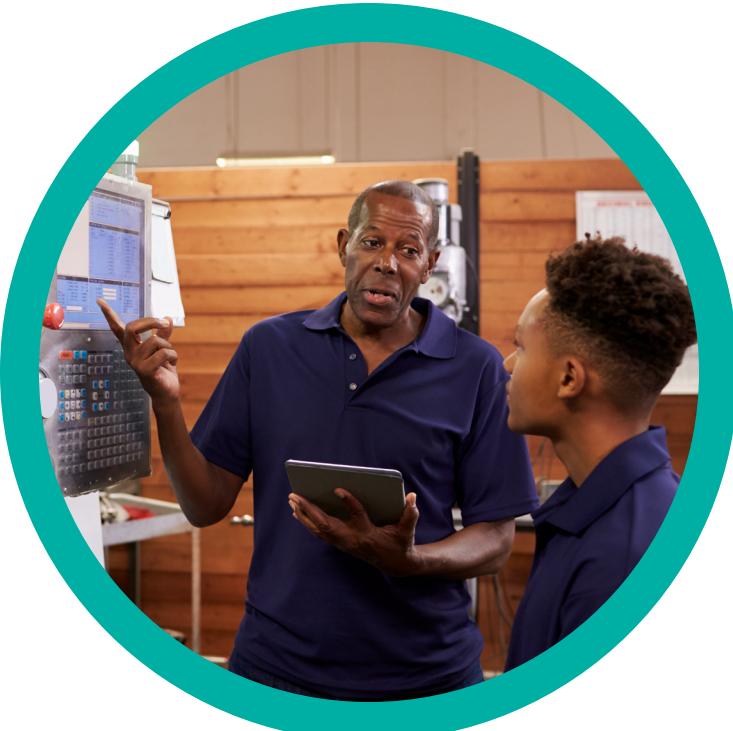
The last two pages are provided by Advance CTE, an organization committed to helping students, teachers, counselors, parents, and employers make connections from school to work. You can see the clusters and the sub-clusters within each cluster, which allow you to understand the varied careers available to you, within the career field you are considering. For instance, if you are interested in the medical field, the Healthcare and Human Services cluster reveals several sub-clusters that go far beyond direct patient care roles like nurses or doctors. This can help you better understand the full range of opportunities available in your community. These pages are also available by clicking on the Cluster icon in the top left corner of pages 1 and 2. The Education Cluster icon is shown as an example.



## Ready to Navigate?

Help your student design their path to their promise today! Engage in career discussions and encourage them to meet with their school counselor or career coach about how to use The Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator to create career goals and plan their middle and high school course schedule.

Explore [The Progressive Promising Pathways Maps](#).



## Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Labor Market	The relationship between the demand for workers by employers and the supply of workers (people seeking jobs) in a specific geographical area (Kalamazoo County)
Workforce Region	A geographic area defined by employment and economic trends, used to organize local labor market data, showing which industries, occupations, and skills are most in demand
Workforce Data	Current information about jobs, such as median wages, the number of existing jobs, and how many jobs are expected to be created (growth)
Job Zone	<p>The level of education required for an occupation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Zone 1 requires less than a high school diploma</li> <li>• Job Zone 2 requires a high school diploma</li> <li>• Job Zone 3 requires an industry certification or a two-year associate's degree</li> <li>• Job Zone 4 requires a four-year bachelor's degree</li> <li>• Job Zone 5 requires a master's or doctorate degree</li> </ul>
High-Demand Occupation	Occupations that are growing or stable in predicted job openings in a specific workforce region
High-Wage	A wage higher than the Michigan median wage of \$46,940
High-Value Occupation	Occupations that are both high-wage and high-demand
Low-Value Occupation	Occupations that are low-wage (below \$46,940) and/or low-demand (unstable growth or below 0%)
Median Wage	The middle point of wage distribution, meaning half of the people working in a specific occupation earn more than this amount, and half earn less
Career Cluster	A grouping of occupations and industries based on similar skills and knowledge
Sub-Cluster	A specific grouping of occupations within a larger Career Cluster that share similar skills
Career Pathways Map	A visual representation that groups jobs based on career cluster and shows the typical progression, from middle and high school required education, career-connected pathways, dual enrollment options, postsecondary programs and majors, work-based learning options, and links to college and career resources
Industry Certification	A formal document (like a license or certificate) proving that a person has specific skills required by an industry, often earned faster and is less expensive than a college degree (e.g., welding certificate, IT certification)
Work-Based Learning	Experiences that combine classroom learning with authentic work experiences to develop career-relevant skills and knowledge. Examples include job shadowing, coops, internships, apprenticeships, and full and part time jobs
The Kalamazoo Promise	A scholarship program for KPS graduates providing up to 100% of tuition for postsecondary education at approved Michigan public institutions
Postsecondary Education	Education or training pursued after high school, including college, career and technical education, military training, and apprenticeships

In partnership with Kalamazoo Public Schools



Pathway2Careers  
200 East Broadway, Suite 215  
Maryville, TN 37804  
[support@p2c.org](mailto:support@p2c.org)

Kalamazoo Public Schools  
1220 Howard Street  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009  
Contact: Dr. Tracy Y. Miller  
[millerty@kalamazoopublicschools.net](mailto:millerty@kalamazoopublicschools.net)