

Kalamazoo Public Schools

**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.

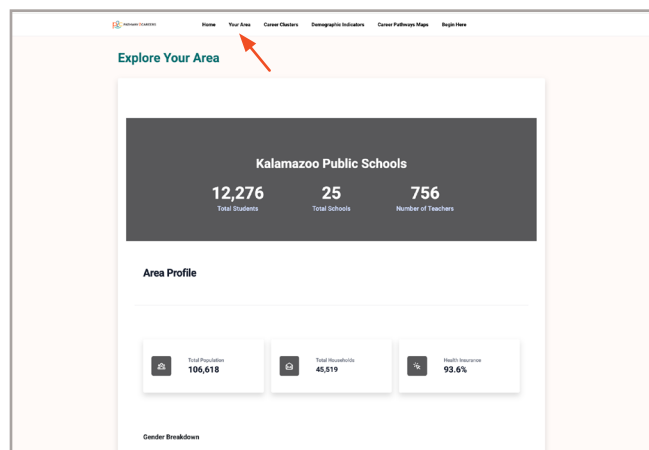
What is the Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator?

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.

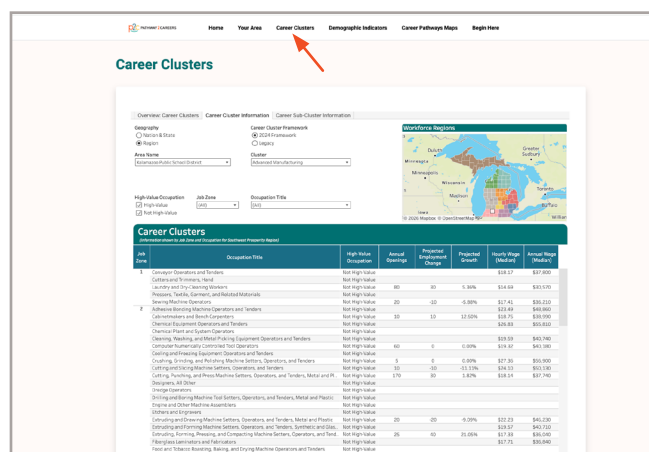
Your Area:

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.



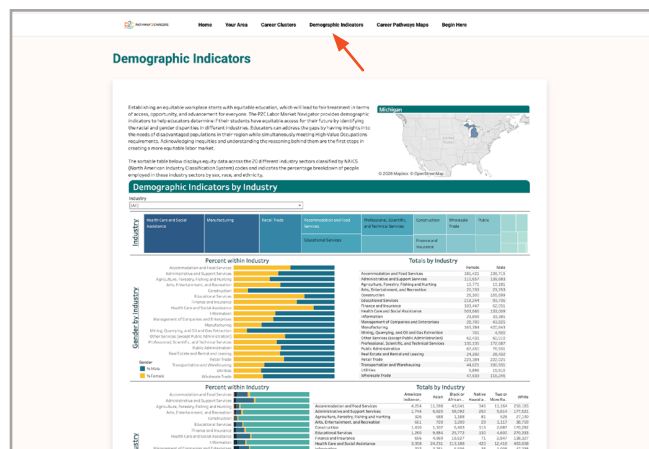
Career Clusters:

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.



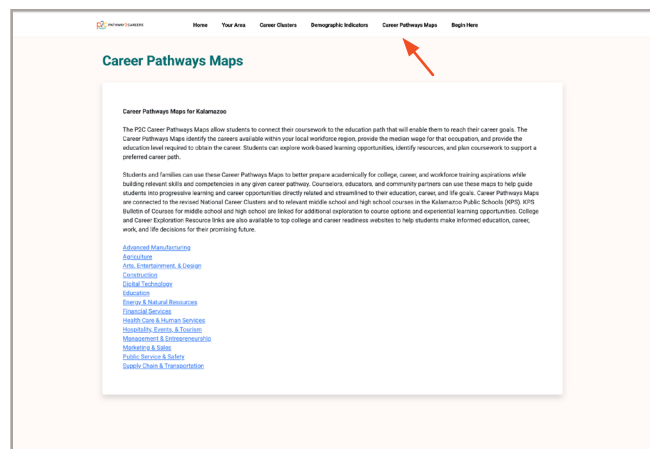
Demographic Indicators:

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.

Promising Progressive Career Pathways Map

Advanced Manufacturing
Engineering • Industrial Machinery • Production & Automation • Robotics • Safety & Quality Assurance

Middle School
Building & Moving
Education (Skills/Knowledge)
Work-Based Learning
Local Career Opportunities

High School
Middle School Core + Electives
Early/Middle College
Machine Tool Technology

Community College
KPS High Schools + Career and Technical Education
CCC - Machine Tool, Mechatronics
Associate of Arts and Sciences
Computer Aided Design, Engineering Technology, Machine Tool Automation, Machine Tool Technology

University
Bachelor Degrees
Manufacturing Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Mechatronics, Robotics, and Automation Engineering, Computer Software Technology

EDP (K-12)
Dual Enrollment Choices
2+2 Transfer Programs

Internships, Apprenticeships, Full- and Part-Time Jobs

Salary Data:

Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters	\$48,890	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	\$63,930	Mechanical Engineers	\$94,430
Welders, Measurers, Checkers, and Samplers	\$53,520	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	\$75,580	Environmental Scientists and Specialists	\$78,540
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	\$39,030	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	\$81,190	Industrial Production Managers	\$109,930
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	\$43,090	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	\$81,080	Electrical Engineers	\$98,630

Design Your Path to Your Promise
— Explore Where You Can Go.

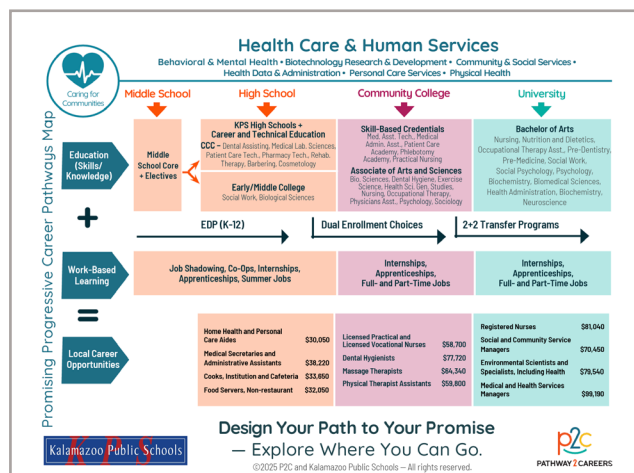
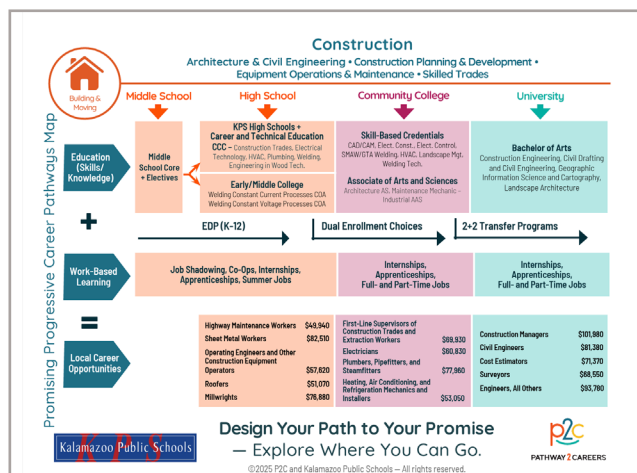
Kalamazoo Public Schools

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P2C
PATHWAY 2 CAREERS

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.

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 courses, 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
	English	8 th Grade Math or Accelerated Math	8 th Grade Science	Social Studies	Mandarin Chinese	Physical Ed./Band, Orchestra, or Choir	Life Skills
	English	7 th Grade Math or Accelerated Math	7 th Grade Science	Social Studies	Spanish for Begin. (Elective)	Physical Ed./Band, Orchestra, or Choir	Life Skills
	English	8 th Grade Math or Algebra	Science/Robotics	Social Studies	Spanish Intermediate	Physical Ed./Band, Orchestra, or Choir	Life Skills
HIGH SCHOOL	English Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	World Language	Enrichment	Career Readiness
	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 (DEE) or Chemistry or Physics	US History	Mandarin Chinese	Health	College/Career Readiness
	English 11 & AP	Algebra II or Pre-Calculus	Physics or Chemistry or Earth Science	Gov or AP Gov	Mandarin Chinese / French	Drafting	Economics
	College Eng. 12 or Honors Eng.	Pre-Calculus or AP Calculus	Astronomy or Geology	Social Studies Elective	Mandarin Chinese / French	Fine Arts	Electronics & Robotics
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		• Certificates and Associate's Degrees	• Bachelor's and Advanced Degrees
10-12	Electronics & Robotics Land II	Drafting: General, Architectural, and Mechanical		• Fundamentals of Tech Drawing		• Machinist Certificate	• Mechanical Engineering
10-12	Computerized Manufacturing	Mechatronics: Robotics & Automation		• Fundamentals of Machine Tool Ops		• CAD-CAM Certificate	• Manufacturing Engineering
11-12	Statistics	Machine Tools		• Basics of Mechanical Science		• Machine Tool Operator, COA	• Industrial Engineering
				• Trends in Manufacturing		• CNC Operator, COA	• Robotics Technology
				• CAD Design		• Computer Aided Design, AAS	• Electrical/Electronic Engineering Technology
						• Engineering Technology, AAS	
						• Machine Tool Tech., AAS	

Kalamazoo Public Schools College and Career Awareness & Exploration Resources

Higher Education

Career Connect
Early/Middle College Programs
Kalamazoo County Early/Middle College (EMC) is an innovative early college program, which gives students the opportunity to earn an associate degree or certificate with an additional year of high school.

Kalamazoo Valley Community College
Kalamazoo Valley Community College seeks to provide every student with clear, flexible program options that provide a mix of educational skills and experiences that will prepare students for advanced coursework at top universities and meaningful opportunities for employment in a changing world.

Kalamazoo College
Kalamazoo College offers qualified high school students the opportunity to enroll in courses while concurrently enrolled in high school during the fall, winter, and spring terms.

Western Michigan University
Dual enrollment through Early College Programs at WMU provides eligible high school students with credits that may be applied toward high school graduation requirements, as well as a college or university program.

The Kalamazoo Promise
Choosing a career path is one of the biggest and most important decisions you'll ever make. The good news is that The Promise is here to help you find and pursue the career path that fits you best.

Local Career Training Programs

Career Launch Kalamazoo
This modernized Youth Apprenticeship Program that provides flexible occupational training programs that cultivate well-educated, highly skilled workers able to meet the demands of a competitive global economy in careers that are in high demand.

Kalamazoo BLSS Career Connect Campus
New in the 2025-2026 school year, students will have the opportunity to participate in programs at the Career Connect Campus (CCC). The inaugural class of students at the CCC will learn from industry experts in a new, state-of-the-art facility.

Teach Kalamazoo
Kalamazoo's Grow Your Own (GYO) Teacher Residency program includes apprenticeships and numerous on-ramps into the teaching profession for undergraduate and graduate students, staff, parents, paraprofessionals, for anyone with an existing bachelor's degree, and/or anyone who is interested in entering the honorable and fulfilling profession of teaching.

Labor Market Tools

Michigan Pathfinder
Pathfinder uses current labor market, wage, and institutional data and metrics to help you create an individualized career roadmap. This free tool provides information to students, parents, and guidance staff to make informed choices about educational and career options.

Pure Michigan Talent Connect
Michigan's free online career exploration tool that provides information on in-demand careers and the degrees or credentials needed to pursue them.

College & Career Exploration and Resources

xello
Xello Career Exploration
Kalamazoo Public Schools uses the Xello platform so students in grades 6-12 can build self-knowledge and explore options beyond high school.

Michigan Career Development Model
The Michigan Career Development Model (MCDM) is a framework, guided by legislation that engages school communities, students, and their support networks in intentional and meaningful career awareness, exploration, and preparation.

ADVANCE CTE
Advance CTE National Career Clusters Framework
The National Career Clusters® Framework provides a shared structure and language for CTE program design across the United States. The new framework provides meaningful career exploration and preparation experiences through Career Technical Education (CTE) that prepare students for the changing and interconnected world of work.

Michigan Pathfinder
Pathfinder provides valuable information to help students make informed choices about educational and career options.

O*NET Online
O*Net provides a collection of resources to inform students' career and career journey: a Career Exploration Tool, O*NET Interest Profiler, My Next Move, Career One Stop, and Get My Future.

FAFSA
Need some financial assistance to pursue higher education? Click here to access the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to explore what financial aid and programs are available to you.

CollegeBoard
SAT (SAT - College Board)
The SAT and PSAT are standardized tests meant to show colleges and universities how prepared students are for college by measuring key skills like reading comprehension, computational ability, and clarity of expression.

EBSCO Learning Express
EBSCO LearningExpress provides online platforms for academic skill building, standardized test preparation, and career-oriented digital content. It helps students prepare for college, explore careers, and accelerate their journey into careers.

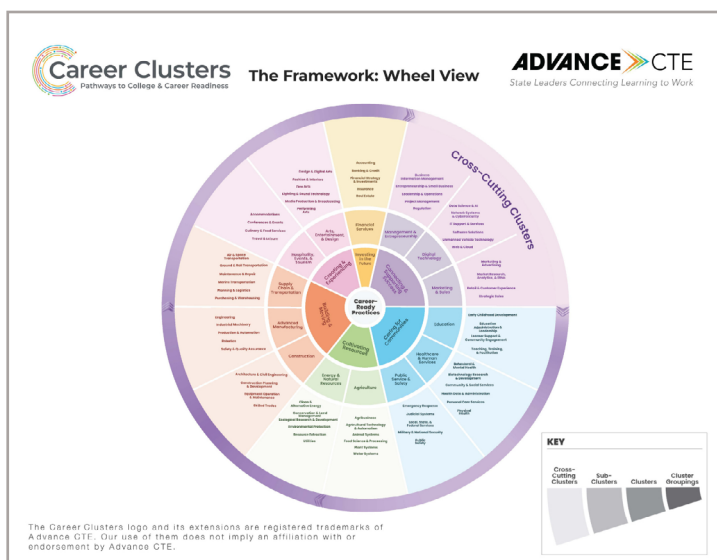
Credential Center
Credentials demonstrate for employers that job candidates have specific skills or knowledge in an occupation, industry, or technology. This site helps students explore training associated with certifications and credentials.

Apprenticeship USA
Discover apprenticeships across industries, how programs are started by employers, and how to become an apprentice.

ASVAB Career Exploration
The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is a multiple aptitude battery that measures developed abilities and helps predict future academic and occupational success in the military.

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.



Advanced Manufacturing: Engineering and Producing Tomorrow's Solutions	
Cluster Definition: The Advanced Manufacturing Career Cluster blends innovative technologies and practices to enhance design and production. It covers areas such as engineering, research and development, automation and artificial intelligence, equipment maintenance, safety protocols, and quality control. This Cluster aims to increase efficiency, reduce waste, ensure safety, and produce high-quality goods, driving the industry's growth and adapting to modern demands.	
Sub-Clusters	Example Programs of Study
Engineering: Careers that use engineering principles to develop and improve manufacturing processes and systems and to design products. Professionals in this field tackle production challenges, boost efficiency, leverage advanced technologies, and contribute to the sector's advancement. The manufacturing sector encompasses numerous types of engineering, including mechanical, electrical, chemical, biomedical, materials, and industrial. This Sub-Cluster also involves research and development and prototyping for emerging products and systems.	Engineering & Technology Pre-Engineering Semiconductor Manufacturing Engineering Technology
Industrial Machinery: Careers focused on working with manual equipment, such as computer numerical controlled (CNC) machines, 3D printers, quality control equipment, material handling tools, maintenance and repair devices, specialized machining and surface treatment machines, fabrication equipment, and energy management systems. Professionals in this field set up, operate, maintain, and repair advanced machinery, ensuring efficient and safe performance.	Industrial Machine Mechanics Precision Machining
Production & Automation: Careers centered on the hands-on management and execution of manufacturing processes. This field involves automation, overseeing production lines, quality control, assembly and product finishing, and ensuring efficient workflow. This Sub-Cluster includes specialized sectors such as processed food and beverage production and textile manufacturing, emphasizing efficiency and adherence to industry standards across diverse production types.	Apparel & Textile Production Manufacturing Production Process Development
Robotics: Careers involved in developing, implementing, and maintaining technologies that deploy robotics. This field encompasses roles focused on programming robots; overseeing production lines enhanced by robotics, mechatronics, and smart manufacturing concepts; and ensuring that these technologies operate efficiently and safely.	Industry 4.0 Robotics Technology
Safety & Quality Assurance: Careers dedicated to ensuring workplace safety, worker health, environmental compliance, and product quality. Professionals in this field develop and implement standards and practices to maintain safe and sustainable operations while conducting rigorous testing and inspections to uphold product integrity.	Safety & Environmental Assurance

Career Clusters Pathways to College & Career Readiness

ADVANCE CTE State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

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	The level of education required for an occupation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Zone 1 requires less than a high school diploma • Job Zone 2 requires a high school diploma • Job Zone 3 requires an industry certification or a two-year associate's degree • Job Zone 4 requires a four-year bachelor's degree • Job Zone 5 requires a master's or doctorate degree
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

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