



Design Your Path to Your Promise



Student User Guide

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

Welcome to Your Future!

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

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 do I use the Labor Market Navigator (LMN) for Kalamazoo Public Schools to Maximize the Kalamazoo Promise?

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

Benefit	What It Means for You
Clarity	Stop guessing. Know which jobs are growing, what they pay, and the credentials required or degrees employers are seeking.
Goal-Focused Education	You can select a CTE or other program of study that leads to strong, in-demand careers in the Kalamazoo region.
Control	You become the driver of your educational choices. Use the data to choose courses, internships, apprenticeships, and certifications/degrees that align to your goals.
Smarter Course Selection	When a career path requires a specific certification or degree (such as 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	Feel secure in your post-high school decisions, whether you choose to go to college or technical school or start your post-high school career. You can also do both.
Efficient Time Management	Since the Kalamazoo Promise funds are available for a fixed period after graduation, the maps help students plan their educational and progressive career path from start to finish and guide them in adjusting along the way.
Connection to the Kalamazoo Promise	You can maximize the benefits of The Kalamazoo Promise by making smart, informed decisions about progressive course pathways and relevant experiences in planning your future career.

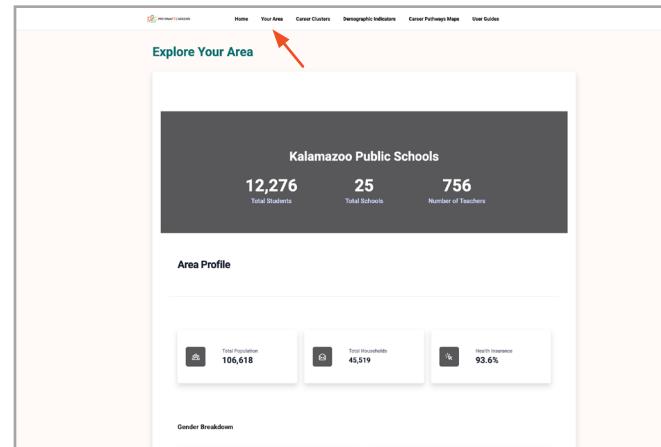
What is the Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator?

The Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator (LMN) is an online resource designed just for you, a student 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.

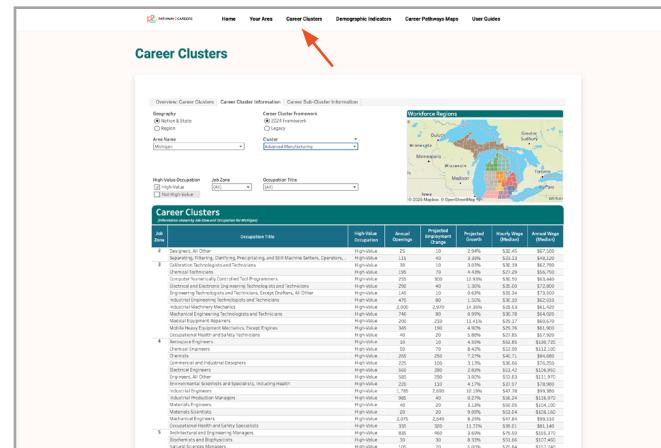
Your Area:

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.



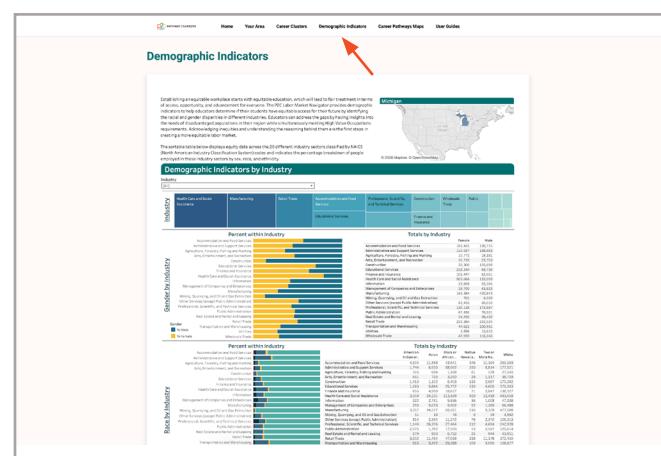
Career Clusters:

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 gives students a clear view of the local workforce by showing 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.

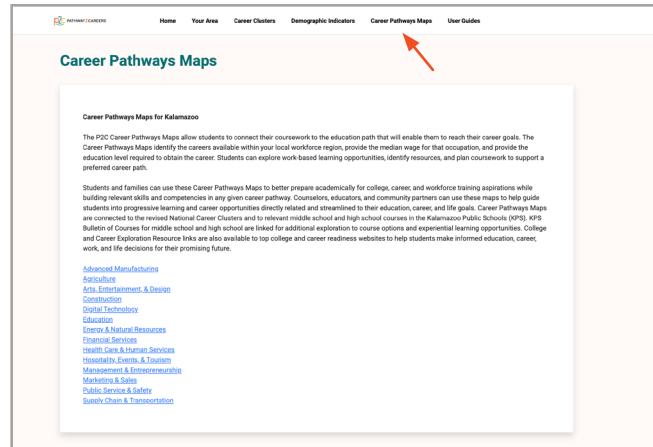


Career Pathways Maps:

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.

To access the Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator, visit:

<https://dashboard.pathway2careers.com/kalamazoopublicschools/>



Preparation Starts Now

Why is early career preparation critical?

Preparing early opens doors to valuable skills and connections that help students confidently enter the world of work. Early preparation supports:

- **Closing the Skills Gap:** Many high-value careers, such as information technology and construction, require specialized technical expertise rather than a four-year degree. The earlier you identify these pathways, the sooner you can prepare by choosing the right CTE program of study, certifications, or work-based learning experiences.
- **Maximizing Your Time:** High school is the perfect time to explore career fields risk-free through job shadowing, summer jobs, electives, clubs, and extracurriculars. The LMN and Kalamazoo Promising Progressive Career Pathways Maps help you 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 the students directly into the workforce after the apprenticeship is completed.
- **Securing Your Financial Future:** Getting an early start on your career means you can reach financial independence faster. Knowing the typical entry-level and median wages allows you to set clear, achievable salary and lifestyle goals.



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

Why Use Local Workforce Data?

Because employers in your community need your talent and skills!

Bottom Line: Using local workforce data ensures your 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 you connect your 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 you to plan your studies, seek in- and out-of-school experiences, find resources, and explore work-based learning opportunities.

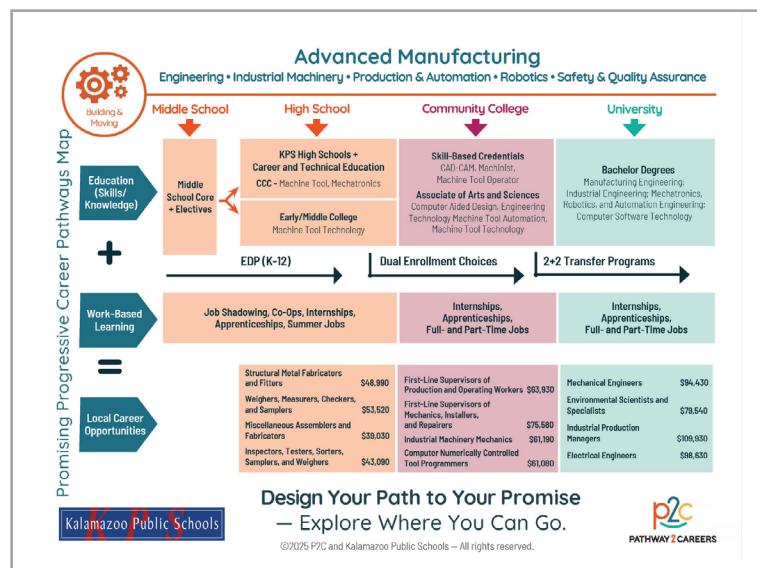
Every map is built around three key elements:



- **Job Titles & Median Wages:** See the specific job titles available in that field, along with the median annual salary.
- **Education Requirements:** Know exactly what kind of education you need—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 show you multiple entry points. You don't always need a four-year degree to get started! Many pathways promote "earn and learn" by working in a part-time job or apprenticeship while continuing your education.

How do I Use the Kalamazoo Promising Progressive Career Pathways Maps?

1. **Explore by Cluster:** Start with a career cluster that aligns to your EDP (e.g., Agriculture, Construction, Marketing & Sales).
2. **Identify the Target Career Pathway:** Explore career pathways that offer strong earning potential and promising growth in the region. Select the role that best matches your interests, personality, and long-term goals, which becomes your destination as you map out the education and training steps needed to get there.
3. **Trace the Steps Backwards:** 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 Entry Point:** Look for the "bridge" jobs, the part-time roles that let you get your foot in the door in an industry and gain experience while you save money for further education.



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.

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

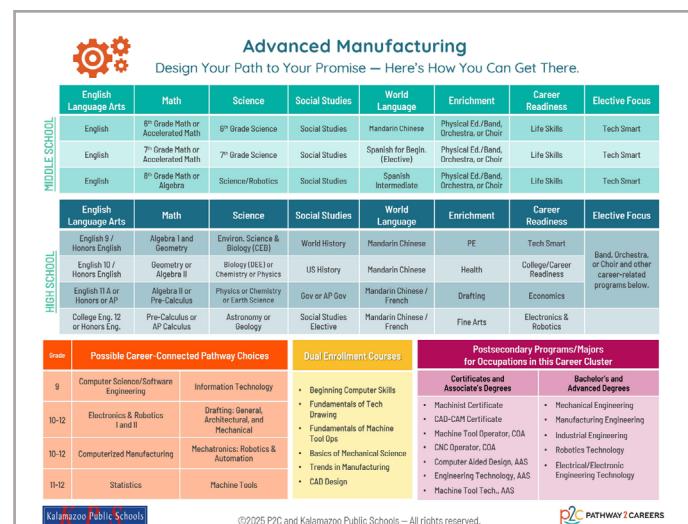
median wages. Notice how earnings typically increase at each level of education (from high school to university). This data helps you strategically choose your postsecondary education pathway by showing whether it provides a clear financial advantage. Explore the Kalamazoo Labor Market Navigator for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

Try This: Choose two different career maps and compare the median wages, education requirements, and long-term career outlook. Then explore how these careers align with your EDP and future career interests. Consider updating your EDP by selecting one short-term and one long-term career goal that connect to these pathways and identify the courses or experiences you will pursue next.

What courses should I take on my career journey?

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

- The courses in the top row are required middle school courses, along with electives. To view the full Middle School Course Catalog, click on the words "Middle School" on the left side of the page.
- The courses in the middle row are high school choices that you can make along the way to fulfill graduation requirements and prepare for a future career. To view the full High School Catalog, click on the words, "High School" on the left side of the page.
- 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 you want to pursue, there are also community college and university majors that will allow you to access high-value careers in the Kalamazoo community.



How do I take advantage of college and career exploration resources?

As the first Promise community in the country, you have access to a wide range of programs and tools designed to help you prepare for and step into rewarding careers in the future. Whether you plan to pursue a two or four-year degree, attain a certification, or enter into the workforce, these resources can place you 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.

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?

Begin designing your future now. Engage in career conversations with your parent, guardian, school counselor or career coach about how to incorporate the data you find into your middle and high school course schedule.

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

Kalamazoo Public Schools College and Career Awareness & Exploration Resources

Higher Education

Career Connect

Explore | Page 1 | Page 2

Kalamazoo Valley Community College

Kalamazoo Valley Community College

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

More in Your Future

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Western Michigan University

KALAMAZOO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Michigan Pathfinders

The Kalamazoo Promise

Michigan Pathfinders

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">• 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



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