



CAREER NAVIGATION SYSTEM

A New District Wide Approach to Early Career Exploration & Planning

Co-Authored by: Duncan Young, CEO Envision Experience and Andrew Potter, CAO Envision Experience

Let's be honest—goal setting and long term planning are not strong suits of the adolescent brain. Teenagers, more than anyone, need support in engaging in what we call Early Career Exploration and Planning (ECEP.) ECEP means ensuring that every young person has the support they need to translate their passions into a possible future career. But there's more to success than planning—when done effectively, ECEP helps students set achievable short term and long terms goals, building plans that lead to these goals, while tracking progress along the way.

Of course most teenagers aren't rolling out of bed in the morning with career planning on their mind. But those that *are* thinking about their future are facing a much more complex world than ever before, and typically sum up their career planning efforts in one word: confusion.¹ **As we approach a decade in which 65% of all jobs will require some level of post-secondary education² but where 92% of current executives believe that there is a serious gap in workforce skills,³** we need to think through how we support students with career planning, including the development of a new agile framework and set of tools that meet the challenges of a new 21st century global environment.

To better understand this combination of challenges for next gen leaders, here's a personal story from one of us (we won't say which one) that illustrates the journey. It all started with a trip to school...

I am infamous among my family for a lack of any kind of sense of direction. Hardly a holiday goes by without parents and brothers recounting the story of how, as a 16 year old new driver at the wheel, we got lost on the one mile trip from our house to school. (Dual strategies during these holiday gatherings of repeated denials and attempts to change the subject never seem to work.) Apparently the development of an internal compass can be stunted some time in early childhood.

These 16 year-old directional challenges were a mere glimpse of what was to come behind the wheel and even in life.

As I got older, things got a bit more complicated. First, there were more destinations as my travel radius expanded outside of my hometown and into surrounding cities and states- no longer was it about finding the way to school, it was about navigating Washington DC, beltway traffic and now a 500 mile journey between home and school. Secondly, I began traveling on new roads that had more traffic and more competition for limited highway space. Thirdly, I traded in my tried and true space age grey Dodge Aries K for a slick new Honda Civic SI (with tinted windows), and learned new skills as the technology around me evolved in my new ride. And finally, as my circle expanded the familiar landmarks I had relied on disappeared and I no longer knew what my ultimate destination actually looked like.

¹ Malgorzata Kuczera and Simon Field. 2013. "A Skills Beyond School Review of the United States." OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training. Kuczera and Field argue that the plethora of career choices and the diversity of routes to these choices is one of the three primary barriers to career success in the United States.

² Anthony P. Carnevale, et al. June 2013. "Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020." Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University.

³ Adecco. October 2013. "The Skills Gap and the State of the Economy".

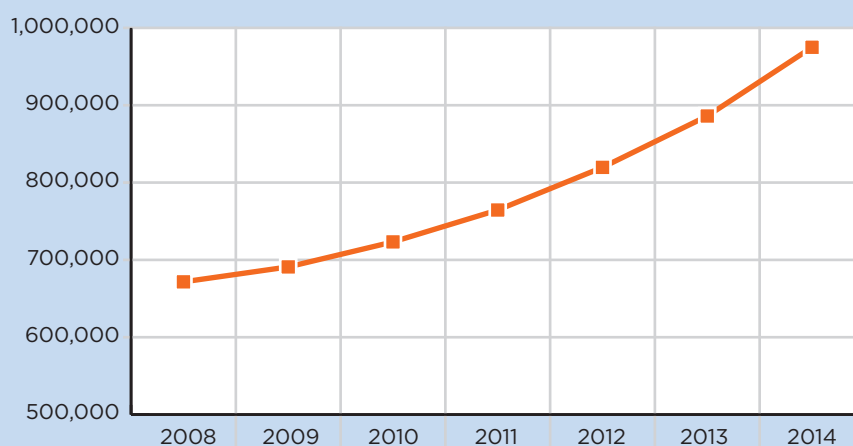
In a lot of ways, these challenges in navigating an expanded driving universe mirror the challenges that today's students face in navigating an expanding career universe. Let's consider the parallels:

- In the same way that a new driver needs guidance and learns to navigate new destinations, today's students need the right tools to navigate a wider array of career choices than ever before. Many of the careers on which our economy has been based for generations are becoming obsolete and being replaced by industries, technological solutions, and specific roles that did not even exist 10 years ago.

One recent study even argues that **47% of total U.S. jobs are at risk of being automated within the next twenty years.**⁴

- Just as drivers jostle for highway space, students are traveling on increasingly crowded and competitive highways for future earning potential. In the new global economy today's students will not just be competing with other US students but also with non-US students who are increasingly highly qualified. They will be entering a globalizing workforce—the trends of outsourcing and offshoring are only accelerating. **In fact, nearly one million international students now study in the United States on an annual basis, competing for both seats in post-secondary institutions and jobs at leading corporations.**⁵

International Students Enrolled in U.S. Post Secondary Institutions (2008-2014)



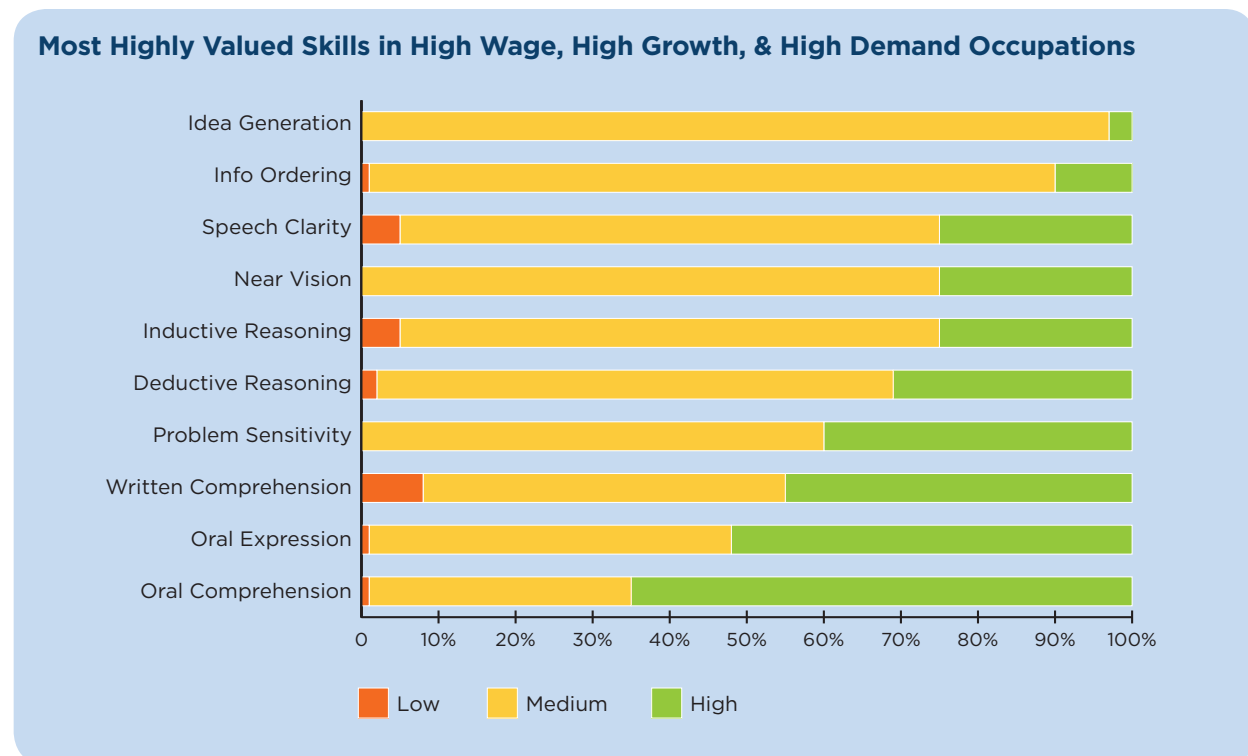
- The challenge that a driver has in visualizing a destination in the absence of familiar landmarks has a parallel in the lack of true “hands on” exposure to different careers that we provide to our students. Many students are “flying blind” and choosing careers without a full understanding of what they are getting into. When it goes wrong, the results can be emotionally catastrophic—as students get stuck in careers they don't enjoy and for which they have no passion. Beyond the emotional costs, how many of you know of (or are) a parent who spent more than \$100K on a degree that served only to confirm what your child *didn't* want to do with their life? Recent research from the Lumina Foundation found that not only do students lack clear pathways to credentials that lead to careers, these students also lack the information to evaluate the relevance of those credentials in a dynamic career environment.⁶
- Lastly, young drivers are not only learning new driving and navigation skills simultaneously—they are doing it fast while surrounded by evolving technology. There are parallels in the new skills that students entering the workforce now need for success. Functional or job-specific knowledge is no longer enough as non-cognitive skills like teamwork, written and verbal communication, collaborative problem solving, analytics

⁴ Carl Frey and Michael Osborne. 2013. “The Future of Employment.” A paper presented at Oxford University Engineering Sciences Department and the Oxford Martin Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology for hosting the “Machines and Employment” Workshop.

⁵ Institute of International Education. (2015). “International Student Enrollment Trends, 1948/49-2014/15.” *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>

⁶ Lumina Foundation. 2015. “Connecting Credentials: Making the Case for Reforming the U.S. Credentialing System”.

and creativity become more and more critical. **Recent research conducted by the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce found that communication and critical thinking skills dominated the top 6 of the top 10 valued skills in the most desirable occupations.**⁷



In short, students entering the workforce in the next ten years are going to have a tougher time than their parents did when it comes to navigating their career paths and competing for a career that aligns with their passions and skills. While districts are deeply vested in helping students navigate their future (and many do an amazing job with this work), current career development tools and approaches often aren't sufficient to prepare students for the real challenges they will face.

This gap is primarily due to five factors:

1. Career readiness often gets stuck in the “no man’s land” that lies between “college readiness” and CTE. As a result, efforts on career exploration and preparation take a back seat to these two more established categories around which districts organize efforts.
2. District career planning initiatives are typically not well resourced, and often fall onto the plate of a school’s already overworked guidance counselor, not well organized, and not well resourced.
3. Career exploration efforts often over-rely on the administration of the tried and true career aptitude assessment, but there isn’t enough of a systematic process- either in setting the stage for the assessment or helping the student interpret the results - for it to be useful.
4. There are rarely any kind of systematic in-district programming to expose students to various careers and give them a chance to glean insights from and talk to professionals from various fields so they can make an informed career planning decision.
5. With all the scholastic challenges students face there is very little focus on helping students set good career goals and track their objectives to meaningful results.

In most cases, we’re actually helping students find their career path with the equivalent of an old-school, fold-up map, while what they really need is an evolving GPS.

⁷ Carnevale, June 2013.

The Career Navigation System—a Best Practice Framework for Early Career Exploration

There is an opportunity to throw out the “map” of traditional career planning approaches, and replace it with a modern “GPS” style navigation framework for students. **We call it a Career Navigation System or a CNS.**

So what is a CNS? This isn’t any one tool- instead, it’s a framework for how leading districts around the country are beginning to plan and organize and focus their strategy and efforts around early career exploration and planning.

Implementing a CNS involves four distinct phases:

- **Phase 1:** *Focus, A Plan and a Systematic Approach.* To be successful, early career exploration and planning needs to get focus within a district. It can no longer be treated as the inferior kid brother to college readiness and CTE but instead needs to be placed on par with these important areas and properly resourced. Once focus is established and a strong champion identified, a simple plan with clearly defined goals should be created. And while the initiative needs focus, don’t neglect getting buy-in. We recommend a guided in-service day as a Career Exploration “kick off” to present key data and plans around critical career readiness issues paired with a measurable plan.
- **Phase 2:** *A Facilitated Approach to Helping Students Find Their Passion.* Career aptitude tests (like Holland’s Vocational Inventory) are useful tools, but need proper explanation prior to administration as well as the support of trained facilitators to help them properly interpret the data.
- **Phase 3:** *Opportunities for Hands On Career Exploration.* Too often we ask students to think about careers in the abstract, without giving them the opportunities to talk to professionals from a given field or better yet get hands on experience trying out a specific job. A great way to address this is an in-district Career Exploration Forum (which could range from a half day to a 3 day session spanning a weekend), in which students have a chance to really explore options, hear speakers from different career fields and have a “rotational” experience getting hands on experience with different jobs.

Programming like this can be done by districts themselves, or provided by an external partner (our organization, for example, offers this kind of programming via Carpe Futurum Career Exploration Forums.) For aspirational students who seek a deeper experience, Envision offers summer programs targeted at offering hands-on career experience in a variety of professional fields like medicine, law, and engineering—these are amazing programs for serious students. The intensive summer programs take place on college campuses and can be costly, however, so many districts choose to send a smaller number of students to these as part of a talent recognition program for high achievers.

- **Phase 4:** *Support in setting good goals and tools for follow up.* A hands-on career exploration experience might ignite a student’s passion, but at the end of the day that passion needs to be translated into objectives, goals and an achievable plan. Districts can provide much more support to students in helping them set good goals and just as importantly need to provide them with ongoing support on tracking progress against those goals. Of course, the support of guidance counselors in this process is often imperative but technology has great potential to scale and extend these efforts to help more students and track progress.

For example, our organization, is currently beta testing an app –the Envision Career Navigator, which houses a student’s career plan and sends them alerts, reminders, content and resources that help them stay on track.

We’re entering a complicated new super-highway for students navigating their paths to future success with career exploration and planning. It’s time to make career exploration and planning a focus area for districts looking to measure meaningful results by rethinking, re-imagining and investing in strategies and a framework for that success. An effective ECEP plan will minimize the number of students who get lost on the way to their dream career. (Directions to school not included.)



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About Envision

Envision helps students turn their career and life aspirations into reality. Since 1985, Envision programs have served more than 800,000 students from more than 145 countries, with programs designed to connect high aspiring students with the leadership, scholarship, and career skills needed to succeed in today’s competitive college and career landscape; providing unique, real world experiences that enable students to discover their passion, try out a future career, and positively impact the world around them.