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# REPORT<sub>to</sub> PARENTS

## Exposing Children to Career Choices

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” Upon hearing this question, chances are that your children have no firm ideas about what they want to be or do—but it’s never too early to help them explore all the options out there. Now, more than ever, children are seeing that there’s nothing that they can’t achieve.

**Get them involved.** From Scouts to Boys and Girls Clubs, there are wonderful after-school organizations that help children learn and grow. Many bring in guest speakers to talk about their careers and take field trips to “work sites” ranging from fire stations to hospitals.

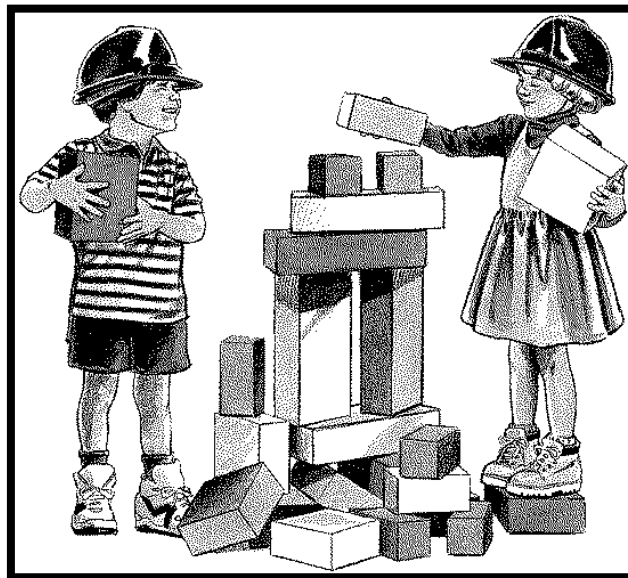
**Read all about it.** School and public libraries are stocked with books for children that introduce them to interesting careers. Check out titles like *When I Grow Up*, *See What You Can Be*, *Jobs People Do*, *Career Day*, and don’t forget Dr. Seuss’ inspiring *Oh the Places You’ll Go*. Online, visit [www.khake.com/page64.html](http://www.khake.com/page64.html), which offers career exploration guides and resources for younger students.

**Have the “tools” on hand.** Children can’t know if they’re good at something unless they try it. By having a wide variety of supplies available, your children can explore different skills, while having fun in the process. Calculators, math puzzles and games, and building sets are appealing to those who might end up in math or engineering careers. Toy medical kits and a supply of Band-Aids are always a hit, and can light a fire in future health professionals’ lives. Art supplies, craft kits, and musical instruments may spur an interest in the arts. Check for low-cost used items at thrift stores or garage sales.

**Help them start their own businesses.** While the days of newspaper routes and lemonade stands are fading fast, there are many ways kids can try out the world of work. With your supervision,

your children could launch a pet-sitting or leaf-raking business, sell homemade crafts or baked goods, or earn cash working as “mother’s helpers.” Help them track how much they’re spending to advertise their services, show them how to set a financial goal, mark their progress toward it, and celebrate their successes.

**Talk about your job.** Many parents have jobs that their kids can’t really comprehend. They might only know that you work in an office building or a store. If you can, participate in Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day (held every April) so they can see what a work environment is like. Talk to them about the education and training you needed to get your job.



**Keep them balanced.** It’s tempting for parents to see a talent in their child and focus just on that. But the most successful people in life have a wide variety of interests and abilities. Be proud and encouraging of your young artist’s work, for example, but make sure he or she also does well in math, science, reading, and other areas. Enjoy your youngster’s computer wizardry, but make sure he or she also learns about art and music,

books and science, and the fun and team-building of sports and activities.

**Be realistic.** Many children want to grow up to be professional athletes, rock stars, famous actors, or the president. While shooting for the stars is wonderful, and you should encourage all of their hard work to succeed, help them also realize that the competition for those superstar positions is fierce. Help them expand their dreams to include their ideal job as well as other related careers. If your child is aching to be a pro football player, for example, make sure he or she also knows about careers in physical therapy, sports medicine, physical education teaching, coaching, sports law, and other jobs related to sports.