



CAREER EXPLORATION

CTE Pathway Connector

Help students connect the CTE learning already happening on their campus with careers and multiple paths after high school.

TIME NEEDED	AUDIENCE	FORMAT
15–20 minutes	Grades 9 to 12	Individual + reflection

About the activity

The CTE Pathway Connector is a short reflection and research activity. Students start with the pathway, academy, program, or course sequence their school actually uses, identify skills they are building, connect those skills to their Career Clues result, and investigate career and postsecondary possibilities.

EDUCATOR FILE | Keep this guide for facilitation. Assign students the separate CTE Pathway Connector Student Activity file.

Quick tip for educators

Keep the activity exploratory. A CTE pathway can open multiple career directions, and the same career may have more than one preparation route. Students should verify current requirements rather than assume every route applies.

Students will

1. Identify two or three transferable skills they are developing through their CTE pathway.
2. Connect their CTE experience with their Career Clues direction without treating either as a final answer.
3. Investigate three careers that connect to their pathway or the skills they are building.
4. Verify possible education or training routes for one career and choose one practical next step.

Student activity

Assign the separate CTE Pathway Connector Student Activity. Students can complete it independently or with light educator support, using their own campus CTE pathway as the starting point for broader career and postsecondary exploration.

5. Write the name of the CTE pathway, academy, program, or course sequence your school actually uses.
6. Name two or three skills you are building and give a real example from class, a lab, project, student organization, or work-based learning experience.
7. Compare your pathway with your Career Clues direction and note where they overlap or point to different possibilities.
8. Investigate three careers, then choose one to verify possible education or training routes and one next step.

Take the next step

Keep the activity focused. Students do not need to map every possible career or program; one credible option and one useful next question are enough.

NEXT STEP · CONVERSATION | Ask a CTE teacher or counselor

Bring one career or program you found and ask what local courses, credentials, employers, or postsecondary partners connect to it.

NEXT STEP · RESEARCH | Compare one postsecondary route

Look at one college, technical program, apprenticeship, credential, or employer-training option that actually prepares people for the career you chose.

NEXT STEP · EXPERIENCE | Look for work-based learning

Explore a job shadow, internship, employer visit, career event, volunteer role, or other experience that would help you learn what the work is really like.

Explore more

Students can use the same reflection later when their pathway, interests, or plans change. The goal is to keep expanding what they can see from the skills they are building now.

Use the pathway name your school uses

Pathway names and structures vary. Students do not need to translate a local or state pathway into a national framework to complete this activity.

Verify requirements before recording them

Education, training, certification, licensing, and age requirements can vary by career, employer, and state. Use current, reliable sources when those details matter.

Educator guide highlights

A simple 15- to 20-minute flow that keeps the student's own CTE experience at the center and uses Career Clues as a second lens.

Time	Step	Student action	Educator move
2 min	Start	Write the pathway, academy, program, or course sequence the school actually uses.	Use the local name. Do not require students to translate it into a national framework.
4 min	Identify	Name two or three skills and give an example of where each skill shows up in the pathway.	Prompt for evidence from classwork, labs, projects, student organizations, or work-based learning.
3 min	Connect	Compare the pathway with the student's Career Clues direction.	Ask where the two overlap and where they open different possibilities.
6–10 min	Investigate	Explore three careers; verify preparation routes for one; choose one next step.	Keep the scope narrow. Ask what is supported by a current source and what still needs to be checked.

Lesson at a glance

Grade level: 9–12

Time: 15–20 minutes

Best for: CTE classes, career exploration, advisory, counseling, and individual planning

Materials: CTE Pathway Connector student activity, Career Clues result, and access to current career/program information

Prep time: About 5 minutes

Facilitation notes

9. Use the pathway, academy, program, or course-sequence name the student's school actually uses.
10. Treat Career Clues and the student's CTE pathway as starting points for exploration, not prescriptions.
11. Do not assume every career has a four-year, two-year, certificate, apprenticeship, and direct-to-workforce route.
12. Ask students to record only preparation routes they can verify with current, reliable information.
13. If a pathway name is unfamiliar, use the school or district description before making assumptions about what it includes.

Assign the separate student activity

Assignment title

CTE Pathway Connector: From Pathway to Possibilities

Ready-to-paste assignment directions

Complete the CTE Pathway Connector Student Activity. Start with the CTE pathway, academy, program, or course sequence your school uses. Identify skills you are building, compare them with your Career Clues direction, investigate three careers, verify possible preparation routes for one career, and choose one next step. Submit the completed Student Activity file.

Directions for students

Post or share the separate Student Activity file as the assignment. Students should complete that file directly; they do not need this facilitator guide. You can paste the assignment directions below into Google Classroom, Canvas, or your LMS.

Files and materials

CTE Pathway Connector Student Activity (student-facing file)

Students also need their Career Clues result and access to current career/program information

What students submit: the completed CTE Pathway Connector Student Activity only.

Estimated time: 15 to 20 minutes.

Reflection questions

14. Which skill from your CTE pathway could be useful in the widest range of careers?
15. Where did Career Clues reinforce your current pathway, broaden it, or point you somewhere different?
16. What did you have to verify before you could say a postsecondary route was actually possible?

Optional group discussion

17. Can two students in the same CTE pathway reasonably explore very different careers? Why?
18. What can a CTE pathway tell you about future possibilities? What can it not tell you?

Suggested introduction

You might say: Today, you will use the CTE learning you are already doing as a starting point for career exploration. Your pathway can help you build useful skills and discover possibilities, but it does not decide what career or education path you have to choose.

Closing prompt

Reinforce that students do not need to identify one perfect career. The goal is to notice transferable skills, investigate credible possibilities, verify what preparation is actually required, and choose one useful next step.