

# Top Tips for Parents

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As a parent and former headteacher I am only too aware how difficult it is for parents to know how to help their children to make informed choices about their future careers in a rapidly changing labour market. Yet there are thousands of exciting opportunities and it is never too early to start investigating these.

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## Here are 10 Top Tips for Parents:

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- All secondary schools are required to provide programmes of careers education and guidance and publish details of this on their website. In addition to lessons about relevant topics, these will include access to an independent careers adviser, information and visits.

You'll learn about the range of possible routes including Further Education Colleges, Universities and Apprenticeships. As well as experience of workplaces and opportunities to meet employers. The school will be able to direct you to a vast range of information sources.

- Beware of relying too heavily on your own experience. Though useful to share, the route you were advised to take, entrance requirements etc may well be out of date.
- Many young people have an idea of what they want to do but do not know how to achieve this. If your child has a particular interest in a career investigate with them what the entrance requirements are. If this is not a realistic direction in the light of current predictions what do they need to do or are there alternatives which might not need the same level of qualification?

- Find out what the demand is for these careers. Many young people are attracted to careers where there are far more applicants than vacancies such as hair and beauty and personal trainers. There is a pressing demand for what are known as intermediate technical skills, such as programmers and engineers of all kinds. Women are often underrepresented in these high tech occupations. Often as well, some occupations are viewed by many as gender specific when such limitations are the exception.
- Help your child to understand what jobs really involve. Often people are unaware of the range of opportunities in some fields such as construction. There is a vast range of highly skilled and paid roles within these industries.

#### **TOP TIPS**

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- Don't fall into the trap of thinking that university is the only route to highly successful careers. It is one option suited to many but not all.
- Similarly don't fall into the trap of believing that employment based routes such as apprenticeships are only suitable to less academic young people and lead to low level careers. Apprenticeships have undergone many changes during recent years. It is now possible to follow employment based routes all the way to degree and postgraduate level as a genuine alternative to university.

- Have an ongoing conversation with your child about the world of work. Tell them about your work and, if possible, take them to see your workplace at first hand. Look at all of the organisations around you and discuss all of the occupations that might exist there.

So for example in addition to doctors and nurses a local hospital will employ thousands of people ranging from paramedics and therapists to cooks, site staff, administrative staff and highly qualified technicians. Similarly, schools employ site and admin staff, technicians, finance managers and more.

- Your child's school will be able to help with all of this and point to useful sources of information or advice.
- Above all leave all doors open. I never cease to be inspired by the achievements of young people when they have set their sights on a goal.

Brian Lightman is a former headteacher and has previously been the General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders.

He now works as a consultant supporting school leaders in their ambition to provide the best education for all young people.

#### Find Out More

PiXL (Partners in Excellence) is the largest not-for-profit network of schools of secondary schools, sixth forms, primary schools and other providers of alternative education in England and Wales.