



## **Finding Your Future**

The following pages provide background information, a set-up guide and resources for hosting a *Finding Your Future* workshop to help school districts plan conversations with families.

# Finding Your Future: Introduction

Finding Your Future is an activity for students, families, school staff, community members and employers. The activity will help students explore who they want to be, together with their families. Participants will need 1.5-2 hours for this activity. It can take place in a school library, gym, cafeteria or another community space that has a few tables, chairs and enough space to move around.

## Why this is important

A growing body of research shows that students and their families will tap into postsecondary access resources (career exploration and college access programs, financial aid, etc.) if those opportunities feel relevant to them. These conversations are designed to lay the foundation by helping:

- **Students:** envision their future and identify values that are important to them.
- **Families:** get to know and share in their students' hopes and dreams and the pathways to get there.
- **Teachers and counselors:** understand where their students and families are coming from and make recommendations for programs, courses and resources that support their needs and interests.
- **Community members:** engage with the education system and help build the future workforce by sparking interest in jobs and community roles.

## How it works

Workshops are based on community dialogues (circles) that call on the wisdom of the group and allows all members to actively contribute and learn.

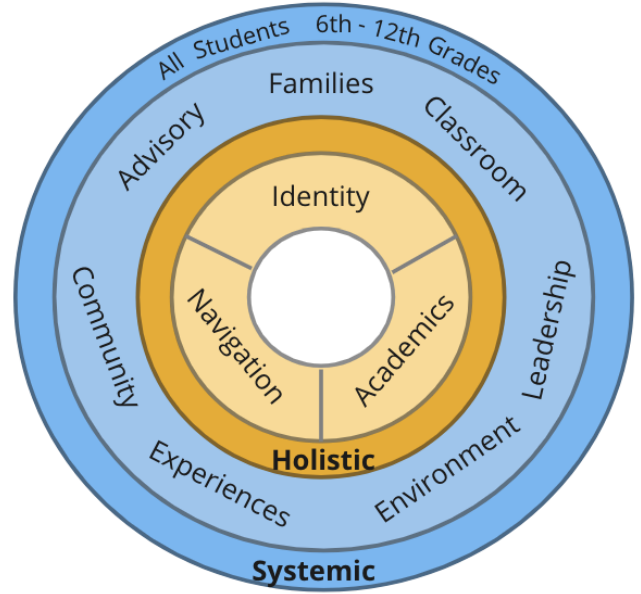
Role	Who	What
Facilitators	School staff or community members.	Lead the planning team, assist with community invites, provide the materials, facilitate the conversation, write a summary.
Host(s)	At least one school staff member (teacher, counselor, school administrator, etc.). Even better if there is a hosting team.	Serve as a point of contact, participate in at least one planning conversation, identify space, invite students and families, assist with community invites.
Participants	Students, families, teachers, and community members (employers, local officials, recent grads).	Attend the workshop with a willingness to engage and share ideas and dreams.



**Background Context**

The workshop builds on the holistic Bridging Framework. This seeks to broaden the conversation about planning for life after high school beyond the counselor's office, so that it happens earlier, and in many places, including with families.

The conversation prompts help students and their families explore their values, connect with where they want to be, view their cultural identity as a strength and envision their future. National research and focus groups with Alaskan students and families all indicate that these are critical - and often overlooked - steps in the future planning process.<sup>1,2,3</sup>



Expect this...	Don't expect this...
Sitting in a circle or small groups.	A presentation or lecture.
Active participation from the group.	A sage on the stage.
Hearing from students, their supportive adult, and if possible, teaching, counseling and other school or afterschool staff.	Students or parents to attend alone (it's ok if they do, but better if they come together).
To augment course selection events, high school visits and classroom-based career exploration activities.	To replace course selection events, high school visits or classroom-based career exploration activities.
Questions like: Who inspires you? What might the future look like in 20 years? Where might you be? Who might you be with? What might you be doing? What do you need to get there? What strengths do you already have?	A presentation focused on economic data, jobs analysis, salaries, college application processes or scholarship information.
A chance for students, families, school staff and other supportive adults to have meaningful conversations together.	Someone to tell you all the answers.

<sup>1</sup> Vanasse, Janelle. *Rethinking Readiness*. Created 2020, <https://www.rethinkingreadiness.com/>, Accessed 8 April 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Savitz-Romer, Mandy, and Suzanne Boufard. *Ready, Willing & Able: A Developmental Approach to College Access & Success*. Harvard Education Press, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Perna, Mark. *Answering Why: Unleashing Passion, Purpose, and Performance in Younger Generations*, Green Leaf Book Group Press, 2018.

# Finding Your Future: **Set-Up Guide**

The following steps provide guidance to set up a workshop that will be impactful for students, families and supportive adults.

## 4+ weeks before the workshop

- The first step is to decide on “Who, Why & When.” Some examples include:

Who	Why	When
4th & 5th grade	Developmentally this is a good time for exposure to future roles and jobs. The workshop will maximize students' natural curiosity about how the world works.	In the fall to help establish relationships with families, or in the spring to help with the transition to middle school.
8th grade	This is a good time to help students and families think about opportunities, activities and course selection as they transition to high school.	In the spring before course selection or towards the end of the school year.
9th grade	This is a good time to help connect families to what students might be exploring in school like career interest surveys so students can make the most of their high school experience.	During or after a unit on workforce prep or future planning. Or as part of parent-teacher conferences.

- Identify your hosting team. This could include a teacher, counselor, administrator, community partner, family engagement specialist and/or CTE coordinator.
- Reserve a location with enough space for people to sit at tables and/or in a circle (auditoriums don't work as well for this workshop).

## 3 weeks before the workshop

- Invite other supportive students and adults. If exposure to community roles and careers is the goal, invite people from the community who might share more about their experiences (i.e., people who work for Tribes or Native Corporations, are part of a labor union, and/or own a business). If the focus is on the 8th grade transition to high school, invite current freshmen and sophomores to be part of a Q&A session at the end.

## 2 weeks before the workshop through the day of

- Invite students and families. Consider multiple ways to communicate:
  - Copy and edit the [canva graphic](#) (thumbnail image on right) to create posts and flyers
  - Add an announcement to the school newsletter
  - Post on the classroom or school Facebook group
  - [Email to families and students](#) (see a sample in *Sample Workshop Resources* on page 19)



- Have students create and deliver invitations to their families
- Robo-calls and/or personalized phone calls
- Text reminders
- Flyers in the school and community (see a sample in *Sample Workshop Resources* on page 19).
- Review and adjust the [flow](#) (see Family Dialogue Flow on page 16), questions, and [slides](#) to suit your goals and the size of your workshop
- Decide if it would be better to use a projector (bigger group) or stick with flip charts (smaller group)

## 1 week before the workshop

### Gather supplies

- Flip chart paper
- Markers and pens
- Scrap/extra paper for notes

### Optional supplies

- Snacks or food, if providing
- Projector, if using the slides to guide the conversation (if not, prep the flip charts)
- Printed [worksheets](#), if using
- Printed handouts with opportunities to follow-up on [like this one](#) (see resource on page 20)
- Printed [sign-in sheet](#) (see a sample in *Sample Workshop Resources* on page 19)
- Printed [survey](#) (see a sample in *Sample Workshop Resources* on page 19)
- High school course handbooks, if applicable

## Day of the workshop

### Set-up space

- Talk it up with students, text reminders to families
- Prep chart paper with questions and/or set-up projector
- Arrange chairs or tables so that the group can talk in a “circle”. If there are more than 20 people, Set-up two or more smaller circles.
- Make pens, markers, paper for notes, worksheets and other handouts easily accessible. Arrange sign-in sheets and survey in a place where you will remember them. Set out snacks or food.
- Check that doors are unlocked and people can easily find the workshop (i.e. put signs and arrows on doors if needed.)

## Within a week after the workshop

### Follow-up

- Review surveys to make adjustments for next time & see if anything needs additional follow-up.
- If appropriate, type up and share out notes and findings with with school staff, partners, and/or families and students
- Send a follow-up email [like this one](#) to all families, including those who couldn't make it, with reminders and tips.

# Finding Your Future: Family Dialogue Flow


Dur	What	Resource
	<b>Set-up:</b> Tables in sort of a circle (or chairs in a circle)	Easel, chart paper, note paper, markers, pens, stickies, clipboard. Optional: printouts below
:05	<b>Welcome, context, agreements</b>	
:10	<b>Gathering/opening circle</b> Name, Role (student, parent, teacher, community member) <i>When you were little, who did you want to be like?</i> <i>Who inspired you?</i>	Chart question
:05	<b>Pair and Share:</b> <i>Why?</i> In groups of 2s or 3s Watch or phone. 1 minute, listen. Switch. If time, discuss, what you heard that was new or surprising	Chart question and prompt
:05	<b>What does the future look like?</b> <i>Imagine life 20 years from now</i> Draw (or write) for 2 minutes (give time if still writing) <i>Students: Where are you, who's with you, what are you doing?</i> <i>Adults: What are today's students doing? What jobs and roles will need to be filled in our community/state?</i>	Chart question Paper Pens Optional: Data about job openings
:10	Groups of ~6 people, role-alike (students, adults in separate groups) Pick a scribe and someone to share out <i>Students: What are some common themes</i> (what you're doing, who's with you, where are you?) <i>Adults: What are today's students doing 20 years from now</i> (what are they doing, who's with them, where are they?)	Prep chart for each table It may help to have an economic forecast for the adults:
:10	Each group shares out (2min each) Popcorn: <i>What did you hear that was similar, what did you hear that was different?</i>	Chart themes
:20	<b>What do you need for your journey?</b> In mixed groups (adults and students) of 10 or smaller. Write the question on chart paper <u>or</u> use the worksheet and pair students with their supportive adult Packing a backpack (10 min each question) 1) <i>What skills, attitudes, knowledge, and degrees/certificates do students need to be ready for the future they've envisioned?</i> What do you need to pack? What's on your shopping list? (Things you want to find out more about) 2) <i>What are the strengths &amp; values that can help you?</i> (individual, family, community/culture) - what's already in your backpack? Gallery walk (place all the charts on the wall and quietly walk around and	Prep chart paper with 1 question for each table Timekeeper Optional: info about scholarship and support programs

	review them) OR have each group share out.	
:20	<p><b>Student Panel</b>            Invite 3 or 4 students who have recently transitioned, for example, freshmen to talk with 8th graders.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <a href="#">What has been the best part of being at your new school?</a></li> <li>2) <a href="#">What has been hard?</a></li> <li>3) <a href="#">What do you wish you had known?</a></li> <li>4) <a href="#">Any other tips to share?</a></li> </ol>	
:10	<p><b>Closing &amp; Exit tickets</b>            What's one thing you'd like to learn/explore (what's on your shopping list)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1)</li> </ol>	Stickies and surveys on the table Chart paper by the door. Box for surveys


# Finding Your Future: **Worksheets for Students & Families**

This is a chance for us to explore what the future might look like for students. For students, if you have an idea of where you might want to go, you're much more likely to get there. And for the adults, hearing a bit more about our students' hopes and dreams can help them find their way.

## 20 years from now...

<p><b>Where</b> are you?</p>	<p><b>What</b> might you be doing? <b>How</b> might you be contributing?</p>	
<p><b>Who's</b> with you?</p>		

## What do you need for your journey?

<p><b>What's on your packing list?</b> What skills, attitudes, knowledge, experience and degrees/certificates do you need to be ready for the future you've envisioned?</p>	<p><b>What's already in your pack?</b> What are the strengths and experiences you already have? Who can help you along your way?</p>	
---	--	---



## **Closing**

What do you want to explore more? What are you going to look into?

# Finding Your Future: Sample Workshop Resources

[Sample Finding Your Future Poster or Email](#)



## Finding Your Future

Please join us for Finding Your Future, a conversation designed to help students and their families prepare for the future. Together we'll explore your child's hopes, dreams and opportunities so they know where they want to go and you know how to help them get there.

**Who:** Parents of \_\_\_\_\_ graders

**When:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What to bring:** Your child (if possible) and a willingness to participate in the conversation.

**What to expect:** A conversation (not a presentation) and thoughtful responses like the ones students shared in [this video](#).

[Sample Finding Your Future Sign-In Sheet](#)

### Workshop sign-in sheet

Name	Email/Phone	Your connection to this conversation	More info?

[Sample Finding Your Future Survey](#)

### Thanks for coming and for sharing your thoughts!

I am currently a:

- Student
- Parent/supportive adult
- Teacher/school staff

This helped me think about what I want for my (my student's) future.

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Definitely

This was a good use of our time tonight.

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Definitely

I would recommend doing something like this to a friend.

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Definitely

If we were to do an event like this again, what could make it even better?

What else could help you/your student plan for life after high school?

# Finding Your Future: Resources to Plan, Prepare and Finance Your Future

Alaska has a number of free or low-cost opportunities and resources to help students and families:

- **AKCIS** is Alaska's free online [career exploration](#) program for students and adults. The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education also has [free K-8 programs](#) to use with younger students and their families, as well as [downloadable elementary resources](#).
- **Career & Technical Education (CTE) courses** – formerly known as Voc-Tech – often feature hands-on experiences and opportunities for students to earn real-world credentials and endorsements. School districts can receive funds through the federal Perkins Grant program to help support these courses.
- **Dual enrollment courses** are eligible for high school *and* college credit, allowing students to earn college credit more quickly and at a lower cost. Advanced Placement courses can serve a similar purpose. Students can also opt to take courses directly from universities. For example, the University of Alaska has recommended dual enrollment courses that are available [in person](#) (on campus) or [online](#), through the Alaska Advantage program.
- **Summer programs and leadership opportunities** – Alaska has programs & opportunities including [ANSEP](#), local apprenticeships, culture camps, leadership programs, and summer programs like [RAHI](#).
- **Mentors** can be part of a formal program, a trusted auntie or uncle, or a near-peer. When students learn about the paths that others have taken it gives them an opportunity to reflect on their own.

## Financing

Every year millions of dollars in free funding for college and career training goes unused in Alaska. Planning ahead can help you save your own money and tap into scholarships and other funding sources.

- **529 Plans** are tax-free savings plans that allow families to save for education. It's an easy way to save your PFD. Kids with a 529 Plan started for them are seven times more likely to go to college.
- The **Alaska Performance Scholarship** (APS) is available to students who achieve a certain GPA, take the required courses, and attend an Alaska university. Students should start planning their course schedule as a freshman in order to qualify for this scholarship. The **University of Alaska Scholars** grant is a merit-based scholarship awarding \$12,000 to the top 10% of the graduating class.
- The **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), usually completed in a student's senior year of high school, is a key to unlocking grants, loans, and scholarships. It is an important step to be eligible for scholarships, the performance-based APS, and the **Alaska Education Grant** (AEG). Students who have financial need may qualify for up to \$4,000 from the AEG, but it is first-come-first-serve. It is important for students to complete their FAFSA as close to the October 1st start date as possible.
- The **Education Resources Handbook** has additional resources. Many, but not all, of the scholarships listed here are geared to students who are Alaska Native.
- **Low-Cost Education Loans** are available through the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education.



For support using these tools, or to provide feedback about how they could be even more useful for you and your district, contact Emily Ferry, [eferry@asab.org](mailto:eferry@asab.org), 907 466-1660.

# Finding Your Future: Family Conversations at Home

Here are a few resources to help you and your child prepare for the transition to high school and beyond.

## Talk with your child about their future plans

When students have a vision for the type of life they want to lead, school can become more meaningful. Consider talking with your child about these questions:

In 20 years when you're \_\_\_ years old

- Where might you be living?
- Who might be with you?
- What might you be doing? How might you help your family or community?

This can be a “for now” plan; plans change! Some things, like where they want to live, might feel more clear than what type of job they would like to have.

Consider asking follow-up questions like:

- What do you need to get there? (i.e., skills, attitudes, experiences, or degrees)
- What skills, experiences, and strengths do you already have? Who else can help?

If your child is interested in becoming a vet, for example, talk about the types of courses and degrees they might need. What jobs, classes or volunteer opportunities could help them get a feel for that career now? Who could they ask for help learning more about that pathway? What strengths do they have that will help them along the way?

## Start thinking about (and planning for) postsecondary education

65% of all jobs in Alaska, and 99% of new jobs will require a postsecondary degree, credential, or certification. It's never too early to start planning

and saving. See the resources on the previous page for tips and links to opportunities.

## Freshmen and sophomores shared these tips:

- 1) Take required classes during your freshman and sophomore years to give you more flexibility later.
- 2) Course options include Career & Technical Education (CTE, hands-on learning like the Intro to Trades), dual enrollment, honors, Advanced Placement and Plato (online, self-paced courses.)
- 3) If you are interested in the Alaska Performance Scholarship, make sure you sign up for the courses that will preserve your eligibility.
- 4) There are lots of clubs, activities and sports - get involved!
- 5) Fall sports: Football, cross country, and volleyball start in July. If you are interested, ask a counselor, coach, or another player about getting on the coach's email list or app in the spring.
- 6) The schedule rotates daily.
- 7) Freshmen First: New students will have the school to themselves on the first day so they can meet their teachers and practice finding and moving between their classrooms.
- 8) Don't be afraid to ask for help!