

The Career Path Less Taken

A Career Planning Lesson Plan for Grades 6-12

OVERVIEW

[THE CAREER PATH LESS TAKEN](#) is a half-hour documentary designed for a general audience, but with the goal of providing a meaningful discussion platform for teachers and students in career exploration and career planning settings. It aligns well with the [Ohio Career Connections Framework](#) for middle grades and high school.

Time Needed: 40-50 minutes. The documentary is 30-minutes in length, but can be watched in shorter segments.

LEARNING OUTCOME(S)

Students will be able to:

- identify and explain how the career technical education (CTE) pathway can lead to a future career;
- identify and demonstrate key employability skills desired by employers;
- discuss their career goals and begin the formulation of an education and/or training plan.



BACKGROUND

Against the backdrop of Ohio’s looming skills gap the documentary travels across the state to innovative career-tech education programs (CTE)

that are preparing young people for the jobs of tomorrow. THE CAREER PATH LESS TAKEN challenges traditional notions of success by demonstrating that there are many pathways to skilled jobs that do not require a four-year college degree. It also explores the history of CTE and how students are finding their way back into these programs after decades of misunderstanding and stigma.

For decades, the measure of “success” for young people entering the workforce has been whether or not they had earned a Bachelor’s Degree. As many of you know, or have experienced, that 4-year college degree can come with a hefty price tag and still not prepare the graduate with the skills that employers are looking for.

This documentary, A CAREER PATH LESS TAKEN, looks at one pathway to success—namely Career Technical Education, or CTE—which has been stigmatized or looked down upon for more than a generation. Once referred to as ‘vocational education,’ a common view of these programs was that they were for students who couldn’t be successful in a traditional high school classroom. Whether or not that was ever true is debatable, but today’s CTE programs are certainly not a place where unmotivated students can find an easy pass. With access to cutting-edge technology, hands-on experience, rigorous academic and certificate programs, and burgeoning partnerships with industry leaders, CTE programs are preparing young people to discover their passions, acquire meaningful knowledge and skills, and redefine success for the 21st century.

CONTENTS

THE CAREER PATH LESS TAKEN may be shown in its entirety or if time is limited, a selected chapter or two may be screened. Below are the chapters with run times.

Chapter	Title	Start Point
1	Introduction, Setup and Data Foundations (length 6:25)	0:00
2	Student Profile: A Pre-Engineering Student (length 6:00)	6:26
3	The Role of Business and Industry (length 3:45)	12:25
4	History and Equity of CTE (length 3:16)	16:13
5	Student Profile: An IT Trainee (length 3:35)	19:30
6	Conclusion and Skills USA (length 3:42)	23:05

Chapter 1, Introduction, Setup and Data Foundations – A visit to the Skills USA Ohio State Championship sets up the topic of 21st Century careers and introduces the current and future “skills gap” faced by the workforce. [\[Watch video\]](#)

Chapter 2, Student Profile: A Pre-Engineering Student – At Colerain High School in Cincinnati, we meet Brittany Ashcraft, a senior, who takes an advanced honors course load, but who is also earning college credit and participating in CTE (pre-engineering) through a Butler Tech satellite program. [\[Watch video\]](#)

Chapter 3, The Role of Business and Industry – We examine how industry and business are finding positive outcomes from aligning and working directly with schools to find, and train, their workers. [\[Watch video\]](#)

Chapter 4, History and Equity of CTE – Dr. Terrence Robinson helps us understand the negative practices (tracking) that have historically been associated with vocational education as we shine a light on the not-so-bright spots of its legacy. [\[Watch video\]](#)

Chapter 5, Student Profile: An IT Trainee – At John Marshall School of Information Technology in Cleveland, we are introduced to Kobe Ballard, the first student to choose nearly every pathway the school offered—including dual-enrollment at the local community college. [\[Watch video\]](#)

Chapter 6, Conclusion and Skills USA – We return to the Skills USA Ohio State Competition as winners are announced, reiterating the importance of being clear-eyed about these careers, the need for skilled workers, and why this issue is important for Ohioans, the businesses around the state, and ultimately the state’s economic viability. [\[Watch video\]](#)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following are recommended writing prompts and/or in-class discussion questions that can be used in conjunction with watching certain segments of the documentary.

- What are your career interests, skills and values?
- What are your career goals?
- What does a “job of the future” look like?
- What skills will be needed for these jobs?
- Why is the “skills gap” important for our state?
- Which in-demand job career cluster(s) might you be interested in exploring?
 - Construction/Trades
 - Supply Chain
 - Information Technology
 - Health Care
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Other

- What courses will you take in high school to reach your goals?
- What is Career and Technical Education (CTE)?
- Does a CTE learning environment like the ones in Chapter 2 or Chapter 5 appeal to you? Why?
- How will automation change jobs of the future? What skills will be necessary to work in an automated environment?
- What activities will you participate in, through high school and beyond, to reach your goals?
- What knowledge, information and ideas did you learn through the documentary that relate to careers you are interested in?
- Which of the skills highlighted in the documentary translate to the skills needed to be successful in the workplace; how are these skills applied in the careers that you are interested in?
- How did the documentary impact your career interests? Which pathways are you interested in exploring further and finding out more about related careers?

Locate the video to play:

- [Promotional thirty-second](#) video for *The Career Path Less Taken*.
- *The Career Path Less Taken*, Full [thirty-minute documentary](#).
- [Location for customizable flier](#).



- *The Career Path Less Taken*, [digital toolkit](#).

Advise from CEO to job seekers:

- Four Top CEO's give Career Advice to 16-26 in the series, [Talking Jobs with CEO's](#)
- Career Profiles ([in-demand career videos](#)):
- [Work \(Career\) Resources](#) (locate a career center or campus for training or touring):

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

American Graduate Station Websites

- [Cincinnati](#)
- [Cleveland](#)
- [Columbus](#)
- [Dayton](#)

Ohio Department of Education

- [Career-Technical Resources](#)
- [Career Advising Policy/Student Success Plan](#)
- [Career Connections Framework](#)
- [Career Connection Lesson Plans : Search](#)
- [Resources for Teachers](#)
- [Resources for School Counselors](#)
- [Resources for Families & Communities](#)

Ohio Means Jobs

- [K-12 Resources](#)
- [OMJ Backpack](#)

ideastream®
ideastream.org/americangraduate/

cet
cincy-americangraduate.org/home/

WOSU public media
wosu.org/classroom/american-graduate/

Example Activity from [Career Connections](#) website.

Career Tree Activity

Key Topics

Self-Awareness

SCANS

Information

Standards

- Research:
Use a variety of communication techniques to present information
- Communication

Activity

For this activity, students design a “career tree” based on the occupations of the people in their family.

- Refer to the worksheet “Career Tree” for specific instructions.

Preparation

Materials needed:

- Worksheet “Career Tree” (one for each student)

Time needed:

- One 45-minute class period
- Homework assignment

Discussion

Discussion questions to consider asking students include:

- How did careers change over the generations? (This may especially pertain to gender).
- Did your family members stay in the same field? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Variation

Have students write a paragraph that compares and contrasts how their families’ careers have changed or remained the same.

List careers that are obsolete and those that are new.