

MIDDLE SCHOOL
HIGH SCHOOL
COLLEGE & BEYOND

The PARENT *and* TEACHER'S GUIDE

TOUGH
DECISIONS
AHEAD

A yellow diamond-shaped warning sign with a black border and the text 'TOUGH DECISIONS AHEAD' in bold black letters. The sign is mounted on a silver post and is positioned on the left side of a road.

Helping Students Navigate the Bumpy Road
from School to More School, First Job, and Career

A red Volkswagen Beetle is shown from a rear perspective, driving away on a paved road that stretches into the distance. The road is flanked by green grassy fields under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

CAROLE MARSH

Don't allow kids to suffer, fail, crash and burn! Here's candid help from an employer who knows the score and the secrets, and minces no words!

Contents

Word from the Author	page 7
A Message to Parents	page 9
Right Here, Right Now.....	page 11
Picking a Career Path.....	page 14
Common Core and Careers...What's the Connection?.....	page 16
Chomping at the Bit.....	page 18
What the Heck Are “Ethics”?	page 19
Ruler of the World.....	page 20
The Robots Have It!.....	page 21
Soldiering On.....	page 22
Open for Business 33 Years Later.....	page 23
A Fantastic Factory Job	page 24
Job Security “Detail”	page 25
Decision Making...and Un-Making...and Even Re-Making	page 26
GED Success	page 28
Opportunities Abound!.....	page 29
Emerging Adults	page 30
The Hunger Games	page 31
What I Don't Want to Do!.....	page 32
Breaking Bad...Habits	page 34
A Word from the (Older &) Wise(r) A Teacher's Lament.....	page 35
A Work Experience	page 36
A Word from the (Older &) Wise(r) Mom, Marcie, Shares	page 37
To Infinity...and Beyond.....	page 38
The Value of Mentoring	page 39
Be the Best!.....	page 40
Freelance Flexibility.....	page 41
Where Did You Get Those Spanx?.....	page 42
Listen to the Kids.....	page 43
Cover (Letter) Your Bases	page 44
Student Loan Debt.....	page 45
College in Four Years!	page 46
Grow Up!	page 47
Community Colleges	page 48
Before They Were Famous.....	page 49
The New Frugality	page 50
All is Fair in Knowledge	page 51

Be Prepared	page 52
Reality at All Costs	page 55
Speak Easy	page 56
Egging on Your Entrepreneur	page 57
Stamp of Approval	page 58
Good Tips	page 59
Dropouts Drop In!	page 60
Distrust is Not Rust.....	page 61
Manufacturing Mania	page 62
Race to the Top	page 63
Questions for the Boss	page 64
What Do You Do If...	page 65
Maturity as a Young Person’s Essential Skill Asset.....	page 66
Volunteering Counts!	page 67
For Good Career Advice...Check the OBITS!	page 68
Success Comes in Many Flavors	page 69
A—Z: From Accounting to Zombies!.....	page 70
Vocabulary or Bust!	page 71
Quick Start.....	page 72
Wacky is Wonderful!	page 73
It’s For Anyone!.....	page 74
It’s All About the Kids!.....	page 75
Gap Year, or Not.....	page 78
School Skills = Job Skills.....	page 79
You Say You Want a Revolution?	page 81
Internships Are Invaluable Options.....	page 82
That Olympic Spirit	page 83
Technological Know-How	page 84
Between the Lines	page 85
It’s Hard, It’s All Hard	page 86
A Word from the (Older &) Wise(r)... A Parent Shares	page 87
Appendix	
Rigor...or Rigor Mortis?.....	page 88
Why Should I Study?	page 89
Create Your Own Logo	page 94
Resouces.....	page 96

Right Here, Right Now

Here's how it seems to be, right here, right now, in our country. I started this as a compilation of some of the things I've heard over and over at many "What are we going to do?" meetings. I wanted to share it.

A few "facts" I've heard or read...

(But really, these few pages tell such a truth, that they probably express the situation a lot better than a lot of long copy for you to read. There are so many things that we CAN do something about, and we CAN start today. Kids are counting on us!)

If knowledge is power, here ya go:

- If a state has no skilled workforce, companies will not move there. *(No state can afford to get a reputation that it can't provide skilled workers.)*
- If a state has a skilled workforce, new companies will move there and current ones will stay. *(Some companies have left already, taking your kids' jobs with them!)*
- Skills such as welding are needed; not all in-demand skills are high-tech skills.
- With a high demand for certain skills and a low volume of talent, you can lose entire industries, not just a few companies here and there.
- We don't have the capacity to teach/train skills. *(I do not agree!)*
- There are 5,000 active job openings in high-tech fields across the nation *unfilled* due to a lack of trained workers.
- We need to get kids aware of and interested in new kinds of jobs. *(Starting in kindergarten! Remember, some future jobs your kids might have don't exist yet, or have no names.)*
- We need talent now and in the future.
- Skills needed but that no one seems to be preparing workers for include: sewing machine operators (industrial), transportation workers (roads, railroads), electrical engineers (especially for power plants and energy concerns), computer specialists (for jobs being brought back from offshore!).
- Businesses are actually *struggling* to find *skilled* talent. *(Think of the opportunities a skilled student will have!)*
- Soft skill training is very much needed. (In this book, we call these "essential" (not "soft") skills.) "Common sense" is the skill employers most often mention! (Ouch!)
- There's a great interest in state career academies and anything else where kids can get "certificates" for job-ready skills they learn.
- Everyone misunderstands the jobs available. *(A student hears aerospace and thinks, "I'm not good enough in math for that," not realizing that we have all kinds of jobs that support every aspect of aerospace, so they don't even apply—and we need them!)*



•Studying hard in high school is so important. *(I had an applicant for a job where they would be trained by us and make good money...but the kid didn't know what a ruler was! I couldn't risk investing in such a person.)*

•"Skill Gap" is the term used for what employers need...and job applicants don't have. There are many skill gaps in trade, manufacturing, and industrial areas. *(Can you say OPPORTUNITY for your kids?!)*

•Work Ethic: *(We just can't hire kids who either don't want to work, or have no or limited work ethic...ordinary but essential stuff like good attendance, punctuality, dependability, listening skills, common sense, etc.)*

•Aging Workforce: *(An aging workforce and changing technology are opening up jobs for those who get skills, have skills, or boost their skills to keep up with the technology.)*

•There ARE a lot of good things going on: new Career Pathways programs in secondary schools and community colleges; schools focusing on school-to-work readiness; a new focus on starting career education as young as kindergarten; specific career tracks to get kids interested in areas that are expected to provide jobs, such as medical and technological fields; and many other pilot programs, corporate reach-out and giveaways. *(Hey, where's the clearinghouse for all of this?)*

•Kids need to be exposed to many more opportunities than they are. *(If you build an app and sell it to 1% of the world, that's 250 million sales!)*

•A high school diploma and four-year college degree is just one way to get a good job, not the only way.

•Many skilled trade jobs pay a lot better than jobs only requiring a liberal arts college degree.



•A complaint: *"Many kids have never built ANYTHING! I need kids who know what a ruler is or how to read a blueprint—they bring nothing to the table."*

•A complaint: *"Many kids have never even had a paper route, babysitting service, lawn care job, so they just have no work ethic that I can work with!"*

•A complaint: *"Kids need to learn skills, then how to refine them to actually do something with those skills, and how to finesse their skills so I can see that they are employable and worth my investment to train and grow."*

•A complaint: *"Kids don't appreciate what a company can offer them: a job, benefits, training, longevity, promotions, lateral training areas so they get even better promotions and pay raises, and a lifetime career."*

•A complaint: *"I never thought I'd have such a hard time finding job candidates qualified in technology, math, or technical skills, or qualified for semi-professional jobs like accounting or repairing things—whether computers or printers or anything else."*

•A question: *"Is anyone training kids for changing roles? Even when they get a job, things change fast and they will have to manage new ways of doing things, learn new software, and just expect to change jobs and roles, and often."*

•A question: *"Why are kids so blindsided by the facts of real-world work? They seem shocked that they have to work eight hours a day, that we expect them to be here every workday, that they have to do their job in full and 100% correctly, and work in teams? Why are they so clueless about such ordinary work things?"*

•A question: *“Don’t kids get to do anything anymore? Don’t they have business speakers come to their schools? Do they ever tour plants? Work and workplace just seem so invisible and vague to them.”*

•A comment: *“Kids should broaden their view, get transferable skills across many types of jobs in a company or industry.”*

•A comment: *“There are a lot of exciting things going on in the U.S.: new manufacturing plants, expansion of ports to import and export goods, and just lots more. If I were a kid, I’d be excited... and studying!”*

•A comment: *“I work with high school kids to learn about financial aid and college preparedness and they are just so clueless, it’s sad. There is no knowledge pipeline where they come to me with what Mom or Dad or their teacher said or suggested. They don’t know their weaknesses or strengths, and sometimes they can’t even tell me what classes they’ve had! It’s scary.”*

•A comment: *“Kids need to be realistic about job expectations. I don’t know where they get ideas about such unrealistically high starting salaries. They have a sense of entitlement about what we can do for them, and seem unfocused or unconcerned about what they can do for us.”*

•Advice: *“If I were a kid, I’d try to get skills, sharpen skills, and keep an open mind to industries I never thought I’d be interested in. I’d keep skills tucked away for future use, I’d anticipate change, and not just get a job and get comfortable. It’s not just about getting some learning, it’s about lifelong learning, and it’s not just about getting a job, it’s about keeping a job and growing in that job. Kids today are bound to have lots of jobs and several careers; they need to get better prepared, more realistic, and realize that if they do their part, this can be exciting, lucrative, and rewarding. What do they think is coming next for them? A lot of hard work! Fun, yes, but 21st century jobs are challenging and changing—ever-changing.”*

•Well, I am sure that there are many more facts, pieces of advice, quotes, questions, and comments where these came from. But the picture is clear. So what are WE going to do about all this? Let’s see!



Picking a Career Path

Yes, there's some discussion, even controversy, over having secondary school students pick a career path and follow a class schedule partly tailored to that choice. No matter how you feel, spend your energy on supporting efforts to make any age child aware of their need for career- and college-readiness. Many states are adopting similar initiatives (or have them in place), and it sure can't hurt for all kids to hear more, not less, about careers and the paths that can lead them in that direction.

States have named broad categories of opportunities (which they call clusters), and within each category there are many, many types of jobs. This is not the end-all, you know. Students are just trying these on for size, and for some kids, they just might fit and stick. For others, it's at least an experiment and an experience in thinking school-to-school and school-to-job.

The full program focuses on K-12, as does my Carole Marsh's Careers Curriculum (imagine that!), and I love the idea of teachers and parents talking to kids about careers from as young an age as possible. By even fourth and fifth grades, students often overtly or covertly harbor ideas about "what I could grow up and be one day." I love that kids of that age really want to make a difference, dream big, and are not yet devoted only to the idea of "I gotta make a living."

Since nearly half of future jobs are expected to go to people with associate degrees or occupational certificates, it's never too soon to promote the concept of lifelong learning—and not as a choice, but as an essential expectation.

In the early grades, we should begin to challenge students with not only rigorous courses, but also with the idea that "rigor" is a good word. Since most businesses complain that today's students are just not equipped with essential skills to successfully enter the workforce, it is counter-productive to merely prepare students for mediocrity, or remediation. They need to know that they have to study hard. Teachers try hard to make school wonderfully interesting, and students and parents have to do their part to expand on that.

There has been some concern expressed that focusing on careers will narrow a student's educational experience, but I sincerely believe that the opposite is true: knowing that whatever you study and learn may come in handy for this or that career that interests you is important. Anything tied to the real world is of interest to kids; indeed, they prefer that by far to vague, unconnected, even disembodied courses of study that they can't see the purpose of. You and I know a big secret: it's all important, often essential, and it's the combination of cumulative learning and experienced skills that begins to help the world and your place in it make sense.

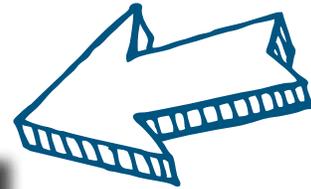
A "pathway" is just an idea, one choice. Just the fact that you must pick one is a great lesson in decision-making skills. As school years go by, yes, jobs change and new unheard-of ones come online, and kids change their minds. But what child who ever wanted to "be an astronaut" did not enjoy exploring that dream and theme to some extent (and then go on to become an investment banker), or resented the opportunity to think big or different or outside of the box?

It's a process. Just learning to prepare for a potential job is conducive to comprehending how and why to learn and how the pieces of educational effort fit together to create stepping-stones to success. How beneficial! "Learn to earn" is not a bad idea at all—wish I'd had some of that when I was a kid!



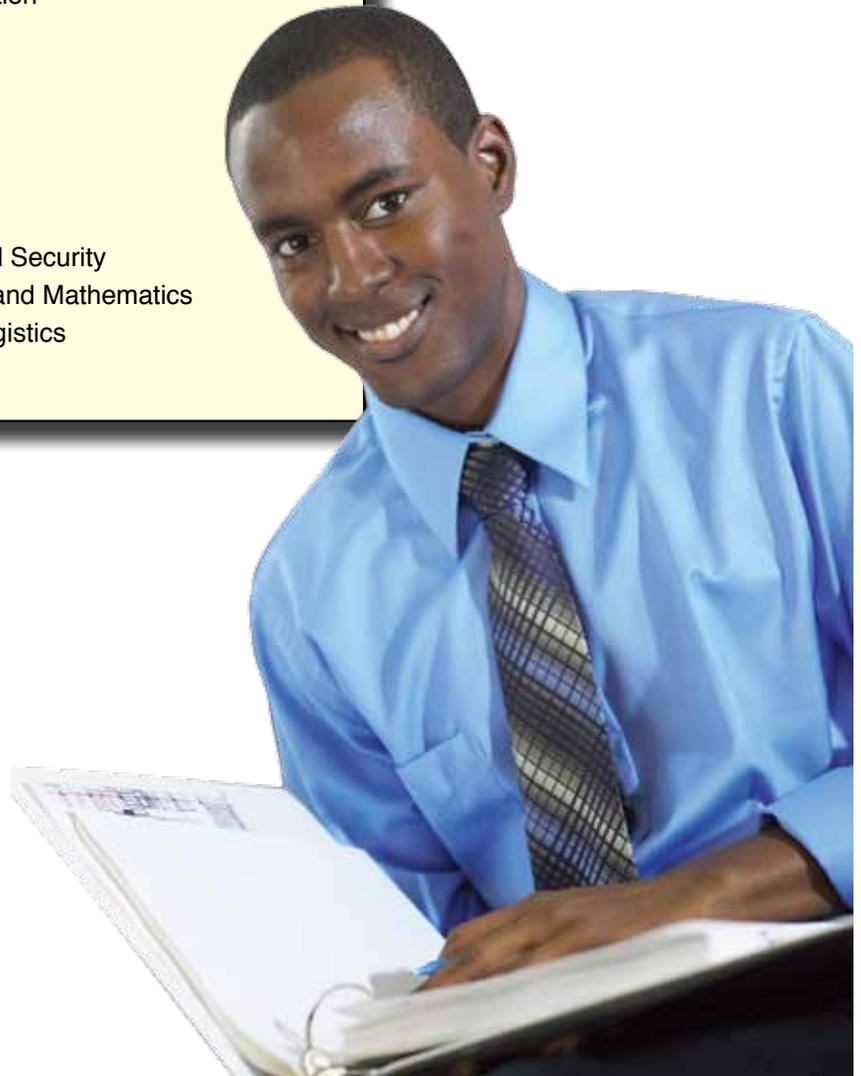
If I were a child, I'd be thrilled to be considered a job or career candidate at such a young age (or any age), and worthy of having such information shared with me, and even my opinion asked—wow! Some students who have been in the state's Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education Program are already familiar with some of the pathways concepts.

In some instances, students would eventually receive not only their diploma, but also specific career-related certificates for skills mastered. Actually, there are so many career choices, and so little time. I just suspect that kids will not find this boring and distracting, but fascinating and energizing.



Examples of Career Pathway Clusters

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Arts, Audio/Visual Technology and Communications
- Architecture and Construction
- Business Management and Administration
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Government and Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics
- Energy Systems



Chomping at the Bit

What you want kids to be is “chomping at the bit” to prepare for their future. I fondly recall my own children, and grandchildren, when they were three to four years old...always with grandiose plans, extreme enthusiasm, and total determination to see them out, even if that was “Eat my Cheerios, watch my movie, take a nap.”



I suggest that your job today is to keep your children motivated in spite of all the negative news about the economy, that in the real world:

- It's always something; that's part of the challenge.
- There will always be cyclical economic conditions, so expect them.
- The pendulum usually swings in the other direction, just not as fast as we like.
- Entrepreneurs are often born during “hard times.”
- They are not the “only one” suffering from whatever “it” is.
- It's a continual “figure it out” process.
- Half of success is working toward it; the other half is being ready and spotting it when it comes your way.
- Being underemployed is better than being unemployed.
- The terms furlough, freeze, layoff, downsizing, etc., were not created just for them; they've been around a long time.
- There's no simple formula.
- The times are always dynamic.

So this could have been written in most any decade, not just today, and will be true for coming years as well. While some days might not be easy, the struggle to find your way, figure out what you want to do, and get on with it IS the struggle appropriate for those in the high school to college/work age group. Help them navigate these rough waters and be inspired by any success or forward step, rather than just focus on the negative.

We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort. —Jesse Owens



Ruler of the World

I never, ever wanted to be ruler of the world, never expected to be a breadwinner, nor a business owner. How do we get from not knowing much...to being capable and able, even, perhaps, inventive and wise, creators of solutions?

As a “late bloomer,” it’s a process. However, it is the natural order of things (or we weary parents certainly hope so!), that our children complete twelve years of school, then either go out on their own to college or to work, or to both, and become financially independent, while we whine (for real, or for show) about being “empty-nesters.”

I draw no conclusions about helicopter parents or the boomerang generation, who return home, if indeed they ever leave, perhaps for a brief spell or, lawsy help us, forever.

An employer I know complains that kids “don’t know how to do anything.” I know what he means. I was very discouraged as a child when my mom would not let me wash dishes (“Might break them.”) or make my bed (“You don’t know how.”) or cut the grass (“That’s for boys.”) or babysit (“You’ll probably kill the poor kid!”).

But I did get to make a ruler. As I recall, each third-grader got this skinny slip of soft wood; it felt so good in my hand. We had to measure carefully (twice!) and carve once. It’s either readable because we colored in the hashmarks, or, more likely, because our sweaty, dirty kid fingers eventually color-coded the marks and numbers with a color that must surely be universally called “kid brown”.

I was never prouder in my life. I had made a ruler! I must have been proud of it, because it is the only item I have left from my long ago schooldays, unless, that is, you count that slightly improved gray matter inside my skull. That, too, of course.

If you can make a ruler, you might not be able to be ruler of the world, but you might be able to be part of the world, to make do, to make a difference—that was the invaluable lesson to me. I went on to make, hmm, let’s see: a lopsided apron, a painted drinking glass (mine was very Vegas!), and some other stuff.

My mom never did let me “make stuff” at home and I suffered mightily as a young married woman who did not know how to cook, wash clothes, drive, or most anything else in that day-to-day “somebody’s gotta do it” world. My poor kids bore the brunt of my veneration of “doing” as I started them young on washing, cooking, bed-making, grass-mowing. Will they ever forgive me? Do I care?

We have hands for a reason. And no matter how essential megabites are, there is (in my opinion and probably that of brilliant physicists or neurologists or psychologists, and such), no substitute for using all your senses in a variety of ways to build skills, no matter how messily, until you not only get them right, but they become second nature.

If I could build a ruler, I could build a business. No person or book told me that. My hands told my head and my heart, long ago, in third grade.



“If you can make a ruler, you can probably do anything!”

The Hunger Games...

Most parents adore their kids, especially when they are babies...toddlers...little schoolchildren...even in those angst-ridden middle school years...in high school...and feel such pride when they are in college. But, hmmm, no parent is eager for a child to “Fail to Launch,” as they say, or return (oh, let’s say more than once) back home to live. Most parents do not really want a revolving door child (and I use this word facetiously now), back to live (even mooch) off of them, or to stay...for...forever? Yikes!

This book is full of “Food for Thought”, and you may need some of it...but you need to impart all of it to your children/ students. You may have no idea how employers dismay over a job candidate’s extreme lack of work ethic, or basic skills, even being dependable, punctual, and realistic about starting wages...just for starters. Things haven’t changed that much! Kids still need to walk financially before they can run. Help them feel the pain of not ordering pizza in every night, or 2,047 movie channels, etc. Survival of the fittest goes to the person more apt to be able to “make do,” accept what they need vs. what they want, and postpone gratification in order to support themselves...and not depend on parents indefinitely. Yes, life is hard, but you know, after all these years, I still love that cheap boxed macaroni and fake cheese I lived off of when starting out. Give your kids the same, uh, opportunity!



Before They Were Famous...

A lot of kids mistakenly believe that others just blossom into success, when the truth is that most folks had weird first jobs or other odd starts to eventual successful careers. (And by the way, many of these folks admit they were not very good at their first jobs!) Just to share with students:

Cindy Crawford Corn-shucker

David Letterman TV weather-reader

Hugh Jackman party clown

Rachel McAdams worked at McDonald's

Michael Dell washed dishes at a Chinese restaurant

Jim Carrey janitor

Suze Orman bussed tables

Madonna worked at Dunkin' Donuts

Brad Pitt danced around in a chicken suit for a restaurant

Eva Mendes sold hot dogs at a mall

Robin Williams street mime

Matthew McConaughey cleaned chicken coops

Walt Disney ambulance driver

Merv Griffin church organist

Madeleine Albright sold bras in a department store

Jennifer Aniston waitress

Sean Connery polished coffins

Johnny Depp telemarketer

Sheryl Crow elementary school teacher

Jon Bon Jovi made Christmas decorations

Tom Cruise paperboy

Clay Aiken YMCA counselor



Career Readiness? Start Young!

A personal parting shot by Carole Marsh

Reader, this book (and series) has been a labor of love. Emphasis on the labor, yes. Emphasis on the love. I always say two things. One is that I was a writer before I was born, and take no credit for my God-given talent. The other is that “I don’t know nuttin’ about nuttin!”—something we realize the older and presumably wiser we get! Still, a girl’s gotta do what a girl’s gotta do: and trying to help you, and all kids, is my only goal.

This photo is of the grand opening of my company in Peachtree City a few years ago. This is my family. This is what career success looks like to me: a bunch of smiling folks about to cut a red ribbon on our latest wild? crazy? risky? entrepreneurial venture—and all of them related to me.

“How did my kids grow up to be so smart, so industrious, so business savvy, so...” well, you get my drift. I take no credit. When I had my first child, Michele, I had never even been around babies, so I was clueless with a capital C. I only “got it” one day when she was learning to crawl. A divorced, poor, lonesome young mother, our play yard was the neighbor’s patch of grass. I put her down to crawl, and for some reason [an angel shoved me?] got down on all fours myself and crawled along beside her. It was then that I had my parental educational EUREKA! moment. I saw that this child was learning...looking, listening, sniffing, touching, tasting, thinking—learning. I knew what to do next.

To keep this short, here are just a few things I did that I think helped my kids have school- and career- and life-readiness:

- When they talked, I listened.
- When I talked, they were required to listen...and obey.
- They had all the books they could read; yep, from the public library.
- They had chores, and no, they could not give them back once they discovered that they were chores!
- They had to be polite, say yes ma’m and no sir.
- We laughed and learned and played together.
- School was their job; I had a job.
- Homework was their homework; I had my own homework.
- They grew up in a family business. They did not start at the top. They started with sweeping the office and taking out the trash. (This is still a Gallopade tradition, hey, even if the president of the United States came to work for us!)
- Honesty and all the other Golden Rule stuff was a given.
- We had trust, faith, and forgiveness.



One day, I looked up and they were taller, smarter, and in charge. They paid their own way through college. They went out on their own into the world. Why they chose to come back home to me and the “family business” only they can say. But look at us. For all we’ve done wrong, for all the missteps and mishaps, boo-hoos and boo-boos, we have individually and collectively changed kids’ lives. Sometimes, I suspect, saved them.

We are always “ready” for anything.

Good luck to you in your educational endeavors with your children and students. Bless you in your earnest efforts.

Carole Marsh (Longmeyer)

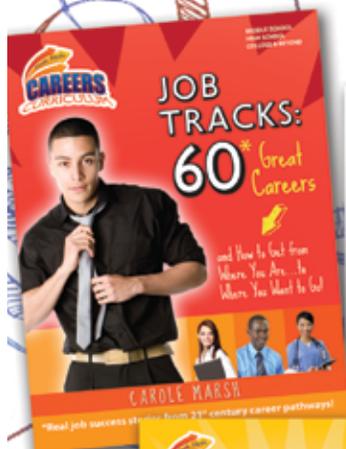
PS: And did you get a good look at those grandkids?!



FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND BEYOND!

"If you are ready for 'readiness'...for choosing a career pathway... deciding what to do after high school...or for a first job, or raise and promotion - THIS SERIES IS FOR YOU!"

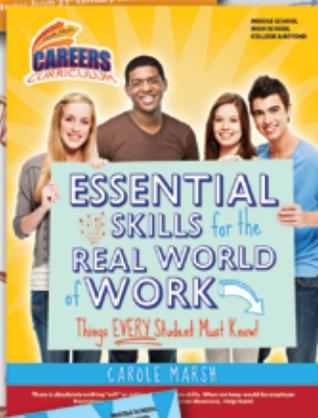
— James Barnard



Job Tracks: 60* Great Careers and How to Get from Where You Are... to Where You Want To Go!

This book is filled with unique and effective approaches for helping students find their career pathway! Featuring 60 careers from today's job market, this book allows young people to hear first-hand from a person with the job: how they got it, what they do, what education and skills were required, and "what I would have done differently!" Readers get the feel of what particular careers might actually be like—essential knowledge for that all-important decision!

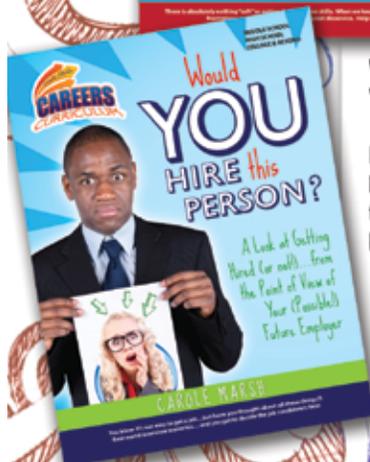
"Entertaining and charming to read!"



Essential Skills for the Real World of Work: Things EVERY Student Must Know!

There's no other book that does a better job of sharing essential skills for the real business world and explaining why they are essential! This book dishes out the subtleties, nuances, and in-between-the-lines considerations of job interviewers who are not only interested in candidates with essential skills, but are actually desperate for them! It includes a fun and effective scoring system to encourage students to rack up job-readiness skills long before they are required.

"Highly encouraging and enlightening!"



Would You Hire This Person? A Look at Getting Hired (or Not!)...from the Point of View of Your (Possible!) Future Employer

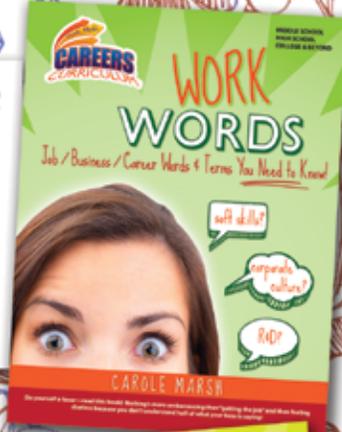
Read verbatim interviews that are both entertaining and enlightening! In this book, students hear both sides of the interview, including the employer and job candidate's unspoken thoughts. The reader can decide for himself or herself if they would hire the job candidate before learning the actual outcome.

"Such realistic scenarios – I got nervous reading them! I wanted the person to get the job, but, gee...I can see why some would not!"

Work Words: Job/Business/Career Words & Terms You Need to Know!

Get ready for lots of insider information and a few inside jokes! Written by a real employer, this book defines essential job, business, and career words and terms with insight, humor, and pizzazz! The contents of the book are organized into entertaining and effective groupings.

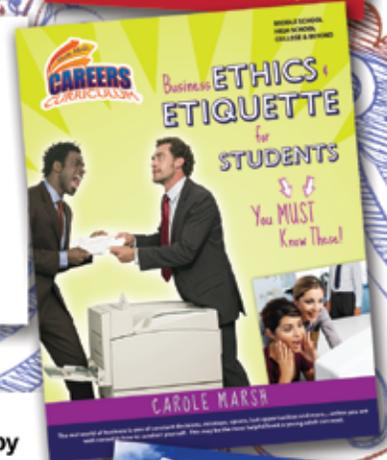
"Why be embarrassed when you can be empowered by knowing 'job speak' BEFORE you even get the job?"



Business Ethics & Etiquette for Students: You MUST Know These!

This highly entertaining and immensely practical book is an eye-opening must-read for students and new hires! It provides them with the confidence to avoid embarrassment, misstep, lost opportunity, and more.

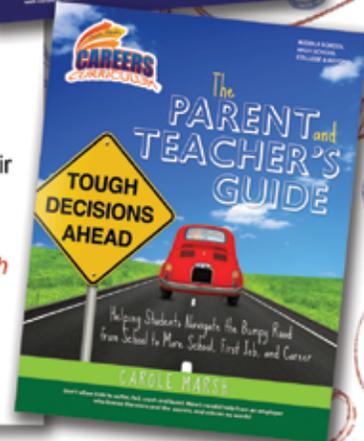
"Fascinating and quite a lot of material covered. Anyone can benefit from this double-whammy of info book!"



The Parent and Teacher's Guide: Helping Students Navigate the Bumpy Road from School to More School, First Job, and Career

Filled with candid help from someone who has traveled the bumpy road of "non-readiness" from school to job to career, this book boasts timely and honest information that will help kids get ready for the real world of work. The wealth of ideas available to parents and teachers in this book will help them to navigate their student's journey ahead!

"Marsh has a keen sense of devotion to every type of student truly seeking a path to success. This book is worth the price for the compassion and humor, explanation of 'Rigor vs. Rigor Mortis,' and 'Why Study These Subjects' section. She's clearly 'been there, done that,' and achieved great success despite many obstacles!"



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Secondary educational schools of all types, that are dismayed that so many students have to start their futures with remedial classes



Educators, who in spite of their efforts, know their students are neither ready for the real world of work, nor the rigor of additional education or training



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Examples of job interviews that show what employers really expect and think!

Essential Skills for the Real World of Work: Things Every Student Must Know!

The absolutely essential skills you need to even have a chance to get a job and keep one...no kidding!

The Parent and Teacher's Guide to Helping Students Navigate the Bumpy Road from School to More School, First Job, and Career

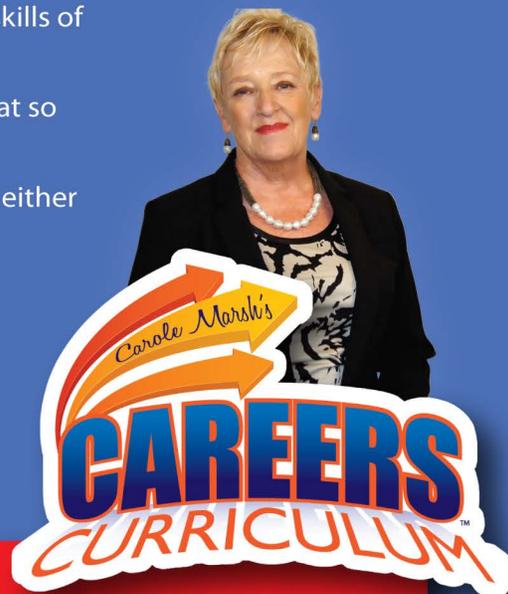
How parents, teachers, and others can help students avoid floundering in all these areas, making false assumptions, assuming unnecessary debt, and failing to successfully launch into their future.

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