Pathfinder Quest: Pathways to Possibilities

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Essential Question(s)

- What factors should I consider when choosing a major that supports my career goals?

Summary

Pathfinder Quest: Pathways to Possibilities helps students explore how their interests connect to real careers. Through online activities and reflection, students learn that choosing a major isn't about being perfect, but rather finding a path that fits who they are and where they want to go.

Learning Goals

- Students will be able to identify how different college majors can lead to a variety of career paths.
- Students will use online career exploration tools to research potential jobs, employers, and salaries related to a chosen major.
- Students will reflect on how their perceptions of careers and majors have changed.

Attachments

- Activity Slides—Pathways to Possibilities.pptx
- Majors by Holland Code—Pathways to Possibilities.docx
- Majors by Holland Code—Pathways to Possibilities.pdf
- Note Catcher—Pathways to Possibilities - Spanish.docx
- Note Catcher—Pathways to Possibilities - Spanish.pdf
- Note Catcher—Pathways to Possibilities.docx
- Note Catcher—Pathways to Possibilities.pdf

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- Note Catcher handout (attached; one per student)
- Majors by Holland Code handout (attached; one per student)
- Pen/pencil

2 minutes

Preparation Note

Be sure to add the next session's meeting information to slide 20.

10 minutes

Engage

Use the **Activity Slides** to facilitate this session. Move through **slides 2-4** to review the title, essential question, and lesson objectives as needed. Pass out the **Note Catcher** handout to every student.

Display **slide 5** and introduce students to the Fiction in the Facts strategy, which is similar to the game "two truths and a lie." Explain that students will explore surprising facts and common misconceptions about different careers. This activity encourages critical thinking and helps students challenge assumptions about professional paths. Give students 30 seconds to discuss which statement they think is the fictional statement or which is the truth and why. After students have had time to read the three statements and make their choice, move to **slide 6** and reveal the two facts and the lie. After each round, encourage students to ask follow-up questions or share personal connections to the careers mentioned. Repeat this process for **slides 7-10.**

15 minutes

Explore

Move to **slide 11** and explain that students will be taking an online interest profiler to connect their interests to potential careers. Have students access the O*NET Interest Profiler site by either typing in the URL or scanning the QR code on the slide. Students will need to use the following instructions found on their Note Catcher handout**.** Allow students time to work through the interest profiler.

Facilitator Note: Accessing the Website

Students will need access to an electronic device. A laptop is recommended, but a phone will also work.

If the web address has been updated and is no longer taking students directly to the profiler, have students navigate to the homepage https://www.mynextmove.org and go to the purple box labeled "Discover your Interests" to find the O*NET Interest Profiler.

15 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 12** and ask students the following question:

"How many of you feel pressure to pick the 'perfect' major for your dream job?"

After, show transition statement:

Did you know that 60% of college students in the United States change their major during their first year of college (Coplin, 2012)?

Explain the mini-game "Fact or Fiction?" Read each statement aloud and have students vote with a thumbs up (true), thumbs down (false), or sideways (unsure). Then reveal the truth and provide a short explanation. Repeat this process for **slides 13-15**.

Move to **slide 16** and introduce The Holland Code as one of the most cited and practical career choice theories (Zainudin et. al, 2020). The Holland Code emphasizes the relationship between career success and a person's personality type. This theory can help students make more informed and fulfilling choices when selecting a major.

Transition to **slide 17** and pass out the **Majors by Holland Code** handout to each student. Ask students if they remember session 2's Magnetic Statement activity. Explain that each of those statements were aligned with one of the Holland Code sections. Invite students to study the table of majors after the session to see if the code they most align with matches their chosen major.

10 minutes

Extend

Display **slide 18** and have students turn over their Note Catcher handout. Have students access the O*Net Online Career Search by scanning the QR code or typing in the provided URL. Guide students through the next step in their career exploration journey: connecting their interests to real-world job data. Using their results from the O*NET Interest Profiler, students will choose two careers that interest them most. For each career, students will follow the instructions on the "Occupation Search" section of their Note Catcher handout. Students will repeat these steps for 2-3 careers.

Facilitator Note: State of Choice

Feel free to change the example state to your own preference.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 19** and explain the I used to think...but now I know strategy on their Note Catcher handout. Explain that the reflection activity encourages them to think about how their ideas about majors, careers, and college planning have evolved throughout the session. Give students 2–3 minutes to complete their responses. Give students the opportunity to share any thoughts they have, either out loud or in small groups.

Lastly, move to **slide 20** and explain that the next session will involve resume work. Encourage students to either bring their already-created resume or begin to create one. Remind students that their campus has resume creation resources, such as a career services department.

Research Rationale

First Generation College Students (FGCS) lack the social capital of their middle-to-upper-class peers and thus struggle in their college and career readiness experiences (Almeida, et al., 2019). Social capital is defined as the relationships you develop in your personal and professional life that provide support and guidance. Research indicates that FGCSs struggle to build social capital due to a lack of experience and knowledge stemming from their familial, social, and economic background. Structured programs on post-secondary institution campuses that are readily available and convenient help bridge the gap between FGCSs and their peers (Dernberger, 2025).

Social Capital

At the post-secondary level, social capital refers to the relationships and interactions that students build with peers, faculty, and professionals. These connections provide valuable resources and support, such as information about career opportunities and access to academic and extracurricular activities. Thompson et al. (2023) explain that students had better academic and career opportunities after using their campus Career Services than those who did not. However, students from lower socioeconomic families are less likely to possess valuable information about college success, leading to less access to campus resources than their higher socioeconomic peers (Dernberger, 2025; Almeida, et al., 2019). Studies suggest that developing social capital between students and faculty is essential for students' development, positively impacting academic achievement and retention. (Almeida, et al., 2019). Students often have difficulty with the career decision-making process, and campus resources, such as Career Services departments, help ease this process by considering the student’s personality, interests, and background.

Resources

- Almeida, D., Byrne, A., Smith, R., & Ruiz, S. (2019). How relevant is grit? The importance of social capital in first-generation college students' academic success. *Journal of College Student Retention, 23*(3), 539-559. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119854688
- Coplin, B. (2012). 10 things employers want you to learn in college: The skills you need to succeed. New York, Ten Speed Press.
- Dernberger, B. N. (2025). Inequality in the college-to-career transition: Building career-relevant cultural and social capital on campus. *Sociology Compass, 19*(3). https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.70041
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Fiction in the facts. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/60
- K20 Center. (n.d.) I used to think... but now I know. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/137
- Thompson, D., Dent, H., & Fine, M. (2023). Factors related to a college student's career optimism and their perception of career services. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *77*(3), 395–409. https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12408
- U.S. Department of Labor. (n.d.). My next move. https://www.mynextmove.org/
- Zainudin, Z. N., Rong, L. W., Nor, A. M., Yusop, Y. M., & Othman, W. N. W. (2020). The relationship of Holland theory in career decision making: A systematic review of literature. Journal of critical reviews, 7(9), 884-892.