PHASES IN CHILDREN'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Children's career aspirations, and their understanding of how they might achieve those aspirations, change as they get older. Children mature at different rates, but we can describe broad phases in their aspirations. Over time we see development from fantasy careers to realistic careers as children realise the compromises needed to achieve their aspirations. Below we outline some of these phases and highlight implications for career-related learning in the classroom.

Career knowledge and aspirations

Age

Classroom focus

Children start to classify people using simple, observable differences such as: big or small, young and old, boy or girl.

They recognise that adults have jobs, and might give some simple facts about jobs.

Jobs just exist and getting a job just happens.



Children classify jobs using observable differences, including gender. They rule out some jobs based these differences.

Their career aspirations are mainly based on their hobbies, or jobs they see around them.

Getting a job just happens, but they might name skills that a job would need.

They might be able to identify some of their own attributes and skills.

Children are becoming aware of a broader range of jobs.

Other people's views become more important including perceived status of different jobs.

Children start to become aware of some constraints on job choices, and begin to dismiss some jobs as being for the wrong gender or status or beyond their capabilities.

They can describe skills or activities that might lead to a particular job.

Up to age 11

Challenge stereotypes in the classroom: avoid the use of gender as a sorting mechanism or to set expectations.

Talk about a broad range of jobs that people around us have, and who can do them.

Talk about attributes children already have or how they can develop them in school.

Ask visitors to talk about their jobs and attributes.

Link curriculum topics to different jobs. Ask who would need to know, or use, the information you're learning about today?

Age 11 and up

all of the above and...

Regular visits from external speakers. Use your alumni if possible.

Activities that allow pupils to develop their attributes and employability skills.

Discuss the labour market locally and nationally.

Young people are developing critical self-awareness about their own values and attributes.

They have stronger views about what is an 'acceptable' job, and reject other jobs as not for them.

They recognise that there is an interaction between their attributes and interests, and available job opportunities.

They might even begin to consider systemic influences, including labour market and patterns of employment.

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