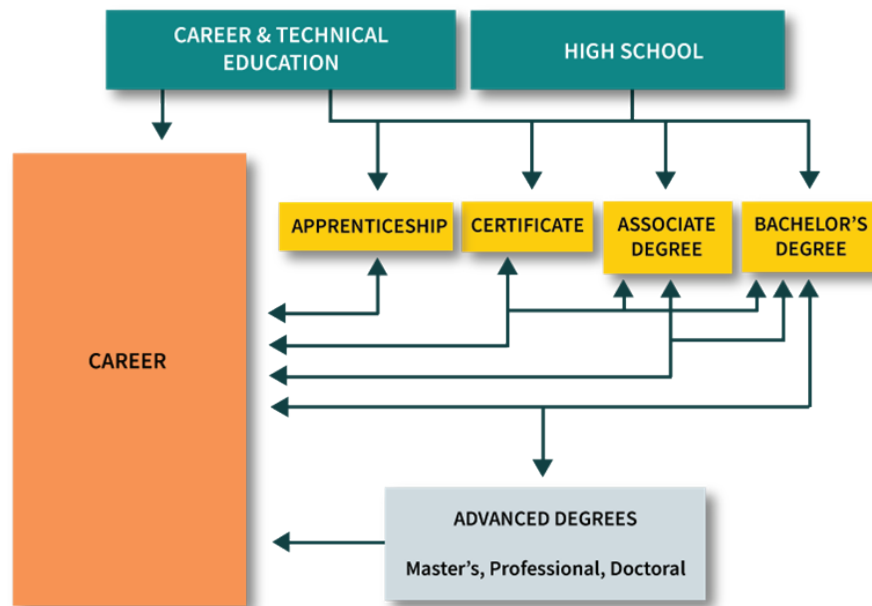


5 Tips for Talking About Education and Training After High School

As teachers, service providers, guidance counselors, parents, employers, or any other type of community member, it is an honor and a responsibility to help others find their way. To best support the people in your life navigating their education and career journey, it is important to be equipped with the right information and talking points. Below are four important topics to keep in mind when having these conversations.

1. Emphasize Empowerment and Choice

There is no correct formula for how someone should approach their education and training after high school. It is most important that it is right for them. Most people's paths look different and it is essential to recognize this with empathy and understanding. There are so many options for people to explore, and someone will be most successful in an education and training program if it is their choice, they are excited about the pathway, and they are interested in the program. Take a moment to consider the diagram below to see the numerous pathways available in Vermont.



As this diagram reinforces, there are numerous pathways into careers and educational opportunities. No one choice is static, and options are available throughout a career.

2. Focus on Inclusive Language

An additional strategy to emphasize choice and opportunity is through language. Whereas ‘college’ refers to a specific type of postsecondary pathway, ‘**credential**’ refers to any verified educational degree, certificate, occupational license, Registered Apprenticeship, or industry recognized credential that has value in the labor market. Another inclusive phrase to use is ‘education and training after high school.’ This shift in language helps to communicate that there are many valuable postsecondary pathways available to someone, and college is not the default.

Here is an example of how to use this language in action:

“Hey _____, I’m curious if you are planning to continue your education and training after high school? There are so many different types of credentials that can help you reach your goals.”

3. Consider the End Goal

People continue their education and training for many reasons. Some people are motivated by the goal of going to college or completing the education and training credential itself. That is great! But it is not true for everyone. If someone is unsure of the “point” of pursuing a postsecondary program, try framing education and training after high school as the means to their desired end. Here are some potential motivators:

- ▶ Get a well-paying job, which can help people afford to:
 - ▶ Pay off debt
 - ▶ Buy a house
 - ▶ Help support their family
 - ▶ Buy fun tech or recreation equipment
 - ▶ Go on vacation
- ▶ Start a business
- ▶ Have employer covered health insurance
- ▶ Allow them to start a career or change a career
- ▶ Find fulfillment and meaning in their work
- ▶ Avoid unemployment, especially during hard times personally or nationally
- ▶ Increase the range of jobs they are eligible for

4. Reinforce the Variety of Credentials

One barrier many Vermonters face is not knowing the full range of postsecondary options. Historically, many students and young people have been told that college is the best and only postsecondary option. This messaging limits Vermonters’ imagination about what is possible for their careers and their lives.

Options like certificates, Registered Apprenticeships, licenses, and badges can jump start someone’s career. These programs are often more affordable, take less time to complete, and can include hands-on learning. This makes them especially appealing for adults, people who are working, and students who did not thrive in a traditional classroom environment. Learn more about the value of non-degree credentials in this [Strada Education report](#).

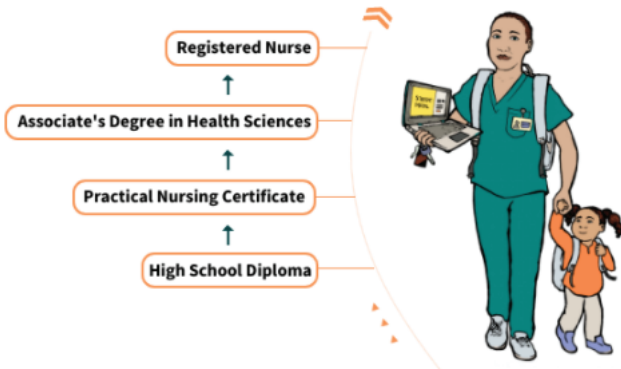
Key takeaways from this report include that adults with non-degree credentials:

- ▶ Perceive their education path as more valuable and are more likely to recommend it to those without a credential
- ▶ Are employed full-time at higher rates than their non-credentialed peers
- ▶ Have a 30% higher median annual income than those without a credential

5. Introduce Stackable Credentials

Stacking credentials is a great way for someone to work toward a career or education goal in more manageable steps. There are three stackable credential models, which will work for students depending on their education and career goals.

Vertical: Earn credentials that stack upon one another to build knowledge about a certain topic. For example, if pursuing a college degree feels out of reach for a student, they could always start with a certificate program in their desired industry. That certificate program may lead to a 2-year degree program. That Associate degree can eventually lead a Bachelor’s degree.



Horizontal: Earn credentials across multiple focuses or topics to expand breadth of knowledge. For example, earning multiple short-term credentials can build expertise across a few focuses within a field. This makes an employee very versatile and resilient.

Hybrid: Earn vertically stacking credentials across two or more focuses or topics. This model combines the benefits of both vertical and horizontal stacking.



Visit the “[My Life, My Path](#)” resource to see more options for how to explain stackable credentials to students, employees, and community members.