

“Post-school education – Transitioning from school to career in NRW” Parents are important partners in this regional project.

Parents provide vital guidance in career and course choices

Dear parents and guardians,

A successful career and course focus, and subsequent choice of career path, is critical to ensuring a secure future where your children can support themselves. As parents and guardians, you are the most important partners here, as you are particularly familiar with your children’s interests, potentials and abilities.

School students often ask themselves questions like:

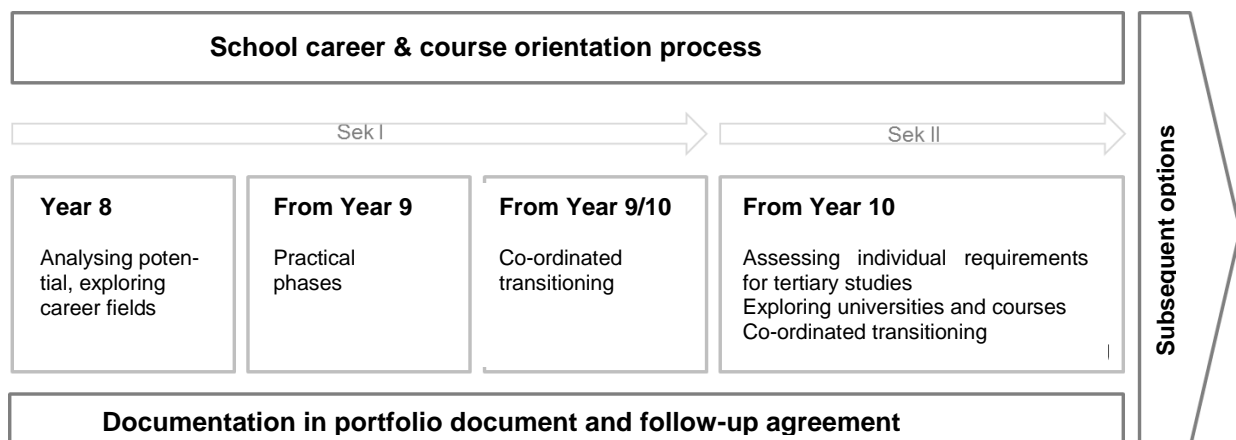
- Which career is best for me and my strengths?
- Do I need an apprenticeship or university studies for this?
- How can I prepare for an application?

You can intensively support, assist and advise your children as they seek answers to these questions. Schools in North-Rhine Westphalia and other experts, such as the career advisors at employment agencies, offer specialised, competent support for these and other similar issues.

Practical tips

How do schools help parents and children identify suitable career and course pathways?

Career and course orientation is a key component taught at schools in North-Rhine Westphalia, and are based on the “Kein Abschluss ohne Anschluss” (Post-school education) regional project which, with extensive community involvement (ministries, business, unions, Federal Employment Agency), stipulates a systematic orientation process for every school student from year 8, to aid with the transition from school to career or from school to university to career.



This is done through various so-called “standard elements”, which are described in this information sheet (**Course and Career Choice Co-ordinator (StuBo)**, **Career Orientation Office (BOB)**, **potential analysis**, **portfolio document - e.g. NRW “career choice passport”**, **practical phases**, **follow-up agreement** etc.). The aim is to prepare the children for this transition as well as possible, and ensure it is overcome successfully.

1. The **Course and Career Choice Co-ordinator (StuBo)** means schools always have at least one specific teacher acting as the contact person for parents, students and other out-of-school partners.

(See www.berufsorientierung-nrw.de/standardelemente/stubo/)

Tip: If necessary, arrange a consultation with your school’s StuBo. Consultation hours can be found on the website of your child’s school.

2. At many schools, the **Career Orientation Office (BOB)** is a central facility for information, activities and conversations, and a fixed port of call for course and career advice. It is where career advisors from the Employment Agency provide counselling on individual career-choice matters during set consultation hours. The office also provides information material. For more details on opening hours and activities, visit the respective school’s website.

(See: www.berufsorientierung-nrw.de/standardelemente/berufsorientierungsbuero/)

Tip: Have a look at the BOB at your child’s school.

3. Your child’s career orientation starts in year 8 with the **potential analysis**, which gives the children information on their strengths and potentials. It provides an opportunity to explore suitable career fields later on in the career-orientation process, and look for internships. Preparation and follow-ups are performed in class. The potential analysis is a one-day academic event held outside the school. On the day, your children will be familiarised with their interests and potentials for the professional world through a variety of tasks. Parents can of course attend the assessment session. As the potential analysis is run by out-of-school educational institutions, you must provide your consent in the form of a signed privacy statement. The educational institutions will inform you of the analysis method in writing, particularly detailing what it will monitor. During the assessment session, you and your child will be able to decide whether or not your child will take the results with them to school for further counselling as part of the career and course-orientation process. The potential analysis follows a different format at each different school type.

(See: www.berufsorientierung-nrw.de/standardelemente/potenzialanalyse/)

Tip: Attend the assessment session held at the school after the potential analysis. Seize the opportunity to allow your child’s teachers to use the results to provide personalised career-orientation advice at the school. We would ask you to forward your children’s results to the school’s teachers, though you are not obliged to do so.

4. A **portfolio document**, i.e. the NRW “career choice passport”, is an important tool at the school. The career choice passport is a folder the students use throughout the entire career and course-choice process. It contains important information, checklists and templates. The potential analysis results, internship certificates and references, careers research results and the follow-up agreement can also be filed in here. The follow-up agreement is a document in

which students record in writing the decisions they have made in relation to their transition from school to vocational training/tertiary studies, and the next steps they will be taking towards their (desired) career.

(See www.berufsorientierung-nrw.de/standardelemente/portfolioarbeit)

Tip: Regularly check your child's career choice passport! Help your child with it, and encourage him/her to bring the folder to all career counselling sessions and consultations at school.

5. From the end of year 8 onwards, the students gain initial realistic experiences and ideas about the professional world through various **practical phases**. The three career-field familiarisation sessions allow them to witness professional activities in-house at a company/establishment for an entire school day each time. Sponsored familiarisations are offered to students otherwise unable to participate due to organisational (if the career field is unsuitable for on-site familiarisations, e.g. construction industry) or other reasons. Extracurricular educational institutions provide insights into various career fields. The children are introduced to a typical working day by specially trained staff, allowing them to get an idea of the particular career field. The experiences gained during the familiarisations are then discussed in class in order to reflect on them and reach a well-founded decision for choosing an internship later on.

Internships, generally lasting two weeks, actively involve the children in the professional world, enabling them to perform and observe practical exercises, and talk to experienced staff.

Practical courses are geared around the same requirements applicable to the first year of an apprenticeship/traineeship. They build on the familiarisations, and particularly foster technical and social skills in students needing support in this area. The tasks are as realistic and hands-on as possible to encourage the children's career focus and readiness for vocational training, and maximise the possibility of being successfully accepted for said training. The courses are run by external providers specialised in the field.

Long-term internships are specially aimed at students requiring particular assistance with making a successful transition into an apprenticeship/traineeship. They are designed to help the children to practise comparing a career's requirements with their personal strengths, potentials and individual needs for support, and improve their opportunities on the training and job market, without jeopardising their chances of obtaining a Hauptschulabschluss (a type of secondary school completion certificate). The students spend one day a week doing the in-house internship. This requires a recommendation by the school staff, and consent from the student and parent, as the internship is voluntary.

(See www.berufsorientierung-nrw.de/standardelemente/praxisphasen/).

Tip: Talk to your child about their experiences during the career-field familiarisation and help him/her look for in-house internships. Encourage your child to gain further practical experience in addition to the mandatory internships, e.g. as part of a voluntary holiday internship. Inspire him/her to also gain experience in careers not typical of his/her gender. This often opens up promising career prospects.

6. In year 9, your child will be given a form called "Co-ordinated transitioning with follow-up agreement", or **follow-up agreement** for short. Your child will write down two important points here:

- The decision he/she has made at the time regarding the transition from school to vocational training/tertiary studies, and
- The next steps he/she plans to take towards his/her (desired) career.

The *form* belongs to your child, and should be filed away in the portfolio document.

It is also important to consider what your child will do after finishing school: an in-house traineeship, further schooling and then tertiary studies?

Your support is once again required during this critical orientation phase. You will help your child find the best possible compromise between his/her (desired) career and the real opportunities available.

(See www.berufsorientierung-nrw.de/standardelemente/uebergangsgestaltung-anschlussvereinbarung/)

Tip: Find out the results of your child's counselling sessions conducted by the school and by the Employment Agency's career advisors. Be actively involved in your child's career-orientation process.

How does the Employment Agency help parents and school students in the career and course-orientation process?

The Federal Employment Agency is responsible for providing prompt information to all parents and children about to undertake traineeships. It assists you, your children and teachers right across the country with the career and course-selection process early on. Its counselling is free and confidential. The Federal Employment Agency also assists by running career-orientation events at schools, at the Careers Information Centre (BIZ) and other locations. The Careers Information Centre in turn provides lots of information for parents and school students. School groups regularly visit the BIZ.

(See: www.arbeitsagentur.de)

Tip: From year 8 onwards, arrange to speak to your school's competent career advisors! Names and consultation hours can be found on the school's website.

How do business and trade unions help parents and school students during the course and career-orientation process?

Companies and businesses are important partners in the course and career-selection process. They offer students practical career-choice opportunities on site, e.g. as part of career-field familiarisations and internships or learning partnerships. This allows the children to gain an early idea of the professional world. Many companies run "open days" or similar events to provide information on their areas of activity and the relevant careers and traineeship opportunities. Companies and other institutions like chambers, associations, universities etc. similarly present themselves at traineeship exchanges, careers fairs etc., and offer information on careers, traineeship options, courses and more. Chambers in turn advertise suitable placements as partners on-site at the companies. Supported by the chambers, the companies then send traineeship representatives to schools. These are mostly second-year trainees themselves who want to give the school students comprehensive, authentic insights into the traineeship based on their own personal experiences.

Trade unions have extensive information on trainee satisfaction in various industries and careers. Use this service and attend relevant events with your children.

We hope you and your children find the career and course-orientation process helpful, and make the right decision!