**Career Exploration in Middle Grades**

**What is Career Exploration?**

Career exploration is a process of learning about oneself and the world of work, identifying potential careers, and developing a strategy for realizing education and career goals (ACTE, 2018).

**Why Improve Career Exploration in Middle Grades?**

Career exploration gives a broad view of the working world that students will one day enter. It helps students to make connections between high school coursework and potential careers, which helps to keep them motivated to graduate with the skills they need to enter postsecondary education and ultimately the workforce.  Here are some of the reasons middle school is a perfect time for career exploration:

* Career exploration in middle school reaches students at a time when they are most susceptible to disengaging from the learning process.
* Research shows that students in middle grades are becoming increasingly aware of their interests and values.
* Middle school students are in the stage of adolescent development that allows them to interact in meaningful ways with career development activities.

**Career Awareness, Exploration, and Advising Framework**

Career exploration is part of a continuum of experiences that students might engage in throughout their academic career. Career exploration provides a critical bridge from career awareness to career advising and supports students along a meaningful path to postsecondary education and the workforce.