Recruiting Special Populations into Career-Technical Education

An Ohio Department of Education Toolkit

December 2022

Ohio | **Department** of Education

◆AIR®
Advancing Evidence.
Improving Lives.

Contents

Introduction

Career-technical education (CTE) plays a vital role in preparing students for future success, which is one of the strategies in [Future Forward Ohio](#), the state's strategic priorities for assisting students in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important for each child to have an opportunity to access career-tech and learn the workforce readiness skills that are needed for today's growing economy.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) Office of Career-Technical Education has provided this toolkit to support the education community in implementing strategies that recruit and support special student populations into high-wage and in-demand CTE programs. Ensuring that recruitment strategies, CTE policies, and school systems are inclusive of all student populations will improve access and opportunities to CTE programs for each child.

Despite CTE serving as a key predictor of secondary completion, post-school engagement, and employment outcomes for special populations (College and Career Readiness and Success Center, 2018a), some student groups have historically been underserved by CTE programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Some of these special population groups are defined in Perkins V legislation.

To achieve a more diverse career-technical landscape, students representing these special population groups must have access to additional supports that could increase their enrollment and success in CTE programs.

The development of this resource was informed by a review of existing research on the impact of CTE on different student populations. Additionally, ODE collected feedback from a small, voluntary sample of Ohio school counselors. Counselors provided insights into current special population recruitment practices and offered input on content for the toolkit.

This toolkit can be used by any school or district staff member who:

- Informs students about CTE programs,
- Enrolls students in CTE, or
- Supports student participation in CTE.

Defining Special Populations

Informed by the Perkins V definition of special populations and ODE's priorities, special populations include:

- Economically disadvantaged students
- Students with disabilities
- Students preparing for nontraditional fields
- English learners
- Students experiencing homelessness
- Youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system
- Single parents, including single pregnant women
- Students with a deployed military parent
- Justice-involved youth

Specific roles might include school counselors, career community coordinators, transition coordinators, career specialists, enrollment coordinators, counselor liaisons, or any stakeholders that inform recruitment into career-technical education programs, pathways, or courses. Teachers and administrators will find the content useful to support students exploring career pathways.

This resource begins with an overview of research on CTE participation for various special populations and explores the policy levers districts and schools can influence to support more equitable recruitment practices. The toolkit then describes three strategies to ensure current recruitment practices include activities that will support students in these special population groups. Each strategy contains accompanying reflection questions for users to consider.

STRATEGY 1:
Using Data to Identify Special Population Groups

STRATEGY 2:
Leveraging Partnerships for Inclusion

STRATEGY 3:
Removing Barriers to Access

There are two tools provided at the end of the toolkit:

- **Recruitment Strategies, Resources, and Potential Partners:** This tool, which is organized by student population, provides sample recruitment and retention strategies as well as potential partners and resources.

- **The Action Planning Template:** This summary tool was designed to help users move from learning to action by providing reflection questions for teams to discuss and document their responses.

Terms Used in This Toolkit

Partner schools: Referring to the high schools and middle schools where students are enrolled prior to or during their enrollment in CTE programs.

Public service providers: Organizations that offer supports to one or more specific populations. Typically, nonprofit or government-funded organizations.

Overview: CTE & Student Special Populations

Summary of the Research

Historically, special populations have been underserved in CTE (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Despite overall lower participation rates, CTE research highlights positive outcomes across special populations. These outcomes include higher secondary completion rates, higher engagement in post-school activities like postsecondary enrollment and community engagement, and higher employment rates.

Key Findings in CTE Research

- Students experiencing homelessness who participated in at least three CTE courses had higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates compared to students experiencing homelessness participating in less than three CTE courses (Advance CTE and National Center for Homeless Education, 2020).

- According to Ohio's Education Management Information System (EMIS) data, Ohio foster care students who were CTE concentrators who left school in 2021 for whom status is known, 88.6% were employed within six months of leaving school.

- For Ohio's students receiving special education services, completing at least three semesters of CTE coursework in the same career pathway or concentration increases the likelihood of post-school employment (Unger et al., 2021).

Career counselors and other educators in the schools and communities that serve these special populations must be equipped to understand and meet their individual needs (Phillips, 2022). Ohio's districts and schools can leverage two major policies to maximize access to CTE programs: Perkins V and ODE's *Each Child, Our Future*.

Guided by Legislation and State Goals

This toolkit was created to align with and amplify the goals of two critical policies informing CTE from the federal and state level—Perkins V, the shorthand name for the federal CTE legislation that allows for over $1.3 billion in funding to states annually, and ODE's *Each Child, Our Future*. Both policies prioritize improving educational access and promoting equitable supports for students across Ohio.

### *The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*

The governing legislation for this work is the [Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)](), which identifies priority special populations that must be served and supported through CTE programs nationally. Additionally, Perkins asks states to

identify inequities in accessing CTE and continuously work toward improving access for these student groups.

Each Child, Our Future

Each Child, Our Future is foundational to this work and a guiding framework for how Ohio's education community should approach the recruitment of students in special populations into CTE. This toolkit directly emphasizes two of the three core principles from the plan:

DEFINING **EQUITY** IN EDUCATION

Each child has access to relevant and challenging academic experiences and educational resources necessary for success across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background and/or income.

- **Equity:** In Ohio, *each* child is challenged to discover and learn, prepared to pursue a fulfilling post-high school path, and empowered to become a resilient lifelong learner who contributes to society (see graphic of apple tree).

- **Partnerships:** *Everyone* shares the responsibility of preparing children for successful futures.
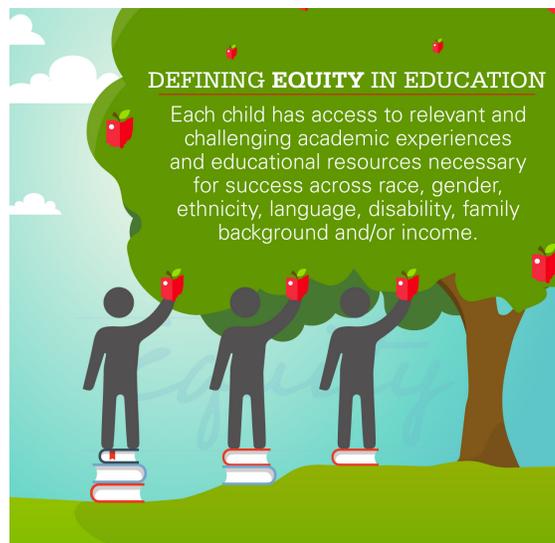
Emphasizing Equity in the Recruitment of Students into Career-Technical Education

Equitable recruitment activities support the development of a diverse workforce, and in turn impacts efforts to decrease the skills gap in the state of Ohio. Specifically, equitable recruitment into CTE:

- Allows students to engage in a **cohesive, flexible,** and **responsive** career pathway;
- Makes students feel **welcome and supported** and like they have the **means to succeed** in the career pathway; and
- Encourages students to **skillfully navigate** their own career journey (Advance CTE, 2021).

This tool identifies supportive processes, resources, and potential partners that can be leveraged to increase CTE access, awareness, and support for students in special population groups. The toolkit will support users in exploring and understanding:

- **How to identify special populations.** The state of Ohio has developed resources that

CHECK OUT Advance CTE's resource about improving access and equity in CTE for students in the juvenile justice system: **Learning that Works Resource Center**

make data readily available. The first strategy in this toolkit discusses the importance of using qualitative and quantitative data to identify a district's priority special population groups.

- **How to serve all students, with a focus on inclusion.** Incorporating a universal design for recruitment, which embeds specific supports for each special population group, may help all students better see themselves within CTE. The belief that a school or district serves all special populations simply by designing activities for and delivering information to *all* students misses the opportunity to serve *each* student. This toolkit discusses ways you can embed inclusive tactics to better reach special population groups through partnerships and within the recruitment activities you are already doing for all students.

- **How to remove and decrease barriers.** Admissions processes, policies, and procedures and stigma may facilitate negative perceptions of CTE among students. Reviewing policies and procedures with a lens for unnecessary barriers to participation can help decrease red tape for special population groups. Stigma is also an invisible but legitimate recruitment barrier for students who fall into these special populations. Communicating the value and benefits of CTE programs, as well as the long-term success of graduates from CTE programs, is important to relieve these stigmas. This toolkit addresses strategies to remove these barriers and improve stigmas surrounding career-technical education and personal student barriers around self-efficacy.

A NOTE BEFORE GETTING STARTED: The strategies explored in this toolkit were written to support CTE programs in working toward more equitable recruitment efforts. Strategies shared are often effective with more than one population. Consider the examples provided as opportunities and inspiration for how to better reach, inform, and include all students.

Strategy 1:
Using Data to Identify Student Population Groups

The first step to being more inclusive of special populations is understanding the current makeup of students in the district. Strategy 1 discusses the different data that can be collected, analyzed, and acted on, as well as strategies for interpreting that data and putting it to use. This strategy describes existing quantitative data sources and provides tips for collecting qualitative data to help understand student perspectives better.

Using Data to Understand CTE Participants

Perkins V emphasizes data-driven decisions and improving access to CTE for special population groups. Because of this, ODE has made self-reported Education Management Information System (EMIS) data available to the education community through the [Secure Data Center Reports](). These data reports support the federal indicators of performance and are disaggregated by students in special population groups and the subgroups of race, gender, and migrant status. The reports offer critical insights into (1) who is participating in and completing CTE programs and (2) how they are performing compared to other students.

> **Consider:**
>
> Are there any special population groups that you would like more district- or school-level data on?
>
> How might that additional data help you better serve the special population?

The state of Ohio has many resources for accessing data that can inform a district's or program's CTE recruitment efforts.

- The [Ohio School Report Cards website]() contains a variety of aggregated and disaggregated quantitative data related to CTE and students from special populations, such the percentage of homeless students enrolled in each school and scoring proficient on state tests, or the percentage of students in each school earning industry recognized credentials.

- The Reports Portal application in Ohio's Digital Identity (OH|ID) provides reports on enrollment, discipline, and college and career readiness at the school and district levels. For example, you users can view the percentage of economically disadvantaged students earning dual credit at the school level.

- The [Ohio Means Jobs website]() provides districts and schools with local in-demand jobs data. This information can support counselors and districts in informing students on potential career paths based on what jobs are available to them regionally.

In addition to reviewing quantitative data, like the sources listed above, this section provides potential qualitative data sources that may help to gather individual student perspectives. The strategic use of qualitative data can facilitate understanding of how or why certain students do or do not participate in CTE. Consider using:

- **Surveys** to explore how perspectives align or differ between students and to observe trends or changes in perspectives over time.

  - For example: Survey students who are not yet participating in CTE and disaggregate the data to see if students from special population groups bring up perceptions or challenges that are keeping them from participating. Survey students already participating in CTE, to get their impressions of experiences they've participated in such as past tours and current program activities.

- **Interviews or informal conversations** can best be used when trying to understand the "how" or the "why" of perspectives, as well as to develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the experiences of a specific group.

  - For example: Have regular conversations with CTE instructors on the specific instructional supports or professional development resources needed to support their special population students most effectively.

When reviewing data, reflect on how each special population responds. This may increase understanding of how different students experience common and individual barriers to access and success.

Consider other data sources outside of Ohio to help understand the district's special population groups. For example, the U.S. Department of Education provides users with an interactive website, Our Nation's English Learners, which breaks down trends and maps English learners across the country.

> **Using Data to Inform Recruitment Tools**
>
> While exploring the data available, consider what data points might support a district or school in speaking to the positive outcomes of CTE, and including that data in fact sheets or flyers.

Using both qualitative and quantitative data in tandem can elevate a district or program's understanding of the special population groups they serve, as well as the barriers that may exist that are preventing strong recruitment practices.

Why Using Data Matters

Maria is a career counselor who planned for a group of middle school students to visit the career center for the first time. She reviewed available data related to the partner school she was going to host and found that more than 55% of students at the school were receiving free or reduced-price lunches. Maria then reached out to the school for an informal conversation to learn more about the students who would be visiting the center. She discovered there are also several students in the class who are currently facing homelessness.

With this information, Maria made sure she emphasized the supports available to students in the CTE program during her presentation. She added a slide that highlighted the availability of free washers and dryers for all students to use before or after school and talked about the after-school snack program.

Student perspective:

If you were an economically disadvantaged student or student experiencing homelessness at this recruiting event, would you feel that you could thrive at this career center?

Strategy 1: Reflection & Action Planning

- Do I know what special population groups are in my district?
- Do I know which special population groups in my district are most commonly participating in which CTE programs?
- Are special populations enrolled in CTE at rates similar to how they show up in the district overall?
- What CTE programs align to in-demand careers in the area?

Strategy 2: Leveraging Partnerships for Inclusion

Partnerships are critical to the recruitment and sustained engagement of special population student groups. Partnerships can be leveraged to maximize outreach, facilitate communication and common messaging, and identify the necessary conditions and supports for student success in CTE. These partnerships can include guardians, community-based and student organizations, other local school counselors, advisory boards, business partners, and public service providers. Leveraging these partnerships can improve recruitment activities for all potential career-technical students.

Identifying Potential Partners

A partnership development plan can support district teams in identifying and delivering coordinated and integrated recruitment activities. Follow these steps to develop a draft partnership development plan related to each of your school or district's special population groups.

Step 1. Using the data available, identify the special populations in the district or school.

Step 2. Once the special population groups have been identified, consider what is known about the groups and what additional information is needed.

Step 3. Identify potential partners by completing the brainstorming questions below for each special population group in your district; see Figure 1 for an example.

1. Which organizations, services, or resources support students in this group?
2. Who can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the supports that help this student population thrive?

Step 4. Identify and assign next steps to conduct outreach and establishing working relationships with identified partners.

Figure 1. Example Brainstorm of Population-Specific Partners

- Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers
- Partner School Special Education Teachers
- Students With Disabilities
- Mental Health Providers
- Parent/ Family Support Groups

Why Partnerships Matter

After Maria, the new career center counselor, spoke with the partner school counselor, she reflected on the need to better reach economically disadvantaged students in her district. She recognized that although she was likely speaking to many of them during the tours she hosted, there might be a more supportive way to provide outreach and information to them. Maria considered what other services the students might need. Then Maria remembered the local food bank down the road.

Maria reached out to the food bank's coordinator and received permission to host an information booth about the Career Center's program outside the food bank during some of the key collection times. Maria planned to bring flyers that shared the positive outcomes students from economically disadvantaged families often found when participating in CTE programs. She hoped that meeting students in this location might provide a more open setting for discussion and information sharing around the supportive environment and services the CTE program can provide.

Student perspective:

If you were an economically disadvantaged student, would you feel more comfortable asking questions about available supports in this setting than in an all-class tour?

Making the Most of Partnerships

Building partnerships requires establishing clear roles and responsibilities, a commitment to common goals and outcomes, and strong project management. The examples in Table 1 offer a starting place for districts to use when developing a partnership plan for CTE recruitment.

The sample activities and resources provided can help collaborative teams work together to increase special population awareness and enrollment into CTE. Planning and organization can help ensure both parties find value in the partnership and that the partnership will be long-lasting and beneficial to students.

Are career center staff building partnerships with local partner schools?

How might the actions listed in Strategy 2 be used to develop more productive partnerships with teachers, counselors, and administrators of all schools offering in the district?

Table 1. Examples of Partnership Activities that Might Support Outcomes Related to CTE among Student Special Population Groups

Activity	Potential Outcomes
Partner visits Provide opportunities for partners to tour CTE facilities and learn more about the opportunities available to students. Be sure to highlight the benefits of CTE that are directly related to the special population(s) the partner serves. Invite all partner schools to collaborate in this activity.	• As partner organizations and service providers understand the benefits of CTE to the populations they serve, they may support your recruitment efforts through information sharing and mentorship. • Partnerships and collaborations with all schools in the district and with outside community or national organizations create a shared understanding and increased awareness of the value of CTE, potentially easing social stigmas.
Information sharing between partners and school staff Give partners an opportunity to discuss their organization with program staff. Ask them to highlight the connection between their services and the student special population groups in the district.	• School staff will likely have greater access to and understanding of the supportive services and resources available to the related special population groups and will be able to more easily refer or connect students to the appropriate wraparound services.
Strategic informational presentations in the community Host and facilitate CTE information sessions for potential students and their guardians in partnership with providers or at public service provider buildings. Example: an information table hosted at the local homeless shelter or food bank	• This addresses the pain point in "finding" students in these groups who may not be identified via school data and may increase access points for students in these special population groups. • This activity may provide a more open and comfortable environment that increases a student or guardian's comfort level in asking population-specific questions during the presentations. Example: "I rely on the free meals offered to me at my current school. Can the CTE program offer me free meals as well?"

How Else Can Partnerships Support Special Population Groups in CTE?

Maria knows there will be students with physical disabilities participating in the middle school visit. Two of the students use wheelchairs. Currently, there are no students who use wheelchairs in the career center. To ensure that the career center is up to date with all regulations from the Americans with Disabilities Act, Maria reaches out to the Ohio Methods of Administration (MOA) coordinator to review their school's accommodations. The MOA coordinator plans an on-site visit to provide technical support. Maria also creates a tour of the career center that makes use of the wheelchair ramp instead of the stairs and is sure to show students the elevators and accessible accommodations for all students to use when needed.

Student perspective:

If you were a student who used a wheelchair and the career center proactively ensured you were aware of accommodations available and were set up for success during the tour, what conclusions about the CTE program might you make?

Strategy 2: Reflection & Action Planning

- Do I know what other partners are serving my district's special population groups?
- Am I leveraging partnerships to better reach and/or serve my district's special populations?

Strategy 3:
Removing Barriers to Access

In addition to better understanding the special populations that districts serve and partnering with service providers that support those same populations, districts can work to remove real and perceived barriers to accessing CTE.

It is important to consider what red tape or barriers may be in place that are contributing to the typically low CTE participation rates of student special populations. Table 2 explains the role that policies, processes, and assumptions can play in influencing access and supports for CTE enrollment.

- **Policies:** the decisions about how to build and govern communities.
- **Process:** the ways in which decisions are made and policies are implemented.
- **Assumptions:** the underlying values or beliefs that determine how policies are developed, implemented, prioritized, and modified.

When reviewing policies and their intended or unintended impact on different special population groups, consider:

- Who likely benefits from this policy?
- What groups might be burdened by this policy?
- Who makes decisions about policies?
- How might decision making be more inclusive?
- What assumptions underlie this policy?
- How might assumptions be informed by equity?

Table 2. Policy Review and Reflection

School policy on program prerequisites: Students may only enroll in the Information Technology (IT) program if they have received a B or higher in Algebra I.	
Reflection on the policy:	**Who likely benefits from this policy?** Students who had a complimentary learning style to their teacher's instructional methods, Students who had effective Algebra I teachers, students who needed and were able to access supplemental tutoring.
	What groups might be burdened by this policy? Students who had a different learning style from their teacher's instructional methods, students who needed but were not able to access supplemental tutoring, students with ineffective Algebra I teachers.

Reflection on the process to developing the policy:	**Who makes decisions about policies?** This policy was recommended by CTE instructors because the pathway requires the use of Algebra I concepts.
	How might decision making be more inclusive? Could the school offer supplemental tutoring for students with lower Algebra I grade? Could the class start with an Algebra I boot camp on foundational Algebra I concepts and remove the prerequisite?
Reflection on the assumptions that led to developing the policy:	**What assumptions underlie this policy?** The assumption that informed this policy was that any student who received a grade lower than a B in their high school algebra class would not be able to successfully complete the IT CTE curriculum.
	How might assumptions be informed by equity? Considering equity in this situation would lead us to think of the many reasons a student may not have been able to achieve a B in the course. This may guide us to understanding, with additional and alternative supports, that these students could be successful in the program and should not be prevented from enrolling, but rather provided with additional supports to help them succeed.

Addressing the Stigma

The environment and people around a student greatly influence the educational paths they choose. Staff and administrators understand the negative stigma that can sometimes be placed on CTE programs. To combat this stigma, districts and programs can take steps to ensure that students, parents, guardians, and other mentors are well informed about CTE outcomes, benefits, and opportunities.

Many of the students that fall into the special population groups are facing multiple challenges.

> **Recruiting Nontraditional Students**
>
> Consider using nontraditional students in the advertisements for each career field. Include population-specific information such as testimonials from nontraditional students that explain their career path and their positive experience in choosing a career that is not a traditional choice for their gender.

Their parents or guardians may look at alternative career paths as a disservice or impediment to their student's success. The activities discussed in the next section can support a district or program in proactively informing parents, guardians, teachers, and students about the value and benefits of CTE engagement and why CTE is a viable and beneficial opportunity for students representing special populations.

People Influencers

Consider all the people and information that affect a student's choice and path in life. Guardians, teachers, and other student mentors naturally bring their own experiences, perspectives, and biases to conversations. Therefore, it is important to inform not only students about CTE and its outcomes, but also the adults and other influential stakeholders.

- If students are the ones that receive tours and presentations on CTE classrooms and programs, how are their guardians getting that information?
- Are high school teachers receiving tours and information about CTE programs and opportunities?

Presentations Are an Opportunity to Reach Special Population Groups

Many CTE staff are already making presentations to large groups of students. Make sure you highlight population-specific resources in those presentations. Share information and data such as the following:

- Data pointing to the likelihood of employment after completing CTE for each special population served in the district;
- Data, disaggregated by special population type, comparing the post-graduation outcomes of students who did and did not participate in CTE; and
- Wraparound supports, such as on-site daycare or meals, that are available to students who are engaged with CTE.

Marketing Influencers

Written materials and advertising can play a big part in influencing a student's choices in their career and education journey. Here are questions to ask when walking through middle and high schools:

- Is there positive messaging about CTE opportunities in high-traffic areas?
- Do the CTE materials inform students about the many paths to success they can take through CTE?
- Does the material share the inclusive environment that CTE creates for students, such as those representing student special populations?
- Is the material personalized to the needs of the student community, such as by being translated to the languages represented in each school?
- Is the material translated into the student's spoken home languages?

- Do all CTE materials have a non-discrimination statement similar to this example:
  - Career-technical education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age for participation in any program or activity. Lack of English language proficiency will not be a barrier to admission and participation in career-technical education programs.

Advance CTE has developed a [repository of resources and action steps](#) for developing a CTE communications campaign. These resources include step-by-step processes; fact sheets; and tips on working with families, learners, and even policy makers.

As part of the CTE education team, it is important to consider the role you can play in better informing the people and marketing that influence student choice.

How Does Removing Barriers Make a Difference in CTE?

Maria is planning another middle school visit to her Career Center. A little more than 30% of the students at the middle school are English learners who speak 13 different Asian languages. Maria sees that historically, this school only enrolls 6% of English learners into CTE. Maria seeks the support of an Asian American and Pacific Islander-owned IT company to show students someone culturally similar to them finding success in this career pathway.

She also realizes that the career center has no marketing materials that have been translated into any of the 13 Asian languages. Maria ensures that all marketing materials are translated into the languages spoken at home or in the school.

Student perspective:

If you were an English learner in this district, how would you feel when you saw marketing material in the language spoken in your home?

Strategy 3: Reflection & Action Planning

- How does my district or program review and reflect on existing policies with a lens for equity?
- How does my CTE program inform parents, teachers, and students about CTE opportunities and outcomes?
- Do my program's marketing materials and practices emphasize inclusivity and successful outcomes?

Tool 1:
Recruitment Strategies, Resources, and Potential Partners

The following table includes strategies to support recruitment and retention of students in special population groups to career-technical education.

Career-technical education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age for participation in any program or activity. Lack of English language proficiency will not be a barrier to admission and participation in career-technical education programs.

Table T1-1. Cross-Cutting Strategies & Partners—To Support Multiple Special Populations

Strategy	Description	Links/Examples
Student testimonials	Gather feedback or descriptions about the CTE program from individual students. These can be shared with prospective students in flyers, posters, on your website, in videos, or in person during live presentations. Consider gathering population-specific testimonials by speaking with current students representing special populations and asking them to share how the CTE program has supported them in relation to any barriers or challenges they face. Share testimonials anonymously unless you have obtained permission from students and parents.	Rochester (New York) Public Schools uses testimonials as a marketing and recruitment tool. Spring Independent School District CTE shares student testimonial videos on their website.
Videos	Videos can be used to give parents, students, and partners a more in-depth and personal understanding of your CTE program. Provide tours of your space via video or record and post an online version of your recruitment presentation.	Review Advance CTE's Video Resources, which include links to existing videos and tips on developing custom videos.
Fact sheets	Fact sheets provide quick data points that can make the case for CTE. It is best to format fact sheets as one-pagers that can be easily printed and shared. Focus on sharing data that emphasize student outcomes, benefits, and the positive impact CTE can make in your community. Include data that are specific to your area's priority special populations.	Check out Advance CTE's fact sheets.

Strategy	Description	Links/Examples
Presentations or information sessions	When developing presentations, consider the language, images, and examples you are sharing. Swap out photos to ensure you have all genders and abilities represented for each of your CTE programs. Share population-specific data points and call out why CTE is a great opportunity for students representing the common special population groups in your area. Consider hosting information sessions at service provider locations to increase access to those they serve. Add the non-discrimination statement shared the introduction to this resource above in all marketing materials.	[ODE has developed resources to equip schools with the knowledge and tools to navigate CTE](#).
Flyers and posters	When sharing flyers and posters, think about the three "L's:" location, language, and look. Are they hanging or shared in a location that will reach the right students? Does the language relate to the students you are hoping to recruit? Do the graphics portray the participation of students representing all genders, abilities, and backgrounds? Add the non-discrimination statement shared the introduction to this resource above in all marketing materials.	[Advance CTE provides digital and print templates that are ready to be edited to meet your needs](#). [ODE provides a Career Tech Ohio poster, ready to be printed](#).
Mentorship	Providing one on one mentorship to students can be a great way to improve retention of special population groups. Consider assigning teachers and faculty to develop mentoring relationships with all students or those students who represent a special population group and may benefit from 1-1 check-ins and coaching.	Check out this [postsecondary CTE Mentoring Program](#) for ideas.

Cross-Cutting Potential Partners

[**Ohio Means Jobs**](#): Ohio's workforce development partners provide resources for jobseekers and students. These organizations often have training and support dollars that can be spent on populations that align with the CTE special population groups. Supports could include funding for supplies, clothing, and transportation. To learn more about services available, reach out to your local partners.

[**The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services**](#): The Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) can provide career coaching, job placement, tuition assistance, transportation help, and many other resources for young adults ages 14-24.

The following tables include population-specific strategies to support your CTE program in better recruitment and retention of students in special populations.

Table T1-2. Economically Disadvantaged, Students Experiencing Homelessness, and Students with a Deployed Guardian

Supportive Recruitment Strategies
1. Tailor presentations to this population by providing related outcomes data, highlighting the financial benefits that students can gain through participating in these programs.
2. Ask shelters, food banks, and human services offices to share or hang paper collateral such as posters and flyers in their spaces. Ensure that these resources include population-specific facts as well as your office's contact information if individuals want to learn more.
3. Ensure that students are signed up for free and reduced-price lunch opportunities and other supportive services they may be eligible for such as funding for transportation and supplies.
4. Offer students locker spaces, hygiene facilities, and clothing to ensure they can concentrate on school when they are there.

Resources & Potential Partners
ODE Resources for Students Experiencing Homelessness: This site provides funding guidance and resources, resources for educators, administrators, and families, as well as information on district homeless liaisons.
ODE Resource: Supporting Ohio's Military Families: This site provides resources and information related to supporting students in military families.
Teachers, counselors, and administrators: Staff that work directly with students in the traditional school environment can be your best allies in serving students who are facing economic hardship and homelessness. Connecting with other educational team members can help you serve students in a coordinated fashion.
United Way: United Way supports communities in tackling tough challenges by working with private, public, and nonprofit partners to boost education, economic solutions, and health resources. United Way program staff can be great resources in supporting your own partner development. Consider meeting with them to learn and brainstorm about other partnership opportunities in your community.
United Way 211: United Way's 211 line connects you to expert, caring, and confidential help. It is a great resource to share with all students and can be especially supportive to those students who represent a special population group.

Resources & Potential Partners
Local shelters and human services: Most communities have locally run service providers that specialize in supporting economically disadvantaged families and families facing homelessness. Connect with these partners to better identify and inform students within these populations as well as to learn about existing supports you may be able to connect your current students with.

Table T1-3. Students With Disabilities

Supportive Recruitment Strategies
1. Provide examples of how previous or current students with disabilities have been able to participate in programs.
2. Work directly with special education teachers, and counselors to identify opportunities that meet the skills and interests of students with disabilities.
3. Ensure that teachers are trained and well informed on how to best support students with disabilities.
4. Meet one-on-one with students with disabilities interested in career-technical education. Listen to their experience and ensure that they will be provided with the required supports to be successful in CTE.

Resources & Potential Partners
Teachers, counselors, and administrators: Staff that work directly with students in the traditional school environment can inform you on the best way to support students with disabilities. Connecting with other educational team members can help you serve students in a coordinated fashion.
Ohio Employment First: Employment First works to create greater opportunities for all people to advance their careers using their strengths and talents. This policy benefits communities by supporting diversity and enrichment efforts, promoting equal opportunity, and decreasing dependency on public funding.
State Support Teams: Support Team consultants are educators with expertise in Ohio's Improvement Process (OIP), Early Literacy, Early Learning and School Readiness, Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports and Special Education. State Support Teams provide guidance to build capacity in district personnel to support students with disabilities, including serving students with disabilities in career technical pathways
Opportunities for Ohioans With Disabilities (OOD): OOD provides a variety of services to help students with disabilities prepare for postsecondary education and employment. Partnership with OOD could result in identification of additional supports or solutions to better serve students with disabilities in CTE.

Resources & Potential Partners
ODE's Serving Students with Disabilities in Career-Technical Pathways: This ODE-hosted webpage is designed to support schools as they provide special education services to students with disabilities (ages 3–21). The document addresses specific requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and addresses some frequently asked questions.
Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities: The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) is a statewide nonprofit organization that serves families of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities in Ohio as well as the educators and agencies who serve them.
Pursuit of Equity: Teacher Preparation for the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Career and Technical Education: This webinar hosted by the College and Career Readiness and Success Center discusses how to prepare CTE teachers to include and support students with disabilities.

Table T1-4. Students Preparing for Nontraditional Fields

Supportive Recruitment Strategies
1. Provide student testimonials that represent the nontraditional gender when recruiting students preparing for nontraditional fields. A male interested in nursing might be able to see himself in that role after a testimonial from another male nursing student or graduate.
2. When developing promotional materials, include the benefits for nontraditional students, and ensure imagery is inclusive of both genders. For example, next to an image of a female student participating in hands-on learning, include a statement like, "Local engineering companies are seeking to hire diverse graduates."
3. Strive to hire teachers who represent female and male genders for all programs whenever possible.
4. Consider developing clubs or resource groups where nontraditional students from all pathways can discuss their experiences.

Resources & Potential Partners
Supporting Students Preparing for Nontraditional Fields, Illinois State University: This document was developed in partnership with the Illinois Community College Board and outlines strategies and recommendations for recruiting students into nontraditional fields.
Strategies to Increase the Concentration of Students in Nontraditional Occupations (NTO), Wisconsin Technical College System: This action research brief provided by the Wisconsin Technical College System's Student Success Center Team discusses the importance of recruiting this special population and strategies to do so.

Resources & Potential Partners
Teachers, counselors, and administrators: Staff that work directly with students in the traditional school environment can be your best allies in supporting students preparing for nontraditional fields. Connecting with those who work one-on-one prior to enrollment in CTE can help you identify students who might be interested but need extra support or information to participate in a nontraditional field for their gender.

Table T1-5. English Learners

Supportive Recruitment Strategies
1. Ensure that all marketing materials are translated into the languages of all students you serve. Provide translated videos, flyers, and other marketing collateral. Ensure that the information shared highlights the successful outcomes and financial benefits that students can gain through participating in these programs.
2. Provide presentations or information sessions that are held in the English learners' language, or provide translations. Translation services can be supportive of not only the student but also the guardians in learning more about the program.
3. Ensure that students have translated materials or the supports needed for them to be able to participate fully in the program.
4. Offer office hour opportunities to meet with students learning English to ensure they have space to ask questions and discuss any challenges.

Resources & Potential Partners
Teachers, counselors, and administrators: Staff that work directly with students in the traditional school environment can inform you on the best way to support English learners they have worked with individually. Connecting with other educational team members can help you serve students in a coordinated fashion.
ODE's English Learners Resources: This ODE site provides an overview of English Learner information in Ohio, as well as links to additional resources.
Guidelines for Identifying English Learners: This ODE resource is intended to support teachers and faculty in identifying and supporting English learners.
Our Nation's English Learners: This resource shows the most common languages spoken by English learners. It also includes a map that breaks down information at the district level.
CTE Supports English Language Learners: This article from the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) highlights the strategies that Denver Public Schools is using to meet the needs of multilingual learners in CTE.

Table T1-6. Youth Who Are in Foster Care or Who Have Aged Out of the Foster Care System

Supportive Recruitment Strategies
1. Share student testimonials from students who were engaged with the foster care system and have participated in CTE.
2. Develop and share fact sheets that highlight the positive outcomes of participating in CTE for youth who are in or who have aged out of foster care. Ensure that these resources are shared with partner organizations.
3. Form a group for students who are engaged with or who have aged out of the foster care system to support one another in their educational environment.
4. Connect students with wraparound supports, mentorship opportunities, and training to ensure they are set up for success after graduation.

Resources & Potential Partners
Teachers, counselors, and administrators: Staff that work directly with students in the traditional school environment can be your best allies in serving students facing economic hardship and homelessness. Connecting with other educational team members can help you serve students in a coordinated fashion.
Outcomes of Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Adulthood: This literature review provided by the U.S. Department of Education is related to youth transitioning from foster care into CTE programs. This was written for CTE educators and stakeholders.
Supporting Foster Care-Involved Youth: This Illinois State University document was developed in partnership with the Illinois Community College Board and outlines strategies and recommendations for recruiting and supporting students who are in or who have aged out of foster care.
Ohio Foster Care Agencies: The Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) is a membership-driven association of Ohio's county Public Children Services Agencies that advocates for sound public policy, promotes program excellence, and builds public value for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities. Use the link provided to find an agency near you.

Table T1-7. Single Parents and Single Pregnant Women

Supportive Recruitment Strategies
1. Host presentations and information sessions at agencies that serve young parents in your community. Minimize any barriers or challenges that could prevent parents from learning about CTE.

Supportive Recruitment Strategies
2. Include resources or supports in your marketing materials that can help single parents find success in your program. This may help students understand that CTE could work for them.
3. Ensure that students are signed up and connected to all the supportive resources they are eligible for.
4. Adapt student schedules to align with day care timing and childcare pickup expectations. Look for opportunities to embed flexibility in learning for students who may need to stay home with a child who is sick, etc.

Resources & Potential Partners
Supporting Single Parents: This Illinois State University document was developed in partnership with the Illinois Community College Board and outlines strategies and recommendations for recruiting and supporting students who are single parents participating in CTE.
Example of Single Parent Resources: The College of Western Idaho runs the "Single Parents Support Network," a group to help single parents connect to one another and learn about existing resources.
Agencies supportive of young parents and expectant parents: Many communities have organizations that serve young parents or expectant parents. Research the organizations that are specific to your local area or district. These organizations can be a great place to provide outreach and information sharing to single parents.
Ohio Human Services–Child Care Resources: This website provides resources and access to childcare services for qualifying Ohio residents.

Table T1-8. Justice-Involved Youth

Supportive Recruitment Strategies
1. Provide information sessions and presentations at juvenile justice facilities. Ask facility staff to bring together potential students who would qualify to participate in your program to discuss opportunities and positive outcomes.
2. Gather student testimonials from students who have enrolled in CTE from a juvenile justice facility. Share those testimonials with students at other facilities via videos or flyers to ensure that students hear a peer perspective of the program.
3. Ensure that students are signed up and connected to all the supportive resources they are eligible for. Ask questions to ensure they have access to housing, supplies, etc.
4. Connect students with a mentor to ensure they have a person they know and trust within the CTE environment to bring concerns or challenges to, as well as learn from.

Resources & Potential Partners

Local Juvenile Justice Facilities: The Ohio Department of Youth Services is committed to providing young people with education, behavioral health care, and other services they need to help them transform their lives.

Juvenile Justice Reentry Education Program: This resource from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education provides tools and resources for designing and implementing juvenile justice reentry programs. It can be used to inform your CTE program's work with students who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

The Need for CTE and Workforce Development Services for Youth in Juvenile Justice System: This webinar will inform CTE staff on the changing landscape of the juvenile justice system and the need for CTE opportunities for youth in the juvenile justice system.

Tool 2: Action Planning Template

Once the importance of using data, partnerships, and communication to support the recruitment of student special populations into CTE is understood, it is time to turn information into action. The best next step for a program or district may be obvious; if not, the action planning tool below was developed using the reflection questions included throughout the toolkit.

Table T2-1. Strategy 1: Using Data to Identify Student Population Groups

Reflection Questions	Using the Information Shared in Strategy 1, List Action Items You Would Like to Do to Strengthen Your District's Use of Data	List Your First Step in Strengthening Your Program's Data Usage along with a Corresponding Deadline
1. Do I know what special population groups are in my district?		
2. Do I know which special population groups in my district are most commonly participating in which CTE programs?		
3. Are special populations enrolled in CTE at rates similar to how they show up in the district overall?		
4. What CTE programs align to in-demand careers in the area?		

Table T2-2. Strategy 2: Leveraging Partnerships for Inclusion

Reflection Questions	Using the Information Shared in Strategy 2, List Action Items You Would Like to Do to Strengthen Your District's Use of Data	List Your First Step in Strengthening Your Program's Data Usage along with a Corresponding Deadline
1. Do I know what other partners are serving my district's special population groups?		
2. Am I leveraging partnerships to better reach and/or serve my district's special populations?		

Table T2-3. Strategy 3: Removing Barriers to Access

Reflection Questions	Using the Information Shared in Strategy 3, List Action Items You Would Like to Do to Strengthen Your District's Use of Data	List Your First Step in Strengthening Your Program's Data Usage along with a Corresponding Deadline
1. How does my district or program review and reflect on existing policies with a lens for equity?		
2. How does my CTE program inform parents, teachers, and students about CTE opportunities and outcomes?		
3. Do my program's marketing materials and practices emphasize inclusivity and successful outcomes?		

References

Advance CTE and National Center for Homeless Education. (2020). *Making good on the promise: Improving equity in and access to quality CTE programs for students experiencing homelessness.* National Center for Homeless Education. https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Making-Good-on-the-Promise-CTE-Homelessness.pdf

Advance CTE. (2021). *Without limits: A shared vision for the future of career technical education.* https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/CTEWithoutLimits_Vision_2021.pdf

College and Career Readiness and Success Center. (2018a). *Pursuit of equity—Leveraging career and technical education for students with disabilities* [PowerPoint slides]. https://ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/Slides_PursuitOfEquityWebinar_1.pdf

Phillips, A. I. (2022, February). *Understanding the barriers: How microaggressions, equity & perception affect black female CTE students.* Education Resources Information Center, U.S. Department of Education. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED618486.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2020, February 6). *Program memorandum OCR and OCTAE: Updated procedures for preparing the Methods of Administration (MOA) described in the Vocational/Career and Technical Education Guidelines.* Tennessee Board of Regents, The College System of Tennessee. https://www.tbr.edu/sites/default/files/media/2020/05/2020%20Memorandum%20of%20Procedures.pdf

Unger, D. D., Li, J., Minton, D., Scheffler, A., Sparber, C., Novotny, A., Howard, M., & Cushner, H. (2021). *Ohio's Longitudinal Transition Study postsecondary outcomes for youth receiving special education services: Ohio's Indicator 14 annual report 2021.* Ohio Department of Education. https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Special-Education-Data-and-Funding/Ohio-Longitudinal-Transition-Study-OLTS