

Core Messages for Attracting Learners to Career Technical Education

The message triangle below is a visual depiction of the core message framework, which should be the starting point for any and all Career Technical Education (CTE) conversations related to engagement of parents/guardians and learners. The heart of the triangle is your central theme or value proposition, which is reinforced by your three supporting messages — the three points of the triangle.

As a whole, these are the messages about the value of CTE that you should repeat each and every time you engage with parents/guardians and learners — or related groups or organizations — on the benefits of CTE.

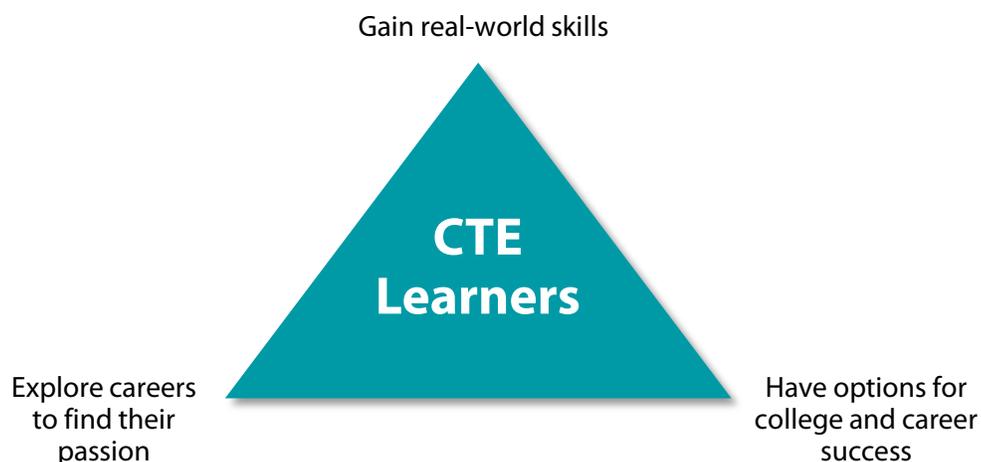
This kind of message discipline is foundational to changing the narrative on what CTE is and the benefits it delivers to learners. In fact, to encourage CTE advocates to stick to this core script, you can create small notecards with these messages on one side and your organization's logo and contact information on the other if they want to learn more.

These messages are formulated based on national messaging research conducted by Advance CTE through an online survey of over 2,000 families and 10 focus groups of families considering and currently participating in CTE, with an oversample of Black and Latinx families and families experiencing low income.

Prospective families are parents/guardians and their learners who are not currently participating in CTE, while **current families** are parents/guardians and their learners who are participating in at least one CTE course.

Core Messages

These messages resonate with CTE prospective and current learners and their parents/guardians:



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ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

Primary Message

Through CTE, learners gain real-world skills that prepare them to succeed in college and a career that they are passionate about.

Key Supporting Statements

1. **Gain real-world skills.**
 - a. CTE is a unique opportunity for hands-on learning that prepares learners for the real world.
 - b. Eighty-five percent of families participating in CTE are satisfied with opportunities to take courses that help them gain skills in a specific field compared to only 54 percent of families considering CTE.
 - c. Through CTE, learners acquire specific skills to pursue their career passion while also building a foundation for lifelong learning.
2. **Explore careers to find their passion.**
 - a. CTE programs allow learners to explore a range of options for their future — inside and outside the classroom.
 - b. Through CTE, learners can start their path toward a career that they are passionate about while earning valuable experience, college credits and more.
 - c. Eighty-four percent of families participating in CTE are satisfied with opportunities to explore careers compared to only 54 percent of families considering CTE.
3. **Have options for college and career success.**
 - a. CTE families are more confident about their plans immediately after high school and more open to paths outside of a four-year degree to achieve career success.
 - b. More than 80 percent of current families are satisfied with opportunities to jumpstart postsecondary education in high school through earning college credits and taking advanced classes compared to 61 percent of prospective families across race, ethnicity and income.
 - c. Seventy-three percent of current families plan for their learner to complete a postsecondary degree or credential compared to 60 percent of prospective families.

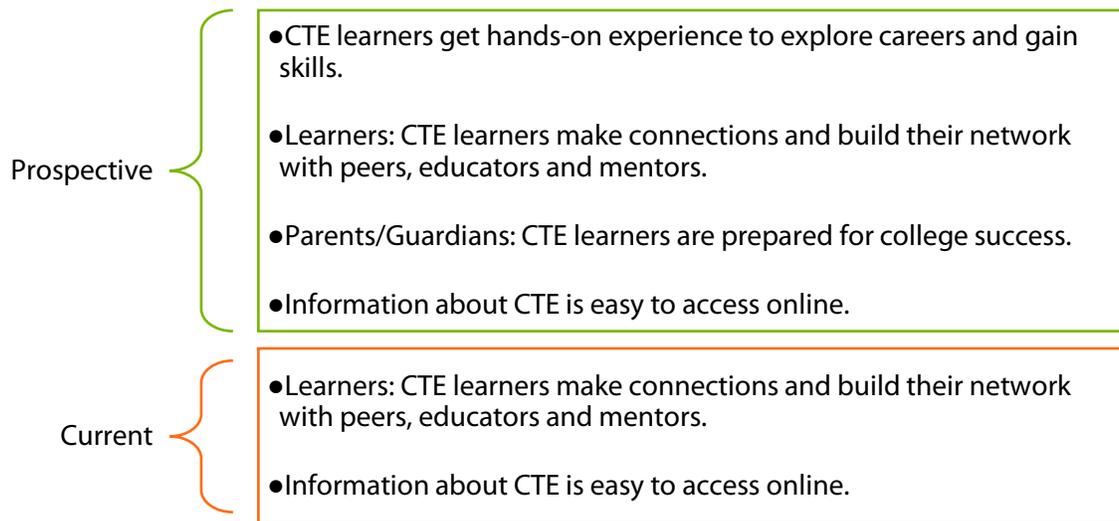
Customizing Key Messages With an Equity Lens

While the core messages resonate with families across race, ethnicity, income and participation, the following message groupings help emphasize nuances regarding what these families find most important in their education and what most resonates with them about CTE. They also reflect equity barriers that historically marginalized populations may face in career exposure, preparation for and access to college, and trust in information sources about CTE.

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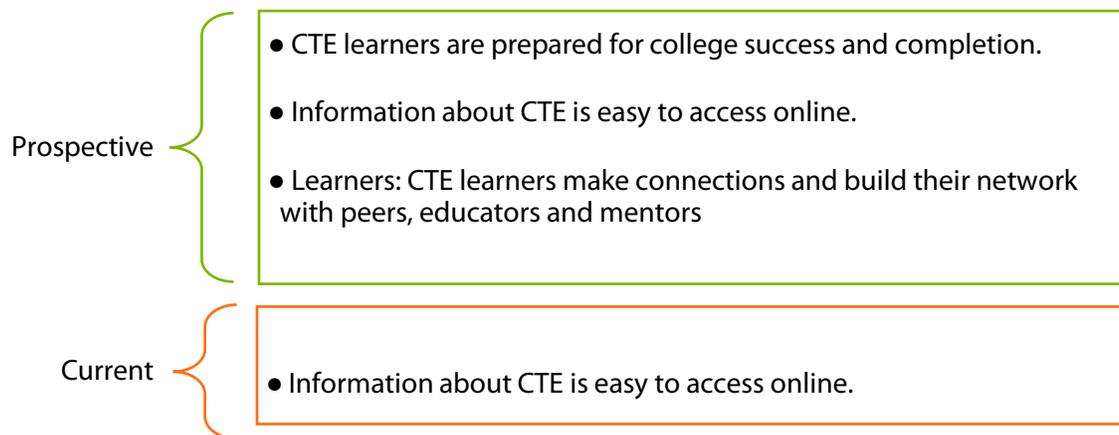
Black Families

Findings for Black families stood out for their strong affinity for online sources of information, prospective parent/guardian confidence in college completion, and strong learner preference for the “Making Connections” message over other racial and ethnic groups.



Latinx Families

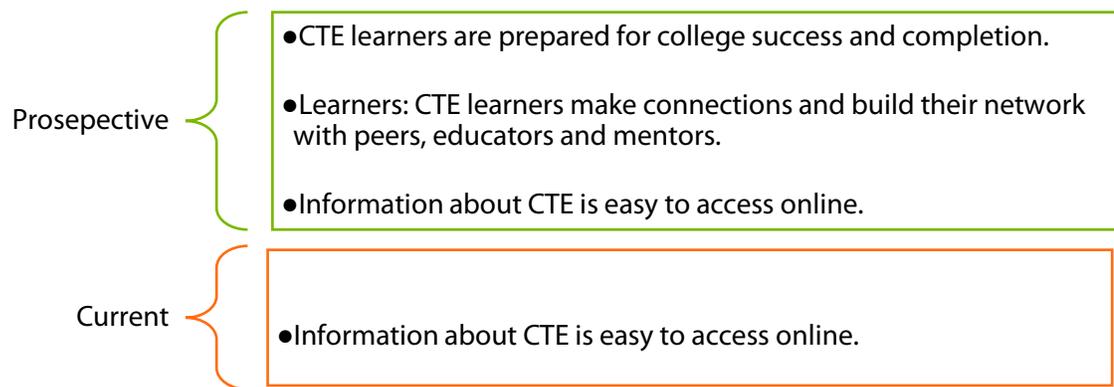
Findings for Latinx families stood out for the significant difference in plans for college completion between prospective and current parents/guardians, while current learners continue to prefer career exploration over gaining skills and ranked Google searches as their top information sources.



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Families With Low Income

Online sources of information about CTE were a top choice for both prospective families with low income and current learners experiencing low income. Parents/guardians and learners experiencing low income who are participating in CTE were much more likely to have plans to complete a college degree than prospective families.



All Current Families (Retention Message)

It is important to continue reinforcing the benefits of CTE to current families to ensure their continued participation in CTE programs. The findings indicate families in CTE are more prepared for college and more open to options outside of a four-year degree, while current learners are attracted to the social capital benefits of CTE.

- CTE learners make connections and build their network with peers, educators and mentors.

NOTE: This message is particularly effective among current Black and Latinx learners and learners experiencing low income.

- Parents/Guardians: CTE learners have more options for college success and completion.

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