

## Summary of Test Messages to Engage Parents & Students

The messages below were tested with parents and students through a [national survey](#) in 2017. The chart on page two demonstrates what worked in each message, key language, and pitfalls. The most successful messages with parents and students were “Prepare for the Real World” and “Get More From High School.” However, there are themes in language in the remaining three messages that are critical to use when speaking with parents and students.

### PREPARE FOR THE REAL WORLD

*CTE gives purpose to learning by emphasizing real-world skills and practical knowledge. Students receive hands-on training, mentoring, and internships from employers in their community. They also learn how to develop a resume and interview for a job. These additional tools and experiences make school more relevant, and ensure students are ready for the real world.*

### GET MORE FROM HIGH SCHOOL

*CTE gives learning a boost. It combines regular academic courses with career-focused courses, skill-building, mentoring, and work opportunities to give students extra preparation for college and careers. CTE students also do better in class because the hands-on experience makes academic subjects more engaging and more interesting. CTE students have a significantly greater high school graduation rate (90%) than the national average (75%).*

### A SMART INVESTMENT

*CTE makes the future more affordable by helping families save money and invest their time wisely. CTE students can earn a paycheck, marketable certifications and even earn college credits while in high school, which can lead to better opportunities whether they pursue college or a career. And there are a growing number of scholarships designed to help CTE students on their way.*

### EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

*CTE gives students opportunities to figure out what they are passionate about and want to do — and not do — after high school. Students explore a range of career options based on what they love to do and do well. CTE helps students build confidence and leadership skills to meet their goals in and out of the classroom.*

### GIVING STUDENTS A LEG UP

*CTE gives students an extra advantage for both college and careers through specialized classes, mentoring, and work experience in fields where jobs are in demand — like health care, engineering and information technology. When young people develop valuable skills, make connections and build a network while they are in high school, they have an inside track on a successful career.*

Concepts	What Works	Key Language	Pitfalls
<b>Prepare for the Real World</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real-world skills and hands-on trainings meet stated needs</li> <li>Prospects appreciate the specific program aspects, like mentoring, internships, resume building</li> <li>Gives students a 'head start'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Real-world</i></li> <li><i>Internships</i></li> <li><i>Hands-on</i></li> <li><i>Mentoring</i></li> <li><i>Gives a head start</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not specifically mention college.</li> <li>Could be interpreted as putting down high school or other experiences.</li> </ul>
<b>Get More from High School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balances academics with career training, which appeals to both the college and career tracks.</li> <li>Having "extra preparation" for future is a value add</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Career-focused courses</i></li> <li><i>Skill-building</i></li> <li><i>Mentoring</i></li> <li><i>Work opportunities to give students extra preparation</i></li> <li><i>Greater high school graduation rate (90%)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some felt this was too focused on high school rather than the future benefits of CTE.</li> <li>Some students worried this might be too much work.</li> </ul>
<b>A Smart Investment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earning and saving money is popular, especially with lower income families.</li> <li>Important to talk about college and career.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Affordable</i></li> <li><i>Save money</i></li> <li><i>Earn a paycheck</i></li> <li><i>Marketable certifications</i></li> <li><i>Earn college credits</i></li> <li><i>Scholarships</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many felt this prioritized money over passion or education.</li> <li>Cost of the program is source of confusion.</li> </ul>
<b>Exploring Possibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connects with key aspiration of finding career passion.</li> <li>Exploration language resonates particularly among prospects.</li> <li>Appeals to students who are unsure of their career path.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Opportunities to figure out what they are passionate about</i></li> <li><i>Career options</i></li> <li><i>Build confidence and leadership skills</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Missing many of the specific benefits that respondents liked from other messages: e.g. college credits, internships, scholarships, mentoring.</li> </ul>
<b>Giving Students a Leg Up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High demand fields listed, caught respondents' eyes.</li> <li>Important to include diverse list with "unexpected" fields.</li> <li>Networking, specialized classes, mentoring stand out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Extra advantage for both college and careers through specialized classes, mentoring, and work experience</i></li> <li><i>Valuable skills</i></li> <li><i>Successful career</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not everyone understands what a 'leg up' means</li> <li>Need to ensure that fields listed appeal to audience</li> </ul>