

Communicating Career Technical Education: Learnercentered Messages for Effective Program Recruitment

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Discussion Topics



- Research background
- Key findings
- Considerations for historically marginalized populations
- Put research into action

Research Background

Content

Test resilience of 2017 research findings in current environment

Confirm what families want in their education and satisfaction level in and outside of CTE

Test timely messages on what is most compelling to families about CTE and who should communicate it

Focus on findings by race/ethnicity and income to identify equity barriers to CTE and message tailoring

Advancing CTE Without Limits



WITHOUT
LIMITS

A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education

Principle 1: Each learner engages in a cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem

Principle 2: Each learner feels welcome in, is supported by and has the means to succeed in the career preparation ecosystem

Principle 3: Each learner skillfully navigates their own career journey

Research Methodology



This research explored what middle and high school families are looking for in their education and what messages resonates with them about CTE.

- **Prospective Families** Learners and parents/guardians interested in but not currently participating in CTE
- **Current Families** Learners and parents/guardians who's learner is participating in one or more classes in a CTE program of study

Research Methodology

Qualitative

10 Virtual Focus Groups

- 2 **Current Learners** & Parents/Guardians
- 8 **Prospective Learners** & Parents/Guardians
- 1 Universal Prospective group, 7 disaggregated by income, race and ethnicity
- Oversample of Black, Latinx, and low-income families

Quantitative

National Online Survey

1,098 parents/guardians

- **255** Current adults
- **843** Prospective adults

1,058 learners

- **256** current learners (9-12th)
- **802** prospective learners (6-11th)

Oversample of Black, Latinx, and low-income families

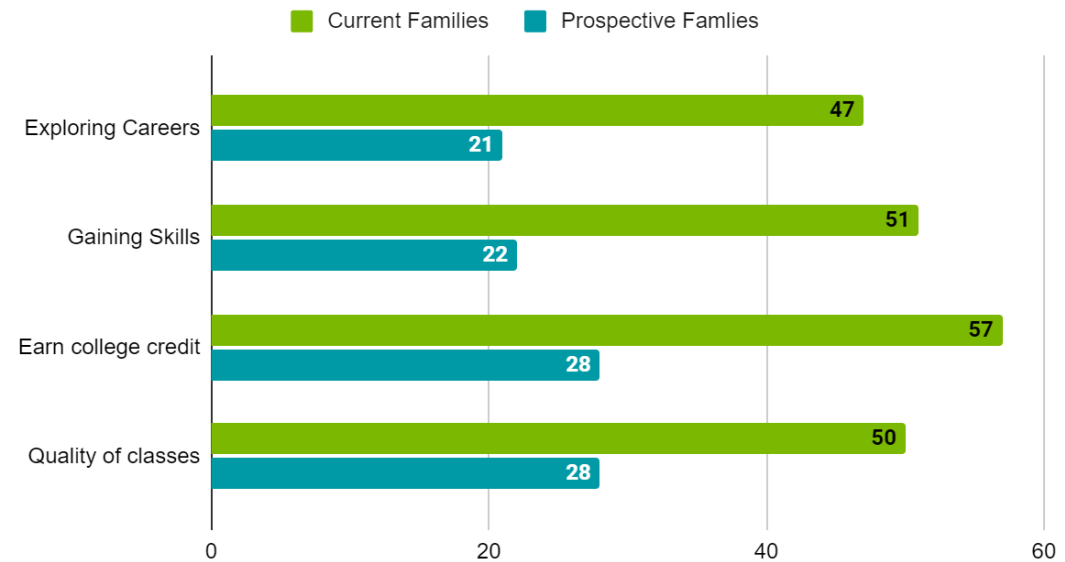
Findings

CTE *Still* Delivers for Families

53% of Current CTE
Parents/Students *Very Satisfied* with overall school
experience
(88% satisfied)

28% of Prospective
Parents/Students *Very Satisfied* with overall
school experience
(75% satisfied)

How satisfied are you with....? (% Very Satisfied)



CTE Families More Satisfied with Education Quality and Opportunities

Those participating in CTE and their parent/guardian are **more satisfied** than those not involved in CTE in regards to:

- ✓ *Overall Education Experience*
- ✓ *Quality of the classes*
- ✓ *Quality of teachers*
- ✓ *Opportunities to take advanced classes*
- ✓ *Opportunities to explore different careers of interest*
- ✓ *Opportunities to earn college credit(s)*
- ✓ *Opportunities to earn credits towards a certification*
- ✓ *Opportunities for internships*
- ✓ *Ability to learn real-world skills*
- ✓ *Opportunities to make connections and network with employers*
- ✓ *Opportunities for extracurricular activities*

CTE *Still* Delivers for Families

2x

Parents/guardians whose learners are enrolled in CTE are almost twice as likely to be “very satisfied” with their education experience compared to prospective parents/guardians

85%

of families participating in CTE are satisfied with opportunities to take classes that build skills in a specific field compared to just **54 percent** of families considering CTE

84%

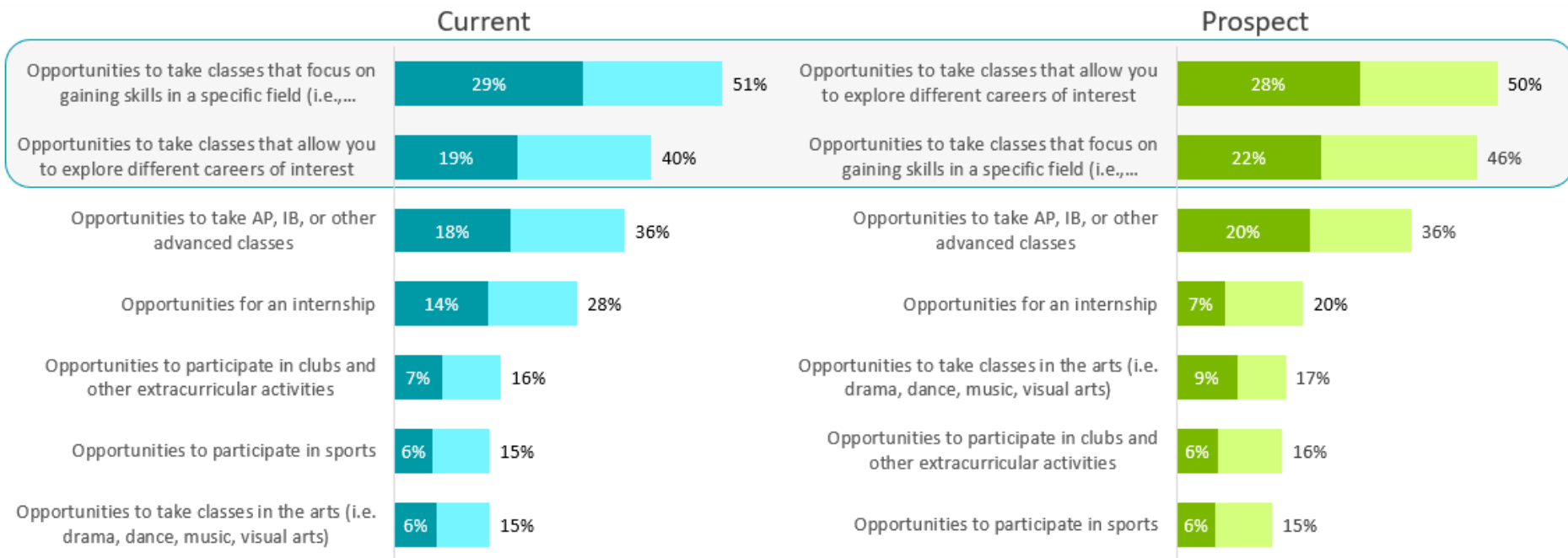
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Families are Attracted to the Real World Benefits of CTE

- “Preparing for the Real World” was still the top message chosen by over 60 percent both prospective and current families on the value and benefit of CTE.
- This message was especially effective for prospective families, and most effective among prospective Latinx families.
- “Preparing for the real world” was also chosen as the **top desired benefit/outcome for CTE** by both prospective and current families.
- Families viewed **career exploration and skillbuilding** as key aspects to preparing learners for the ‘real world’

Key Aspects of CTE Priorities for Families in their Education

Exploring careers and gaining skills were ranked in the top 2 most important aspects of education by over 45 percent of prospective families compared to less than 20 percent for extracurricular activities and sports



Participants rated items from most important to least important. Dark shading shows % most important; bar shows % top 2 in importance

CTE Benefits and Outcomes: Finding Passion A Top Priority

- Prospective and current parent/guardians and learner placed **finding a career passion** in their top two outcomes and benefits of CTE out of 22 options.
- Finding a career passion was ranked **above** finding a well-paying job, earning college credit, and having experiences that stand out on college and job applications
- Exploring careers and gaining realworld skills should be communicated as an effective path to finding a career learners are passionate about

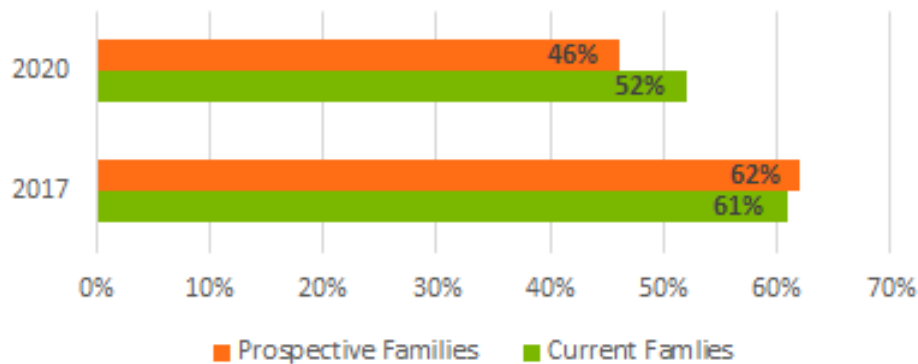
Top CTE Benefits and Outcomes for Prospective Families

- ✓ Preparing for the Real World
- ✓ Finding career passion
- ✓ Getting hands-on experience
- ✓ Learning life skills
- ✓ Discovering “right fit” for career

College *and* Career Success Matter to Families

78 percent of prospective families and 85 percent families currently participating in CTE expect to pursue some level of postsecondary education

% of Families Planning for Learner to Complete 4 Year Degree



Families in CTE are more certain about their postsecondary plans only 3% were unsure vs. 13% of prospective families

Families are more open to paths other than a four-year degree compared to our 2017 research.

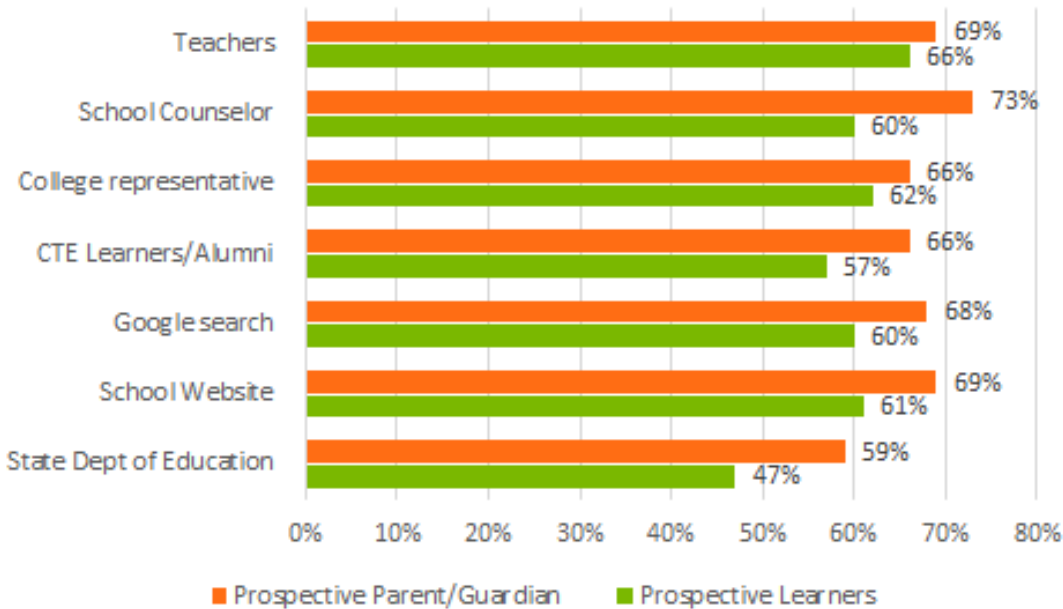
CTE Learners Prepared for College

- CTE Learners and their parents/guardians are **more satisfied with opportunities to prepare for college** through opportunities for advanced classes and college credit.
- CTE Learners and their parents/guardians are **more confident about completing a postsecondary degree.**

Over 80% of families currently in CTE are satisfied with opportunities to earn college credit and take advanced classes compared to only 60% of prospective families

Teachers and Counselors are Go-To Sources

Sources named by families as Top 2 Sources for information about CTE



Teachers and school counselor stop sources across, participation, race and income

CTE learners and alumni are a top 5 source for both prospective and current families

Parents more likely than learners to consult non-school sources (employers, community orgs)

Effective Messaging

Message Testing



- **Tested three messages for:**
 - Believability
 - Personal connection,
 - Relation to current education experience
 - Likelihood to enroll in CTE
- **Messages:** Prepare for the Real World, Safe Bet in this Economy, and Making Connections
- **Force choice** of the message that makes CTE sound like a good options

Messages

- **Preparing for the Real World:** Effective message in 2017 focused on CTE's value in cultivating real-world skills and practical knowledge through hands-on experiences and career exploration to prepare learners for the real world.
- **Safe Bet in this Economy:** Selected due to traction on messaging for CTE's role in the economic recovery and concerns about significant sector-based job loss. Focused on CTE's value in cultivating in-demand, transferable skills with input from employers that are evergreen in the rapidly changing world of work.
- **Making Connections:** Inspired by focus group responses on current CTE experiences. Focused on CTE's value in building relationships with like-minded peers, instructors, and employers through mentorship, internships, and other hands-on experiences.

Message Testing Choice

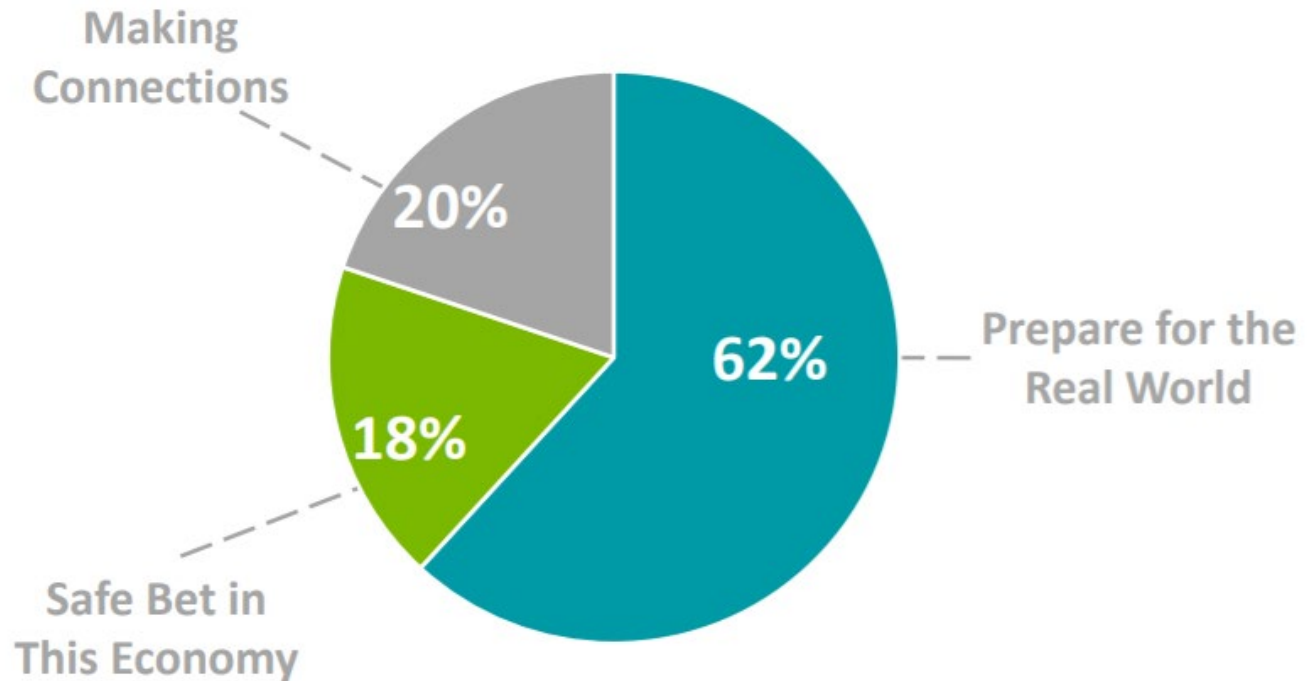
Preparing for the Real World

64% Prospective Families

56% Current Families

69% Highest: prospective Latinx families

Which does the best job of making Career Technical Education (CTE) sound like a good option for you/your child?



Most Effective Message: Preparing for the Real World

- ✓ Continues top message from 2017 research
- ✓ Top message across participation, race, and income
- ✓ Reinforces top outcomes/benefits desired from 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.

help students explore different options before they start **college** or a **career**, and get them **ready for the real world**

Most Effective Message: Preparing for the Real World


“It seems to fit exactly what I know has been going on with graduates and the job market. This would appeal more to those trying to avoid wasting time and spending money.”

Black Prospect Parent

“I do not think our school systems teach students about real-world problems or issues we may deal with in our adult lives, so I liked this.”

Prospective Learner

Language that Works



Explore careers to
find their passion

Have more
options for
career and
college success



CTE
Learners...

Gain real
world skills

Language that Works



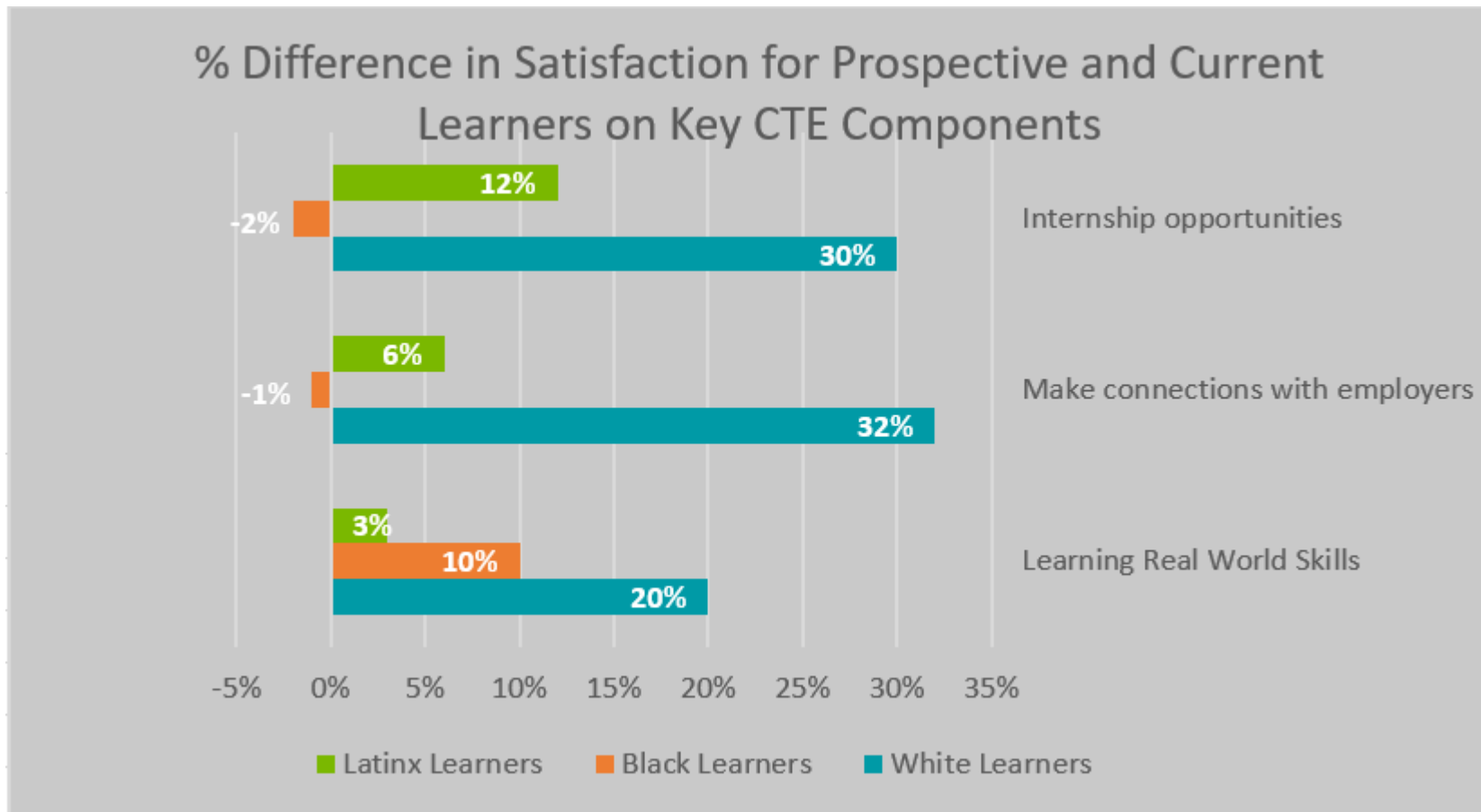
- ✓ Gain realworld skills
- ✓ Explore careers for a path you are passionate about
- ✓ Get hands on experience
- ✓ Leads to fulfilling, reward careers
- ✓ Be prepared for college
- ✓ Enhance your high school experience
- ✓ Make valuable connections
- ✓ Be prepared for the real world

Equity Considerations for Historically Marginalized Populations

Real World Skillbuilding, Handson Experiences Face Satisfaction Gap

- Career exploration and gaining skills in a specific field had equitable difference in satisfaction among race/ethnicity and income between prospective and current learners
- However, **White learners had significant higher differences in satisfaction between prospective and current groups for internships and networking with employers than Black, and Latinx learners**
- Quality, equity and access for CTE programs matters for effective communication to families

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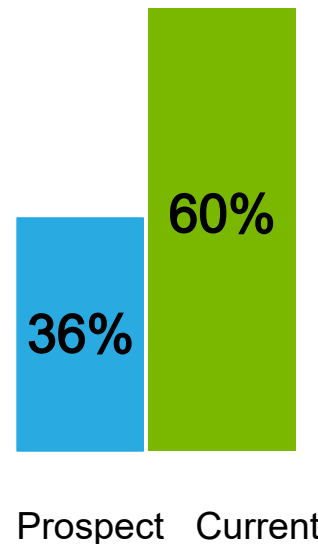


CTE Helps Each Learner Prepare for and Complete College

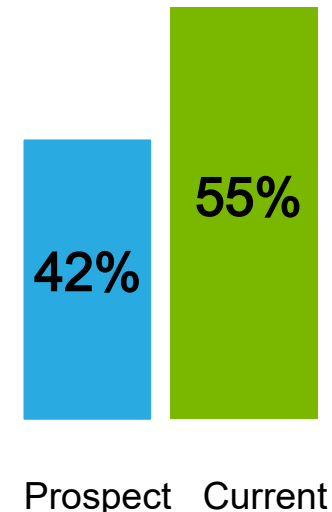
- Latinx and low income prospective parents/guardians had significantly lower percentages choosing a two or four year degree outcome after high school than White and Black parents/guardians
- The findings indicate CTE helped to close this gap for both parents/guardians and learners

Plans to earn a two or four year degree immediately following high school

Latinx Families



Low Income Families



Source Trust and Information Accessibility Matters

- It is important that your intended audience sees themselves in information sources about CTE
- Black and Latinx parents/guardians were significantly more likely to consult school counselors than Black and Latinx learners
- Online sources of information about CTE should be up-to-date, use digestible terminology, and be available in the language(s) of your target audience



Effective Secondary Messaging: Making Connections

- While Preparing for the Real World was the universal top choice, CTE's unique opportunities to build social capital with peers, instructors and employers with similar interests resonated with **Black, Latinx and low income learners**
- **Effective Retention Message** The percentage difference of Making Connections over the economic message was even more significant among current learners.

Prospective Learners

+9	Black
+8	Latinx
+6	Low Income
+1	White

Percentage Point Difference 'Making Connections' Chosen Over An Economic Message

Current Learners

+19	Black
+18	Low Income
+15	Latinx
+7	White

Putting Research Into Action

Resources

<https://careertech.org/recruitmentstrategies>

- **Core Messages** resource with the messaging triangle and key supporting messages for historically marginalized populations
- **Dos and Don'ts** which detail how to use the messages and how not to use them
- **Fact Sheet** with key statistics that reinforce the value and benefits of CTE
- **Future:** Updated **message card** and other printed material templates, updated **Social media guide** with tips and example on how to reach audiences effectively and equitably
- **CTE 101 Video** - effective test in research to improve perceptions of CTE

Key Dos and Donts

Do....

- Be consistent and reinforce key messages
- Utilize learners to tell CTE success stories
- Be specific about how CTE works, particularly hands-on experiences
- Engage and inform educators closest to learners about CTE
- Emphasize CTE learners are more satisfied with their education
- Emphasize CTE's value in preparing for college *and* career success

Don't...

- Position CTE and college as an "either/or"
- Position CTE as a 'different' high school experience
- Push financial benefits of CTE career pathways over finding passion
- Do all the talking - elevate the learner voice
- Neglect message tailoring
- Forget about retention messages

Implement in Your State

- Share with stakeholders who communicate with families about CTE
- Participate in our **RFP for technical assistance** with strategic communications to be released in early May
- **Educate Teachers and School Counselors about CTE:** Our career advising curriculum released in 2019 will be virtual later this spring!
- **Review and Refresh** your Communication Materials
- Review recruitment data, **identify equity gaps** in access and participation and develop targeted recruitment campaign
- Consider ways to receive feedback from families and **elevate the learner voice** in your recruitment process



Thank you!

For questions or more information, please contact:

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