

Pennsylvania's Guide to Best Practices in CTE Student Placement

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333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
www.education.pa.gov



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If you have any questions about this publication or for additional copies, contact:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Bureau of Career and Technical Education
333 Market Street, 11th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Voice: (717) 787-5530, Fax: (717) 783-6672
www.education.pa.gov

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Introduction

One important hallmark of a high-quality career and technical education (CTE) system is its capacity to enroll (or “place”) students in CTE programs that are a good fit for their interests, aptitudes, abilities, and that offers strong workforce opportunities. The approach to student placement in a CTE program has significantly evolved over the past two decades. In some places, the practice of placement, unfortunately, involved schools tracking and funneling low-income, underrepresented, and low-achieving students into CTE programs because they were seen as a good option for students struggling with the school’s academic-track program.¹ But over recent decades, in most places, high-quality CTE programs have become a meaningful part of the high school experience for millions of American students from all levels of socio-economic status and academic performance – and the data proves it.

Key findings from a recent study showed that students with greater exposure to CTE programs are more likely to graduate from high school, pursue postsecondary education, and earn higher wages than non-CTE high school graduates.² As studies continue to emerge about the benefits of student enrollment in CTE programs, so do effective student placement strategies and methods.³ This guide highlights some of the best practices in student placement taking place throughout Pennsylvania.

Student Placement in Pennsylvania

Career and Technical Center (CTC) administrators and counselors play a critical role in effective student placement and enrollment. With the goal of better understanding how to enhance student placement and enrollment decisions between CTCs and their sending schools, the National Center for College and Career Transitions (NC3T) conducted a focus group with over 40 CTC administrators and school counselors at the 2018 Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators (PACTA) Fall CTE Counselors Conference. Facilitated by Dr. Joann Hudak, participants were asked three open-ended questions.

1. What are the three top challenges to placing/enrolling students in your career and technical programs?
2. Are there any immediate opportunities/strategies that you could employ to address any of these challenges?
3. Can you identify “Promising Practices” either in your career and technical center or other sites?

Following this focus group, in October 2018, Dr. Hudak hosted a meeting with CTC directors from the NC3T-PA Career Pathways Partnerships at the PACTA Fall Cooperative Education Meeting. Dr. Hudak reviewed the results of the focus group session with the directors and asked

¹ Giani, Matt, “Who is the Modern CTE Student? A descriptive portrait of career and technical education students in Texas,” American Enterprise Institute, 2019.

² Ibid.

³ Dougherty, Shaun M., “Career and Technical Education in High School: Does it Improve Student Outcomes?,” Thomas Fordham Institute, 2016.

for their input or comments. The results of both meetings were used to develop questions for an electronic survey which was then sent to all CTC directors throughout the state. A total of 31 individuals representing 30 CTCs completed the survey.

The top challenges identified by participants include:

1. A stigma at sending schools towards CTE;
2. A negative attitude towards the CTC among parents;
3. A “college for all” (four-year college for all) mindset;
4. Poor program placement of special education students; a student may not be academically prepared for the CTE program; and
5. Lack of understanding about CTE programs by sending school counselors, administrators, and teachers leading to a lack of student buy-in.

The top strategies to address the identified challenges included:

1. Use student ambassadors to promote programs at sending schools;
2. Offer open houses for potential students and sending school counselors;
3. Have special education counselors and teachers meet with CTC counselors prior to student enrollment applications;
4. Invite sending school administrators, counselors, and teachers to CTC tours and other relevant meetings to hear first-hand the value of CTE;
5. Create common messaging plans for sending schools and CTCs to use to effectively market CTE programs; and
6. Develop information resources specifically for parents.

The student placement initiatives profiled in this report represent a variety of best practices and successfully address some of the leading concerns shared by CTC administrators. They include:

1. Student ambassador programs;
2. Student recruitment processes;
3. CTE program selection for special education students;
4. Mini profiles, which “spotlight” programs that include career exploration days, marketing strategies, and prospective student CTE camps; and
5. Prospective Student Showcase tours.

To learn more about the innovative student placement best practices taking place inside Pennsylvania’s CTCs, delve into the Best Practices and Spotlight profiles detailed in this report.

Best Practice: Student Ambassador Program

Susquehanna County Career and Technology Center

Key Findings

1. Utilized student ambassadors rather than faculty to market school programs to potential students from sending schools.
2. Sent student ambassadors to their home sending school to share their experience at SCCTC as well as had ambassadors host the sending school students for one-on-one school tours.

Peer-to-Peer Marketing

In SY 2017-2018, Susquehanna County Career and Technology Center (SCCTC) introduced the Student Ambassador Program to promote the 13 CTE programs offered at the tech center and increase enrollment at SCCTC. At the time, schools from the seven surrounding districts were sending 15 percent of eligible students. However, SCCTC knew that in order to meet the local workforce needs enrollment needed to increase significantly. SCCTC leadership set a goal to enroll 40 to 50 percent of eligible students by 2023.

Ambassador Selection and Responsibilities

In order to become an ambassador, a student must apply and receive approval from a committee made up of SCCTC faculty (see resources section #1 for the application). Open to students in grades nine through twelve, students considered for an ambassadorship must have excellent attendance records, maintain a high GPA, and demonstrate leadership in the classroom. Once selected, students attend ambassador training led by SCCTC's Co-Op Coordinator and School Counselor. The training focuses on marketing strategies geared towards promoting CTE, anti-bullying, effective presentation methods, and the employability skills necessary to be successful in the workplace. The program strives to maintain 20-25 student ambassadors, and as students graduate, instructors are asked to submit nominees to fill those slots.

Once trained, ambassadors begin promoting SCCTC by visiting their respective sending schools to share about their experience at SCCTC. These visits typically occur on career days at the sending school. Program instructors also attend career days at the sending schools along with the student ambassadors. The students are also encouraged to promote the career center at assemblies and in any unsupervised gathering. SCCTC leadership believed that "putting kids in front of kids" would be a more effective marketing tool than having a faculty member present program offerings. And according to SCCTC Executive Director, Dr. Alice Davis, "We were right. The ambassadors do a great job. They are excited about what they're learning and that excitement transfers through them. It's contagious."

When visiting schools, ambassadors share about SCCTC's CTE programs, school culture, and the benefits of graduating debt free with a skill and/or credential. They also explain and demonstrate what work-based and contextual learning looks like at SCCTC. Contextual learning, which connects learning to real world application, is a theme stressed in all programs offered at the school. Dr. Davis regularly tells her instructors "Education *has* to be relevant. Especially for nontraditional learners. We emphasize contextual learning and try to make sure students are engaged. We have received several students who were doing poorly – or flunking - their non-contextual learning classes, but when they attend SCCTC and experience contextual learning, they thrive."

Ambassadors also conduct school tours for students in both sixth and ninth grades from their sending school. These tours are conducted year-round depending on the wants and needs of the sending school. Tours are typically two hours long with students spending at least 30 minutes in a program of interest to them. They may return to visit another program or split their time between multiple programs. According to Dr. Davis, "Having an ambassador from the same sending school of a potential student adds a level of familiarity and comfort for visiting students." They spend one-on-one time with prospective students to answer the questions students might not want to ask an adult.

These tours also allow ambassadors to communicate some of the more intangible qualities offered at SCCTC. An emphasis is put on ensuring prospective students know that they will be cared for both educationally and personally. For example, an ambassador might share a specific experience about a class with an instructor who was approachable, flexible, and listened well to students. Another ambassador might share how he/she was close to dropping out of school, but that the combination of work-based learning instruction and a caring instructor led to a renewed ambition to do well in school. Dr. Davis tells her instructors, "Everyone remembers their best and worst teacher. We want to make sure that we are trying to be their best."

Outside School Walls

Though initially developed as a marketing tool for SCCTC, the student ambassador program quickly evolved into more. When accepted into the program, ambassadors are tasked with being the eyes and ears of the school as well as anti-bullying mentors. School leadership hangs ambassador pictures on a prominent wall in the school so that students will become familiar with their faces. They are expected to be student advocates whether they are at school, the movies, a grocery store or an activity at a sending school. Dr. Davis explained "When they take on this responsibility, they [ambassadors] have agreed to care about every single one of the SCCTC students. Ambassadors must demonstrate a level of care in every aspect of other students' school life. To answer questions. To be a support. To be a listening ear. We want kids to feel safe."

Impact/Future Plans

Since introducing the student ambassador program, the school leadership has witnessed an exponential increase in school tours. Prior to the program, some sending districts sent no students to tour SCCTC while others sent only a few. However, in SY 2018-19, there was roughly a 100 percent increase in student tours and this number is expected to grow. Due to the newness of the program, enrollment data is not yet available, but school leadership hopes enrollment increases by 10 percent in SY 2019-20.

Overall, school leadership is dedicated to not only increasing enrollment but also improving the message of training offered at SCCTC. Dr. Davis explained, "We are working to increase the dignity of jobs students train for at the career center. You don't have to be a doctor to make a great, meaningful living. We are proud of our students."

Best Practice: Recruitment Process

Clearfield County Career and Technology Center

Key Findings

1. CCCTC conducts pre-tour information days at each sending school, educating and preparing students for their on-site tour day at the tech center.
2. Students attend full-day tours at CCCTC, spending 15-20 minutes visiting each program offered.
3. CCCTC hosts an open house prior to the application deadline, allowing students/families to re-visit programs of interest and have any additional questions answered.

A New Recruitment Process

In 2016, the Clearfield County Career and Technology Center (CCCTC) began redesigning its marketing and student placement process to increase student recruitment and enrollment. The superintendents, school counselors, and principals from CCCTC's five sending districts developed the new recruiting process over a three-year period.

According to CCCTC Executive Director, Fred Redden, instituting a new recruitment process was essential because "students were basically enrolling in a program of study after one short classroom visit." Redden explained further that "prior to the new process, recruitment at CCCTC was a shell of what it is now." Previously, tenth-grade students visited CCCTC for half of one day, visiting all 15 programs offered at the school. Students spent five to six minutes viewing each program before identifying two in which they intended to apply. The application was very basic and pre-tours at sending schools did not exist nor did the use of interest inventories, which are self-assessment career tools that aid in career planning by asking students a series of questions to help identify strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Thus, students were selecting their program of study based on very little information. Now, the recruitment process involves multiple interactions with potential students over the course of two months. The timeline is as follows.

September

In September of each year, CCCTC's marketing director, student services coordinator, and a few CTC instructors visit the sending schools to provide all tenth graders with pre-tour information. This pre-tour session prepares students for their October visit at CCCTC. Students are shown a recruitment video and instructors tell them about their programs and the overall culture of CCCTC. They also might hear from a current CCCTC student who is enrolled at both the sending school where the tour is being hosted and CCCTC. This information day provides the tenth graders with background knowledge and a chance to prepare questions about CCCTC prior to their school visit in October. College credit opportunities such as dual enrollment and articulation credits are discussed as well as the student activities offered. Nontraditional

students are defined and highlighted and both males and females are encouraged to apply to all programs.

October

In October tenth-grade students from all five sending districts visit CCCTC. The students are evenly grouped with Skills USA and National Technical Honor Society participants serving as tour guides. During the tours, instructors lead a brief informational presentation and then involve the students in a hands-on activity. The students rotate through all 15 programs, spending 15-20 minutes at each program. The CCCTC culinary students showcase their program by cooking lunch for the tour groups. Typically, these tours last a full school day. Additional one-on-one visits are scheduled for students who are undecided about programs. If students return, they spend half of the day in two of their favorite programs.

CCCTC hosts an October Open House after the tours are complete but before the application deadline, allowing parents and potential students to visit and tour the facility as well as meet with instructors to ask specific questions. The school also invites representatives from local colleges that offer dual enrollment to be present to answer questions which prospective students might have. During this time period, application due date reminders are sent from each sending school's public service announcement system.

In October, the CCCTC Student Services Coordinator attends meetings with students that have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and their IEP team. The goal of the meeting is to work as a team and evaluate interest inventories, program interest, and review student academic abilities to determine the right fit for these students. Understanding that these factors all directly contribute to both the recruitment and retention of a student, CCCTC's Student Services Coordinator attends these meetings at the sending school prior to processing the application. All five sending schools work to coordinate all meetings in one to two days so that all students can meet with their team.

November/December

Applications are due in November and acceptance letters are mailed in December to all students that have been selected for entrance into a specific program. A CCCTC certificate, a letter of acceptance, and a request for students to celebrate on social media using the hashtag #ccctcaccepted2019 are included with the acceptance letter. As an incentive to share their acceptance through social media, students who participate are automatically enrolled in a drawing for a \$50 gift card to Sheetz, a chain of convenience stores and coffee shops. According to school leadership, this social media presence had helped CCCTC to gain student interest and more applications.

June

Students who are accepted are sent a summer welcome letter signed by their instructor. These letters provide contact information to the teacher and indicate what items students will need to

purchase for the program, as well as act to keep students connected to the school when it is not in session.

Impact/Future Plans

According to Mr. Redden, CCCTC enrollment has increased by 30 to 40 percent since implementing this recruitment process. School leadership anticipates the number will continue to grow as CCCTC is now marketing school programs and offering tours to fifth and eighth-grade students each spring.

For the 2019-2020 school year, CCCTC accepted all on time applications into the student's first choice selection. This is the first time the school has been able to achieve this. While students were never turned away, they may have gotten their second or third program choice depending on if classes were full.

Best Practice: Prospective Student Showcase Tours

Lehigh Career and Technical Institute

Key Findings

1. Lehigh Career and Technical Institute hosts four days of Showcase Tours for all eighth (and some ninth) grade students from the nine sending school districts in Lehigh County.
2. Prospective students are organized into tour groups based on interest area which allows for a more efficient and relevant tour experience for participants.
3. LCTI significantly reduced the amount of time that instructors, staff, and students spent hosting prospective students from 32-35 days per year to four days per year.

Showcase Tour Program

In 2014, Lehigh Career and Technical Institute (LCTI) began hosting Showcase Tours for eighth- and ninth-grade students from its nine sending school districts in Lehigh County. These tours were implemented to showcase LCTI's CTE programs to potential students in a structured format on dedicated tour days.

Prior to the Showcase Tours, there were 32-35 days of student tours each year which negatively impacted instructional time in the CTE Programs. In addition, the prospective students' visits to the CTE programs were too short thus limiting their ability to fully understand program offerings and to help them decide which might be the best fit. At that time, students on half-day tours would visit 20 of LCTI's 40 CTE programs. These visits were not planned according to a student's interest area, but rather they depended on the tour group to which they were assigned. Recognizing that this process did not meet the best interest of prospective or current students, LCTI leadership decided to market the CTC and its programs in a more organized and tailored format.

Tour Days

LCTI now hosts four—rather than over 30—Showcase Tour days with tours given in both the morning and afternoon sessions. The four tour days are held during the same week and lead up to an open house held at the end of the same week. All eighth graders and some ninth graders who have expressed interest in LCTI from the nine sending districts attend the tour. The sending schools provide LCTI with rosters of student participants prior to the tours so that organizers can plan accordingly. Each tour group is made up of about 15 prospective students with a maximum of 400 students/26 tour groups total per session. Prospective students are grouped based on their interest areas so that they can visit relevant programs.

When prospective students arrive at LCTI, Student Ambassadors and staff members greet them at the bus. Student Ambassadors accompany prospective students on the tour. Students will visit six to seven labs. In each lab, they spend five to eight minutes hearing about the program from an instructor and then they observe a student demonstration of a hands-on activity or

participate in a hands-on activity in a station format. If it is the latter, a Student Ambassador is at each station to help the attendee complete the project.

In order to ensure one lab is not overrun by multiple tour groups at the same time, tour guides use “Showcase Cards” which note exact times each group is expected to be in specific labs. Tours last approximately an hour and a half, and once complete, guides share about the LCTI Open House as well as how students can schedule another tour if they are interested in seeing another lab.

Tour Guides

LCTI provides training for everyone involved in the tours including Student Ambassadors, instructional assistants, office staff, professional staff, and administrators. The training is short – around 15 to 20 minutes – and involves addressing frequently asked questions, covering tour routes and reviewing the script Student Ambassadors are expected to follow. The script includes words like “I was just like you a few years ago, and I love LCTI because..., and after I graduate, I plan to...”.

Student Ambassadors are nominated and selected by teachers, and school leadership aims to have four to six Ambassadors per CTE program. An Ambassador must have passing grades, demonstrate progression in their CTE program, have good attendance, and little to no discipline issues. Students can join the Ambassador program as early as ninth grade, and if they continue to meet program requirements, those students are asked to recommit to be an Ambassador in the following school year. Each year LCTI has between 200 to 250 Ambassadors and in SY 2018-19, 226 Ambassadors participated in the program.

Volunteer Appreciation

Within a few days after the Showcase Tours are completed, LCTI leadership hosts a Showcase Tour Appreciation Day to recognize the students, staff, and administration who provided for and assisted with tours. During this time, guides are invited to enjoy a light snack, view a looping photo presentation, and hear a message of appreciation from the school administration. According to LCTI Director of Academic and Special Programs Grace Loeffler, “Our student ambassadors and staff do an excellent job of representing our school. This day is a time for them to enjoy some downtime after their efforts during tour week, and it is also a time for the administration to show their appreciation for their efforts.”

Value/Impact

Since enacting this change, school leadership has experienced several benefits. LCTI’s Director of Academic and Special Programs, Grace Loeffler, stated, “Now, prospective students can visit their CTE Programs of interest and see the programs in action. They also meet and speak to the CTE teachers, staff, and students, and learn more about their opportunities at LCTI.” Lab instructors also benefit because their instruction time is interrupted far less than before. Loeffler further explained, “Our current students also have the opportunity to participate in the Showcase

Tours as Ambassadors which helps develop their leadership, public speaking, and marketing skills and they are role models to the prospective students on the Showcase Tours.” In October of 2018, over the course of four days, approximately 2,000 eighth and ninth graders from the nine sending school districts were given an LCTI Showcase Tour.

Best Practice: CTE Program Selection for Special Education Students

Beaver County Career and Technology Center

Key Findings

1. BCCTC Community Outreach Coordinator visits all sophomore classes in the 14 sending districts to present program opportunities.
2. Prospective students may attend a comprehensive tour day where they see each CTE program in person as well as attend two in-depth CTE program tours of their choice.
3. Prospective special education students receive tailored school tours and assistance when selecting which CTE program to attend.

With a goal of increasing enrollment by 15 percent by SY 2022, Beaver County Career and Technology Center (BCCTC) leadership made a concerted effort in 2018 to better market CTE programs by:

1. Increasing exposure to prospective students,
2. Offering comprehensive tour days, and
3. Tailoring school tours and program selection for special education students.

Increased Program Exposure

To increase the exposure of BCCTC's 17 CTE programs, which are available to juniors and seniors, BCCTC's Community Outreach Coordinator presents program information to sophomore classes in the 14 sending districts. Instructors and current students accompany the Coordinator to answer student questions and display projects they have made at BCCTC. Liz Lanshcak, the Community Outreach Coordinator, and other BCCTC staff also attend STEM and STEAM nights at elementary, middle and high schools throughout the sending districts. Depending on the theme of the program, BCCTC will offer a hands-on activity like launching rockets to engage potential students and introduce BCCTC programs to them.

Comprehensive Tour Day

Sophomores choose to attend school tours which are held throughout the year. Prospective students may attend either an individual tour, which they schedule or a comprehensive tour day. Most sending schools choose to send prospective students on a comprehensive tour day. These tours include quick visits to all CTE programs at BCCTC in the morning, and then eat lunch at the BCCTC while BCCTC's Community Outreach Coordinator answers questions and quizzes students about fun facts on the history of different trades. After lunch, prospective students choose the two programs in which they are most interested to revisit for a longer period. Here, they can experience a hands-on activity like making pizza in the culinary program or building a toolbox in the carpentry program.

During comprehensive tours, BCCTC staff act as guides. Multiple guides are used to accommodate large groups of prospective students (up to 260). Each guide receives an

agenda to coordinate flow among tour groups. Tour guides lead prospective students to each lab where student ambassadors greet the visitors, provide an overview of the CTE program, and either demonstrate a skill specific to the program or invite the visitors to participate in a hands-on activity.

Tailored Fit for Special Education Students

While BCCTC tours have been offered for years, BCCTC's Learning Facilitator Sue Chance tweaked them in 2007 to better serve and educate prospective special education students. BCCTC enrolls a large special education population with 45 percent of enrolled students receiving services. According to Ms. Chance, the information about CTE programs presented on tour days was often too complicated for some special education students, and thus did not help them make an informed choice based on their education level, strengths, and capabilities. This lack of clarity resulted in some special education students applying to programs that were not a good fit for them.

To address this, Ms. Chance and BCCTC leadership developed clear guidelines for special education students interested in enrolling in a program. First, they attend a virtual tour of the program and hear students enrolled in the program share what the program offers and requires. After the virtual tour, the prospective students visit BCCTC to meet with instructors, see the facility and participate in a hands-on experience in one or two programs. To further assist prospective special education students with program selection, Ms. Chance designed a form for BCCTC instructors to fill out after a special education student visits a program. This form allows for comment justifying why a program might not be a good fit at this time for a student. Although this form has only been used five times in the last 15 years, it has proven useful to help prospective special education students find the best program that fits their strengths and sets them up for success.

Ms. Chance also has access to IEPs from all sending schools which further informs BCCTC staff as to how to help prospective special needs students choose a program. Ms. Chance explained, "The IEPs let us see evaluation information before we communicate with their teachers about how a student might perform in a program. Using that information has helped us fit students into programs where they thrive instead of struggle to keep up."

To help sending school counselors better educate potential students about what each CTE program entails, Ms. Chance developed a "live binder" which all sending schools can access. This online resource allows school counselors to view two pages from every textbook used at BCCTC to evaluate whether the teaching level fits with the student with an IEP. The information, which is updated each semester, is broken down by reading comprehension levels, as well as the career and readiness standards students in that program are expected to achieve.

BCCTC also streamlined communication with sending schools by generating a communication protocol. Rather than BCCTC's Learning Facilitator meeting with multiple representatives from the same school, sending school teams are now asked to meet internally. Sending school teams develop a plan for a special needs student and then communicate that plan to BCCTC

through one point of contact. This protocol has reduced the Learning Facilitator's time spent with sending schools by half, as well as made for more efficient and clear communication and expectations.

Impact/Value

In SY 2018-19, 1,273 sophomores visited BCCTC with 329 expressing interest in applying to a program. With an enrollment of around 600 students, BCCTC's director has a goal of increasing total enrollment by 100 students in the next five years. In 2019, enrollment had increased to 643.

Partnering with sending schools has led to another positive impact – better support for prospective special education students in choosing a CTE program. The set protocol and live binder designed by Ms. Chance helps prospective special education students make informed decisions about what type of program they are joining. Through tours and hands-on experience, these prospective students gain an accurate idea of what they *will* be doing versus what they *thought* they would be doing in a program. Ms. Chance reports that the result has been a dramatic increase in retention among the special education population.

SPOTLIGHT PROFILES

The mini-profiles included below offer a further glimpse into other promising, innovative cooperative education practices taking place throughout Pennsylvania's career and technical centers. Offering small snapshots of successful initiatives, these profiles are part of Pennsylvania's CTE Technical Assistance Program (TAP) which regularly highlights CTE best practices on multiple subjects. Educators are encouraged to learn, replicate ideas and share their own promising practices. For more information and additional profiles, visit <http://pacteresources.com/>.

Spotlight on Career Exploration Days

Parkway West Career and Technology Center

Overview

As part of its comprehensive recruitment plan, Parkway West Career & Technology Center hosts two career exploration days for prospective students. Under the leadership of Dr. Darby Copeland, Executive Director of Parkway West, an administrative team developed a plan focused on how to better inform rising tenth graders about the careers and opportunities available to them at the CTC. The goal of the career exploration days is to provide eighth and ninth graders the opportunity to explore their career choices in a low stress, hands-on environment while allowing them time to experience the Parkway West CTC atmosphere and ask questions.

Prospective students visit two programs of their choice where instructors model lessons, help them create a project and inform them about the program. Approximately 250 prospective students attend one of four afternoon/morning sessions at a time.

The most pressing challenges are organizing the sending schools and accommodating their various schedules. At Parkway West, the school counseling department and the work-based/public relations coordinator assume responsibility for addressing program logistics and the scheduling, and they work closely with the participating school districts. Program expenses are covered under the general fund and are sufficient to cover the costs of scheduling two extra days into the associated instructors' calendar.

Impact

Since implementing the comprehensive recruitment plan, which includes the career exploration days, there has been an increase of over 200 students participating in programs at Parkway West. This marks a 35 percent increase in student enrollment. Parkway West plans to continue hosting career exploration days and focusing on student recruitment.

Spotlight on Marketing Strategies

Western Montgomery County Career and Technology Center

Overview

At the Western Montgomery County Career and Technology Center (WMCTC), the administrative team and faculty implemented innovative recruitment and marketing strategies to support student enrollment. Administrative Director Christopher Moritzen led the administrative team as they focused on marketing/recruitment strategies and ultimately on changing stakeholders' perception of the school's role and purpose for students and the community.

Efforts to increase student enrollment centered on the following key issues:

1. Marketing individual programs;
2. Reaching out to non-traditional students;
3. Branding and marketing the CTC;
4. Increasing students' quality of life;
5. Community outreach;
6. Using social media; and
7. Building business and industry partnerships.

Administrators implemented a variety of strategies. For example, an online application now makes the process more accessible to prospective students. Students in grades five, eight, and nine tour the building, and faculty give presentations about WMCTC in elementary schools. Community involvement among various stakeholders has increased and now includes the Chamber of Commerce and several businesses. These efforts are funded through the CTC's general fund. For the full list of strategies, see the [Western Montgomery County Career and Technology Center website](#).

Impact

WMCTC continues to focus on marketing and recruitment strategies and the impact has been overwhelmingly positive. From 2014 to 2017, enrollment at WMCTC increased approximately 50 percent, from 400 to over 600 students. Furthermore, three programs are no longer at risk of being cut due to enrollment increases.

Spotlight on Prospective Student CTE Camps

Connellsville Area Career and Technical Center

Overview

Connellsville Area Career & Technical Center (CACTC) runs summer and evening camps to raise awareness among prospective students about the CTC and the value of CTE programs it offers. CACTC's Workforce Development Coordinator Shawna Little organizes career-themed camps for students in grades 6, 7, and 8. These camps, which typically run for three days during the summer or in the evening after school, provide prospective students with hands-on learning experiences that introduce them to a particular career field. Most of the camps aim to educate students about high priority occupations.

Since the first camp took place in 2017, the themes of the camps have addressed several career areas such as first responders, health careers, and heavy equipment. The camps are funded through a grant from the local Workforce Investment Board.

The Workforce Development Coordinator is responsible for publicizing the camps. The camp flyer (see resources #2) is distributed to all middle school students and is posted on the district's website. She also presents camp information to middle school students during a special assembly. The camp instructor and current students enrolled in that program of study also attend the assembly to generate interest in the camp.

Because the camps are grant-funded, middle school students enroll at no cost. The number of students in a camp can range from 15 to 20 students. Enrollment in most camps is capped at 20 students.

The main challenge with running a camp is collecting paperwork from prospective students. If the camp is being funded through a TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) grant, the paperwork for applicants can be cumbersome, and it is challenging to collect applications in a timely manner. To overcome this challenge, the Workforce Development Coordinator works closely with the middle school counselor, who helps with collecting the applications and communicating with students.

Impact

CACTC plans to continue offering the camps. Of the students who attended a camp, 64 percent of them eventually enrolled in the CTC.

Conclusion

The best practices highlighted in this guide demonstrate how implementing multiple strategies can strengthen and improve the quality of student placement in CTE programs at CTCs across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

CTC administrators can carefully consider, adapt, and implement many of the strategies explained in this report, whether using student ambassadors, hosting comprehensive school tours, or improving communication between the sending schools and CTCs, as well as others. Through careful attention to placement practices, CTC administrators can further enhance their school's ability to enroll students in the program that offers strong workforce opportunities and is the best fit for students' interests, aptitudes, and abilities.

CACTC Camp Flyer

Future First Responders Camp

When: June 20-22, 2018

Time: 9:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.

Location: Connellsville Area Career and Technical Center

Grade: Connellsville Area School District (CASD) 6th-8th graders

Cost: Free! Enrollment is limited to 20 students

Great opportunity for middle school students to experience an in-depth and hands-on exploration of the emergency services field!

The Future First Responders camp is a three-day career awareness camp that will introduce middle school students to the exciting and rewarding field of emergency services, primarily profiling the careers of police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians (EMT's). Additionally, it is important to expose students to this career field because emergency medical technicians and paramedics are listed on the 2018 High-Priority Occupations for Westmoreland-Fayette Counties Workforce Development Area list⁴.

The camp will begin at 9 a.m. and end at 2 p.m. each day. The students will receive a camp T-shirt, as well as a first-aid kit, and will earn an actual American Heart Association CPR/First Aid card to keep as well as a certificate of completion. The students will receive lunch each day.

To reserve your spot, please complete the attached application and return to Mr. Dave Tangretti, Middle School Guidance Counselor, by Thursday, June 7.

Schedule

Wednesday, June 20: Day 1 – Patrolling the Beat

Students will meet a local police officer, and possibly (depending on availability) a police K-9 officer. Students will get to try on an actual police duty belt (no weapons) and will be taught how to safely handcuff⁵ a suspect. Other law enforcement equipment will be demonstrated (no firearms).

⁴ CACTC Future First Responders Camp works with the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) of Westmoreland and Fayette Counties.

⁵ Mr. Barry, the camp instructor, is a certified handcuffing instructor, and all procedures will be learned safely and practiced slowly.

Thursday, June 21: Day 2 – EMTs to the Rescue

Students will meet and speak with actual EMTs and Paramedics and tour a real ambulance. Students will be taught basic first aid (calling 911, bandaging, etc.) and CPR techniques as well as how to immobilize a trauma patient on a backboard.

Friday, June 22: Day 3 – “Rookie” Fire School

Students will learn about the science of fire, a brief history of the American fire service, and tour an actual fire station. Students will be fitted with their own “turnout gear” and will be taught how to properly and safely use a fire extinguisher. Students will get the opportunity to operate a real fire hose at low pressure (under the close supervision of the instructor and student helpers) to put out a real fire (scrap wood in a small pile outdoors). Students will take a field trip to the WCCC Public Safety Training Center.

Liability Statement

I have read all information regarding the future first responders camp. I understand that the Connellsville Area School District assumes no responsibility for health, accidents, or transportation insurance while my child is attending the camp and all field trips associated with the camp.

Student’s Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Student’s Adult T-Shirt Size: _____

*Please return this sheet along with the Summer Career Exploration Camp Application to Mr. Dave Tangretti, Middle School Guidance Counselor, by June 7, 2018.