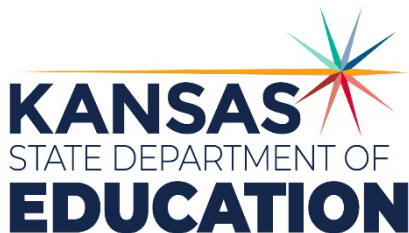


Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in Career and Technical Education

A toolkit for serving foster youth, individuals experiencing homelessness, English language learners, students in non-traditional careers, youth from military families, single parents, students with disabilities, out-of-workforce individuals, and learners from economically disadvantaged families in career and technical education (CTE) and career and technical student organization (CTSO) programming.



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- Cognitive preparation,
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- Employability skills and
- Civic engagement

to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation.

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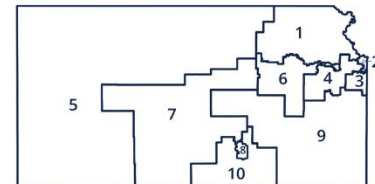


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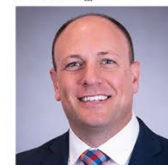
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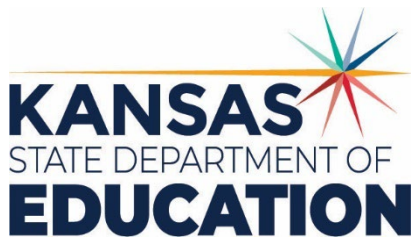
May 27, 2026

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This “Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in Career and Technical Education” toolkit was created by the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE), with support from the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®). It is reflective of CTE research and promising practices collected as part of a targeted and comprehensive literature scan, documented national practices in engaging special populations in CTE and CTSO programming, and subject matter expertise, practices, and experiences obtained through focus groups and interviews with a sample of district and school representatives from across Kansas.



Development of this resource was supported through funding under [The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act](#) (Perkins V), U.S. Department of Education.

Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in CTE

Introduction: Supporting Special Population Students in Their CTE Experiences

Introduction

For several decades, career and technical education (CTE) has been evolving to meet student and labor market needs—both nationally and across Kansas. Modern CTE has evolved significantly from the vocational education of the 20th century. While vocational training was often viewed as a separate track for students who were not college-bound, today's CTE experiences are designed to prepare students for both college and careers. CTE pathways respond to the needs of a changing, high-tech economy by providing students with the relevant, adaptable skills that are in high demand.

The [Kansas Department of Education \(KSDE\)](#) offers a wide range of [CTE programming](#) across a variety of in-demand career fields aligned with [Advance CTE's National Career Clusters® Framework](#). Career clusters link what students learn in school to the knowledge and technical and employability skills they need for success in postsecondary education, training, and careers. Kansas addresses the call for economic growth across [six \(6\) industries](#): health and human services, public services, media and technology, design, production and repair, agriculture, and business. These sectors cover [thirteen \(13\) career clusters and 31 career pathways](#). In addition, KSDE supports eight (8) nationally recognized career and technical student organizations (CTSOs). Participation in a CTSO extends CTE student learning through innovative programs, business and community partnerships, leadership development experiences, and career-focused competitions at the school, state and national levels.

CTE has also become an indispensable lever for improving students' college and career readiness. CTE programming plays a powerful role in expanding pathways to high school graduation, post-secondary success, including completion of postsecondary certificates and two- and four-year college programs, and gainful employment. CTE can also help all students achieve the objectives of the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards (KCCRS) through authentic, applied learning experiences. In short, CTE is a crucial change agent for the success of improving outcomes for *all* students.

The federal Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, otherwise known as Perkins V, governs CTE funding across the nation. Perkins V identifies priority “special populations” (defined further below) that must be served through CTE programs. Additionally, Perkins V asks states to identify and address barriers that special populations experience to accessing and achieving success in CTE programs and work toward improving special population student outcomes.

Despite CTE serving as a key predictor of secondary completion, engagement in post-secondary education and training, 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). Despite overall lower participation rates, CTE research highlights positive outcomes across special populations. The outcomes include higher secondary completion rates, higher engagement in post-school activities like post-secondary enrollment and community engagement, and higher employment rates.

This toolkit aims to help Kansas school districts and schools strengthen their approaches to recruiting, enrolling, and supporting special populations in their CTE and CTSO experiences, putting them on the pathway to long-term success in their education, training, and employment journeys.

Using this Toolkit

This toolkit presents a variety of strategies used across the nation and in Kansas districts to improve recruitment of and support to special population students in CTE programs and associated CTSO activities. It also presents a variety of considerations for specific special populations, case study examples, and tools to support continuous improvement of district and school approaches to recruiting and supporting special population CTE students. While the approaches explored in this toolkit were written to support districts and schools in their efforts to recruit and support special populations in CTE and CTSO programming, many of the strategies shared are relevant to providing quality, accessible CTE experiences to *all* students.

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

- Informs students about CTE programs and CTSO opportunities.
- Enrolls students in CTE programs, courses, or CTSOs.
- Supports student participation and success in CTE and CTSO programming.
- Guides students toward post-secondary education, training, and employment pathways during and after CTE and CTSO involvement.

Specific roles may include school counselors, CTE and core academic teachers, special education teachers and administrators, district and building leaders, community career coordinators, transition coordinators, career specialists, or any other stakeholders that inform student recruitment into CTE programs, pathways, courses, or CTSO experiences.

District leaders are encouraged to leverage this toolkit for collaborative planning purposes. The approaches presented throughout are by no means all-encompassing, nor is it expected that every district or school is high achieving in *every* strategy. Strategies are intended to help districts and schools evaluate and improve current practices for engaging special populations in CTE and CTSO experiences and design additional efforts to improve recruitment and support. Various tools are included or linked to in the appendices to support planning and continuous improvement, including an action plan to support strategy development and implementation. District leaders are encouraged to identify and implement additional strategies, collect promising practices, and case studies to illustrate these approaches in action, and to build a student-centered culture of continuous improvement to support recruitment and success of special population students in CTE and CTSO experiences.

Navigation

This toolkit consists of six major sections and appendix tools to support implementation. KSDE encourages users to leverage the table of contents to navigate this resource and to return to this toolkit as a reference guide to support strong strategic planning and program development for all CTE students.

Background: CTE, CTSOs, and Special Populations

What is CTE?

In Kansas, career and technical education, or CTE, is defined as organized educational activities that offer a sequence of courses which provide individuals with both rigorous academic content *and* the relevant technical knowledge and skills needed to prepare for further education and employment. CTE combines classroom learning with hands-on technical and employability skills development and experiences. CTE programs are designed (and continually re-evaluated) to ensure student preparation for high-demand, high-wage, high-skill careers, either by entering the workforce directly or by providing a pathway to further education.

Academic skills learned in secondary CTE programs are aligned with the challenging state academic standards adopted by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). A student's CTE experience also provides proficiency in technical skills associated with a career pathway. This proficiency may lead to one or more industry-recognized credentials, a certificate, or an associate degree, and may also include opportunities for work-based learning that supports the development of academic knowledge, higher-order reasoning and problem-solving skills, work attitudes, employability skills, technical skills, and occupation-specific skills, and knowledge of all aspects of an industry. In addition, many CTE students earn dual credit in advanced courses offered at partnering post-secondary institutions.

What are CTSOs?

Career and technical student organizations, or CTSOs, are student-led organizations which are aligned with and integrated into CTE programs at the middle, secondary, and/or postsecondary institutions. Student members develop and demonstrate leadership, personal growth, civic engagement, technical skills, and 21st century skills in authentic, real-world applications learned in their CTE experiences, often through pathway-based, industry-relevant competitions and mentorship opportunities. KSDE supports eight (8) nationally recognized CTSOs. To learn more, visit [KSDE's CTSO page](#) and explore pages 76 & 77 of the ["Postsecondary Readiness Digital Reference Guide."](#)

Defining and Supporting Special Populations in CTE

"Special populations," as defined under the [Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act](#) (Perkins V), are those students from learner groups who have historically faced barriers to educational and workforce success. Perkins V mandates that CTE programs not only identify and serve these populations through quality CTE education, but that they also ensure *all* students have access to and can participate in CTE programming and are supported to ensure their success. Quality CTE education for all Kansas students is part of a larger economic imperative. By removing systemic barriers and tailoring student supports across Kansas' statewide, regional, and local school systems, we strengthen college and career readiness efforts, promote multiple pathways to in-demand careers with family-sustaining wages, and strengthen the broader labor market. A comprehensive and inclusive CTE system ensures that talent pipelines include all workers and learners, enhances community resilience, and contributes to individual economic mobility.

Perkins V requires that local eligible recipients conduct a comprehensive local needs assessment (CLNA) and update it on a biennial basis. The CLNA is considered the foundational element of Perkins V implementation at the local level. As part of this process, local eligible recipients must conduct an evaluation of their CTE systems and approaches and use various data sets to identify targeted areas for improvement. This process also requires CTE administrators to review and consider the performance of and service to special populations in CTE programs.

Special Populations in Perkins V

- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults
- Individuals preparing for careers that are nontraditional for their gender
- Single parents, including single pregnant women
- Out-of-workforce individuals
- English learners
- Homeless individuals
- Youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system
- Youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is on active duty

For More on Perkins V and Its Requirements

The following resources provide overviews of the [Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act](#) (Perkins V) and resources for understanding and implementing its various components and requirements.

- [U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education's Perkins Collaborative Resource Network website](#). This federal resource provides overviews of the law, the history of Perkins legislation, and various resources and videos.
- [KSDE's CTE website](#) and [approach to ensuring Perkins V accountability](#). These websites provide guidance and various resources for districts and schools associated with KSDE's implementation of Perkins V.
- [The Learning that Works Resource Center](#), managed by [AdvanceCTE](#), serves as a "repository for high-quality resources to support Career Technical Education (CTE) policy and practice at the local, state and national level."

Serving CTE Special Populations in Kansas

KSDE is committed to creating quality CTE and CTSO experiences for *all* students, including those defined as "special populations" in Perkins V. By emphasizing inclusive approaches to student recruitment to and support in CTE experiences, KSDE supports the development of a college and career ready student body ready to contribute to the Kansas economy.

Ensuring that all students have access to a quality CTE education:

- Allows all CTE students to engage in cohesive, flexible, and responsive education experiences along a career pathway that leads to in-demand, high wage, and critical need.
- Makes each CTE student—including those that have traditionally faced barriers or underrepresentation—feel welcome and supported in their CTE experience and like they have the means to succeed in their chosen career pathway.
- Encourages students to skillfully navigate their own journey and post-secondary education, training, and career decisions.

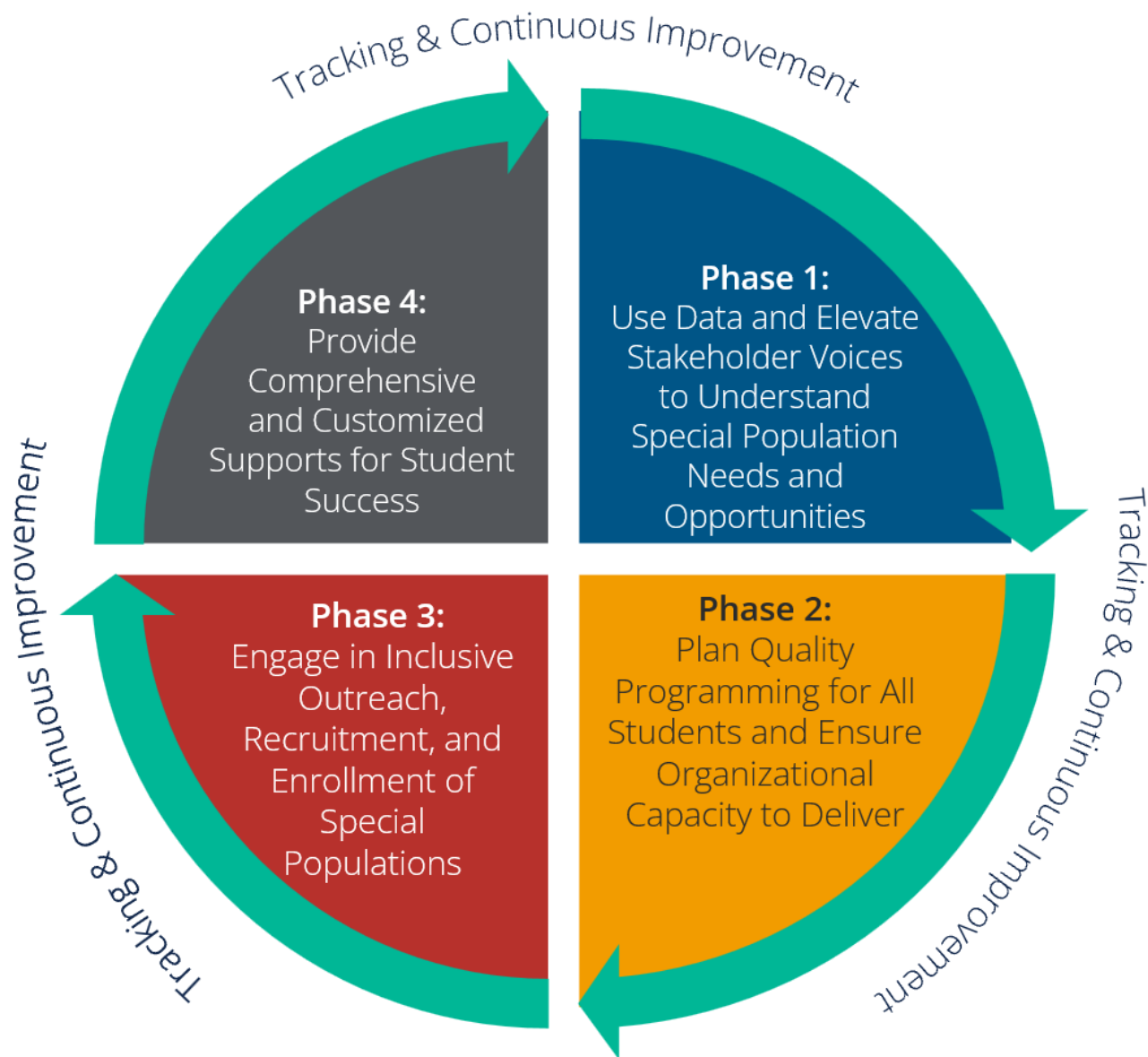
Supporting Special Populations Throughout Their CTE Journey: A Student Lifecycle Orientation

The core elements and strategies presented in this toolkit are divided into four distinct student lifecycle phases, as described in Figure 1. This student lifecycle orientation allows Kansas school districts to think about their approaches to working with special populations in CTE and CTSO programs across a phased, student-centered model that focuses on data collection, preparation, recruitment, and support services. Each of these phases is described briefly below.

Figure 1. Four-Phase Student Lifecycle

Explore Kansas CTE "Fast Facts"

[AdvanceCTE](#), the national association of state CTE directors and related professionals, regularly updates state profiles focused on CTE stats and achievement toward state and federal goals. See the [Kansas profile here](#).



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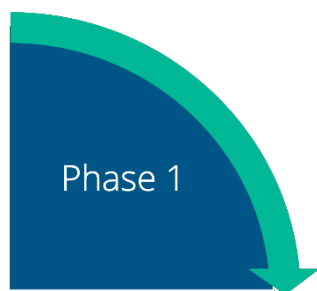
- Phase 1: Use Data and Elevate Stakeholder Voices to Understand Special Population Needs and Opportunities. In this phase, districts access demographic and CTE program data and engage with a variety of stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, teachers, counselors) to better understand special population CTE students and identify potential barriers, needs, and opportunities associated with their success in CTE and CTSO experiences.
- Phase 2: Plan Quality Programming for All Students and Ensure Organizational Capacity to Deliver. In Phase 2, districts utilize intelligence collected in Phase 1 to inform their CTE program development and/or refinement to meet the needs of all students, including special populations, and ensure the proper staffing and resource models and professional development necessary to adequately support special population CTE students throughout their journey.
- Phase 3: Engage in Inclusive Outreach, Recruitment, and Enrollment of Special Populations. In this phase, CTE leaders develop inclusive outreach and recruitment language and practices to attract special population CTE students and use various strategies to mitigate barriers to entry.
- Phase 4: Provide Comprehensive and Customized Supports for Student Success. Once special population students are enrolled in CTE programs, courses, and associated career-connected learning experiences (e.g., work-based learning,

CTSO involvement), they may require customized academic and non-academic supports to bolster their success. Phase 4 focuses on these comprehensive supports.

Schools, Families, and Community Partners: Drivers of Change for Every Phase of a Student's Journey

The success of special populations in CTE and CTSO programming hinges on a tiered system of supports and active engagement from educators, students and their families, and crucial community and business partners. As indicated in the [Kansas School Improvement Model](#), it is vital to nurture these collaborative relationships—not only to develop quality programming for *all* students, but to establish an ongoing, reciprocal process of two-way communication and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders. This dynamic exchange supports student advancement in state standards, acquisition of technical and employability skills, and post-secondary readiness, with contributors maintaining evidence-based instruction and responsive support networks from enrollment through transition. Teachers, counselors, and school administrators require continuous professional development, while student voices should inform the direction of learning. Employers and community organizations play essential roles by providing resources and connections that link education with career opportunities. By intentionally cultivating these partnerships, a robust environment emerges where special populations are empowered and the CTE system reflects greater community representation.

Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in CTE



Use Data and Elevate Stakeholder Voices to Understand Special Population Needs and Opportunities

To better understand, recruit, and support special populations in their CTE experiences, it is essential to understand the current make-up of CTE students, including those that represent special populations, and how representative a district or school's CTE student demographics are of the communities they serve. Both quantitative and qualitative data are essential to districts determining underrepresentation in CTE experiences and opportunities to better serve special population students through CTE programs and CTSO experiences. Phase 1 of this toolkit focuses on accessing and analyzing state and regional data to identify and understand special population CTE students and set reasonable goals for closing any gaps in special population representation. It also focuses on engaging in meaningful stakeholder engagement (e.g., surveys, focus groups, regular feedback loops with students and parents) to surface real and perceived barriers in special population access to and completion of CTE programs.



Access and Analyze Education and Demographic Data to Understand CTE Participants

The first step to ensuring that special populations are well represented and supported in CTE pathways is to understand the current makeup of CTE students in the district. If no barriers to access for special populations existed, we would expect the learners enrolled in CTE programs would proportionally reflect the demographics of the learners in your district or community. Below, we briefly discuss the different data that can be collected and analyzed, as well as strategies for interpreting that data to inspire action and set goals.

- Obtain a baseline for all special population demographics in your district. To better understand the total number of special population students in your district in proportion to the total student body, obtain baseline data for all students by each demographic. This is an important baseline data point for understanding how representative your CTE students are to the students served across your district.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Are there any special population groups for which you would like more district- or school-level data? Where might you obtain this data? Is it currently being collected?
- How might that additional data help you better serve the special population(s) of focus?
- How can we cultivate the proper staff knowledge required to obtain and analyze data?

- Examine the demographics of CTE students to understand representation. Next, obtain data on current CTE students, disaggregated by special population. Conduct a percentage-point gap analysis (see below) by comparing each special population's representation in CTE programs to their proportion in your district's overall student population.
- Examine participation of special populations in specific courses, career clusters, and pathways. To determine underrepresentation in various courses, pathways, and programs that lead to in-demand careers and post-secondary experiences, disaggregate participation in each by special population. Use the [Kansas Career Cluster Guidance Handbook \(2026-2027\)](#) to explore Kansas' current career cluster and pathway offerings.

ACCESSING STUDENT DATA

A variety of student data can be accessed directly or by reaching out to your district's Kansas Individual Data on Students (KIDS) data manager. More guidance on accessing student data is provided in **Appendix A: Tool 1**.

Explore these resources:

- [KSDE Web Applications website](#)
- [KIDS website](#)
- [Kansas Building Report Card website](#)
- [Data Central Career and Technical Education Reports](#)
- [Perkins Collaborative Resource Network Perkins V Enrollment Data \(State-Level\) by special population](#)

EXAMPLE: CONDUCTING A "PERCENTAGE POINT GAP ANALYSIS"*

Step	Example
1. <i>Calculate the overall percentage of learners in a particular special population in your district.</i>	There are 2,400 learners in grades 9–12 enrolled in your district. Out of those learners, 120 are classified as individuals with a disability. $120/2400 = 0.05$ or 5% Interpretation: In total, 5% of grade 9–12 learners in your district are students with a disability.
2. <i>Calculate the percentage of CTE learners in the same special population.</i>	Your district has a variety of CTE pathways and programs. Of your total 2,400 grade 9-12 students, 320 are enrolled in CTE programs. Of those, 23 are individuals with disabilities. $23/320 = .0718$ or 7.2% Interpretation: Out of 320 CTE learners in the district, 7.2% of them are identified as students with a disability.
3. <i>Calculate the difference between the percentages to find the percentage-point gap.</i>	Out of all learners in grades 9-12 in your district, 5% are classified as students with a disability, but 7.2% of all CTE students are individuals with disabilities. This means that your district is doing a great job of engaging individuals with disabilities in CTE education, as they are overrepresented by 2.2%.

*This example is inspired by an example included in Arizona Department of Education's ["Using Data to Identify and Address CTE Opportunity Gaps: Participant Workbook."](#) Refer to this great resource for additional strategies.

- Examine special population representation in other CTE programming experiences and quality indicators. Continue your examination of proportional representation of special populations across other CTE-aligned experiences like work-based learning (WBL), involvement in CTSO activities, dual credit course enrollment, and industry-recognized credential (IRC) attainment.
- Apply various engagement and success metrics to determine relative levels of involvement of special populations in CTE courses and/or programs. Consider also disaggregating by CTE course “participants,” CTE “concentrators,” and CTE “completers” (see definitions below) to determine various levels of engagement, pathway concentration, and completion of career pathway programming. In addition, disaggregate additional performance metrics (e.g., expressed interest, enrollment, persistence) by special population to better understand how well each demographic is performing in CTE programming. This can help you determine if there are potential barriers to achieving success for special population students.
- Determine any gaps in your data collection. Are there questions about your special population CTE students that you could not answer? Consider how that data may be collected to improve your analysis of CTE special populations *and* how you may collect information directly from various stakeholders and partners to fill these gaps. More in the next section!

Defining CTE Participants, Concentrators, and Completers

CTE Participant: The term “CTE participant” means an individual who completes not less than one course (equivalent to a student who has earned one, but less than two secondary level credits) in a single career and technical education pathway.

CTE Concentrator: The term “CTE concentrator” means: (A) at the secondary school level, a student who has completed at least two (2) courses (equivalent to two (2) or more secondary level credits) in a single career and technical education pathway.

CTE Completer: This is a student who has completed a minimum of three (3) secondary level credits in a single CTE pathway, with at least two (2) of those credits being a combination of technical and application-level courses.

A completer must also earn or complete at least one or more of the following:

- Earn an end of pathway assessment/certification for completer status (industry-recognized certification or a passing score on a third-party, end-of-pathway assessment).
- Earn an Excel in CTE qualifying recognized credential aligned to the pathway.
- Earn nine (9) + college hours leading to completion of a certificate or postsecondary program aligned to the pathway's program of study.
- Complete a high-quality work-based learning career preparation experience, Kansas work-based learning continuum, in the Pathway defined in [Kansas Work-Based Learning: Personalized Learning Plan Guidance Document \(ksde.org\)](https://www.ksde.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/2027/Kansas-Work-Based-Learning-Personalized-Learning-Plan-Guidance-Documents.pdf).

For more, see the “[Kansas Career Cluster Guidance Handbook \(2026-2027\)](#).”

Special Considerations by Population

Population(s) of Focus	Strategy/Approach
<i>Foster Youth</i>	Identify student groups with layered barriers to better understand compounding challenges. For example, foster youth removed from a home more than twice may have a situational propensity for chronic absenteeism. For more, explore these resources to identify trends in these layered barriers. • The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count Data Center, which includes data on children in foster care with more than two placements in Kansas. • KSDE's "Kansas Report Card" data on chronic absenteeism.



Elevate Student, Parent, Teacher, and Counselor Voices to Understand Challenges and Opportunities

In addition to quantitative data about special population enrollment and success in CTE programs, CTE leaders should engage students and other stakeholders to ensure that their perspectives are incorporated in program design, delivery, and continuous improvement efforts. The strategic use of qualitative data can facilitate understanding of how and why certain students do or do not participate in CTE, their barriers to enrollment and success, and the program elements and supports that are most impactful to ensuring their success.

Feedback loops are structured processes that collect, analyze, and respond to input from stakeholders, such as students, families, educators, and community partners, to inform continuous improvement. Core components include data collection (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups), analysis of trends and gaps, and responsive action planning. By gathering qualitative insights from special populations, parents, teachers, and counselors, CTE leaders can use insights to refine student-centered program design, instructional delivery, and support services to support special population student success.

- Engage in inclusive and comparative stakeholder engagement. Think strategically about the questions you are trying to answer when you engage various stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other interactions. A few elements and questions for consideration:
 - Engage prospective, current, and former CTE students in your efforts to understand barriers, opportunities, and areas for improvement.
 - Include both “traditional” students and those who identify as a Perkins V “special population” in your engagements. This will allow for constructive comparisons.
 - Include students, parents, teachers, counselors, employer partners, and other influencers and partners that engage with students throughout their CTE and CTSO experiences. These different perspectives on student CTE experiences will shed light on real and perceived perceptions about CTE programs and potential barriers to enrollment and success.

As you design your stakeholder engagement strategies, consider the following.

- What information couldn't we get from students and demographic data?
 - What intelligence about perceived and real barriers might we want to hear about from students, parents, teachers, and others?
 - What might be the most effective and efficient ways of obtaining both a representative sample of feedback *and* detailed and nuanced intelligence?
 - When (e.g., time of year, week, day) are we most likely to get responses from our audiences?
 - Are there differences in the perceptions, experiences, and success factors between "traditional" CTE students and those identified as a Perkins V "special population"?
-
- Prepare inclusive recruitment language and engagement materials. Ensure that your stakeholder engagement opportunities are promoted at a literacy level and language that will be understood by your audiences, including students and parents. Avoid internal "jargon," utilize translation services, and keep invitations clear, concise, reassuring, and authentic to generate interest and trust.
 - Utilize trusted partners to recruit stakeholders for engagement. Leverage trusted community and faith-based organizations, teachers, counselors, and other influencers to recruit stakeholders for various engagements (e.g., surveys, focus groups).
 - Communicate about stakeholder engagement opportunities through multiple platforms and methods. Utilize online, print, graphic, text, and voicemail platforms to keep students and families informed about stakeholder opportunities.
 - Use tiered and varied forms of stakeholder engagement to reflect scale and nuance. Leverage multiple stakeholder engagement methods to collect feedback, including:
 - Surveys to generate large scale, allow for larger volumes of stakeholder feedback, and analyze trends across special populations and other groups.
 - Focus groups to generate nuanced conversations with stakeholders with varying opinions and lived experience.
 - Individual interviews to allow for more candid, nuanced, and deep discussion.
 - Informal conversations in casual interactions, parent-teacher conferences, etc., to generate trust and create a comfortable environment.

Special Considerations by Population

Population(s) of Focus	Strategy/Approach
<i>Individuals with Disabilities</i>	Conduct a quarterly community of practice of counselors and teachers from across the district to discuss local, district, and statewide exemplars and ways to customize approaches for adoption. KSDE staff have conducted periodic surveys and focus groups to obtain insight. Reach out to Andy Ewing at andy.ewing@ksde.gov to learn more and check out this recorded “CTE Prep for Students with Disabilities” webinar from Education Associated, Inc., about approaches in Louisiana.
<i>English Language Learners</i>	Use surveys, polls, and discussions to learn spoken language(s) at home. Compare to data within your city, region, or workforce area using Kids Count Data Center Spoken Languages. The Annie E. Casey Foundation: Kids Count Data Center
<i>Individuals with Disabilities</i>	Have ongoing discussions with community organizations serving children with disabilities, such as Families Together, Pre-ETS, KANSASWORKS and look to KSDE for a list of more partners to gain insight into promising practices and available resources.

Identify and Track Potential Academic and Non-Academic Barriers and Opportunities for Improvement



With both quantitative education and student demographic data and qualitative data from stakeholder engagements in hand, district CTE leaders can now reflect on ways to better understand, recruit, and support the student populations they serve, as well as potential academic and non-academic barriers experienced by special population students.

The following are just *some* of the common barriers that CTE leaders may encounter as they examine ways to improve access to CTE pathways and success in CTE programming. Many of these barriers were elevated by and discussed with KSDE staff and district- and school-level subject matter experts in preparation for the creation of this tool.

Consider...

While reviewing quantitative and qualitative data, focus not only on what you have learned about challenges, barriers, and opportunities for improvement—also capture what is working well in recruiting, enrolling, and supporting special population success in CTE. And promote it!

- Lack of awareness regarding CTE opportunities and career pathways. Often, the most significant barriers to recruitment of *all* students into CTE programs is the lack of awareness of the career pathways, CTE course and programming, associated WBL and dual credit opportunities, and outcomes associated with them. This may be intensified for special population students, especially if they are representative of populations systemically underrepresented in CTE programs and their associated career pathways. This lack of awareness often extends to students, parents, core academic teachers, special education and other specialized educators and staff, and other adults guiding students' academic and college and career readiness decisions.
- Perceptions about CTE and/or vocational education and lack of understanding about the diversity of post-secondary options for CTE students. These misperceptions may include that CTE pathways are an *alternative* to core academic pathways to graduation and somehow less impressive, valuable, or prestigious as pathways that lead to post-secondary

education and training, including 2- and 4-year college pathways. In fact, CTE students are as likely to attend post-secondary institutions or training programs. In addition, many suspect that CTE programs are focused on trades occupations. CTE is no longer just your grandfather's "shop class."

- Bias, stereotypes, fears, and misunderstanding about special population abilities (i.e., deficit mindset). Many teachers, counselors, and WBL employers carry a deficit mindset about specific special populations. Lack of understanding and awareness about unique student abilities and inflated views of their barriers can cause these influencers to overlook or, worse, steer special population students away from CTE, CTSO, and WBL opportunities.
- Inadequate resources or staffing to support varied learning styles and appropriate scaffolds. Staffing constraints may put a strain on adequate support of special populations that may need adaptive learning accommodations or additional resources and scaffolds to be successful in CTE programs. Counselors, paraprofessionals, resource specialists, interpreters, teachers, and others may be under-resourced, overburdened with large class sizes that limit customized learning, and/or stretch between core academic classes and CTE classrooms. These constraints may exacerbate already existing CTE teacher shortages caused by wage disparities with the private sector and other external factors.
- Lack of accessibility in classrooms, CTE centers, employer facilities. Often, accessibility issues, whether real or perceived/easily overcome, impact *all* (or many) students, not just those with noticeable physical limitations.
- Real and perceived language barriers. English language learners (ELL) often face both real and perceived language barriers. CTE leaders should ensure that information distributed to promote CTE opportunities are translated into commonly spoken languages in your district but should provide translation services for key events promoting CTE programs to students and parents. Often, misperceptions about ELL student efficacy and learning styles prevent teachers and counselors from encouraging ELL students to enroll in CTE courses and pathways, even when effective learning is possible.
- Prerequisites and other academic barriers. Strenuous barriers to enrollment in CTE courses, including arbitrary prerequisites, may pose barriers to a variety of student populations. And not all these barriers are a matter of academic proficiency. CTE learning often accommodates multiple learning styles and presents opportunities for students who struggle with "traditional" classroom learning. Students whose family lives result in a more transient learning experience (e.g., military family students, foster care students who have lived with multiple families) may also experience barriers posed by prerequisites.
- Restrictive scheduling and lack of alignment with core curriculum offerings. CTE courses may compete with core curriculum offerings and requirements or experience gaps in course offerings, which limit options for all students, including special population students.
- Lack of demographic representation in role models in industry, classrooms, teachers, and staff. Special population students may assume that certain career pathways, programs, and careers are out of reach because of a lack of representation in classrooms and workplaces, influencers like CTE teachers, or awareness of opportunities in their families and communities. Students may self-select out of pathways and careers because they have been made to feel that they would not be successful—whether because of arbitrary academic barriers, gender stereotypes, or other reasons.
- Financial, transportation, geographic, and other non-academic barriers. Economically disadvantaged students and those that experience transportation challenges, housing instability, or lack of geographic access to CTE programs and career connected experiences (e.g., rural learners) may experience significant barriers to enrolling and succeeding in CTE

DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEAM

- What other barriers have you heard about or witnessed? Are these barriers a result of real or perceived challenges?
- How might you and your team prioritize these barriers to ensure access to CTE programs for all students in your district?
- Has your district already creatively solved some of these barriers to recruitment, enrollment, and support of special populations in CTE?

programs, especially when those programs require costly supplies not covered by school resources or on-site WBL outside of an easily commutable distance.

CTE leaders should document those barriers most frequently encountered in stakeholder engagement interactions and devise strategies to mitigate these barriers and prioritize solutions that fortify quality CTE opportunities and aligned CTSO, WBL, and experiences for *all* students. Approaches to mitigate these academic and non-academic barriers will be discussed in Phase 4 of this guide.

Case Study

Listening First: How One Team Helped a Student Thrive in CTE

A Kansas school district faced a tough decision when considering a student with multiple disabilities for a Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) class. Staff were concerned about safety risks, especially with tasks like cutting, cooking, and using hot surfaces. The student's learning goals were foundational: counting, recognizing sight words, and improving fine motor skills. Instead of saying "no," the team leaned into the Phase 1 approach of elevating voices. They brought together the student's parents, special education teacher, FACS teacher, and CTE coordinator to talk through the challenges and possibilities.

Through this collaboration, the team identified ways the class could support the student's goals. They introduced assistive tools and para support and scheduled weekly planning time between the FACS and special education teachers. This helped identify new strategies and align classroom activities with the student's IEP. The student not only participated safely, but she also thrived. As time progressed, she developed both her confidence and abilities, securing a position as a teacher's aide following her completion of high school.

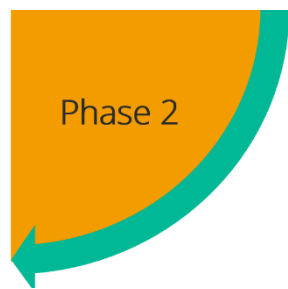
1. What assumptions do we make about student safety and ability when considering CTE placement, and how can we challenge those assumptions through collaboration?
2. How often do we include students and families in conversations about course selection and support planning—and what might we learn if we did this more intentionally?
3. What structures (like shared planning time or team meetings) do we currently have in place to support collaboration between general and special education staff? What is missing?

4. How can we better align classroom activities with IEP goals to ensure students with disabilities are meaningfully included in CTE programs?

5. What small changes could we make today to elevate student, parent, teacher, and counselor voices in our decision-making process?

For additional helpful resources and links, visit Appendix B: External Resource and Reference Compendium.

Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in CTE



Plan Quality Programming for All Students and Ensure Organizational Capacity to Deliver

In engaging with subject matter experts (SMEs) across Kansas, one of the most significant barriers identified for special population student success in CTE experiences was lack of foresight and planning to ensure that special population needs would be met in CTE courses, pathway programming, and associated CTSO and work-based learning experiences, and that school districts would have the organization capacity to deliver quality, accessible, and meaningful experiences to all students.

While this “Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in CTE” toolkit does not focus deeply on program and curriculum development (i.e., building accessible and inclusive education content), Phase 2 focuses on ensuring the right voices, staffing and resources, and comprehensive programming approaches are employed to support special population students. We have, however, included several resources in the Appendix B External Resource and Reference Compendium for Phase 2 that focus on program and curriculum design approaches to ensure success with various special populations.



Include Relevant Stakeholder Voices in Program and Curriculum Development

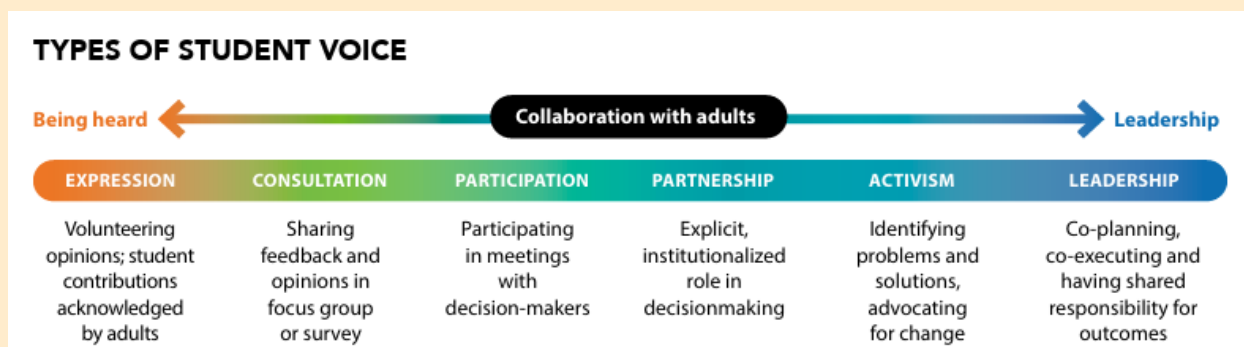
Elevating student voices (future, past, and present) and tapping the expertise of skilled and experienced practitioners who serve special populations supports the development of quality programming for all students, not just special populations. The following high-level approaches and considerations are meant to reinforce the importance of elevating these voices in program and curriculum development.

- Center student voice and leverage human-centered design principles in program and curriculum design. Being responsive to the needs and strengths of students is foundational to their success in CTE programs. When educators center learner voice and student-lived experiences, perspectives, and aspirations, they foster environments that are welcoming, supportive, and empowering. This responsiveness ensures that instruction is not only relevant but also reflective of students’ identities and goals, which increases engagement, motivation, and persistence.
- Ensure that parent/family, teacher, specialized resource providers and experts, and school counselor voices are well-represented in program development. Engage these stakeholders and experts to 1) better understand student interests and opportunities; 2) overcome misconceptions about various CTE pathways, experiences, and post-high school opportunities; 3) identify potential academic and non-academic barriers; and 4) ensure that this intelligence is reflected in pathway programming, courses/scheduling, WBL experiences, and curriculum design processes. Building accessible and inclusive programming for all students requires this expertise and makes student success more probable.

Explore Advance CTE and ACTE’s “With Learners, Not for Learners:
A Toolkit for Elevating Learner Voice in CTE”

- [The “With Learners, Not for Learners” Toolkit](#) helps dismantle barriers, especially for students from special populations, and improves program quality through intentional feedback loops.
- The graphic below, lifted directly from the toolkit, illustrates a continuum of learner voice, ranging from expression (where students share thoughts and feelings) to consultation, participation, and ultimately

leadership, where students co-create and influence decisions within CTE programs. This progression highlights the importance of moving beyond passive listening to active collaboration, ensuring students are not just heard, but are partners in shaping their educational journey.



Source: [With Learners, Not for Learners: A Toolkit for Elevating Learner Voice in CTE](#)

- Engage those that *work with* special populations early to ensure program design has a strength-based approach and is supportive of special population needs *while* programs are being built. Practice strengths-based thinking in the example below.
- Consult labor market data and engage employer partners in program design. CTE leaders should use labor market information (LMI), or consult with LMI data experts, to determine which industries, industry clusters, career pathways, and specific occupations are or *will be* high-wage, high-skilled, and high-demand or critical occupations. After consulting data, CTE leaders should engage industry leaders to:
 - Validate this data, focusing on obtaining direct intelligence for job demand, nuances of occupational criticality, and shifting skill and credential needs to keep pace with technology, innovation, artificial intelligence, and other industry transformation.
 - Discuss the technical and employability skills required of in-demand occupations and the training, industry-recognized credentials (IRCs), and other job requirements needed for success on the job.
 - Leverage their leadership and involvement in building and supporting CTE and CTSO programming, including influence on curriculum and work-based learning (WBL) experiences.
 - Provide quality WBL experiences, including site tours and job shadows, internship and co-op opportunities, and pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship roles.

Practicing Strength-Based Thinking

In this exercise, taken directly from the Arizona Department of Education's ["Using Data to Identify and Address CTE Opportunity Gaps: Participant Workbook,"](#) practice shifting your thinking and transform each statement from a deficit-based statement/approach to a strength-based one.

Below are definitions for each and a list of stereotypes and perceptions about CTE learners, families, and programs that may be present in your school or district. How can you reframe these statements using a strength-based thinking lens? Write your revised responses in the "Strength-based thinking" column.

- Deficit-Based Thinking: Locating the source of a problem in individual decisions or preferences; in other words, blaming the learner.
- Strength-Based Thinking: Recognizing and celebrating learners' strengths and locating root causes in systems and structures.

Deficit-Based Thinking	Strength-Based Thinking
<i>Example: The reason there are only boys in my welding program is because girls just aren't interested in welding.</i>	<i>Example: There are girls in our school who would excel in welding, but they don't feel welcome in these programs and haven't been invited in.</i>
<i>We've tried to get parents more information about our CTE programs, but they never show up to our open houses.</i>	
<i>This program is too rigorous for some students. They just don't have the motivation or the academic knowledge to make it in my classes.</i>	
<i>CTE just isn't valued in their culture. That's why we never get "those" students in our programs.</i>	
<i>The program is too rough for students who don't like to get their hands dirty.</i>	
<i>We always get a lot of interest in my program at the beginning of the year, but as soon as students find out how much they must pay for equipment and exam fees, they are all back out.</i>	

Special Considerations by Population

Population(s) of Focus	Strategy/Approach
<i>Individuals with Disabilities</i>	Engage Kansas Vocational Rehabilitation Services at the outset and throughout the CTE development process to ensure intentional planning and program design.
<i>Students in Non-Traditional Careers</i>	Counselors and teachers (CTE and general) can engage industry leaders as advisors in the development of CTE courses. Find desired employability skillsets, pain points, misconceptions, and retention gaps of new employees. For more information, visit The Project on Workforce various reports on CTE and WBL.
<i>English Language Learners</i>	Determine the most effective, evidence-based language learning model—such as the SIOP Model or Project GLAD —to address the specific needs of ELLs in both core and CTE courses. Ensure ongoing collaboration with EL specialists during the implementation phase. Read more with Existing Models of ELL Teaching: Which is the Most Effective? and Instructional Models and Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners .
<i>Students in Non-Traditional Careers</i>	Conduct team reviews of CTE and general education curricula, as well as industry-specific content, to identify career stereotypes. Check out these resources: Project Implicit , KSDE's Non-Traditional Careers , and NAPE: Reducing Stereotype Threat in the Classroom .
<i>Out-of-Workforce Youth</i>	Strengthen the connection between industry and education to explore opportunities that include various stakeholders. Listen in on the panel discussion on McCourt Policy Conference- Wasted Talent: Youth Unemployed & Underemployed in America .



Ensure Staffing Structures and Capacity to Support All Students

School districts should ensure that they have adequate staffing, resources, and specialized expertise to fully support special population student success. Using intelligence gathered about current and potential student barriers to entry and success, district and CTE leaders can do the following to evaluate their organizational capacity to deliver on the promise of CTE experiences to special population students.

- Support district and school staff in strategic analysis and planning exercises that examine organizational structures, specialized programs and services, and staffing levels to support all CTE students' needs. This analysis should also include an examination of how existing staff and resources are prioritized and distributed across core classes, CTE programs, and other efforts. Are there major supports missing or under-resourced?
- Allocate appropriate staffing and resources, such as teachers, staff, and paraprofessionals, to support special population students in CTE, while maintaining a balance with core academic programming and classes.

- Engage in asset mapping to understand existing internal and external resources available to districts, schools, parents, and families to support success in CTE programs. Examine specialized resources that are provided internally or by community partners to support special population students with both academic and non-academic needs. These specialized resources may include:
 - Specialized staffing supports like paraprofessionals and/or teachers with experience in supporting specific special population of students (e.g., special education teachers, translators) and various community-based service case workers.
 - Adaptive learning tools, reasonable learning accommodations, and scaffolds that support learning.
 - Wraparound services to support non-academic needs (e.g., transportation, supplies, housing, food assistance).
- Explore external partnerships and funding streams to support special population students. Cultivate an ecosystem of partners to support the success of all students by connecting with organizations that provide academic and non-academic supports to students—and explore federal, state, local, foundation-based, and private (e.g., industry- and employer-based) funding and resources to support student learning.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Does your district prioritize supports to CTE programming (e.g., counselors, resource/support paraprofessionals, translators) at the same level as other pathways to graduation?
- Are there potential barriers/challenges you discovered in Phase 1 that are perpetuated by current organizational structures, resourcing, or staffing models?
- If you increase enrollment of special population students in CTE, how can you ensure they are provided the supports (i.e., staff, tools, resources) they need to be successful?

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

Check out the Arizona Department of Education's webpage dedicated to their [school counselors](#) – a one-stop shop. Empowering school staff is a powerful way of reducing the achievement gap for special populations.



Provide Staff and Partner Professional Development to Support Special Populations

Success in CTE programs for *all* students requires knowledgeable staff and regular access to professional development to learn new teaching and instructional methods, especially when those methods are adaptive to varied learning styles and illuminate new technologies and skill-development strategies. CTE leaders should provide regular opportunities for professional development of CTE teachers and staff, as well as opportunities for peer sharing and learning. The success of special populations in CTE experiences may require enhanced and customized instruction methods. In addition, districts and schools should leverage the expertise of specialized teachers and staff to educate all educators and staff about the needs and opportunities associated with special population students in CTE.

Offer targeted professional development opportunities to key internal staff, such as teachers, counselors, and various support staff, to enhance their capacity to effectively support special populations. This training should foster awareness of unique needs, build relevant skills and competencies, and provide information on available support services and accommodations. Professional development could take many forms, such as workshops, seminars, online courses, peer mentoring, or collaborative learning sessions.

- **Couple training and peer learning with regular follow-up meetings and assessments to ensure that staff integrate these new skills into their daily practice.** This will lead to improved academic, social, and employment outcomes for special populations. By cultivating a supportive network and sharing resources, organizations can build a culture where every individual's needs are recognized and addressed proactively. In addition, with increased knowledge comes less propensity toward misperceptions about students' limitations and an increased use of strength-based mindsets and approaches.
- Create customized toolkits and repositories that highlight best practices in serving special populations in CTE, CTSO, and WBL experiences and provide tips, tools, tricks, and guidelines
 - **Strength-Based Approaches:** Resources that promote the use of strength-based mindsets, helping educators and staff recognize and build upon students' unique abilities rather than focusing on limitations.
 - **Differentiated Instruction Strategies:** Tips and guidelines for adapting teaching methods to meet diverse learning styles and needs, including hands-on workshops for CTE teachers working with students who have learning differences.
 - **Awareness of Industry Trends:** Information packets and updates for teachers, counselors, ELL specialists, and administrators on emerging occupational and skill needs, as well as welcoming and supportive workplace strategies learned from industry professionals. In addition, industry partners can offer valuable insights into the latest equipment, applications, and techniques that enable accommodations and modifications for students with diverse needs.
 - **Partner Engagement and Resource Navigation:** Step-by-step guides for collaborating with external partners, such as employers and community service providers, including introductory email templates, tips for organizing advisory committees and events, and navigating school participation.
 - **Assistive Technology Integration:** Best practices for introducing and using assistive technology in classrooms and work-based learning (WBL) settings to support accessibility and opportunities for all learners.
 - **Cultural Competency and Trauma-Informed Care:** Training modules and resources for counselors and staff to enhance their understanding of cultural backgrounds, trauma impacts, and how to create supportive environments for all students.
 - **Professional Development Planning:** Templates and checklists for organizing workshops, seminars, online courses, peer mentoring sessions, and ongoing assessments to ensure skill integration into daily practice.
 - **Peer Sharing Networks:** Instructions for creating and sustaining peer learning networks among staff and partners to facilitate ongoing sharing of best practices, resources, and success stories.
- Facilitate reciprocal education and practice exchange with external partners. This may include employers who offer work-based learning opportunities and community service providers. This approach promotes understanding of the abilities, opportunities, strengths, and potential challenges faced by special populations in the classroom and on the job. This collaboration also enables informed decision-making by providing insight into on-the-job opportunities and actual workplace conditions.
- Ensure that CTE teachers and administrators are regularly informed about developing industry trends, newly established companies, or emerging occupational and skill needs. Engage employer advisory committees and seek opportunities to work with industry professionals to support professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators relevant to current and future careers.

Learn from partnerships with organizations like...

The [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability \(EARN\)](#), which supports employers with strategies to recruit, hire, retain, and advance people with disabilities. [EARN's Neurodiversity Hiring: Checklist for Organizational Success](#) resource offers organizations practical guidance to successfully recruit, hire, and support neurodiverse talent and may be helpful to CTE leaders in their understanding of on-the-job resources and adaptations.

- Create and distribute comprehensive packaged resources to assist partners in effectively navigating school participation.
 - Check out [HIREPATH's Career Hunts](#) (think scavenger hunt meets hands-on industry connection) and the step-by-step process in organizing a transformative event.



- Explore this [NOCTI Video: Resources for CTE Administrators](#), which offers guidance and practical tools for CTE administrators to enhance program effectiveness and support.
- [NOCTI](#) also features an array of assessments, resources for various stakeholders, and information for advancing CTE.

Special Considerations by Population

Population(s) of Focus	Strategy/Approach
<i>Foster Youth</i>	Gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of these students' experiences and potential barriers by exploring the following resources. Serving Students in Foster Care: Implications and Interventions for School Counselors speaks to the impact of student transience on academic achievement and presents strategies to proactively address barriers to promote continuity of education. Edutopia: Supporting Students Living in Foster Care provides an overview about students' backgrounds and how to create a safe, supportive environment with positive relationships. Recognize how foster care may affect a student's attendance and capacity to complete assignments; implement flexible homework schedules; and review disciplinary measures, such as suspension, to minimize further loss of instructional time. Read Pipeline to Success: Supporting California Foster Youth from High School to Community College.
<i>English Language Learners</i>	School staff are key to supporting teens in work-based learning by ensuring their rights, teaching essential soft skills like punctuality, and guiding employers in understanding students' readiness for job tasks. See Migration Policy Institute for more.
<i>Individuals with Disabilities</i>	Establish ongoing professional development (ADA National Network and Job Accommodation Network) that enables CTE and general education teachers and counselors to work together on accommodations and modifications.

Provide Quality WBL, Career-Connected Learning, and CTSO Experiences for All Students

Ensuring access to high-quality WBL and CTSO experiences is a critical component of preparing all CTE students for success in today's dynamic workforce. This commitment involves intentionally designing and expanding WBL opportunities that reflect the student populations served by CTE programs, including those identified as special populations under Perkins V. By fostering strong partnerships with employers, educators, and community organizations, we can create meaningful, real-world learning experiences that empower every student to explore career pathways, build essential skills, and achieve their full potential.

- Examine the experiences of special population students in WBL by focusing on the quality of their peer interactions and how these relationships influence their persistence and success.
 - How is the classroom climate evaluated for special populations and WBL students who are co-enrolled in core and CTE courses, specifically in terms of how their peers make them feel included, respected, and supported?
 - Are the levels of participation and collaboration for special populations comparable to those of their peers, and in what ways do these interactions foster or hinder their sense of belonging?
 - What methods can be used to reflect and capture peer interaction experiences from the perspective of special population students, including what is working well, what challenges remain, and what areas of peer support, participation, or collaboration could be strengthened to improve their overall learning environment?
- Ensure that WBL opportunities are accessible to all CTE students, including special populations across the full WBL continuum.
 - Provide a diverse set of quality work-based learning experiences that include:
 - » Opportunities to learn about work through career fairs, company tours, and job shadows.
 - » Hands-on opportunities to learn at and through work, like project-based challenges and CTSO competitions, internships, and pre-apprenticeships.
 - » Special population involvement in CTSOs to enhance learning, create a network and work-based community, and connect with employers.
 - When building these programs, ensure accessibility to all students by:
 - » Learning from experts in each special population about any classroom and/or on-the-job adaptations needed to support special population success in WBL experiences.
 - » Expand geographic access to CTE and WBL opportunities. Consider offering online courses, adopt simulated technologies, utilize mobile labs, and explore partnerships with other community partners (e.g., community college campuses and satellites) to provide access across urban and rural settings.

A HIGHLIGHT ON CAREER AND TECHNICAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

- Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) are intra-curricular groups for students in CTE programs. These organizations are designed to enhance the learning experience by providing opportunities for leadership, personal growth, and career development. CTSOs align with one or more career clusters and engage students in activities like competitive events, community service projects, and network with other students, mentors, and industry professionals. These career-connected and network-building activities may provide some special population students with opportunities to which they would not otherwise have had access.
 - Visit [KSDE's CTSO page](#) to learn more about the 8 CTSOs in Kansas, which focus on careers in business, hospitality and tourism, IT, finance, human services, education and training, health and biosciences, architecture and construction, agriculture, and more.
-
- Ensure that WBL learning experiences are of high quality and align with classroom learning opportunities. Define what constitutes a “quality” WBL experience and align resources with employers and partners who provide structured work-based learning in relevant career fields. Ensure a focus on hands-on, career-connected, on-the-job learning, safety, mentorship, exploration and exposure of multiple roles and industry environments, for example, in the context of specialized needs for each population.

PHASE 2 | PLAN QUALITY PROGRAMMING FOR ALL STUDENTS AND ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO DELIVER

- Align WBL to classroom learning opportunities.
 - Ensure alignment of WBL to CTE classroom learning and general education core curriculum. Take steps to ensure alignment of WBL opportunities with CTE course progressions with core academic curriculum and content.
 - Support special population students to successfully enroll in and complete dual credit courses and obtain industry-recognized credentials associated with CTE programs and pathways.
- Equip WBL providers with information regarding special populations, enabling them to assist these groups and facilitate connections with community partners. Align these efforts with internal professional development and community/partner education efforts.
- Ensure a focus on industry-relevant employability skills to ensure special population success in the job market. CTE and work-based learning programs play a vital role in preparing students for success in the workforce by emphasizing not only the development of industry-recognized technical skills but of “employability skills” or “durable skills.” Employability skills are foundational abilities that enable *all* students and workers to thrive in a professional setting. Incorporating instructional and on-the-job opportunities to learn about and demonstrate employability skills helps learners cultivate the behaviors, attitudes, and competencies that employers value most.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILL ATTAINMENT

By integrating hands-on experiences with skill-building activities, students not only gain technical expertise but also learn how to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and adapt to changing environments. It is important to ensure that instruction in employability skills is accessible and culturally responsive to the needs of special populations. Providing chances for all CTE students to demonstrate and practice these skills in both simulated and real-world workplace settings is necessary.

Examples of employability (or durable) skills include:

Effective Relationships

- Interpersonal skills
 - Teamwork
 - Customer service
- Personal qualities
 - Initiative
 - Adaptability
 - Professionalism

Workplace Skills

- Resource management
 - Manages time, money and personnel.
- Information use
 - Locates, organizes, analyzes, uses, and communicates information.

- Communication
 - Verbal communication
 - Listening
 - Comprehends written material.
 - Conveys information in writing.
- Systems thinking
 - Understands, uses, monitors, and improves systems.
- Technology use
 - Understands and uses technology.

Applied Knowledge

- Applied academic skills
 - Academic application
- Critical thinking
 - Problem-solving
 - Creative thinking
 - Goal setting

To facilitate the integration of these skillsets into both academic and technical instruction, supplementary resources for students and industry partners are available in Sections 2 and 3 of the [Kansas Work-Based Learning: Personalized Learning Plan Guidance Document](#).

Special Considerations by Population

Population(s) of Focus	Strategy/Approach
<i>Students in Non-Traditional Careers</i>	Use learner representation to build awareness, inform choice, and underscore belonging. Invite voices from the field to serve as mentors or provide a ‘day in the life of’ perspective as well as use available podcasts and videos.
<i>Individuals Experiencing Homelessness and Institution-Involved Youth (Foster Care and Incarcerated)</i>	Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) specialists teach high school elective courses for credit, helping students build job skills, gain hands-on experience, and receive one year of follow-up support to aid their transition; partnering with these professionals supports a holistic strategy.
<i>Single Parents</i>	Provide financial literacy education, practical workshops, and support resources to help students understand real-world finances, public assistance, taxes, and affordable childcare. See Make a Difference for Special Population Students: Practical Tips and Tools for Educators
<i>Out-of-Workforce Youth</i>	Engage with local employers through program advisory committees to facilitate direct collaboration with students. For engagement ideas, read Supporting Out-of-Workforce Individuals: Recruitment and Retention Super Strategies .

Case Study

Removing Barriers for an ELL Student Experiencing Homelessness in Healthcare CTE

Nam, an incoming high school sophomore and English learner, wanted to become a nurse but faced scheduling conflicts, part-time work, and unstable housing. A school team assembled which at first included his counselor and the assistant principal who oversaw the CTE program. During the summer, the district created policies and provided professional development aimed at identifying and meeting learner needs using a comprehensive approach. The school advisory soon expanded by involving the CTE teacher, ELL specialist, and community partners to address these challenges. Recognizing Nam's homelessness circumstance, the school immediately connected him with the district's McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison.

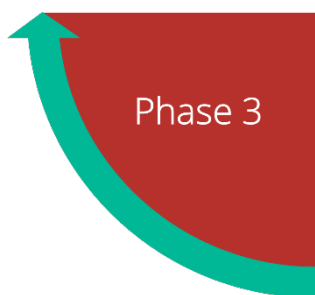
Initially, the school team's attempts included offering an online healthcare course, but Nam lacked internet access. The school then connected him with local workforce services for transportation, supplies, and exam vouchers, and secured free internet through a national provider's program. The district liaison helped Nam access transitional housing and ensured he could remain enrolled and engaged in school. Nam was also matched with a mentor from a local clinic who spoke his native language, and his teachers worked together to tailor lessons to his needs. With this support, Nam was able to pursue his healthcare studies and advance toward his career goals.

PHASE 2 | PLAN QUALITY PROGRAMMING FOR ALL STUDENTS AND ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO DELIVER

1. What barriers did Nam face in accessing his healthcare CTE pathway, and how did the school team identify and respond to these challenges?
2. How did regular collaboration between the ELL specialist and CTE instructor help support Nam's learning and engagement? What strategies from their partnership could be applied to other students?
3. In what ways did community partnerships (such as WIOA Youth, internet provider, and the local clinic mentor) contribute to Nam's success? How can your school strengthen similar partnerships?
4. How did the team's approach to listening to Nam's story and elevating his voice shape the solutions they implemented? What processes does your school have for gathering student input and feedback?
5. What additional supports or changes could further improve access and success for students experiencing homelessness or balancing work and school responsibilities?

For additional helpful resources and links, visit Appendix B: External Resource and Reference Compendium.

Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in CTE



Engage in Inclusive Outreach, Recruitment, and Enrollment of Special Populations

CTE leaders must intentionally design outreach, recruitment, and enrollment strategies that actively include and engage special populations. Drawing on comprehensive data analysis and high-quality programming resources is essential to create approaches that are truly reflective of and responsive to these students' experiences. Grounding these efforts in evidence-based

practices enables practitioners to connect with students from a variety of backgrounds, fostering a welcoming and supportive environment for all participants in CTE.

Strong partnerships are key to expanding the effectiveness of recruitment and sustaining meaningful engagement with special population groups. Collaborating with guardians, community and student organizations (such as CTSOs), school counselors, teachers, advisory boards, business partners, and public service providers ensures communication is consistent, clear, and culturally relevant. These partnerships also help identify and address the specific needs of each student, providing tailored supports that contribute to their success. By leveraging these collaborative relationships, CTE programs can extend their reach, maintain responsiveness to every learner type, and help build a more resilient workforce. Additional resources and approaches can be found in **Appendix B External Resource and Reference Compendium for Phase 3** on page 63.



Craft Comprehensive, Effective, and Inclusive Messaging

The format of outreach messaging is just as important as its content. Special populations benefit from a variety of presentation styles that meet them where they are. Differentiation ensures that no group is left out and that messaging is both accessible and captivating (NAPE, 2019).

- Address stigmas of CTE and opportunities programs present for postsecondary and labor market success, economic mobility, etc. Multiple pathways approach.
- Ensure that language speaks to all learners and their families and has asset-based language.
- Provide examples of success for special populations in CTE.
- Ensure that information about available accessibility accommodation is included across all communication formats. Draw attention to individuals who

CHECK OUT [NAPE'S MESSAGING RESOURCES](#)

ADDRESSING ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

- Have you included [Symbols of Accessibility](#), such as TTY or access for hearing loss?
- Are there designated areas or dedicated staff for individuals needing individual attention, low lighting, or quieter spaces?
- Are you hosting an event that accounts for wheelchair users, the visually impaired, or the hearing impaired?
- Is your website or digital platform accessible? Find out at [AskJan Digital/Web Accessibility](#).



may be unfamiliar with the school building, training facility, recruitment area, or similar locations. Related questions to consider:

- Create online ads and social media posts with language-enabled support and accessible formats of text and visual images.
- Ensure that visual images on posters, flyers, and websites are representative of community members from special populations. Check out the [2025 CTE Month Poster Scoring Rubric](#).
- Recorded messages (audio or video) for students and/or families with limited literacy, language barriers, or visual disability.
- Provide workshops that provide hands-on exposure to CTE programs.
 - Check out [Windward District CTE Camp Cimi ā-loa'a](#).
- Utilize community radio and local media to reach rural or disconnected populations.

Special Considerations by Population

Population(s) of Focus	Strategy/Approach
<i>Students in Non-Traditional Careers</i>	NAPE: Make the Future, Connecting Girls to Manufacturing highlights the need for intentionality in depicting images of genders in non-traditional roles.
<i>Economically Disadvantaged Youth</i>	Share your CTE communications throughout your school's community, such as churches, shelters, pantries, government agencies, health organizations, libraries, bus terminals, and through radio or TV PSAs. Get guidance from University of Kansas on Preparing Public Service Announcements .
<i>English Language Learner</i>	Host a CTE informational event and secure an interpreter ensuring students and families are invested and informed. Snacks, activities like raffles or games, and cultural representation foster belonging. See Tips on Using Interpreters .



Leverage Trusted Partners to Recruit (and Later Support) Special Populations in CTE

Stakeholders, which included business partners, student families, and community-based organizations, play a pivotal role in ensuring effective recruitment and enrollment of special populations in CTE. Their involvement brings depth, relevance, and reach to outreach efforts. Educators help shape messaging and identify students who may benefit from CTE pathways. Students themselves serve as peer ambassadors, offering authentic perspectives that resonate with prospective learners. Industry partners and community organizations extend the program's visibility, build trust within underserved communities, and provide real-world context that makes CTE more tangible and appealing. Support services, such as counselors and advocates, ensure that enrollment processes are accessible and responsive to individual needs. When these stakeholders collaborate intentionally and consistently, they create a welcoming and informed entry point for all learners, including those from special populations.

- Identify partners, such as [Families Together](#), [Western Kansas Career Showcases](#), and [Kansas Pre-Employment Transition Services](#) that are connected to special populations' students and families.
- Broaden special population partnerships to incorporate state-level learner allies. Advance CTE shares steps to having meaningful stakeholder engagement:
 1. Interact and collaborate with influencers, advocacy groups, and state agencies that represent learners identified as having special population status.
 2. Enhance internal knowledge and capacity at the state level by appointing dedicated liaisons for specific special population groups and expanding expertise regarding the unique needs and interests of their respective communities.
 3. Create clear structures and routines to engage special population learner representatives and coordinate services among state agencies.
 4. Incorporate stakeholder input and create feedback mechanisms to confirm that resources and services are meeting stakeholders' identified needs.

([Career Tech](#), 2021)

- Leverage credible communicators within schools and throughout the community to build trust.
- Become familiar with the available resources and program successes that [Kansas Chambers of Commerce](#) and [Kansas Career & Technical Student Organizations](#) offer.

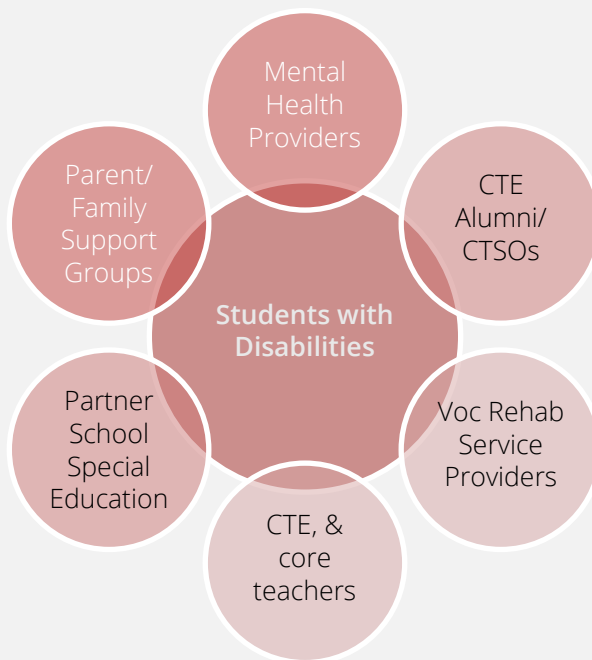
- Additional considerations are peer groups that promote student advocacy, agency, and community engagement. Student organizations, such as debate teams, mock trial, student council, and student government, are a great

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

For strategies on refugee and immigrant serving organizations, see:

- [Kansas Office for Refugees](#)
- [Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas](#)
- [Refugee Resettlement, Jewish Vocational Service](#)

Example of Partnership Voices for Population-Specific Groups



conduit to reaching learners in an informal and supportive setting, allowing them to develop leadership skills, share experiences, and voice their needs in a space where they feel empowered and included.

- Facilitate student access to regionally provided supportive services as needed, including transportation to work-based learning sites and program supplies, as well as non-academic resources that enhance accessibility, persistence, and completion.

Special Considerations by Population

Population(s) of Focus	Strategy/Approach
Youth with Active-Duty Parent	When a parent has been called to duty, it is hard on the parent and child still at home. Consider a mentor from Big Brothers Big Sisters of America , who can offer a listening ear, provide guidance, or some encouragement.
Single Parents	Reach out to KansasWorks or local workforce service location to identify employers sensitive to the needs of your students.
Economically Disadvantaged Youth	Access affordable or discounted internet or device services. Explore Cheap Internet Options , Low-cost devices and internet and Central Kansas Library System .



Identify the Right Communications Channels and Engagement Strategies

Effective outreach begins with selecting communication channels that resonate with all types of learners and communities of Kansas' respective counties, cities, and communities. These strategies should be culturally relevant, language should be accessible, and approaches adapted to special populations' unique experiences.

- Find the right mechanisms for communication. Which media, channels, or communication tools are likely to be most effective? What methods can be used to measure, track, and adjust their effectiveness?
 - Use the templates found in Units 5 and 6 in [Advance CTE's Recruitment and Engagement Tool](#) to guide your communications and messaging approaches.
- Use the right influencers. Whose message will resonate? Who do students trust?
- Be intentional about creating a sense of belonging in the language used for outreach and recruitment.

A HIGHLIGHT ON CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Here are some tips shared by [Achieving the Dream: Knowing Our Students](#).

- Minimize the steps required to access support.
 - Make support easy to access for everyone, so no one feels embarrassed or singled out when seeking help.
 - Facilitate a seamless transition between support services by ensuring that students are personally introduced to the appropriate office or individual to whom they are being referred.
 - Advisors and teachers can work to establish connections with students to foster a sense of community.
 - Collaborate across departments to guarantee that every student establishes a connection with at least one faculty member.
 - Use orientations to highlight why connection matters to students.
 - Use brief psychological strategies to strengthen students' learner identities and reduce stereotype threat, such as integrating regular growth-mindset activities.
 - Incorporate systematic collection and analysis of data regarding students' identities and their intersections into routine school operations.
-
- Host community events such as career fairs, open houses, and school visits that allow face-to-face engagement and hands-on exploration.
 - Check out this [CTE Mobile Career Exploration Lab](#) by Nash County Public Schools.
 - Explore New Hanover County Schools, where [Students Get First-Hand Experience with Jobs at a Career Fair](#).
 - Remember that not everyone is knowledgeable about CTE Programs. Prepare to offer pertinent information that clarifies its objectives, framework, and results, ideally incorporating perspectives from students to enhance stakeholder understanding.
 - [Why Career & Technical Education Works: Student Perspective](#)

PHASE 3 | ENGAGE IN INCLUSIVE OUTREACH, RECRUITMENT, AND ENROLLMENT OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS

- [Why Career & Technical Education Works: Parents Perspective](#)
- [Why Career & Technical Education Works: Employer Perspective](#)
- Hold information sessions facilitated by current students, during which they share their experiences, promote engagement, and interact with employers. Check out the following models:
 - [Reverse Job Fair](#)
 - [CTE Student Panel](#)
 - [Feel Good Story: How a CTE Student-Focused Enterprise is Shaping Real-World Success](#)



Nash County Public Schools, 2025¹

Special Considerations by Population

Population(s) of Focus	Strategy/Approach
Foster Youth	Select high-quality materials that appropriately address the specific needs and sensitivities of these students, and distribute them to relevant stakeholders, including staff, community members, and students. Consider these before getting started. Education Experiences while in Foster Care Taken into foster care, through the eyes of a child TEDxTalks, Life in a Trash Bag: Restoring Dignity to Foster Children
English Language Learners	Highlight learner experiences, such as LEARN AMERICA for interactive storytelling activities and the preservation of individual identities that contribute to building cohesive communities.
Students in Non-Traditional Careers	Identify methods and approaches that enhance recruitment and retention, such as student testimonials, artwork, music, or presentations.

¹ Nash County Public Schools. (2025, May 22). *Career and technical education (CTE) Mobile Career Exploration Lab ribbon cutting* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TueEw2OvO8>.

Cross-Cutting Strategy Considerations

The following table includes some high-level cross-cutting strategies to support recruitment of students in special population groups to CTE.

Ways to Engage Students	
Student Testimonials	Consider gathering population-specific testimonials by speaking with current students representing special populations and asking 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. Check out Spring Independent School District CTE (Houston, TX) .
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.
Presentations or Information Sessions	When developing presentations, consider the language, images, and examples you are sharing. 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. Host information sessions at service provider locations to increase access to those they serve.
Flyers/Posters	Think about the three Ls: location, language, look. Are the flyers/posters in a location that will reach the right students? Does the language relate to students you hope to recruit? Do the graphics portray the participation of students representing all genders, abilities, and backgrounds?
Mentorship Approaches	Providing 1:1 mentorship to students can improve retention of special population groups. Consider assigning teachers/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.



Mitigate Barriers to Entry and Enrollment

School districts and CTE leaders should work to identify and 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. The approaches below can help CTE leaders mitigate barriers to entry caused by policies and ensure that enrollment requirements and application processes are not limiting special population involvement in CTE programs.

- Re-evaluate and reflect on the impact enrollment requirements, prerequisites, and other policies may have on special population student enrollment in CTE courses and programs and CTSO experiences.
- Revise program infrastructures to emphasize flexible scheduling, ensure adequate staffing, and optimize processes that support enrollment and successful completion of courses, programs, and WBL opportunities by special populations.
 - Prioritizing scheduling for students from special populations to safeguard their access to essential core classes.
 - Assessing scheduling requirements for each case rather than relying solely on fixed standards. For example, co-teaching in core classes is not necessary for every student with a disability.

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

For strategies on scheduling, visit [On the Right Path: Newcomer Student Enrollment and Course Placement Promising Practices](#) from The Next 100.

QUESTIONS TO 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 and representative of the needs and experiences of special population students?
- What assumptions underly the policy? Are these assumptions based on stereotypes, lack of information, or a deficit mindset?
- How might we adjust this policy to increase access and success for all students?

Special Considerations by Population

<i>Population(s) of Focus</i>	<i>Strategy/Approach</i>
<i>Out-of-Workforce Youth</i>	Set up support groups, organize student meetups, and help them build networks for sharing information about classwork, homework, and childcare. For more, see Supporting Out-of-Workforce Individuals: Recruitment and Retention Super Strategies
<i>Individuals with Disabilities</i>	Show a pre-recorded video of a student with disabilities speaking about their CTE learning experience.
<i>Single Parents</i>	Advance CTE: Engaging Representatives of Learners with Special Population Status through Perkins V points out the need to offer courses in a variety of formats—asynchronous online, synchronous online, face-to-face, hyflex, and hybrid—at different times of day and locations to accommodate the schedules and responsibilities of single parents.

Case Study

Revitalizing AG Enrollment Through Multi-Prong Recruitment

Over the past three years, Meadow Valley High School noticed a steady decline in student enrollment in its agriculture (AG) pathway. School leaders identified several barriers through their data analysis. Many students and families were unaware of the diverse career opportunities in AG, some held outdated perceptions of the field, and outreach efforts had not reached all segments of the community. Recognizing the need for change, the school formed a recruitment committee made up of AG teachers, ELL specialist, counselors, CTSO advisors, and community partners. The committee reviewed promising recruitment strategies from across the country and decided to take a multi-prong approach tailored to their local context.

Rather than relying on just one or two tactics, the committee launched a coordinated campaign. They partnered with Kansas CTSOs to showcase leadership and career development opportunities in AG. A concise fact sheet was created to highlight AG career pathways, local job prospects, and student success stories. Presentations were delivered in English, Spanish, and German at the middle schools, adult learning center, and local libraries to reach families and prospective students from all backgrounds. To engage the broader community, the team hosted a Facebook Live demonstration event featuring hands-on AG activities and Q&A with current students. Finally, they produced a “Day in the Life” video series with AG alumni, sharing real-world experiences and career journeys. By leveraging inclusive messaging, partnering with trusted community members, and utilizing multiple communication channels, Meadow Valley High School not only experienced a rise in overall AG course enrollment but, more importantly, successfully engaged student populations that had previously been underrepresented. As a result, more students and families began to view AG as a pathway to meaningful careers, broadening access and opportunities for all.

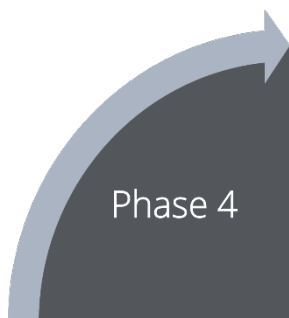
1. What barriers to AG enrollment did Meadow Valley High School identify, and how did these barriers impact different student groups?

PHASE 3 | ENGAGE IN INCLUSIVE OUTREACH, RECRUITMENT, AND ENROLLMENT OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS

2. How did the recruitment committee use data and stakeholder feedback to shape their multi-prong outreach strategy?
3. Which outreach methods (e.g., CTSO partnerships, fact sheets, multilingual presentations, Facebook Live events, alumni videos) do you think were most effective in reaching new audiences, and why?
4. How did inclusive messaging and representation in recruitment materials help address misperceptions about AG careers?
5. What additional strategies or partnerships could Meadow Valley High School consider to further increase AG enrollment and support student success?

For additional helpful resources and links, visit Appendix B: External Resource and Reference Compendium.

Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in CTE



Provide Comprehensive and Customized Supports for Student Success

Once special populations are successfully recruited and enrolled in CTE programs, the work of ensuring their success truly begins. Many students face a range of systemic and situational barriers that extend beyond access – challenges such as inconsistent academic support, varied learning styles, limited exposure to career planning, inadequate accommodations, and a lack of culturally responsive instruction. Without intentional design and sustained support, these barriers can hinder progress and lead to disengagement, underperformance, or early exit from the CTE program if not addressed throughout the service delivery lifecycle.

Promising practices are emerging across the country to address these challenges. Teachers are working collaboratively with counselors and support staff to co-develop personalized learning and career plans that reflect students' lived experiences and goals. The integration of project-based learning, culturally relevant pedagogy, and flexible instructional formats that accommodate various learning strengths and life circumstances are some of the engagement efforts for optimal learning and program persistence. When students see themselves reflected in the content and feel supported by their instructors, their engagement and achievement increase significantly.



Mitigate Academic Barriers for Special Populations in CTE

Providing academic supports to special population students in CTE programs is essential to ensuring access to learning and career readiness for all learners. Students that identify as belonging to one or more special populations often encounter unique challenges that can hinder their academic success and skill development. Many of these were discussed in Phase 2 of this toolkit. By implementing targeted interventions such as differentiated instruction, assistive technologies, flexible scheduling, and personalized learning plans, educators can help mitigate these barriers. Creating inclusive learning environments that recognize and respond to diverse needs not only promotes student achievement but also empowers all learners to thrive in both academic and workforce settings.

- Develop individualized learning plans. Individualized learning plans can be customized to a student's strengths, needs, interests, and career aspirations, as well as specific services needed to successfully transition and advance toward college, career, and life goals. Individualized plans can also help with:
 - Coordinating support services and accommodations to students through collaboration with educators, families, and partners.
 - Monitoring student progress and adjusting plans to ensure academic and vocational success.
- Develop differentiated instruction for CTE courses to support the varied learning styles of special population students. Differentiated instruction approaches tailor teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles, abilities, and interests. This may include:
 - Using varied instructional materials (visuals, hands-on activities, simplified texts) to enhance accessibility.
 - Providing multiple ways for students to demonstrate understanding (projects, presentations, written work).

PHASE 4 | PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE AND CUSTOMIZED SUPPORTS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

- Utilize assistive tools and technologies to support student learning, like speech-to-text software, screen readers, and adaptive devices that support and scaffold student learning. Tools and technologies like these can enhance access to curriculum for students with physical, sensory, or cognitive challenges, and promote independence and engagement through personalized tech solutions.
- Institute flexible scheduling, when possible. Offer alternative class times, extended deadlines, or modified pacing to meet individual needs. Flexible scheduling can support students and families with balancing school and WBL opportunities with personal matters of health or family.
- Provide customized academic support (directly or through partners).
 - Engage WIOA Youth Title I partners through local workforce development boards who can enrich CTE participation through supplemental funding supports as well as supply occupational job training and career counseling.
 - Connect all students with internal and external tutoring resources and supports to enhance learning, comprehension, and applicability of course content to career opportunities and life skills.
- Identify and secure grants available to help reduce academic expenses related to course fees, equipment acquisition, certification examinations, prerequisite requirements, laboratory costs, and licensing fees.
- **Engage families and communities in special population student experiences.** Parents, families, community and faith leaders, and many others have influence over students and their chosen education and career pathways. In Phase 3, we discussed utilizing these influencers—in addition to teachers and counselors—to promote the opportunities that a CTE education presents to special population students both in high school and in post-secondary education and employment. Research has demonstrated that family and community engagement in a student's education experience translates to both short- and long-term benefits related to both program quality and student outcomes.

CONNECT WITH KEY PARTNERS

Get to know WIOA Youth Title I resources and job opportunities by exploring [KANSASWORKS](#).

[Find your closest KANSASWORKS Workforce Center](#) and reach out to engage if you are not already.

FOR MORE ON FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN A STUDENT'S EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Check out this comprehensive "[Engaging Families and Communities to Support Special and Underserved Populations in CTE](#)" guide from the [Association for Career and Technical Education \(ACTE\)](#), originally created in collaboration with [AdvanceCTE](#).

Special Considerations by Population

Population(s) of Focus	Strategy/Approach
<i>English Language Learners</i>	Career pathways can be improved by utilizing native language skills and existing funds of knowledge, reducing extra course requirements, and minimizing missed CTE opportunities. The use of postsecondary-approved or industry-recognized credentials that support native languages is recommended. • KSDE Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines • Kansas Seal of Biliteracy Poster Additional examples include Spanish-language certification exams for ServSafe, OSHA, Entrepreneurship, and Microsoft Office Specialist.
<i>Individuals with Disabilities</i>	Need fresh ideas for instructional support, do a web search of curriculum guides or use AI responsibly to get a head start on modification and accommodations. The CTE Technical Assistance Center of NY has a repository of instructional guidance across 14 career clusters.
<i>Youth from Military Families</i>	Assist students in accessing complimentary online tutoring and homework support services. Access free support through https://military.tutor.com/home.
<i>Students Experiencing Homelessness</i>	As noted in ADVANCE CTE, designate secure storage spaces for personal belongings or offer dedicated areas for quiet study.
<i>Out-of-Workforce Youth and Economically Disadvantaged Youth</i>	Counselors, AVID coaches, and support specialists advise and prepare students on durable skills for personal and workplace readiness, drawing from students' volunteer, unpaid, or community experiences. See Developing Professional Skills in CTE Toolkit: A Toolkit for Student Skill Development.



Mitigate Non-Academic Barriers for Special Populations in CTE

Before any student can engage in meaningful learning, their foundational needs must be met. These needs include things like physical well-being (such as adequate sleep, nutrition, and safety), emotional security (feeling respected, valued, and supported), and a sense of belonging within their learning environment. Students also need access to appropriate resources. When these conditions are in place, students are more likely to be motivated, focused, and ready to participate actively in their education.

Because CTE students identified as belonging to a special population may have an increased probability of experiencing non-academic barriers, steps should be taken by districts to identify potential non-academic barriers to success in CTE programs (in Phase 1) and address them through connection to various internal and external partners and resources. In this section, we highlight some of the common barriers and identify potential high-level solutions to address them.

- Transportation Challenges
 - Barrier: Lack of reliable transportation to attend classes or work-based learning opportunities.

PHASE 4 | PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE AND CUSTOMIZED SUPPORTS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

- Solution: Provide bus passes, carpool programs, or school-sponsored transportation options.
- Childcare Responsibilities
 - Barrier: Students who are parents may struggle to find affordable childcare.
 - Solution: Offer on-site childcare (at school or employer facilities), partner with local providers, or provide childcare subsidies.
- Financial Hardship
 - Barrier: Inability to afford tuition, supplies, uniforms, certification fees, or event registration fees, as applicable.
 - Solution: Offer scholarships, grants, emergency funds, and access to financial aid counseling.
- Housing Instability
 - Barrier: Homelessness or unstable living conditions can disrupt attendance and focus.
 - Solution: Connect students with housing assistance programs and community resources.
- Mental Health & Emotional Well-being
 - Barrier: Stress, trauma, or mental health issues may hinder academic engagement.
 - Solution: Provide access to school counselors, mental health services, and peer support groups.
- Language Barriers
 - Barrier: English language learners may struggle with communication and comprehension.
 - Solution: Offer bilingual support staff, ESL programs, and translated materials in classrooms and on WBL employer sites.
- Disability-Related Accessibility
 - Barrier: Students with physical, cognitive, or learning disabilities may face access issues.
 - Solution: Ensure ADA compliance, provide accommodations, and offer assistive technologies.
- Lack of Family or Community Support
 - Barrier: Students may lack encouragement or understanding from family/community.
 - Solution: Engage families through outreach, mentorship programs, and community partnerships.
- Limited Awareness of Resources
 - Barrier: Students may not know what support services are available.
 - Solution: Conduct orientations, create resource guides, and assign dedicated support staff.

CONNECT WITH KEY PARTNERS

Get to know the resources available through regional partners like regional workforce boards, who often support youth and adults with funding, services, and referrals to partner resources and might be able to help CTE and district leaders serve special populations in CTE.

Find your closest [KANSASWORKS Workforce Center](#) and reach out to engage if you are not already.

Case Study

Leveraging Electronic Portfolios for Student Mobility and Success

Jasmine, a junior in the business administration pathway at Meadow Valley High School, faced an unexpected challenge when she learned her family would be moving out of state due to her parents' active military duty. Jasmine was anxious about losing access to her school's electronic portfolio, which documented her academic progress, work-based learning achievements, and volunteer work at a local insurance office, especially since she was close to taking her first bookkeeping certification exam. Although the school had an electronic portfolio system, it was only accessible while students remained in the district, and a student-owned online version had not yet been implemented in practice.

Recognizing the urgency of Jasmine's situation, the school team promptly helped Jasmine transfer all documentation of her academic achievements, employability and technical skills, growth opportunities, and work experiences from the school portfolio into a Google Drive folder under her personal account. This comprehensive portfolio included her school records, interest surveys, skill assessments, practice test scores, and employer feedback on her work performance. This ensured Jasmine could continue to showcase her achievements and advocate for credit at her new school. The experience highlighted a critical gap in the school's systems and prompted the team to meet weekly until they developed a standardized operating procedure to provide every student with a portable online portfolio, rolling out the new process for all learners the following quarter. This proactive approach not only supported Jasmine's transition but strengthened the school's commitment to student mobility and career readiness.

1. How did Jasmine's upcoming move highlight gaps in the school's electronic portfolio system, and what risks did this pose for her academic and career progress?
2. Why is it important for students to have personal, portable access to their academic, work-based learning, technical, and employability records, especially when navigating transitions such as relocation? What other situations might students face where having their own digital portfolio would be beneficial?

PHASE 4 | PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE AND CUSTOMIZED SUPPORTS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

3. What steps did the school team take to ensure Jasmine's achievements and experiences were preserved and transferable, and how did this support her confidence during the transition?
4. How can standardized procedures for student-owned online portfolios benefit all learners, not just those who move frequently? What other types of standardized procedures do you feel could improve the student CTE experience?
5. What additional strategies could schools implement to support students in documenting and advocating for their skills and experiences during major life changes? What systems are currently in place to allow for student's voices to be heard?

For additional helpful resources and links, visit Appendix B: External Resource and Reference Compendium.

Appendix A. Toolkit Resources

Appendix A contains a variety of toolkit resources referenced throughout the toolkit. Where these tools were inspired by an existing tool or tools, those tools are referenced.

Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in CTE

Tool 1: Guidance for Accessing and Collecting Student Demographic Data

Your district can access various data sources either directly or by sending an email to the KIDS Data Manager in your district. The information below is meant to help district or school CTE leaders access the data needed to analyze special population student involvement and success in CTE.

Accessing Data Directly

Data can be accessed by logging in to the [KSDE Web Applications site](#). If you do not already have access to the “Pathways” portion of this site, you may need to request that your Superintendent provides you with access.

Data can be found in the following locations.

- Total Student Enrollment can be found on the [KSDE Data Central, Kansas Building Report Card](#).
 - Individuals with Disabilities percentage can be found on the KSDE Data Central > Kansas Building Report Card > tab for Other Results > District IDEA State Performance Plan > under Select a Report > Special Education Prevalence Data. On the Excel document, scroll to the right for “Total Prevalence - IDEA.”
 - Race / Ethnicity / National Origin district percentages can be accessed on the district accountability report.
 - Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, Gender and English Learner percentages can, unfortunately, only be accessed via your district student management system (PowerSchool, Skyward, etc.) Hopefully, the demographic data will be posted on KSDE Data Central soon.
- Find the Percentage Currently Enrolled in CTE Courses by accessing your KSDE Web Applications > “Pathways” data (Personnel will need approval for access.) > Reports > Student Status, Minority & Gender Report. Once you download the report, look at the first line for the Total non-duplicated count numbers.
- NOTE: The CAR report on the KSDE Web Applications page for Pathway Reports also lists the total numbers of students of special populations enrolled in CTE Courses. KSDE Web Applications > “Pathways” data (Personnel will need approval for access) > Reports > CAR Report.

Reaching Out to Your District Data Coordinator

The following language can be used to ask your district data coordinator (KIDS Database) or building administrator for student data relevant to understanding student demographics.

Example outreach:

Our team is undergoing an exercise to analyze CTE course participation by Perkins V “special populations.” Could you help us in obtaining the following data?

- *The percentage of our high school students that have an IEP for special education.*
- *The percentage of our high school students that are categorized as ESL / ESOL.*
- *The percentage of our high school students by collected race, ethnicity, and national origin demographic categories.*
- *The percentage of our high school students that are categorized as coming from economically disadvantaged families.*
- *The percent of our high school students that identify as male and female.*

Simple Data Capture Chart

Data Element	Total	Gender	Race / Ethnicity / National Origin	Individuals w/ Disabilities	English Learners	Individuals from Economically Disadvantaged Families
<i>Data Year</i>						
<i>Total Percent of Student Enrollment</i>		Male				
		Female				
<i>Percentage Currently Enrolled in CTE Courses (# / total unduplicated count)</i>		Male				
		Female				

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Data Element	Total	Gender		Race / Ethnicity / National Origin	Individuals w/ Disabilities	English Learners	Individuals from Economically Disadvantaged Families
Data Year							
Total Percent of Student Enrollment		Male					
		Female					
Percentage Currently Enrolled in CTE Courses (# / total unduplicated count)		Male					
		Female					
Data Year							
Total Percent of Student Enrollment		Male					
		Female					
Percentage Currently Enrolled in CTE Courses (# / total unduplicated count)		Male					
		Female					

Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in CTE

Tool 2: Action Planning Template

The action planning template is provided to support identification of school district continuous improvement strategies associated with recruiting and supporting special populations in CTE programs. The format below aligns to the four phases of this toolkit and high-level approaches associated with each phase. CTE leaders are encouraged to use this action planning template to further detail the actions required to implement identified improvements, assign timelines and responsibilities, and monitor progress toward successful implementation.

Phase 1: Use Data and Elevate Stakeholder Voices to Understand Special Population Needs and Opportunities

Associated Approaches	What improvements are needed?	How will we get there?	How long will this take?	Who is responsible?	How will we know we are successful?
<i>Reflective of the approaches presented in this toolkit. Add more as needed.</i>	<i>Provide detail.</i>	<i>What specific strategies or steps are required to implement this strategy?</i>	<i>Assign a timeline.</i>	<i>Individual/ org accountable</i>	<i>Describe success.</i>
<i>Access and Analyze Education and Demographic Data to Understand CTE Participants</i>					

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Associated Approaches	What improvements are needed?	How will we get there?	How long will this take?	Who is responsible?	How will we know we are successful?
<i>Reflective of the approaches presented in this toolkit. Add more as needed.</i>	<i>Provide detail.</i>	<i>What specific strategies or steps are required to implement this strategy?</i>	<i>Assign a timeline.</i>	<i>Individual/ org accountable</i>	<i>Describe success.</i>
<i>Elevate Student, Parent, Teacher, and Counselor Voices to Understand Challenges and Opportunities</i>					
<i>Identify and Track Potential Academic and Non-Academic Barriers and Opportunities for Improvement</i>					

Phase 2: Plan Quality Programming for All Students and Ensure Organizational Capacity to Deliver

Associated Approaches	What improvements are needed?	How will we get there?	How long will this take?	Who is responsible?	How will we know we are successful?
<i>Reflective of the approaches presented in this toolkit. Add more as needed.</i>	<i>Provide detail.</i>	<i>What specific strategies or steps are required to implement this strategy?</i>	<i>Assign a timeline.</i>	<i>Individual/ org accountable</i>	<i>Describe success.</i>
<i>Include Relevant Stakeholder Voices in Program and Curriculum Development</i>					
<i>Ensure Staffing Structures and Capacity to Support All Students</i>					

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Associated Approaches	What improvements are needed?	How will we get there?	How long will this take?	Who is responsible?	How will we know we are successful?
<i>Reflective of the approaches presented in this toolkit. Add more as needed.</i>	<i>Provide detail.</i>	<i>What specific strategies or steps are required to implement this strategy?</i>	<i>Assign a timeline.</i>	<i>Individual/ org accountable</i>	<i>Describe success.</i>
<i>Provide Staff and Partner Professional Development to Support Special Populations</i>					
<i>Provide Access to Quality Work-Based Learning, Career-Connected Learning, and CTSO Experiences for All Students</i>					

Phase 3: Engage in Inclusive Outreach, Recruitment, and Enrollment of Special Populations

Associated Approaches	What improvements are needed?	How will we get there?	How long will this take?	Who is responsible?	How will we know we are successful?
<i>Reflective of the approaches presented in this toolkit. Add more as needed.</i>	Provide detail.	What specific strategies or steps are required to implement this strategy?	Assign a timeline.	Individual/ org accountable	Describe success.
<i>Craft Comprehensive and Effective Messaging</i>					
<i>Leverage Trusted Partners to Recruit (and Later Support) Special Populations in CTE</i>					

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Associated Approaches	What improvements are needed?	How will we get there?	How long will this take?	Who is responsible?	How will we know we are successful?
<i>Reflective of the approaches presented in this toolkit. Add more as needed.</i>	Provide detail.	What specific strategies or steps are required to implement this strategy?	Assign a timeline.	Individual/ org accountable	Describe success.
<i>Identify the Right Communications Channels and Engagement Strategies</i>					
<i>Mitigate Barriers to Entry and Enrollment</i>					

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Phase 4: Provide Comprehensive and Customized Supports for Student Success

Associated Approaches	What improvements are needed?	How will we get there?	How long will this take?	Who is responsible?	How will we know we are successful?
<i>Reflective of the approaches presented in this toolkit. Add more as needed.</i>	Provide detail.	What specific strategies or steps are required to implement this strategy?	Assign a timeline.	Individual/ org accountable	Describe success.
<i>Mitigate Academic Barriers for Special Populations in CTE</i>					
<i>Mitigate Non-Academic Barriers for Special Populations in CTE</i>					

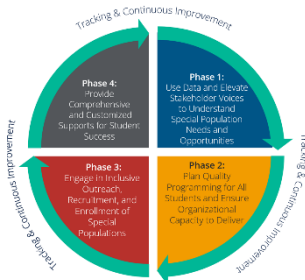
Recruiting and Supporting Special Populations in CTE

Tool 3: Focus Group Sample Questions for Students

These focus group questions for CTE learners are designed to uncover their experiences, particularly regarding barriers, challenges, and opportunity gaps, as well as supports and relationships that address these issues. State and local leaders might select a subset of these questions per student interaction to avoid overwhelming participants. *This tool was adapted from content in Advance CTE's [Learner Voice in CTE Toolkit](#) (see p. 49).*

CTE DECISION MAKING	CTE EXPERIENCE
1. Tell me about your decision to enroll in this CTE program. What led to you choosing to enroll in this program? 2. How did you find out about this CTE program? What kind of reputation does it have locally? 3. Who was involved in your decision-making process for enrolling in this CTE program? Who helped you make this decision? 4. What, if any, roadblocks did you encounter when enrolling in this CTE program? How could we make enrolling easier? 5. What, if any, potential concerns did you have before enrolling? 6. In your mind, what made this program the right option for you? 7. If you were giving advice to a friend or sibling who is thinking of enrolling in this program, what advice would you give? 8. What is the best way to attract learners like you to CTE who are not already participating in CTE?	1. What have you enjoyed about this CTE program? What have you gained from this CTE program? 2. What has made you feel welcome, supported or valued in your CTE program? 3. What has been challenging or frustrating in your CTE program? 4. What has made you feel uncomfortable, marginalized or discriminated against in your CTE program? 5. What do you know now that you wish you had known when first making the decision to enroll? 6. What would this program look like at its best? What could this program do more of? Less of? 7. How can I, as an instructor/counselor/administrator/state leader, improve your CTE experience? 8. Imagine you could change the way that growth and success is measured in CTE. What would growth or improvement look like for you as a CTE learner? What would success look like for you?

Appendix B. External Resource and Reference Compendium



Global Resources

The following are additional resources aimed at engaging and supporting special populations in CTE and may be valuable tools to supplement this guide. They were also consulted as part of a rapid literature scan to inform the creation of this toolkit.

- [Engaging Families and Communities to Support Special and Underserved Populations in CTE](#). This [Association for Career and Technical Education \(ACTE\)](#) resource focuses on ways that CTE leaders and educators can communicate and collaborate with underrepresented and special population students' families and communities to support their success in CTE programs.
- Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's "[Recruiting Special Populations into Career-Technical Education An Ohio Department of Education Toolkit](#)." Also created in partnership with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), this resource served as inspiration for this toolkit and provides similar approaches to recruiting and supporting special populations in CTE.
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Education's "[Strategies for Serving Special Population Students in CTE](#)." This comprehensive guide from Pennsylvania serves a very similar purpose to this toolkit and can be consulted for additional approaches and actionable strategies.
- "[Strategies for Special Population Success: Practical Tips and Tools for Educators](#)." This resource from the [National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity \(NAPE\)](#) offers targeted guidance and evidence-based practices designed to help educators support the enrollment, persistence, and achievement of special populations in CTE programs.



Kansas Statewide, Regional, and District Resources

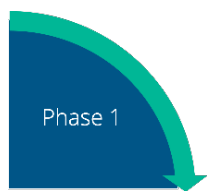
This section highlights statewide and regional resources designed to support and engage special populations in Career and Technical Education (CTE). It includes resource guides, policy guidance, reports, and various tools for successfully building and implementing CTE and CTSO programming in Kansas.

- The [2025-2026 KSDE CTE Resource Guide](#) provides Kansas educators and administrators with current policies, strategies, and resources to effectively support CTE programs, especially for special populations. It is organized for easy navigation and offers practical guidance for maximizing access and opportunities for all students in career and technical education. The guide targets school and district leaders, educators, and partners working to improve student success in CTE pathways.
- Advance CTE's [Kansas Fast Facts](#) highlights key statistics and essential information about CTE in Kansas, offering a quick and accessible overview for educators, administrators, and policymakers.
- [Kansas Career Cluster Guidance Handbook, 2026-2027](#) outlines guidance on career clusters for Kansas educators and partners, offering resources and strategies to support special populations in CTE.
- [Kansas Commerce: Workforce Services in Kansas](#) provides a comprehensive overview of programs and resources available to support workforce development, career readiness, and employment opportunities across the state.
- [Kansas Department for Children and Families](#) offers a comprehensive range of services to support children, families, and vulnerable individuals across the state, including specialized vocational rehabilitation programs that help people with disabilities achieve employment, independence, and self-sufficiency through counseling, training, job placement, and ongoing support.
- The [Kansas Department of Labor](#) provides resources on workforce trends, employment statistics, labor market information, and guidance for job seekers and employers. These tools support career planning, workforce development, and informed decision-making for students, educators, and businesses in Kansas.
- [Kansas High Demand Occupations](#) identifies industries and job roles in Kansas with strong current and projected employment needs, guiding students, job seekers, and educators toward career pathways aligned with workforce demand.
- [Kansas Regents Degree Stats](#) is an online tool that offers data and insights on degree program outcomes, including graduation rates, employment trends, and earnings for graduates from Kansas public universities, helping students and educators make informed decisions about postsecondary education.
- [Kansas State DOE Building Report Card](#) is an educational data site providing insights to support continuous improvement in schools and districts across the state.
- [Kansas Work-Based Learning: Personalized Learning Plan Guidance](#) helps educators create tailored learning plans that connect students' academic and career goals with real-world work experiences, supporting skill development and readiness for future success.
- [KSDE Can Star Recognition Program: Individual Plan of Study Rubric](#) is a tool to assess and recognize excellence in the creation and implementation of Individual Plans of Study for students. This rubric helps educators ensure that personalized academic and career planning meets high standards, supports student success, and aligns with the goals of the Can Star Recognition Program.

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- [KSDE Career Ready Practices and CTE Course Competencies](#) provide Kansas educators with detailed frameworks and measurable standards that outline the essential skills, knowledge, and behaviors students must develop to succeed in specific CTE pathways, ensuring alignment with state workforce needs and postsecondary goals.
- [KSDE CTE Reports](#) are essential tools that provide Kansas educators and administrators with up-to-date information, data, and insights on CTE programs.
- [KSDE District Accountability Report](#) provides detailed data and performance metrics on Kansas school districts, supporting transparency, continuous improvement, and informed decision-making for educators, families, and communities.
- [KSDE Employability Skills: Measuring and Reflecting Student Learning](#) is a framework designed to assess and showcase students' development of essential workforce skills, helping educators track progress and prepare learners for real-world career success. This approach emphasizes continuous reflection and documentation of employability skill growth throughout the educational journey.
- [KSDE Fact Sheet: CTE Policy on Combining Funding Eligible CTE Courses](#) provides a concise overview of Kansas CTE policies that explains how eligible courses can be funded together to maximize resources and expand opportunities for students.
- [KSDE Fact Sheet: Kansas Graduation Requirements](#) is an overview of the updated state graduation criteria, outlining the coursework and competencies that Kansas students must meet starting with the graduating class of 2028.
- [KSDE Individual Plan of Study Scope and Sequence \(Preschool – Grade 12\)](#) is a comprehensive framework that guides Kansas students through personalized academic and career planning from early childhood through high school graduation. This tool helps educators, students, and families align coursework and experiences with future goals, ensuring each student is prepared for postsecondary success.
- [KSDE Students' Right to Know](#) is an initiative that ensures Kansas students have access to clear, accurate information about educational programs, career pathways, and outcomes to support informed decision-making throughout their academic journey.
- The [Piper High School Capstone Handbook](#) provides students, faculty, and parents with a detailed guide to the requirements and procedures of the 2025–2026 Capstone program. This handbook offers a thorough overview of expectations, timelines, and the available resources designed to
- The [2026 Sample Digital Portfolio \(USD 266\)](#) is an example portfolio template developed by Maize Unified School District 266 to showcase student work, achievements, and growth throughout their academic journey. This digital tool provides an organized platform for students to collect, reflect on, and present evidence of their learning, skills, and career readiness, supporting both academic and career and career and technical education (CTE) pathways.

Phase 1 Resources



Resources to Support Understanding Special Populations and Their Needs and Opportunities

The following additional resources may further aid districts and schools in their Phase 1 activities. Many of these resources are cited throughout this toolkit and/or served as inspiration for its creation. Note that resources are listed in alphabetic order, not order of importance.

- [Achieving the Dream, Knowing Our Students](#) focuses on data-driven strategies to better understand and meet the unique needs of diverse student populations in education.
- [A Framework for Effectively Partnering with Young People](#) presents actionable strategies for building meaningful partnerships with youth in educational settings, ensuring their voices and perspectives are central in program development and decision-making.
- [CTE: Using Data to Identify and Address CTE Opportunity Gaps Participant Workbook](#) is an Arizona Department of Education resource that presents data-driven strategies to uncover and address gaps in CTE opportunities for special populations. It provides actionable tools for planning, tracking progress, and prioritizing next steps, with a focus on increasing participation and success among special populations.
- [Engaging Families and Communities to Support Special and Underserved Populations in CTE](#). This [Association for Career and Technical Education \(ACTE\)](#) resource focuses on ways that CTE leaders and educators can communicate and collaborate with underrepresented and special population students' families and communities to support their success in CTE programs.
- [Kansas CTE Reports](#) provides comprehensive data and reporting tools to support career and technical education (CTE) planning, analysis, and improvement efforts across the state.
- [KSDE District Accountability Report](#) provides detailed data and performance metrics on Kansas school districts, supporting transparency, continuous improvement, and informed decision-making for educators, families, and communities.
- Advance CTE's [Kansas Fast Facts](#) highlights key statistics and essential information about CTE in Kansas, offering a quick and accessible overview for educators, administrators, and policymakers.
- [Kansas Report Card](#) provides data insights to support continuous improvement in schools and districts across the state.
- [Kansas State DOE Building Report Card](#) is an educational data site providing insights to support continuous improvement in schools and districts across the state.
- [Kansas State Dept. of Education IPS Student Summary](#) provides an overview of each student's Individual Plan of Study, highlighting personalized academic and career goals, progress, and alignment with state educational standards to support post-secondary success.
- [National Student Clearing House Data Resources](#) presents various solutions for educational institutions and organizations to help learners improve their lives through furthering their knowledge and advancing their

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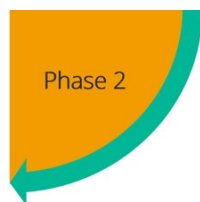
career opportunities. The site provides resources focused on compliance, data, learner insights, and program administration.

- [With Learners, Not for Learners: A Toolkit for Elevating Learner Voice in CTE](#), a resource from Advance CTE and ACTE, empowers educators to actively involve students in CTE program design and implementation, emphasizing learner voice and shared decision-making.

In addition, the following additional resources may further aid districts and schools in their tracking and continuous improvement activities aligned to the data collection and analysis and stakeholder feedback loops discussed in Phase 1.

- Explore common approaches to continuous improvement, like Lean Six Sigma's [DMAIC Process](#).
- [Non-traditional Career Preparation: Root Causes and Strategies](#), from NAPE, offers evidence-based strategies for CTE professionals preparing students for non-traditional careers in secondary and post-secondary education.
- [Root Causes and Strategies: A Call to Action](#) is a resource from NAPE that examines the underlying factors impacting nontraditional career preparation and provides evidence-based strategies and recommendations for CTE professionals.

Phase 2 Resources



Resources to Support Planning Quality Programming and Ensuring Organizational Capacity

The following resources may further aid districts and schools in their Phase 2 activities. Many of these resources are cited throughout this toolkit and/or served as inspiration for its creation. Note that resources are listed in alphabetic order, not order of importance.

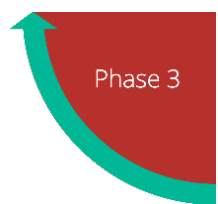
- [A Framework for Effectively Partnering with Young People](#) presents actionable strategies for building meaningful partnerships with youth in educational settings, ensuring their voices and perspectives are central in program development and decision-making.
- [Assistive Technology for Kansans \(ATK\)](#) provides access to tools and devices that enhance learning, communication, and independence for individuals with disabilities across Kansas.
- [Career Pathway Readiness Benchmarks](#) is a Tableau Public data platform provided by the U.S. Department of Labor designed to help districts and schools measure and monitor students' preparedness for career pathways. This visual tool enables educators to create and publicly share real-time data, track progress, identify areas for improvement, and support students in developing essential skills and knowledge aligned with workforce needs and post-secondary goals.
- [CTE Equity: Strategies, Promising Practices, and Resources](#), from Trailblazers, Career and Technical Education in Virginia, is a collection of promising, helpful, and comprehensive strategies, practices, and resources that address the needs of special populations in CTE.
- [CTE Technical Assistance Center of NY](#) includes professional toolkits, practical guides, videos on supporting special populations, and comprehensive frameworks for developing employability skills as well as access to information essential for career success.
- [Existing Models of ELL Teaching: Which is the Most Effective?](#) analyzes different instructional methods for teaching English Language Learners, presenting evidence on their effectiveness and offering practical insights for educators.
- [Instructional Models and Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners](#) offers an overview of various instructional models and strategies tailored to the needs of English Language Learners, with actionable examples and guidance for classroom implementation.
- The [Kansas Department of Labor](#) provides resources on workforce trends, employment statistics, labor market information, and guidance for job seekers and employers. These tools support career planning, workforce development, and informed decision-making for students, educators, and businesses in Kansas.
- [Kansas High Demand Occupations](#) highlights occupations in Kansas with the greatest demand, guiding CTE program development and student career planning toward high-growth sectors.
- [Kansas Work-Based Learning: Personalized Learning Plan](#) Guidance helps educators create tailored learning plans that connect students' academic and career goals with real-world work experiences, supporting skill development and readiness for future success.
- [KSDE Can Star Recognition Program: Individual Plan of Study Rubric](#) is a tool to assess and recognize excellence in the creation and implementation of Individual Plans of Study for students. This rubric helps

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educators ensure that personalized academic and career planning meets high standards, supports student success, and aligns with the goals of the Can Star Recognition Program.

- [KSDE Career Ready Practices and CTE Course Competencies](#) provide Kansas educators with detailed frameworks and measurable standards that outline the essential skills, knowledge, and behaviors students must develop to succeed in specific CTE pathways, ensuring alignment with state workforce needs and postsecondary goals.
- [Non-traditional Career Preparation: Root Causes and Strategies](#) is a literature review from NAPE offering evidence-based strategies for CTE professionals preparing students for nontraditional careers in secondary and post-secondary education.
- [Organizational Training and Technical Assistance on Individuals with Disabilities](#) provides training and technical support to organizations, helping them better serve individuals with disabilities and create inclusive educational environments.
- [Project GLAD](#) (Guided Language Acquisition Design) provides a structured, research-based approach to language development for multilingual learners, including sample lesson plans and classroom strategies.
- [Teacher Education Reinvented. An Asset-Based Approach to Education: What It Is and Why It Matters](#) provides educators with practical strategies to recognize and build upon the unique strengths of every student. By emphasizing an asset-based perspective, it supports the development of CTE environments where special populations are empowered to succeed.
- [What Parents and Students Need to Know](#) offers essential information for parents and students about CTE pathways, program benefits, and opportunities for success in postsecondary education and careers.
- [With Learners, Not for Learners: A Toolkit for Elevating Learner Voice in CTE](#), a resource from Advance CTE and ACTE, empowers educators to actively involve students in CTE program design and implementation, emphasizing learner voice and shared decision-making.

Phase 3 Resources



Resources to Support Outreach Recruitment, and Enrollment of Special Populations

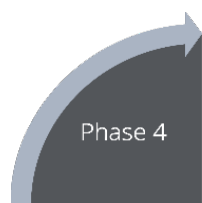
The following additional resources may further aid districts and schools in their Phase 3 activities. Many of these resources are cited throughout this toolkit and/or served as inspiration for its creation. Note that resources are listed in alphabetic order, not order of importance.

- [ACTE: Strategies to Support Special Populations in CTE](#) guides and provides actionable strategies to help educators recruit, retain, and support learners from special populations.
- [ACTE: Supporting Military-Connected Learners in CTE](#) offers strategies and best practices for educators to effectively recruit, support, and retain students from military families in Career and Technical Education programs. It provides guidance on addressing the unique challenges faced by military-connected learners and ensuring their success in CTE pathways.
- [Advance CTE Fact Sheets](#) are concise information sheets offering key data and best practices for engaging and serving special populations in CTE programs.
- [Advance CTE: Engaging Representatives of Learners with Special Population Status through Perkins V](#) is a resource that offers strategies and best practices for involving representatives of special population learners in CTE program planning and implementation.
- [ADVANCE CTE: Making Good on the Promise](#) provides strategies, best practices, and policy recommendations to help educators and leaders ensure that all learners, especially those from special populations, can fully participate in and benefit from high-quality CTE opportunities.
- [Advance CTE's Recruitment and Engagement Tool](#) offers practical guidance for developing effective communication and outreach strategies tailored to diverse audiences.
- [CTE Prep for Students with Disabilities](#) is a video designed to help educators and program leaders effectively support students with disabilities in Career and Technical Education. It provides guidance, strategies, and practical tools to promote inclusion and success in CTE pathways.
- [Disability Rights Center for Kansas: Service Maps](#) houses interactive maps and resources to help individuals locate disability services and advocacy organizations throughout Kansas.
- [Kansas Department for Children and Families](#) offers a comprehensive range of services to support children, families, and vulnerable individuals across the state, including specialized vocational rehabilitation programs that help people with disabilities achieve employment, independence, and self-sufficiency through counseling, training, job placement, and ongoing support.
- [Maximizing Access and Success for Special Populations: Wraparound Supports \(video\)](#) is a video from Advance CTE highlighting comprehensive support services designed to ensure access and student success in CTE.
- [Nash County Public Schools: CTE Mobile Career Exploration Lab](#) showcases an innovative mobile lab designed to bring hands-on career and technical education experiences directly to students.

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- [Practical Tips and Tools for Educators](#) offers concise strategies and resources to help educators effectively support and engage special population learners in Career and Technical Education programs.
- [State Strategies to Expand CTE Program Recruitment and Support for Learners with Disabilities](#), from Advance CTE, provides strategies and resources to help educators support career and technical education for students with disabilities.
- [With Learners, Not for Learners: A Toolkit for Elevating Learner Voice in CTE](#), a resource from Advance CTE and ACTE, empowers educators to actively involve students in CTE program design and implementation, emphasizing learner voice and shared decision-making.

Phase 4 Resources



Resources to Support Comprehensive and Customized Services to Support Student Success in CTE

The following additional resources may further aid districts and schools in their Phase 4 activities. Many of these resources are cited throughout this toolkit and/or served as inspiration for its creation. Note that resources are listed in alphabetic order, not order of importance.

- [A Guide to Career & Technical Student Organizations](#), from KSDE, provides an overview of CTSOs, their value, and the opportunities available in Kansas.
- [Achieving the Dream, Knowing Our Students](#) focuses on data-driven strategies to better understand and meet the unique needs of diverse student populations in education.
- [Assistive Technology for Kansans \(ATK\)](#) provides access to tools and devices that enhance learning, communication, and independence for individuals with disabilities across Kansas.
- [CTE Equity: Strategies, Promising Practices, and Resources](#), from Trailblazers, Career and Technical Education in Virginia, is a collection of promising, helpful, and comprehensive strategies, practices, and resources that address the needs of special populations in CTE.
- [CTE Policy on Combining Funding Eligible CTE Courses](#) provides an overview of Kansas CTE policies that explains how eligible courses can be funded together to maximize resources and expand opportunities for students.
- [CTE Prep for Students with Disabilities](#) is a video designed to help educators and program leaders effectively support students with disabilities in Career and Technical Education. It provides guidance, strategies, and practical tools to promote inclusion and success in CTE pathways.
- [CTE Technical Assistance Center of NY](#) includes professional toolkits, practical guides, videos on supporting special populations, and comprehensive frameworks for developing employability skills as well as access to information essential for career success.
- [Developing Professional Skills in CTE Toolkit: A Toolkit for Student Skill Development](#) outlines strategies and activities for students to build professional skills essential for CTE success.
- [Disability Rights Center for Kansas: Service Maps](#) houses Interactive maps and resources to help individuals locate disability services and advocacy organizations throughout Kansas.
- [Engaging Families and Communities to Support Special and Underserved Populations in CTE](#) is a comprehensive guide from the [Association for Career and Technical Education \(ACTE\)](#), originally created in collaboration with [Advance CTE](#), that focuses on the impact of community and family involvement in the educational success of special populations in CTE programs.
- [Family Guide: Focus on Transition to Adulthood](#) provides families with practical strategies and information to support youth as they transition from school to adult life, including post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.

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- [Family Tools on Life Planning](#) helps families and students plan for the future by addressing key areas such as financial planning, goal setting, and navigating adult services to ensure a smooth transition to adulthood.
- [HIREPATHS](#) is a career exploration platform designed to help students discover diverse pathways to employment, offering resources and information on in-demand industries, job requirements, and educational opportunities.
- [Individual Plans of Study for College and Career Readiness and Success](#) outlines a personalized approach for students to map out their educational pathways, career interests, and skill development, helping them prepare for postsecondary education and workforce entry.
- [Job Accommodation Network \(Ask Jan\) for Employers](#) offers employers expert guidance and resources on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues to foster hiring and retention practices that benefit everyone.
- [KSDE Can Star Recognition Program: Individual Plan of Study Rubric](#) is a tool to assess and recognize excellence in the creation and implementation of Individual Plans of Study for students. This rubric helps educators ensure that personalized academic and career planning meets high standards, supports student success, and aligns with the goals of the Can Star Recognition Program.
- [KSDE Employability Skills: Measuring and Reflecting Student Learning](#) is a framework designed to assess and showcase students' development of essential workforce skills, helping educators track progress and prepare learners for real-world career success. This approach emphasizes continuous reflection and documentation of employability skill growth throughout the educational journey.
- [Learning Source, CTE and Soft Skills: Preparing Students for Workplace Success](#) highlights strategies for integrating soft skills and employability training within Career and Technical Education programs to better prepare students for success in the modern workforce.
- [Make a Difference for Special Population Students: Practical Tips and Tools for Educators](#) is a resource providing educators with actionable strategies and practical tools to effectively support and empower CTE special populations.
- [Maximizing Access and Success for Special Populations: Wraparound Supports \(video\)](#) is a video resource from Advance CTE highlighting comprehensive supports and practices designed to help special populations achieve positive outcomes in CTE programs.
- [National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative \(NTACT:C\)](#) provides guidance, tools, and evidence-based practices to support effective transition planning for students with disabilities as they move from school to postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.
- [O*NET Online](#) is a comprehensive online resource providing detailed information about job roles, skills, and career pathways to support students' career readiness.
- [SAE for All Student Guide](#) is designed to support all students in engaging with supervised agricultural experiences, offering practical steps and guidance for successful participation.
- [State Strategies to Expand CTE Program Recruitment and Support for Learners with Disabilities](#), from Advance CTE, provides strategies and resources to help educators support career and technical education for students with disabilities.
- [Transition Services/Coordinated Set of Activities Examples](#) provides examples of coordinated activities that support students with disabilities in achieving their postsecondary goals, including instruction, community experiences, and employment preparation.
- [U.S. DOL: Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) develops and promotes policies, practices, and resources that increase employment opportunities and workplace inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

APPENDIX | TOOLKIT RESOURCES

- [What Parents and Students Need to Know](#) offers essential information for parents and students about CTE pathways, program benefits, and opportunities for success in postsecondary education and careers.

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