



CAREER EQUITY RESOURCE CENTER

Funded by the New Jersey Department of Education
Office of Career Readiness



Notable Equity Practices for Special Population Students in CTE Programs

The Career Equity Resource Center (CERC) provides resources to schools and districts that will assist in the preparation of careers that align with high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand industries and occupations. The strategies outlined below are examples of notable equity practices that are aimed at increasing access and success for nontraditional, special population, and/or historically marginalized students. They are divided into three major categories: outreach and recruitment, retention and support, and placement/post-placement.

*FOR PURPOSES OF THIS HANDOUT: “*nontraditional career*” or “*nontraditional program*” refers to any career or program in which special populations or marginalized students (or a group thereof) are underrepresented.

EXAMPLES OF EQUITABLE OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT PRACTICES IN ACTION:

1. There is a regular, formal process for distributing information about nontraditional careers to all learners.

Strategies:

- Distribute brochures, fact sheets and other recruitment materials that contain specific information on the benefits/advantages of nontraditional careers during “exploratory” time frame.
 - Train/provide information on nontraditional careers to guidance counselors so that they can share with students.
 - Require all MS students to take a career development course that introduces them to the CTE course offerings.
2. There is a regular, formal process for distributing information about nontraditional careers to all parents/family members.

Strategies:

- Conduct parental information program in conjunction with a program for the students that informs parents of their influence in career choice, and the benefits of high-skill, high-demand occupations, nontraditional careers, etc.
 - Distribute brochures, flyers, and other written materials to Middle School and High School parents/families at registration and recruitment events such as open houses, information sessions, etc.
3. The school district models equity in career and technical education programs by employing nontraditional instructors and aides.

Strategies:

- Recruit alumni from the school district who have gained employment in nontraditional occupations.
 - Seek out nontraditional workers who can volunteer in the classroom and/or participate in special activities.
 - Inform district administrators of the significance of incorporating role models from specialized populations and other marginalized groups.
4. Program recruitment involves both role models and learners from diverse backgrounds not traditionally associated with the field of study.

Strategies:

- Use role models, such as:
 - Presentations by successful alumni and senior nontraditional students.
 - Presentation by men/women in the community in the targeted nontraditional occupation areas.
 - An article in the student newspaper/school website with information on the upcoming class that includes an interview with a nontraditional student.
 - Recruit especially popular students – other students will follow.
 - Recruit students in friendship groups. Have young women/men who are interested recruit their friends.
5. All marketing materials are regularly checked for gender and other issues of equity in language and photos.

Strategies:

- Look at recruitment materials and make sure they show boys/girls participating in all types of career and technical programs, including from which they have been historically absent. Pay attention to gender, race, ethnicity, special needs, etc.
 - Create bulletin board displays recruiting young men and women for activities.
 - Distribute flyers recruiting young men and women to nontraditional programs/activities.
 - Conduct a “textbook audit” to check for gender biased educational materials.
6. Most career development special events, like career fairs and college nights, have a designated area and spokesperson for equity and marginalized students.

Strategies:

- At career fairs and college nights, have a counselor or other volunteer (Career and Technical Education teachers, etc.) at a designated area to discuss nontraditional career opportunities, statistics, and information.
- Have presentations or volunteer the area by women/men in the community in the targeted nontraditional occupation areas.
- Utilize a Freshmen Orientation by having information and, if possible, a speaker about nontraditional career opportunities for all students. Offer a demo by current students, with products of the class visible.
- Develop a set of 5-minute videos for marketing nontraditional CTE to various audiences and potential students.

7. At least half of the counselors have had exposure to methods related to counseling learners on nontraditional careers and/or equity issues.

Strategies:

- Explore opportunities for professional development and further education from national and local organizations, postsecondary education, and lectures.
 - Suggest supervisors find a presenter who could present to the counseling department.
 - Have staff that may be trained or skilled turn-key information to other counselors.
 - Once counselors have the skills, turn-key general information to teachers, administrators, and other faculty on simple suggestions they can do.
8. Recruitment includes activities for middle school learners.

Strategies:

- High school Career and Technical Education recruitment begins in middle school.
- Use high school students to promote 8th grade students as role models.
- Use career development strategies and information.
 - Start with the skills, not the career.
 - Talk about career paths, salaries, and benefits.
- Recruit students through personal invitations, homeroom presentations, and bulletin boards.
- During career development special events, invite 8th graders or have a special session for the 8th grade students to get interest.
- Publish an article in the student newspaper or school website with information on the upcoming class that includes an interview with a nontraditional student.
- At Freshmen Orientation, include Career and Technical Education classrooms in every tour. Offer a demo by current students, with products of the class visible.
- Develop a set of 5-minute videos for marketing nontraditional CTE to various audiences and potential students.
- Talk with counselors from the feeder schools and ask for their help in encouraging nontraditional students.
- Require all middle school students take a career development course that introduces them to the vocational education course offerings.

EXAMPLES OF EQUITABLE RETENTION & SUPPORT PRACTICES IN ACTION:

1. At least half of the instructors in career and technical education (CTE) have had exposure to methods for infusing diversity and/or gender equity training into their classroom environments.

Strategies:

- Provide professional development and training geared towards developing strategies for implementation.
 - Offer professional development credit for these trainings.
- Develop a video library of resources and store in central area for all instructors to access easily.
- Make online curricular and other resources available to staff on school/district website.

2. There is a targeted program or service for nontraditional/marginalized students in your school or district.

Strategies:

- CERC Peer Leadership Program Model
 - Project Lead the Way (or other programs like it)
 - Create a distinct group for your school/district.
 - Involve students in the process by use this as an opportunity to incorporate project-based learning modules: allowing them to choose a name, define the mission and goals for the group, plan activities, etc.
3. Nontraditional learners receive tutoring and/or academic services.

Strategies:

- Institute academic assistance programs for students in nontraditional occupations, or marginalized students.
 - Incentivize groups of this nature so that students don't feel even more marginalized for receiving "special services".
4. There is a mentoring program for nontraditional learners in your school or district.

Strategies:

- Engage community members in mentoring services.
 - Utilize older student groups to institute peer mentoring programs.
 - Research national best practices and model programs for instituting mentoring services in your school/district.
5. (If yes,) Nontraditional learners regularly participate in the mentoring program.

Strategies:

- Offer small incentives for students who participate in the programs (food, prizes, certificates, etc.).
 - Try to incorporate it into the school day, if at all possible.
 - Make it as entertaining and interactive as possible, incorporate hands on activities, special events, trips, etc.
6. There is a support group for nontraditional learners in your school or district.

Strategies:

- Develop a support group for nontraditional learners.
 - Do not make this a punitive group. That will discourage students from being active or participating in the group.
 - Consider having the CTE teacher involved as well as any nontraditional members of the faculty.
7. (If Yes), Nontraditional learners regularly participate in the support group.

Strategies:

- Do not make this a punitive group. That will discourage students from being active or participating in the group.
 - Treat the group as a positive experience. Create unique activities, field trips, opportunities, and rewards.
 - Connect with alumni and community members to find volunteers that would allow a field visit or come in to speak to the students about life in a nontraditional career.
 - Let students share problems and concerns. Let some portions be student run.
 - Consider having a mentoring program. Older students would have a younger student as their mentee.
8. There is a regular and formal process in place to review policies and instructional practices in classrooms in which nontraditional students would be enrolled.

Strategies:

- Join the committee or task force that looks into policies and instructional practices.
 - Discuss best instructional practices at department meetings.
 - Create policies and instructional practices that are non-biased towards one gender or another.
 - Enforce sexual harassment policies, codes, and guidelines.
 - Enforce bullying policies, codes, and guidelines.
9. There is a regular review of classroom materials and consideration in the new textbook selection process for equity and fairness.

Strategies:

- When the opportunity to receive new textbooks and materials becomes available, examine materials not only for quality educational materials, but for equity and fairness among both genders.
 - Consider looking for posters and signs that depict both males and females in the professional field.
 - Consider both males and females when purchasing equipment and materials for the CTE classrooms.
 - Join the committee or task force that looks into new materials and textbooks for the department. Or nominate someone who will be looking for equity and fairness.
10. Nontraditional occupations and/or equity is a topic addressed in staff development sessions and/or is the subject of workshops.

Strategies:

- If counselors are educated in methods to counsel nontraditional learners, turnkey vital information to the general staff and faculty of any pertinent information.
- When time comes to schedule/enroll students for the next year/term, consider having a staff development session on how to speak to students about nontraditional careers. New staff can benefit as well as returning staff, as information sometimes gets forgotten.
- Have a presenter come do staff development or a workshop on professional development days or during a faculty meeting.

11. If yes, does staff regularly participate in them?

Strategies:

- Make it a required meeting.
- Supply refreshments.
- Make it entertaining.
- Contract a presenter who can distribute professional development credits, so teachers and staff can receive credit towards their 100 hour 5 year requirement.

EXAMPLES OF EQUITABLE PLACEMENT & POST-PLACEMENT PRACTICES IN ACTION:

1. Relationships and/or partnerships with business and industry play a significant part in our services for marginalized or special populations.

Strategies:

- Partner with local employers/industry for co-ops, internships, job shadowing experiences, etc.
- Send out one-pager information sheets to employers in your district on marginalized groups and how they can assist your school/district.

2. Nontraditional career and technical education programs are aligned with high-skill, high-demand, high wage occupations.

Strategies:

- Conduct an assessment of CTE programs, and cross reference with statistics on high-skill, high-demand, high-wage occupations.
- Create programs of study for CTE programs that align with high-skill, high-demand, high-wage occupations.
- Make sure school/district administrators are well informed on the latest research and statistics regarding these occupations.

3. An employer database (with job shadowing, internships, co-ops and career information) is available and accessible for learners preparing for nontraditional occupations.

Strategies:

- Provide time during the school day (planning periods, etc.) for educators and administrators to do research on the surrounding community and potential industry partners.
- Reach out to local colleges and universities for potential interns who could create and maintain such databases and information for school credit.
- Making this a special project and involve your own students in this process.
 - Give them extra credit or make it a part of their overall grade.

4. Employers are involved through special events like employer focus groups, employer panels, and mock interviews and these events have a portion of the activity devoted to nontraditional occupations.

Strategies:

- Reach out to local businesses and organizations regarding opportunities for participation at these events in your school/district.
 - Make sure the community is informed about these events.
 - Involve parents, often times they are an untapped resource.
 - Consider speaking with those parents about any opportunities of collaboration at their place of employment.
5. Sufficient numbers of employers participate in internships and/or work experiences for nontraditional learners in order to provide opportunities for all learners who wish to participate.

Strategies:

- Contact local companies, businesses, and organizations to speak with someone regarding the possibility for participation.
 - At PTA meetings, consider having a staff representative ask if any parents are in nontraditional occupations.
 - Consider speaking with those parents about any opportunities of collaboration at their place of employment.
 - If the number of work opportunities is smaller than the number of student learners, consider shortening internships to a shorter period of time to allow all students the chance.
6. Significant numbers of nontraditional role models from business and industry participate actively in the nontraditional program.

Strategies:

- Contact local companies, businesses, and organizations to speak with someone regarding the possibility for participation.
 - Indicate that participation can be small or a more in-depth part.
 - At PTA meetings, consider having a staff representative ask if any parents are in nontraditional occupations.
 - Consider speaking with those parents about any opportunities of collaboration at their place of employment.
 - Offer advertisement at games, shows, and events as a form of incentive.
7. At least 75% of nontraditional students participate in job shadowing, mentoring, internships, or other experiences which help them gain a realistic picture of future employment.

Strategies:

- Consider linking this with the nontraditional student support group. Have mentoring and job shadowing be a part of each.

- Contact local companies, businesses, and organizations to speak with someone regarding the possibility for job shadowing, mentoring, or internships.
 - At PTA meetings, consider having a staff representative ask if any parents are in nontraditional occupations.
 - Consider speaking with those parents about any opportunities of collaboration at their place of employment.
 - Consider linking the real-world experiences into the classroom and/or elective.
 - Consider making all students in nontraditional fields participate.
8. Post-placement activities include surveys and on-site visits with targeted follow-up for nontraditional students.

Strategies:

- Consider having senior student take a survey of their post-graduation plans.
- At school events where alumni may return (Homecoming, Thanksgiving, etc.), consider having a survey available asking if they are still on track with their post-graduation plan.
 - Having a small reward, such as a baked good or pen, be available.
- Advertise Career Fairs in the newspaper and on the school website. Specifically ask if any former students would be willing to speak or represent their career.
- Use social media to gain pertinent information on recent graduates. Former students may be more likely to answer questions if they can do it from their computer or phone.
- Connect with the local community college counselors. See if they will distribute a post-secondary survey to graduates of the school.

The Career Equity Resource Center (CERC) is a program funded by the NJ Department of Education, Office of Career Readiness and housed at Rutgers University's Center for Women and Work.

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