

# Strategies for Special Population Success

## Practical Tips and Tools for Educators



### General resources for all categories of special population students

National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

Advance CTE

Association for Career Technical Education

Intercultural Development Research Association

American Civil Liberties Union

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary & Secondary Education

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights

Perkins Collaborative Resource Network

U.S. Department of Education, Equity Assistance Centers

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

U.S. Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau

This resource will help you develop plans to address the equity gaps for special populations that you uncover during your Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment as part of your Perkins V planning. Use this resource with your team to identify potential strategies to address the root causes of your identified gaps in participation and performance. Utilize the recommended national organizations to support your efforts and locate similar local organizations that serve students in your state and community. Target your strategies to address the needs of each of the special population groups to increase the potential for success. Be creative and collaborative as you implement remote learning and provide support services virtually during the COVID pandemic. With the right support, your students who are from special populations can achieve amazing results and discover a new world of opportunities.

### Special Populations include:


- ✓ Individuals with disabilities
- ✓ Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults
- ✓ Individuals preparing for nontraditional fields
- ✓ 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

### Common strategies

- Explore how systems, policies, power, language, social capital, remote learning and internet/technology access reproduce inequalities in your school/college.<sup>1</sup>
- Learn and use culturally responsive teaching and leadership skills, such as connecting students' cultural background to instruction and valuing cultural diversity as an asset in the learning environment.<sup>2,3</sup>
- Incorporate student, family and community voices into equity audits and development of institutional policies and programs.<sup>4</sup>
- Implement professional development that builds educator capacity to understand how gender, race, class, language, ethnicity, and ability differences are perceived and treated in the institution and influenced by implicit bias and micromessaging.<sup>5</sup>
- Use wise feedback<sup>6</sup> and other strategies to help special populations develop self-determination,<sup>7</sup> self-efficacy<sup>8,9,10</sup> and a growth mindset.<sup>11,12</sup>
- Use Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) as a way for students to build social capital and networks in which they feel welcome and supported.<sup>13</sup>
- Prioritize and focus on increasing the representation of diverse groups with CTSOs.
- Ensure that special populations participate in work-based learning, supported employment,<sup>14</sup> and apprenticeships leading to economically self-sufficient employment.
- Acknowledge, address, and respond to culturally traumatic or celebratory news and events.<sup>15</sup>
- Use role models/mentoring to reinforce student identity and self-efficacy.<sup>16</sup>
- Partner with community-based organizations that support each special population group. Give community-based organization and support agencies the opportunity to conduct outreach and provide services on campus so that they are easily accessible and friendly.<sup>17</sup>
- Involve caregivers in outreach, decision making, and support for special populations. Remove barriers to students and their care-givers participation such as transportation, child care, translation, location, and scheduling.<sup>18</sup>
- Implement case management with students who are special populations to ensure that services are coordinated and no one falls through the cracks.<sup>19</sup>
- Implement equitable cooperative learning strategies that ensure rotation of responsibilities to all group members. Manage grouping configurations to eliminate tokenism or stereotyping.<sup>24</sup>


## Individuals with disabilities

- Create opportunities and ways that parents and students with disabilities can advocate for themselves.<sup>20</sup>
- Challenge low expectations, such as secure reporting or peer advocates.<sup>20</sup>
- Provide professional development with faculty on strategies for providing accommodations for students with disabilities in virtual and face-to-face learning environments, including how to protect privacy and reduce stigma.<sup>20</sup>
- Implement Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction with all students in all classrooms.<sup>20</sup>
- Request and implement approved accommodations when students with disabilities are taking industry-based certification or licensure exams.<sup>20</sup>
- Increase Individualized Education Program (IEP) effectiveness by including all individuals who support a student, including career and technical education (CTE) teachers. Train CTE teachers on how to understand a student's IEP, provide appropriate accommodations, raise expectations, and decrease bias.<sup>20</sup>
- Build relationships with companies that have successfully employed students with disabilities and ask them to support your outreach to new employers.<sup>21</sup> Use the resources available through your state's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to assist with work-based learning experiences and employment placement.<sup>21</sup>

 **National Technical Assistance Center for Transition (NTACT)** assists State Education Agencies, Local Education Agencies, State VR agencies, and VR service providers in implementing evidence-based and promising practices ensuring students with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, graduate prepared for success in postsecondary education and employment. Check out their [Effective Practices and Predictors](#) resources.


## Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults

- Provide free books, materials, tools, uniforms, computers, internet hot-spots and other resources necessary for success in a CTE program. Pay dues, activity fees, and other costs for students who are low-income to participate in CTSOs.<sup>18</sup>
- Make financial aid and scholarships easily accessible online, and systematize assistance into the school day to ensure financial assistance is completed for students.<sup>18</sup>
- Provide transportation, transportation vouchers, bus passes, or mileage reimbursement. Ensure that transportation is available at the right time and in the right location so that students are safe.<sup>18</sup>
- Ensure that students have access to healthy food and nutrition by providing meals at school and all family events. Locate local food bank distribution sites for families on campus.<sup>18</sup>
- Offer affordable or free licensed childcare on-site in coordination with the times and locations of all programs.<sup>18</sup>
- Have students manage a free-access, business clothes closet for interviews or work. Seek donations from the community.<sup>18</sup>

 **Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)** helps teachers and schools educate children and youth to be active participants in a diverse society. Their [Teaching Tolerance](#) program provides free resources to educators that emphasizes anti-bias and social justice.

## Individuals preparing for nontraditional fields

- Expose students to nontraditional career options early (elementary grades) to broaden their horizons about what careers are available to them. Children develop gender career stereotypes as early as age 3.<sup>22</sup>
- Address math anxiety and spatial visualization skill development for students pursuing nontraditional fields in STEM through instructional scaffolding and tutoring.<sup>23</sup>
- Offer informal, low-risk, hands-on, skill-development experiences for students to try skills in a nontraditional program, especially for girls who need to develop skills before expressing interest. These activities can include a virtual mentoring, brown-bag online lunch, after-school workshop, maker space experience, or summer camp.<sup>16</sup>
- Ensure that safety equipment, safety clothing, uniforms, and tools are available in small to large sizes to accommodate a person of any stature.<sup>25</sup>
- Form informal virtual support groups in which students can share their experiences and build community with other students pursuing a nontraditional career.<sup>16</sup>
- Enroll nontraditional students in cohorts—three or more in the same section—to combat tokenism or gender/racial isolation and encourage peer support and cohort engagement.<sup>16</sup>
- Enforce civil rights and sexual harassment policies and practices—ignoring is the same as condoning. Ensure that students are aware of reporting procedures and that their privacy will be protected.<sup>26</sup>

 **National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)** provides thought leadership and capacity building to implement effective solutions to increase student access, educational equity, and workforce diversity. NAPE has developed resources and professional development programs that address gender equity in career and technical education and workforce development. Check out NAPE's literature review [Nontraditional Career Preparation: Root Causes & Strategies](#).

## Resources for individuals with Disabilities

National Alliance for Partnership in Equity's PIPELine to Career Success for Students with Disabilities

Advance CTE's Making Good on the Promise: Improving Equity and Access to Quality CTE Programs for Students with Disabilities

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs

Early Learning Technical Assistance Center

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Technical Assistance Center for Transition

National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities

American Association on Health and Disability

## Resources for individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults

Southern Poverty Law Center

National Center for Children in Poverty

## Resources for individuals preparing for nontraditional fields

National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

Nontraditional Careers for Men

Her Own Words

National Center for Women & Information Technology

National Institute for Women in Trades, Technology & Science

National Association of Women in Construction

National Girls Collaborative Project





### Resources for single parents, including single pregnant women

Institute for Women's Policy Research

National Women's Law Center

### Resources for out-of-workforce individuals

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Employment Services

### Resources for English learners

U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition

National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition

WIDA

E.L. Achieve

TESOL International Association

## Single parents, including single pregnant women

- Do not isolate teen parents in separate programs where access to CTE is not available. Access to CTE programs that lead to employment in an occupation with family-sustaining wages is critical.<sup>27</sup>
- Allow for attendance flexibility and alternative course completion options, especially for teen parents who may be struggling to manage parenting responsibilities.<sup>28</sup>
- Provide transportation for the teen parent's child to childcare and the student to school, ideally in the same location.<sup>28</sup>
- Provide parenting/child development classes for teen parents to develop coping skills and stay in school.<sup>28</sup>
- Offer affordable or free licensed childcare on-site in coordination with the times and locations of all programs.<sup>28</sup>
- Offer courses in many ways—asynchronous online, synchronous online, face-to-face, hybrid—at different times of the day and in different locations to accommodate single parenting responsibilities and schedules.<sup>29</sup>
- Conduct family-friendly outreach activities, and incorporate family into student events.<sup>29</sup>
- Conduct single parent support groups and/or study groups to build a community of support and social networks.<sup>29</sup>



Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR)'s Student Parent Success Initiative conducts research and policy analysis, provides technical expertise and assistance, and communicates its research increase equity in higher education for student parents and other underserved student populations. Check out their briefing paper on Prioritizing Student Parents in COVID-19 Response and Relief.

## Out-of-workforce individuals

- Coordinate services with the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and services through your State's Workforce Development System's adult/dislocated worker program, youth program, and the American Job Center network.<sup>30</sup>
- Help students identify transferrable skills to connect instructional relevance and build opportunity in a high-demand nontraditional career field that supports economic self-sufficiency and offers good benefits.<sup>16</sup>
- Organize support groups and study groups that build community and social capital. Hold these virtually or provide transportation, childcare, and food to encourage participation.<sup>18</sup>
- Provide career-planning services such as resume writing, goal setting, interview skills, stress management, job-shadowing, and work-based learning.<sup>18</sup>
- Identify employment-based training such as work-study, subsidized employment, and apprenticeships that provide wages while attending school.<sup>31</sup>
- Offer short-term programs with stackable certifications, credentials, or licensure that have value in the workplace.<sup>32, 33</sup>



Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) advocate for federal, state, and local policies to improve access to education and training that lead to better-paying jobs by promoting bridges between adult basic education, workforce skills training, and postsecondary education and leveraging education and training opportunities in public benefits programs. Check out their report on Career Pathways in Career and Technical Education.

## English learners


- Engage families and community in supporting English learners' engagement in CTE and CTSOs.<sup>41</sup>
- Provide interpreters for students and their families.<sup>18</sup>
- Support English learners with scannable technology if students have smart phones, such as word walls, scannable vocabulary lists, and audio directions.<sup>43</sup> Use technology to facilitate language translation such as visual dictionaries and translation apps.
- Facilitate collaboration between CTE and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers.<sup>44</sup>
- Connect content learning to language acquisition. Position English learners as competent classroom community members by sharing ideas in pairs, using cooperative learning strategies, and engaging in classroom discussion.<sup>45, 46</sup>
- Provide instructional materials in multiple languages or implement a flipped classroom with prep materials in the English learner's language.<sup>47</sup>



National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) collects, coordinates, and conveys a broad range of research and resources in support of an inclusive approach to high quality education for English Learners. Check out their practice briefs and podcast episodes on instructional strategies for educators.


## Homeless individuals

- Have a process in place to identify students experiencing homelessness, including training and professional development opportunities for staff so they can identify and meet these student's needs.<sup>40</sup>
- Connect with your State's Office of Education of Homeless Children and Youth authorized by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVHAA). Ensure that students experiencing homelessness and their families know their rights under the MVHAA.<sup>41</sup>
- Know what support services are available in your district under Title I, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act that help students experiencing homelessness maximize credit accrual and complete high school.<sup>42</sup>
- Become familiar with your state's laws about reporting suspected abuse or neglect, or a suspected runaway.<sup>33</sup>
- Provide access to free meals, shower and laundry facilities, a secure place to store personal belongings, quiet place to study, free school supplies, and access to technology and the internet.<sup>44</sup>
- Coordinate school and community resources that provide trauma-informed wraparound services such as transportation, referrals to health care, shelters, housing, and employment.<sup>45</sup>
- Access financial support for dues, activity fees, and transportation resources through the MVHAA for students experiencing homelessness for extracurricular activities and participation in CTSOs.<sup>46,47</sup>
- Ensure access to school-based programs such as Upward Bound, Gifted Ed, Special Ed, AP courses, CTE, athletics, band, theater arts, and other programs.<sup>45, 48</sup>
- Pair students with mentors who encourage them to attend school every day, and provide accountability through attendance monitoring, and follow-up with students and parents/guardians when students miss school to determine the cause of the absence and how that barrier can be overcome.<sup>48</sup>
- Revise policies that may inadvertently decrease student attendance such as severe penalties for tardiness and/or suspending students from school because of excessive absences.<sup>49</sup>

 National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) provides technical assistance and resources to schools, service providers, parents, and other interested stakeholders to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness can enroll and succeed in school. Check out NCHE's Homeless Education Issue Briefs and their joint publication with Advance CTE, *Improving Equity in and Access to Quality CTE Programs for Students Experiencing Homelessness*.


## Youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system

- Be familiar with the requirements of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 as it relates to education.<sup>49</sup>
- Learn about your students in foster care. They may have experienced abuse, neglect, and multiple placements, so safety is their number one priority—not school. Build a relationship of trust with them and their foster family.<sup>50</sup>
- Be flexible with homework, due dates, and testing, and stay in touch with foster parents to know when a student will have a birth parent or biological family member visitation because these times may create emotional unrest.<sup>51</sup>
- Help students who are transitioning out of foster care to develop a transition plan using the [Foster Care Transition Toolkit](#). Find out when foster care benefits terminate in your state.<sup>51</sup>
- Connect students with federal TRIO<sup>52</sup> programs at your local community college. These include Upward Bound<sup>53</sup>, Talent Search<sup>54</sup>, Educational Opportunity Centers<sup>55</sup>, and Student Support Services.<sup>56</sup>

 Legal Center for Foster Care & Education serves as a central clearinghouse of information on foster care and education and provides training and technical assistance. Check out their ESSA Implementation Toolkit. Learn more about [Supporting Students Living in Foster Care](#) and the [U.S. Department of Education Students in Foster Care](#) resources.

## Youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is on active duty

- Understand the unique needs of a child with a parent in the military on active duty during deployment. Promptly refer a student for counseling who continues to show signs of stress, inability to function in school, or has high levels of emotional response after a family member deploys.<sup>15</sup>
- Retain classroom routines and maintain predictable, structured class schedules.<sup>15</sup>
- Participate in outreach activities at a Base Exchange in the summer.<sup>57</sup>
- Help students access free, online tutoring and homework help at [military.tutor.com](http://military.tutor.com).<sup>58</sup>
- Use competency checklists that students can share with their next school to ensure their continued learning in a similar CTE program, if their family moves due to deployment or reassignment.<sup>59</sup>
- Be familiar with the education support services available from the military branch your student's parent(s) serve. Know the local point of contact. The Veteran's Administration's Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance program provides education and training opportunities to eligible dependents and survivors of certain Veterans.<sup>60</sup>

 Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA) serves school districts with a high concentration of military children and works with local school leaders and commanders to highlight best practices and partnerships that can meet the needs of military families. Start exploring the MISA resource with their [Promising Practices](#).



### Resources for homeless individuals

Advance CTE's *Making Good on the Promise: Improving Equity and Access to Quality CTE Programs for Students Experiencing Homelessness*

National Center for Homeless Education

The National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

Hidden in Plain Sight-Homeless Students in America's Public Schools

### Resources for youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system

North American Council on Adoptable Children

National Foster Youth Institute

Legal Center for Foster Care & Education

### Resources for youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is on active duty

Military Impacted Schools Association

Military Family Association



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