

Career and Technical Special Populations Training and Resource Education Center

<http://ctsp.tamu.edu>

The Career and Technical Special Populations Training and Resource Education Center (CTSP Center) is a collaborative effort between the Family Development and Resource Management unit of Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The CTSP Center provides career and technical education (CTE) teachers and other educators with access to resources for improving their knowledge regarding the education of students who have special needs and are enrolled in CTE programs.

Relevance

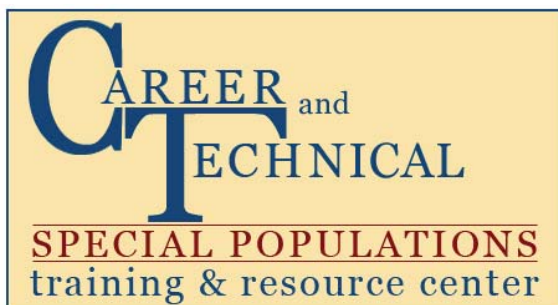
CTE programs enable post-secondary students to gain entry-level employment in a high-skill, high-wage job and/or to continue their education. CTE programs consist of hands-on, real-life learning experiences that are beneficial to all enrolled students. Students with special needs in secondary CTE programs have been shown to have specific benefits. They were less likely to drop out and more likely to be employed, to have paid competitive jobs, and to work full-time after high school (Cobb et al., 1999; Colley & Jamison, 1998). Furthermore, students with special needs enrolled into CTE classrooms obtained paid competitive jobs more often and felt more prepared to keep their jobs. With this record of success, students with special needs are often placed in CTE classes. As of 2008, the

Texas Education Agency confirms that on average, over 25 percent of the 464,789 special education students in Texas are served through CTE.

With the increased enrollment, CTE teachers have several responsibilities. Specifically, CTE teachers have to plan and provide school-based instructional activities that correspond with the goals and objectives of students' Individual Education Plans (IEP), including classroom and lab activities (Kohler, 1998). CTE teachers must also evaluate and grade students' attainment of the IEP objectives (Evers & Elksnin, 1998). In addition, they must provide instructional accommodations and modifications. Finally, CTE teachers must know their responsibilities under federal and state laws. They have to ensure that all rights of the parents and students are fulfilled. In undertaking these responsibilities, CTE teachers – either due to a lack of educational background or experience – continue to face difficulties and should receive additional support and assistance to help them meet their instructional goals (Wonacott, 2001).

Response

The primary role of the CTSP Center is to assist CTE teachers, special education teachers, administrators, Extension agents, and parents who work with special populations in Texas. The CTSP Center serves as an educational resource library and provides multimedia online courses and learning modules that address critical issues related to serving students with special needs. The CTSP Center website disseminates information through webcasts, newsletters, FAQs (frequently asked questions), and links to external resources. Resources specifically dedicated to educating parents are also made available on the site.



Results

Over the past three years, the CTSP Center has made over 900 educational contacts with CTE teachers, administrators, special educators, and parents. Additionally, the CTSP Center has been recognized as a Continuing Professional Education (CPE) provider by the Texas Education Agency.

Learners from various parts of Texas have enrolled and/or completed the CTSP Center's six online courses. To date, 639 hours have been awarded to completers, with 566 educators currently enrolled. Since September 2008, the CTSP Center's website received a total of 20,076 visitors, with an average of 194 visitors per day. The site also received an average of 1,116 repeat visitors. In the current grant period, resources that

were typically downloaded included webcasts (372 downloads), newsletters (347 downloads), and learning module materials (1,403 downloads). Information about the CTSP center's Disability Awareness module was distributed to over 1,100 Texas AgriLife Extension Service employees. This module is designed to help Extension employees and other educators in Texas gain knowledge of various disabilities and available resources.

Feedback on the CTSP Center's free services and resources has been positive. Evaluation data from workshops, presentations, and instructional materials have shown that participants gained knowledge and planned to apply it to their daily educational activities.

References for this brief are available on request.

Leadership provided by Dr. Lakshmi (Hema) Mahadevan, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist – Special Populations; and Dr. Rick Peterson, Director and Extension Parenting Specialist—Family Development and Resource Management (2009). For more information: lmahadevan@ag.tamu.edu or 979.845.4374.
