

Building Rich CTE Programs in Rural School Districts

Strategies for Strengthening Career and Technical Education in Rural Communities



Allen Parish School Systems
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Introduction to Rural CTE Challenges and Opportunities

Overview of Rural Education Landscape

- Geographic isolation and limited resources
- Challenges in access to industries and modern technologies
- Challenges in meeting state-defined growth opportunities for students

Opportunities for Rural Schools

- Strong community ties and local industry connections
- Unique vocation for specialized CTE programs (e.g., agriculture, skilled trades)
- Partnerships with local businesses for real-world learning

Today's Objectives

By the end of this session, attendees will:

1. Understand the unique challenges and opportunities of building strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in rural school districts.
2. Explore strategies for aligning curriculum, forming industry partnerships, and leveraging technology to enhance rural CTE programs.
3. Identify actionable steps to strengthen work-based learning, secure funding, and improve student outcomes in rural communities.

The Importance of CTE in Rural Schools

Student Preparedness, Economic Impact, and Student Engagement

- Equipping students with skills for high-demand careers
 - a. Teaching students about workforce and the continuous changes
 - b. What are 5 star jobs and why does this matter?
- Increasing graduation rates through hands-on learning
 - a. Advantage of rural schools is the level of ability to get to know students. What are the unique abilities and interests?
- Meeting workforce needs in local industries (e.g., agriculture, healthcare, technology)
 - a. Reinforcing the idea of CTE skills training and the alignment to workforce needs
- Fostering local talent retention
 - a. Hiring local residents improves retention rates and facilitates a resilient workforce and community
- CTE is a pathway to academic success for all students
 - a. Career/College
 - b. Life Skills
- Providing real-world settings for learning
 - a. Replicating the workforce environment in labs with tools, equipment, technology, etc
 - b. Modeling quality characteristic traits in a work environment—soft skills

Key Components of a Strong Rural CTE Program

Curriculum Alignment, Industry Partnerships, and Work-Based Learning Opportunities

- Ensuring CTE programs align with state and industry standards
 - a. Participating in training opportunities to keep up with the latest trends
 - b. Membership in Professional Organizations such as ACTE
 - c. Collaboration with industry partners is essential
- Incorporating cutting-edge technologies and skills
 - a. Up-to-date curriculum, equipment, and technology
- Developing local partnerships with businesses and industries
 - a. Advisory Meetings
 - b. Monthly Industry Interaction
- Creating internship and mentorship opportunities for students
 - a. Jump Start Summers
 - b. AHEC of A Summer
 - c. Cooperative Learning Experiences
 - d. Mock Interviews
- Connecting classroom learning with real-world applications
 - a. Internships, Job Shadowing, Industry Tours

In theory these are idealistic concepts but not necessarily the easiest to attain.

Limitations exist as a result of geographical location and limited industry outside of basic needs services.

Building Community and Industry Partnerships

Engagement with Local Employers

- How to engage local businesses and industries in developing CTE curricula
 - a. Schedule Classroom Visits “Industry Interaction”
 - b. Facilitate Tours of Campuses Highlighting Student Work and Tools/Equipment Used in Labs
- Examples of successful rural partnerships (e.g., local farms, construction companies, medical centers)
 - a. Roy O Martin - Woodworks Program
 - b. Local Farmers (rice, beans, livestock, trees, crawfish)
 - c. Local Government
 - d. Allen Parish Community Healthcare - Partnership for CNA Program
 - e. AHEC Programs at Oakdale Community Hospital and Allen Parish Community Hospital
 - f. Local Chiropractor, Vet, Dentists, etc for tours and shadowing

Strengthening Support Networks

- Working with local chambers of commerce, workforce boards, and other stakeholders
 - a. SWLA Education & Workforce Committee
 - i. Chem Expo, LAIA, Women in Industry
 - ii. Roy O Martin - Woodworks Program, Women in Manufacturing, and Girls Can Too
- Collaborating with higher education institutions to expand opportunities
 - a. Sowela
 - b. ABC Pelican

Accessing Funding and Resources for Rural CTE

State and Federal Funding

- Perkins, CDF, SCA, General, Title Funds
- Other Grants: QSM, REAP, EEF

Creative Resource Management

- Sharing resources across schools or districts
 - a. Teachers - Spanish
 - b. Materials - Rotating Materials in Relation to When Classes are Scheduled
- Leveraging online resources and virtual learning to supplement in-person offerings
 - a. Virtual Block in Allen Parish (1st Period Fall and Spring Semesters)
 - i. ASL I and ASL II
 - ii. Python and Operation Spark (C++, HTML, and JAVA)
 - iii. Physics

Partnerships for Funding

- Securing support from local businesses
 - a. Limited Businesses

Technology and Innovation in Rural CTE Programs

- **Integrating Technology in CTE**
 - Using virtual labs and online platforms to offer advanced training.
 - Bringing technology into traditional trades
 - i. Can be a stretch depending on the program
 - ii. Ex: 3D Printers, Computer Coding, Robotics, Drones, AutoCAD
- **Developing Digital Literacy**
 - Preparing students for modern workforces that require tech skills
 - i. Implementing the computer and technology components have been a struggle, however, with new mandates, we will see tremendous growth
 - Incorporating coding, data analysis, and other digital tools into the curriculum.
 - i. Moving beyond Adobe
 - ii. Incorporating Computer Training Aligning to Industry Needs such as Inventor
 - 1. Ex: Crest Industries Need

Strategies for Recruitment & Retention of CTE Teachers in Rural Areas

Recruitment Strategies

- Incentives and support for teachers moving to rural areas
 - a. Small Class Sizes
 - b. Increased Parental Involvement
 - c. Benefits of Living in a Rural Area
- Building a strong local CTE network to encourage collaboration and mentorship
 - a. Very Difficult: CTE Teachers Only One
 - b. District Collaboration
 - c. CTE Cluster Collaboration
 - d. Professional Development - Regional, State, and National Conferences
 - e. CTSO's - , FBLA, FCCLA, FFA

Retention Tactics

- Recognizing Value
- Ongoing professional development opportunities
- Building Capacity in CTE teachers to advance in their careers
- Providing a supportive work environment to reduce burnout

Leveraging Data to Improve CTE Programs

- **What is Improvement? It depends on who is asking.**
 - Are we doing what is best for students?
 - Are we meeting workforce needs?
 - Are we meeting accountability expectations in terms of teacher talent and resources?
- **Data-Driven Decisions**
 - Using student outcomes and industry needs data to inform program development.
 - i. Using the CLNA to Plan and Improve Programs
 - ii. Using State Data such as Heat Maps to Evaluate Areas Which are Underserved
 - Tracking graduation rates, job placements, and skills acquired by CTE students.
 - i. CTE Teachers Serving to Assist Counselors with Tracking Pathway and IGP Content
- **Continuous Improvement**
 - Collecting feedback from students, parents, and local businesses to adjust and improve programs.
 - Teacher contributions in planning and developing new programs is critical for success.

Next Steps and Action Plan

- **Assess Your Current CTE Program**
 - Conduct a needs assessment and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis for your district's CTE offerings.
 - i. Continuing to do what has always been done is not necessarily what is best for students.
 - ii. “We Have to Go to Grow” ~ Tony McCardle
 - 1. Continued Professional Development
 - 2. Industry Trends are Changing and Keeping Up
- **Build Key Partnerships**
 - Identify Potential Local Business Partners and Local Educational Institutions
 - Contacting your Sales Tax Personnel and Request a Listing of all Businesses in District
 - i. Starting Point for Industry Engagement
 - ii. Point of Contact for Building Internships
- **Set Short- and Long-Term Goals**
 - Create a Roadmap for Implementing and Expanding your CTE Program over the next 1-3 years
 - Set Realistic Expectations for Implementing Internships
- Q & A

Final Thoughts

Key Takeaways

- Rural communities have the unique advantage of strong ties to local industries, providing rich opportunities for CTE programs.
- Strategic partnerships, technology integration, and creative resource management are keys to success.
- Although we are rich in opportunities as it relates to rural communities, the tie into the accountability expectations will be quite challenging.
- Preserving the rural community may result in other deficiencies. Economic development will be essential in moving towards the state model for growth as it relates to accountability.

Call to Action

- Encourage stakeholders to begin conversations and collaborate for stronger rural CTE systems.
- Follow-up questions - see contact information.

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