

We Asked, You Answered: Learning from Our CTE Teachers

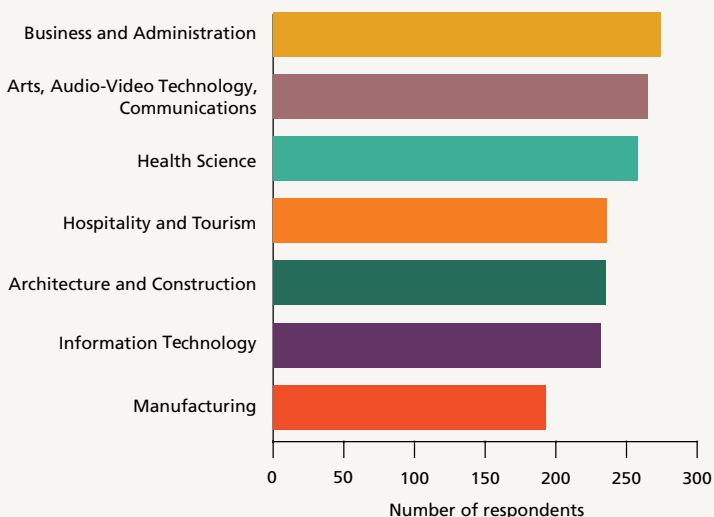
IN SPRING 2014, the American Federation of Teachers' educational issues department conducted an online survey of K-12 career and technical education (CTE) teachers who either are AFT members or have attended AFT conferences or professional development offerings. The survey sought to learn the range of CTE courses currently taught, the kinds of partnerships that schools are establishing, and educators' views of career and technical education in preparing students for college and careers.

The AFT received 570 survey responses from teachers working in 26 states and the District of Columbia, in 373 different schools. Although the survey was not based on a random sample and is therefore not statistically representative of the nation's CTE educators, it is nonetheless a large and broad survey. Responses came from a diverse group of teachers who teach a wide range of subject areas.

Respondents were asked in which of 16 career clusters their school offered programs. These clusters were based on those developed by the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium as an organizing framework for programs designed to improve pathways to college and career readiness.

The results confirmed what other research has found: CTE offerings are predominantly in technical and design fields. As shown in Figure 1, the two clusters most often reported by survey respondents were business and administration (274), followed by arts, audio-video technology, communications (265). The three clusters mentioned the least were government and public administration (25); transportation, distribution, and logistics (69); and human (consumer) services (96).

Figure 1. Top seven career clusters reported by respondents
n=541

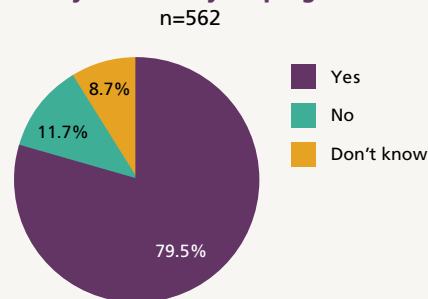


The subjects taught by CTE teachers varied extensively, with some educators teaching multiple subjects. The largest number of respondents (16 percent) taught some kind of business course that included accounting, marketing, finance, entrepreneurship, or management. The second-largest subject area was health science (11 percent), which was primarily nursing but also

included sports medicine and dental assisting. Nine percent of respondents reported teaching various computer applications, followed closely by visual and media arts (8.6 percent), a cluster that included digital media, entertainment, and game design. Seven percent taught information technology, computer science, and electronics. And 6.5 percent of teachers taught core subjects such as English, math, and science.

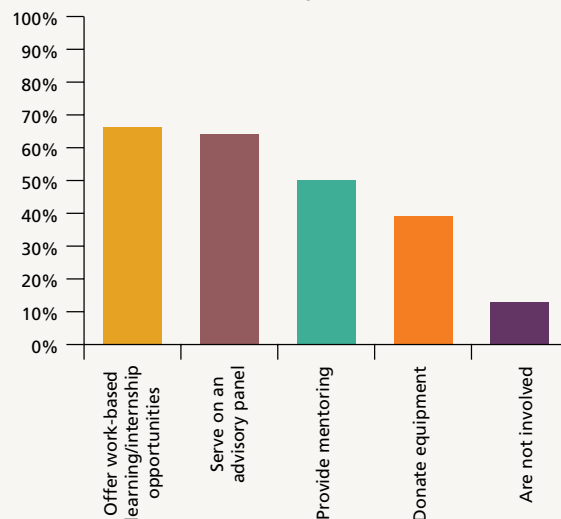
The recent emphasis on career pathways and linking CTE to postsecondary education is reflected in a high percentage of respondents—79.5 percent—who reported connections between secondary and postsecondary courses in their programs. Nearly 12 percent said no such connections exist, and 8.7 percent did not know, but these tended to be middle school CTE teachers. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2. Are there connections between secondary and postsecondary courses in your program?
n=562



Similarly, as shown in Figure 3, with CTE looking to provide students with skills transferable to the labor market, a majority of respondents said that their programs take local labor market needs into consideration, primarily via student internships (349) and business advisory boards (339). When employers were not involved, respondents tended to report having greater difficulty obtaining updated equipment.

Figure 3. How are employers involved in your program?
(check all that apply)
n=527

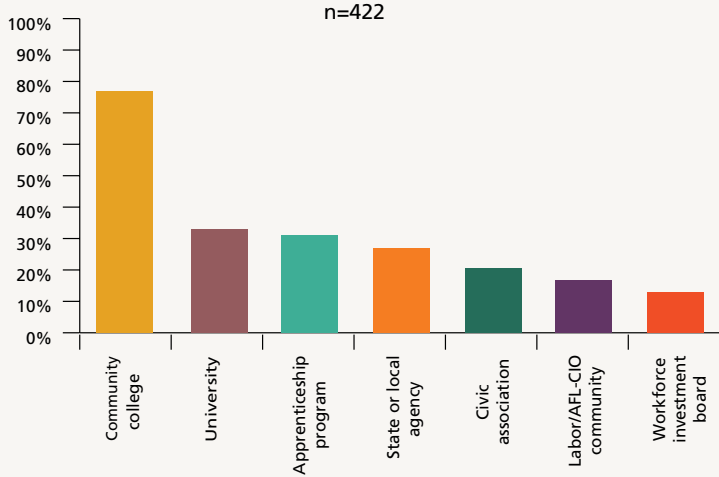


The Certification Challenge

MANY CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) courses are taught by industry professionals who have deep content knowledge but do not hold academic subject-matter credentials. This lack of certification for academic instruction can pose a problem for students; in some cases, they cannot receive academic credit for courses taught by teachers who lack full certification. A brief published by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, "Credit Quandaries: How Career and Technical Education Teachers Can Teach Courses That Include Academic Credit," looks at how Michigan, Missouri, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin are ensuring that CTE teachers can teach courses that offer academic credit.

These states are resolving this certification issue by recoding course assignments so that course titles and classifications clearly indicate that students learn academic content and earn academic credit in CTE courses. These states are also encouraging CTE teachers to coteach or coplan their CTE courses with fully certified teachers to ensure that such courses are academic-credit bearing. The brief is available at www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/Credit_Quandaries.pdf.

Figure 4. Does your program have community partners?
(check all that apply)



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