



TRAILBLAZERS BLOG

There is more to say about Trailblazers' topics than will fit in our newsletter, so we're writing a blog now. Take a look: <http://ctetrailblazers.blogspot.com/>

NONTRADITIONAL BEST PRACTICE

So far this spring we have visited four different schools to talk about nontraditional student enrollment. We have seen urban, rural and suburban schools with different kinds of programs and activities. If you would be interested in talking to us about one of your courses or if you have advice to offer others, please get in touch with us. We would love to talk to you.

COMPLETER FOLLOW-UP

The 2011 Follow-up of 2010 CTE completers is underway. Passwords to access the system were uploaded into the SSWs Dropbox but these haven't now expired. Administrators who have not yet collected their passwords should contact us at CTEcompleters@virginia.edu

EMPLOYMENT NEEDS DATA

New occupational employment projections are available for Virginia's LWIAs from the Virginia Employment Commission. Administrators can use these data to prepare new courses, complete local plans, & prepare plans of study. Excel files are available on the [Trailblazers website](#).

We can help you use the projections for program planning. Call or email us: Trailblazers@virginia.edu 434-982-5582

WORKPLACE READINESS SKILLS

CTE has a new list of 21 workplace readiness skills that must be taught in every course. The resources you need to implement this change in the curriculum are online at [Virginia's CTE Resource Center](#) website. To view these, click on Verso, then a program area, then a specific course. You will see the skills list & instructional resources for each skill.

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Completer Follow-up Survey

The Virginia Career and Technical Education Completer Follow-up Survey is now underway. In this survey, school divisions contact students who graduated in 2010 after completing a CTE program to learn about their employment, enrollment in post-secondary education, and satisfaction with their CTE programs.

Last year's survey of 2009 graduates showed how successful CTE is in preparing students for life after high school. Seventy-six percent of CTE completers enrolled in postsecondary education after graduation. Twenty percent of completers worked full time and an additional 28 percent worked part time, mostly while also attending college. Six percent of completers reported being unemployed, far fewer than the national youth unemployment rate of 19 percent.

The state of Virginia met last year's goal of interviewing 75 percent of CTE completers statewide, and almost all school divisions achieved a 75 percent response rate or higher. Only a few of the states largest, and most difficult to survey, divisions failed to meet this goal. The survey has gotten off to a good start this year, and a similar level of success is anticipated.

Once again, the Weldon Cooper Center is managing the website designed to help CTE administrators and teachers conduct the survey. This website allows users to see who needs to be surveyed, note students who could not be surveyed, and enter survey responses. The system tracks responses and shows at a glance who has been surveyed, who still needs to be contacted, and how schools and divisions are progressing toward the 75 percent or higher response rate goal. Access to the website is confidential and controlled by passwords delivered securely to CTE administrators.

In most school divisions CTE teachers do the surveys by telephoning their own students. This method generates the highest response rates, since students are more likely to respond to their own teachers than to anyone else. School divisions have more than three months to complete the surveys -- the deadline is July 1st. But the sooner schools start, the more time they have to finish, so we hope school divisions will start working on this promptly.

For technical help using the website and conducting the surveys, please do not hesitate to contact us at CTEcompleters@virginia.edu or 434-982-5582. CTE Completer policy questions should be directed to Lolita B. Hall, Director, Office of Career and Technical Education Services at the Virginia Department of Education at lb.hall@doe.virginia.gov or 804-225-2051.

Employer Partners: One Key To Job Success

As both CTE educators and employers know, workplace readiness skills are essential for success in the workplace. Students can learn about these skills in the classroom, but they also need experience with real work and real employers to understand why these skills are important and to learn to apply them in the workplace. This means that employers need to actively participate in the educational system by helping to provide those experiences. Successfully preparing students for the workplace cannot fully rest on the shoulders of CTE teachers;

Employer Partners (continued)

school administrations, employers and the wider community have an essential role to play in the development of young workers.

One of the more interesting pieces of research on this topic is a [study of Career Academies done by MDRC](#). In this research, students who applied for admission to a Career Academy were randomly assigned to either the Career Academy group or a control group. Both groups completed surveys during their twelfth-grade year and four years after their scheduled graduation. They were asked about a broad range of school- and work-related experiences during high school and afterward. This kind of controlled comparison is the best way to reveal the impact of the Academy experience in students' lives after graduation.

The Career Academies that were studied aimed to offer preparation both for college and for entry into the workforce directly after high school. The curriculum each year typically consisted of three or more academic courses and at least one occupation-related course focused on the academy's career theme. The really distinguishing feature of the academies, however, was their extensive partnerships with local employers.

"Each Academy in the MDRC evaluation offered a variety of activities designed to enhance students' understanding of the world of work in general and their knowledge of occupations within the academy's broad career themes. Some career awareness activities — field trips and opportunities to "job-shadow" adults at work for a day — took place outside of school. Other activities typically occurred in school: researching jobs and their requirements as a class assignment or receiving instruction or counseling about how to find a job or act on the job. Academies also sponsored events at which adults came to the schools to talk about their work."

"The businesses provided students with work experiences — summer internships and jobs during the school year — that were intended to teach practical skills, inculcate proper workplace behavior, and point out pathways to careers within the Academy's theme occupation. The broader goal of these work experience positions was to show students how their education fit into the world of work. Local employers also served, along with representatives from the Career Academy and the school district, on an advisory board that guided policy and created strategies for combining classroom- and work-based learning."

Follow-up with Academy students four years after graduation showed that the experience had a sustained, positive impact on the labor market outcomes of young men.

"Career Academies increased earnings for young men by an average of \$212 per month, or more than \$10,000 over the 48-month period — an 18 percent increase over control group members' average earnings. The higher earnings resulted from the combined impacts that the programs had on the number of months employed, hours worked per week, and better wages. In other words, Career Academies helped the young men obtain better-paying jobs and jobs at which they worked for more hours."

Researchers believe that these Academy graduates were able to earn more because their technical courses and involvement with employer partners had given them more work experience and more job knowledge which helped them get better jobs and faster promotions than their non-Academy peers.

Interestingly, the Academy experience did not have this kind of significant impact on labor market outcomes for young women. Researchers speculate that "One reason for the lack of post-high school labor market impacts among young women may be that the young women in the sample were more focused, relative to the young men, on attending post-secondary education programs or taking care of their children."

It is important to note also that the Academy experience did not deter male or female students from post-secondary education. Both Academy and non-Academy students graduated at similarly high rates and were just as likely to go on to further education.

Source: Kemple, James J. With Judith Scott-Clayton 2004. *Career Academies: Impacts on Labor Market Outcomes and Educational Attainment*. MDRC. http://www.mdrc.org/project_29_1.ht