

# **HFTFS PRIZE 2017**

## **APPLICATION PART 2**

### **READING #2**

**HARBOR FREIGHT**  
**TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS**

**Overcoming the Stigma of a Skilled Trades Education**

Adapted from [“The Value and Promise of Career Technical Education: Results from a National Survey of Parents and Students”](#) by Advance CTE, April 2017.

Career and Technical Education has come a long way in the last decade. CTE programs not only teach students real-world knowledge and skills but increasingly provide opportunities for dual enrollment, industry-recognized credentials and meaningful work-based learning experiences. Yet despite the many benefits of CTE—including a graduation rate for CTE students that is 93%, compared to a national average of 82%—there are still challenges with limited awareness and outdated perceptions of CTE.

Advance CTE, with support from the Siemens Foundation, commissioned focus groups and a national survey to explore the attitudes of parents and students currently involved in CTE, as well as prospective CTE parents and students, to better understand the promise and opportunity of CTE.

Perhaps the most significant finding is that parents and students engaged in CTE have significantly more satisfaction around the quality of their education and the opportunities they have for college and career readiness. Specifically, 55% of CTE parents and students are “very satisfied” with their overall school experience compared to just 27% of prospective parents and students.

In fact, parents and students engaged in CTE have higher levels of satisfaction across nearly all aspects of their educational experience compared to parents and students not engaged in CTE. About nine in 10 parents of CTE students were satisfied with their children’s opportunities to explore different careers and learn

real-world skills compared to just five in 10 parents of non-CTE students.

“College” and “careers” are often presented as separate paths—or even pitted against one another—but parents and students see these as complementary and desire both. Indeed, not only is college viewed as important, a four-year degree or higher is the post-high school plan for most students, whether involved in CTE or not. Nearly eight of 10 CTE students plan to attend college, including 62% who intend to attain a bachelor’s degree or higher, which is consistent with prospective students’ attainment goals.

Prospective parents and students want to hear about the tangible outcomes from CTE programs. The opportunity to gain “real-world” skills and benefits is a theme that is particularly compelling for all audiences surveyed.

When asked to select three elements from a list of facts about CTE programs that were most important to them personally, “CTE allows students to come out of high school with a real-world skill” was selected by 43% of prospective parents and students. Similarly, the notion that “CTE classes allow students to earn college credits while still in high school” was selected by 44% of prospective parents and students.

The term “Career and Technical Education” has been in use for almost two decades, but in many ways is still catching on as an option for parents and students. Just under half (47%) of

prospective parents and students report having ever heard of CTE. On the flip side, 68% of prospective parents and students had heard the term “vocational education.”

When asked what they think of CTE based on a short description, 89% of prospective parents cite a favorable impression, signaling support and interest in CTE. However, when prompted, a number of basic questions around how CTE programs work are raised: *When are classes available and for whom? Where are they offered? How do they fit with other required courses? Do they cost money for students?* This suggests clear, informative and proactive communications is critical.

To that end, here are key words and phrases to use with parents and students:

- “Real-world skills”
- “Hands-on experiences”
- “Explore career options and what you are passionate about”
- “Fulfilling, rewarding careers”
- “Career” and “career-focused”
- “Extra advantage for both college and careers”
- “Leadership” and “confidence”
- “Enhanced high school experience”

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