

STUDENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT



High-quality CTE programs of study provide students opportunities to gain career knowledge and engage in education and career planning and decision-making, including career counseling, career assessments, curriculum that helps students learn about careers, information about educational opportunities and workforce trends, and job search information and placement services. Some career development activities can easily be accomplished in a virtual or socially distanced environment, while others are more challenging.

Key Issues to Address

- Providing all students with access to high-quality career development
- Recruiting other staff to support career development
- Sharing up-to-date labor market information and information about educational opportunities with students
- Providing additional supports to help students plan for transitions
- Holding advising sessions, career fairs and other activities with social distancing or through virtual platforms
- Providing access to virtual career information and planning portals and career exploration activities

One of the biggest risks to student career development in a COVID-19-impacted school year is that these activities will not be prioritized given the growing demands on funding and on counselors' time, which is likely to be focused on addressing more immediate social-emotional, physical and academic needs of students. Secondary school counselors in particular face a myriad of other responsibilities that are likely to require significant attention, and postsecondary career advisors are also likely to face new or more time-consuming responsibilities. In a May 2020 National Association of Colleges and Employers [survey](#) of colleges, 38% of campus career centers had implemented a hiring freeze, 16% had already experienced budget cuts of more than 10% and 50% had imposed a spending freeze. It will be critical for CTE leaders and stakeholders to advocate for robust

career development services. Activities may need to be streamlined or integrated more seamlessly into coursework, or additional staff trained to support career development and maintain capacity for this important work.

Current economic conditions could also make future planning uncertain for students, particularly those selecting a program of study or nearing the end of their education. While many economists predict that most long-term job outlooks will remain stable, local economies are shifting dramatically in the short term. To help learners navigate these changes, career development professionals and instructors must have access to current education and workforce information and to professional development on labor market trends.

Educators and counselors will also need to be diligent about keeping learners and guardians, as appropriate, informed about further education and career options as well as opportunities such as work-based learning (WBL), career and technical student organizations (CTSOs), early postsecondary opportunities and articulated credit. Academic and career plans may need to be adjusted based on emerging student and economic needs, but it is important to specifically encourage high school seniors to maintain their momentum related to transitions, including tasks like applying to postsecondary institutions and completing the FAFSA, and for those approaching the end of their postsecondary education to continue intentionally planning for next steps. Frequent communication and low-cost incentives, such as contests, can encourage completion of these tasks. Students who graduated in spring 2020 may need continued access to campus career centers or online resources as they transition.

In-person Considerations

If students return to campuses, most campus-based career development activities should be able to continue with minor modifications to accommodate social distancing. Guardian meetings and interactions with business and community leaders, such as industry tours, guest speakers and mock interviews, may be able to occur with social distancing or may need to happen

virtually to reduce visitors to campus. At the postsecondary level, virtual career coaching may be offered to reduce student traffic in offices or common areas. Larger events such as career fairs or camps may need to be adapted for social distancing, with fewer attendees at a time or with students and companies signing up for small group or one-on-one interviews or sessions, or be reconceptualized into virtual offerings as described below.

Access and Equity Implications



When you are considering how to engage students in career development, remember that less privileged learners particularly benefit from being exposed to different occupations and industries, and may have connectivity issues that keep them from accessing virtual career exploration tools. In addition, low-income students, learners of color, students with disabilities and other learner groups have historically been tracked into certain career fields, which can consciously or unconsciously creep back into the system as counselors and educators navigate so many unprecedented challenges. Keeping these learners and their guardians, as appropriate, informed about all the possible options will be an equity challenge, and data should be carefully reviewed at regular intervals to ensure underrepresented students are accessing high-quality programs and services.

Remote Considerations

Fortunately, many online career exploration and development tools already provide a wealth of opportunities to continue with these activities virtually. These include career information and planning portals with education and career information, student interest and strength inventories, and portfolios; career exploration games; virtual platforms that expose learners to industry experts; and exploration tools and supports for transition for special populations.

Many states or schools already require students to complete academic and career plans through online platforms, and colleges and state workforce systems often offer online portals for exploring labor market and career information. Even more of these resources are likely to be made available if a significant portion of learning continues remotely.

These virtual tools can be integrated into course content, building on efforts that already began in the

spring, when many programs pivoted to career exploration. Live Q&A sessions for learners with counselors or mentors, interview and resume assistance, virtual industry chats or job shadowing, and independent career-focused research projects are all ways to engage students across the spectrum of career development activities virtually.

Career fairs and transition fairs can also be offered remotely through larger online meetings with postsecondary and industry representatives, as well as small group or one-on-one virtual meetings for interviews or Q&A. Examples of states, districts and institutions that harnessed virtual career exploration in spring 2020 are featured in the [Resources, Tools and Examples](#) section below.

In addition, counselors can also use phone calls, text messages/messaging apps and emails to continue to aid students in planning, or set up group and individual advising sessions and meetings on synchronous online platforms to discuss plans or provide tutorials on topics like completing the FAFSA. Social media channels can also provide information about career fairs, WBL and other opportunities to learners and guardians.



Blended Considerations

In blended learning scenarios it will be important to prevent career development activities from getting lost in the shuffle between campus-based activities and remote learning. In addition, careful attention will need to be paid to student schedules as it relates to their academic and career plans, to help them stay on track if the instructional calendar is adjusted to accommodate a blended model.



Resources, Tools and Examples

- A variety of online career exploration and planning platforms exist that can be harnessed for remote and socially distanced learning, including [Xello](#), [Kuder](#), [Naviance](#) and others.
- If your state does not have an online career information and planning system, learners can access [O*NET](#) for information on industry sectors, labor market trends, job duties and pay; or [CareerOneStop](#) for career exploration and planning resources.

- [Nepris](#) is a virtual platform that connects classrooms with industry professionals that has been used by education systems in [Washington, D.C.](#); [Texas](#); [Kansas City](#); [Orange County](#); and [Louisiana](#).
- [ConnectEd](#) has a library of “Day at Work” videos across occupations.
- Local examples of virtual career exploration include Mahoning County Educational Service Center’s weeklong [Virtual Exploration Tour 2020](#); Washington’s CareerConnect program, which transitioned to [CareerConnect@Home](#) this spring; and [Transition Tennessee](#), which hosted virtual transition fairs in spring 2020.
- [Explore-work.com](#) features web-based modules for students that align with the five required WIOA Pre-Employment Transition Services, and [T-Folio](#) is a free virtual transition portfolio.
- ACTE has an active division for [Counseling and Career Development](#).

This is an excerpt from [High-quality CTE: Planning for a COVID-19-impacted School Year](#). Access the complete guide for additional content about providing high-quality CTE programs in a COVID-19-impacted school year. **Last Update:** June 22, 2020

This document is not legal advice, nor is it an exhaustive list of every consideration or action that CTE educators may need to take for the 2020–21 school year. Readers should defer to federal, state, local and/or institution requirements and guidance. The instructional models, ideas, resources, tools and examples shared do not constitute endorsements of any products, services or strategies, as different products, services and strategies will work in different contexts. As knowledge is gained, this guide may be updated to incorporate new ideas and resources and emerging issues.



Student Career Development: Key Questions to Consider

Cross-cutting Questions

- How can educators, WBL coordinators, paraprofessionals or other staff assist with career development responsibilities, as many counselors and advisers focus on other needs?
- How can career development activities be embedded more fully into course content?
- How will you access information and professional development about understanding short-, medium- and long-term workforce projections and helping students navigate a changing economy?
- How can you keep all learners informed about their breadth of career and education options?
- How can you provide frequent communication and additional supports or incentives to help students transition along their career pathways, in light of uncertain economic conditions?

In-person Questions

- How and where can you meet with learners (and when needed, their guardians) for career advisement, while maintaining social distancing?
- How can you adapt interactions with business and community representatives, like industry tours, guest speakers and mock interviews, to maintain social distancing?
- How can you adapt career and transition fairs to social distancing? Can students and employers sign-up for one-on-one or small group meetings?
- Even if students return in person, how can you leverage virtual platforms for career advisement, career fairs and other career development and exploration experiences?

Remote Questions

- If you don't already have access to a virtual career information and planning portal, will your state, district or institution be making this investment, or are there free tools you can use? Which system would work best for your students?
- How can you advise learners through virtual tools, phone, messaging or email?
- How can you provide interactions with business and community representatives through virtual platforms?
- How can you help learners conduct research about careers using online resources and virtual consultation with industry professionals?
- How can you stage mock interviews, provide resume assistance or help students apply for further education or jobs through synchronous or asynchronous tools?
- How can you schedule and host virtual career or transition fairs that allow for synchronous, one-on-one or small group meetings?

Blended Questions

- How can you provide learners with access to career development resources both when they are at home and on campus?
- How can you work to ensure that any decisions made about instructional calendars, lab time or course offerings when moving to a blended schedule do not negatively affect students as they transition to the next step on their education and career pathways?