



ACCESS AND EQUITY

By Catherine Imperatore

HIGH-QUALITY CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PROGRAMS DEMONSTRATE COMMITMENT

to the success of students from different backgrounds and with varying needs. For this reason, Access and Equity is one of ACTE's 12 elements of high-quality CTE within the *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

The Access and Equity element of ACTE's quality framework includes seven criteria that describe program of study promotion; student recruitment; and inclusive strategies that support access and equity for various student populations, including by gender, race and ethnicity, and special population status (such as individuals with disabilities, individuals from economically disadvantaged families and English learners). The criteria listed below are from the 2018 version of the *ACTE Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

Criteria for Access and Equity in High-quality CTE Programs

- a. The program of study is promoted to all potential participants and their parents/guardians (as appropriate), in a manner that is free from bias, inclusive and nondiscriminatory.
- b. Students are actively recruited from populations that have been traditionally under-represented, including by gender, race and ethnicity, and/or special population status.
- c. Career guidance is offered to all potential and current program of study participants in a manner that is free from bias, inclusive and nondiscriminatory.

High-quality programs of study promote the program and recruit students in ways that are inclusive and intentional. Promotional materials, such as brochures,

posters, websites and social media, and presentations delivered at schools and community events, should feature a variety of students from different demographic groups and special populations. Messaging should be carefully crafted to ensure that it avoids explicit or implicit biases and communicates that a variety of students can be successful in the program of study.

In addition, if data shows that students from certain populations have been under-represented in a program of study, administrators and teachers can actively reach out to these populations to inform them about the program and how it can help them achieve their goals. Community organizations and student groups that represent particular populations can help you make these connections.

Career development professionals across the program of study can also help with promotion and recruitment, and are responsible for delivering unbiased career guidance that informs

all students of their options within CTE. Additional criteria about the delivery of high-quality career guidance are addressed under the Student Career Development element of the ACTE framework.

d. Facilities, equipment, technology and materials are provided in a way that ensures all students have the opportunity to achieve success in the program of study, including by meeting Title IX, Americans with Disabilities Act and other accessibility requirements.

e. Curriculum, instruction, materials and assessments are free from bias, inclusive and nondiscriminatory, and offered in a way that ensures all students have the opportunity to achieve success in the program of study, including through accommodations, as appropriate.

The content of the program of study must be delivered in a way that enables students from various populations to succeed in the program whenever possible. This includes ensuring that facilities and equipment not only meet legal accessibility requirements, but also are welcoming and inclusive for students with different needs and varying abilities. Curriculum, instruction, assessments and learning materials must be reviewed for explicit and implicit bias, and appropriate accommodations made available. For instance, programs of study that have integrated industry certification exams into their curricula should consult with the certification provider to determine what accommodations are available and appropriate.

Beyond these requirements, teachers should also strive to differentiate instruction for various learning styles. This concept is not addressed in the Access and Equity element of the ACTE *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*, but rather in the Engaging Instruction element.

f. Supportive services, such as tutoring and transportation assistance, are provided to ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve success in the program of study, as appropriate.

g. Appropriate actions are taken to eliminate barriers to extended learning experiences, such as work-based learning, CTSO participation and articulated credit, for all students, including special populations.

High-quality programs of study work to ensure access to work-based learning, career and technical student organization (CTSO) activities, and opportunities to earn articulated credit. For example, program staff can provide extra preparation and support to students with disabilities as well as their employers, to ensure work-based learning experiences are productive. In addition, programs of study should also consider providing logistical support and services such as tutoring, child care and transportation to ensure that students are able to focus on their coursework. This is particularly relevant for programs of study that support low-income youth and adults.

Community and business partners can often help with funding for these activities. A criterion addressing partner financial support for programs and students is included under the Business and Community Partnerships element. A related criterion in the Facilities, Equipment, Technology and Materials element calls on programs of study to maximize student access to facilities and equipment through partnerships and flexible delivery methods — a concept with particular relevance to rural and resource-limited programs.

Success Strategy: Inclusive Equipment and Materials

Assessing a program of study's commitment to access and equity can mean taking a new perspective. Roseburg High School participated in the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity Education Foundation's Program Improvement Process for Equity (PIPE) training in 2015, with support from the Oregon Department of Education. By conducting an equity environmental scan and student surveys, program staff learned that young women were not participating in manufacturing courses, in part because protective gear was too large for them to wear comfortably and safely. Armed with this information, Roseburg invested in smaller helmets, gloves and jackets;

developed a survey course to expose freshmen to each of the school's CTE programs, including welding; highlighted female welding students in community events; and invested, with funding from the Douglas Education Service District, in educator professional development on equity. By the following semester, female enrollment in welding had increased by more than 800 percent.

Tools to Promote Quality

To ensure all students have access to high-quality programs of study, and opportunities to succeed within those programs, practitioners can turn to ACTE's High-quality CTE Tools online library. Resources within the Access and Equity section address messaging to promote CTE; equity gap analysis and program improvement; overcoming barriers to work-based learning and CTSO activities for students from special populations; and specific, inclusive strategies for rural students, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, low-skilled adults, English language learners and nontraditional program participants.

Practitioners can also use the *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework Self-evaluation Instrument* to assess a single program or multiple programs across a district or institution, in relation to ACTE's 12 elements of high-quality CTE. The rubric can be completed on paper or online, where users can receive automatically calculated scores, save and print their results, and be connected to the online library for areas identified as needing improvement. ■

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Quality CTE Program of Study Framework and Self-evaluation Instrument: www.acteonline.org/high-quality-CTE

High-quality CTE Tools Online Library: www.acteonline.org/high-quality-CTE