



BREAKING BARRIERS & BUILDING CONFIDENCE:

Georgia CTI provides personal and professional development opportunities for students with disabilities.

By Kathryn E. Shirey

S

tudent leadership organizations stand as pillars of opportunity, providing invaluable experiences and skill development for students across the nation. They offer students an arena to refine and demonstrate the skills they have developed, bridging the gap between the career and technical education (CTE) classroom and real-world applications. Yet, for students with disabilities (SWD), accessing these transformative programs is often fraught with challenges.

A unique program situated in the South, Georgia Career and Technical Instruction (Georgia CTI) is tailored explicitly for SWD. Georgia CTI is a testament to the visionary zeal of educators and administrators determined to bridge this gap. Together they are empowering SWD to pursue their college and career aspirations. It is the hope of this author that this pioneering effort signifies a paradigm shift, where students with disabilities are supported.

Promote meaningful learning opportunities.

Georgia CTI is a comprehensive program designed explicitly for students with a diverse range of disabilities. Student members attend conferences and competitions, and they often receive support services within their CTE courses. This results in higher rates of CTE pathway completion. EOPA pass rates are higher as well.

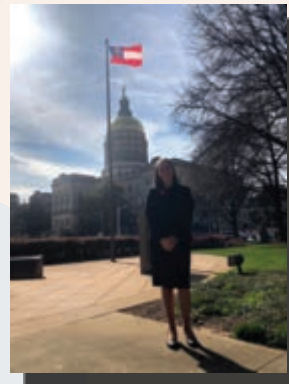
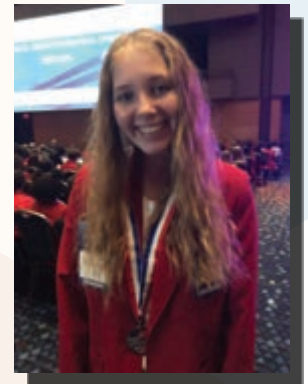
Every aspect of Georgia CTI is intertwined and meticulously crafted to ensure inclusivity and provide meaningful learning opportunities. At the heart of it all lies a collaborative culture, from the local school level all the way to the partnerships forged between state agencies, the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) and the Georgia Department of Education (DOE). These alliances have been instrumental in driving forward the mission of inclusivity in CTE for SWD, laying the groundwork for a more accessible and equitable educational and workforce landscape.

Georgia CTI helps students grow in their confidence and abilities to compete against their nondisabled peers.

Leverage business and community partnerships.

Georgia CTI fosters a seamless continuum of support from the classroom to the workforce, setting students up for sustained success. GVRA plays a pivotal role in providing support services to SWD, facilitating their transition from school to the workforce. Through individualized guidance and resources, GVRA equips students with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of the job market. This partnership enhances Georgia CTI's efficacy, further bridging the gap between education and employment and fostering sustainable career pathways for SWD.

Similarly, the collaboration with and support from the Georgia DOE underscores a shared commitment to advancing inclusivity in CTE. Through strategic initiatives and policy frameworks, the DOE champions the rights and aspi-



“Through my involvement in Georgia CTI events, I gained the confidence to pursue my interests further, eventually competing in FFA and SkillsUSA.”

-Kassidy

rations of all learners. They work in tandem with Georgia CTI to dismantle barriers and expand opportunities for SWD. From curriculum development to teacher training, the DOE’s involvement enriches the program’s pedagogical foundations, ensuring that it remains responsive to the evolving needs of students and reflective of best practices in inclusive education.

Georgia’s pioneering approach to inclusion exemplifies the transformative power of visionary leadership and collaborative effort. As Georgia continues to refine and enhance its programming, we ask policymakers to champion equity in student organizations on a broader scale.

Georgia CTI’s model holds the promise of catalyzing a national conversation. It offers a roadmap toward a more equitable and accessible educational and workforce landscape. Let us answer the call to action, ensuring that every student, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to realize their fullest potential in CTE.

Kathryn E. Shirey, M.Ed., is a dedicated advocate for inclusive education and workforce participation, driven by her personal and professional experiences. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in school improvement at the University of West Georgia, where her dissertation is focused on access and equity within CTE. Shirey is also involved in various professional affiliations and memberships,

including ACTE, the Council for Exceptional Children, Kappa Delta Pi, and the National Society of Leadership and Success. Further, she currently serves as the president-elect of the Georgia Association for Career Educators of Special Populations and provides guidance as a board of directors adviser for Georgia CTI.

REFERENCE

Georgia CTI. (2023). Education is a path to success in life. <https://georgiacti.org/>

With questions or inquire about starting a CTI organization in your state, reach out to Kathryn E. Shirey.
kat.shirey5@gmail.com

**BREAKING
BARRIERS
& BUILDING
CONFIDENCE:**

Hear from our students.

"Being a part of Georgia CTI has shown me that having a disability isn't something to be ashamed of, and that I am not alone." **-Caleb**

"I have a speech impairment, but when I am at a CTI event, I am not scared to talk to anyone because I am not scared that they will judge me. They don't care that I have a speech impairment." **-Brittany**

"When someone new comes, no matter who they are, they'll always belong!" **-Brelle**

"Without the support of my CTI coordinator and the experiences from Georgia CTI events, I would have never signed up for SkillsUSA. And I would have never competed at the National Level with SkillsUSA!" **-Kenslie**

90%

of students served by CTI graduate with a high school diploma.

"I was always worried that people would figure out I was different. And things always seemed harder for me than they were for others. I tried to fly under the radar and not get noticed, but one day, I decided to try CTI. I will forever be thankful for Georgia CTI and the part it played in who I am today!

When I joined Georgia CTI and participated in the events, it didn't take long to lose any worry about my learning disability being exposed, as everyone there faced their own challenges. It was a space where I felt emboldened to explore new endeavors fearlessly!

In my sophomore year of high school, I decided to take my involvement to the next level by running for a position on Georgia CTI's state officer team. I was elected and served as the state president for two consecutive years! This role afforded me the opportunity to connect with individuals from all corners of Georgia, collaborating closely with representatives from the Georgia Department of Education and legislators to drive positive change.

I am now a sophomore at the University of West Georgia, majoring in social and behavioral health. Georgia CTI helped ensure that my transition from high school was successful!" **-Kassidy**

Hear from our students' families.

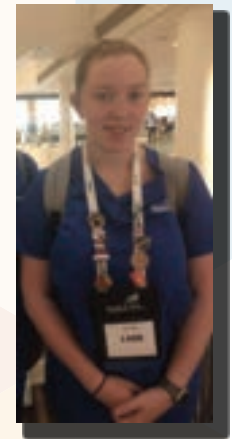
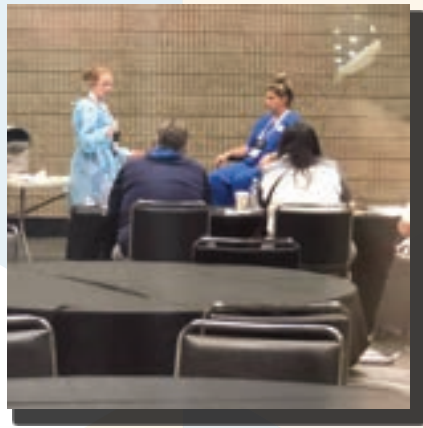
"Being a part of the CTI program has enhanced our scholar's self-confidence, communication, and leadership skills, in addition to providing him with opportunities to collaborate in a team-oriented environment with peers working toward a common goal. The CTI leadership conferences and field trips have been rewarding experiences that will continue to help him grow personally and academically!" **-Selena**

"The CTI program should be in every high school! This program builds confidence, empowers, and promotes leadership in its students. The program teaches students that they can accomplish their goals." **-Justina**

95%

of CTI students who graduate high school then enroll in postsecondary education or enter the workforce within a year.

(Georgia CTI, 2023)



		Georgia CTI Competitions															
		Advertising Campaign	Agricultural Science	Automotive Service Technology	Career Exploration Manual and Job Interview	Catering-Food Service Prep	Clinical Skills	Community/ Civic Awareness	Computer Applications	Construction Technology	Cosmetology/ Hair Design	Cosmetology/ Nail Design	CTAE Showcase	Culinary Arts (Professional Foods)	Drafting & Design	Early Childhood Education	Flo
U.S. DOE recognized CTE Career Clusters	Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources																
	Architecture and Construction																
	Arts, A/V and Communications																
	Education and Training																
	Finance																
	Government and Public Administration																
	Health Science																
	Hospitality and Tourism																
	Human Services																
	Information Technology																
	Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security																
	Manufacturing																
	Marketing, Sales, Services																
	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics																
	Transportation, Distribution and Logistics																

To access the complete chart, and gain a better understanding of how Georgia CTI competitions align with CTE career pathways, read *Techniques* online. acteonline.org/tech-building-confidence

FIGURE 1: Georgia CTI competitions align with career clusters.

MAY 2024

Techniques

CONNECTING EDUCATION AND CAREERS

ACTEONLINE.ORG



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

IN Underserved Communities

- Innovative, community-centered education
- Breaking barriers & building confidence
- National Policy Seminar makes the case for CTE
- Nuts & bolts of inclusion
- Preparing students for life after high school



PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATION FOR
CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION
ACTEONLINE.ORG • \$7.00