

THE ADVOCATE

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Make the Time

Use technology to save time and reach students where they roam.

5



Activity Connection

An innovative challenge invites students to solve a problem using STEM skills, a mobile app, and lots of ingenuity.

5

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News of Note

A Boston school finds that a creative mix of arts and academics inspires students to attend college.

6

Let X = CTSOs

Co-Curriculars + Common Core = 21st Century Skills

BY KATHLEEN WILSON SHRYOCK

Our society is on the move. Blink-of-an-eye advances in technology, changes in skill requirements, and evolving expectations from recruiters can make it difficult for today's high school students to transition into college or career. With these advancements giving rise to new challenges and opportunities, many agree that an education based solely on academics is not enough. Instead, students need to develop the skills that will help them connect classroom learning with real-world applications. Integral activities that support the curriculum, such as those offered by National Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), provide students with the skills needed to make a successful leap into college and career.

"We know that the world is not just changing rapidly, it is changing exponentially," said Jean-Claude Brizard, senior advisor at the College Board. "Students must be able to participate beyond simply evolving with the work; they must be architects of this evolution. For this to be possible, students must develop strong critical thinking, analytical, reasoning, and communications skills in order to succeed in college and life." Brizard, whose organization is committed to preparing students for a successful college experience, believes that rigorous coursework with built-in relevance is important. Beyond simply advising students that a course is required for graduation, a creatively constructed curriculum that allows students to connect their schoolwork with outside applications is essential.

For Ruth Lohmeyer, counseling center team lead at Lincoln Northeast High School (Lincoln, NE) and an American School Counselor Association counselor of the year finalist, the college and career readiness of students is a priority. Through advice and intervention, Lohmeyer's counseling team has increased the school's graduation rate by 8% within a ↻

Within the next 10 years,

63% of all jobs in the U.S. will require some **post-secondary education**

and **90%** of new jobs in growing, high wage industries will require some

post-secondary education

Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010



three-year period and increased the rate of students who go to college by 15% within a five-year period. In a school where 70% of students are first generation college attendees, providing opportunities for students to actively engage is important. “High school is the place where students explore careers matched to their unique skills, personality, and interests,” she said. “By focusing on college and career readiness, students graduate from high school with a sense of purpose and a confident direction.”

Students at Lincoln Northeast begin preparing for college and career in the ninth grade. While some skeptics express concern about students feeling pressured this early in their high school career, Lohmeyer explains that it is not too soon for students to begin identifying possible interests. “The better the students know themselves, the better choices they can make,” said Lohmeyer. “Student activities help students figure out their unique gifts and interests so that they can make good decisions about how they spend their time.”

The research supports Lohmeyer’s mantra that a successful student is an involved student, and the benefits continue throughout adulthood. Studies indicate that participants in middle and high school student activities are more likely to enroll in college,¹ stay enrolled,² get better grades,³ graduate from college,⁴ and pursue graduate school education.⁵ In addition, students who participate in one or more activities in each year of high school are 80% more likely to volunteer, 70% more likely to attend college, and 60% more likely to vote.⁶

For students and teachers who have experienced the impact of integral student programs through a CTSO, the positive correlation between student involvement and college and career readiness comes as no surprise. Many of these organizations have been providing students with opportunities to connect classroom instruction with hands-on career and technical experiences for decades.

Dr. Ed Davis, executive director of DECA, explains that CTSOs provide teachers with the tools to expand the classroom and engage their students. Because the activities are co-curricular and align with common core standards, they often are presented during class

time. This gives all students, including those who are unable to participate in traditional after-school activities, the opportunity to participate. As a result, students are able to apply the knowledge and skills they are learning in the classroom to relevant, rigorous projects. “(CTSOs) create learning communities where students can bond with other students (who) are focused and goal-oriented,” said Davis. “They can apply 21st century skills such as creativity, problem solving, teamwork, and planning to their co-curricular activities.”

Dan Brown, director of the Future Educators Association, agrees that co-curricular programs are relevant to students’ interests and correlate with the demands of the working world. “Real life doesn’t start after school ends,” said Brown. “We often describe life after formal schooling as ‘the real world,’ but we are kidding ourselves. High school is a prime time for adolescents—and especially budding educators—to develop and stretch these crucial ‘real-life’ skills.” Interactive student programs that support the curriculum offer authentic, relevant opportunities for students to learn, to network, and to lead in their areas of interest.

The evidence affirms the effectiveness of CTSO activities in promoting college and career readiness. According to a study by the National Center for Career and Technical Education, students who participate in CTSOs have higher academic motivation, academic engagement, grades, career self-efficacy, college aspirations, and employability skills than non-CTSO students.⁷ In 2011, the National Research Center for College and University Admissions reported that close to 85% of CTSO members indicated that their experiences in a CTSO had a positive effect on their academic performance. The same research indicated that in a study of 10th grade students, those who were active in CTSOs were more likely to be enrolled in college at age 21 than other students.⁸ Research completed by DECA indicates that participation in DECA influences the college and career plans of more than 80% of its members.⁹ In 2013, the Technology Student Association (TSA) reported that of its 190,000 middle and high school student members, 100% are likely to graduate from high school and 75% are college bound.¹⁰

Career and Technical Student Organizations

Business Professionals of America (BPA)



For students pursuing careers in business management, office administration, information technology, and other related career fields. www.bpa.org

DECA (formerly Distributive Education Clubs of America)



Prepares students for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management. www.deca.org

Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)



Prepares students in all areas of business and related fields by bringing business and education together through innovative leadership and career development programs. www.fbla.org

Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)



Promotes personal growth and leadership development through family and consumer science education. www.fcclainc.org

Future Educators Association (FEA)



Dedicated to supporting young people interested in education-related careers. www.futureeducators.org

FFA (formerly Future Farmers of America)



Develops student potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. www.ffa.org

HOSA—Future Health Professionals of America



Promotes career opportunities in health care. www.hosa.org

SkillsUSA



Serves teachers and high school and college students who are preparing for careers in trade, technical, and skilled service occupations, including health occupations. www.skillsusa.org

Technology Student Association (TSA)



Provides leadership and opportunities in technology, innovation, design, engineering, and STEM learning. www.tsaweb.org

“...students who participate in one or more activities in each year of high school are 80% more likely to volunteer, 70% more likely to attend college, and 60% more likely to vote.”

Dr. Rosanne White, executive director of TSA, explains that CTSO involvement is effective for a number of reasons. “When students first enter a high school, large or small, they are looking for a place to belong,” she said. “TSA and other CTSOs help students develop that sense of belonging. Students become part of a team participating in activities that connect them to school socially and academically.”

The local, state, and national competitions featured by many CTSOs allow students to develop these important social and curriculum-related connections in an interactive setting. The National FFA offers 24 Career Development Events targeting skills from communications to management to mechanics. Students compete as individuals or in teams to showcase how well they can apply classroom knowledge to situations relevant to the agriculture industry. Jenna Clark, education specialist for FFA, notes that these events provide students with a realistic vision of life after high school. “Not only are our students using the skills they learned in the classroom, but they are also working with college professors and business leaders who offer direction and feedback,” she said. “The events are a great opportunity to learn about future college and career opportunities.”

TSA’s competitions encourage students to use science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills to address real-world problems. White explains that TSA’s programs are intentionally designed to connect students to proficiencies they will need for 21st century employment. “The competitions entice students to get involved, challenge themselves, and work as a team,” said White. “When students are engaged and excited about what they are doing, it’s fun. They are learning valuable career skills without even knowing it. It’s an affordable, effective way to expose students to career training while they are still in high school.”

DECA also uses competitive events to help students develop skills. Each event is designed to support national curriculum standards in marketing, finance, hospitality, or management. Competition criteria are tied directly to common core state standards and the development of employability skills.

Bill Hembree, a small business owner and former member of the Georgia House of Representatives, believes his high school experiences with DECA were instrumental in shaping his career and providing him with the skills to succeed. “Young people need direction in high school and college. Today’s job market rewards those students with specific skills,” he said. “DECA-sponsored local, state, and national events allowed me to compete with other students and gain valuable real-world experience. I learned how to start a small business with a plan that included many of the same advertising and sales techniques I use in my insurance business

today.” DECA also helped Hembree develop public speaking skills and a service-oriented mindset, assets that have served him well in his career as a state representative and in his continued role as a supporter of youth and education initiatives.

For Joan Snyder Kuhl, entrepreneur and founder of Why Millennials Matter, engaging activities gave roots to her career aspirations. “I grew up in a small town. While I had always dreamed about being a business leader in a big city, I didn’t have a lot of exposure,” she said. “I was challenged to write and present a business plan and placed in the top three in the nation. The business fundamentals and presentation skills I learned from competing helped me explore career options early on. DECA opened doors and showed me that I was not limited, that I could take my business skills anywhere and even be an entrepreneur.”

Brizard agrees that co-curricular activities can help students develop competencies that will be important in college, career, and future life. Most college applications ask about student activities because they can reveal information about a student that test scores and grades cannot. Brizard recommends that students—and their advisers—be cognizant of activities that show authentic interests, responsibility, and marketable skills. “Admission officers are interested in seeing a student’s interests and personality through co- and extra-curricular activities, but they don’t want to see students overextend themselves unnecessarily,” he said. “Students should be encouraged to get involved in the activities that really interest them and where they can demonstrate leadership abilities.”

Our fast-paced society offers a wealth of always-evolving opportunities for students who are prepared to meet the challenges. Integral activities through a CTSO can provide students with the skills and direction to achieve success in post-secondary education and employment. “College teachers and administrators tell us that students with these types of experiences are more likely to be successful in college because they have clearer goals and understand the relevance of their college work. Business leaders tell us that these are the kinds of experienced (applicants) they want in their candidate pool,” said Davis. “Co-curricular activities change lives.” ●

FOR MORE INFORMATION about college and career planning, visit these helpful sites:

American School Counselor Association at www.schoolcounselor.org.

College Board at www.collegeboard.org

Lincoln Northeast High School Counseling Center at www.a4sa.org/LincolnNE.

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College and Career Planning Strategies

THE ROAD TO COLLEGE AND CAREER can be difficult to navigate. While high school students must develop the skills necessary for independent living and learning, they also need advice and support from seasoned champions; adult guides-on-the-side who can steer students toward the appropriate resources for post-secondary planning. By using the following strategies, parents and other adult champions can team up with their students to create a custom-made map to future success.

- Keep in mind that the biggest decision isn't choosing what college to attend but making the deliberate choice to move on to the next level. Post-secondary plans aren't limited to college but can include vocational schools, two- or four-year colleges or universities, and military service.
- An early assessment of a student's interests and unique gifts can link coursework and activities to career exploration. At Lincoln Northeast High School in Lincoln, NE, interest assessments begin in the ninth grade. Rather than pressuring students to make an early career choice, lead counselor Ruth Lohmeyer says it is an opportunity for students to invest in the next 50 years of life by exploring options while still in high school.
- Connect students to professionals who are actively working in the field of interest. Help students locate job shadowing programs, internships, or other opportunities to converse with mentors.
- Encourage students to take advantage of rigorous coursework through honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Jean-Claude Brizard, senior advisor at College Board, explains that students who participate in advanced classes are more likely to enroll in—and graduate from—college than those who do not. SpringBoard is a readiness program by College Board that integrates rigorous instruction with professional development. For more information, visit www.collegeboard.org.
- Seek opportunities for students to participate in career fairs, college search workshops, and financial aid seminars. Take advantage of resources offered by the high school, local colleges, or other community organizations.
- Open new doors for a student who is struggling to define goals by suggesting that he or she enroll in a unique course that is outside of his or her typical areas of study.
- Help students draft a long-term plan including courses they plan to take during their four years of high school. College Board's online resource, www.bigfuture.org, includes tools to help students and their parents create a comprehensive action plan.
- "Encourage students to prepare a balanced college resume by looking at themselves in 3D," suggests Lohmeyer. This means pursuing a balanced mix of academics, activities, and community service.
- Begin the college search early. Colleges often look different in person than they do through a website or brochure. If possible, visit schools of interest, walk the campus with your student, talk to current attendees, and meet face-to-face with a representative.
- Research available scholarships and sources of financial aid. These four sites are a good place to start: www.finaid.org, www.meritaid.com, www.zinch.com, and www.fastweb.com.
- Encourage your student to be involved in integral activities that complement their interests and challenge them to develop valuable skills that aren't always measured by academics. CTSO involvement is a great way for students to connect classroom learning with real-world applications.

Remember that college and career planning is a process that takes years. Small interventions and encouragement from an adult champion can provide students with the confidence to keep moving forward, one step at a time. ●

COLLEGE & CAREER RESOURCES



STATE CTSO PROFILES

The Career and Technical Student Organizations have created a one-page flier to assist with advocacy for career and technical education in your state.



COLLEGE BOARD

This organization strives to ensure that every student has the opportunity to prepare for, enroll in, and graduate from college. Their website includes comprehensive resources for educators, parents, and students.



BIG FUTURE

A complete college planning guide for students and their parents presented by the College Board.

a4sa.org/resources



NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION - STEM

This page from the NEA provides ideas and resources that can help educators connect students with the valuable science, technology, engineering, and math skills they will need in college and career.



COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS AND SUCCESS CENTER

This center at American Institutes for Research provides states and other CCRS stakeholders with the information and resources to ensure that all students are ready for success in college and careers.



COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS: A QUICK STATS FACT SHEET

This fact sheet offers findings and statistics on the current status of high school graduates' readiness for life after high school.

Technology Time Savers

MATT SOETH is the video production teacher and activity director at John C. Kimball High School in Tracy, CA. He is also the technology coordinator for the California Association of Directors of Activities (www.cada1.org). With such a busy schedule, Soeth is always on the lookout for time saving tools. He has found that reaching students where they roam, through their cell phones, is an effective and efficient way to manage communications.

Soeth recommends these four applications for ease, purpose, and professionalism:

Remind101 is a private mass texting app that allows users to send messages to a group of students, parents, or peers. Messages can be prepared in advance and sent at a preprogrammed time. Soeth has used this app to remind a class of a pending assignment, advise the entire school of a spirit day, or communicate with parents about back-to-school night. www.remind101.com



Cel.ly is a group text application similar to Remind101. The primary difference is that Cel.ly is more interactive and users have the added option of allowing recipients to respond, ask questions, or even participate in a group discussion. cel.ly

Wiggio is a free, online toolkit that facilitates group interaction. It is a great place to create and share documents and hold online discussions. It can be linked to your email or cellphone, so it is easy to communicate on projects and make sure that students are on task. www.wiggio.com

HootSuite is a great tool for managing social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and Google+ by linking them together. For a small monthly fee, you can access data about audience interaction with your networks. www.HootSuite.com



Soeth notes that all of these apps can be managed from a smart phone. Because today's teens prefer phone communications, he recommends that educators use technology to their advantage. "The more we can be a voice on social media and model professional interaction, the more successful we will be as teachers and the more successful our students will be," he said.

Soeth also recommends that schools implement a social media policy outlining the rules for online communication. If there is not a policy in place, meet with the administrator to clarify the purposes and modes of student-teacher communications.

TO LEARN MORE about the use of technology to manage classroom communications, visit www.mattsoeth.com. ●

Solving the Challenge with STEM Skills

THE VERIZON INNOVATIVE App Challenge, co-sponsored by Technology Student Association (TSA), the Verizon Foundation, Samsung, and the MIT Center for Mobile Learning, invites teams of middle school and high school students to design an original mobile application that will effectively address a local need. The goal of organizers is to provide an engaging learning experience while increasing interest and abilities in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills.

In 2012, students from Emory H. Markle Intermediate School in Hanover, PA, joined with more than 3,000 students from across the nation to accept the challenge. The Markle team's award-winning app, Voice Notes +, was designed to help students who have a difficult time taking notes in class. The app can be used to record lectures, organize a student's notes for review, and enhance them with Internet study resources.

For TSA co-advisers Jana Z. Bonds and Melissa Wilson, the competition provided their students with relevant experiences that stressed STEM. "Students had to use STEM concepts in every aspect of the Challenge," said Bonds. "They used the engineering design process to develop the project, math for software programming, and technology to test and evaluate their prototypes." Opportunities to collaborate, problem solve, and even work with an MIT engineer provided additional real-world experiences.

Daphne Weiss, an eighth grader at Markle in 2012, gained valuable skills from her work on the Challenge. "The project definitely opened (my) eyes to the computer science field," she said. "Understanding programming is a great skill to have in any career. The time management and teamwork skills that my group developed will be helpful for the rest of our lives."

According to STEMconnector, 80% of the fastest growing careers in the country require STEM skills, but the United States is not graduating enough STEM-savvy students to meet this need.¹ Opportunities like the App Challenge can pave the way to college and career. "When my middle school students are ready to enter the workforce, there may be jobs out there that haven't even been created yet," said Bonds. "Society is changing and by teaching our students not just basic content but how to think, problem solve, and work with others, we are preparing them to survive and flourish in the future." ●

TO LEARN MORE about the Verizon Innovative App Challenge or to enter your team in the current competition, go to www.appchallenge.tsaweb.org.

TO READ MORE about the importance of STEM skills in business and industry, read this article from STEMconnector at www.a4sa.org/STEMconnect.

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Arts and Academics Are Inseparable

IN 1998, the Boston Arts Academy (BAA) in Boston, MA was founded on the premise that academics and the arts are equally important to the academic, social, and emotional development of students. Today, the city's first and only public high school for the visual and performing arts is proving that the integration of arts and academics is a winning combination. Through a rigorous curriculum, students are preparing to graduate from high school and to make the successful transition to college and career.

Currently, the school hosts more than 400 students that are reflective of Boston's economically- and ethnically-diverse population. Over 50% come from low-income households. Administrators believe that the combination of arts and academics allows students with a variety of learning styles to nurture their creativity. 94% of BAA's graduates go on to college.

Because of its innovative use of the arts as a strategy for improving student success, especially in an urban setting, many education stakeholders are interested in exploring BAA's model. As a result, the academy is also home to the Center for Arts in Education, an outreach organization that provides professional development programs and resources for schools and educators. ●

TO READ A DETAILED ARTICLE about BAA and its innovative programs, go to: www.edutopia.org/cross-training. Originally published 10/19/2006 © Edutopia.org; The George Lucas Educational Foundation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about BAA and the Center for Arts in Education, visit www.bostonartsacademy.org and www.bostonartsacademy.org/center



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Success in college & career

when **x** = participation in one or more student activities *in each year of high school*

STUDENTS ARE

- 80% MORE LIKELY** to volunteer
- 70% MORE LIKELY** to go to college
- 60% MORE LIKELY** to vote

than those who only participated in an activity *in some years*

Zaff, Moore, Papillo, and Williams (2003) Journal of Adolescent Research

CTSO Career and Technical Student Organizations offer the perfect opportunity for students to learn and develop academic, technical, and employability skills which are necessary in today's workforce.

when **x** = no participation in student activities

STUDENTS ARE

- 60% LESS LIKELY** to volunteer
- 75% LESS LIKELY** to go to college
- 35% LESS LIKELY** to vote

than those who participated

Zaff, Moore, Papillo, and Williams (2003) Journal of Adolescent Research

Make the Time.
Alliance for Student Activities
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THE ADVOCATE

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