



# **Supporting Special Populations Students in CTE**

A self-paced online course for CTE leaders  
and instructors



# **Module Five**

# **Supporting Non-Traditional**

# **Students**

# Who are “Non-Traditional” Students?

“Non-traditional fields” refers to occupations or fields of work for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work.



# Examples of Non-Traditional Fields for Females

- Aviation maintenance or service technicians
- Engineering (all civil, aerospace, etc.)
- Law enforcement (detectives and criminal investigators)
- Construction trades
- Welding
- Computer programmer
- Electrician
- Pipe layers, plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters



# Examples of Non-Traditional Fields for Males



- Administrative support
- Cosmetology
- Dental Hygienist
- Occupational and Physical Therapist
- Nurses, Phlebotomist, Physician's Assistant
- Massage Therapist

# Why Focus on Non-Traditional Students?

- Federal funding for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs includes the stipulation that schools seek to dispel gender stereotypes in career preparation programs for occupations employing less than 25% of one gender.
- To reach this goal, schools and states must set targets, and annually report progress in increasing the percentage of “non-traditional” students who enroll and complete CTE programs.

# Barriers to Non-Traditional Students

Gender equity issues pose significant barriers to recruiting students into programs for nontraditional fields.

- Many students cannot picture themselves working in non-traditional fields, making typical recruitment strategies less effective.
- Cultural and family expectations exert strong influences on student career choices.

# Did You Know?

- Traditional methods that foster girls' interest in STEM careers (print advertising, site visits, demonstrations) do not make a strong impact.
- For women, **self-confidence and efficacy** in the field precede interest.

*“Women must feel confident in their abilities before they will develop interest in a career.”  
Allison and Cossette, 2007*



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# ▶ Confidence with Knowledge is Essential!

- Provide consistent information to students, parents, caregivers, and educators about all careers **including non-trad options**.
- Provide consistent career exploration activities to stimulate non-trad prospect interest.
- Emphasize potential earnings for nontraditional careers.
- Prepare program information for parents, caregivers, and educators that includes perspectives on non-traditional careers.
- Work with employer partners to identify non-trad role models.
- Educate faculty and staff on bias, both personal and institutional, and the barriers for students seeking nontraditional careers.



# Promote Non-Traditional Fields to Students & Families

1. Early awareness about non-traditional fields

2. Sponsor Non-traditional student days.

3. Information sessions for families about non-traditional fields.

4. Invite current non-traditional fields to be mentors.

5. Seek permission to present non-trad in information videos

6. Focus on hiring non-trad teachers.

7. Recruit non-trad field reps to the program committees

8. Feature non-trad workers on field trips.



# Recruitment Strategies

- Provide workshops, career fairs, career panels, and other events.
- Discuss local employment opportunities. Emphasize the potential earnings of nontraditional careers.
- Invite students and parents to a program site to eliminate misconceptions.
- Establish mentoring programs for students that connect them with those working in non-traditional fields.
- Ask instructors and directors to share their expertise and insight on recruiting and retaining non-traditional students.



# Tips for Marketing Materials

- In photos, show nontraditional students working.
- Include pictures with colleagues of another gender working as peers.
- Include pictures with individuals in context to reduce stereotypes.
- For radio and TV, use nontraditional student voiceover.
- Use gender inclusive language.

## Strategies – Classroom Supports for Non-Traditional CTE

- Anticipate gender-related issues (e.g., separate changing rooms, varied equipment sizes).
- Identify conditions or situations that might create discomfort (e.g., identify terms and actions that may be perceived as gender-specific).
- Take steps to identify activities that positively affect the performance and completion rate of all your students.



## More Strategies to Support Non-Traditional CTE Students

Continued...

- Avoid team segregation by gender.
- Still, allow for same gender pairing.
- Make career and continuing education information available to all students in the classroom.
- Invite professionals to talk positively about a mixed gender work environment.

# Retaining Non-Traditional Students

Why might students leave nontraditional programs?

- Poor classroom climate
- Student isolation based on gender
- Lack of role models or successful mentors
- Gender-biased instructional and support strategies
- External conditions such as lack of support from parents/guardians and peers



# Strategies to Retain Non-Traditional CTE Students

Peer support groups for non-traditional students



Organize a student mentoring program pairing older and younger non trad students.



Surround non-traditional students with resources that reinforce their program selection.





# Promising Practices in Supporting Non-Traditional Students

[York County School of Technology: Non-traditional Student Day](#)

[Western Montgomery CTC: Utilizing Recruitment Strategies to Increase Enrollment](#)

[Carbon CTI: Non-Traditional Student Recruitment Video](#)

[Eastern Westmoreland CTC: Non-Traditional Student Recruiting Day](#)



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# Module Five Resources

[Pennsylvania Department of Education: Nontraditional Programs](#)

[Resource Guide: Publications & Electronic Resources Relating to Special Populations](#)

[Nontraditional Career Preparation Root Causes and Strategies](#)

[Nontraditional Career Preparation Root Causes and Strategies](#)

[Strategies to Increase Access and Success for Underrepresented Students in Career and Technical Education & STEM](#)

[Increasing Access, Equity and Diversity: NAPE's Program Improvement Process for Equity](#)

[The Power of Micromessages in Marketing, Recruitment and Success in CTE](#)

# Module Five Assignment

**Please complete the Module Five Prompts (Reflection Journal):**

1. What information from today's lesson was the most interesting to you? Why was it the most interesting and how will you use it in your teaching?
2. How can you encourage fostering self-esteem and self-efficacy with nontraditional students?



# Contact/Mission

For more information on supporting special populations students in CTE, please visit PDE's website at [www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov)

*The mission of the department is to academically prepare children and adults to succeed as productive citizens. The department seeks to ensure that the technical support, resources and opportunities are in place for all students, whether children or adults, to receive a high-quality education.*

