

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Closing Equity Gaps in Career and Technical Education

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Building equitable career and technical education in the nation's capital

Career and technical education (CTE) programs help high school students make informed decisions about postsecondary education and careers. Data from the District of Columbia's Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) indicate that not all students participate in CTE coursework, potentially missing out on the economic and social benefits that District programming offers. Since 2018, we have partnered with District administrators to collect and analyze data on student participation and persistence in CTE coursework to identify gaps and consider strategies to ensure that all students have equitable access to CTE programming.

Digging into the data

Education Northwest analyses of District data reveal differences in student participation and concentration in CTE coursework and the need to address persistent inequities in student access to quality programming. To address these challenges, we consulted with OSSE administrators to develop a workshop training series to support educators in improving student access to, persistence in, and outcomes from completing CTE programming. The initial training focused on building a shared understanding of the types of data that currently exist and the importance of applying an equity lens when analyzing results. Subsequent trainings covered investigating districtwide and school CTE data to help identify performance gaps, conducting a root cause analysis to determine the underlying factors affecting observed outcomes, and creating an operational plan to support educators in applying a strategic approach to improving programs.

Training educators to recognize and close gaps

This partnership's explorations of CTE data have enabled educators to identify gaps in student engagement in CTE programming and differences across CTE career areas and among student groups. For example, the data shows gaps between male and female students participating and persisting in some CTE programming. We also observed inequities for students experiencing poverty, those with disabilities, and those who are emergent bilingual.

Our workshop training series has expanded educators' understanding of culturally responsive data literacy practices and supported them in identifying actionable strategies to improve student performance and promote equitable outcomes. During the training development process, OSSE and Education Northwest partners realized that online modules could complement the instructor-led training and help ensure all staff members have access to this learning opportunity. Education Northwest's team designed a custom interactive, self-paced course to address this need.

The one-hour course provides a condensed version of the original, multiday, instructor-led course. Like the original, the online version trains CTE teachers and administrators to analyze their student enrollment data, identify possible gaps in CTE participation and persistence, and plan to address those gaps. Each online module includes a recommended follow-up resource to help OSSE staff members apply their learning with their colleagues on site. These resources include templates for completing a diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility program reflection, an analysis of student enrollment data, a root cause analysis, and a data equity action plan.