

Assisting Students in Special Populations to be Successful in Career and Technical Education

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Abstract: This paper provides insight on how Michigan Career and Technical Education high school programs benefit students within special populations categories. Career and technical education programs allow students to receive “real world”, “hands-on” learning experiences that allow them to transition into the workforce and/or postsecondary education. Special populations categories, which adhere to Perkins Federal Legislation, will be explained and information on supplementary services, accommodations and modifications that benefit students within these categories will be provided. Data of students within special populations categories and specific CTE programs that have assisted students in becoming successful will be presented.

Key words: special populations, Perkins, accommodations, modifications, career, education

1. Introduction

Michigan Career and Technical Education (CTE) high school programs provide students with an opportunity to enter programs that match their interests and abilities. Michigan has programs in a variety of career clusters such as Manufacturing, Marketing, Health Science, Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, Information Technology and Human Services that allow students to gain hands-on, practical experience that prepares them for the workforce or to further their education at a postsecondary institution. Work-based learning experiences at employers’ worksites are also a benefit given to students who enroll in CTE programs. All students have access to these programs including students within special populations categories. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) legislation defines special populations categories as students who are:

- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including foster children
- Individuals preparing for nontraditional training and employment
- Single parents, including single pregnant women
- Displaced homemakers
- Individuals with other barriers to educational achievement, including individuals with limited English proficiency (PCRN, 2017)

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2. Accommodations and Modifications of CTE Programs to Benefit Students

Students within special populations categories have benefitted from participating in CTE programs because many programs provide students with appropriate supplementary services, accommodations and/or modifications to be successful.

Supplementary services are additional services provided to assist special populations students to successfully enter and complete career and technical education programs. These services include direct services to students, such as a paraprofessional assigned to a CTE class. Supplementary services can include one or more of the following (Administrative Guide for CTE in Michigan, 2013):

- Outreach and recruitment materials
- Provide paraprofessional support staff in CTE classroom/laboratories who complement, supplement, or reinforce program requirements
- Additional guidance and counseling
- Monitoring of student progress on a defined schedule with interventions as needed
- Attendance monitoring
- Mentoring/coaching on career and technical education competencies
- Test preparation assistance
- Use of applied math, science, and communications teaching materials
- Staff training provided in strategies for working with special populations students
- Providing child care for students who are single parents
- Collaborating/cooperating/coordinating with other school personnel to provide services
- Collaborating/cooperating/coordinating with community agencies to provide services
- Social/personal intervention through coordinated counseling support
- Individualized and small group activities and instruction
- Workplace readiness skills support
- Documentation and review of support services provided and the results
- Academic support services
- Transportation assistance
- Work-based education support
- Job placement matching and follow-through

Students within other special populations categories, such as students with disabilities with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or 504 plan, may also require additional supports and services through accommodations and/or modifications of CTE programs.

Accommodations give students a different or modified delivery of instruction, but these students are learning the same academic content. Accommodations can be provided in different areas of the delivery of instruction such as in the materials/curriculum, methods/strategies, and assessment accommodations.

Modifications (as compared to accommodations) eliminate or decrease the standards necessary for program completion, employment or job retention. Modifications to CTE program requirements for students with an IEP and/or 504 plan are required unless such modifications would significantly change the nature of the program or create nonconformity with employment and/or licensing requirements. In such cases, students may remain in a CTE instructional program if they are benefiting from the program. However, it is an IEP team decision to

determine whether a student is benefiting and whether it continues to be an appropriate placement for the student. There are many workplace and employment skills that students gain from participation in a CTE program with such modifications.

In addition to providing accommodations and/or modifications to students with disabilities, it is essential that CTE staff collaborate closely with Special Education personnel in their local school districts. CTE staffs bring their technical skills and Special Education personnel bring their knowledge of methods and techniques to enable students to understand CTE academic content. Special Education personnel assist in providing a variety of teaching techniques, prepare learning materials, modify the delivery of instruction, provide assistive technology, and provide testing strategies and accommodations that adhere to the students' IEPs and/or 504 plans. The collaboration between CTE staff and Special Education staff is a necessity for students with disabilities to be successful in CTE programs.

3. Michigan Data of Students within Special Populations

The data shows that students within special populations are enrolling in CTE programs. During the 2014-2015 academic year, there were a total of 45,424 students within special populations enrolled in CTE programs out of an overall student enrollment of 104,038. During the 2015-2016 academic year, there were 46,244 students within special populations out of a total student enrollment of 107,930 (Career and Technical Education Information System Reports, 2015, 2016). This data shows that CTE programs in Michigan are attracting students within special populations categories to enroll in CTE programs.

4. CTE Programs that Assist in the Success of Students

CTE programs in Michigan have dedicated instructors and staff who assist students in becoming successful. There are excellent CTE programs that are described on the Career and Technical Education, Special Populations website (michigan.gov/octe, Special Populations). Some of these programs are described below.

The Wexford-Missaukee Career and Technical Center gives students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in a career skills program that allows students to rotate to different programs during the school year. During this rotation, students build relationships with school personnel and learn basic job skills. After the one-year rotation, it is then determined whether students will enroll in CTE programs.

The Calhoun Area Career Center (CACC) develops partnerships with the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) to successfully transition students from school into the adult world. Students are given options to attend the Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI), attend job readiness classes provided by MRS, or directly enter employment after attending high school. CACC also promotes career readiness by collaborating with other staff and providing the following activities:

- Certificate of Completion — for students with disabilities who are unable to meet the CTE standards, students receive a certificate of completion. The curriculum is modified to teach specific tasks (on a limited basis).
- Counseling Dept. — provides students with postsecondary options by having students attend college fairs, Career Connections Day (speakers from industry), expose students to resume writing and other events.
- Annual visit to MCTI

- Scholarships available for students with IEPs (Student & Career Services Scholarship, Tools of the Trade Scholarship)
- Work based Learning — job shadows, work experience, co-op positions

There are also specific examples of students who have done well in CTE programs. Liz Parish attended the career center in Ionia, Heartlands Institute of Technology, for two years in the CTE Machine Tool program. This program is a nontraditional program. Because of the CTE training and exposure to business and industry, Liz landed a shop keeper job at Franchino Mold & Engineering in Lansing. After six months of being a shop keeper, Liz was given an apprenticeship and is now an EDM machinist (Jansen, 2014).

Kelsey Parsons attended the culinary program at Capital Area Career Center. Kelsey formed a team with three special needs students, one has cerebral palsy, two have autism and neither had cooked before. These students, with the help of their instructor, Chef Corbett Day, competed in the state-level competitions and won fourth place. Kelsey plans on continuing her education in the culinary program at a postsecondary institution with the goal of teaching culinary arts to students who have special needs (Smith, 2015).

5. Conclusion

Michigan Career and Technical Education programs support students in special populations categories as evidenced by this paper. With the help of dedicated CTE instructors and staff along with support from Special Education Personnel and partnerships with the community, students within special populations will continue to do well and successfully transition from high school to the world of work or postsecondary education. Michigan is proud of their CTE programs and the continued work that is done to assist students in becoming successful!

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