

Advice From Experienced Practitioners

Enhancing the Success of Special Population Students in Career and Technical Education

**Compiled by the California Community College Special Populations Collaborative Project
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Introduction

During the 2005-2006 academic year, the California Community College Special Populations Collaborative Project, in conjunction with California's Joint Special Populations Advisory Committee, conducted sessions that allowed experienced practitioners to share their expertise in working with special population students. The discussions were started by providing data on special population students. The data came from analyses of California Community College Career and Technical Education Core Indicators performed by the collaborative project. Practitioners were asked to describe reasons for the data (i.e. the barriers experienced by special population students that resulted in the data), and then to identify successful responses to those barriers. The prompts and the responses of the practitioners are summarized on the following pages by special population group.

Single Parents, Displaced Homemakers, and Economically Disadvantaged Students

Prompt: Among the six special population groups, single parents and displaced homemakers have the lowest rates for completing a degree or certificate. Why is this happening and how can we help them complete their training?

Practitioner Response:

Barrier	Response
Childcare needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive • Difficult to find reliable care • Requires more travel time and expense to take children to care. • Non CalWORKs participants often have no support for childcare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide on-site child care. This reduces transportation expenses and transit time to more than one location. • On-site care should operate during extended hours to accommodate evening classes and jobs. • Provide child care for school-age children after school. Offer study time and tutoring. • Train and pay parents to work in the centers. Parents benefit from learning child development and parenting strategies.
Financial needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to earn income requires students to stop their training. • Substantial school-related costs for registration, books, and some programs require expensive specialized tools or equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more student jobs. This provides income and reduces transportation costs and time between home, school, and job. • Provide and make students aware of available financial supports, e.g. community college Board of Governors grants. • Link with organizations to provide tools/equipment.
Transportation needs - the expense and time of getting to the college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and market distance learning options to avoid the need for transportation and childcare. • Provide transportation vouchers; develop car pool programs.

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Practitioner Response: (cont.)

Lack of personal support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop descriptions of "What's available to help you stay in school."• Front office and registration staff should have this information and be able to refer students to support services.• Teachers should be given this information on a quick reference sheet with contacts and numbers for student support. They should announce they have this resource. • For online registrations have a link to support services available.• Require career and academic counseling.• Provide students with mentors.• Students may also need referral to community resources (substance abuse, domestic abuse, childcare, etc.) Establish community networks of these services and inform students.
Students often fail to engage or feel connected with school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sponsor teas/coffees/breakfasts.• Have single parents attend events with their children.• Make the school appear more welcoming and home-like. This diminishes negative past associations with school.

Students with Disabilities

Prompt: Students with disabilities have the highest rate of completion among the six special population groups, but they have the lowest rate of employment or going on for further education. Why is this happening and how can we improve the situation?

Practitioner Response:

Barrier	Response
Students fear the work environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create jobs and career ladders on-site that lead to jobs in non-profits, non-governmental agencies, and then into the business community. • Provide job coaches to students. Work closely with organizations that provide job coaches such as PRIDE industries. • Provide role models for students. • Teach self-advocacy.
Employers fear the accommodations that will be necessary to hire students with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop relationships with the business community. • Establish uncompensated internships for students with disabilities. Schools can offer credit to students for the internship. • Develop financial incentives for hiring students with disabilities. • Facilitate community events to highlight successful placements.
Students lack work socialization skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide soft skills training such as personal responsibility, interview skills, crisis management, self advocacy
Many students are in recovery from drug use, which is particularly negative for employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore micro enterprise as a way to build possible small businesses.
Unfavorable labor market	(No suggestions offered.)

Limited English Proficient Students

Prompt: Limited English proficient students are the most likely special population group to get a certificate that requires few units to complete. They have a very low rate of employment or of transferring for further education. How can we help them stay in school longer to get more training and thus have more economic success?

Practitioner Response:

Barrier	Response
<p>Lack of language skills</p> <p>Many LEP students spend all their time doing the remedial language programs (ESL) and run out of time and money before they get actual workplace training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide bi-lingual instructional materials. • Provide multi-lingual literature about careers, salaries. • Provide more VESL programs.
Lack of role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide mentors, role models. • Provide internships, apprenticeships. • Provide on-campus jobs.
Lack of family support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct family-involvement activities. • Provide information on college opportunities in citizenship programs.
The FAFSA form asks students to list a goal. Many students list getting a certificate which may be their immediate goal. Once they achieve this, they cannot continue to get financial aide to acquire a degree or more extensive certificate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide better guidance for financial assistance. Counselors and financial aid staff need to know FAFSA rules and have students list degrees as their goal. Students can then get financial support for a longer time.
Going back to school as an adult in a foreign language is very difficult.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with extra time on exams to work through the questions.
LEP students may not be familiar with technology because of age or economic status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to computers and instruction and tutoring in technology use.
Immigrant status/documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide legal assistance for documentation issues

Nontraditional Students

Prompt: Students training in areas nontraditional to their gender are the most likely of the six special population groups to be working after getting training. How can we encourage more students to pursue and succeed in nontraditional programs?

Practitioner Response:

Barrier	Response
Lack of nontraditional role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expose students to nontraditional role models/mentors starting in middle school.• Develop marketing materials highlighting successful nontraditional role models.
Lack of family support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop relationships with family members.• Provide family members with information on the training programs and salary statistics.
Fear of entering a nontraditional career	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide internships during training so students gain first hand experience.
Insufficient knowledge of the specific barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey CTE graduates as well as dropouts to identify specific barriers.• Survey employers to determine barriers for nontraditional workers on the job.