

# Meeting the Needs of Our Students: Growing the CTE World One Program at a Time

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I don't know about you, but when I was a kid, I really didn't know what I wanted to do when I grew up or what options existed for me out in the great big world. (If you are a frequent reader of my letters, you are not shocked by that revelation...) All I knew was a person was supposed to go to school and then somewhere around sixteen go get a job in fast food (check – thank you, Andy's – sort of like Wendy's, but not quite) and then eventually graduate and then go off to the world of work or the military or college. I really had no idea of what sorts of things were out there in the world to do, and since I was able to play a little bit of baseball, I accepted a college scholarship to play ball and embarked on my collegiate career for the ages... Okay, maybe it wasn't the BEST college career, but it did lead to meeting my wife, so that all turned out okay for me. While my situation got “fixed” by meeting the right person to help me down the road of life, I do NOT want that for our students.

When I was coming up, things were different. In the early 1980's (yes, I am THAT old) there were quite a few job opportunities out there where a person could go and make a decent living with nothing more than a high school diploma, so there wasn't this big push to worry so much about the future. The thinking was, “I am sure I'll find a job doing something, somewhere...” Auuuuggghhh! Looking back at that now through my “educator's” and “father's” lenses, I shudder to think. What about happiness? What about passion? What about personal fulfillment? Isn't it important to be HAPPY doing something throughout life that provides for the family needs AND yet keeps a person interested and excited about being engaged in that workspace? NONE of those questions crossed my mind back in 1982. Now, however, we demand more for our students. It is not enough merely to provide them with an excellent educational experience; we also MUST engage them in personally meaningful learning events/activities that will fuel their jets throughout their lives. It is due to THIS orientation that we are working so diligently to meet the intrinsic needs of our students.

Going hand-in-hand with the launching of the Individual Plans of Study (see, “Meeting the Needs of Our Students: Individual Plans of Study,” November 12, 2018”) for our students,

**we are diligently setting the table so as to offer many more options from which the students may choose. Particularly, we are looking to expand the Career and Technical offerings we have at the high school. Currently, we offer four different “pathways” (a series of courses leading to a specific career/vocation), including Ag Science; Power, Structural and Technical Systems; Restaurant and Event Management; and Web and Digital Communications. But, next year will have expanded those offerings to include six new pathways for the students to enjoy. The new pathways explore Teaching/Training, Health Science, Construction and Design, Business Finance, AV Communications, and Graphic Design. But, that is not all, over time we will look at the other pathways available and seek to incorporating them into our offerings as well!**

**The real take away is here in the Land of the Longhorns we are looking at every turn to meet the immediate and future needs of our students. We know that if we expose our students to a variety of opportunities for their life’s work, they will more than likely land on something of real interest. This is particularly true given all of the work that is and will be taking place with the Individual Plans of Study that will facilitate the students setting their own directions as they journey beyond our hallways toward a career that is based on a passion they have. Honestly, I only wish I had had that sort of support when I was working my way through school. Yes, I ended up in a passion-driven field for myself, but I spent MANY years wandering around lost. That was simply time wasted when I could have been MUCH more productive.**