

### 1.05.03

### Challenges in Engaging Parents and Students

Many of us believe passionately that providing *all* students with better information about the world of work – and the career possibilities available to them – will provide tremendous benefits no matter what their academic future holds.

Unfortunately we have not been successful in communicating this message to parents and students. The barriers to effectively engaging parents include:

- Traditional educators are not necessarily well versed in the benefits of Jump Start or supportive of CTE – as indicated in module 1.05.08, counselors, teachers and administrators do not necessarily support Jump Start and CTE. For many their concern is that CTE students (particularly minority students) are “tracked” into what they believe are low-trajectory Jump Start pathways that reduce student life opportunities. When parents engage with their school counselors or a favorite teacher, they’re not always hearing about the Jump Start / CTE options that expand our students’ life options.

In other cases traditional educators are most likely to talk to parents about the traditional academic course options offered by their schools. They’re invested in “how things have always been done,” and not necessarily well informed about the variety of Jump Start options that appeal to so many different student interests.

- “Every parent wants Harvard . . .” – parents want what’s best for their students. For many this means they want their students to get top grades and attend prestigious colleges, regardless of the realities at hand. We know that not every student is interested in academic subject courses, or capable of earning the grades necessary to attend an Ivy League college. Communicating this reality to parents in a way that is positive and not a “put down” is a tremendous challenge.

#### Challenges Engaging Parents and Students

- 1) Traditional educators are not necessarily well versed in the benefits of Jump Start or supportive of CTE
- 2) “Every parent wants Harvard . . .”
- 3) Students don’t know what they don’t know . . .

Our best communications channel to parents is students . . . if students are energized by the CTE project-based learning we offer, enthusiastic about the educational and career preparation benefits of our Jump Start programs. Unfortunately, our students are not effective ambassadors for Jump Start or CTE.

- Students don’t know what they don’t know – those of us who are worked with, taught or been parents of teenagers know that they’re not necessarily proactive about preparing for their future. (*Understatement of the century!*) Teenagers are typically more worried about “the now” than “the future.” Without strong motivation and guidance they’re unlikely to plan in any meaningful way for their post-graduation education, training, and careers. It’s hard to engage students about their Jump Start options if they’re not paying attention.

**In order to engage effectively with parents, we’ve got to get students enthusiastic about adult options and career planning way before high school.** Starting with classroom speakers in elementary school . . . career fairs in middle school . . . and the full range of workplace-based learning (WBL) options available to us (see module 1.08) . . . our opportunity is to make students Jump Start champions because of their many positive CTE experiences.

**Then we have to take positive steps to provide parents and students with a more positive perspective on CTE.** As indicated in the box here, this starts with energizing WBL activities as early as elementary school.

We also have to take our role as proactive CTE advocates (see module 1.05.12) to change the narrative about CTE, using students to convey positive messages about CTE to parents based on their positive experiences.

Together with our students we have to help traditional educators (counselors, academic-subject teachers and administrators) take note of the transformative impact that Jump Start and modern CTE opportunities have on *all* our students.

One way that Louisiana is trying to recast the image of CTE and change the narrative is by using video resources developed by our partner, Edge Factor. Edge Factor uses the elements of great story telling to create high-quality, high-impact videos that *grab* parents and students (and educators!).

During the 2018-2019 school year several districts will be integrating Edge Factor resources into their family outreach efforts for Jump Start. *All* Louisiana schools have no-cost access to a selection of Edge Factor resources they can use. **Our goal is to find positive ways that work to engage parents, students . . . and educators . . . about the benefits of CTE / Jump Start.**

#### Positive Ways to Engage Parents and Students

- 1) Involve students in the full range of workplace-based learning opportunities starting in elementary school
- 2) Using students to convey positive messages to parents
- 3) Helping traditional educators notice the transformative impact of modern CTE opportunities with our students



**Louisiana is testing video resources developed by Edge Factor to provide positive outreach messages to parents and students**