

Promoting Career Technical Education: Social Media Guide

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ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work



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Introduction

Social media is an increasingly important communications tool that can be used to effectively reach families, employers, policymakers, and other audiences that need to know about the value and promise of Career Technical Education (CTE). This guide will walk you through the importance of social media, highlight how to use different platforms, showcase effective campaigns and provide sample posts to get you started.

Demographics

While there are numerous social media platforms, this guide will primarily focus on Twitter and Facebook. Facebook is the most widely used social media platform for active users. Sixty-eight percent of U.S. adults use the social media network. [Twenty-eight percent of Americans with a college degree use Twitter](#)¹. Based on your target audience, the graph below will help you decide the best platforms in which to invest your time.

Use of different online platforms by demographic groups
% of U.S. adults who say they use ...

	Facebook	YouTube	Pinterest	Instagram	Snapchat	LinkedIn	Twitter	WhatsApp
Total	68%	73%	29%	35%	27%	25%	24%	22%
Men	62	75	16	30	23	25	23	20
Women	74	72	41	39	31	25	24	24
White	67	71	32	32	24	26	24	14
Black	70	76	23	43	36	28	26	21
Hispanic	73	78	23	38	31	13	20	49
Ages 18-29	81	91	34	64	68	29	40	27
18-24	80	94	31	71	78	25	45	25
25-29	82	88	39	54	54	34	33	31
30-49	78	85	34	40	26	33	27	32
50-64	65	68	26	21	10	24	19	17
65+	41	40	16	10	3	9	8	6
<\$30,000	66	68	20	30	23	13	20	20
\$30,000-\$49,999	74	78	32	42	33	20	21	19
\$50,000-\$74,999	70	77	34	32	26	24	26	21
\$75,000+	75	84	39	42	30	45	32	25
High school or less	60	65	18	29	24	9	18	20
Some college	71	74	32	36	31	22	25	18
College+	77	85	40	42	26	50	32	29
Urban	75	80	29	42	32	30	29	28
Suburban	67	74	31	34	26	27	23	19
Rural	58	59	28	25	18	13	17	9

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018
"Social Media Use in 2018"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

¹ Pew Resource Center, Source: Social Media Fact Sheet
<http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/>

What Makes a Social Media Post Worth Sharing?

Timeliness – Share messaging at key times of the year for CTE, such as Back-to-School night, National CTE Month and CTE awareness events as well as prior to the annual CTE student recruitment and enrollment time frame. It is better to post during or immediately before or after an event, rather than a week later.

Proximity – People tend to be more interested in something that is happening near them – in their city, state or county. For CTE, this means posting relevant content within your state or school system and tagging local connections, partners and locations.

Reach – To expand the number of people that will see your post, you need high engagement. Public figures, celebrities and others in the limelight will attract more media attention. Consider asking your state and local leaders in education, business and industry for a quote about why they recommend and support CTE programs. For added impact, ask for a photo or video testimonial.

Novelty – Something different and outside people’s normal routine will attract the most attention. CTE has many unique qualities to highlight, including work-based learning experiences, project-based learning in the classroom, internships, employer engagement and more. What may be “normal” for you is not necessarily normal for the general public.

Human Interest – Student and parents want to hear from successful CTE students and alumni. Tell the student success story.

Relevance – Can you relate the message to something currently going on in the world and news? If possible, localize a larger issue. A trending hashtag that relates to the post can help, too.

Impact – Call out the “so what?” Demonstrate how CTE impacts learners, employers and the community. For example, when talking about CTE programs, include statistics about participant graduation, college and employment rates compared to students who do not enroll in CTE programs.

The Dos and Don'ts in Social Media Engagement

Do not post material that is harassing, obscene, defamatory, libelous, threatening, hateful, or embarrassing to any person or entity. Dishonorable content such as racial, ethnic, sexual, religious, and physical disability slurs are not tolerated.

Do not post any images or other content from another source unless you are sure it is in the public domain or that the owner has granted permission. Check website terms of service to see if the site has rules about when you may reproduce content.

It is always about conversation. Actively seek conversation, participate in discussions and reply to questions. Ensure engagement and conversation are key aspects of your social media strategy.

Increase traffic to your post. Posts utilizing data points and images receive significantly higher traffic compared to those that do not.

Pay attention to quality. Sustained, intensive dialogue is valuable only if initiated or enriched by high-quality content. Be sure you have carefully vetted articles, videos and links to external content that you are posting.

Be honest. Cite your sources through links and tags. This shows respect for the author and increases your credibility.

Be professional and polite. A dialogue is only worthwhile if all participants treat each other with respect. Avoid provoking and insulting people, and break off conversations if a social media user becomes offensive.

Correct your mistakes. Recognize mistakes and correct them in a timely manner.

Separate opinions from fact. To avoid misunderstandings, you should make a clear distinction between opinions and facts in your statements. You should also indicate whether you are presenting your own opinion or that of the organization, school or institution.

Understanding Twitter

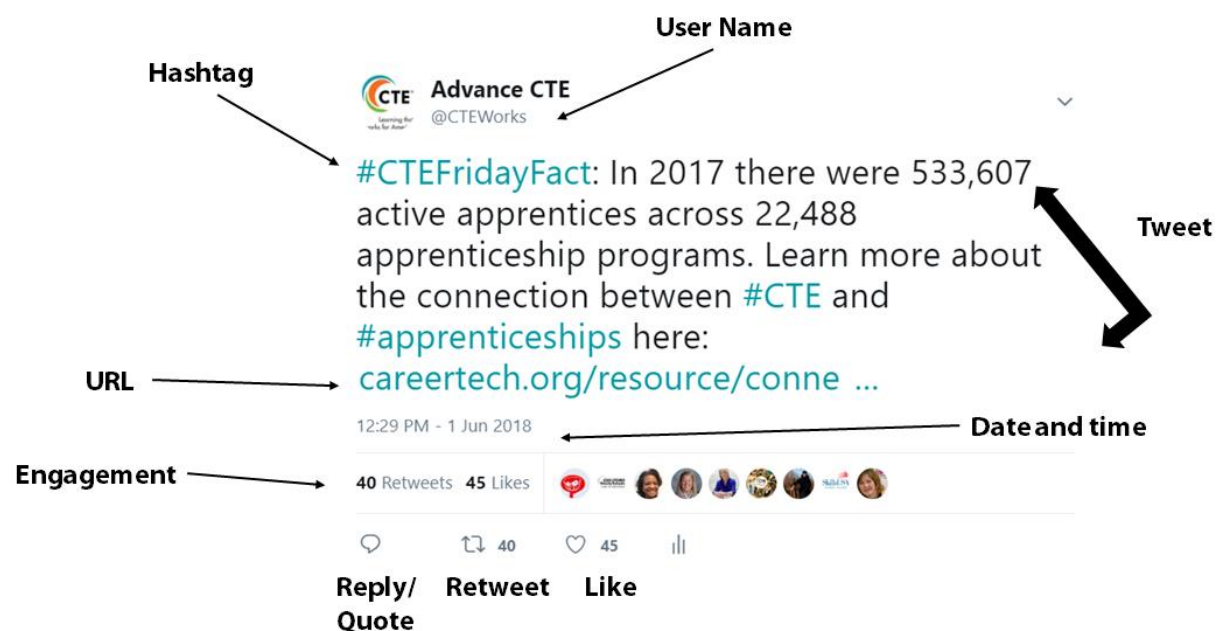
Twitter is a social media platform that allows users to create profiles and share, or “tweet,” their thoughts. Twitter content includes breaking news, entertainment, sports, politics and everyday interests.

Join the conversation by following other users. If you want to engage with a larger audience, create a public profile. You can engage in conversations by replying to tweets and retweeting or sharing posts. You are limited to 280 characters, and videos cannot exceed two minutes and 20 seconds, so be sure your posts are compelling, but also concise.

To boost engagement, help users find your content by using #hashtags. There are examples of CTE hashtags below. Relating your tweet to a trending topic is also an easy way to become part of a larger conversation. You can find some of the popular weekly hashtags in this guide as well. Custom hashtags help you find when others share your content. Learn more about Twitter by reading this guide [here](#).

Anatomy of a Tweet

Below you will find an image of a tweet from Advance CTE’s Twitter account. This example points out the elements of a tweet, and you can also find definitions of these words below.



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Twitter Terminology

Direct Message: Private messages sent between accounts

Followers: Twitter accounts that have clicked to “follow” your Twitter profile. Your messages will show up on their account’s newsfeed

Follow: Subscribing to a Twitter account is called “following”.

Hashtag: A hashtag connects tweets that talk about the same thing in one place.

Like: Liking a tweet indicates that you appreciate it. By clicking the “heart” symbol on a tweet, you can “like” a tweet. Your likes are visible on your profile.

Reply: A response to another person’s tweet.

Retweet: When you share another account's tweet to all of your followers by clicking on the Retweet button.

Trends: A trend is a topic or hashtag determined algorithmically to be one of the most popular on Twitter at that moment. You can choose to tailor trends based on your location and who you follow

Tweet: A post made on Twitter; no more than 280 characters.

Username: A username, also known as a handle, is how you're identified on Twitter, and is always preceded by the @ symbol. To tag a Twitter account, you can include “@Username” in your tweet.



Sample Tweets

You can use these tweets to get you started.

Tweet 1: Students in #CTE and their parents are more than twice as likely to report they are very satisfied with their education compared to those not involved in CTE. Learn more https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/ValuePromise_MessagingCard.pdf
#CTEWorks

Tweet 2: #CTEFridayFact: 89% of parents think students should receive more education about career choices while in high school. Find out how our [state/school/district] prepares learners for their future careers. [insert link to your resource]

Tweet 3: 9 of 10 parents & students agree that finding a career they are passionate about is important. Learn how [my state/school/district] provides #CTE to help students find their passions. [insert link to your resource]

Tweet 4: 65% of careers require some postsecondary education. Learn how #CTE is integrated at the postsecondary level for student success.
<https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/CTE%20and%20Student%20Success%20Efforts.pdf>

Tweet 5: 82% of #CTE students are satisfied with their ability to learn real-world skills in school, compared to only 51% of non-CTE students. Learn how [my state/school/district] provides students with real world skills [insert link to your resource]
#CTEWorks

Tweet 6: Nearly 70% of #CTE students are satisfied with their ability to engage with employers compared to only 32% of prospective CTE students. Find out how we match students with employers here: [insert link to your resource]] #CTEWorks

Sample CTE Hashtags

Below are the common #CTE-related hashtags that can enhance your social media posts.

#CTEWorks: Use when pushing out organizational announcements and resources and/or for advocacy-oriented posts.

#CTE: Use when posting about CTE.

#CTEMonth: Use during CTE Month in February and/or when promoting CTE Month activities.

#PerkinsCTE: Use when discussing the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins).

#CTEFridayFact: Use for weekly posts including a CTE data point.

TIP: If you decide to create your own specific hashtag be sure to do a search to see if it is being used by someone else.

Popular Hashtags

Mix your CTE specific hashtags with general ones to increase the post visibility.

Education

#HigherEd
#STEM
#CareerTech
#edChat
#Healthcare
#CTSO

General

#MondayMotivation
#TuesdayThoughts
#TipTuesday
#WednesdayWisdom
#ThrowbackThursday
#FlashbackFriday

For example, the Technology Student Association tweeted to explain how to use specific hashtags. They also engaged their social media audience by asking their followers to help them decide on hashtags to use. *See the example to the right.*



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Follow these accounts to begin creating a CTE Twitter community and stay informed:

National Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs):

- [Business Professionals of America](#)
- [DECA](#)
- [Educators Rising](#)
- [Family, Career and Community Leaders of America](#)
- [Future Business Leaders of America-Phi Beta Lambda](#)
- [HOSA-Future Health Professionals](#)
- [National FFA Organization](#) (Future Farmers of America)
- [SkillsUSA](#)
- [Technology Student Association](#)

National Organizations:

- [Advance CTE](#)
- [Association for Career and Technical Education](#)
- [National Skills Coalition](#)
- [Council of Chief State School Officers](#)

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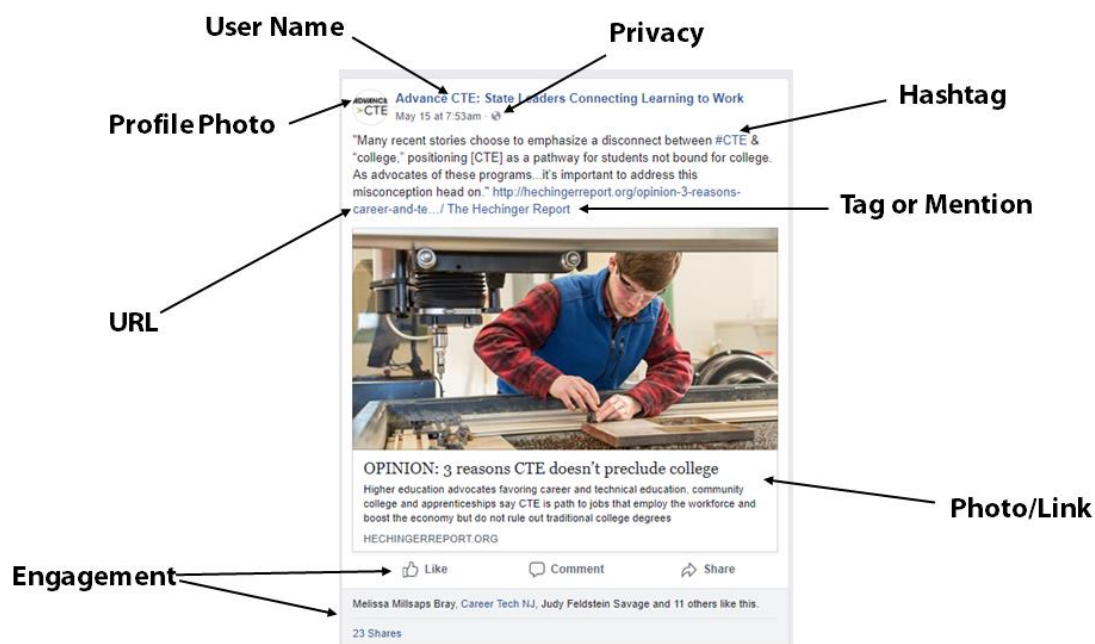
Understanding Facebook

Facebook is an online social networking service that has the highest number of active users around the world. Facebook can be used to share news, videos and pictures; promote events; and talk to audiences via video in real time using the LIVE feature.

The Facebook feed is made up of posts from the people you follow. When you share a post, your audience can like it, comment on it or share it. Hashtags are also used on Facebook but they are not as popular as they are on Twitter.

Anatomy of a Facebook Post

Below is an image of a Facebook post from the Advance CTE Facebook page. This example highlights the elements of a post.



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Facebook Terminology

Comment – You can comment directly on a post, or people can comment on your posts. It is important to check these daily to engage with your audience and to become aware of any questions that may need immediate attention.

Followers – Individuals have the option to “follow” pages, which then shows those updates in their news feed.

Friends – Personal accounts that are connected (by request) on Facebook. “Friends” automatically follow each other’s posts, which are displayed in their news feeds according to the Facebook algorithm.

Like – A way to show support or agreement with content; it also shows up as an update to your timeline that is visible to your users.

Post – Messaging created on Facebook.

Profile Picture – This is your page’s user photo. This photo shows up on your page and on anything you post or comment on. The dimensions for profile pictures are 170 x 170 pixels on computers, 128 x 128 pixels on smartphones and 36 x 36 pixels on most feature phones.)

Share – You can automatically share another account’s content, depending on privacy settings. If someone has a private account, their content will not be accessible to people who they are not friends with.

Tag or Mention – Using the @ symbol creates a drop-down menu to “tag” a person you want to mention in that post. For example, if you want to mention a business that is included in a photo of a student at their internship you would use this function. Once you publish the post, the user will be notified.

Create a Compelling Post

Social media should not be a one-way communication only providing followers with information. It is critical to think strategically about how to ensure your social media pages are engaging and how to establish a two-way communication between your audience and your organization.

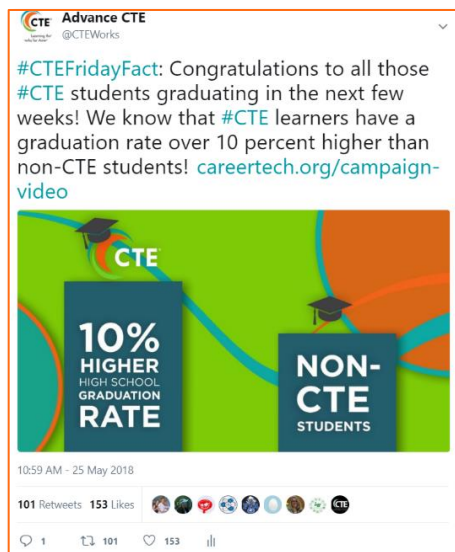
To determine the effectiveness of your social media, view the social media analytics to see which posts are doing well and which posts are the most engaging. *See what Twitter analytics look like below.* You want your audience to interact with the content and share it with others.



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Examples of Posts with High Engagement

In spring 2018, Advance CTE launched a CTE 101 video, which provides an overview of how CTE prepares learners for their future while closing the skills gap for employers across the country. To promote the video, staff utilized social media as a critical component of the promotion of the video. Below are Advance CTE posts that utilized the video content and resulted in high engagement rates.



What Worked

The tweet to the left addresses a popular topic in the spring: school graduation. It includes an attention-grabbing image; the popular #CTE hashtag makes it easy to find; and the statistic is relevant information to advocates, parents, teachers and more.

Results

The tweet below had an engagement rate of 4.6 percent, which includes 392 engagements and 8,418 impressions. Total engagements included 155 likes, 101 retweets and 25 link clicks.

TIP: Impressions are the number of times a user saw your content. Engagement rate is the total number of times users interacted with the content i.e. clicked a link, or shared a post.

What Worked

The CTE 101 video was attached to the tweet on the right as a short clip to encourage users to view the full video. The clip was only 25 seconds to keep the user's attention. Hashtags were also used to help users find the content.

Results

The tweet had over 11,000 impressions and 360 total engagements, which included 123 likes, 80 retweets and 28 link clicks.



TIP: Videos on twitter are limited to two minutes. You can trim longer videos directly in Twitter if you upload the file instead of linking to the video on a separate platform.

Encourage Your Followers to Promote Your Posts

Consider drafting a promotional toolkit to help others easily share your content through social media. Advance CTE's social media promotional toolkit included sample posts across each platform, a relevant hashtag, social media handles, graphics and links to share. View Advance CTE's video promotional toolkit here <https://careertech.org/cte-101-video>. Graphics should be created using the dimensions specific to that platform to make sure they appear in the best quality possible.

TIP: Twitter uses 1,024 x 512 pixels and Facebook uses 1,200 x 628 pixels.

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Demonstrate What CTE Looks Like

Awareness of the term CTE is fairly moderate. Just less than half of parents and students have heard of the term, according to a survey of about 1,700 parents and students.² Many parents and guardians associate CTE programs with vocational education, or terminal programs for kids who are not bound for postsecondary education or a living-wage career. Students primarily do not understand how CTE is integrated in their middle and high school experience.

One of the best ways to demonstrate what CTE looks like is to localize your examples. Students and their parents want to know how CTE will work for them in their own schools and communities and will be put off by examples that they cannot relate to. Using local examples can help explain the nuts and bolts of how CTE is delivered, make the connection



between CTE and a specific program, and highlight partnerships with local colleges and employers that are recognizable to parents and students.

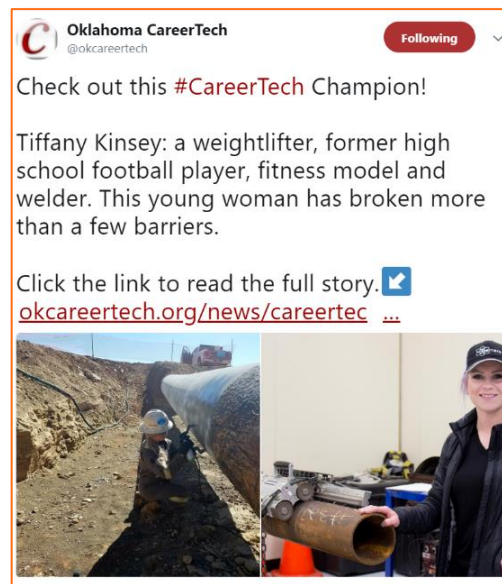
For example, the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education released a video series of ten episodes that gives the viewer a behind-the-scenes look at Oklahoma #CareerTech. You can watch episode one [here](#).

² The Value and Promise of Career Technical Education: Results from a National Survey of Parents and Students, April 2017, Advance CTE Survey <https://careertech.org/resource/value-and-promise-of-cte-results-from-a-national-survey>

Showcase Student Success Stories

The best way to sell CTE is to lift up the examples of successful CTE students or alumni of CTE programs. To communicate the value and promise of CTE, the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education utilizes Twitter to share compelling student success stories. They use the hashtag #CareerTech on Twitter and share a student profile that includes information about how the student excelled in the program and was prepared for postsecondary education and/or their career as a result of their enrollment in CTE. This type of post is a great way to highlight CTE and the many ways learners benefit.

While lifting up student stories, especially in workplace settings like job shadowing, internships, or apprenticeships, highlight the role of the employer or business partner.

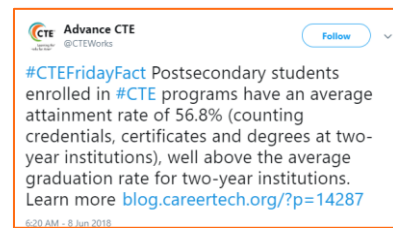


TIP: Be sure to get permission before sharing any photos of students and /or staff.

Share Insightful and Relevant Data

Data can be a particularly strong selling point to demonstrate the benefits of CTE. Advance CTE has numerous fact sheets and resources you can use to share the importance of high-quality CTE and help educate those who may not know what CTE is. For more data about CTE, view Advance CTE's fact sheets [here](#). Check out the Association for Career and Technical Education's fact sheets [here](#).

For example, each Friday Advance CTE shares data utilizing the hashtag [#CTEFridayFact](#) on Twitter. *See the example on the right.* This is a good place to start to get ideas for content and data. View the tweets [here](#).



Engaging Key Audiences

Audiences will respond positively to different types of messages. For example, students are less interested in hearing about in-demand fields like healthcare; Information Technology; and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), while that information is a big selling point for parents and guardians.

It is important to understand who your key audiences are and how to reach them. You can start by understanding the demographic of the active users of the platform you are using. Below are examples of how organizations and states have successfully reached their target audiences.

Learners

Use images of students in their CTE courses, in work-based learning settings and at CTSO activities and competitions. They are more likely to share something that directly includes them. CTSOs have great examples of creating social media campaigns to engage students.

For example, SkillsUSA launched a campaign called *Show Off Your Skills* where chapters were instructed to create a service event and then registered students would get a free Week of Service t-shirt. During the event, students had to wear the shirts and create a video for a chance to win a grant for the chapter and state association. This type of campaign demonstrates the pride learners have for their chapter and serves as engaging content that can be used across social media channels. In this specific tweet, SkillsUSA shared a GIF of a number of students in the Week of Service t-shirt.



TIP: Find compelling data points on student satisfaction and achievement to use in social media posts.

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Parents and Guardians

To engage with parents and guardians, ensure the content shared is relevant and helpful to them. Use social media to share information about school events that require parent participation, such as a career fair, or important dates for their child, such as enrollment in courses.

Social media can also be used to help parents and guardians understand what a high-quality CTE program looks like. As mentioned above, many parents have negative perceptions of CTE due to their own experiences with vocational education. Drive home the idea that today's CTE prepares their child for the real-world. Highlight stories, videos and images that showcase what CTE looks like, backed up with compelling data points.

The example on the right is a Facebook post from the Maryland State Department of Education encouraging parents to visit their website to learn about their CTE programs. It is important to not only showcase the value and benefits of CTE, but also include a call to action in your post. What do you want them to do after reading your message? In the sample post, the call to action is to visit the website to learn more.



TIP: Learn more about the messages and language that resonate with parents and students to help you craft relevant content.

Business/Industry

Social media can be a fantastic tool to engage with important business, industry, and workforce partners in your state or district. Employers play a critical role in the development and implementation of high-quality CTE programs, often weighing in on curriculum and industry standards and providing work-based learning experiences for learners. Demonstrate how learners are gaining important real-world skills by highlighting success stories from internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, mentorships and even industry leaders in the classroom.

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The tweet on the right by the Kentucky Department of Education is a good example of how to provide a behind-the-scenes look at what students are working on.

Policymakers

Social media can be a critical platform to engage with lawmakers. Legislators at all levels typically utilize social media. Use these channels to share the many successes of CTE in your state, district and/or school. If you are able, advocate for policy specific to CTE. For posts specific to the Perkins Act, use the #PerkinsCTE hashtag.



CTE-Related Awareness Days/Weeks/Months

Any easy way to create content is to highlight CTE in relation to national awareness days, weeks or months. The table below gives you some examples:

Month/Week/Day	Name
June 2018	National Safety Month
July 2018	National Culinary Arts Month
July 1, 2018	World Architecture Day
November 20, 2018	Future Teachers of America Day
February 2019	CTE Month
February 11, 2019	International Day of Women and Girls in Science
February 17 – 23, 2019	National Engineers Week
February 21, 2019	Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day
March 7 – 11, 2019	National Careers Week
March 30, 2019	National Doctor's Day
April 2019	National Internship Awareness Month
April 29, 2019	World Veterinary Day
May 1, 2019	National Law Day

State & U.S. Territories CTE Twitter Accounts

Alabama	Alaska	American Samoa None Listed	Arizona	Arkansas
California	Colorado	Connecticut	Delaware	Washington, DC
Florida	Georgia	Hawaii	Idaho	Illinois
Indiana	Iowa	Kansas	Kentucky	Louisiana
Maine	Maryland	Massachusetts	Michigan	Minnesota
Mississippi	Missouri	Montana - None Listed	Nebraska	Nevada
New Hampshire - None Listed	New Jersey	New Mexico	New York - None Listed	North Carolina
North Dakota - None Listed	Ohio	Oklahoma	Oregon	Pennsylvania
Rhode Island	South Carolina	South Dakota	Tennessee	Texas
Utah	Vermont	Virgin Islands	Virginia	Washington
West Virginia	Wisconsin	Wyoming		

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