

INCORPORATING CTSOs INTO CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

The field of Information Technology is comprised of careers seen in virtually every sector of our economy. These careers can be extremely challenging due to the fact that they are constantly changing and updating. Those who choose to pursue careers within this field must be adequately trained, and understand the importance of life-long learning and continuing education. As middle school and high school educators, it is your duty to provide this foundation and help instill these educational values within your students. The purpose of this podcast is to encourage you to help students enhance their skills and traits by incorporating the ideas and goals of career and technical student organizations into classroom instruction.

Career and technical student organizations, also known as CTSOs, are an integral portion of course curricula and designed to develop citizenship, teamwork, and leadership skills essential for students preparing for the workforce or further education. Not only do they enhance students' civic and social awareness, but they also allow students to develop a positive attitude regarding living and working. Some of the more well-known organizations related to Information Technology are Future Business Leaders of America, Business Professionals of America, SkillsUSA, and the Technology Student Association. Each of them was developed for a different reason, but they generally serve the same purposes and host a variety of competitive events for students based on state and national curricula.

Courses that fall under the Information Technology career cluster are generally viewed by students as exciting, innovative, and challenging. Being involved with CTSOs and their competitive events would only provide more unique instructional methods and opportunities to attain course competencies, goals, and objectives. You may be thinking, "My school district doesn't usually like for students to go on field trips." Yet, contrary to popular belief, many of these types of districts actually welcome academic competitions, and sometimes even sponsor them financially. So, why not utilize these events to help add a competitive edge to prepare students for an aggressive job market? After all, the travel and interaction with students from other schools are tremendous learning opportunities.

The benefits of career and technical student organizations are endless! The competitive events are excellent motivating devices that help instill the desire to learn and to achieve. Students get to demonstrate and validate their mastery of essential technological concepts, skills, and knowledge not only to you as their instructor, but also to other students and instructors regionally, state-wide, or sometimes nationally. CTSOs also build school spirit, encourage community service, allow students to receive recognition, and help publicize your schools Information Technology program.

To give you more specific advantages, let's discuss FBLA, which is Future Business Leaders of America. Although this organization is typically referred to as an organization for traditional business courses, the competitive events program is designed to correlate with the U.S. Department of Education Career Clusters in addition to the National Business Education Association standards. Students are allowed to compete individually, in teams, or as an entire chapter depending upon the category. As a bonus to you, the event instructions and assessment rubrics provided could assist you with development of your own creative, yet related lessons and activities.

A few of the FBLA event categories that fall under the IT cluster category for high school students include:

- American Enterprise Project,
- Business Presentation,
- Business Procedures,
- Computer Applications, and
- Computer Problem Solving.

More traditional competitive events include:

- Cyber Security,
- Database Design and Applications,
- Desktop Application Programming,
- Desktop Publishing,
- Digital Video Production, and
- E-business.

In addition to these exciting categories, high school IT students may also participate in categories such as:

- Electronic Career Portfolio,
- Future Business Leader,
- Help Desk,
- Internet Application Design Programming,
- Management Information Systems, or
- Word Processing I and II.

Advanced students who really enjoy challenges may desire to enter categories such as:

- Network Design,
- Networking Concepts,
- Spreadsheet Applications,
- Virtual Business Challenge, or even
- Web site Development.

Middle school students are also able to join in on the fun! FBLA event categories that fall under the IT cluster category for middle school students are:

- Computer slide show presentation,
- Desktop publishing applications,
- Keyboarding applications I and II,
- Spreadsheet creation, and
- Web page creation

As you can see, career and technical student organizations, such as FBLA and the other ones previously mentioned, provide several opportunities for involvement and creative ways to attain course goals and objectives. We encourage you to take advantage of these great resources, and applaud your attempts to embrace alternative methods of instruction. For more information about career-technical organizations, please visit: www.cte.unt.edu/it/resources.html.