

Public Abstract

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The current study addresses students' views of career and technical education at an Area Career Center in mid Missouri. Newer programs that combine career and technical education courses with traditional high school instruction can benefit students in allowing them to connect their academic training with real world careers and practical concepts. This study looks at students' perceptions of CTE, the sources of influence they reported on their decisions to take or not take CTE courses in high school and the role cultural capital played in their views.

Utilizing a qualitative method of data collection eight high school seniors enrolled in either CTE only classes, AP only classes or a combined CTE and AP course load were interviewed about their views of CTE at the local area career center. All of the students were white and there were four boys and four girls interviewed in the study.

Results show that all students in the study associated CTE with some form of hands on education, with students enrolled in CTE courses reacting more favorably to CTE instruction and its connection to careers and occupations. The most significant influences on students' decisions to take or not take CTE classes were their future academic or career goals and how CTE knowledge would or would not help them. Other reported influences include teachers, family members and personal experiences. Finally, the role of cultural capital in students' views of CTE is explored reaching the conclusion that more data and analysis is needed to find more arguable claims.