



## **The Value of a Career and Technical Student Organizations in Texas**

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### **Abstract**

Career and Technology Education (CTE) teachers are expected to participate in a Career and Technology Student Organizations, (CTSO)s, as mandated by most school districts and outlined in their CTE performance goals. Additionally, current CTE Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, warrant the participation of CTE programs in a CTSO. The CTE teachers that participate in running a CTSO volunteer extracurricular hours in order to incorporate a CTSO into their programs and curriculum, typically without incentive pay. This qualitative case study will investigate the value that CTE teachers find in joining in a CTSO versus the time dedicated to the programs and lack of supplemental income, in order to develop an understanding into why CTE teachers participate in these programs.

**Keywords:** Career and Technology Education, Career and Technology Student Organizations



## Introduction

Career and technical education, or CTE, has been a major part in the American education system since 1876 when there was a rise and focus for vocational learning and training. Over the years, there have been many manifestations of what CTE looks like in a school setting, however, the foundation of learning a specific technical skill has remained the same. CTE today encompasses student learning that entails skilled and technical curriculum that aligns with the current needs of industry and the economy. The courses focus not only on skilled and technical learning, but soft skills, leadership and teamwork as well. In total, about 12.5 million students are enrolled in CTE across the nation (Careertech.org, 2016). CTE prepares these learners for the world of work by introducing them to workplace competencies, and makes academic content accessible providing it in a hands-on context. In fact, the high school graduation rate for CTE students is about 90% – 15 percentage points higher than the national average (Careertech.org, 2016).

There is a National Career Cluster Framework that provides a vital structure for organizing and delivering quality CTE programs. In total, there are 16 Career Clusters in CTE, representing more than 79 Career Pathways to help students navigate their way to greater success in college and career. The 16 clusters include: 1) Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources, 2) Architecture & Construction, 3) Arts, A/V Technology & Communications, 4) Business Management & Administration, 5) Education & Training, 6) Finance, 7) Government & Public Administration, 8) Health Science, 9) Hospitality & Tourism, 10) Human Services, 11) Information Technology, 12) Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security, 13) Manufacturing, 14) Marketing, 15) Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics, and 16) Transportation, Distribution & Logistics. Within all of these career clusters lies a foundation in learning leadership and soft skills. This is where Career and Technology Student Organizations, or CTSOs, come into play. CTSOs are essentially extracurricular clubs in which CTE teachers participate. CTSOs are outlined in each CTE Texas Essentials Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, and are incorporated into most school district CTE performance goals (Ozfidan, & Miranda, 2017). This creates a situation where participating in a CTSO is mandatory versus volunteer, however CTSOs help facilitate leadership and enhance the skilled curriculum that students in CTE courses learn.



There are 8 CTSOs that are recognized nationally (Ctsos.org, 2016). The current CTSOs include: 1) Business Professionals of America (BPA), 2) DECA, 3) Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), 4) Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), 5) Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), 6) SkillsUSA, 7) The National FFA Association, and 8) Texas Technology Students Association (TSA). The state of Texas also recognizes the Texas Association of Future Educators (TAFE). This qualitative study will interview current secondary CTE teachers that participate in CTSOs across Texas to develop and understanding into the beliefs and values that a career and technology teacher holds towards the participation in a CTSO versus the extracurricular time needed in order to facilitate the CTSO program and lack of supplemental income.

### **Methodology**

For this qualitative case study I wanted to capture the beliefs of CTE teachers and why they participate in a CTSO. In order to accomplish my research goals, I decided to conduct face to face interviews with current CTE teachers across the state of Texas. To facilitate the majority of the interviews I attended the Texas Industrial and Vocational Association, or TIVA, summer professional development conference hosted in Houston, TX. This provided me the opportunity to meet with a variety of CTE teachers within the 16 career clusters. This diversity in curricular content allowed for a wider scope of teacher beliefs. In addition to the TIVA conference, I tried to meet at few teachers in their classroom or CTSO meeting location, to get a picture of where the students meet and work. Notes were taken during each interview and transcribed within a day.

Purposive sampling was used when selecting the teachers that were interviewed. I elected for purposive sampling due to my expertise and experience in CTE, as well as my extensive network of CTE teachers in Texas. Nine teachers were selected for the interview process ranging in teaching experience, gender and content area. Out of the nine interviewees, four were female, five were male, two teachers had 1-5 years of teaching experience, five with 5-10 years of experience, and two with 20+ years of experience. The content areas included Automotive Services, Audio and Video Production, Graphic Design, Culinary Arts, Information Technology, Construction and Building Trades, and Cosmetology. Nine interview questions were asked during each interview. In an effort for triangulation, current CTE evaluation documents were



reviewed to see the level of performance goals that were associated with a CTSO. Documents were obtained from within school districts in Texas. The interview questions can be located in Appendix A. Photographs of the teacher classrooms are located in Appendix B, and CTE performance evaluation documents are located in Appendix C.

As I conducted the interviews, I was focused on discovering more information into the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' most valuable beliefs in the importance of the inclusion of a CTSO into their curriculum and why do they volunteer countless hours to facilitate the time needed to participate in the CTSO?
2. What changes would occur in a teacher's belief system if their efforts in a CTSO were to be supported by a supplemental income or stipend for their work? Would this enhance or degrade the value in their CTSO programs?

### *Analysis*

Throughout the progress of the interviews, all of the teachers expressed a passion for their students, CTE and in their CTSO. All of the teachers referred to their students as their "kids", which may be over looked by some, but this personal inference towards family, struck a note with me. I could tell that there was a certain level of emotional investment engaged by each teacher in the interview, so I knew I was investigating a topic that would have an honest and impactful meaning divulged from each person.

The interviews were hosted in an executive suite of a hotel which allowed for a professional and intimate meeting space. Throughout the interviews several identical themes began to appear, and after analysis of the transcription, these themes were reinforced. There were three major overarching themes that were supported by sub-categories. The first theme that I discovered was that there is value in the participation in a CTSO. This major idea was supported by the ideas of: 1) leadership skills and soft skills learned, 2) networking, and 3) student engagement. The second theme discovered was there is value in personal and emotional investment in a CTSO. This was supported by the ideas of witnessing student success and investing in the students. The final theme that emerged was there is value in acknowledging the work dedicated in a CTSO, supported by the ideas of: 1) acknowledgment by the administration, 2) affirmation and money, and 3) boosts to the curriculum.



### *There is Value in the Participation in a CTSO*

The first pieces of data that began to support the idea of the value in participation was in the fact that students were learning leadership and soft skills. These are not typically parts of a curriculum that one would think would be aligned in what programs offer in CTE, however leadership and soft skills are outlined in detail in every single CTE TEK. Many of the teachers found that participating in a CTSO not only provided these skills, but they integrated seamlessly into their classrooms. The following are supporting excerpts from the interviews:

#### *Learning Leadership Skills and Soft Skills*

Brandon: I use SkillsUSA to showcase leadership roles, job skills, and things that go along with the SkillsUSA PDP (professional development program). But we really go through the PDP and get working on the leadership curriculum. It leads to how to work with businesses, and career ideas, and things like job interviews, resume and finally how to be an officer, be a leader and how to make decisions. We kind of do it every day.

Brandon: They get to learn teamwork and leadership, how to lead and job specific skills. They learn how to be a good employee, how to be proactive, how to maintain a job and move up their career. They do this, all while having fun and enjoying it.

Sheila: SkillsUSA is the greatest thing for the kids. They get to be a part of something big. They always say that 'I didn't know that I could do so much'. They get to learn to be part of a team, they feel welcomed, and they get to learn what it really means to be a leader. My students have written letters about how much they learn through SkillsUSA and how it has affected their learning, growth and future.

Tristan: A CTSO is there to help provide an element that doesn't exist in a program. Prior to SkillsUSA, I had no leadership component to my curriculum. We kind of did them, but it was not evident. It was just something that carried over from industry, because I knew what employers were looking for in applicants. SkillsUSA because a platform that allowed me to add this missing piece to my lessons with a purpose. In my audio video courses, I do incorporate the leadership elements very much. Things like job resumes, interview skills. The technical side, the model that is used for contest is something that



almost becomes a template for student work. It is a model that allows the student to take ownership in their own projects. But the leadership, how to write that resume, and just how to talk to people is so important. I'm lucky because I get to see the kids for four year, from freshman to senior level. SkillsUSA lets me see their skills and learning grow.

Warren: SkillsUSA provides leadership opportunities, and real-world opportunities that industry wants from our students to learn. The contest piece of SkillsUSA motivates kids to want to learn and to work hard.

What I found to be interesting was the wide support and appreciation for the need to teach interview skills and job resumes. This is, perhaps, an area of skill that needs to find a home in every curriculum. So often the focus is merely on the content of the course, and not in a holistic education. The concepts of learning leadership and teamwork are also skills that are not directly considered when looking at the content of a course. The fact the CTSOs are supporting this type of learning, and introducing a larger perspective on learning from the needs of industry, is what these teachers are finding as incentives for participation in their CTSO.

### *Networking*

Barbara: I benefit from the network of teachers that I have grown to work with and collaborate. The sharing of ideas and strategies for student success is invaluable.

Brandon: Networking is really big in my opinion. Networking has helped my program grow leaps and bounds and my kids can learn more from it. I like to take other's suggestions and implement them in my program, and to spread the word, so it is not just a benefit to my cluster, but to others areas in my school as well. I just like to see what others are doing, to see how much they are loving it, and to pick up whatever I can. I'm social, I'm a talker.

Donna: I love seeing my shy kids grow to speak. I have had the shyest of girls walk up and speak to their congressman to advocate for CTE with confidence. Its' just amazing for me to see the kids do this. The network of teachers I meet helps to also challenge me



to be better in all that I do, SkillsUSA and just being a better teacher. Just like the kids, I benefit from the networking. I like learning from other motivated professionals like myself. I like engaging in trainings for teachers that SkillsUSA offers at the conferences. They make me a better teacher and advisor. These network of teachers help me create better relationships with everyone I meet and work with.

Jay: I like that I get to spend more time and share my expertise with my kids beyond the classroom. I get to push kids in their individual talents, and just get to know them better. I get to know teachers better and build a network of people to talk to, and bounce ideas off of. Networking and the time spent with other SkillsUSA teachers doesn't happen enough.

Sheryl: As a teacher... the biggest is the network of teachers that I know. I learn from other teachers, and I learn from the conference and retreats that I get to attend that are filled with SkillsUSA teachers. Everyone motivates me, and I love to learn from what others are doing. It's an inspiration for me. If I didn't have the network of teachers, I would be bored in my own classroom. I always get to learn new things for next year.

The concept of professional networking is not new, however, having a reinforcement of a network of teachers with similar passions and goals that are aligned to the success of students in CTE is beneficial. Professional development goes beyond staff training and attending conferences. Learning how to support your own learning is vital to the success of any teacher, but surrounding yourself with like-minded professionals is yet another benefit that arises from working in a CTSO. The teachers that take advantage of the networking in a CTSO are the educators who are creating more innovative and engaging projects for their students. This leads us to the final support of why there is value in participating in a CTSO, the idea that CTSOs generate student engagement.

### *Student Engagement*

Barbara: CTSOs like SkillsUSA take the learning to the next level. It gives them real-world application of what they are learning in the classroom. It helps provide an environment that goes beyond a test and lets the kids see value in what they are learning



and doing. It's like the carrot on the stick of learning, and SkillsUSA has the emphasis on real-world expectations.

Donna: The kids learn leadership and real-world contest expectations. The networking of students outside of their own cities, and nationally, is power of communication through SkillsUSA. Like when we are at the national conference, and kids and teachers are just trading state pins and making connections, lifelong friends. It changes your perceptions.

Jay: My students are challenged and pushed to their limits. It betters themselves and gives that competitive spirit so they can set high goals. It also gives them a chance to "brag" on their work and what they have accomplished. A chance to "show off" I guess. It also emphasizes college, and build relationships. SkillsUSA really strengthens the program.

Sheila: I get to have more engaged students from having them participate in SkillsUSA. I want to go everywhere that I can to share with people the great and exciting things that SkillsUSA can do for you and your students. I want to tell people how excited my kids are to be a part of SkillsUSA. I want to advise more teachers to get involved in leadership. I want them to know how SkillsUSA fits into their TEKS, into their practicum courses.

Sheryl: The purpose is to get the kids involved. It's also a network of people to meet and know in your industry area. Its motivation and an opportunity to showcase your skills. It gives the kids goals to strive and work towards, even if they win or lose a contest. They get to learn something about themselves, how to step up when needed and how to accomplish something bigger than themselves. SkillsUSA get the kids out of the box, it gets them out of east Texas. SkillsUSA shows them that they can accomplish things, big things. It helps direct their learning to have realizations of "what do I want to do". It gets them to understand the value of what they are learning in my classroom. It build that work ethic.





Tristan: SkillsUSA gives the students ownership. It teaches them to not just listen to me, but to listen to others. It gives them value in leadership, I get so many thank you notes from kids when they graduate, but I tell them not to thank me, but to thank themselves for the work that they have done for me. High school can be such a blur, but SkillsUSA has a moment of impact on that blur.

Warren: My students get to meet other kids outside of their bubble. They see others in all of the events and they see all of the opportunities in front of them. It makes them better.

The needs of the industry and economy drive the values in a CTSO and therefore create a unique experience for the students that are involved. Several of the teachers attest to the importance of how their CTSO puts their students into real-world situations. This competitive outlook engages students to set higher standards and challenges them to find success in their trade skills. Another benefit that engages a students in a CTSO is in the student networking that takes place. Through the use of technology and social media, students are enabled to communicate with other students around their regions, across the state and even across the country. I was very enlightened when Sheryl and Warren gave a testament of how their CTSO pulls kids outside of their comfort zones. Sheryl stated that, “SkillsUSA get the kids out of the box, it gets them out of east Texas” and Warren reiterated this by saying, “My students get to meet other kids outside of their bubble”. I had to take a moment to realize that most students do remain trapped in their cities, and many, especially students in CTE, may not have the opportunities to travel. By being involved in a CTSO, students have to opportunity to see several parts of the state and can even earn the opportunities to travel across the United States and into other countries. These ideas, that a CTSO can increase a student’s communication network, experience to real-world situations and opportunities for travel are what truly make a CTSO appealing for the teachers and the students.

### ***There is Value in Personal and Emotional Investment in a CTSO***

The second set of concepts that began to emerge supported the theme that there is value and reward generated from a teacher who invests personally and emotionally into their CTSO.



Most teachers do not receive a stipend or any other supplemental income for running a CTSO. There are demands of time, travel and commitment to time that is even outside of their contracted days. The following are supporting excerpts from the interviews that allow us to start understanding why teachers are putting so much time and investment into their CTSOs:

*Witnessing Student Success*

Barbara: The students are pushed to learn more. They are motivated in their own learning. Real-world, I can't stress more.

Sheryl: I value my time a lot when I see what happens with the kids, when I see how they grow, what they accomplish. I see them learn how to speak, and grow in their own confidence. They can talk to people! It's amazing to witness, and it is what makes the SkillsUSA experience so valuable. It's worth every minute I put in.

Stephen: I get to see more fruits of my labor. I get to see kids engaged in what I am teaching them, and it allows me to feel that the time that I invest in SkillsUSA is valuable and not wasted.

Tristan: I don't think about it. I just do it. Many of the kids and new teachers just think that it is a racket, or they have never heard of SkillsUSA, but many of these kids never saw a resume either. SkillsUSA helps direct me on what I need to do, because I have seen what it had done for my kids. My kids are nerds, and it takes a lot of guidance to get them to excel on their own, and to show them what they can do. SkillsUSA helps me do it, and it shows me the value I get from the program in my kids. I like to see how my students excel. SkillsUSA rejuvenates me. As a teacher, I get to see how the kids dedicate time and hard work to prepare. The care that they take in their projects. It just rejuvenates me. SkillsUSA is like the dessert at the end of the meal.

Warren: I do SkillsUSA for the kids, and for their success. I remember when a kid came to me to simply thank me and told me that being a part of SkillsUSA literally saved her life. She was very suicidal but through my program and being a part of SkillsUSA, it



opened her eyes to life. She became an officer, graduated high school, and now has a successful job. What more could I ask for? I benefit from the emotional piece most. It's just when I see these kids I have, and I know their stories, and who they are, who their families are, and when I see them overcome, and they are successful, it means the world to me. It's why I teach.

Emotional investment is something that is hard to measure. We can only get a sense for the amount of joy a teacher receives from witnessing their student's success through their testaments. It was humbling to hear these personal stories, but these pieces are the driving motivation teachers have in devoting themselves to the work in a CTSO. I think it was simply stated when Stephen said, "I get to see more fruits of my labor. I get to see kids engaged in what I am teaching them, and I allows me to feel that the time that I invest in SkillsUSA is valuable and not wasted". It was also hard not to empathize with Warren's story of the student who was saved from suicide because of his work through his CTSO. He also makes an important point by stating, "It's just when I see these kids I have, and I know their stories, and who they are, who their families are, and when I see them overcome, and they are successful, it means the world to me. It's why I teach". This "rejuvenating" experience proves so much worth that teachers acquire from a CTSO, that one can start to see the value and return from their investment.

#### *Investing in the Students*

Barbara: I really feel undervalued for the time that I put into SkillsUSA. When the kids win, they can see the direct benefit, so it gives me a sense of validity sometimes. So their success demands personal value, which helps with the job. But success in value, however money would be a reward for work.

Brandon: I'm here now, pre-conference meetings, all for SkillsUSA. I don't do it for myself, I do it for the kids. I don't need to get paid because I see the value of my time in it for the kids. I like seeing them succeed. It makes it all worth it.

Jay: I value my time in SkillsUSA very highly. It's not a substitute to the curriculum in the classroom, it is a compliment to it. SkillsUSA is a catalyst for inspiration, and success



in class. My kids learn to be better, learn more and inspires and enables me to personal success.

Sheila: The time that I commit to SkillsUSA is very important. I would devote more time and money to it if I could. It's the most important thing that I do.

The value in time committed from the teachers to their students and to their CTSO is something that wasn't vocalized in any direct experience, however it was certain that almost all the teachers had a passion for putting in the time for their students to succeed. Barbara did feel undervalued for her time, but underpaid teachers is an entirely separate subject. There are a lot demands on educators and most call for a teachers' most precious commodity of time. However with statements like "It's the most important thing that I do" and "It makes it all worth it" one can see that the level of time and personal investment motivates these teacher and their commitment to their CTSO.

### *There is Value in Acknowledging the Work Dedicated in a CTSO*

The final theme that I found during the interviews was the value in gaining affirmations through the acknowledgment of the teacher's work in their CTSOs. Everyone wants to have acknowledgement of a job well done. It gives validity to the work we do and provides self-confirmation that the work we do is being recognized and appreciated. CTSOs can provide an explicit avenue for many of these needed affirmations. The following are supporting excerpts from the interviews that allow us to start understanding how the dedication towards a CTSO can lead to more awareness and appreciation of the work:

#### *Administrative Acknowledgement*

Barbara: The value of my program would go up and my value as a teacher would go up and my class curriculum would increase. The success from my students in SkillsUSA reinforces a curriculum that proves that they are learning and doing the work. SkillsUSA shows them how to do it right, and how to be on top of your game. My kids are performing very well, they are amazing. It would be nice if the administration knew exactly what they meant and more importantly, what that looked like.



Brandon: I think evaluating me on SkillsUSA would decrease the value of my SkillsUSA chapter. It doesn't need to be evaluated, because it won't show if my program is worth anything or not. They just need to see what the kids are doing in my program, and what they do with what they learn, and where they go.

Donna: I would love to see me evaluated on SkillsUSA. The administration would see what I do. They would see the blood, sweat and tears that we invest in SkillsUSA and into our kids. They would understand CTE better, and our evaluations would be off the charts. What we do with our kids is amazing and needs to be celebrated.

Sheila: An evaluation system is not important for me, but it is important for the perception by the administration. Admins are not always familiar with what happens in CTE courses. They don't really know that CTE programs are so different. They have no idea of the leadership learning in CTE and what we are responsible for in our TEKS. They don't understand that my favorite lessons revolve around SkillsUSA. There is value in experiencing this first hand. Yes it is worth a stipend because SkillsUSA is not just a "club", it's an actual organization. An evaluation system could help the admins understand this. They could also see the time put into SkillsUSA by teachers. They can see the hours of dedication, and also see the impact we are having with kids.

Sheryl: Evaluating me and adding SkillsUSA would increase the value in my program. The admins would see SkillsUSA. They currently don't understand what we do. They need to take the time to immerse themselves in what we do, who we are and they will be amazed. They just have no idea what goes on. They just assume cosmetology is just hair and make-up. They have no idea that we do public speaking, problem solving. We are as valuable as any other program or subject, of not better.

Stephen: An evaluation system would increase the value of my program. It would show the time that I put into my program and allow the admins to "see" the results. It would



just go up up up. An evaluation would just recognizes the value of SkillsUSA in the program and the value it has on my kids.

Tristan: I don't think that an evaluation of me and how I do SkillsUSA would have much of an impact in my program. I have a successful program. My kids are the success. The admins just need to talk to the kids to find out.

Warren: An evaluation wouldn't change anything on my side, but the admins would have a better idea and picture of what goes on in our programs. Maybe they would appreciate our work a little better. It would be nice to show off what we do in SkillsUSA someplace.

There is a definite need and desire by all teachers to have some form of administrative acknowledgement of the work they do in their CTSO. There is also a general desire by the teachers to explain the success of their programs to their administrators in order to showcase their students' success. I believe that since these CTE teachers have such an immense passion and emotional investment in their CTSO, and when they witness success in their students, they want to translate this feeling of true accomplishment to their administration. Most administrators will only hear about the placement of students in their respective CTSO contest, but as we have seen, there is much more to a CTSO than a mere contest. There is a level of understanding that CTE teachers need for administration to observe, and perhaps an evaluation system that addresses CTSOs would benefit the teachers and administrators. It would allow administrators the opportunity to recognize the value of a CTSO, and offer a sort of "buy-in" to the CTE programs.

#### *Affirmation and Money*

Barbara: Yes, it would seriously change my program. If I had money associated with SkillsUSA, I would put in more time. I give as much time as I can outside of class, but if we were to get paid, I would put in two times as much time, which I know would foster more success for the kids. It would not change my passion.



Brandon: I don't do SkillsUSA for the money. I put in the time and effort for the kids. Money won't change that. However, I wouldn't turn it down. It would be nice.

Donna: It wouldn't make my program better or more robust, but it would make me feel more appreciated. I mean I donate so much of my own money already for SkillsUSA. There is so much red tape that you have to go through just to buy something that a kid needs. Most of the time it's just easier to buy it myself. Like I said, it would just make me feel a little better, a little back to me, for so much that I already put in, but it wouldn't affect or change the program.

Jay: Money doesn't matter to me, I am glad to give my time to the kids. But if I were to get money, I guess it would have me more devoted to my actions and more time for kids for sure.

Sheila: Getting a stipend would not change anything that I do. SkillsUSA is so to me, and it is important to do it at a high level. The problems lie with new teachers without any experience. If they don't have the support in their new programs, they can shut down, and lose motivation. It can kill even the best SkillsUSA programs. A stipend would help with the support and learning curve needed for new teachers. It would engage them to continue a successful program so that they can learn and grow in SkillsUSA, so they can start to see the overall benefits. It's hard to see as a new teacher, so there needs to be something there to get them to allow the intrinsic motivation to grow.

Sheryl: Money obviously helps. It would make it a little easier for me, to spend less of my personal money would be the biggest help.

Stephen: I'd be willing to put in a little more time if I were to get paid. I already do a lot of projects, so nothing new would come from getting paid. But most teachers are already not expecting to get paid for what we do. Money wouldn't change my motivation with



the kids and the SkillsUSA program. It would just let me know the admin does appreciate my work.

Tristan: No, money is now why I 'm in it. I do it for the kids, and I don't think of it as work. No.

Warren: It wouldn't change my program, but I would feel a little more appreciated as a teacher for the work that I do.

It is almost upsetting to think about the time that teachers spend on extracurricular duties without compensation. The administration is quick to say, "we appreciate all that you do", however, if a school district were to actually take the time to budget, to recognize the level of excellence that teachers put into their work, perhaps many of the teacher will start feeling that sense of real appreciation. Many of these CTE teachers were humble in wanting money. Their intentions were honorable, but the truth is that these teachers should have some form of supplemental pay for the work put in outside of their contracted time. Many of these CTE teachers spend several weeks working with their students in their CTSOs during the summer and beyond. Sheila is one teacher that pointed out that a supplemental stipend would do more than show appreciation of the work. In the case of new teachers, or when a teacher is replaced, a monetary stipend would allow for a chance for a CTSO program to flourish. She states:

"The problems lies with new teachers without any experience. If they don't have the support in their new programs, they can shut down, and lose motivation. It can kill even the best SkillsUSA programs. A stipend would help with the support and learning curve needed for new teachers. It would engage them to continue a successful program so that they can learn and grow in SkillsUSA, so they can start to see the overall benefits. It's hard to see as a new teacher, so there needs to be something there to get them to allow the intrinsic motivation to grow".

This was an eye opening approach to the needs to supplemental monetary support for CTE teachers working in a CTSO. New teachers need support and when they are put into a situation where they must participate in a CTSO and not be compensated for the time; this can be





disheartening. Since most districts mandate that their CTE teachers participate in a CTSO, and since CTSOs are written into the curriculum TEKS, district should be responsible for paying teachers for the time they are required to put in to support running the CTSO.

*Boost to the Curriculum*

Barbara: SkillsUSA overlaps my normal curriculum. There is a project based structure that mimics the real-world. SkillsUSA gives this structure a new timeframe and pushes them, which makes them better. It really does showcase real-world techniques and needs from the industry.

Donna: CTSOs enhance your classes and allows the teacher to apply the curriculum into a real-world scenario. It helps the classroom go beyond the practical.

Jay: CTSOs provide kids with opportunities to expand their knowledge of a subject beyond the curriculum. It lets them explore avenues that might not be possible in a traditional classroom environment. It puts their skills against others.

Sheila: When I first started teaching, I found that skills gave them the opportunity to work on their technical skills, and to compete and enhance, but as I became more involved, I saw that it was, that SkillsUSA had such a strong leadership program, that it taught the students to learn leadership, and I changed my focus. It taught student to learn work ethic, intrinsic motivation, and to have a desire in continuing their education. They saw that they could accomplish something in a trade, something hands on. SkillsUSA gave them the feeling of success which equals leadership. It was difficult in the beginning to understand all of the components, but as your grow as a teacher and advisor, and as you attend training, you learn about the curriculum that SkillsUSA offers. Their curriculum can work in any classroom, and it can be used in college. It covers ethics, to management to supervision. But the leadership curriculum fits into our current TEKS, so it is a good compliment to what we already do.



Stephen: SkillsUSA gives my classroom an outlet that goes outside of the normal classroom curriculum. It shows real work experience. Kids start getting to ask the question of ‘who will see my work?’. It helps answer the questions of ‘why try?’. CTSOs show the validity in what they learn, and it gives more drive to the kids, and motivates them to practice and hone their skills. SkillsUSA overlaps what I normally do in my classroom. It gives my students a competitive drive, and I structure my projects around what is expected in SkillsUSA. The written tests push them on knowledge, so they study outside what I give them. SkillsUSA is helping create self-learners. SkillsUSA is a fantastic edition to me as a teacher. It helps make things more real, and the kids get so much more out of it. The SkillsUSA experience creates motivation for me and the kids, and begs us to apply ourselves more. It helps me build better relationships, and it boosts the program.

Warren: I can teach the contest materials in class. It goes alongside of my normal curriculum. I use SkillsUSA practice as “tutor time”. SkillsUSA also brings in that leadership and teamwork part of the curriculum that we have to do in our TEKS.

This final support idea that a CTSO provides a boost to the established curriculum is one that CTE teachers find raises the value in the courses. The benefits of real-world opportunities through the CTSO allows for learning beyond the classroom. Student learning is enhanced by the knowledge that their work is exactly what their content industry is looking for in their employees. This connection to the industry the CTSO provides, allows for the CTE teachers to showcase a curriculum that can foster better relationships with students and the competitive drive highlights the student’s benefits in becoming life-long learners. I believe that Stephen says it best when he states that his CTSO “helps answer the questions of ‘why try?’”.

### **Recommendations**

To further investigate this study, I would make the following recommendations:

1) A perspective look from each CTSO is needed. Due to the lack of time for this project, the only CTSO that I had access to was SkillsUSA. Many are similar in behaviors, but the voice of the differing CTSOs is needed.



- 2) Focus groups would be beneficial in the fact that these could be organized by career clusters.
- 3) Texas is also a large state, and data per region could be separated.
- 4) Additional evaluation documents from a purposive sample of school districts is needed.
- 5) CTSO data from the Texas Education Agency, such as enrollment in CTE and CTSOs, would be beneficial.

### **Conclusion**

The role of a CTE teacher is an ever changing position that is driven by the changes and needs warranted by the industry and economy. They are forced to participate in student organizations because of the demands of their aligned TEKS and performance reviews set by school districts. However, most CTE teachers find joy and rejuvenation in participating in CTSOs, and understand the value and benefits to their programs. CTSOs provide vital leadership training, teamwork and networking for students and teachers. CTSOs boosts the CTE curriculum that empowers teachers in creating an engaging experience for students that forces them to go beyond their normal habits and to pursue new endeavors and goals. CTSOs push students out of them comfort zones and awards them with opportunities to travel and become life-long learners.

The benefits of a CTSO are invaluable to a CTE program. CTE teachers understand this value although there is still a need for affirmation and compensation for time and work. Most school district administrators do not comprehend the efforts that CTE teachers put into their programs and CTSOs, nor do they recognize that effort with stipends or supplemental pay. There needs to be an administrative shift that will allow for this recognition to occur. Perhaps an evaluation system of the teacher's time, effort and outcomes in their CTSO would benefit all CTE programs.

The work that CTE teachers invest in their CTSOs are benefitting students. They volunteer the work without any monetary compensation and only rely on honor an emotional payback. CTSOs are impacting students in ways that that are increasing global communications and helping the industry. A celebration of the work that Career and Technical Educators are doing in their Career and Technology Students Organizations is needed because the success of the programs are evident.



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## Appendix A - Questions

Case Study: How do CTE educators value the implementation of a CTSO in their curriculum?

Author: Bart Taylor

Career and Technology Education, or CTE, teachers are expected to participate in a Career and Technology Student Organizations, or CTSO, as mandated by most school districts as outlined in their CTE performance goals. Additionally, current CTE Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, warrant the participation of CTE programs in a CTSO. The State of Texas and the Texas Education Code also recognizes the value of career and technical student organizations by emphasizing the importance of “participation by students and teachers in activities of career and technical student organizations supported by the agency and the State Board of Education” (Sec. 29.182). Most CTE teachers volunteer extracurricular hours in order to fulfill the needs of time to incorporate a CTSO into their programs and curriculum typically without incentive pay. This case study will investigate the value that CTE teachers find in participating in a CTSO versus the time dedicated to the programs and lack of supplemental income, in order to develop an understanding into why CTE teachers participate in these programs. Current CTSO include:

Business Professionals of America (BPA)

DECA, Texas Association

Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)

Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)

Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA)

SkillsUSA Texas

Texas Association of Future Educators

Texas FFA Association

Texas Technology Students Association (TSA)

This qualitative study will interview current secondary CTE teachers that participate in CTSO across Texas. Face to face interviews will be conducted and notes taken. When possible, interviews will take place in the CTE instructor’s classroom and/or CTSO meeting location. Photographs of the classrooms will be taken when possible. The following interview data will be collected:



1. What is your name? How long have you been teaching? What CTE courses have you taught?
2. What is your background and experience in CTE? Major roles, duties etc.
3. What do you think is the purpose of a CTSO?
4. How do you facilitate and incorporate your CTSO into your curriculum?
5. How do you value the time that you devote to your CTSO?
6. What are the benefits to your students from having a CTSO?
7. What are the benefits to you as a teacher from having a CTSO?
8. Do you think you would have a more robust CTSO program if you were to receive a stipend or supplemental income? Why or Why not?
9. How would an evaluation system, which would include your CTSO, increase or decrease the value of a CTSO in your program?

### Appendix B – Pictures of Classrooms











### Appendix C – CTE Performance Evaluation Documents

	Needs Improvement	Meets Expectations	Excellence	Evidence of Attainment
<b>Domain I 50%</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Industry Standard Licensing/Certifications/National Testing or Post Secondary	<79 %	<80-89 %	90-100 %	Percentage of coherent sequence takers receiving certifications, license, and or scores on National exams or
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher holds Industry Standard	No		Yes	License or Certification
<input type="checkbox"/> CTSO's - Student Membership	< 49 %	50-89 %	>90 %	Student membership dues
<input type="checkbox"/> CTSO's - Student Participation	< 49 %	50-89 %	>90 %	Roster of events and competitions
<input type="checkbox"/> CTSO's Competition	Regionals	Qualified for	Qualified for	Names of qualifiers



<input type="checkbox"/> PDAS	Below Expectations or	Proficient	Exceeds	Copy of evaluation
<input type="checkbox"/> Syllabus/Parent Letter	No		Yes	Copies for each course
<input type="checkbox"/> TEKS Mastery	< 69 %	70-89 %	90-100 %	TEKS test, assessments
<b>Domain II 30%</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Professional	< 29 Hours	30-45 Hours	>46 Hours	Eduphoria record
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional CTE Organization Membership	No	Yes	Yes, and I am a committee or board	Proof of Membership
<input type="checkbox"/> Scope and Sequence	No		Yes	Scope and Sequence
<input type="checkbox"/> Industry Partners	0	1-2	> 3	Donations, field trip, guest speakers, job
<input type="checkbox"/> Advisory Committee	Never Meet	Meet twice a year	Meet three times a year	Sign in sheets and agenda
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Portfolio	< 69 %	70-89 %	90-100 %	Student Portfolio
<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporating Core Curriculum	< 69 %	70-89 %	90-100 %	Lesson Plans
<b>Domain III 20%</b>				
<input type="checkbox"/> College Visits	0	1	2	Field trip
<input type="checkbox"/> Industry Field Trips	0	1	> 2	Field trip
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement	0	1	> 2	Proof of involvement. Pictures.
<input type="checkbox"/> Organized Volunteering	0	1	> 2	Flyers, Proof of involvement, etc...
<input type="checkbox"/> Guest Speakers	0	1	> 2	Guest speaker approval form, photo's
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent Involvement Opportunities	0	1	> 2	Sign in sheets, records of meetings, events, pictures, etc