

Student Organizations

CTSOs and Education

Career and technical student organizations (CTSOs) are national student organizations with local school chapters that are related to career and technical education (CTE) courses. CTSO programs are tied to course subject matter. Depending on the subject, internships and other cooperative work experiences may also be a part of the CTSO experience.

Participation in CTSOs helps prepare high school graduates for the next step, whether it is postsecondary education or entering their chosen field of work. There are CTSOs in numerous fields, such as business, marketing, education, information technology, health services, and agriculture. In addition to high school chapters, some CTSOs also have college chapters. Eleven CTSOs are recognized by the US Department of Education. They include the following organizations.

- *Business Professionals of America (BPA)* is for students who are studying any form of business and who want to enter the business world.
- *DECA* for students in the field of marketing.
- *Future Business Leaders of America–Phi Beta Lambda (FBLA–PBL)* is for students who desire to become leaders in their chosen area of business.
- *Future Educators Association (FEA)* is for students studying any area of the educational field.
- *Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)* fosters growth and leadership for students in the educational field of family and consumer science.
- *Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA)* is for students who want to become health professionals.

- *National FFA Organization* is for students who intend to become farmers.
- *National Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization (PAS)* is for college students in any field of agricultural study.
- *National Young Farmer Educational Association (NYFEA)* connects agricultural students with professionals in the farming industry from individual farmers to large corporations.
- *SkillsUSA* is a partnership of students, teachers, and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce.
- *Technology Student Association (TSA)* is for students interested in the fields of technology, science, and engineering.

CTSO Goals

The goal of CTSOs is to help students acquire knowledge and skills in different career and technical areas as well as leadership skills and experience. They help student members to become competent, successful members of the workforce. CTSOs achieve these goals by enlisting instructor-advisors to organize and lead local chapters in their schools. CTSO advisors help the students run the organization and identify the best programs that meet the goals of the educational area.

Support for local chapters is often coordinated through each state's education department. The local CTSO chapters elect officers and establish a program of work. The program can include a variety of activities, including working in the field, community service, school projects, and competitive events. Student achievement in certain areas, such as leadership or patriotism, is recognized with certificates or public acknowledgment through awards ceremonies.

CTSO Opportunities

CTSOs offer a wide variety of activities that can be adapted to almost any school and classroom situation. Competitive events are a main feature of most CTSOs. The ability to compete in various events enables students to show how well they have mastered learning specific content. Events also measure the use of decision-making, problem-solving, and leadership skills. Students may also receive recognition awards and, in some cases, scholarships, if they win at state and national levels. However, members can develop career and leadership skills even though they may not participate in or win competitions. Simply preparing for CTSO events also develops these skills.

Participating in the many programs and activities can promote a lifelong interest in community service and professional development. Each local chapter can provide opportunities for members to learn valuable skills for the workplace and beyond. In addition to competitive events, other opportunities can include

- completing a school or community project related to the field of study;
- training in the field;
- supporting a local or national philanthropy organization;
- attending CTSO state meetings; and
- participating in leadership conferences.