

2016 CTE Completer Student Follow-up Survey March 03, 2016 **Transcript**

[00:00:00] Good afternoon. Welcome to the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Career and Technical Education video technical assistance webinar. We are very pleased this afternoon to have a focus on the 2016 CTE Completer Student Follow-up Survey. Joining me is Dr. Jim Ellis from the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Research. We would like to point out that this year our Completer Follow-up Survey is being managed by a different office within the Weldon Cooper Center. We are very appreciative for the years of work with Dr. Gunther and Annie Rorem, but will be even more pleased that this particular project has now moved to a research unit within the Weldon Cooper Center. We believe the school divisions will find this move to be extremely beneficial and that the process of administering the completer follow-up survey will be even smoother. The primary purpose of today's video session will deal with the 2016 Completer Follow-up Survey. Specifically, the survey accomplishes three major objectives. It meets the federal government's requirement that we report on student transition from secondary to postsecondary, or to military, or to gainful employment. It also provides a measure that goes to the State Board of Education in terms of the success rate of students who are enrolled in career and technical education programs. As you will hear later in this presentation, we are required to meet a minimum of a 75% completer rate, however our goal is to reach 100% of those students annually. There are two key factors in terms of definition of terms that we need to be concerned about. One is a CTE completer, and that is a student that has met all of the requirements in terms of completing a sequence of courses which requires a minimum of two 36-week courses, or a combination of courses that satisfy the requirements for two 36-week courses. And a CTE concentration which is a sequence of courses that are part of a State Board of Education approved program. Those courses are available in the Administrative Planning Guide which is housed on the DOE website.

[00:03:35] Specifically as we look at 5S1, which is a part of the school division's annual performance rate, we will always provide you at least three years of data as illustrated here and particularly you are concerned with the most recent year. This illustration shows the 2014-15 through the 2012-13 school year data. Also, disaggregated in that number is the special populations data for the current year. We would encourage you to contact Mark Burnett, the Data Specialist within the Office of Career and Technical Education, if you have specific questions about your data, the percentages that are presented in your numerator and denominator. As mentioned earlier, school divisions are encouraged to, at a minimum, achieve a 75% threshold or higher. We are very pleased that this past year, school divisions across the state are seeing a 78% pass rate. We recognize that this is really heavy lifting in terms of contacting students one year after graduation. We commend you in terms of the techniques that you are using in terms of preparing students in their senior year to anticipate needing to complete this follow-up survey one year after they have graduated. We will now turn to Dr. Jim Ellis who is the new project leader for the completer follow-up survey of school divisions across the state. We'll be in communication with him during the process and Jim also has a team of individuals at the university that will be involved in this work, and he will introduce them as he goes through this update. Welcome aboard Jim and we look forward to working with you during the next year.

[00:06:17] Thank you very much. We're looking forward to it too I'm really enjoying it. I am Jim Ellis, I'm the Director of Research at the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, and I'll be working on the annual CTE completer follow-up survey with you all, so, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our team if you have issues or questions. And the team at CSR includes Tom Guterbock, who is the Director of The Center for Survey Research, Ila Crawford, Kimberly Emmert, and Emma Wang, so we're all ready to help and we look forward to

working with you during the upcoming survey season. Well, as George mentioned, the goal is for every school division's survey to complete at least 75% of its 2015 CTE completers. This is an important goal which makes sense when you understand the purpose of the survey. The objective of the survey, beyond meeting state and federal reporting requirements, is to give state and local administrators information to help evaluate the success of CTE programs and helping students progress to find work and potentially furthering their education. We could answer this question at the state level with a much smaller sample of students in the same way that political polls can predict election winners with only a small sample of voters, and they still work most of the time. But we don't just want to know about the whole state, we also want to be able to assess divisions and individual programs and to help you assess your own divisions and programs right down to the school level. In most cases, CTE programs have small numbers of completers and we need to survey a very large percentage of students in each program in order for information to be useful.

[00:07:52] In 2015, as George mentioned, over 78% of the previous year's completers were successfully surveyed and that's really good. But we hope to continue to improve our survey responses and reach even more students this year. You may be asking yourself what we learned as a result of the responses from last year's follow-up survey. All completers are asked how satisfied they are with their CTE education, and administrators might be interested to see how student satisfaction in their division compares to the state as a whole. The percentage of students reporting that they were very satisfied ranges widely across school divisions, but overall statewide over 98% of all surveyed completers responded that they were either satisfied or very satisfied. If the students in your division report low rates of satisfaction, then you may want to consider ways to improve student outcomes and consider investigating this further. If, in your division, satisfaction is lower overall than compared to statewide, then low postsecondary transition rates might be part of the issue. Most CTE students have the ambitions to continue their education and you can dig further into the survey results to see what percentages of students in your division and in each of your programs have continued on to higher education. This graph shows the percentage of students statewide who are enrolled in postsecondary programs at the time of the survey.

[00:09:19] Unemployment is another reason students might not be satisfied with their programs. This chart shows the statewide labor force status of students across all the CTE programs. We count individuals as unemployed if they do not have a job but are looking for one. A high unemployment rate is a serious red flag. This usually means that a program is not helping students transition to higher education or find the work they want. Perhaps because the program is not sufficiently rigorous, or maybe it's not preparing students for jobs, particularly in your area. The nationwide unemployment rate in 2015 did see a slight increase. The rate was 18.2% for 18 to 19 year olds in June 2015. Around that same time, about 6.3% of CTE completers statewide reported that they were looking for work but we're unable to find it. This was a decrease of three percentage points from last year's CTE survey results which is good news. There were some unemployment rates in specific programs that were higher than this. This is a concern and something that should be investigated further to determine if changes might need to be considered. There are many ways to use the CTE follow-up data to review your program. This quick summary is only intended to give a rough idea of some of the things you might look at. Each year, it's important to review carefully what the data reveals about your specific programs and consider this information in your decisions about keeping, changing, or eliminating programs. But before we can use data to solve problems, we have to collect good data and lots of it. So at this point, I'm going to move on to the technical details of doing just that.

[00:10:57] For the past couple of years, as George mentioned earlier, the logistics of the CTE Completer Survey have been ably handled by the Demographics and Workforce section within the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at UVA. This year, The Center for Survey Research will be taking over those duties. We're a different group within the Weldon Cooper Center and were grateful to Annie Rorem and her team for making sure that this will be a smooth transition. We're grateful also to George and his team here for helping us with that transition. You'll hear us talking about CSR at the

Center for Survey Research and just remember that we are simply another unit within the Weldon Cooper Center. Our role in the CTE Follow-up survey at the Cooper Center is logistical. We're going to get to a couple of these steps in a minute here. CSR is going to provide the platform and manage the process of setting up and conducting the survey and disseminating the data to VDOE and local divisions. We're the ones who designed the website and field phone calls for anyone who needs help conducting the survey. We also provide customer support to all of you across the state and we document the data that are collected by producing data files and reports after the data collection closes. So, how does the whole thing work? You got an advance look at step one here. Though the survey is not yet open; by now most of you should have received the initial memo from VDOE pertaining to the opening of the CTE Completer Follow-up Survey. I hope you have read it and if not, I encourage you to do so. The memo contains directions and general information on this year's survey. This presentation will highlight the major points of that memo and offer some more elaboration. So step one is to read the memo.

[00:12:29] Step two as in past two years we will continue to disseminate usernames and passwords for the completer site via the VDOE SSWS Dropbox. This is a well secured cloud storage location that allows you to sign in and get your passwords in a way that protects the privacy of student information at all times. Please remember that the files only remain in the Dropbox system for six days, then they are automatically deleted from the system. So it's important that if you download the files, as soon as you receive the email that will notify you when a file arrives. What most of you will receive are two files; one with a set of passwords for division level access and another with a set of passwords for school level access. The difference is that the division level passwords will allow users to see all completers from all schools within a division. The school level passwords will allow users to see only completers from within a particular school. It is the responsibility of the CTE administrator in your division to distribute these passwords to the appropriate people who will be contacting students. The files that you will receive are fairly straightforward, but I would like to remind administrators to be careful if you print out the Excel files and send them out. There's a chance they will not print well or that user names and passwords might get cut off in the process due to the formatting issues. For example, you might need to expand the width of the columns in the spreadsheet before you print. You might also need to check that printing doesn't go past page edges. So just be aware of these issues as you move through these steps.

[00:14:02] After you have your usernames and passwords, it is time to access the survey website. We place a high premium on making the survey process as painless as possible for divisions; so if you have any problems or issues with the website please let us at CSR know about it. When you log into the website you will find a set of instructions, a user guide, and a list of best practices for conducting the survey. The site contains a list of your CTE completers and the information you will need to interview them, including their phone number. The next step is interviewing the former students and getting to the required 75% response rate or better. There are several ways in which you can do this, but before I continue, I would like to highlight one important section of the survey itself. One question in particular that I'd like to take a moment to point out, is found in section two, regarding employment status. It's the question in the red box on this slide. There are three questions about the CTE completers current employment status right before this question. They are: Are you currently on active duty? Are you currently employed in a full-time position? and Are you currently employed in a part-time position? If no is answered for all three of these questions, please be sure to have the individual answer the question that says, Are you actively seeking current employment? This is the question in the red box. This is very important as it allows us to provide accurate data relating to unemployment figures. This fourth question will appear on the web survey screen only if all three prior questions have no for their answers; otherwise it will not appear at all. But of course, if you working off paper copies its always going to be in front of you, so just be aware of how that question is supposed to be asked and when. Having the best possible contact information for students is the key to being able to reach the target response rate of 75% or better. It's also valuable to have as many different contacts as possible; if one doesn't work, you may be able to reach the student in another way. The decision about how to contact students is made locally. We and the administrators at VDOE are concerned about the accuracy and reliability of the data that is collected, but there are no state regulations on how you connect to your

students. This decision is governed at the local level. Traditionally, schools have used two tactics; snail mail and phone. Some schools mail paper questionnaires to their students along with envelopes to return them. You may download prefilled individualized questionnaires from the CTE Completer website and print them locally. Some schools mail passwords to the students and ask them to log in online and complete the questionnaire on their own. So we can provide lists of student passwords to those divisions who ask.

[00:16:51] Then these divisions follow up, phoning the students who don't respond. Others skip the mail and decide to call all the students directly, interviewing them over the phone and filling out the questionnaire. Today however, many divisions and schools are incorporating new technology in their strategies. Some are reaching out to students electronically and hoping that students will reply and provide a phone number so they can be interviewed. Others are providing passwords and asking students to go straight to the survey website to complete the questionnaire. For example, some teachers maintain a class Facebook page during the semester to keep students connected to class work in their projects. They use this again in the spring to reach out to students asking them to get in touch so they can participate in the survey. I haven't heard of anyone using Twitter this way but it's a possibility too. Facebook and Twitter are great for keeping in touch with people, but they're very public. It's important to remember not to post individual passwords where everyone can see them. When you ask students to participate in the survey, you have to send their passwords via some kind of private channel like email, text, or direct message. Many schools have the capacity to blast individualized e-mail messages to students, and some are using this method to send the survey invitations and passwords. If you don't have this capacity in your division, it is relatively inexpensive to purchase it from an email blast service. Services will also blast out individualized text messages. Some divisions are already trying this. If this isn't a possibility, individual staff can send emails or text messages, individually giving students their passwords and instructions on how to log in and complete the questionnaire. You could put a link to the survey on the school homepage and direct students to get started from there. The point to remember is that new methods of communication can be very inexpensive. Students use them and respond to them and we should be doing as much as division policy allows to take advantage of these technologies in the survey process.

[00:18:45] So we're recommending that large divisions build an outreach process in two steps. First, try to connect with students in mass, via mail, email, and social media to encourage as many as possible to fill out the questionnaire on their own. Second, begin telephoning to track down non-responders. Telephoning can be more time consuming, so it's worth trying to get students to respond on their own first. Of course, if you're a small division with only a small number of completers, it might be easier to just start phoning. In short, please remember that the survey will start soon and will end July 1st. Each division needs to get a 75% response rate or higher in this time frame. Try to utilize electronic media in order to contact students and we will be sure to contact all of you again in the fall about accessing the results of the survey. Finally, the most important suggestion that I can give is that now is the time to get started on next year's survey. The first step would be to let current students know that the survey is coming next spring, that is in the spring of 2017. Ask teachers to tell students about the work they're doing now to survey last year's graduates and tell them why it's important. Tell them several times so that perhaps they will still remember about it when you try to reach them next spring. The next step is to collect the best possible student contact information now. If division policy allows, it's worth trying to collect several different points of contact including email addresses, personal cell phone numbers, mailing addresses, parents or guardians cell or landline numbers, or social media contact information. Anyway that students are communicating may be valuable to know. Schools are required to submit phone numbers and addresses with the completed demographic report and we post those on the survey website, but this isn't always the most up-to-date or efficient means of contacting students. Sometimes, these phone numbers and addresses were collected at the beginning of the year and never updated. Collecting the most current information just before graduation will be helpful for these pieces of contact information.

[00:20:47] I also want to acknowledge that despite the wonders of the 21st century, the digital divide is real for many former students. And even those who love their CTE program are not going to go to the county library and find a computer to take the survey online. It's just not going to happen very much at all. For these students, contacts by telephone or old fashioned mail might be the only method that will be successful. So while we strongly advocate incorporating new technology, we don't advocate giving up the old. Response rates will be best for those who use as many types of contact as possible. Maintaining contact information and reaching out to students multiple times in a variety of ways is the best way to improve response rates. Of course, don't hesitate in contacting the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service if you have questions on survey processes, passwords or contacting former students. If you have policy questions or want to know more about the specific requirements you need to follow, you can contact VDOE directly. Thanks in advance for all of your hard work and we'll keep in touch with you. We're looking forward to helping you this year.

[00:21:53] Jim thank you very much for the overview of the 2016 follow-up survey. I am sure that school divisions will enjoy working with you. The work that you are involved in is critically important to the success of CTE programs across the state. We have now on the screen, three announcements of upcoming activities specifically in regard to today's webinar, Directors memo number 098-316 announces the Completer Follow-up Survey. We have full intentions of the window opening on March 30th. If by any chance that window might open earlier, we will certainly let you know. And then across the bottom of the screen is information pertaining to the next upcoming video session which will deal with the end of your financial reporting. That session will be led by Terry Dougherty. We ask that you take a few minutes and complete the video streaming session evaluation. We take your input as being critically important. It helps us to continuously improve the sessions that are offered throughout the year. I would certainly like to thank Sharon Acuff who coordinates with the video unit here at the DOE, and we thank Chris who's behind the camera making these sessions possible. And again, Jim, thank you a lot for coming and we look forward to working with you and your team throughout the spring and summer months to complete yet another follow-up survey. And we would hope that since we achieved 78% last year, that minimally, we might achieve at least 80% this year. Thank you very much for participating in today's session and we wish all of the administrators and teachers across the state a great second semester of school.