

Finding a sense of community is sometimes a challenge for CTE teachers. Whether in rural schools or suburban schools many CTE teachers find that they are the only ones in their buildings that teach their subjects. This challenge in your first years of teaching can make the profession stressful.

I would like to offer some tips that will help you set up your own support system that will keep you from feeling so isolated in your subject area.

1. **Summer Conference:** The annual CareerTech conference is a great place to seek out new professional contacts and mentors to help you improve your teaching practice. This can be a time when your divisional specialist can make introductions to put names and faces together.
2. **ODCTE Professional Development:** Every division offers chances for professional development that may be specific to the classes you teach. Along with that, the ODCTE professional development division offers PD that will improve your skills in teaching in any subject. As often as your school will allow, avail yourself of these experiences to meet with other instructors and build your skills base.
3. **Know your fellow teachers:** Reach out to your division specialist and find out who the closest subject-specific teachers are to you. Then reach out to them and see if they are willing to field questions by text or email.
4. **Visit other classrooms:** Working with your administrator, set up times when you can visit other teachers and watch them teaching the same subjects you teach. This may give you some insight into using different classroom teaching strategies. Be careful when trying another teacher’s technique, however, as it is tailored to his or her personality; you have to take your own personality as a factor when trying new instructional strategies.
5. **Virtual Unconference:** CTE teachers in Oklahoma have the basic technology in their rooms to do a virtual conference with several teachers. In an unconference, there are not any set topics. The topics are developed by the needs of the group. It would be good to invite your division specialist to join in on the virtual unconference.

These are only a few ideas that can help you overcome isolation in your CTE classroom. Remember that you should also reach out to other teachers in your building for support and ideas also.