

One of the many marvels of being a CTE teacher is that we affect student’s lives in ways we understand and in ways, we can’t begin to comprehend. The demands of being a new CTE teacher can eclipse the fact that students are the center of our profession. You can easily become fixated on industry or state standards, district initiatives, and departmental guidelines while we busily attend meetings, pore over lesson plans and endlessly grade papers.

I want to look at helping maintain a positive, caring, respectful environment. Effective student communication cannot only allow students to feel heard but can also indirectly support your classroom management. Communication in the CTE classroom can be in various forms from small groups to entire class conversations. The key is to teach student how to have a conversation that makes them accountable yet still able to share their voice! As with anything, we do as CTE teachers we have to practice what we preach. Which means we have to learn to listen and respond the way we want them to listen and respond.

Weather it is small or large groups usually we have to start by prompting students’ thoughts. Prompts will vary depending on the CTE class and activity but might look like:

* What are you thinking?
* What did you intend to do?
* Can you tell me more about that?
* What are your actual results?
* What explains your results?
* What do you want to change?

While the prompts will come easy, responses may be harder to get without training. There is usually one person that will have a quick sometimes snarky response but you want to hear everyone. They need to know the rules for discussion, and that you expect each person or select people to also respond. However, you want all responses to be accountable so there responses will look like:

* I agree with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because ……
* I disagree with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because ……
* In addition to what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ said …..
* I like what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was saying …..

I have attached Rules for Discussion sheet that can be used with students during discussions. Likewise, as a CTE teacher, you need to follow these rules and in doing so you show that you are listening to your students and hear what they are saying which connects them to you and your CTE class. In the end, this will also help with classroom management.