

# Career and Technical Education *Advisor*

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## TOP LEGAL CASES

### NEGLIGENCE

**Governmental immunity:** An appeals court dismisses the claim of a teacher who was injured in a classroom altercation between students. Because no school official ever promised to guarantee the teacher's personal safety in the classroom, the district avoided liability for negligence. **Page 11**

### SECTION 504

**Equal opportunity:** The Office for Civil Rights determines a district violated Section 504 and the ADA by routinely denying the transfer requests submitted by students with disabilities. Despite the district's claim that space restrictions prompted the denials, OCR will monitor the district for two years to ensure compliance. **Page 11**

### FREE SPEECH

**First Amendment:** A school district must allow students to wear buttons depicting Hitler youth as part of their protest of the school dress code, pending the conclusion of their lawsuit. Although the buttons are insulting, a District Court finds they do not rise to the level of being 'plainly offensive.' **Page 12**

## COVER STORY

### Bridge divide between abstract concepts, real-world applications for CTE students

When a student suddenly grasps the connection between a seemingly abstract concept and his technical training, you can often see his face light up. This "aha" moment is crucial for CTE students, who will be expected to apply theoretical concepts in a hands-on way in their first jobs. You can take students from the conceptual to the concrete by using a few simple strategies in your presentation. To get you started, *Career and Technical Education Advisor* spoke with one expert about the best ways to help students understand complex material and then put their learning into action. **Full story, page 3.**

#### CTE customized

Learn why it is critical to reach students in the way they learn best when tackling difficult material. **See page 3.**

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Empower immigrant students with greater awareness

Learn how you can reach out to immigrant students and their families to share the benefits of a technical education. Make sure they know that with some hard work and appropriate assistance, their career goals are within reach. **Page 4**

### Freshman academies set students' course for future

Find out what benefits freshman academies can offer ninth-graders and why the program is a natural fit with the objectives of CTE. **Page 5**

### Provide carefully tailored professional development

Just making time to hold a training session will not do your CTE faculty members much good. Instead, customize professional development to meet the true needs of your staff. **Page 7**

### Improve recruitment with well-designed Web site

Having a stellar program does not mean much if potential students do not know what you have to offer. See how your Web site can be a critical tool in sharing the benefits of your CTE program. **Page 8**



## Freshman academies help students set course for future

Ninth-grade students have a lot on their plates as they grapple to find an identity while plotting a course for the rest of their lives. You can ease that transition by creating a freshman academy to help students prepare to make decisions about their careers and their futures.

"It is a pivotal time during which many young people make life-defining decisions, the importance of which only becomes apparent later in their lives," said Mindy Bingham, author of the Career Choices curriculum. Today's young people face a future with far more options and fewer certainties than ever before, she said.

As a result of these pressures, students can fall into the trap of giving up their own identities and being influenced by negative characteristics. Without adult guidance and the maturity to understand how their choices affect their career options, some students may simply drop out of school, opting for the easiest path, she said.

However, a well-structured freshman academy can change the course of students' lives.

"The obvious benefit is that the freshman academy gives students a smaller environment, so they are not so overwhelmed by the size of the high school," Bingham said, adding that in some cases, students are even taught by a core group of teachers.

A well-planned academy also can provide students with the support and resources to create a plan for their lives that helps them identify barriers, as well as strategies for overcoming them. Students who receive assistance planning tend to mature more quickly and have the motivation to follow through on their plans to a greater degree than their unsupported peers, Bingham said.

"The drop-out rates decrease and academic achievement increases," she said.

### Keys to success

A freshman academy can give students the skills to succeed throughout the rest of their lives — but only if it is implemented effectively. Here are just a few of the components Bingham noted as crucial for a successful academy:

■ **A customized program grounded in guidance services.** Because students are making crucial choices about their educational commitments, identities, career choices, and relationships and

### Key points

- Freshman academies should foster good decision-making, planning skills.
- Enthusiastic instructors engage, motivate transitioning students.
- Offer professional development that helps instructors keep pace with students' needs. ■

lifestyles, it is important for freshman academies to provide tools that help students begin to weigh their options.

"School systems should be encouraged to adopt a comprehensive guidance course meeting all of the Course Standards for Freshman Transition Classes [from the Freshman Transition Initiative at George Washington University]," Bingham said, adding that the course should encourage students to think about what they want out of life, as well as the consequences of failing to plan for the future.

The course format outlined by GWU is designed to be competency-based, with instruction in reading, writing, verbal communication and social science, Bingham said. Such a course must include more than freshman orientation activities, focusing on critical-thinking and decision-making skills.

One of the most important components of such a course is that it culminates in the development of a 10-year plan created by each student, she said. This plan can help students prepare for their career dreams, representing a critical tool for ensuring that they take on the prerequisite activities and courses to make their hopes realities.

■ **Enthusiastic instructors.** Working with 14- and 15-year-old students can be challenging, and students will benefit most from instructors who are passionate about working with this population, Bingham said. Students will be able to sense whether or not instructors truly want to be there.

■ **The right tools.** Don't rush into implementation before you have had time to do your homework and put together an effective curriculum that details your goals for students and how they will achieve those goals.

"With a quality curriculum tool, instructors can be successful from the first day of class, rather than taking two or three years to struggle with finding what does and what does not work," Bingham said.

*For more information about academies, visit [www.academicinnovations.com](http://www.academicinnovations.com).* ■