WHAT IS A NONTRADITIONAL OCCUPATION?

Nontraditional refers to occupations or fields of work for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of the individuals employed in each occupation or field of work.  

SUMMARY

When informing students about Nontraditional Occupation (NTO) programs, it is crucial to dispel stereotypes held by teachers, counselors, parents, and/or students themselves regarding nontraditional occupations by raising awareness of nontraditional careers early in the educational process. A goal of teachers and counselors should be to promote a message that suggests to a student of an underrepresented gender that they can succeed in a nontraditional career. The message should also promote this idea among more traditional student populations, parents, and school staff.

Gender equity issues pose a significant barrier to student interest in NTO programs. Difficulties recruiting students into nontraditional careers are compounded by the fact that most learners do not picture themselves working in nontraditional fields; they need consistent exposure to materials and career exploration activities to stimulate their interests. In light of these barriers, traditional awareness-raising methods are insufficient to impact career decision making.
CREATE MATERIALS AND PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE INTEREST IN NTO PROGRAMS AND ADHERE TO EQUITABLE STANDARDS TO COUNTER GENDER EQUITY BARRIERS

• Provide workshops, hands-on career fairs, career panels, and other events that highlight NTOs. Invite students and parents.

• Discuss local employment opportunities for those with training in nontraditional fields.

• Emphasize the potential earnings of nontraditional careers to students and parents.

• Invite students and parents to an NTO program site to eliminate misconceptions about CTE programs and nontraditional careers.

• Include presentations from positive, attainable role models to creditably answer questions posed by parents and students.

• Create relationships with employers to provide accurate information and facilitate contact with potential speakers and resources.

• Create a section of your program’s website that has specific information for students interested in NTOs, include testimonials and success stories.

• Contrast pay between traditional careers and nontraditional careers.

• Also include information about support services that are specifically relevant to those individuals seeking careers that are nontraditional for their gender.

• Review all current material and processes to make sure they do not contain an inadvertently discriminatory message.

• Make adjustments to social media campaigns to reflect recommended practices.

  • Social media is an effective way to facilitate word of mouth advertising with a source that is easily remembered and referenced in conversation.

  • Educate counselors and teachers on bias, both personal and institutional, and ensure they understand the potential barriers for students seeking nontraditional careers.

• Present NTO programs to students of all genders.

• Design activities that include family members and encourage students to achieve educationally; this action is especially important for economically disadvantaged or underrepresented communities.

DID YOU KNOW?

In a study conducted by Dodson and Borders, male elementary school counselors reported more job satisfaction and less role conflict than male engineers. The study found that males who chose a nontraditional career that represents upward mobility in contrast to their family of origin have higher job satisfaction.
• Include pictures of women and men in all recruitment material.

• For radio and TV advertising make sure to include nontraditional student voiceover.

• Use gender inclusive language, not gender neutral; you are actively seeking students of all genders.

• Include real world setting in promotional videos.
  • Cover topics like what it’s like to be a man or woman and work in a gender dominated field;
  • work/life balance;
  • support networks; and especially the role of family and peers in providing support.

• Use press release modalities to let the community know when you are offering information sessions geared towards nontraditional students.

• Use common language instead of professional terms like “nontraditional careers” when discussing NTO programs; don’t assume your audience knows what nontraditional careers are.
  • If students and parents do not recognize the meaning of language, do not use it in recruitment efforts.

• Train teachers and counselors to consider issues related to NTOs.
  • Train counselors to understand the relationship between the personal, professional, and cultural situations facing students in NTO programs.
  • Drive cultural change by spreading awareness of NTO issues.

• Facilitate support groups.
  • Include clubs that increase student engagement or interaction with professional organizations, peer counseling, and groups that involve like-minded peers in programs.
  • Support is a high priority consideration for females as they consider career options.
  • Stress the influence of job security and job availability of some nontraditional careers, especially for males from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

DID YOU KNOW?

Traditional methods that foster students interest in a STEM career, like print advertising, site visits, demonstrations, etc., are not sufficient to prompt women to explore STEM fields. For women, self-confidence and efficacy in the field precede interest.

Allison and Cossette conducted a thorough review of academic literature on recruiting women into stem careers and found that “A number of recruitment strategies focus on engaging young women’s interest in STEM careers through interpersonal and/or hands-on experiences (for example, increasing women’s self-confidence in STEM fields through cooperative and/or hands-on workshops)” are effective because, “for women, self-confidence precedes interests and career goals. Women must feel confident in their abilities before their interest is aroused.” 1
• Inform students of actual on-the-job activities.
• Include information about expectations of work life balance.

• If lower pay is a concern for male students considering nontraditional careers do not attempt to minimize its significance. Instead, balance discussion of pay with discussion of positive elements that may align with their values.

• Each student’s values are different; don’t make assumptions based on gender stereotypes.

• Attempt to initiate hands-on experience as early as possible through facility tours.

• Provide mentors and accessible positive role-models.
  • Establish mentoring programs for students in NTO programs that connect them with those working in NTO fields (corresponding fields is helpful but not necessary).
  • Ensure that mentoring programs fit the educational setting and student need.
  • Consider alternate mentoring strategies; internet based contacts and connection to professional organizations may be viable options when face-to-face contact cannot be established.
  • Include speakers and presenters in classes who can serve as NTO role-models.

**Sources:**


