# Building Awareness of Career, Vocational & Technical Education: Insights from Language-Diverse Families

**Submitted by Rosalie Rippey, Project Manager**
Secondary Options Family Engagement Project (SOFE)
Federation for Children with Special Needs

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# Background Information

## Overview of the SOFE Project

The Secondary Options Family Engagement Project was created through a grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Our goal is to build awareness of career, vocational, and technical education (CVTE) among families with preferred language other than English, guided by the insights of families themselves.

Project objectives include:
- Developing a network of individuals and organizations that are connected to communities historically under-represented in career and technical education. In particular, we are focused on improving access for families with preferred languages other than English.
- Gathering parent and caregiver perspectives on available information resources, including soliciting input into DESE's new family information resource, [Massachusetts School Finder](#).
- Conducting awareness activities and developing language-accessible and parent-friendly resources to support family and student decision-making about options for high school.

**Gathering Parent/Caregiver Perspectives**

During the month of October 2021, FCSN launched a survey and organized a series of focus groups and interviews to hear from families from around the state and from diverse language groups. The goals of our information gathering were to:
- Understand the level of awareness about these schools and programs
- Solicit input into messaging and information channels for increasing awareness
- Gather feedback and suggestions to enhance the Massachusetts School Finder

The survey, focus groups, and interviews were conducted simultaneously. Questions that were asked are included in the appendix to this report. The questions are very similar between the two, allowing the focus groups to provide a deeper dive into issues while the surveys offer broader validation of quantitative findings.

For focus groups and interviews, our family engagement specialists worked with [cultural brokers](#) hired specifically for this project due to their relationships with language groups and geographic communities we are seeking to reach. For groups and interviews conducted in another language, notes were translated into English, either simultaneously or after the interview or focus group was complete.
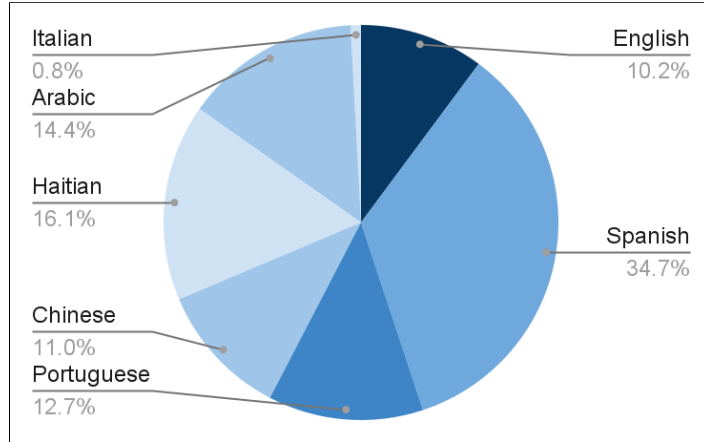
## Who Participated in Focus Groups

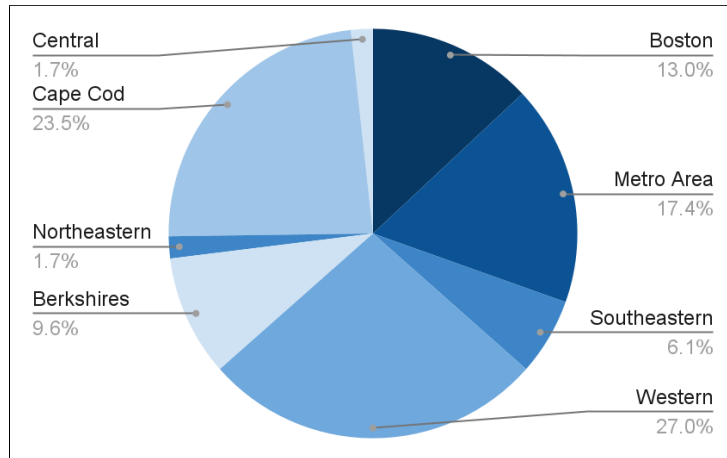Total Focus Group & Interview Participants: 120

FCSN held nine focus groups and one set of interviews, as follows:
1. Arabic Speakers from Greater Springfield (interviews)
2. Brockton parent leaders, the majority of whom are Haitian (in English)
3. Chinese speakers from Springfield/Longmeadow and from Greater Boston
4. Haitian parents/caregivers from Cambridge and Greater Boston
5. Spanish speakers from Pittsfield and Great Barrington
6. Spanish speakers from Holyoke, Springfield and West Springfield
7. Spanish speakers from Eastern Massachusetts
8. Portuguese speakers from Cape Cod
9. Diverse group of bilingual and English-speaking family engagement specialists and cultural brokers associated with the Federation for Children with Special Needs (in English)
10. Diverse group of English speakers and bilingual parents/caregivers from Cape Cod (in English)

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## Home Language of Interviewees / Focus Group Participants

Italian 0.8%
Arabic 14.4%
Haitian 16.1%
Chinese 11.0%
Portuguese 12.7%
English 10.2%
Spanish 34.7%

## Where Focus Group Participants Live

Central 1.7%
Cape Cod 23.5%
Northeastern 1.7%
Berkshires 9.6%
Boston 13.0%
Metro Area 17.4%
Southeastern 6.1%
Western 27.0%

## Age of Focus Group Participants' Children

Adult 22+ 4.2%
Young Adult 14.4%
High School 13.8%
Grades 6-8 24.6%
Preschool 5.4%
Elementary 37.7%

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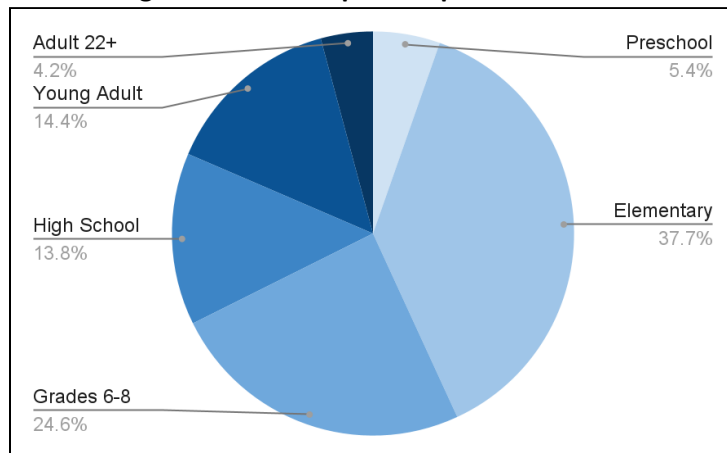
## Who Took the Survey

Total Survey Responses: 444

**Where Survey Respondents Are From**

- Western… 3.4%
- Central 7.5%
- Northeast 9.8%
- Southeast 11.8%
- Cape Cod 14.8%
- Boston 26.0%
- Metro West 14.6%
- Metro North 12.1%
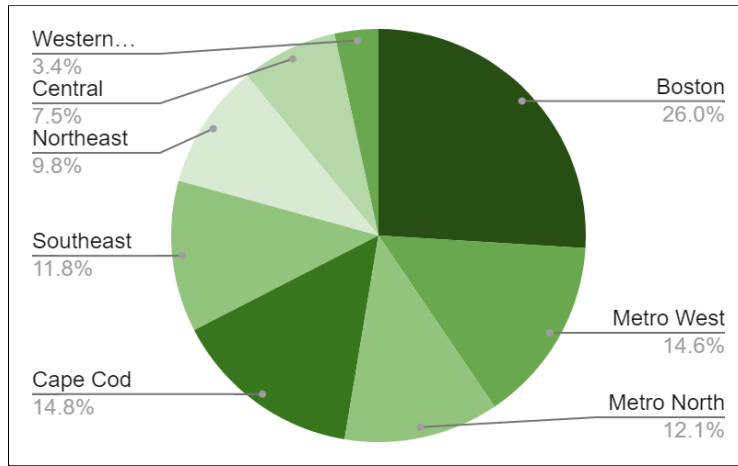
**Age of Survey Respondents' Children**

- preschool 6.8%
- adult 15.5%
- high school age 23.2%
- elementary 28.6%
- middle school 26.0%
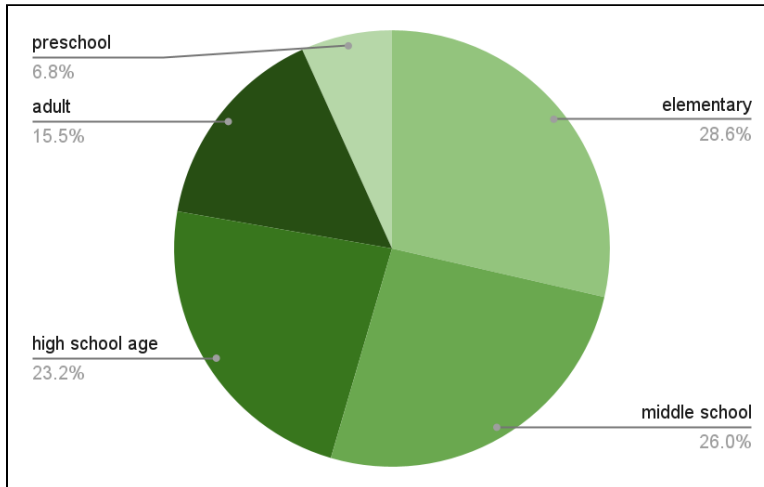
**Survey Respondents' Home Language**

- Other 7.0%
- Russian 1.6%
- Portuguese 2.3%
- Haitian Creole 3.2%
- Spanish 3.6%
- Vietnamese 4.7%
- Chinese 17.6%
- English 60.1%

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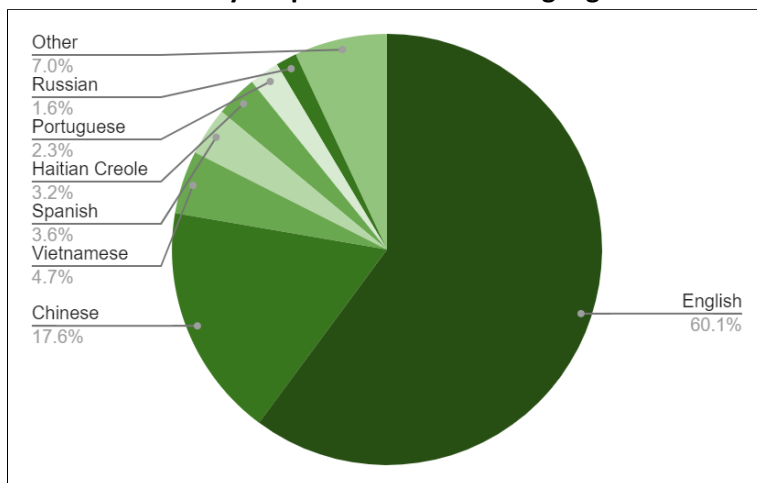
## Race / Ethnicity in Focus Groups & Surveys

For our focus groups, we opted not to ask a specific question about participant race or ethnicity, relying on self-identifications that took place during the group as well as the knowledge of the person who conducted outreach to recruit the participants. As noted above, 90% of participants speak a home language other than English. Across the three groups held in English, we estimate that over half of participants were people of color - African American/Black, Latino, Arab, or Asian.

Our survey did ask a specific question about race and ethnicity. Unfortunately, responses suggest a problem with the way the question was asked, using a matrix whereby people could indicate the race they "most identify with," and then mark off either the "Hispanic/Latino" or "Not Hispanic/Latino" ethnicity category. Separating race and ethnicity in this way is aligned with DESE's demographic categories but the matrix format appears to have caused some confusion. Some respondents checked off every racial category, and large number of people who responded to the Chinese translation selected "Asian" as their race and "Latino" as their ethnicity but did not select "Two or more races." Non-white identities represented below are therefore likely slightly inflated.

**What Race and Ethnicity do you most identify with?**
Total Survey Responses: 444
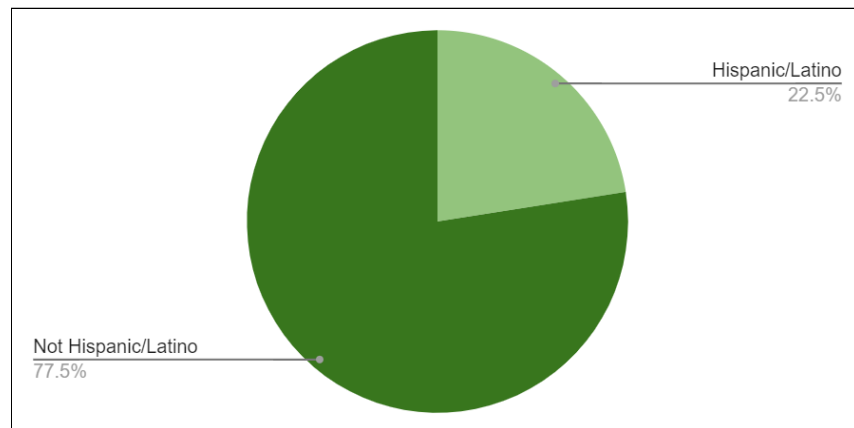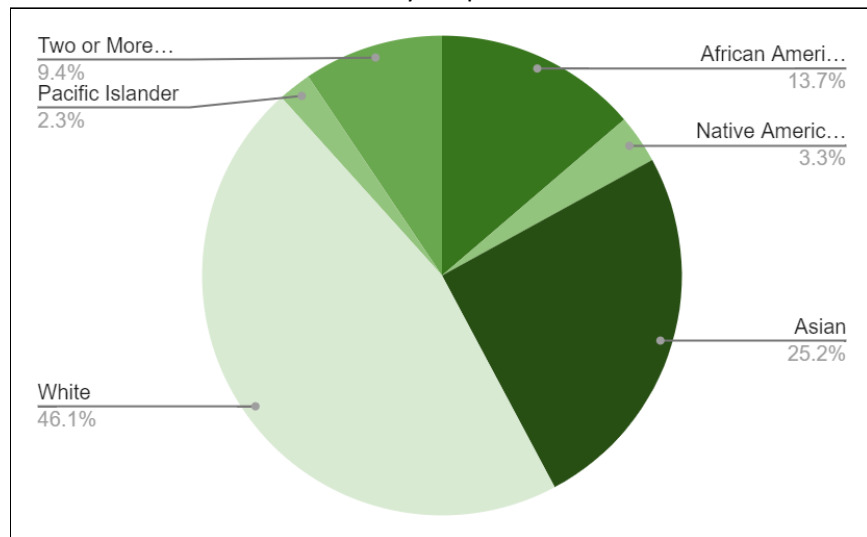
# Findings & Recommendations

## Language-Based Knowledge Gap

An important finding that was consistent between the surveys and the focus groups was that English speakers are more informed, on average, than speakers of other languages. In the surveys, we asked families to rate their knowledge of career, technical, and vocational education on a scale of 0-5.

As the graph below shows, families with a home language other than English were much more likely to rate their knowledge level at 0 than English speakers. And, English Speakers were more likely to rate their knowledge as moderate to high than speakers of other languages.



On a scale of 0-5, how much do you know about Career, Vocational & Technical Education?
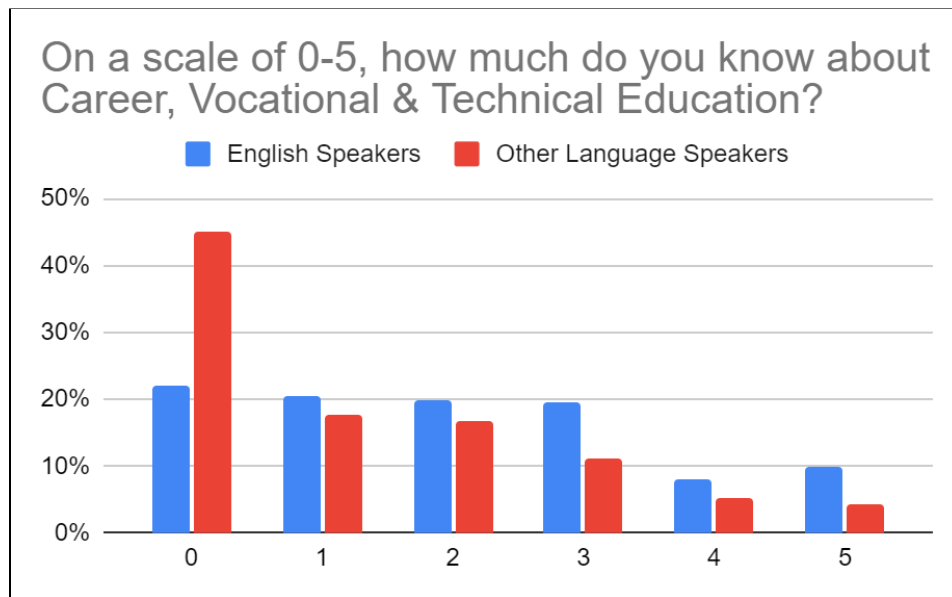
This pattern was also seen in our focus groups. The groups that took place in Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese and Haitian Creole had a significantly lower level of awareness, and participants asked more fundamental questions such as what age level these schools serve and whether there is a cost to attend.

### *Recommended Action Steps*

1. Information about career education should be shared with families in their preferred language. Through the SOFE project, we are developing an overview for families as well as family-friendly descriptions of specific vocational career fields to begin this effort.
    a. Translated resources should be distributed to career, vocational and technical schools and local school districts, for use in outreach and by guidance counselors seeking to ensure families have equal access to this information.

## Parent/Caregiver Questions

The focus groups were able to surface areas of confusion for parents and caregivers, while pinpointing the most important questions that families need answered in order to understand their options and the process for accessing this type of program.

Common questions can be summarized as follows:
- Is there a cost to attend
- Do programs/schools provide adequate academic challenge and preparation for college

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- What are the benefits of this type of education
- How do I know if this is a good fit for my specific child
- Who is eligible to attend
- Can students with disabilities attend these programs
- Do these schools need to know my/my child's immigration status
- How do I apply/enroll
- How can I learn if these programs are available near me
- What are the technical training options for students after they graduate
- Is there someone I can talk to if I have questions

*==Recommended Action Steps==*
2. Family-friendly information should address all of the questions listed above

## Misperceptions and Concerns

While our surveys did not ask about perceptions of CVTE, many opinions came up organically during the focus groups. A consistent pattern across groups was that individuals with direct experience with career education programs (as a former student or family member of a student or graduate) tended to have positive perceptions. Two participants noted that these schools and programs had not been a good fit for their child, but most comments from alumni and parents of students and alumni resonated with the participant who stated, "It's really about kids having hands-on experiences and finding what they love."

There were a number of comments about equity and access. Several participants expressed concern that many regional schools have a waitlist or voiced a desire for more career/technical education opportunities to be available to more students. Some parents/caregivers with a more competitive regional CVTE school in their area described these schools as highly sought-after or exclusive.

Those who are more removed from career education (those who were not alumni and did not have alumni in their family) were more likely to express negative opinions, to hold stereotypes, or to be surprised to learn about the benefits of CVTE. This includes many parents and caregivers from immigrant backgrounds. Observationally, misperceptions were also sometimes held by white participants with higher levels of education. Multiple questions and statements of opinion reflected the misperception that CVTE is designed for students who are not capable or successful academically. A meaningful number of families expressed the worry that CVTE schools and programs would provide adequate preparation for college.

*==Recommended Action Steps==*
3. Misperceptions should be countered in family-friendly, language-accessible ways, emphasizing CVTE as a step on the path to college and stable, rewarding, well-compensated careers.
   a. Messaging should take into consideration the lack of clarity that students and families may feel about how different choices for high school, college, and beyond will lead to specific career opportunities. See the appendix to this memo for specific excerpts and insights culled from the research study, "Career and Technical Education and Postsecondary Student Outcomes in Massachusetts: Career Clusters and Student Groups, Teacher Licensure, and Student Entry" (October 2020 - linked here.)
4. Clarity and transparency around STEM fields may be particularly vital in our outreach efforts, as indicated by ample research into racial, ethnic, and language disparities in STEM programs within career and technical education. (For a summary, see this recent article.)

## Impressions of Massachusetts School Finder

In our focus groups, the Massachusetts School Finder online resource was well received by families, with many commenting that they wish they had known about it earlier or were glad to know about it now.

### Awareness: Low

In both surveys and focus groups/interviews, the resource was mostly unknown to families. There was no significant difference between the responses of English Speakers vs. speakers of other languages when it came to awareness of this tool. Awareness was higher in the surveys, which makes sense given that this is an online resource and surveys were mostly conducted online (only a couple of our cultural brokers conducted interviews and then entered the data).

|  | Survey | Focus Group |
|---|---|---|
| **Heard of School Finder** | 14% | 7% |
| **Have Used School Finder** | 5% | 5% |

### Add a Map? Yes

Parents resoundingly endorsed DESE plan to show results on a map in a future release of the School Finder. Interestingly, English speakers demonstrated higher levels of interest in search results being displayed on a map. Speakers of other languages also supported adding a map function, although at a slightly lower rate. We have not explored the reasons behind this difference because it was not identified until this report was being written.

|  | Survey - English Home Language | Survey - Other Home Language | Focus Groups Language not noted but 90% of participants were speakers of a language other than English |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Yes - Show Results on a Map** | 95% | 86% | 85% |
| **No - Do Not Add a Map** | 5% | 14% | 15% |

It is worth noting that one parent asked that the map be optional (using a checkbox or "view on map" link) because some people find written information easier to understand than visual information including maps.

### Translation? Yes

In focus groups held in other languages, parents commented or asked questions indicating the need to provide the School Finder in languages other than English. In some instances, it appeared that the information being available only in English led to the impression that CVTE schools might only be able to, or intended to, serve students with English home language.

On the survey, 37% of respondents stated that they would like to see the School Finder translated into other languages. Some bilingual families stated English is the language they need, while some English-speakers requested languages needed by family members and neighbors. Two parents asked for the tool to be translated into "as many languages as possible."

### Recommended Action Steps

5.  Translate the School Finder into as many languages as possible.
6.  Add a map function. In keeping with principles of Universal Design, we would encourage the website designers to use a checkbox or button to allow users toggle between map view and list view depending on a user's preference and learning style.

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## CVTE Terminology Used in School Finder

In both our survey and our focus groups, we asked families if they were familiar with a number of CVTE Pathways and Programs, which are listed in a drop-down menu within the School Finder. There was a very low level of knowledge of all of these terms. It is important to note that even reportedly better-known terms were frequently incorrectly defined upon further exploration in the focus group format.

**CVTE Programs and Pathways**

| | **Survey** English Speakers | **Survey** Other Languages | **Focus Groups** Language not noted but 90% of participants were speakers of a language other than English |
|---|---|---|---|
| Early College | 20% | 13% | 12% |
| Chapter 74 Program | 11% | 6% | 6% |
| Innovation Pathway | 9% | 3% | 3% |
| After Dark | 5% | 2% | 6% |
| Non-Chapter 74 (Perkins Only) | 3% | 1% | 2% |
| Postsecondary Chapter 74 | 2% | 1% | *Did not ask* |
| **None of the Above** | **72%** | **82%** | |

In the deeper exploration of these terms made possible by the focus groups, families expressed that career education pathway names and the definitions provided for these pathways were confusing and unhelpful. Specific feedback on these terms, expressed in focus groups, follows.

- **Chapter 74**
  - Those who expressed knowledge of this term were highly-involved in education advocacy or in the field of vocational and technical education.
  - "Chapter _____ " reminds families of negative legal situations such as bankruptcy or juvenile delinquency proceedings.
  - Explaining that these schools get certain types of funding or have a specific set of requirements made families worry that certain programs are under-funded or lower-quality - although they expressed uncertainty on this point.

- **Non-Chapter 74 or "Perkins Only"**
  - Perkins Only sounds less scary than Chapter 74, but parents asked if it was related to a specific person or to the Perkins School for the Blind.
  - Families want to understand the substantive difference between Chapter 74 and Non-Chapter 74 and what that would mean in terms of their child's experiences and future opportunities.

- **Early College**
  - Although 12% reported they had heard of this term, none defined it accurately. Nearly all of these responses reflected confusion between the MA Early College initiative and dual enrollment / concurrent enrollment programs.
  - In several groups, parents asked how this relates to AP classes.

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- **Innovation Pathway**
  - Although 3% reported that they knew about these programs, none defined it correctly.
  - There was confusion about the difference between Innovation Pathway and Innovation Schools
  - Upon reading the definition, families stated that they were interested in these programs and wanted to know if their child could attend one.

- **After Dark (or Chapter 74 Partnership Programs)**
  - 6% of families stated they had heard of these programs. In some instances, they were confusing this program with a local program that has a similar name.
  - Multiple families guessed that this was another name for night school - at least one assuming this meant the programming is for adults
  - This term was viewed as highly negative by many, connoting disreputable activities
  - The Haitian Creole families were particularly negative on this term, describing racialized or racist associations with the term

- **Postsecondary Chapter 74 Programs.**
  - We did not specifically ask about this term in our focus groups. However,, "Postsecondary" is not a plain language term.
  - Additionally, on the School Finder, the grade level boxes only go up to Grade 12.

**A note about the term "Pathway"**
In preparing these focus groups and surveys, we spoke with both professional translators and cultural brokers/ambassadors working on this project about the term Pathway. This term is frequently used in the field of Education, but it is based on a metaphor that is more familiar to English-speakers than to speakers of other languages. For some languages, it was recommended to leave the term untranslated. In other languages, we were encouraged to choose something more precise such as "Options" or "Programs." This provides an important reminder about using plain language and speaking concretely when communicating with families.

**Recommended Action Steps**
7. While the SOFE Project should seek to provide greater clarity around regulatory and education language, this language is an obstacle to parents/caregivers being able to search for programs using the School Finder.  That is,  users can only select a specific career field within a regulatory category. That is, they cannot search for "cosmetology" or "advanced manufacturing" -- they must choose "After Dark Advanced Manufacturing" or "Chapter 74 Advanced Manufacturing," etc. Instead, we suggest listing the career fields only.
8. The label **Pathway/Program (Grades 9-12 only)**, is difficult to translate, and could be stated more plainly. We recommend something like,  "Career/Technical Education Options (Grades 9-12)."
9. Re-Label the drop-down option "All (Pathway/Programs Only)" to "All Career/Technical Options." When the user views their search results, these regulatory terms would then appear with an (i) bubble.
10. Consider grouping together Innovation Pathway programs and Chapter 74 programs so that a user's interest in information technology, engineering, life sciences, healthcare, or advanced manufacturing would yield results both within the Chapter 74 realm and Innovation Pathway programs.
11. Instead of "Post-Secondary Chapter 74 program," consider allowing users to select "High School Graduate" to view  career education Schools that offer Postsecondary opportunities. Additionally, because families asked about options for older/post-high school children (or themselves), it would be beneficial to add an entry to the system pointing people towards a resource for locating such programs.

Implementing these recommendations would allow users to go on to learn about the differences between these formats -- rather than requiring them to understand the differences before they make a selection.
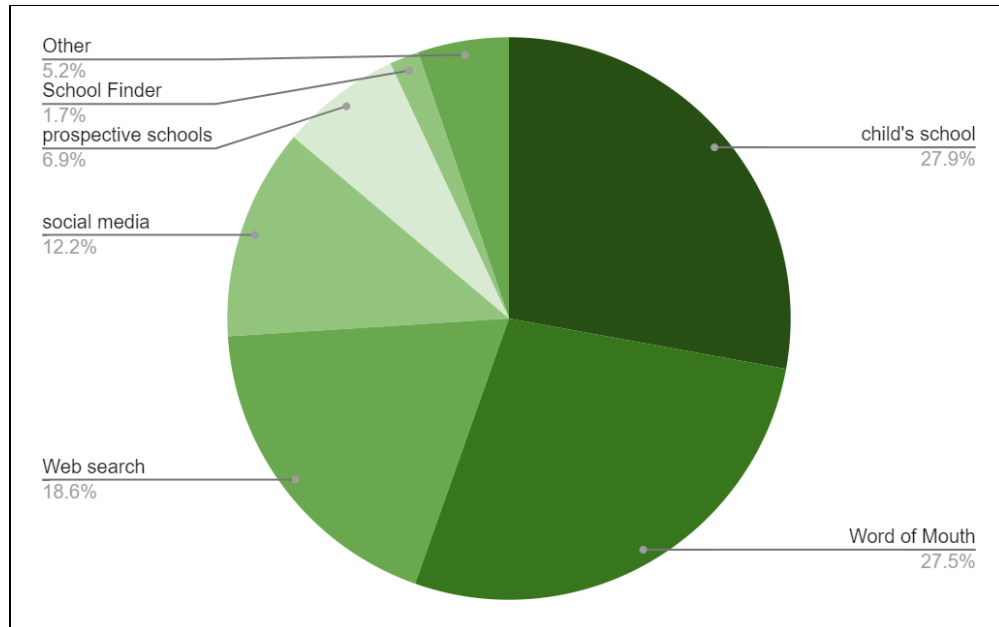
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## Outreach and Communication Insights
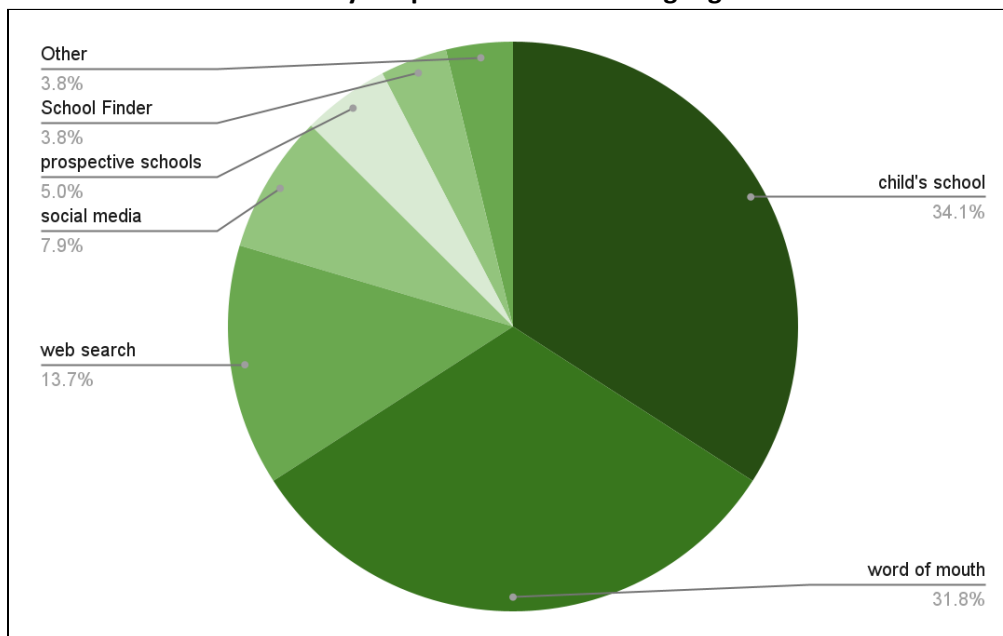
**Where Families Get Information**
Both the survey and the focus groups asked families where they get information about their **educational options.** The focus group also explored where they get information about **resources and activities** - in hopes of uncovering new avenues to explore in our outreach.

In both surveys and focus groups, the most frequently-reported sources of information were their children's current school as well as word of mouth (other families, one's own family). This pattern is easier to quantify on surveys than in a focus group setting, and survey responses are illustrated on the following two charts.

### Surveyed English Speakers



- Other 5.2%
- School Finder 1.7%
- prospective schools 6.9%
- social media 12.2%
- Web search 18.6%
- child's school 27.9%
- Word of Mouth 27.5%

### Surveyed Speakers of Other Languages



- Other 3.8%
- School Finder 3.8%
- prospective schools 5.0%
- social media 7.9%
- web search 13.7%
- child's school 34.1%
- word of mouth 31.8%

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As the above two charts show, the biggest difference between responses of English speakers vs. speakers of other languages is that English speakers were slightly more likely to cite web searches and social media as a source of information - although these information sources are still relevant to both groups.

Other sources of information cited in both focus groups and surveys are community organizations and support agencies (healthcare, parent support). This underscores the importance of community partnerships in building awareness among families.

**Parent/Caregiver Comments and Ideas for Improving Awareness**
Many families volunteered opinions and ideas for improving awareness of career education programs during our interviews and focus group discussions. Key themes in this area include the following:
- **Use plain language** to explain available options and de-emphasize jargon and regulatory terms wherever possible. Jargon, acronyms and regulatory language are barriers to access.
- **Engage with families as co-creators of messaging and resources**, to ensure that information responds to their concerns and perspectives
- **Schools need to communicate more, earlier, and more directly with families**. In some groups, families expressed that they knew their child received information that never made it to them or was not clear enough once communicated by a middle schooler. Others described how, as students get older, communication with families decreases, despite the vital role that parents typically play in encouraging and helping students apply for or enroll in programs.  This concern is particularly acute for parents of neurodiverse children.
  - A great quote from one of the focus group was that information comes to parents accidentally, rather than as a result of schools making an effort to make sure families have the information they need.
  - Promote the benefits of career education more explicitly - using testimonials and videos
  - Several parents asked whether there are certain qualities to look for in their child that would suggest a career education program might be a good match for them, and others recommended creating an online quiz that would suggest what types of programs might be interesting for their child.
  - A couple of parents expressed that it should be about helping students find their passion, what they are good at or what they enjoy.
- **Make the processes for applying and accessing these programs clearer**.

==Recommended Action Steps==
12. In developing materials via the SOFE project, respond to the above recommendations from families in shaping information pieces, additionally responding to needs identified in the 2020 DESE career and technical education research study cited above and included in the appendix.  FCSN will work with cultural ambassadors and family engagement specialists to review all information we produce to ensure that it is family friendly and accessible
13. Disseminate materials to school personnel, to share with their local family networks
14. Parent organizations, community partners, and parent leaders are all important sources of information and communication strategies should tap into these networks.
    a. This includes online networks and apps - especially Facebook, WeChat and WhatsApp.
    b. FCSN would welcome opportunities to connect cultural ambassadors in our developing network with specific outreach initiatives by vocational technical schools, when possible.

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX 1: Survey Questions (English)

## High School Options in Massachusetts

Please take a few minutes to help us understand how we can improve information for families about career, technical and vocational education. Your answers are confidential.

**How old are your children? Choose all that apply.**
Pre-school age (age 4 or younger) | Elementary Age | Middle School age (Grades 6-8) | High School Age | Adult (over 18)

**How do you get information about school options for your child? Choose all that apply.**
From my child's current school | From high schools I am considering | Web search | From other families | Social Media | Massachusetts School Finder | Other

**How much do you know about vocational education options for students in your community?**
Rating Scale: 0 = I do not know anything about these options
5= I know what schools are available, how to apply, and where to learn more about them

**Which of the following vocational education pathways have you heard of? Choose all that apply.**
Chapter 74 Program (Chapter 74 Program, in English)
Non-Chapter 74 (or Perkins Only) Program (Non-Chapter 74 (or Perkins Only), in English)
After Dark / Chapter 74 Partnerships (After Dark / Chapter 74 Partnerships, in English)
Early College (Early College, in English)
Innovation Pathway (Innovation Pathway, in English)
Postsecondary Chapter 74 Program (Postsecondary Chapter 74 Program, in English)

## Massachusetts School Finder

Please click on this link to see the Massachusetts School Finder. Then, come back and finish this survey.

**Before today, have you HEARD OF the Massachusetts School Finder?** Yes | No

**Before today, have you USED the Massachusetts School Finder?** Yes | No

**Would it be helpful to be able to look up the location of your school options on a map?** (Example provided) Yes | No

**If the School Finder was available in multiple languages, what language would you choose?** (Open Response)

## Optional Questions

Your responses to the following demographic questions will help us make sure that we are hearing from diverse families and communities. You may skip these questions if you prefer - but be sure to click "Submit" at the bottom of the page.

**What language(s) do you speak at home?** (Open Response)

**Which of the following best describes your cultural background?** Hispanic or Latino | Not Hispanic or Latino
African American/Black | American Indian/Native American | Asian | Caucasian/White |
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander | Two or More Races

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## APPENDIX 2: Focus Group Script (English)

| Notes to Presenter | SCRIPT |
|---|---|
| **START** | Thank you for joining us for today's conversation about vocational and technical education. We are very happy you are here! |
| **Introduce yourself**<br><br>**Ask the note-taker and screen share person to introduce themselves** | This conversation is being organized by the Federation for Children with Special Needs.<br><br>The Federation empowers families so that they have the information and resources they need for their children – from birth to adulthood. We focus on education, early intervention, health care, transitions, children in foster care and group homes, and building strong family engagement to support all children, especially those children with disabilities, those at risk, and those with economic, cultural or linguistic barriers.<br><br>The Federation is asking diverse families across the state whether you have enough information about vocational and technical high schools.<br><br>Everything you say during this conversation will be confidential. We will not share your name or identity with anyone. We *will* report on what we learn from this group conversation, to help education leaders from the State of Massachusetts improve the information available for families. |
| **Pause to see if there are questions** | Does anyone have any questions before we begin? |
| **Leave time for them to practice each step.** | For our conversation today, we will use the "Raise Hand" button. This is located under "Reactions" on your screen.<br>● Please click "Raise Hand" – and then click Lower Hand. |
| | Great! Let's begin with introductions. I will call on each of you by your Zoom screen name. **Please tell us your name, your town or neighborhood, and the ages or grade levels of your child or children.** |
| **When everyone has introduced themselves** | Thank you all for introducing yourselves.<br><br>Now I am going to ask you a series of questions. Let's get started! |
| | **1. Where do you get information about educational options for your child?** |
| **If no one answers** | For instance, do you get information from: your child's school, the internet, social media, billboards, postcards, friends and family? |
| | **2. Where do you get information about events and resources in your community?** |
| **If you don't get enough answers** | Where would you look for help for a family member? How do you find out about activities to do with your family? |
| | **3. What do you know about Career, Vocational and Technical Education schools / programs?** |
| **If they don't respond** | Please share your understanding of what these schools and programs do. Do you know anyone who has gone to a Vocational School, or whose children attended a vocational school? |
| | **4. What questions do you have about vocational education and vocational schools?** |
| **Screen Share:**<br>**Go to this website and put the link in the chat** | Massachusetts has created an online tool for looking up information about vocational education programs, called Massachusetts School Finder. |

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| | |
|---|---|
| | |
| | **5a. Has anyone seen this tool before? Has anyone used this tool before?** |
| **Say out loud the number who know the difference.** | **Please raise your hand if you have seen it before.** |
| **If yes** | **5b. What did you think about it?** |
| **Once they are done sharing opinions Or, If no** | To use the School Finder, you can enter your address and look up the schools and programs that are options for your child. |
| **Screenshare:** <br> • **Enter the address 1 Main Street, Worcester MA** <br> • **Enter 09 for the Grade** | As you can see, the system will provide a list of schools that are close to your home. If you are looking for a high school for your child, this would tell you about all of your high school options. |
| | **5c. What do you think about this resource?** |
| **Screenshare: Map example** | **6a. Would it be helpful to display these schools on a map?** |
| **Say out loud the number of raised hands.** | **Please raise your hand if you think it would be helpful.** |
| | **6b. Can anyone share more about why you answered the way you did?** |
| | We are wondering if the terms used on the School Finder are well known, or if the language is confusing. |
| **Screenshare: Chapter 74** | **7a. Is anyone familiar with the term, Chapter 74 Program?** |
| **Say out loud the number of raised hands.** | **Please raise your hand if you have heard of it.** |
| **If Yes** | **7b. In your own words, can anyone explain what this is?** |
| **Screenshare: Definition of Chapter 74 Program** | Thank you for answering. An official definition is on this slide. |
| **Read** | Chapter 74 is a name given to schools that receive vocational education funding from the State of Massachusetts. To receive this funding, they must meet the requirements defined in a section of Massachusetts General Law – Chapter 74. The term Chapter 74 means that the school has met certain specific standards. |
| | **7c. Do you have any questions or comments on this explanation?** |
| | **7d. Is this term understandable? Can anyone suggest another name for this program that would be better?** |
| **Screenshare: Perkins-Only** | **8a. Does anyone know the difference between a Chapter 74 Program and a Non Chapter 74 (or Perkins-Only) Program.** |
| **Say out loud the number who know the difference.** | **Please raise your hand if you know the difference.** |

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| **If Yes** | **8b. In your own words, can anyone explain what this is?** |
| **Screenshare: Definition of Perkins-Only** | Thank you for answering. An official definition is on this slide. |
| **Read** | "Perkins-Only" refers to a United States federal law that provides funding for vocational education. To receive this funding, the schools must meet certain standards and requirements. So Non-Chapter 74 or Perkins Only means that the vocational school or program receives federal funding, but not state funding. |
| | **8c. Do you have any questions or comments on this explanation?** |
| | **8d. Is this term understandable? Can anyone suggest another name for this program that would be better?** |
| **Screenshare: Early College** | **9a. Is anyone familiar with the term, Early College Program?** |
| **Say out loud the number of raised hands.** | **Please raise your hand if you have heard of it.** |
| | **9b. In your own words, can anyone explain what this is?** |
| **Screenshare: Definition of Chapter Early College** | Thank you for answering. An official definition is on this slide. |
| **Read** | Early College programs are designed to blend elements of high school and college to provide students with the opportunity to experience and complete college level academic coursework while also gaining exposure to career opportunities. Early college programs reduce the time and expense of college, and increase the chance that a student will complete college. |
| | **9c. Do you have any questions or comments on this explanation?** |
| | **9d. Is this term understandable? Can anyone suggest another name for this program that would be better?** |
| **Screenshare: Innovation Pathway** | **10a. Is anyone familiar with the term Innovation Pathway? Please use the yes button or no button to answer.** |
| **Say out loud the number of raised hands.** | **Please raise your hand if you have heard of it.** |
| | **10b. In your own words, can anyone explain what this is?** |
| **Screenshare: Definition of Innovation Pathway** | Thank you for answering. An official definition is on this slide. |
| **Read** | Innovation Pathways are programs that offer training and experience in an industry where there are a lot of jobs available. The specific industries are:<br>● Information technology<br>● Engineering<br>● Healthcare<br>● Life sciences<br>● Advanced manufacturing |

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| | Innovation Pathway programs provide a high-quality curriculum and direct experience with employers in the field they are pursuing. |
| | **10c. Do you have any questions or comments on this explanation?** |
| | **10d. Is this term understandable? Can anyone suggest another name for this program that would be better?** |
| **Screenshare: After Dark / Chapter 74 Partnership Program** | **11a Is anyone familiar with the term, "After Dark Program, or Chapter 74 Partnership Program"?** |
| **Say out loud the number of raised hands.** | **Please raise your hand if you have heard of it.** |
| | **11b. In your own words, can anyone explain what this is?** |
| **Screenshare: Definition of After Dark Program** | Thank you for answering. An official definition is on this slide. |
| **Read** | After Dark" is also known as a Chapter 74 Partnerships program. In these programs, students complete their academic requirements at their local high school while pursuing vocational education outside of the typical school day schedule. These programs offer training in a field where students will have a strong chance of finding a job or going to college after they graduate. A goal of these partnerships is to increase access to vocational education in areas where there are not enough seats available for all students who apply. Some schools also offer After Dark programming to students who are not on the traditional track to graduate. |
| | **11c. Do you have any questions or comments on this explanation?** |
| | **11d. Is this term understandable? Can anyone suggest another name for this program that would be better?** |
| | **12. What feedback would you like us to share with the creators of the Massachusetts School Finder, to make it as useful as possible?** |
| **Wrap-Up** | Those are all of the questions that we have today. Thank you so much for sharing your opinions and ideas with us today!<br><br>If anyone would like to stay on to ask any follow-up questions about this topic or about other programs of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, we will be available for another 15 minutes and would be happy to talk with you.<br><br>Thank you so much for your time! |

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**Key Finding #1: Returns to CTE concentration vary across different student groups**

The expected returns to concentrating in CTE for earnings 1, 3, 5, and 7 years after a student's expected graduation date—i.e., the expected differences in earnings between students who do and do not concentrate in CTE, controlling for other differences between these groups of students—are positive for all student groups. But the expected returns are larger for male students, students who never enroll in college, and students with disabilities; note, however, that these groups are not mutually exclusive.

**Key Finding #2: The expected returns to CTE concentration for future earnings and college attendance vary across different CTE career clusters.**
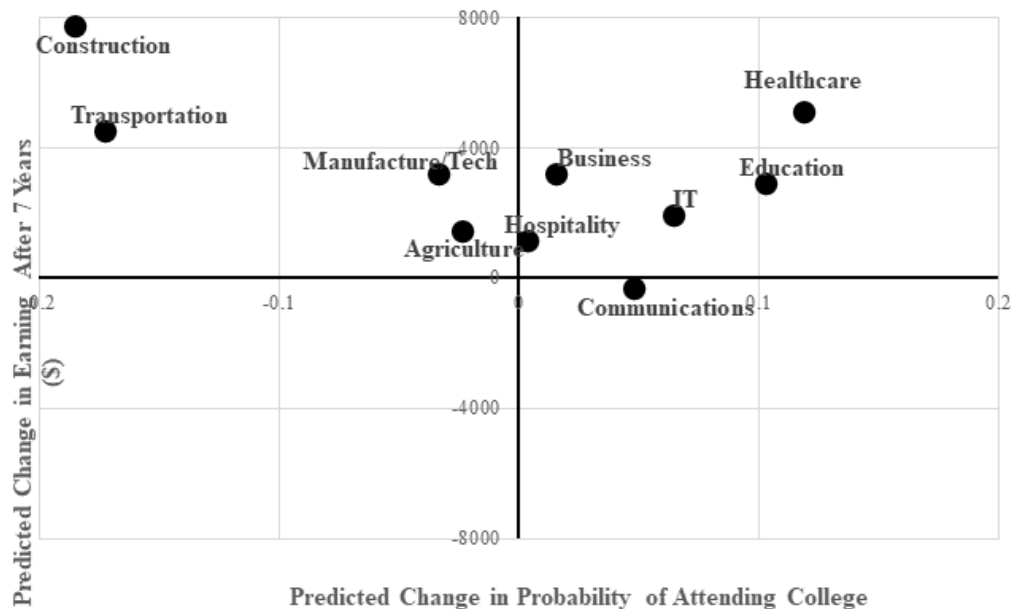


**Page 58:** Nationally, "disadvantaged" students have the most to gain from CVTE, but are least likely to enroll in STEM courses or to get into the more competitive schools such as newer "career academies." They are also less likely to concentrate in CVTE – enrolling in 1-3 courses but not completing a program.

**Page 61:** Middle School Guidance Counselors want students to have the information they need to make an informed choice; families are noted as important to choices for many but not all students. ISome students rely more on assistance from the school or are more self-directed.)  In one of the regions studied, there is uncertainty about whether students understand the connection between the opportunities afforded by a vocational degree vs. going on to college. (Example: becoming a paralegal vs. becoming a lawyer).  Schools are not always allowed to make presentations to the middle schools (varies by region and school).

P**age 62: Focus Groups with Guidance Counselors**
- One guidance counselor described a vision for a decision tree to help students map out their high school and post-secondary plans: "This is what I want, how do I get there?" She believes the goal should be to help students understand themselves, including what kind of learner they are and what kind of environment is best suited for to meet their needs. She also would like to help students make the connections between 8th grade, high school, college, and their goals.

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- Other counselors focused on the need for greater clarity about the meaning of RVTS certifications and the education requirements for professions, including nursing, medical, and legal. They believe that often students do not understand the relationship between RTVS certificates and requirements for different professions; there is confusion about the value of different RTVS certifications in the labor market. They also suggested that middle schools and RVTSs could involve people in the process of providing high school planning support who have knowledge of college admissions and career pathways as well as credibility with the students. The guidance counselors believe that having long-term outcome data from the different high schools, including college matriculation, jobs, and salaries would be helpful to show 8th grade students. They believe that students should have better and easier access to facts that might inform their choices.

**Pp 66-67 – Focus Groups with Middle Schoolers**
- Students want to know what the choice will mean for their future
- Multiple students would like the comprehensive high schools, Regional Vocational Technical Schools (RVTS), and private schools to come to the middle schools to make outreach presentations. They also expressed a desire for shadow day opportunities at the different high schools and more opportunities to explore their interests
- Students would like greater clarity and transparency about the RVTS process after applying. While the students know how to apply to the RVTS, they would like to know what happens after the application. Their questions include: whether any tests are required after getting in; whether admitted students can visit the school; and how competitive it is to get in. The application process is clearly weighing on the minds of some students, and they believe more information would be helpful.

**Possible implications for SOFE Project**
- One-pagers contain an infographic showing possible pathways – with and without a college degree
- Generalized picture of what the application process looks like
- "The right information" – making sure families and students have the right information
- Information for guidance counselors to share with students (translated program/ pathway descriptions)
- Parent/caregiver role not looked at in this study - our focus groups uncover this as a source of information gaps / missed opportunity.