

Learning That Works!

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National Association of State Directors of
Career Technical Education Consortium

What is CTE?

Career Technical Education is an educational model that aligns secondary and postsecondary education to labor market demand, and provides students with the technical, academic and employability knowledge and skills they need for success. Put simply, **CTE prepares students for careers of their choice.**

CTE today is *not* old-school vocational education by another name. While it is built on a similar ideological foundation – that students need to be equipped with skills that enable them to succeed in their careers – the design and delivery has changed radically as our economy has evolved.

The differences are wide ranging, but are grounded in a paradigm shift that acknowledges that:

- Two thirds of jobs created by 2022 will require some form of postsecondary education,
- Career preparedness means building adaptable skills, and
- All students need to be lifelong learners.

Modern CTE is **adaptable, cross-cutting and a partner – not an alternative – to college-preparatory education** and core academic classes across secondary and postsecondary education. And, importantly, CTE itself has expanded to cover all sectors of the economy, as identified by the National Career Clusters® Framework.

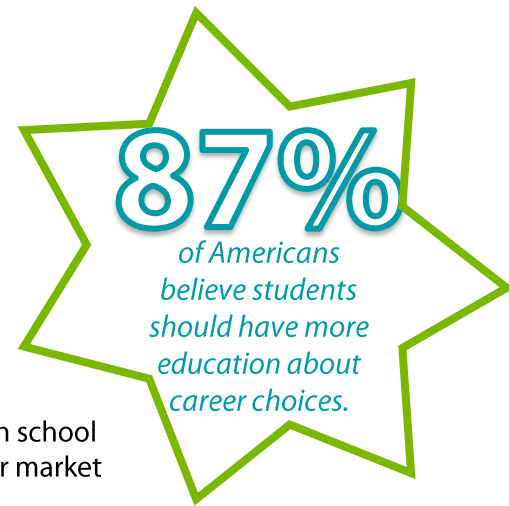
As an educational strategy, **CTE has been used to confront some of the most intractable problems facing America’s education system.**

The Facts

- **CTE leads to fewer dropouts** – CTE concentrators are far less likely to drop out of high school than the national average, a difference estimated to save the economy \$168 billion each year.ⁱ
- **CTE creates personalized pathways to success** – shattering the outdated perception that CTE students are training to take a low-skill job out of high school, recent studies indicate that over 75 percent of CTE concentrators pursue postsecondary education after graduating high school.ⁱⁱ
- **CTE integrates business and industry perspectives** – A core component of the Vision for CTE outlined in *Reflect, Transform, Lead: A New Vision for Career Technical Education*ⁱⁱⁱ is aligning CTE programs with workforce needs. Modern program standards, like those in Washington, require private-sector voices to be equal participants on both general and program-specific advisory committees directing CTE programs.^{iv}

| The Past | The Future |
|----------------------|--|
| High School Focused | Links Secondary, Postsecondary and Workforce |
| 6-7 Program Areas | 16 Career Clusters® 79 Career Pathways |
| In Lieu of Academics | Supports and Reinforces Academic Learning |
| Tracked | Fully Integrated |
| Terminal | Continuous, Lifelong Learning |

- **CTE trains students for high-growth industries** – Most projections of upcoming changes in the labor market indicate that not all sectors will grow equally in the short- or mid-term. The largest projected growth will likely take place in the healthcare industry^v where CTE has been rapidly expanding for years.^{vi}
- **CTE introduces students to the world of work** – Providing work-based learning opportunities like job shadowing and internships is a core pillar of the CTE Vision and high-quality CTE programs.
- **CTE closes the skills gap** – Even as middle skill jobs (requiring more than a high school diploma, but less than a baccalaureate degree) comprise 54 percent of the labor market today, only 44 percent of workers fall into the middle skill cohort.^{vii}
- **CTE allows professionals to advance** – 84 percent of adult CTE concentrators went from CTE study to further education or employment within six months of completing their program.^{viii}
- **CTE represents a positive net investment for society** – CTE is a system focused on data and accountability that prizes business sense and practical thinking. Studies indicate that CTE generates an enormous long term return on investment for participants and for society as a whole.^{ix} One study focused on apprenticeship programs indicated that states would reap \$35 in tax receipts for every dollar invested in internships over the career of an apprentice.^x
- **There is public demand for CTE:** 87 percent of Americans – and 89 percent of public school parents – agree that students should receive more education about career choices while in high school.^{xi}



ⁱ Kotamraju, Pradeep. 2011. "Measuring the Return on Investment for CTE." Techniques: 28-31.

ⁱⁱ <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/sectech/nacte/career-technical-education/interim-report.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://careertech.org/sites/default/files/2010-Vision-Paper.pdf>

^{iv} <https://www.k12.wa.us/CareerTechEd/Forms/CTEProgramStandards2011.pdf>

^v http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Jobs_of_the_Future.pdf

^{vi} <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/tll0zkxt0puz45hu21g6>

^{vii} <http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/middle-skill-fact-sheets-2014/NSC-United-States-MiddleSkillFS-2014.pdf>

^{viii} <http://adulsted-laUSD-ca.schoolloop.com/file/1320734569583/1356617220814/6031349240189194650.pdf>

^{ix} http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/nrccte_roi_guidebook_web.pdf

^x http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/ETAOP_2012_10.pdf

^{xi} <http://pdkpoll.pdkintl.org/october/>