The Opportunity

With all four of the nation's education and workforce development laws either on the path to reauthorization or in the early stages of implementation, now is a crucial time to consider the degree to which Career Technical Education (CTE) is and should be coordinated with these efforts and the state initiatives related to them. Across the country, states are gearing up for the reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins) and the Higher Education Act (HEA), while also preparing for a second round of planning for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and moving toward implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Understanding how coordination between CTE and other statewide initiatives relate to education and workforce development will not only support states' planning and implementation efforts for these laws, it is critical to advancing a statewide vision for CTE and ensuring that all learners can succeed.

To help states prepare for reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, Advance CTE conducted a survey of State CTE Directors in August 2017 to gather information about how states are implementing provisions in the current law. Advance CTE is using the results of the survey to release a series of briefs that will showcase promising practices across states and draw connections between the findings and, "Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE."

This coordination can take many forms. It may mean engaging with another state agency for the first time, strengthening an existing partnership, fostering relationships with new stakeholders, pursuing opportunities for collaboration, or identifying a strategy to begin the engagement that needs to occur. Regardless of the tactic, when coordination between CTE and other statewide efforts is strong it can be the critical driver of progress across systems.

The fifth principle in "Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE" calls on all systems to work together.[1] Aligning systems is not only good government, but is necessary for achieving the most effective and efficient delivery of services to learners. Because CTE connects to multiple systems – including K-12 and postsecondary education, workforce development and economic development – its success is interwoven with that of other programs and systems. This collaboration must put learners at the center to ensure they have access to seamless programs and supports to guide their exploration of careers and acquisition of skills to lead a productive and fulfilling life.

However, CTE has not always been fully aligned or integrated with other programs, policies and systems for a range of reasons – from policy and structural barriers to battles of turf and legacy. The opportunities for true coordination are great as CTE and career readiness continue to grow as a major priority across the country and efforts like Putting Learner Success First and New Skills for Youth are driving states to consider cross-sector alignment and collaboration.[2]

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[1] Released in 2016, "Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE" is a result of nearly 200 leaders from the local to national levels coming together to help map the current landscape of CTE and think strategically about a path forward for the field. Advance CTE and seven co-convening organizations gathered ideas and recommendations to create the new vision. https://careertech.org/vision
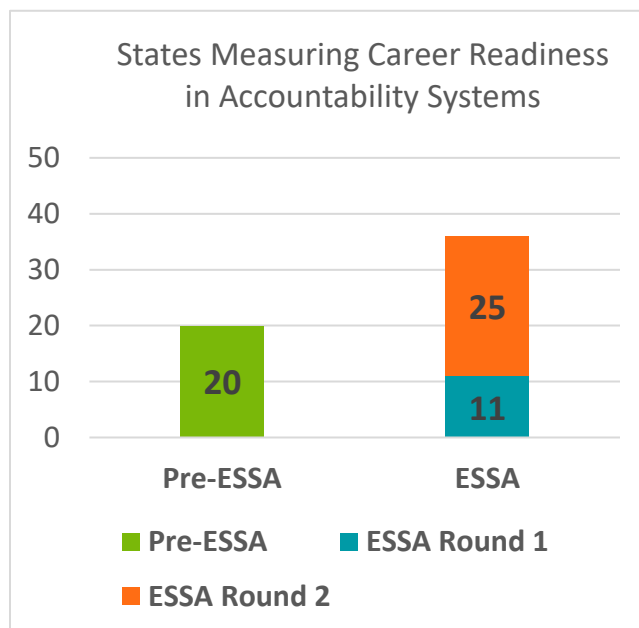
[2] New Skills for Youth is a multi-year initiative funded by the JP Morgan Chase Foundation to support states as they transform their career preparation systems: https://careertech.org/new-skills-youth

Trend data from Advance CTE surveys since 2005 suggests that coordination between CTE and other state initiatives is more common when there is an external forcing event, such as state or federal legislation that triggers a statewide planning process[3]. However, these forcing events have rarely fostered sustainable collaboration. While one-time state or federal actions can prompt collaboration, the data suggest that state leaders may need to employ additional steps or strategies to sustain coordination between CTE and other initiatives or state agencies once initial planning efforts end. Below are some key findings from a 2017 Advance CTE survey of State Directors regarding coordination between CTE and other state initiatives.[4]

CTE & High School Reform/Secondary Education

State Directors reported higher levels of coordination between CTE and high school reform in 2017 than in any year since 2005. In both 2005 and 2017, states were in unique positions to promote coordination between CTE and high school reform efforts. Passage of ESSA opened up new opportunities for alignment with Perkins.[5,6]

During 2016 and 2017, state planning for implementation of the new ESSA law prompted increased collaboration across secondary education. ESSA both encouraged and allowed for states to incorporate CTE into their state plans. In their submitted plans to the U.S. Department of Education, 36 states indicated their intention to measure career readiness in their ESSA accountability systems, compared to 20 states under the prior law's authorization.[7] Going further, 49 states included at least one strategy to support CTE or career readiness in their ESSA plans.[8] Given that ESSA influences academics for all K-12 students, having a stronger connection between CTE and ESSA has tremendous capacity to strengthen a state's vision for career readiness as a priority for all students.

States Measuring Career Readiness in Accountability Systems

Pre-ESSA: 20	ESSA Round 1: 11, ESSA Round 2: 25

Legend: Pre-ESSA, ESSA Round 1, ESSA Round 2

For example, **Wyoming** chose to recognize the value of CTE and ESSA coordination in its ESSA plan by referencing the vision that all students are "college, career and military ready" throughout the plan and including "postsecondary readiness" in the state's accountability system.[9] ESSA identified four

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[3] Advance CTE periodically conducts surveys of State Directors on a variety of topics, including Perkins implementation. Please note that the number of survey respondents has varied across these surveys from 49-53 states and territories.

[4] For this survey question, Advance CTE developed a rating scale to identify the state's connections to workforce development, economic development, and other parts of education. The rating scale ranged from one (no coordination) to four (full coordination). The survey asked State Directors to rate CTE's role in each area based on the rating scale and to consider the amount of input their agency has given formal interactions between staff, pooling of funds, etc., when rating each.

[5] https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf

[6] https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/files/resources/ESSA_CTE_Cheat_Sheet_2017.pdf

[7] Based on Education Strategy Groups' preliminary analysis *http://edstrategy.org/states-on-the-path-to-destination-known/*

[8] https://careertech.org/resource/mapping-career-readiness-essa-full

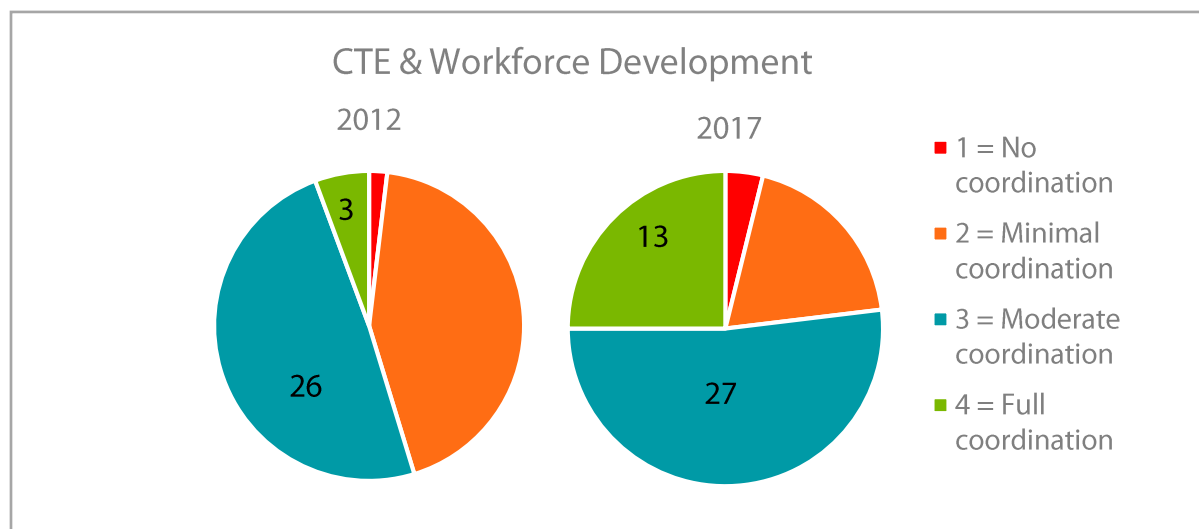[9] https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/wyconsolidatedstateplan.pdf

indicators that all states must measure in their accountability systems and gave power to the states to determine measure(s) for an indicator of "school quality or student success." Wyoming identified "postsecondary readiness" as the school quality/student success indicator at the high school level and weights it evenly with the four other indicators, at 20 percent. High schools will receive a score on this indicator based on the percentage of its students in grade 12 who are "postsecondary ready." Students can meet this indicator in one of three ways:

- Completion of a college prep curriculum and earning a college-ready score on a college entrance exam or earning college credit through AP, IB or dual/concurrent courses;
- Completion of a CTE pathway and earning a passing score on a state-approved CTE exam or industry-recognized certification; or
- Completion of a college preparatory curriculum or a CTE pathway and a military-readiness score on the ASVAB.

CTE & Workforce Development

In 2017, more State Directors reported high levels of coordination between CTE and workforce development than any other year in which Advance CTE asked this question. In 2012, only three states reported full coordination; in 2017, 13 states reported full coordination. The uptick likely stems from the states' planning efforts to implement WIOA, which was reauthorized in 2014.[10] WIOA emphasizes greater coordination between workforce development and CTE through aligned definitions, the requirement that postsecondary CTE is a local infrastructure partner, the option to do a combined state plan that meets the planning requirements for WIOA's core programs and at least one other federal program and other provisions.[11,12] In early 2018, states will be required to submit a second WIOA plan, which will likely create an opportunity for states to revisit the possibility of collaborating on the submission of a combined state plan. However, sustaining coordination between workforce development and CTE outside of state planning processes is critical to advancing statewide priorities for CTE.

CTE & Workforce Development

2012 — 3, 26

2017 — 13, 27

1 = No coordination
2 = Minimal coordination
3 = Moderate coordination
4 = Full coordination

[10] https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/wioa_sa_hr803.pdf
[11] Sec. 3, Sec. 121 (b)(1)(B)(vi) and Sec. 103 (a)(2)(A)
[12] https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/2015-06%20Aligned%20by%20Design%20WIOA%20and%20CTE.pdf

The **Kansas** Board of Regents serves as the state's Perkins eligible agency, and also manages some of the state's workforce development initiatives, including adult education and high school equivalency. This governance structure facilitates strong collaboration, which has been systematized through the state's Postsecondary Technical Education Authority, a body that advises the Board of Regents and consists of business and industry as well as the state departments of commerce, education, and labor. This governance model has allowed the state to make strides in aligning adult education and CTE with the state's workforce priorities.

CTE & STEM

In 2017, more than half of State Directors reported that the following programs/areas of responsibility fell under their supervision: CTE at the secondary level, professional development for CTE educators at the secondary level, Career Clusters®, CTE in the middle grades, CTE at the postsecondary level, career guidance/advisement at the secondary level, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education. This breadth of responsibilities and authority has grown significantly since 2005 and many State Directors saw STEM come under their purview during this time. In fact, since 2010, the number of State Directors with responsibilities for managing their state's STEM activities increased by 65 percent to 33 State Directors in 2017. When asked about CTE's role in STEM in 2017, 75 percent of State Directors reported moderate or full coordination between CTE and STEM. Although STEM practices and strategies look different across states, these results suggests a positive trend of states understanding the valuable linkage between CTE and STEM.[13,14]

In **Texas**, the College, Career and Military Preparation Division within the Department of School Programs in the Office of Academics in the Texas Education Agency oversees CTE and a number of other high school programs, including STEM academies (T-STEM). This shared oversight offers opportunities for continuous communication across staff and sustained coordination over time. In addition, "connecting high school to career and college" was identified as a strategic priority in the state's strategic plan and in its ESSA Plan.[15,16] As part of their efforts to advance this priority, the state released a strategic priority guide for local education agencies to illustrate how federal, state and local funds can be leveraged to support programs that would help accomplish this goal.[17] The guide highlights how locals can dedicate funds toward T-STEM academies and a number of CTE initiatives – an additional signal about how efforts related to CTE, STEM and ESSA can be coordinated to achieve the overall strategic priority of "connecting high school to career and college."

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[13] https://careertech.org/sites/default/files/CTEYourSTEMStrategy-FINAL.pdf
[14] For this survey question, Advance CTE developed a rating scale to identify the state's connections to workforce development, economic development, and other parts of education. The rating scale ranged from one (no coordination) to four (full coordination). The survey asked State Directors to rate CTE's role in each area based on the rating scale and to consider the amount of input their agency has given formal interactions between staff, pooling of funds, etc. when rating each.
[15] https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Welcome_and_Overview/TEA_Strategic_Plan/
[16] https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Laws_and_Rules/ESSA/Every_Student_Succeeds_Act/
[17] https://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=51539614870

Conclusion

As the survey results suggest, opportunities to engage in federal or state planning efforts are great initiators of collaboration, but are insufficient for sustaining alignment and collaboration. Given CTE's momentum and the opportunities presented by ESSA, WIOA and other major state-driven initiatives, it is a critical time to get collaboration and alignment right. When done correctly, systemic alignment can result in a shared vision, aligned goals, streamlined and efficient program delivery, and, most importantly, increased learner success.

Questions for Consideration

As Perkins reauthorization approaches, states consider the next WIOA plans and begin implementing their approved ESSA plans, we encourage you to take stock of CTE's level of collaboration with other federal and state programs, plans and initiatives. Advance CTE asked about the level of coordination between CTE and other state initiatives in the 2017 Perkins Implementation Survey. It may be helpful to reference your responses to those questions as you consider the questions below and begin to evaluate cross-system alignment in your state.

- Consider your state's strengths and weak spots for cross-initiative collaboration and stakeholder engagement.
  - For example, has your state had effective and inclusive state planning processes?
    - Are you satisfied with the level of coordination and collaboration? Is there duplication of effort?
  - Is the learner experience seamless and what gaps are there along the way?
    - What more can be done to align systems to promote learner success?
- Evaluate your state's self-ratings of CTE alignment to high school reform/secondary education, workforce development and STEM.
  - Is each rating where you think it should be?
  - If yes:
    - What is the shared vision across these initiatives, how does CTE fit within that vision and how is CTE helping to advance this vision?
    - What data (and data systems) are you using to monitor learner and program success?
    - What strategies do you have in place to deepen and sustain the collaboration and alignment, particularly in times of leadership transition?
  - If no:
    - What is the cause of the lack of alignment?
    - What barriers are in place to prevent collaboration?
    - What opportunities are there to facilitate a collaborative discussion? Is there an upcoming planning initiative (state or federal) that creates an opportunity for a conversation about aligning systems?