



NASDCTEc Federal Policy Priorities

The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) represents state and territory leaders of Career Technical Education (CTE) through leadership and advocacy that supports an innovative and rigorous CTE system. State Directors play a prominent role in guiding implementation of CTE in their respective states and federal policy priorities should reflect their credible and well-informed preferences and concerns.

CTE State Directors unanimously support a vision for CTE that prepares secondary, postsecondary, and adult learners for further education and training, and ultimately for their careers and the dynamic demands of the global economy. NASDCTEc's vision for CTE -- as outlined in *Reflect, Transform, Lead: A New Vision for Career Technical Education* -- is comprised of five principles to meet that goal. The principles are:

- CTE is critical to ensuring that the United States leads in global competitiveness.
- CTE actively partners with employers to design and provide high-quality, dynamic programs.
- CTE prepares students to succeed in further education and careers.
- CTE is delivered through comprehensive programs of study aligned to the National Career Clusters Framework.
- CTE is a results-driven system that demonstrates a positive return on investment.

The CTE vision guides NASDCTEc's preliminary federal CTE policy priorities shown below. This document, based on discussions with State Directors and a survey given earlier this spring, is intended to launch our conversation about federal CTE policy priorities. Further input from conversations with NASDCTEc members will be considered as we craft more specific recommendations in the future.

CTE is critical to ensuring that the United States leads in global competitiveness.

- CTE programs are structured to nimbly respond to current and projected labor market demands.
- The Common Career Technical Core, a set of shared state standards for CTE, aligns with the Common Core State Standards to promote the delivery of rigorous, blended academic and technical content that prepares CTE students for college and careers.

State Directors have a strong interest in connecting CTE to labor market needs, and many states are already doing so. High-quality, dynamic CTE programs lead students to careers that provide family-sustaining wages and have strong labor market projections. If future federal CTE legislation requires programs to link to labor market demands or projections, State Directors have indicated that the associated definitions - such as high skill, high wage, high demand, or high growth - are important. These definitions will require consideration to avoid unintended consequences such as narrowing the focus to only those industries that have short-term job training needs, or ignoring the needs of replacement workers or small business and entrepreneurial ventures.

The Common Career Technical Core is designed to prepare all CTE students with knowledge and skills at the end of a program of study within a particular career field needed to thrive in a global economy.

CTE actively partners with employers to design and provide high-quality, dynamic programs.

- Partnerships with business and industry are essential to the success of CTE programs.
- Consortia among secondary and postsecondary institutions may be one effective strategy for facilitating these partnerships if structured and implemented effectively.

Partnerships with business and industry are a long-standing attribute of CTE. State Directors believe that curricula, standards, and organizing principles that are drawn from the workplace and employers are critical components in the design and delivery of CTE. Through partnerships between business and industry and education systems, CTE can close skills gaps by providing learners of all ages with access to the education and training necessary to be highly competitive in the labor market.

If structured and implemented effectively, consortia may be one way to facilitate partnerships; however, states would benefit most from consortia that are not mandated and that provide states flexibility in terms of governance and funding.

CTE prepares students to succeed in further education and careers.

- CTE programs prepare students for college and careers by providing adaptable skills and knowledge, thereby ensuring flexibility to transition careers as interests change, opportunities emerge, and the economy transforms.
- CTE programs allow for seamless transitions between secondary and postsecondary education and result in postsecondary credential, certificate, and degree attainment.
- Policies requiring all students to have a personalized learning plan are essential for providing students with a comprehensive strategy to achieve their education and career goals.

CTE leaders have continued to carry out the CTE vision by building upon successful CTE programs, remediating those that are in need, and embracing the notion of college and career readiness for all students. Preparing students for further education and careers is a primary goal for CTE. Through an ongoing effort led by NASDCTEc, leaders from national education organizations have united to define “career readiness” with the aim of better preparing students for careers after high school graduation and beyond.

State Directors continue to strengthen the alignment between secondary and postsecondary education to bolster pathways to postsecondary degree and credential attainment. Academic and technical curriculum integration should be included in upcoming federal CTE legislation, and also in other education legislation such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, to break down barriers between learner levels and provide a more comprehensive education system.

CTE is delivered through comprehensive programs of study aligned to the National Career Clusters Framework.

- Comprehensive programs of study as defined in the U.S. Department of Education’s 10 Component Framework transform CTE content and delivery to advance student achievement and improve secondary and postsecondary alignment.
- The Common Career Technical Core will prepare CTE students for postsecondary education and the workforce through a more integrated delivery of academic and technical skills.

Programs of study have proven to be a powerful mechanism for delivering comprehensive, rigorous CTE. State Directors support a focus of the federal funding on the design and implementation of rigorous programs of study, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education’s 10 Component Framework, emphasizing strategies that improve alignment between secondary and postsecondary systems, such as statewide articulation agreements, transcribed postsecondary credit, and stackable credentials.

Given the current relevance of the Common Core State Standards initiative, efforts to integrate academic standards with CTE are necessary to prepare students for the needs of the 21st century workplace. The Common Career Technical Core, a set of common CTE standards, will help to ensure that all students are well-prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce by integrating the expectations of college and career readiness. The Common Career Technical Core will also help to ensure that students receive a high-quality, rigorous CTE program in every state, and every school and college across the nation.

CTE is a results-driven system that demonstrates a positive return on investment.

- Innovation funding should be included in the next federal CTE reauthorization to give states and locals the flexibility needed to meet the demands of their local and state economies.
- Statewide Longitudinal Data System should include CTE data to ensure that outcomes data show the effectiveness of CTE at the state and national levels.
- Current CTE performance indicators should be reconsidered to ensure they are providing the feedback necessary for program evaluation and improvement.
- A national return on investment model is needed to demonstrate the positive fiscal, societal, and economic impact of CTE.

State Directors are dedicated to strengthening CTE through various means, including innovation and data-driven decisions. The next federal CTE reauthorization should include new set-aside innovation funding awarded from states to locals to give states flexibility in the innovative approaches that locals create and implement. State Directors would also consider promoting innovation through performance based funding.

CTE should be included in Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems that connect secondary, postsecondary, and workforce data systems. Long-term data and outcomes are critical to telling a story of CTE success over time and to showing the value of CTE from a national perspective. Further, a return on investment model will be needed to show the comprehensive impact of CTE on society and the economy.

CTE performance indicators, such as measures of equity and access, must be reassessed to evaluate their effectiveness and strengthened so that they provide better feedback data. State Directors generally support many of the current indicators; however, all existing measures should be reevaluated to confirm that they result in clear, comparable, and usable data. Common CTE definitions and measures would be one way to improve CTE data and increase alignment across states.

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