

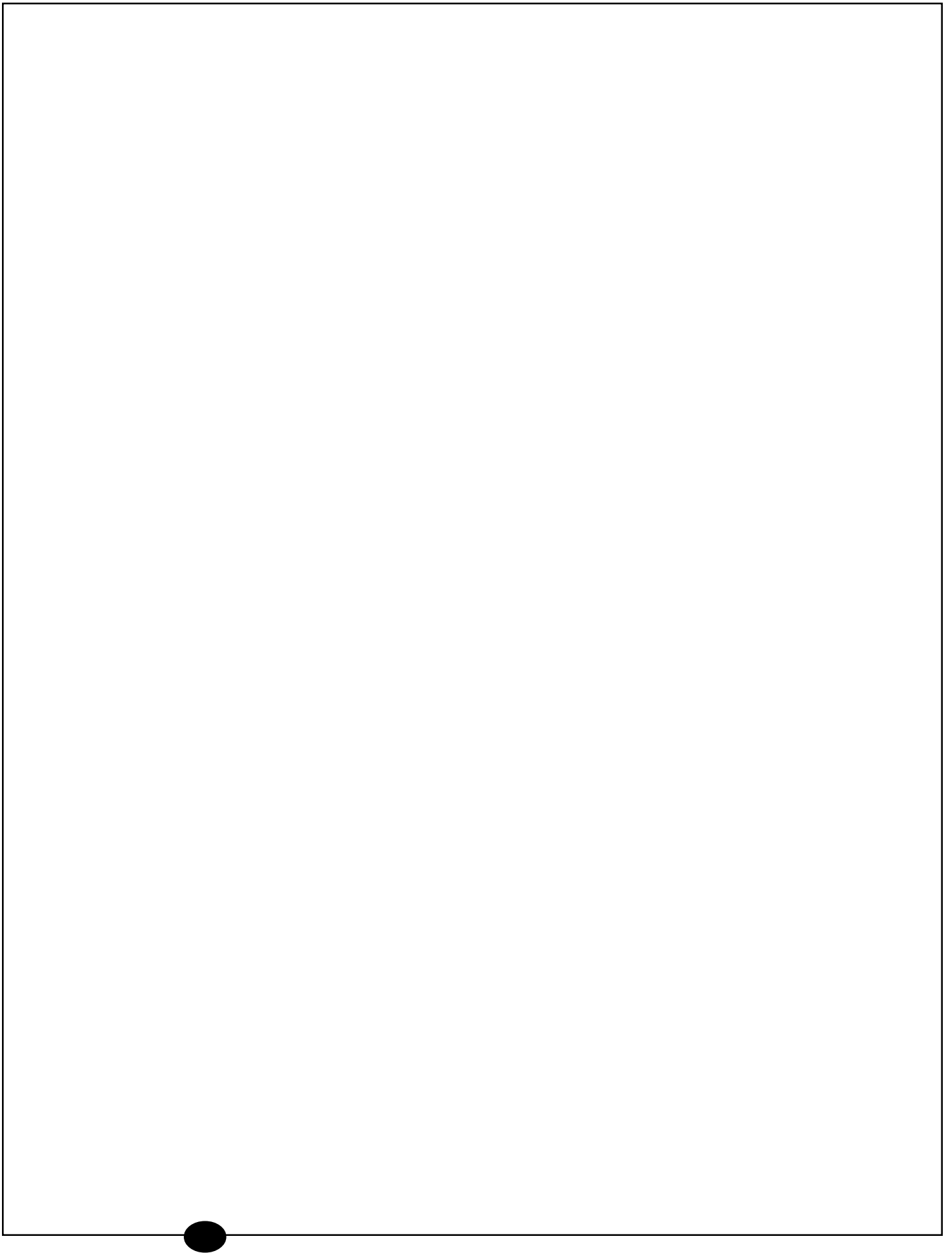
State Leadership for Career Technical Education:

- **Role and Nature of State Leadership**
- **Developing Leaders**

Executive Summary

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State Leadership for Career Technical Education

Executive Summary

The paper begins with concern for the quality and quantity of educational leaders, including state leaders for career technical education. Sources include a literature review; survey responses from directors of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and territories; and interviews with a purposeful cross-section of persons considered opinion leaders in career technical education, persons representing key policy organizations, trade associations, business leaders, professional organizations, policymakers, university faculty, educators, and leadership development program providers.

Part I addresses the status of state leadership for career technical education, including a profile of state directors, the value of state leadership, how it has changed, the change agenda in states, future directions, and the role of state directors in shaping and implementing a national agenda for career technical education.

The evidence from Part I suggests support for the thesis that where there are strong career technical education programs, there is strong state leadership. However, state leadership has suffered from serious cuts in funding and dramatically reduced staffing levels. Another contributing factor to lessened state leadership is the higher rate of turnover of state directors.

Hull expressed the view of many when he said:

The reduced state setaside in Perkins II and III has seriously “clipped the wings” of state career technical education leaders. This has limited their ability to provide leadership in curriculum, teacher quality, and recruitment, and to promote achievement of the objectives of the federal legislation...As the power and authority of state career technical education leadership has eroded, there has also been similar erosion at the local level.

The final report to Congress from the National Assessment of Vocational Education (USDE 1994) supports this view: “By channeling additional funding to local sites, the 1990 Perkins Act overlooks the vital role of state governments in supporting vocational education reform.” The panel recommended that the next Perkins Act should capture a new federal role in vocational education by “once again emphasizing the **state role** (bold added) in vocational education reform.”

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Leadership
matters.

Brand says of the impact of positive state leadership:

A leader who can break out of the silos and talk about and design a system/programs that meet the needs of kids (in terms of success and transition to college/work) can make all kinds of great things happen.

Everyone agreed that leadership matters. Leaders of national career technical education reform movements stated unequivocally that state leadership is the key to successful implementation. The NAVE report said, “States hold the key to achieving vocational education reform at a pace and scale sufficient to affect national workforce quality.”

When directors were asked how their role has changed, the dominant theme was that of politicization of education. Many directors experienced changes in governance structures, mergers of agencies, and new players, particularly workforce boards. Although some had reduced roles in the organizational hierarchy, others assumed broader roles, including responsibility for high school education and merged higher education systems. Another theme was increased collaboration with partners from business and industry, workforce development, secondary and postsecondary systems, academic and technical education, and economic development.

The change agendas of the directors of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories are remarkably consistent. Those agendas reflect and support the vision statement of the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education and the policy direction of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. That is, career technical education is an essential component of the total educational system, offering career-oriented benefits for all students. Career technical education is a critical and integral component of the workforce development system, providing the essential foundations for a thriving economy. Most directors referenced policy and research from the National Centers for Career and Technical Education, the American Association of Community Colleges, as well as models of best practice such as High Schools That Work and career academies as a basis for their change agendas.

Priorities for change agendas were integration of career technical education in the total mission of education, building strong workforce, economic development, and education partnerships; integration of academic and technical education, business industry certifications, accountability, secondary-postsecondary articulation, expansion of career technical education, and increasing funding.

The dominant theme for the desired future direction for career technical education state leaders is leading change. Two strands emerged in the data analysis of this theme: (1) leading change in the system of career technical education—positioning it in state education reform initiatives and in state workforce development systems and (2) being an instructional leader with a deep commitment to quality

teaching and learning, an understanding of promising strategies, and most important, the ability to make it happen in schools. Leaders need the ability to advocate and motivate for change as well as the skills to design and implement strategies for improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Making change happen also requires political savvy and the willingness to take risks in a bureaucracy. *“Only strong leadership at the state level can bridge the gap between national policymakers/administrators and local practitioners to energize change and drive needed reform,”* according to Hull.

Part II identifies a set of knowledge and skills needed for career technical education leaders and recommended criteria for leadership development programs and delivery strategies. The data from the literature, surveys, and interviews supported the need for a leadership development program that includes a foundation of a structured curriculum phase; a bridging phase including strategies such as simulations, case studies, self-assessments; a practicum through structured and monitored experiences in actual settings; and a practice phase with the opportunity to grow while employed in a leadership role. These phases are not necessarily progressive; they may occur simultaneously and cyclically.

Future role for career technical education leaders: Leading change and being an instructional leader

The leadership models make a strong case for structuring a cohort system with a continuous system of networking. Part II concluded with a set of recommendations for developing state leaders for career technical education, including a convening role for the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium.

Major recommendations are—

1. To communicate the “value added” of state leadership for career technical education
2. To advocate with state and federal policymakers to provide resources for state-level leadership and leadership development
3. To encourage state policymakers and agency heads to assess the authority levels of state directors to ensure that they can convene business, education, and workforce and economic development entities, make decisions, speak on behalf of career technical education and impact state policy
4. To communicate the consensus among state directors on the vision and mission for career technical education
5. For the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education to convene related organizations, including the National Centers for Ca-

reer and Technical Education and the American Association of Community Colleges, to address the need for developing state leaders for career technical education

6. For leadership development programs to build a curriculum based on mission and future directions, particularly leading change, becoming an instructional leader and advocacy in a political system
7. For leadership development programs to provide a continuum of experiences, including formal classroom instruction, bridging or simulation and case study activities; internships; and on-the-job support and mentorships
8. For leadership development programs to include a cohort system design with structured networking throughout the program

One of the tenets of Stephen Covey's leadership theory (Covey, Merrill & Merrill, 1994) is to begin with the end in mind. What is the final test of leaders? The answer is that leaders leave behind them those with the will and ability to carry on. Leaders who are clear about mission and who possess the skills to make it happen are the best hope for the future of career technical and adult education. Strong state leadership is a cornerstone for the success of the enterprise of career technical education.

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