



NASDCTEc Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was most recently reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Since that time, renewed energy and focus has been placed on ensuring that every student in the nation is college and career ready. Career Technical Education (CTE) has been at the forefront in ensuring that students across the country are well prepared for further postsecondary education and rewarding careers. Nearly 95 percent of students take at least one CTE course in high school and it is therefore vital that CTE be a core component to any effort to renew this critically important legislation.

Strengthening ESEA's Role in College and Career Readiness

NASDCTEc believes ESEA must make clear in its purpose, planning requirements, uses of funds and accountability priorities that all students should be both college and career ready. The following recommendations encourage the transformation of ESEA to be a more balanced partner with the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins) in supporting students as they explore their career interests, aspirations and talents while helping them build pathways to college and career success. Specifically, NASDCTEc recommends a clearly delineated and prioritized focus within ESEA on secondary education. This would fill a gap in existing federal policy, ensure academic alignment and support high-quality programs of study.

The persistent drop out crisis and skills gap, as well as the demands of the global economy deems *college and career readiness for all* not just a philosophy we aspire to, but a necessary reality. This intensifies the urgency for improved alignment between CTE and ESEA. We look forward to working together to remove barriers to alignment and to create opportunities for improved collaboration.

The following recommendations offer suggestions that will enhance and support the work high schools and area technical centers across the country are already undertaking as Congress considers the reauthorization of ESEA.

Ensuring Student Success

Integrated Education Opportunities – NASDCTEc supports the integration of academic and CTE content offered through comprehensive programs of study. Students are able to learn, retain and apply core academic content more effectively, and are more likely to complete their education when academics are reinforced within the context of CTE programs of study. When aligned to rigorous, state-identified academic standards, NASDCTEc also supports students receiving academic credit for the successful completion of CTE coursework.

Competency-Based Learning – NASDCTEc encourages the wider adoption of student-centered learning models that ensure students master the academic, technical and employability skills necessary to navigate the increasingly complex demands of the global economy. Specifically, state and local educational agencies should be given flexibility to adopt a competency-based approach

with regards to teaching and assessment with adequate assurances that such approaches prepare students to be college and career ready. NASDCTEc believes that student achievement can and should be assessed using multiple measures to supplement annual standardized testing, such as capstone projects and other demonstrations of student learning and progress.

School Counseling and Career Planning – NASDCTEc urges that comprehensive career and academic counseling be offered no later than middle school. This ensures that students and parents can make informed decisions on issues such as the courses, postsecondary entrance requirements and employment opportunities.

College- and Career-Ready Plans – NASDCTEc supports the requirement for all secondary students to be given the supports and tools to plan for future success. Ideally beginning in middle school, these plans should include the student’s academic and career goals, document progress towards completion of the credits required to graduate from their secondary program, and indicate the acquisition of requisite knowledge, skills and work-based learning experiences necessary for career success. These plans will assist students and their families in charting the course to achieve their educational and career goals and should be updated at least on an annual basis.

Accelerated Learning – NASDCTEc supports the expanded use of accelerated learning programs, including dual and concurrent enrollment, transcribed credit, dual credit (taking college-level coursework and securing credit at both the high school and college levels simultaneously), and other versions of cross-crediting in secondary and postsecondary education. The type of coursework should be reinforced in ESEA, as it is in the Perkins programs of study requirement. Such program models promote a smooth and successful transition into postsecondary education.

Digital Literacy – Digital learning should be supported in future legislation to ensure that students are successful users of technologies that foster the sharing, gathering and interpreting of information and ideas that are necessary to compete in a 21st century global economy. Equitable access to such technologies and digital learning experiences should be ensured in a renewed ESEA to promote greater student acquisition of such knowledge and skills.

Highly Effective Teachers

Teacher Preparation – NASDCTEc supports the expansion of teacher preparation for CTE teachers through both traditional and alternative means. The shortage of CTE teachers makes it difficult to meet the existing and future demand for CTE programs. The current “highly qualified teacher” requirement in NCLB hinders the ability of CTE teachers to teach core academic content and has hurt efforts to integrate academic and technical coursework by limiting opportunities for joint planning and instruction. As a consequence, NASDCTEc strongly encourages the removal of this mandate.

Professional development – NASDCTEc believes that high-quality professional development under ESEA is a vital tool in maintaining high-quality and innovative teachers and any professional development in ESEA should include CTE teachers. Further, targeted professional development should be available to promote collaboration between academic and CTE teachers in the design and delivery of integrated instruction. Where possible, externship opportunities for CTE teachers should be encouraged and supported through legislation.

Rigorous Standards & Assessments

College- and Career-Ready Standards – NASDCTEc believes that there should be consistent, high-quality college- and career-ready benchmarks for all students, regardless of where students live, and supports federal policy that encourages state-led adoption of such rigorous standards. Programs should be aligned to rigorous content standards that are informed by the needs of the workplace and ensure excellence. Increased consistency and rigorous standards will better equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in a global economy.

Multiple Measures – NASDCTEc believes that students should continue to be assessed in the core academic disciplines of English, mathematics and science. However, NASDCTEc believes there are other indicators of college and career readiness that cannot be measured by a summative assessment, but would have value within an accountability framework. States should be given encouragement and flexibility to build such valid and reliable indicators into their accountability and reporting systems.

Data Systems

Student Sub-Group Disaggregation – NASDCTEc strongly encourages maintaining current legislative requirements for the disaggregation of data for various student sub-group populations. Doing so helps to identify achievement gaps and supports effective state and local efforts to address such gaps. In instances where only a small number of students are enrolled, such data should be handled in a statistically appropriate manner to avoid student identification.

Transition Period – NASDCTEc strongly urges a reasonable transition period for the implementation of new accountability indicators or performance targets. Other federal programs, such as Perkins, will be affected by any changes made to current ESEA accountability provisions. States need adequate time to adjust their data collection systems and re-negotiate relevant performance targets.

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems – NASDCTEc supports the development and expansion of statewide longitudinal data systems that collect information on academic attainment and graduation rates as well as CTE data such as technical skill attainment, secondary to postsecondary transition rates, and other student outcomes. This information will empower states to make data-driven decisions that can improve student learning, support more effective monitoring of student achievement, and help to ensure the accuracy of data collected for the purposes of more efficient state and federal program administration. NASDCTEc supports the consistent use of terminology and data indicators to promote comparability across and between states to promote best practices, coordinate reporting strategies and identify gaps in services.

The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) represents state and territory leaders of CTE through leadership and advocacy that supports an innovative and rigorous CTE system that prepares students for both college and careers. CTE State Directors lead the planning and implementation of CTE in their respective states and these recommendations reflect their priorities.

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