

CTE Without Limits

Session in a Box: Talking Points

Slide 1:

- Welcome to today's session. I am**[Speaker Note: Introduce yourself and your organization and any state-specific framing you think would be helpful.]**
- **[If virtual: Consider asking attendees to put in the chat where they are from or if it is a small enough group, consider asking attendees to change their Zoom screen name to indicate where they are from or even have everyone do quick verbal introductions.]**

Slide 2:

- We all believe in and understand the value of high-quality Career Technical Education (CTE) as a catalyst for ensuring each learner can be successful in the career of their choice. Today I'm going to introduce you to Without Limits: A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education, which defines where we as a field want to be five years from now and the critical role we all play in accomplishing this new shared vision.
- **[If virtual]:** Please feel free to add questions in the chat at any point in the presentation for me to address at the end.
- **[If in person]: [Speaker Note: Select one:]**
 - I will be happy to answer any questions at the end of this presentation. OR
 - I will be happy to take questions throughout the presentation.

Slide 3:

- This vision was led and developed by Advance CTE, the longest-standing national non-profit that represents State CTE Directors and state leaders of Career Technical Education.
- Advance CTE released its previous vision – Putting Learner Success First – in 2016, with support from 11 national partners. This vision was critical to driving Advance CTE's work and the direction of the CTE community over the last few years.
- In particular, Putting Learner Success First was instrumental in advancing CTE by:
 - directly impacting the priorities within Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V),
 - inspiring over 40 states to build career readiness within their K-12 accountability systems,
 - influencing many philanthropic investments in CTE and career pathways, and
 - inspiring many states' own strategic priorities for CTE.

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- As this vision was coming up on its five-year anniversary, in September 2020, Advance CTE joined with nine partner organizations to host CTE Forward: A Summit on CTE's Impact & Promise, virtually bringing together nearly 200 national, state and local leaders representing K-12, postsecondary, workforce development, business and industry and philanthropy.
- The Summit was designed to have participants co-create a shared vision, which would serve as the "true north" for the CTE community and its key partners.

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- Over the course of several months, Advance CTE worked with partner organizations and state leaders to synthesize and prioritize the ideas, strategies and goals generated during the Summit. In March 2021, [Without Limits: A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education](#) was released.

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- CTE Without Limits is anchored in the belief that each learner must have access to and the means to be successful in the career of their choice – a simple belief, but no easy feat to accomplish. Achieving this will require:
 - All systems working in concert to advance this shared vision;
 - A commitment to tearing down the barriers that limit opportunity; and
 - CTE positioned as the catalyst to make this vision a reality.

Slide 7:

- This is truly a shared vision. To date, **[forty]** national organizations have joined Advance CTE and signed on to support this vision – organizations representing state and local leaders across K-12, postsecondary, adult education, workforce development and industry. **[Speaker Note: the number of supporters will likely change over time. Check [this page](#) for the most recent number.]** These organizations are committed to using this vision to advance their own work and the goals we have set collectively.
- In **[our state]**, we know that we cannot fully realize the aspiration of this vision alone. Only by working together, with a wide range of partners, can this vision of CTE without limits - supported by a cohesive, flexible and responsive ecosystem - become a reality in our state.
- I hope that by the end of this presentation, you will be able to see yourself in this shared vision and how you can contribute to its accomplishment.

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- CTE Without Limits lays out five inter-connected and equally critical principles, as well as a set of foundational commitments to guide our work.

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- The foundational commitments are the non-negotiables that must be in place for the vision to become a reality. These include a commitment to:
 - All dimensions of equity – educational, racial, socioeconomic, gender and geographic
 - Quality – including quality programs, instructors, instruction, work-based learning and credentials
 - Meaningful partnerships, with industry partners deeply invested and involved in the design, delivery and success of the CTE system
 - Actionable, transparent and trustworthy data
 - Continuous improvement and leadership at all levels within our system.

[Speaker Note: If you have more than 45 minutes, expand on these foundational commitments and how they show up in your state’s work.]

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- To have CTE without limits means removing any limitations that show up in our current policies and practices.
- This new vision and its principles, taken together, call on us to:
 - Remove the limitations of siloed systems and funding and accountability models that incent the wrong outcomes
 - Remove the limitations of racist and discriminatory systems, policies and practices that perpetuate inequities
 - Remove the limitations so that each learner can navigate their career progression seamlessly
 - Remove the limitations of seat time and degrees to value all learning and all skills wherever they occur
 - And remove the geographic limitations through cross-state collaboration and open access

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- With that, let’s walk through the five principles of the vision. The principles are sequenced with intention but do not suggest a hierarchy of importance. The first principle is that “each learner engages in a cohesive, flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem”.
- This principle acknowledges that all learners, not just those who opt into CTE, should be supported by a career preparation ecosystem that recognizes and supports non-linear career progressions and allows them to get the skills they need, when they need them, without redundancy or limitation. This career preparation ecosystem is made up of a combination of actors, systems, policies and practices that make up the career pathway infrastructure that guides learners to identify, prepare for and be successful in their future careers.
- Each principle is supported by a set of action steps. So, let’s walk through the action steps associated with this first principle.

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- To accomplish this, we must establish shared statewide goals for a cohesive career preparation ecosystem.
 - These shared goals must recognize the need for more coherence across education and workforce systems.
 - Creating this coherence requires eliminating the silos between delivery systems, learner levels, academic and career-focused instruction type and credit systems that create barriers for learners and lead to inefficiencies and redundancies.
 - Secondary and postsecondary leaders should develop co-advising models that ensure seamless transitions for learners across educational systems.
 - And finally, we'll need to provide learners with expanded opportunities to earn credits in high school that articulate into postsecondary credentials and degrees of value. While we may be doing some of this now, we can do more. We need transcribed credit that is fully transferrable and articulation agreements that result in credit that advances a learner's progress toward credential or degree completion – not just elective credit.
- We must ensure all CTE programs of study are flexible and responsive to both learners and industry.
 - Secondary and postsecondary leaders must work in partnership to design and implement high-quality CTE programs of study and career pathways that:
 - have well-articulated on- and off-ramps;
 - are anchored by credentials of value;
 - include opportunities for work-based learning; and
 - align with high-skill, high-wage and in-demand careers.
 - At the same time, business and industry leaders must not only be beneficiaries of this ecosystem, but also serve as key partners and contributors in its success, which means aligning the career preparation ecosystem with their talent pipeline strategies.
- We must support expanded data and accountability models that value collaboration, equity and innovation.
 - Meeting this goal will require us to measure what matters and commit to using data to drive our decision making.
 - State and local-level leaders will need to work together to identify relevant metrics that measure the full continuum of CTE and ensure the data is transparent, actionable and a tool to help us achieve an equitable career preparation ecosystem.
 - We also need new and innovative ways of measuring equity in CTE so that we can better design and evaluate interventions and supports for historically underserved learners.
 - We need to regularly monitor equity and access metrics for your district, college or school and act on the data to ensure learners are getting the supports they need to access and succeed in CTE.

- How might we leverage what we are already doing under the comprehensive local needs assessment to realize this action?
- Lastly, we must design equitable funding models that direct funding to the learners, communities and programs that need it the most.
 - At the state level, we need to identify and leverage flexibilities within federal funding streams and provide clear guidance to help you better target and braid resources to achieve more equitable outcomes.
 - At the local level, secondary leaders should re-evaluate local tax levies, per pupil funding policies and reciprocity agreements with neighboring districts to ensure funding is not a barrier to accessing high-quality CTE.
 - Postsecondary leaders should reconsider limitations on access to financial aid and last dollar scholarships to better support each learner throughout their career progression.
 - An even bolder, more transformative approach to this action step would be to reimagine our education funding formulas, moving away from inequitable education funding designs, such as relying primarily on property taxes and credit hours.

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- The second principle is “each learner feels welcome in, is supported by and has the means to be successful in the career preparation ecosystem”.
- This principle reinforces that every aspect of the career preparation ecosystem must be designed with an equity lens to ensure it is responsive to the needs of each learner.

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- To accomplish this, we must take a deep look at the scope and impact of the institutional barriers and systemic racism and discrimination that exist within the CTE system.
 - This is difficult work. It is work that requires us to reflect upon our own implicit biases, building our awareness of historical inequities, and learning how to adopt an equity lens in everything we do.
 - States and institutions must work together to conduct equity audits to assess how CTE is serving learners of color and other marginalized populations, such as learners with disabilities and learners from low-income communities.
 - We need to coordinate these efforts with equity audits across the broader education and workforce systems. While CTE has its own equity challenges, the work to fully eliminate all barriers is a shared responsibility of all systems in the career preparation ecosystem.
- We must attend to the cultural competency of the CTE workforce and its industry partners.
 - Every learner deserves to “see themselves” in their CTE instructors. We need to build recruitment strategies and talent pipeline programs that attract and retain diverse CTE instructors, administrators and leaders who are

- demographically representative of our learners and have strong industry expertise.
- We also must continue building the capacity of CTE instructors, leaders and partners through culturally responsive professional development so that they can understand, communicate with and effectively interact with learners across cultures and of different backgrounds.
 - Finally, industry partners providing work-based learning or mentorships should also receive supports to build their cultural competency to make the workplace an inclusive and welcoming environment for diverse learners.
 - We must design CTE programs and interventions on the margin, while maintaining a commitment to quality, to ensure we are meeting the needs of the learners who have the greatest barriers to success.
 - This means that CTE needs to meet the needs of all learners, especially those with significant barriers to access it. We need to meaningfully engage and conduct outreach to currently hidden populations (for example, justice-connected youth and adults, learners experiencing homelessness, single parents, etc.) as they are often placed on the margins of the education and workforce systems.
 - Educational institutions (both secondary and postsecondary) should partner with local community-based organizations to provide the wraparound support services like transportation, childcare, mental health supports, etc. that learners need to be successful in their CTE program.
 - And we need to provide additional incentives that make educational attainment easier and more affordable for learners such as tuition-free dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities.
 - We must leverage existing and design new opportunities to engage learners, families and key community partners to share their unique experiences with the CTE system to inform and improve upon programs and supports.
 - We need to center our systems, our work around learners – not the adults in the system.
 - To do this, we must ensure learners’ voices are frequently and authentically contributing to meaningful decisions related to policy, priorities and funding.
 - Foundational to this action step is that we as CTE leaders must build trust with learners and their families, especially those from marginalized communities.
 - By establishing regular feedback loops, we can provide transparency and accountability to the learners, families and community members, which is essential to gaining and retaining trust.
 - CTE has quite a few spaces where we convene stakeholders for input, including the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment process, program advisory committees, etc. Let’s make sure to include learners and their families in these opportunities.

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- The third principle is “each learner skillfully navigates their own career journey”.
- This principle recognizes how critical it is that we empower learners to make informed decisions by providing them with resources and information that supports their full range of needs, including academic supports, career supports, and wraparound support services.

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- To accomplish this, we must connect advisement systems across K-12, postsecondary and workforce.
 - Districts, schools and colleges must align career advisement and navigational supports, and critical wraparound supports that are necessary for learners to become aware of, engage in and be successful in CTE programs.
 - Learners must have opportunities to build their occupational identity, free from bias and not be limited by where they live, their race, gender or other identity.
 - In addition, all learners must have access to meaningful experiential learning opportunities, such as work-based learning and Career Technical Student Organizations, which can build social capital and professional skills.
 - We need to expand partnerships with employers to offer more work-based learning opportunities and ensure that access to these opportunities is equitable and open to all learners.
 - All CTE programs (including middle, secondary, postsecondary and adult) should include early warning and proactive advisement systems and include indicators related to CTE.
- We must provide actionable data on CTE options and outcomes including access to meaningful labor market data.
 - We need to do a better job of collecting data and using it to know who accesses our programs, who is successful in our programs and who is not.
 - Learners and families must have transparent and easy access to CTE outcomes and labor market data that provides real-time information on career opportunities and earnings.
 - Providing the data is just one step. We also need to provide the supports learners and their families need to be able to understand how to use data to guide their decisions and be empowered to make informed choices.
 - We need to provide that information available in multiple languages and providing targeted outreach to special populations.
- We must invest the necessary resources to support integrated advisement systems, which includes, but is not limited to, more advisement professionals.
 - We cannot support each learner without dedicated investments in counseling professionals (such as school counselors, career coaches, career navigators, etc.), training for any and all individuals working directly with learners, data systems and the wraparound supports themselves.
 - And the counselor professionals, as well as, teachers and faculty need to be support in building data literacy skills.

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- The fourth principle is “each learner’s skills are counted, valued and portable”
- This principle advocates for more flexible learning opportunities that enable and value upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning by recognizing and counting the skills and competencies learners gain throughout their lifetimes.

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- To accomplish this, we must capture and value all learning that occurs, wherever and whenever it happens through the expansion of competency-based education models.
 - Learners gain skills in a variety of spaces — in the classroom, in work-based learning placements, in the military, through service and on the job. We need to value that learning and make it count toward learners’ career progression and pathway.
 - We must ensure experiential learning and work-based learning opportunities like summer youth employment programs are conferring credit that is related to a learner’s program of study.
 - Local schools, districts and colleges should also continue to support, expand and scale competency-based policies and programs to capture skills attainment where and when it happens.
- We must build and leverage trusted systems to translate competencies and credentials into portable credit, including through college in high school programs, statewide articulation agreements and expanding credit for prior learning.
 - We need to build the infrastructure through state-level, system-level and institution-level policy to assess and recognize credit for prior learning to increase completion and shorter time to degree for learners.
 - When opportunities to earn credit for prior learning exist, local practitioners must ensure learners understand how to take advantage of them and remove barriers that result in inequitable participation and utilization.
 - We must partner with business and industry leaders to identify credentials that have value in the workplace and evaluate relevant competencies.
 - And finally, the mobility of our learners requires us to ensure easier transfer of credits within and among institutions in our state. We need to remove accretion, systemic, institution and program-level (or even instructor-level) barriers that often result in learners having to redo work/courses.
 - We need to tackle the impermeability between credit/non-credit courses.
 - And we need to scale what we know works - statewide articulation agreements with transcripted credit and statewide credit for prior learning policies and systems.

- We must encourage industry to expand skills-based hiring practices that value competencies and not just degrees.
 - Under-valuing non-degree programs has a tremendous cost to employers and can leave behind workers with great experience but less traditional or no degrees.
 - To further empower learners, states and communities should provide each learner with a learning and employment record that captures the learner's accomplishments, aptitudes, skills and competencies.
 - Employers should adopt and strengthen skills and competency-based hiring practices instead of defaulting to degrees. They should also ensure the technology used to screen applications includes provisions for skills-based hiring and is free from implicit bias.
 - The education system is one of the largest employers in most communities. Where we can, how can we model skill-based hiring practices and not default to degrees?

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- Finally, the fifth principle is “each learner can access CTE without borders”.
- This principle calls on us to collaborate even more to expand access and remove geographic barriers. This will require partnering with other states to develop and expand new models of collaboration, invest in cross-state, open access systems and agree to common frameworks for defining and delivering CTE.

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- To accomplish this, we must leverage the soon-to-be modernized National Career Clusters® Framework for connecting education and the workforce.
 - The work to update the National Career Clusters Framework is focused on providing structural alignment and a common language to bridge education and work and on empowering each learner to explore, decide on and prepare for dynamic and evolving careers. As it has served as a common Framework for states over the past 20 years, the modernized version will usher in new ways of collaboration and alignment.
 - Local leaders should leverage the Framework to break down silos between education and the workforce and work in partnership with employers to ensure career pathways are designed to align with workforce needs.
 - The Framework can also be used to help erode gender stereotypes of occupations that lead to occupational segregation.
 - At the state level, we can leverage the Framework to align data and accountability practices to monitor whether learners are able to access high-quality career pathways that are aligned to industry.
- We must develop and expand inter-state compacts that support collaboration and the flow of data, credits, credentials and learners to remove barriers.
 - Remember, this vision is centered on learners. So how can we make sure each learner gets what they need – whether your school or college offers the

program of study the learner is interested in? Let's think creatively. Perhaps inter-state efforts to allow learners to seamlessly access in-person and virtual CTE programs and work-based learning experiences in communities or institutions in other states without needing to relocate across borders is a solution we should explore.

- We might also work with other states to develop cross-state frameworks that consistently translate skills and competencies into credit that is transferable within and across schools, postsecondary institutions and states. **[Speaker Note: If you are a state that has a metro region that is shared with another state, consider drawing upon that as an example here.]**
- Within our own borders, we can expand access to CTE programs across county lines, school or community college district boundaries, or workforce development regions to ensure each learner can engage in the right experience for them.
- State and local leaders in our state can collaborate to develop regional programs of study, as well as instructional tools to reduce redundancies and maximize capacity as well as share resources required for CTE delivery through reciprocity agreements.
- This requires collaboration and partnership among school districts and colleges to allow learners to access high-quality CTE in an environment that is accessible to them and conducive to their learning. Learners have different learning styles and needs. This requires personalization and flexibility, without losing the quality of our programs. This principle's actions build upon other parts of this vision but also reminds us, we don't have to do it all and we can, we should, we must should collaborate to successfully meet each learner's needs.
- We must invest in research and development to ensure virtual opportunities are quality, equitable and meaningful.
 - We must call on the federal government, national organizations, states and institutions to invest in research and development to test innovative strategies and identify effective new CTE program delivery models.
 - In the wake of COVID-19, we must also work to build out the next generation of technology solutions, instructional design models, open educational resources and instructor supports to ensure that virtual experiences are high quality and equitable.
 - Districts, schools and institutions should embrace innovation by piloting and incenting new models and approaches and partnering with the state and federal governments and research institutions to evaluate lessons learned.

Slide 21:

- The vision's "call to action" underscores that for this vision to be successful in creating a more flexible and responsive career preparation ecosystem, we must draw on the capacity of each existing system, leverage their greatest assets and push for new models of collaboration, learner-centric design and delivery, and funding and accountability models that create the right incentives and supports.

- We'll need to be brave and bold. We'll need to disrupt historic systems of inequities. We'll need to innovate. We'll need to invest resources in new ways. We'll need to attract new partners and talent into our system.
- The work will take time and will require collaboration, persistence and commitment.
- Only by working together can we realize the possibility and aspiration of a career preparation ecosystem that provides each learner with limitless opportunity.

Slide 22:

- I know that was a lot of information. Some of what I shared likely sounds familiar and other ideas might be really new to you. In the weeks following this session, I encourage you to read the full vision. The ideas or policies in it that seem familiar to you – think about where you can go one step further to improve quality, equity or scale. For the proposals that were new to you, what intrigued you and why? How might you take a first step? The accomplishment of this vision will be realized by both bold, systemic transformations and individuals, like you, taking small steps. I have been thinking about **[Speaker Note: Close with your thoughts on why this vision is important in your particular state. For example:**
 - **What resonates with you about this vision?**
 - **On which principle do you think your state has the most work to do?**
 - **Share any examples of work already started on the vision in your state**
 - **If your state is planning on having a task force or committee to take on a strategy or action in the vision, how might someone get involved?]**
- To read the full vision, access additional resources and sign up to stay engaged, please visit www.careertech.org/without-limits.

Slide 23:

- Thank you!
- **[If virtual]:** If you have any questions, please put them in the chat now. I will also look through to see those that have already come in so I can answer those as well.
- **[If in person]:** I'm now happy to answer any questions.