

Talking Points for the Common Career Technical Core

What are the Common Career Technical Core?

- The Common Career Technical Core (CCTC) are a set of common benchmark standards for Career Technical Education (CTE).
- The CCTC identify what students should know and be able to do at the end of a program of study (i.e., after completing a sequence of courses aligned with challenging academic and CTE content that spans both secondary and postsecondary settings).
- Rather than represent what students should be learning on a day-to-day level, the CCTC represent the knowledge and skills students should master upon completing a multi-course program of study.
- The CCTC include:
 - Content standards for each of the 16 Career Clusters[®] and their corresponding 79 Career Pathways, and
 - An overarching set of 12 Career Ready Practices, which address the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are important to becoming career ready.
- The CCTC will help ensure all students have access to high-quality CTE programs that will prepare them for the career of their choice.

What is a “benchmark” standard?

- A benchmark standard serves as a common reference point against which other standards, curriculum and programs of study can be compared. Is it not uncommon for multiple standards to be needed to meet one benchmark standard.
- As benchmark standards, in practice, the CCTC can serve as an anchor for the patchwork of state, industry and local standards currently in use across the country. States, districts and educators can use the CCTC to ensure their standards and instruction are putting students on a path to meet and master those end-of-program of study expectations.

Who created the Common Career Technical Core?

- The Common Career Technical Core were created for and by states.
- The CCTC were developed over two years, informed by input from more than 3,500 representatives from K-12, postsecondary and business and industry, and built upon a decade of nationally validated Career Clusters Knowledge and Skills Statements.

What are the benefits of the Common Career Technical Core?

A COMMON BENCHMARK

- Even more so than with standards in the core academic subjects, there are a very wide variety of standards for CTE programs.
- With standards developed by industry groups, states, local districts, and other national organizations and vendors all competing to be the standards used in classrooms across the country, there is a hodgepodge of CTE standards that vary in quality and specificity from one state and industry to the next.
- In addition, CTE programs are offered at the secondary, postsecondary and adult levels in myriad settings such as career academies, regional technical centers, technical high schools, technical and community colleges and comprehensive high schools, making the delivery of CTE as varied as the standards themselves.
- The value of having common, high-quality CTE benchmarks across the nation is paramount for comparability, student mobility, and an enhanced sharing of best practices, particularly as our students compete in a global economy.

A MOVE TO END-OF-PROGRAM OF STUDY EXPECTATIONS

- Programs of study are intended to encompass aligned and non-duplicative learning across the secondary and postsecondary levels.
- This type of seamless and aligned learning supported by programs of study is increasingly important as the vast majority of future careers require some form of postsecondary education and credentials.
- As most states only have CTE standards at the secondary level, the move towards end-of-program of study standards is one that requires raising the bar.
- The CCTC are rigorous in what they expect from students from both a content and a depth-of-knowledge perspective, as they more often require students to “demonstrate,” “analyze,” “develop” and “apply” than to “identify,” “recognize” or “explain.”

What does it mean to adopt the Common Career Technical Core?

The CCTC are not intended to necessarily replace existing state standards wholesale but instead ensure that all students who participate in CTE programs leave with a common set of knowledge and skills.

States, therefore, have options in how they adopt and implement the CCTC. For example, they can:

- Formally adopt the CCTC as anchor standards, likely requiring the addition and deletion of currently used state standards;
- Formally adopt the CCTC as the new statewide CTE standards, replacing existing standards;
- Formally require the CCTC as standards for state-approved programs of study; or
- Require the use of the CCTC in the state’s standards development and revision process.

In any case, it is a state-based decision to adopt, adapt or simply utilize the CCTC as another tool in their standards development and program evaluation toolbox.

If a state does decide to adopt the CCTC formally, the state must:

- Adopt all of the Career Ready Practices and all of the Career Cluster- and Career Pathway-level content standards. No individual CCTC standards can be left out except for those Career Clusters or Career Pathways not used in the state;
- Establish the CCTC as end-of-program of study standards that bridge and impact the state’s secondary and postsecondary CTE standards, curriculum and courses; and
- Address any related policies impacted by the new standards and/or to ensure implementation of the new standards.

What is the relationship between the CCTC and industry standards?

- The CCTC does not preclude states or districts from using industry standards.
- However, as many sets of industry standards aim to prepare students for a specific occupation or technical skill, they may not fully prepare students for the broader set of career-ready skills.
- States can examine how industry standards support students’ mastery of the CCTC in specific Career Clusters and Career Pathways and where industry standards need to be augmented to ensure students finish their programs both job ready and also career ready.

What is the relationship between the CCTC and the Common Core State Standards?

- There is no direct relationship between the CCTC and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).
- The CCSS are K-12 standards for mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy, and the CCTC are end-of-program of study standards for all CTE content areas.
- The two sets of standards were developed through completely separate processes, with the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers coordinating the CCSS development and the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) coordinating the CCTC development. The development of the CCTC began just as the Common Core State Standards were being finalized.
- The CCTC development process did draw on the lessons learned from the CCSS development process, particularly around the inclusion of the Career Ready Practices (modeled after the CCSS Standards for Mathematical Practice) and an even stronger role for states in approving the final set of CCTC standards.
- While the two sets of standards are completely separate from one another, there are opportunities for alignment and coordination across the standards.
- The CCTC emphasize discipline-specific literacy and communications throughout (also reflected in the CCSS in ELA/Literacy); the application of mathematics; and cross-cutting college- and career-ready skills in the Career Ready Practices – such as effective communications, working in teams, research skills, critical thinking and perseverance in solving problems, all of which are also strongly reflected in the CCSS.

Key Messages about the CCTC

For the business community:

- Our country is struggling with a skills gap; while unemployment remains high, many employers cannot find qualified, skilled employees to fill open positions.
- On a related note, too few students have access to high-quality Career Technical Education (CTE) programs of study that offer connected learning across secondary and postsecondary settings and prepare them for successful careers.
- The Common Career Technical Core provide a common set of expectations that will help raise the bar for current CTE programs of study and set the stage for more students engaging in CTE that best meets the needs of our economy.

For policymakers:

- Career Technical Education (CTE) is one of our country's best strategies for keeping students in school and putting them on a path to a successful and meaningful career, but only if it provides students with the full set of knowledge and skills they need in today's global economy.
- Unfortunately, students' access to high-quality CTE that prepares them for the career of their choice – and the postsecondary education necessary to access that career – is too often determined by zip code.
- The Common Career Technical Core provide a common set of expectations that will help raise the bar for current CTE programs of study and set the stage for more students engaging in CTE that best meets the needs of our economy.

For the CTE community:

- The Common Career Technical Core (CCTC) are a set of common benchmark standards for Career Technical Education (CTE), representing what students should know and be able to do at the end of a program of study.
- The CCTC were not created from scratch but were informed by input from more than 3,500 representatives from K-12, postsecondary and business and industry, and they were built upon a decade of nationally validated Career Clusters Knowledge and Skills Statements.
- As benchmark standards, the CCTC can serve as an anchor for the patchwork of state, industry and local standards currently in use across the country. States, districts and educators can use the CCTC to ensure their standards and instruction are putting students on a path to meet and master those end-of-program of study expectations.



For the media/public

- Career Technical Education (CTE) is one of our country’s best strategies for keeping students in school and putting them on a path to a successful and meaningful career.
- Yet, students’ access to high-quality CTE that prepares them for the career of their choice – and the postsecondary education necessary to access that career – is too often determined by zip code.
- The Common Career Technical Core is a game changer for CTE, raising the bar for all programs and paving the way for comparability, student mobility and an enhanced sharing of best practices across state lines.