



## **ISSUE PAPER: CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM**

### **The Big Picture – Preparing Today’s Students for Tomorrow’s Opportunities**

A fundamental problem for career technical education (CTE) is that it is not widely perceived by parents, students, educators, or the public as a “goal” of high school. The three generally recognized goals are to successfully pass the California High School Exit Exam, to obtain a high school diploma, and to meet the (a)-(g) requirements for admission to the University of California.

The Governor has done much to validate another goal for high school, which is to successfully complete a CTE program that leads to industry certification, either at the end of high school or after completion of a program at the community college level. He can continue to advance this agenda through his speeches and the work and priorities of the Secretary for Education and the State Board of Education. All of these activities can help validate CTE as a goal for high school.

At the same time, it must be recognized that many of the needed improvements require additional state funding to build the capacity to serve more students through quality career technical education programs.

#### **Grades Six through Eight**

Many in the Regional Occupational Center and Program (ROCP) community believe that discussion of a CTE pathway must begin in the middle schools or junior high schools. A serious problem for CTE is that the focus on career technical education has all but disappeared from middle schools. *One remedy would be continued support for counseling services at the middle school level and requiring the development of an individual career plan for every student by the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade.*

#### **Grades Nine and Ten**

Given the evidence that involvement in a CTE program in grades nine and ten helps keep some students in school, *it is important to expand the support for career pathways and for the Governor to continue to press the University of California to recognize CTE programs as meeting some of the (a)-(g) requirements.* This would allow students to take courses they feel are relevant, while at the same time keeping their options open to pursue a specific CTE certification or completion of the (a)-(g) sequence of courses.

#### **Grades Eleven and Twelve**

The primary function of ROCPs as part of a comprehensive CTE system is to provide higher level courses for students in grades eleven through twelve that lead to industry certification or to articulation to a community college sequence of courses that results in industry certification and an associate’s degree.

*During the next few years the state will have a unique opportunity to expand career technical education programs during a period of little or no enrollment growth at the high school level. Growth funding in the past for ROCPs has only kept pace with high school enrollment growth; it has not allowed ROCPs to expand services. During the next five years, providing additional growth funding to ROCPs will result in increased access for high school students to career technical education programs.*

#### **Post Secondary**

To reflect the diversity of needs throughout the state, services to adults are provided by a variety of agencies. For ROCPs there is a focus on providing a sequence of courses required to obtain industry certification. This is distinct from an emphasis on short term job training that frequently is provided by adult education or through workforce development agencies. Community colleges are the agencies that provide students with the option to pursue CTE, while at the same time completing the coursework that will allow them to transition into a four-year college, if that is their preference.

For students, it is critical that agreements exist among agencies that successful completion of a sequence of courses will result in the desired certification or degree. In too many cases, these agreements are dependent on the individual teachers involved, and the loss of one teacher can result in a new teacher declining to honor the validity of the sequence for that student. To be effective, *the state should seek changes in community college procedures and regulations such that the articulation of programs across agencies is between the agencies, not between the instructors, and is portable from one area of the state to another.*

## **Tracking**

Many have expressed concerns that a comprehensive system must not result in students being tracked into one system or another. This appears to mean that students would always have the option of changing their plans, either from a UC-bound system or a workforce bound system. Specific ideas concerning this issue might include the following:

1. Require all students upon the completion of eighth grade to have developed an individual education plan that clearly identifies for the parents and students the coursework required to provide opportunities for the students to pursue careers of interest to them.
2. In ninth and tenth grade, a primary focus of high school counseling should be to help students enroll in courses that allow them to keep open both options of moving towards a career pathway certification or completion of the (a)-(g) sequence of courses.
3. By eleventh and twelfth grades it becomes extremely difficult to keep both options fully available to all students. By this time, it should be recognized that students are selecting higher-level courses that lead either to career technical certification, or completion of the (a)-(g) sequence of courses. By specifically recognizing this limitation, the state would also be encouraging students and schools to take more seriously the enrollment options selected in grades nine and ten. The state would not, however, be closing out options for students. It is important to recognize that students once again have a wide range of options available to them upon enrolling in the community colleges. A student in a pathway toward CTE certification could shift at the community college level to completion of the course work required for admission to a UC or CSU in their junior and senior years. Alternatively, community college students intent on admission to a UC campus may decide that their interests are better served by shifting to a career pathway that leads to industry certification.

*A specific idea that might make it easier for students to pursue both CTE and the (a)-(g) curriculum within the high school schedule would be to increase the cap for K-12 core academic summer school by 2 percent of high school enrollment for schools that have a formal CTE pathway.*

## **Accountability**

A major problem with the current school accountability system is that it provides no validation for CTE. One measure of accountability should be that CTE coursework reflects business and industry certification standards, as validated by business and industry advisory committees. Another recommended change might be to direct the State Board of Education and Secretary of Education to develop indicators for inclusion in the Academic Performance Index of student performance on state adopted career technical education standards.

## **Facilities**

A major issue for career technical education is the need for larger and more current classroom facilities. The Governor should be applauded for his leadership in including funding for such facilities in the state school facilities bond issue. This commitment should be continued in future bond issues and should be available to all high schools and ROCPs. *For ROCPs, deferred maintenance funding should be made available to Joint Powers of Authority ROCPs.*

## **Instructional Materials**

*The public hearing requirement for school districts regarding the adequacy of instructional materials should be expanded to include a determination on the adequacy of instructional materials for career technical education programs in grades seven through twelve.*

*ROCP ADA should generate state instructional materials funding and those funds should be earmarked for use in ROCP classrooms.*

### **Teacher and Administrator Quality**

Career technical education teachers should have full access to professional development activities. For example:

*\* new ROCP teachers should be able to participate in the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program.*

*\* All ROCPs should receive funding under the Professional Development Block.*

*\* The AB 430 Principal Training Program should be modified for middle school and high school administrators to include a focus on career technical education.*

A tax credit should be provided to business and industry to “loan” their employees to the public schools to teach industry specific career technical education classes and the flexibility must be maintained to employ experts from business and industry as part-time teachers.

### **Equipment**

As one-time funding is allocated to the public schools, a portion of those funds should be earmarked to ROCPs and community colleges for the purchase of equipment necessary to implement courses that are part of a sequence leading to career technical education certification.