

The seventh NCEE Building Block to a world-class education system is to “create an effective system of career and technical education and training.” While Maryland does require career and technical education (CTE) programs to lead to either an industry-recognized credential or college credit, NCEE points out that this standard is less rigorous than the standard in top performing systems. That standard is a program of CTE study that results in an industry-recognized *certificate* that signifies a student is ready to begin a job that leads to a rewarding career.

The Commission recommends that Maryland should have an education system in which, students who are on track for college and career readiness (by the end of 10th grade for most students) have the opportunity to pursue rigorous career pathways that meet employment standards for a rewarding work life after graduating high school *in addition to* being ready to enroll in credit-bearing courses at an open enrollment post-secondary institution. While there is a public perception that only students who do not excel in the traditional academic subjects should enroll in a CTE program, the Commission recommends that Maryland move expeditiously to dispel that notion. Maryland already has several examples of successful CTE programs, such as at Western Tech High School in Baltimore County, that combine the development of certified workforce skills with high academic standards. As a start in the effort, Maryland schools and other stakeholders should develop and implement a communication plan, drawing upon successful CTE programs both in Maryland and elsewhere, to better inform and ensure parents and students that participation in a rigorous CTE program in no way precludes the ability to attend college.

The State should engage with each CTE sector and licensed professionals in that sector to identify standards that are required for employment. Further, Maryland’s CTE programs should be aligned with the economic goals and workforce needs of the State and regional employment needs. An opportunity to enroll in a rigorous CTE program focused on transportable skills should be available across the State in all counties or regions. CTE programs should work with employers to offer internships and apprenticeships that provide the enhancement of job skills in a real-world setting.

In addition to the “hard” skills that are needed for employment, the Commission recommends that all students, even those not enrolled in a CTE program, should be taught the “soft” skills that are needed in the workforce. This includes professionalism, attitude, timeliness, public engagement, cooperative team building, thinking creatively, problem solving, and adaptability to change.

The Commission recognizes that in order to develop rigorous CTE programs additional stakeholders need to have a seat at the table, including business leaders, representatives of industry sectors, community colleges, and workforce development programs in State and local governments. Therefore, the Commission recommends that a high-level group of stakeholders be appointed as an implementation and monitoring group to develop high performing CTE programs across the State. Concrete actions this group should undertake include:

- A state partnership with Pathways to Prosperity and Jobs for the Future to design rigorous and successful CTE programs;
- Systematic evaluation of schools not only on traditional academic subjects, but also on the CTE program through regular data collection;
- Partnerships between schools and school districts with the local community college to develop and provide seamless transfer into post-secondary CTE programs;
- Alignment of CTE programs with the economic goals and workforce needs of the State and regions within the State;
- Development of partnerships with federal and State government agencies to provide meaningful internship and apprenticeship opportunities; and
- Development of policies that would solve the current shortage of qualified CTE instructors.

For Further Discussion

1. What entities should be represented on this group?
2. What should the role of the study group be in relation to monitoring implementation of the group's plan?
3. Should a separate, permanent group of business and industry representatives be created to regularly advise LEAs and community colleges on CTE and post-secondary certificate programs?
4. Should specific CTE programs be located in all LEAs or should some more expensive programs be provided regionally?