Setting a New Standard for Career Technical Education: Common Career Technical Core

The Common Career Technical Core (CCTC) is a state-led initiative to establish a set of rigorous, high-quality standards for Career Technical Education (CTE) that states can adopt voluntarily. The standards have been informed by state and industry standards and developed by a diverse group of teachers, business and industry experts, administrators and researchers.

The CCTC includes a set of standards for each of the 16 Career Clusters®, a comprehensive collection of industry-validated expectations of what students should know and be able to do after completing instruction in a program of study. The CCTC also includes an overarching set of Career Ready Practices that apply to all 16 Career Clusters®. The Career Ready Practices include 12 statements that address the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are important to becoming career ready.

The initiative is being coordinated by the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc), which represents the state and territory heads of secondary, postsecondary and adult CTE across the nation. Forty-four states and territories supported the development stage of the CCTC.

Why do we need a set of common state standards for CTE?

As the economy changed in the past decade, many CTE programs transitioned from helping students prepare for an entry-level job to helping students prepare for a career. As part of that transition, national organizations, like NASDCTEc, individual states, and even industry-based organizations, created different sets of standards for student learning in CTE programs. The result: a hodgepodge of standards that vary in quality and specificity from one state to the next, putting some students at a distinct disadvantage for competing in the ever-changing global economy.

Recognizing the need for more consistency in today’s global marketplace, in the spring of 2010 CTE State Directors united around a vision to develop a shared set of standards that meet a quality benchmark for students in CTE programs, regardless of where they live or which delivery system they use.

How were the standards developed?

The development of the CCTC was a multi-step process that incorporated guidance and feedback from more than 3,500 individuals and organizations from across the nation.

The final set of standards and Career Ready Practices were informed by:

• High-quality state and industry standards;
• Input from educators, business and industry and state leaders; and
• Feedback from the public.

The CCTC was developed to align with other college- and career-ready standards efforts, such as the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, while also articulating industry expectations for each of the 16 Career Clusters®. The final standards—approved by the 44 supporting states and territories and the NASDCTEc Board of Directors—represent the most rigorous, high-quality, program-level standards for CTE.
How will states implement the CCTC?

NASDCTEc is partnering with Global Skills Exchange (GSX) and The Center on Education and Training for Employment (CETE) at the Ohio State University (OSU) to conduct an alignment study to compare the Common Career Technical Core against state/territory CTE standards. The goal of the study is to provide states and territories with a clear understanding of what it will take to implement the CCTC.

The alignment study consists of three parts:

1. Pilot Policy Scan of 10 states to better understand how states develop, adopt and implement CTE standards.
2. Pilot Alignment Study of 10 states to test the methodology for gauging alignment between state CTE standards and the CCTC.
3. Full-Scale Policy Scan & Alignment Study of the remaining states/territories to gather policies related to the development, adoption and implementation of state/territory CTE standards and to gauge how those standards align with the CCTC.

The results of the alignment study will be released in October 2013 during NASDCTEc’s fall membership meeting.

To learn more about the Common Career Technical Core, please visit the Web site at: www.careertech.org/career-technical-education/cctc/.