



**Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education**

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## **A Proven Investment in Kentucky's Future**

### ***A Position Statement from the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) Calling for Increased Investment in Career and Technical Education (CTE) to Support Student Success and Spur Economic Development***

**Adopted by the KACTE Executive Board  
November 12, 2015**

The future ability of CTE to support student success and spur Kentucky's economic development is a critical issue for the membership of the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE). The Association is a non-profit, educational association comprised of teachers and administrators working at all levels of Career and Technical Education instruction: middle schools, high schools, area technology centers, locally operated career technology centers, community and technical colleges, and universities. KACTE members provide instruction in agriculture, business, communications, construction, engineering and technology, family and consumer sciences, health sciences, information technology, manufacturing, marketing, pathway to careers, and transportation.

KACTE's 650 members represent more than 3,000 CTE educators across the Commonwealth. This Position Statement is consistent with KACTE's mission to provide educational leadership in developing a competitive workforce. It addresses the Association's purposes to foster excellence in career and technical education in Kentucky; to advocate Kentucky and national policy to benefit career and technical education; to act as a clearinghouse for education and information relating to all aspects of career and technical education, while providing an access for professional development; and to promote public awareness of the value of career and technical education as an integral part of the total program of education and solicit public support for these programs.

### ***Challenges***

A July 2015 report from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce surveyed the state's employers and found 27 percent have trouble finding potential employees with "good" employability skills; 23 percent have difficulty finding potential employees with proper technical skills; and 10 percent of employees need retraining for specific technical skills. CTE is the educational pathway to address these three areas of concern. A follow-up Chamber report, *4 Pillars 4 Prosperity*, cited a healthy, skilled workforce as the first pillar needed to "create a globally competitive talent development system that produces a healthy and skilled workforce, benchmarked against the best education and workforce preparation systems in the world." It identified availability of skilled labor as the fifth among 12 factors for companies considering new investment.

Speaking at the 2015 Kentucky Workforce Summit, Helen M. Parker, Ph.D., a national consultant on workforce issues with the New Jersey firm Maher & Maher, said the availability and cost of skilled workers is the single most important aspect of economic competitiveness. At the same event, Jason A. Tyszko, senior director, policy and programs, Center for Education and Workforce, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, said that nationally by year 2020 without changes to policy or programs there would be 6 million unfilled skilled jobs in the U.S. Kim Menke, manager, community and government relations, Toyota Motor Engineering and Manufacturing North America, who chairs the Kentucky Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (KyFAME), noted the innovation taking place in CTE, citing the Automotive Manufacturing Technology (AmTech) program piloted by the Kentucky Community and Technical College System's (KCTCS) Bluegrass Community and Technical College. He called it a paradigm shift for education. "It's a different way of education," he said, adding, "not a change in what they teach; it's how they teach." CTE is evolving to incorporate innovation and integrate academic content into coursework -- the changes to policy and programs necessary to fill the 6 million jobs Tyszko cited.

Kentucky is facing challenges from its border states and states in the Southeast that are improving, enhancing, and investing in CTE. Each of the border states has made changes to strengthen CTE to seek a more competitive workforce. The Tennessee Forward plan is designed to make Tennessee the No. 1 location in the Southeast for high-quality jobs through economic development efforts and education reform. The strongest investment in enhanced CTE was Alabama's legislature approving a \$50 million bond issue to improve CTE technology and programs. Availability of skilled labor is a key reason automotive manufacturing in the last half dozen years has focused expansion in Alabama, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Boeing's commitment to build the 787 jetliner in South Carolina is another example of availability of a competitive workforce. Virtually every aspect of a company's workforce needs reflect CTE educational pathways -- from electricians to business/operational practices; from metal workers to computer technology.

Kentucky must answer these challenges to improve the skill level and employability of its workforce and thus compete in the global economy.

## ***Proven Return***

CTE works in Kentucky. The graduation rate for CTE preparatory students (those students who have completed two credits in a CTE pathway and are enrolled in a third, sometimes called CTE concentrators) in the most recent statistics released by the Kentucky Department of Education was 97.7 percent, almost 9 percentage points higher than the overall student graduation rate of 88.9 percent. The Department of Education reported 129,794 public high schools students (which is 68.5 percent of all students) are enrolled in at least one CTE course. There are 37,401 CTE preparatory students. In 2015, 15,854 public high school students earned a Kentucky Occupational Skill Standards Assessment (KOSSA), a skill measurement developed in consultation with business and industry. An additional 10,009 industry certifications (based on examinations and processes developed by the private sector to identify skills needed in a particular industry) were earned by Kentucky public high school students.

National research supports CTE's success. Public high school CTE has a goal of college and career readiness for all students. It's not merely job preparation. It can be life preparation. 2011 research from the National Center of Education Statistics reported more than 70 percent of secondary CTE concentrators pursued postsecondary education after high school, which is a rate higher than the overall student population. Addressing the need for potential employees with employability skills (those aspects of employment related to teamwork, attendance, appearance, etc.), a 2007 report from the National Research Center for CTE reported CTE students were significantly more likely than non-CTE students to have developed problem-solving, project completion, research, math, college application, work-related, communications, time management and critical thinking skills during high school.

Where research has been conducted, results from coast-to-coast show a positive return on investment in CTE.

- 2014 research in Washington State found every dollar invested in CTE returns \$9 in state revenue and benefits.
- In Oklahoma, each graduating class from the Moore Norman Technology Center secondary CTE programs adds an additional \$3.78 million in tax revenues to the state through increased salary and wages.
- 2008 research in Connecticut shows every public dollar invested in community colleges returns \$16.40 over the course of the student's career.
- In Tennessee, CTE returns \$2 for every \$1 invested. At the secondary level, CTE completers contribute more than \$13 million in annual tax revenue.

## ***Foundation for Economic Development***

As Dr. Parker said at the 2015 Kentucky Workforce Summit, the availability and cost of skilled workers is the single most important aspect of economic competitiveness. Kentucky CTE currently offers more than 160 career pathways in schools across the state. The pathways provide students with the opportunity to gain skills needed by the private sector when pursuing expansion or relocation. Kentucky's career pathways are reviewed annually to ensure relevance and rigor matched to business and industry employment specifications. As needed, new pathways are added and existing pathways are modified. Obsolete pathways are eliminated.

CTE addresses current trends. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 14 of the 20 fastest growing occupations (2012-22) are in the construction, health care, and information technology CTE pathways; 19 of the 20 occupations with the most new jobs (2012-22) are in the business services, construction, health care, information technology, office services, retail sales, and transportation CTE pathways. According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (2009), there will be 55 million middle-skill job openings by 2020 that require education and training beyond high school (postsecondary education, apprenticeship, etc.) but less than a bachelor's degree. The educational foundation for most of those jobs is in a CTE pathway.

Some of Kentucky's economic and workforce development initiatives depend on CTE. Designation as a Work-Ready Community requires among its criteria meeting high school graduation goals, a percentage of the workforce attaining a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), and an employability skills development program. TRACK (Tech-Ready Apprenticeships for Careers in Kentucky) is a unique partnership among private sector employers, an employment services company, and Kentucky schools to provide in-school youth with career apprenticeships prior to graduation. One component of the Kentucky Rising initiative is creating a highly effective system of CTE built on high academic standards with pathways both to work and to further education. Without a vibrant and effective CTE, these programs cannot succeed.

### ***Federal Initiatives***

CTE is a national priority. Federal support for CTE (formerly called vocational education) began prior to World War I. Certain occupations and skills are critical for the economic and physical infrastructure of the country. The current law, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, is named for the long-time Eastern Kentucky congressional representative. The Perkins Act has been called a model of federal-state partnership. The federal government provides oversight and guidance to spur excellence, consistency, and innovation in programs. It provides a financial incentive to enhance equipment and for professional development of teachers and administrators. But each state designs the specific CTE programs that meet state, regional, and local employment and economic realities. The result is a locally run, state guided, and federally incentivized CTE system. Kentucky receives more than \$17 million in federal funds to support CTE in the state at both the secondary and postsecondary levels.

Congress continues to emphasize the importance of CTE beyond the annual appropriation of funds. Both the House and the Senate have active and growing caucuses of members who advocate for a viable CTE program. Kentucky's Representatives Whitfield, Guthrie, Yarmuth, Rogers and Barr are members of the House CTE Caucus. Both the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the House Education and the Workforce Committee are beginning bipartisan discussions on reauthorization of the Perkins Act. Few federal programs receive the bipartisan support for both establishment legislation and appropriations that accrues to CTE.

### ***2016-2018 Kentucky Biennial Budget***

The Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) endorses and supports the Kentucky State Board of Education request for additional CTE funding in the 2016-2018 biennial budget. KACTE asks the Executive Branch to include the additional CTE funding requests in the Executive Branch Budget for 2016-18, and KACTE asks the Kentucky General Assembly to adopt the requested amounts. KACTE believes the requested funding for CTE builds on the programs' success to provide student opportunity and develop the state's economy to meet competitive challenges. The total request of \$7.9 million additional dollars for CTE is a modest and reasonable request that will provide positive return on investment.

A critical component of the funding request is permission to issue \$30 million in bonds to modernize CTE teaching equipment and materials in high schools, area technology centers, and locally operated career technology centers. This requires the addition of \$2.250 million annually for debt service, but the result will be students' ability to learn on equipment similar to what exists in the private sector today. Students will be better equipped to deliver the skills needed at the workplace.

State funding provided for locally operated career technology centers has not changed in more than 10 years, but additional centers have been added, which dilutes the available funds each center can receive. An additional \$3.150 million each year will help equalize funding between the locally operated centers and area technology centers. This is an equity request that will provide for more uniform instruction from school-to-school and region-to-region.

Without quality instruction, students have a greater challenge to succeed. The proposal asks for \$1.5 million each year for educator professional development, including promotion of project-based learning across the CTE landscape. Project-based learning is an experiential learning process that allows students to grasp and practice techniques used in real-world applications. It is true career readiness education.

In the 2016-2017 year, the proposal asks for \$1 million to fund four regional career academies. The existing pilot ILEAD Academy, centered at the Carrolton Area Technology Center and serving Carroll, Gallatin, Henry, Owen, and Trimble Counties, is a cooperative project of the Jefferson Community and Technical College, the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative, and Project Lead the Way. In the 2017-2018 budget year, \$1 million is proposed to improve the industry certification process in the state.

These proposed funding requests for CTE are investments in an educational program with proven results that serve students and the state's economy. Based on results in other states, financial benefits will accrue to the state from these investments, and the state will be in a better position to compete for economic development with a more competent, quality workforce. It is a further example of how **CTE Impacts Everybody, Everywhere, Every Day. Period!!**