

# JROTC & CTE:

## A Conversation with Mr. Michael Wetzel

### What is JROTC?

JROTC has a proud history of providing foundations of character development, individual responsibility, respect, ethical decision making, teamwork, communication skills, and leadership — all the skills necessary for young men and women to be successful in the 21st century workforce.

### What is CTE?

What the 21st century CTE programs of today offer students are the skills needed for careers whether the student enters directly into the workforce or chooses a career that requires a college degree.

### How does JROTC relate to CTE?

JROTC instructors are comprised of retired Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard officers and senior enlisted members. Each instructor brings at least 20 years of demonstrated leadership, mentorship, and successful careers in aviation, space, logistics, cyber, engineering, navigation, management, nautical science just to name a few. The instructor force is an unrecognized reservoir of talent that prepares young men and women for careers in every aspect of our society.

### What should CTE educators know about JROTC?

Whether the cadet completes four years of JROTC or just one year, cadets learn the value of teamwork, integrity and the importance of giving back to their communities. JROTC programs are a congressionally mandated citizenship program aimed at teaching the youth of our nation the value of giving back to their communities and nation. There is absolutely no obligation to join the military upon completion of JROTC; we ask only that they take the skills learned and be a meaningful and productive instrument of value for themselves, their families and their community.

### As a JROTC adviser, what should someone know about CTE?

There was a time when students could take wood shop, metal shop, auto shop, culinary arts, and DECA. It was recognized that not every student goes to college, but every student should learn a skill that would allow them to enter the workforce. Somewhere along the way, the vision of every student going to college replaced the vision of every student should have a skill. The inclusion of STEM to show students what they are doing in the classroom can lead to unimaginable careers and the additional re-emphasis on CTE recognizes the need to ensure our future workforce is prepared.

### Example of Success: CTE Advocacy in JROTC

The state of Alabama has come to understand the value of what JROTC teaches high school students wanting to pursue careers in a 21st century workforce. My position as the Air Force JROTC Academic Credit Liaison allows me to carry this message strategically on the connection between JROTC and CTE. JROTC has 3,500 programs and over 500,000 cadets enrolled in all 50 states and our American schools located in Europe, Asia and U.S. territories. I take the successful accomplishments obtained in Alabama and show other states how JROTC can be an integral part of their statewide CTE programs. CTE programs do a great job of preparing the youth of our nation for future careers with or without college, however, many states are still not maximizing all their resources by not including JROTC as a career preparation program as has been done in Alabama.



### Q&A with Air Force JROTC Academic Credit Liaison and Instructional System Specialist Mr. Michael Wetzel, M.Ed

After serving 25 years as an aircrew instructor/evaluator, Mr. Wetzel retired in 1998 from the Air Force to become an Air Force JROTC instructor in California. Teaching JROTC for 13 years in two different Southern California high schools, he earned a Master's of Science degree in Workforce Education and certification as a school counselor. In 2011, Mr. Wetzel was selected for his current position as the Air Force JROTC Academic Credit Liaison and Instructional System Specialist at Maxwell AFB, AL.