

ASK THE TEAM

BY CATHERINE JACQUES

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Credit Quandaries: How Career and Technical Education Teachers Can Teach Courses That Include Academic Credit

Question From the Field: How are states ensuring that career and technical education (CTE) teachers can award academic credit to students for their classes?

All CTE courses provide students with academic, career, technical, and employability skills and knowledge. CTE courses open the door to opportunities for students to acquire the skills embodied in the Common Core State Standards through authentic tasks and assessments. For many students the ability to make connections to real-life tasks is a vehicle for improved student learning. Designed thoughtfully, these courses can address rigorous academic content standards and be as intellectually demanding as traditional academic courses (Southern Regional Education Board, 2012). A barrier that consistently emerges for students relates to highly qualified teacher (HQT) requirements: Students cannot earn credit for their academic accomplishments in their CTE courses if their CTE teachers do not meet the federal HQT requirements (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Most states provide pathways for CTE teachers to become highly qualified through a High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) policy, in which teachers who currently hold a bachelor's degree and certification can demonstrate subject-matter competency through coursework, National Board Certification, or other activities. But because of the unique qualifications, expertise, and career trajectories of CTE teachers, many may not hold the required subject-matter credentials for HQT status, such as a bachelor's degree with a major or minor in the academic subject area. In fact, the majority of states do not require CTE teachers to have a bachelor's degree to be certified (Jacques & Potemski, 2014).

A Note on Terminology

This brief focuses on CTE teachers who do not meet highly qualified requirements. Throughout the brief, we refer to this category of teachers as “CTE teachers.” To meet HQT requirements, teachers of core academic classes must have a bachelor's degree, hold full state certification or licensure, and demonstrate subject-matter competency (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). CTE teachers often hold full state certification or licensure but may lack the required bachelor's degree or proof of academic subject-matter competency because state certification and licensure requirements do not mandate them.

Recognizing the role and impact that CTE courses could have on students' acquisition of college- and career-ready standards, states are exploring various strategies that allow for academic credit within CTE coursework. When students earn CTE credit and academic credit simultaneously, they may be better positioned to graduate from high school on time (Southern Regional Education Board, 2012). Referred to as “embedded-credit courses” or “equivalency courses,” these courses allow students to earn academic credit while applying academic skills in authentic real-life contexts.

Of course, states have an interest as well in ensuring that the teachers who are providing academic instruction in CTE courses have the background, skill, and support to implement high-quality, rigorous academic instruction, not simply that CTE teachers can “check the box” on their certification forms. We developed this *Ask the Team* brief to provide state education agencies (SEAs) and federally funded regional comprehensive centers with potential strategies, commonly used in other states, for addressing the academic credit challenge for CTE courses. Below, you will find two common approaches to addressing HQT challenges: collaboration and course assignment models.

To gather this information, we drew on the Southern Regional Education Board report, *Recognizing Academic Credit in Career/Technical Education: Conditions for Awarding Credit for Career/Technical Courses*; reviewed publicly available policy and guidance documents; and conducted phone calls with staff at SEAs from the states highlighted below. The policy examples describe how some states have addressed these challenges. We offer these examples as information only and do not endorse any specific approaches included in this brief.

Addressing HQT Barriers: Collaboration and Course Assignment

A CTE teacher who meets the HQT requirements is often the best choice for a CTE course that includes academic credit, but there are other approaches states have taken:

- Coteaching or coplanning: Highly qualified academic teachers and CTE teachers serve as dual teachers of record for the course.
- Recoding course assignments

These approaches do not necessarily involve ensuring that CTE teachers meet the definition of HQT; rather, they allow students to gain academic credit for CTE courses regardless of the CTE teacher's HQT status. When considering these approaches, states and districts must ensure that the teachers of these courses can provide all students with rigorous, high-quality instruction.

1. ADOPT A COLLABORATION APPROACH

When a CTE teacher collaborates closely with an HQT core academic teacher on the design and implementation of a CTE course, they can both serve as the official teachers of record for that course. This collaborative approach allows students the opportunity to earn both types of credit simultaneously. Collaboration may be defined as a coplanning model, in which CTE teachers and highly qualified core academic teachers collaboratively plan instruction for their shared course, or as a coteaching model, in which the two teachers coplan and share instructional time by coteaching or combining their classes in a block period. Typically, districts establish a collaboration committee

that is responsible for approving the design of the collaboration models. The committees are generally comprised of administrators, core academic teachers, and CTE teachers. States, districts, and schools can consider different collaboration models based on state requirements, including teacher-leader models and one-to-one models.

Teacher Leader. In this model, a highly qualified teacher leader provides instruction in classes part time and meets with CTE teachers across the district part time to coplan lessons, analyze student data, grade assignments, and discuss academic instruction. In this model the teacher leader provides support to one or more CTE teachers for academic content instruction rather than coteaching the CTE course (although the teacher leader may coteach some lessons). The CTE teacher and the highly qualified teacher leader both serve as teachers of record for the course, enabling students to earn academic credit.

Did You Know?

According to the *Data Quality Campaign* (2012), 35 states (as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) allow multiple educators to be defined as the teachers of record for a course. For collaborative models to be integrated into data systems, states should ensure that data systems can make linkages between multiple teachers and a single course.



Michigan requires that CTE teachers who do not meet HQT requirements use the state collaboration model to allow students to earn academic credit in the CTE course. First, core academic teachers and CTE teachers work together to develop and align integrated coursework. Second, core academic and CTE teachers work together to plan for instruction. The academic teacher does not necessarily have to deliver direct instruction but must:

- Meet with the CTE teacher throughout the school year to discuss student progress.
- Complete professional development for both the core academic subject and CTE subject areas.
- Complete an annual review of student achievement for the course and develop suggestions for improvement.
- Submit an annual report to the district.

Key Reflection Questions for States Considering This Approach:

- Will state or district funding formulas need to be adapted to implement this model?
- Will the teacher-leader role be focused on working with CTE teachers on academic content or will the role be broader?
- Will the teacher leader be spread across schools and districts? If so, is enough time allotted for the teacher leader to observe/monitor CTE instruction and performance?
- What qualifications must these teacher leaders have and how will they be selected for this role?
- How will the effectiveness of the teacher leader be assessed?

Source: Michigan Department of Education. (n.d.). *Guidelines for awarding credit in career and technical education (CTE), humanities, and other delivery models*. Retrieved from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Credit_in_CTE_and_Integrated_Guidelines_199363_7.pdf

One-to-One Partnership. In this model, a highly qualified academic teacher and a CTE teacher both serve as teachers of record for a course, or a set of courses. The CTE teacher helps the core academic teacher integrate project-based learning for mastery of concepts, while the core academic teacher helps the CTE teacher ensure the reinforcement of rigorous content. This approach capitalizes on the expertise of both teachers and establishes a relationship in which the two teachers may design lessons, share instructional responsibilities, and assess student progress.

 State
Spotlight

Missouri refers to academic credit earned through CTE courses as “embedded credit.” Districts that wish to offer courses with embedded credit must get approval from the state for standards alignment and assessment use. Most embedded-credit courses are structured as a block class in which the two teachers either coteach or split instructional time—the CTE teacher delivers approximately two hours of instruction on CTE and the core academic teacher delivers approximately one hour of instruction on academic content. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends that CTE teachers, core academic teachers, and administrators collaborate with CTE centers to develop these courses.

Key Reflection Questions for States Considering This Approach:

- Will state or district funding formulas need to be adapted to implement this model? Will additional discretionary funds be needed?
- How will districts ensure that course content is both aligned and integrated?
- How will districts ensure that teachers have supports such as common planning time?

Sources: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2006). *Missouri embedded credit toolkit*. Retrieved from <http://dese.mo.gov/college-career-readiness/career-ed-model-curriculum/administration-school-reform/embedded-credit-0>

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2007). *Graduation requirements for students in Missouri public schools*. Retrieved from <http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/GraduationHandbook2010.pdf>

 State
Spotlight

New York requires districts to convene a committee of both CTE and academic teachers to determine which courses will bear academic credit and how much credit (i.e., credit hours) they will include. This committee must determine the alignment between CTE course standards and academic standards, how any gaps in academic content will be addressed, and whether the teachers will coplan as well as coteach the course. CTE teachers are responsible for documenting the evidence of academic content taught and collaboration activities, including coteaching, in the event they are asked for justification for academic credit from the district or New York State Department of Education.

Key Reflection Questions for States Considering This Approach:

- What criteria should district committees use to determine whether CTE courses should include academic credit and how the credit is offered?
- What criteria should district committees use to determine whether a course should include coplanning or coteaching?
- How will the members of the committee be chosen? What qualifications will the state review in determining the best selection of members?
- Will state or district funding formulas need to be adapted for this model?

Sources: Association of Career and Technical Educators. (2009). *Joining forces for student success: The emergence of state and local policies to support the recognition of academic credit for CTE coursework*. Retrieved from <http://www.ccrscenter.org/products-resources/resource-database/joining-forces-student-success-emergence-state-and-local>

New York State Department of Education. (2001). *Regents policy*. Retrieved from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/cte/ctepolicy/ctepolicy.html>

New York State Department of Education. (2009). *CTE questions and answers*. Retrieved from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/cte/faq.html>

New York State Department of Education. (2012). *Expansion of career and technical education integrated course options*. Retrieved from <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2012Meetings/March2012/312p12d1.pdf>

2. LEVERAGE COURSE ASSIGNMENT CODES

Course assignment codes are course titles or classifications that indicate the content and credit students earn by completing a course. Teachers of courses with academic content codes must meet HQT requirements to award academic credit. Based on their interpretation of the HQT requirements and course assignment policies, some states allow districts to award academic credit for courses taught by CTE teachers.

State Spotlight

Washington state requires that all courses with academic course codes have teachers who meet HQT standards, but does not require teachers of courses with CTE course codes to meet HQT requirements. The state also allows certain approved CTE courses with CTE course codes to be academic credit-bearing. Thus, teachers of those courses with CTE course codes do not have to be HQT. For example, students taking an agriculture CTE course that is coded as a CTE course can receive academic credit in biology with district approval. Districts in Washington establish an approval process for the courses and also determine the amount of academic credit that students receive for each course based on the academic work completed in that course.

Key Reflection Questions for States Considering This Approach:

- How can the state honor local decision making while maintaining standards for the rigor and comparability of academic credit statewide?
- Which content-area experts will monitor the alignment between course content and the relevant academic and CTE standards?
- What agency will review the proposed course to ensure that the standards, credit, instructors, assessments, and overall design are appropriate?

Sources: Association of Career and Technical Educators. (2009). *Joining forces for student success: The emergence of state and local policies to support the recognition of academic credit for CTE coursework*. Retrieved from <http://www.ccrscenter.org/products-resources/resource-database/joining-forces-student-success-emergence-state-and-local>

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2013a). *Equivalency credit toolkit 3.3*. Retrieved from <https://www.k12.wa.us/CareerTechEd/Forms/EquivalencyCreditToolkit.pdf>

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2014). *Washington state standardized high school transcript frequently asked questions (FAQs)*. Retrieved from <https://www.k12.wa.us/transcripts/pubdocs/HSTranscriptFAQ2014-2015.pdf>

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Career Tech Educator* [webpage]. Retrieved from <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/CTE/Initial.aspx>

Washington Senate Bill Report. (2007). *Final bill report: ESSB 6023*. Retrieved from <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2007-08/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/Senate/6023-S.FBR.pdf>

Wisconsin allows all CTE teachers to meet HQT requirements and award academic credit if they teach a CTE course that includes academic credit. CTE teachers for these courses are only required to demonstrate CTE subject-matter competency—not academic subject-matter competency—because these courses have specialized CTE course codes. CTE teachers and core academic teachers create crosswalks of the CTE and academic content standards addressed in the class, which they submit to the state for approval. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction then submits these courses to the University of Wisconsin at Madison to ensure that the university will accept credit for these courses.

Key Reflection Questions for States Considering This Approach:

- What criteria will the state set for the amount of academic credit that can be awarded for the CTE course?
- How will the state or district ensure that CTE teachers have the skills to successfully integrate academic content into the course?
- What kinds of oversight will the state or district use to ensure comparability between traditional academic courses and CTE courses including academic credit?

Sources: Interview With Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Staff, 2013.

Wisconsin Act 63. H.B. 51 (2013). Retrieved from <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2013/related/acts/63.pdf>

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2013a). *Career and Technical Education Equivalency Credit* [webpage]. Retrieved from http://cte.dpi.wi.gov/cte_equivalency

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2013b). *Equivalent courses frequently asked questions and answers*. Retrieved from http://cte.dpi.wi.gov/files/cte/doc/equivalency_faq.doc

General Considerations

There are some general considerations that states and districts should keep in mind when designing policies, procedures, or guidance for developing CTE courses that include academic credit:

- How are the course content and credit allocations determined?
- Are there content-area experts who can align the course standards and content?
- Does the course help create more connections to real-world applications, serve student needs, or improve student outcomes?
- Will the same academic content also be taught in a separate course without a connection to CTE? Why or why not?
- What agency (if any) reviews or approves the proposed course to ensure that the standards, credit, instructors, assessments, and overall design are appropriate across districts and schools?
- Is there a single teacher with the skills, background, and certification needed to teach the course or are there teams of teachers who can coteach this course?
- Do state and district policies allow more than one teacher to serve as the teacher of record for the course?



I WANT TO KNOW MORE

Resources:

Association of Career and Technical Educators. (2009). Joining forces for student success: the emergence of state and local policies to support the recognition of academic credit for cte coursework. retrieved from <http://www.ccrscenter.org/products-resources/resource-database/joining-forces-student-success-emergence-state-and-local>

Data Quality Campaign. (2012). Analysis of state promising practices in defining teacher of record and linking teachers and students. Retrieved from <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Analysis%20of%20State%20Promising%20Practices%20in%20TOR%20and%20TSDL%202012.pdf>

Jacques, C., & Potemski, A. (2014). 21st century educators: Developing and supporting great career and technical education teachers. Washington, DC: Center on Great Teachers and Leaders. Retrieved from <http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/21CenturyEducators.pdf>

Northeast Comprehensive Center. (2014). Preliminary findings for NYSED's information request on policies and practices related to alternative pathways to graduation. Retrieved from <http://www.northeastcompcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Matrix-on-Findings-for-NYSED-CTE-Information-Request-Jan-2014.pdf>

Southern Regional Education Board. (2012). Recognizing academic achievement in career/technical education: Conditions for awarding academic credit in career/technical courses. Retrieved from http://publications.sreb.org/2012/12V16_RecognizingAcademicCredit.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2004). New No Child Left Behind flexibility: Highly qualified teachers. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html>

For more specific information on these and other states, please e-mail gtlcenter@air.org.

Catherine Jacques is a research associate at American Institutes for Research and provides technical assistance for the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders.