



# PREPARED AND EFFECTIVE PROGRAM STAFF

By Catherine Imperatore

**THERE IS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS' LEARNING THAN THE QUALITY AND DEDICATION OF** their teachers. This conventional wisdom is backed by research: Teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling, according to a literature review by the RAND Corporation; and We Are Teachers reports that 88% of individuals say that a teacher had a significant, positive impact on their life (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). For these reasons, Prepared and Effective Program Staff is one of ACTE's 12 elements of high-quality CTE within the *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

The Prepared and Effective Program Staff element of ACTE's quality framework includes seven criteria that address the qualifications and professional development of program of study staff, including secondary CTE teachers, postsecondary CTE faculty, administrators and other personnel that support both instructors and students. The criteria listed below are from the 2018 version of the ACTE *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

## Criteria for High-quality Program of Study Staff

- a. CTE staff supporting the program of study meet appropriate state, district and/or institution certification and licensing requirements.
- b. CTE educators maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills across all aspects of an industry.
- c. CTE educators maintain relevant evidence-based pedagogical knowledge and skills.

High-quality programs of study are founded on staff, including teachers and faculty, administrators, counselors, support personnel and paraprofessionals, who are licensed or certified in accordance with the requirements of the state, district and/or institution. When qualified staff are hard to find, CTE leaders can pursue creative options, such as developing intensive induction programs for pro-

visionally certified instructors, pairing new teachers with fully licensed instructors, and enabling in-person or virtual access to industry experts.

In addition to their initial qualifications, CTE educators must have and continually refresh both their industry- and occupation-specific knowledge and skills as well as their knowledge and skills for effective and equitable teaching and classroom management. Instructors with expertise in both of these areas can better support students to develop relevant technical, academic and employability skills, explore careers, and meet their goals. This can be challenging for today's CTE educators, as many come into their roles with a background in either education or business and industry but not both.

- d. CTE staff engage in ongoing, rigorous professional development on a wide range of topics covering all elements of a high-quality program of study, as described in ACTE's *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*, which might include pursuit of advanced educator certification.
- e. CTE staff demonstrate leadership and commitment to the profession.

To maintain and expand their skills and knowledge, CTE educators and other program of study staff must have opportunities to engage in high-quality professional development. In the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), this term is defined as "sustained ... intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused." This definition echoes the description of professional development in Perkins IV and also aligns expectations with the Every Student Succeeds Act. There is evidence that professional development designed with these characteristics is more effective in changing teacher practice and supporting student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Educators in high-quality programs of study should have access to these sustained, rigorous professional learning

experiences in alignment with the needs identified in their community through the Perkins V comprehensive local needs assessment. A coordinated annual plan for professional development can help ensure that a variety of relevant content is covered and may extend to professional development plans for individual staff members. Appropriate funds should be budgeted to cover costs for required or approved activities, and whenever possible, participants should be able to earn professional development or articulated credit.

While not required, one avenue for professional learning is advanced certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which is available in a number of CTE specialty areas. Research has documented positive impacts for students whose teachers are Board certified, and Board certification can open doors to leadership positions. Other ways for educators to continue their learning and to support the profession include volunteering with a relevant professional association, serving as a career and technical student organization (CTSO) adviser, or mentoring a new teacher.

**f.** CTE administrators ensure that other program staff have the time, resources and supports to implement each element of a high-quality program of study, as described in ACTE's *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

**g.** CTE and academic staff collaborate regularly and frequently to coordinate curriculum, instruction, assessment, and extended learning activities and to analyze data for program improvement.

To successfully implement high-quality programs of study, program staff must not only engage in professional learning but also collaborate with business and industry partners, coordinate work-based learning and CTSO activities, analyze student data, and stay up to date on labor market information, among other tasks. One of the most important and challenging responsibilities of a CTE administrator is ensuring that educators and other staff have the funds,

time and encouragement to engage in these activities during the school day. In particular, educators should have regular access to colleagues within CTE departments; in academic, counseling/advisement and other departments; and across learner levels to coordinate curriculum and instruction, develop opportunities for career exploration, and analyze data. This collaboration helps to break down silos and leverage different perspectives for program improvement.

Additional criteria in the Career and Technical Student Organizations and Work-based Learning elements of the ACTE framework address the importance of clearly defined roles and supports for staff delivering these learning opportunities. In addition, a criterion in the Sequencing and Articulation element describes the need for collaboration among secondary and postsecondary staff for CTE course sequencing, articulation and transfer.

### Success Strategy: Teacher Externships

Round Rock Independent School District in Texas collaborates with the Round Rock Chamber of Commerce to provide summer externships for middle and high school teachers, counselors, and administrators in CTE and other academic content areas to help them stay up to date with business and industry trends. For three days each summer, participants shadow local employers relevant to their subject area or position in the school district. Educators are paid \$500 plus a \$50 gas card and earn 24 hours of professional development credit. Upon completion, participants develop and present a lesson plan that highlights what they learned. Past participants cite benefits from the program, including learning more about day-to-day business operations and forming stronger partnerships.

### Learn More and Assess Your Programs

Practitioners can turn to ACTE's High-quality CTE Tools online library for resources on the preparation and development of program of study instructors, administrators and other professionals. The Prepared and Effective Program Staff section features information on state CTE licensure requirements, case studies about

professional learning communities and teacher induction programs, and CTE professional development models.

In addition, practitioners can use the *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework Self-evaluation Instrument* to assess a single program or multiple programs across a district or institution in relation to Prepared and Effective Program Staff and all 12 elements of high-quality CTE. The rubric can be completed on paper or online, where users can receive automatically calculated scores, save and print their results, and be connected to the online library for areas identified as needing improvement. ■

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### REFERENCES

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### EXPLORE MORE

High-quality CTE Tools Online Library:  
[acteonline.org/high-quality-CTE](http://acteonline.org/high-quality-CTE)

*Quality CTE Program of Study Framework and Self-evaluation Instrument:*  
[acteonline.org/high-quality-CTE](http://acteonline.org/high-quality-CTE)

*This column was prepared prior to school closures resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic. Some activities highlighted here, such as teacher externships, will likely not be possible in 2020. Keep up with ACTE's response to COVID-19 at [acteonline.org/acte-response-to-coronavirus](http://acteonline.org/acte-response-to-coronavirus), and access our growing list of distance learning resources for CTE educators at [acteonline.org/professional-development/opportunities/distance-learning-resources](http://acteonline.org/professional-development/opportunities/distance-learning-resources).*