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STUDENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

By Catherine Imperatore

HIGH-QUALITY CTE PROGRAMS OF STUDY ARE COMMITTED TO ENABLING STUDENTS TO EXPLORE careers and make informed decisions that help them achieve their goals. For this reason, Student Career Development is one of ACTE's 12 elements of high-quality CTE within the *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

The Student Career Development element of ACTE's quality framework includes eight criteria that address strategies to help students gain career knowledge and engage in education and career planning and decision-making. The criteria listed below are from the 2018 version of the ACTE *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

Criteria for High-quality Student Career Development

- a. Comprehensive career development is coordinated and sequenced to promote and support the career decision-making and planning of all students, including prior to entering the program of study.
- b. Each CTE student in the program of study has a personalized, multiyear education and career plan that reflects exploration of the student's interests, preferences and abilities; and informs course selection, planning for further education and a career, and involvement in extended learning.

- c. Career development activities are aligned with relevant national, state and/or local standards.

High-quality career development incorporates a coordinated sequence of supports and activities that begins before a student enters a program of study, and continues until completion. To achieve this, administrators, educators and career development professionals must coordinate activities across learner levels. High-quality career development should start by middle school, if not sooner, and students should be apprised of locally available CTE programs of study no later than the eighth grade.

This sequence of services builds from exploring broadly defined career areas and student interests and strengths, to more specific strategies such as taking career assessments, participating in courses or course units focused on learning about careers, creating individual education and career plans, and accessing job search information and placement services. These career development activities can occur in the classroom; through meetings with a school counselor or other career development professional; and as part of work-based learning, career and technical student organization participation, or advanced credit opportunities. The entire sequence of career development should

be aligned with relevant standards developed by the district or institution, the state or a relevant third-party organization such as the National Career Development Association.

In particular, students must develop personalized education and career plans based on their interests, goals and strengths. The planning should start as early as possible, evolve over time, and incorporate career assessment results, work-based learning reflections and other materials. When intentionally designed, this process helps ensure that students are well-informed about how their program of study participation relates to their future goals.

The plan should be consulted when students are selecting courses, planning for the next stage of their education and entering the workforce, and should inform decisions about experiential learning and articulated credit. A criterion in the Work-based Learning element of the *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework* addresses intentionally aligning workplace experiences with academic and career plans. It should also coordinate with a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, if applicable. Relatedly, criteria in the Access and Equity element address equity in promoting a program of study,

recruiting participants and providing career guidance.

- d. Students in the program of study and their parents/guardians (as appropriate) are provided accurate and timely information on extended learning experiences available through the program of study, such as work-based learning, CTSO participation and articulated credit.
- e. Students in the program of study and their parents/guardians (as appropriate) are provided accurate and timely information on further education and training options, including application procedures, enrollment, financing, and their projected educational, employment and earnings outcomes.
- f. Students in the program of study and their parents/guardians (as appropriate) are provided accurate and timely information on regional occupational trends and outlooks, high-demand and high-wage career opportunities, and the educational pathways that lead to current and projected career opportunities.

High-quality career development is information-intensive, relying on a variety of sources that provide information on the local and regional labor market; local and regional institutions that offer further education in the program of study; credentials that lead to relevant career opportunities; financial aid and application procedures; and opportunities for experiential learning and articulated credit.

Students should be able to access this information through multiple venues and different forms of media, including the classroom, counselor meetings, social media and digital tools. When students are minors, information should also be communicated clearly to parents or guardians, which may include translating information into different languages.

- g. Students in the program of study have access to job search information and placement services as they near completion of the program of study.

As students come to the end of a program of study, they should have access to resources and supports for finding and applying to jobs in a relevant career field. This criterion will most often apply to the postsecondary partner in a program of study, and can be facilitated in concert with a college career services center.

- h. Career development professionals have access to professional development and up-to-date information on extended learning experiences, education and training options, and regional occupational trends to aid students in education and career planning and decision-making.

To effectively provide the services described above, career development professionals need opportunities for professional learning and accessible, up-to-date information. This applies to all the staff members who may wear the “career development” hat, including career counselors and CTE administrators and educators. In particular, school counselors with multiple responsibilities and high counselor-to-student ratios may need help integrating career and academic planning with their other tasks. Further criteria about the professional learning needs of program of study staff, including career development professionals, are included within the Prepared and Effective Program Staff element.

Success Strategy: Go Centers Promote Postsecondary Planning

Grapevine-Colleyville Independent School District (GCISD) (2017) in Texas has established one-stop shops for students’ postsecondary planning, with the understanding that “college looks different for everyone.” The GCISD Go Centers, located at Grapevine and Colleyville Heritage High Schools, help students learn about a variety of postsecondary options with self-guided tools and individualized assistance from staff.

After an initial information session, each student participates in a needs assessment that identifies specific areas for more guidance. Go Centers offer resources and support around postsecondary options,

career assessments, standardized testing information, financial aid resources, application procedures and résumé writing. Worksheets help students think through their priorities for postsecondary education, compare institutions and avoid common application mistakes; career exploration and planning is facilitated by digital tools from Xello (formerly Career Cruising).

Learn More and Assess Your Programs

Practitioners can turn to ACTE’s High-quality CTE Tools online library for publications and other resources that support comprehensive career development. Resources within the Student Career Development section address specific tools for career exploration and planning, such as career assessments and individual learning plans; delivery methods that incorporate technology; career exploration options for elementary and middle school students; and guidelines and competencies developed by national organizations.

Practitioners can also 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 the Student Career Development element 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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REFERENCE

Grapevine-Colleyville Independent School District. (2017). About the Go Centers. Retrieved from <https://www.gcisd.net/cms/One.aspx?portalId=96313&pageId=332742>.

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High-quality CTE Tools Online Library: www.acteonline.org/high-quality-CTE

Quality CTE Program of Study Framework and Self-evaluation Instrument.
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