CTE Standards

The Common Career Technical Core (CCTC) are the result of a state-led initiative to establish a set of rigorous, high-quality benchmark standards for Career Technical Education (CTE) that states can voluntarily adopt.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were enacted in 2010: integrating academic and technical training—as well as digital literacy—to increase college and career readiness. Soon thereafter, 41 states (and Washington, DC) released the Common Career Technical Core (CCTC) standards for CTE. These rigorous, high-quality standards align with the 16 knowledge and skill areas and the 79 Career Pathways within the Career Clusters.

These benchmarks help to create a shared understanding of the foundational elements that support all impactful CTE programs. But they are only a preliminary step in realizing the promise of today's students thriving in tomorrow's jobs. And—despite the CCTC standards—CTE teachers face varying diverse federal, state, and local standards and mandates.

A report from the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) assessed the Career Technical Education (CTE) standards from all 55 states and territories and finds that while the field is diverse, there are opportunities for bringing more consistency across states.

Some of the report's findings include:

• Only two states and one territory have CTE standards that are fully aligned between secondary and postsecondary systems.

• Nearly all states have programs of study, even though few have statewide postsecondary standards to which these programs of study are aligned.

• There is a significant difference between states' current CTE standards and the Common Career Technical Core.

The CCTC aren't intended to replace existing state standards (though they can), but are—instead—either meant to supplement existing occupation-specific standards or serve as an "anchor" for the state CTE standards. Standards are clear expectations of what students should know and be able to do at the end of a CTE program or course.

States take a wide range of approaches in implementing standards for their CTE programs. In total, 46 states offer statewide CTE standards at the secondary level (along with another three U.S. territories), 13 offer statewide CTE standards at the postsecondary level (plus two U.S. territories), and the same 13 states require CTE standards at both the secondary and postsecondary level.

Most every state has begun to use The National Career Cluster Framework as a way of organizing CTE programs and standards, typically using it as a framework for their existing CTE programs. The majority of states have CTE standards that fall under most of the 16 Career Clusters. The 16 Career Clusters are:

• Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources

• Architecture & Construction

• Arts, A/V Technology & Communications

• Business Management & Administration

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- Education & Training

- Finance

- Government & Public Administration

- Health Science

- Hospitality & Tourism

- Human Services

- Information Technology

- Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security

- Manufacturing

- Marketing

- STEM

- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

The CCTC process was driven by some key assumptions, including that they are for states, by states. While it is a state-driven decision to adopt the CCTC, common CTE benchmarks are key for comparability and the exchange of best practices. They provide the core expectations across different delivery systems and approaches, while focusing on foundational concepts and skills for each Career Cluster and Career Pathway.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has created ten standards for CTE teachers: each describing an important facet of an accomplished teaching practice. These standards serve as the basis for National Board Certification in CTE.

Standard I: Knowledge of Students

Accomplished teachers value their students' various learning styles and stages of development, and they create learning environments that differentiate instruction to meet them.

Standard II: Responding to Diversity

Accomplished teachers use inclusive teaching practices and advocate to ensure that all students receive a quality career and technical education.

Standard III: Knowledge of Content

Accomplished teachers utilize their knowledge and pedagogical skills to develop curricular objectives, design instruction, and facilitate student success within industry.

Standard IV: Learning Environments and Instructional Practices

Accomplished teachers design contextualized learning environments that foster critical thinking, creativity, leadership, teamwork, and communication skills.

Standard V: Assessment

Accomplished teachers design assessments that allow students to provide an authentic demonstration of their knowledge and skills.

Standard VI: Postsecondary Readiness

Accomplished teachers facilitate career exploration so students can make informed career decisions that match their interests and aptitudes.

Standard VII: Program Design and Management

Accomplished teachers design quality programs aligned with industry demands that sustain meaningful educational experiences for their students.

Standard VIII: Partnerships and Collaborations

Accomplished teachers collaborate with family, education, industry, and community partners to help students plan, develop, and achieve their career goals.

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Standard IX: Leadership in the Profession

Accomplished teachers collaborate with stakeholders within their schools and communities to improve instruction, promote student learning, and advocate for their fields of expertise.

Standard X: Reflective Practice

Accomplished teachers reflect analytically throughout the instructional process, using multifaceted feedback to increase the efficacy of their teaching.

The majority of future careers will most likely require some type of postsecondary credential or degree. To make CTE as useful as possible, progress will need to be made toward common standards within states, and ideally across states.

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