

CTE Excellence and Equity Act (S.1004)

Introduced by U.S. Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA), Rob Portman (R-OH), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Todd Young (R-IN), and Maggie Hassan (D-NH)

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Equipping all students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and enter the twenty-first-century job market is fundamental to the current K-12 education system. Unfortunately, many of today's high schools are not providing students with an engaging experience that is relevant to the workforce and that integrates partnerships with industry and higher education. Although the nation currently graduates 82 percent of all high school students, far too many students remain unprepared for postsecondary education and the workforce. Specifically,

- nearly 80 percent of college instructors and 60 percent of employers indicate that public high schools fall short in preparing students for postsecondary education;¹
- 62 percent of college instructors report that students arrive at college with at least some gaps in their preparation;² and
- four out of five employers report that recent public high school graduates have at least some gaps in preparation for the average job and for job advancement.³

Discussions about increasing relevancy and rigor in the nation's schools often overlook career and technical education (CTE) even though a strong focus on academics is the cornerstone of high-quality CTE. In a four-year longitudinal study of 6,638 students in three large urban school districts in three states, the National Research Center for Career and Technical

Education finds that students participating in CTE programs or career pathways earned more credits in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and Advanced Placement classes than students not enrolled in CTE.⁴ Additionally, students who completed a career pathway program of study earned higher grade point averages in their CTE classes than students who did not complete a career pathway.⁵

The **CTE Excellence and Equity Act** would support funding for innovation in CTE and redesign the high school experience for historically underserved students. The legislation authorizes federal grants to partnerships among school districts, employers, and institutions of higher education (IHEs) that help students earn industry-recognized credentials or credit toward a postsecondary degree or certificate and an understanding of the relevance of that course work in the context of a future career. Activities funded under the legislation include

- involving employers as partners in CTE program design, curriculum development, program evaluation, and assessment of student work;
- integrating rigorous academics with CTE in courses that meet state university admissions requirements;
- supporting integrated professional development between core academic teachers (e.g., English, mathematics, history, science, etc.) and CTE teachers;

- establishing credit-transfer agreements between participating local educational agencies and IHEs for courses of study that lead to a credit-bearing postsecondary degree, credential, or certificate;
- providing students with a continuum of work-based learning experiences, such as job shadowing, internships, and pre-apprenticeship programs to develop essential workplace skills; and
- providing integrated student support that addresses the comprehensive needs of students, such as incorporating accelerated and differentiated learning opportunities supported by evidence-based strategies for special student populations.



Endnotes

¹ Achieve, *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* (Washington, DC: Author, 2014), <http://www.achieve.org/publications/rising-challenge-survey-ii-powerpoint> (accessed March 4, 2016).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ M. Castellano et al., *Rigorous Tests of Student Outcomes in CTE Programs of Study: Final Report* (Louisville, KY: National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, 2014), <http://www.nrccte.org/resources/publications/rigorous-tests-student-outcomes-cte-programs-study-final-report> (accessed March 21, 2016).

⁵ Ibid.

Photo provided by the Linked Learning Alliance.

The **Alliance for Excellent Education** is a Washington, DC–based national policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. www.all4ed.org

ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career partners with communities to transform education through Linked Learning, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, graduate ready for college, career, and life. ConnectEd provides planning for school district administrators, coaching and training for teachers, resources and curriculum development for teachers and students, powerful new technology to support Linked Learning pathway certification, tools, and quality checkpoints. www.connectedcalifornia.org

The **Linked Learning Alliance** is a statewide coalition of education, industry, and community organizations dedicated to improving California's high schools and preparing students for success in college, career, and life. www.linkedlearning.org

NAF is a national network that brings together the business and education communities to provide high school students access to opportunities that will help make them college, career, and future ready. NAF works with high-need communities to transform the high school experience through an educational design that includes industry-specific curricula, work-based learning experiences, and relationships with business professionals, culminating in a paid internship. NAF academies fit within and enhance school systems, allowing NAF to become an integral part of a plan for higher achievement at a low cost. NAF academies focus on one of five career themes: finance, hospitality and tourism, information technology, engineering, and health sciences. www.naf.org

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do. www.aft.org

