

CTE Excellence and Equity Act

Introduced by Senators Tim Kaine, Rob Portman, Tammy Baldwin, Shelley Moore Capito, Todd Young

Equipping all students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and enter the 21st century job market is fundamental to the current K-12 education system. Providing students with an engaging experience that is relevant to the workforce and integrates partnerships with industry and higher education is unfortunately lacking in many of today's high schools. Although the nation is currently graduating 82% of all high school students, far too many students are unprepared for postsecondary education and the workforce:

- Nearly 80% of college instructors and 60% of employers indicate that public high schools fall short in preparing students for postsecondary education¹.
- A significant majority of college instructors report that students arrive at college with at least some gaps in their preparation².
- 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 advancement³.

Career and technical education (CTE) is often overlooked in discussion on increasing relevancy and rigor in our nation's schools – despite the fact that a strong focus on academics is the cornerstone of high-quality CTE. When the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education conducted a four-year longitudinal study of 6,638 students in three large urban school districts in three states, they found that students participating in CTE programs or career pathways outperformed their peers on the number of credits they earned in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and AP classes, while also earning higher GPAs in their CTE classes.⁴

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

- involving employers as partners in program design, curriculum development, program evaluation, and assessment of student work;
- integrating rigorous academics with career and technical education in courses that meet state university admissions requirements;
- supporting integrated professional development between core academic teachers and CTE teachers;
- establishing credit-transfer agreements between participating local educational agencies and institutions of higher education 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;
- providing integrated student support that address the comprehensive needs of students such as incorporating accelerated and differentiated learning opportunities supported by evidence-based strategies for special student populations.

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

² Ibid.

³ Ibid

⁴ Castellano, M., Sundell, K. E., Overman, L. T., Richardson, G. B., and Stone, J. R. III., April, 2014, "Rigorous tests of student outcomes in CTE programs of study: Final report," Louisville, KY: National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, <http://www.nrccte.org/resources/publications/rigorous-tests-student-outcomes-cte-programs-study-final-report>.