



Information and Talking Points on CTE for Public Policy Committee

WHAT IS CTE?

Career Technical Education (CTE) is the umbrella term applied to hands-on skill classes such as woodworking, auto shop, metalworking, culinary, cosmetology, and more. These classes used to be referred to as vocational classes, but the name was changed to clarify that CTE is helping students build pathways to careers of their choice. Statistics demonstrate that CTE students have **fewer drop outs, more engagement, higher graduation numbers, and more transition to real jobs after graduation** than non-CTE students.

WHAT IS STEM?

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) education focuses primarily on the sciences. In the past few decades, there has been an increased emphasis on encouraging students to pursue STEM education through higher education, such as colleges and universities. Many involved in STEM learning now are having an “aha!” moment, acknowledging that CTE classes can incorporate STEM learning. This is a window of opportunity for companies in need of skilled tradesmen to have a presence, to push for CTE funding, and to talk about integrating skilled trades with academic coursework to maximize career opportunities.

THE IMAGE PROBLEM

Both CTE and skilled trade jobs suffer from an image problem. We all need to take every opportunity to share and explain that jobs in skilled trades have changed during the past few decades; they are technology driven (machinery and software), innovative, and lucrative. The term “advanced manufacturing” is a good buzz-word to use for our industry as that term has positive connotations with education and legislators. We need to emphasize that plants are bright, clean places to work with material handling that takes away the image of repetitive, backbreaking labor. These are not unskilled factory jobs; they are good jobs with good salaries, and they are waiting to be filled. Young people have the potential to rise quickly through the ranks as boomers retire.

NWFA APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

NWFA has created an apprenticeship program for the wood flooring professional approved by the Department of Labor. NWFA has developed the basic standards for work process and related instruction and is piloting the program with companies in Missouri. All member companies will be able to use this program to employ and train apprentices. Upon completion of the apprenticeship program, the individual earns a DOL certificate that is recognized in all 50 states and will also be eligible for NWFA Certification.

THE CARL D. PERKINS ACT

The Carl D. Perkins Career Technical Education Act is one of the longest-standing government funds for CTE. The purpose of the Act is “to provide individuals with the academic and technical skills needed to succeed in a knowledge-and skills-based economy.” Funding has been negatively impacted in the last several years due to federal budget cuts. “The Perkins Act is crucial to promoting America’s economic competitiveness. An educated and highly-skilled workforce provides direct benefits to American



employers and strengthens the economy through productivity and innovation. Perkins funding is essential to connecting our nation’s educators with the resources they need to serve millions of CTE students nationwide” (Association for Career Technical Education, ACTEonline.org). **Encourage legislators to fight for this funding – to restore it and increase it!**

There also are various funding initiatives to support apprenticeships at the community college level. **Ask that legislators support the work of the Dept. of Labor regarding apprenticeships.** When CTE students have a place to go after high school, it gives the K12 system better reason to support CTE. The funding focuses on partnerships between employers, labor organizations, training providers, community colleges, local and state governments, the workforce system, non-profits, and faith-based organizations.

LEGISLATORS LEADING THE CTE CHARGE

Glenn Thompson (R-PA), co-chair of the CTE Caucus in the House, has been championing CTE – sometimes as the sole Republican voice. His co-chair is Jim Langevin (D-RI). There also is a Senate CTE Caucus, created “to improve and strengthen access to CTE programs nationwide so that students graduate with the skills needed for success in college and careers” (ACTE magazine, *Techniques*). The Senate co-chairs are Rob Portman (R-OH), and Tim Kaine (D-VA); two more co-chairs have been added, Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Johnny Isakson (R-GA).

SkillsUSA

NWFA partners with and supports SkillsUSA, the largest Career Technical Education student organization in the nation, which encourages students who are considering careers in the skilled trades. NWFA is working to organize a wood flooring competition in the state of Missouri. This competition will then be replicated in other states on a national level. SkillsUSA also visits Capitol Hill each year, as does ACTE and its members.

ACTE

ACTE is the Association for Career & Technical Education. It advocates for support of CTE at the federal level. NWFA participates in their regional and annual shows as exhibitors and speakers, and also exhibits in their Career Pavilion, which reaches more than 5,000 CTE educators. NWFA also will be contributing to their industry blog, which is accessible to nearly 30,000 CTE educators.