



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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Career and tech ed key to workforce development

For too long, parents, students and educators have thought of career and technical education as a second-class education. Many are of the opinion that a 4-year degree is the only pathway to becoming a productive citizen. This belief has led to many students missing out on opportunities that could have led to careers that pay a middle class wage or above. It has also led to many students racking up a lot of debt and obtaining four-year degrees that do not lead to careers. The unemployment and underemployment rates for students with a four-year degree have been increasing significantly in recent years.

Employers tell us there are huge gaps between what is needed in the workforce and the skills that US workers have. There are more than 5 million jobs unfilled in the U.S. due to employers not being able to find workers with the skills needed for the jobs.

In Kentucky, it is time to act.

Over the past two years, Kentucky has been involved in several initiatives that helped us work toward a strategic plan to elevate and integrate career and technical education. A [national task force report](#) from the Council of Chief State School Officers, a [Kentucky-specific study](#) of career and technical education by the Southern Regional Education Board, a [gap analysis](#) of the Kentucky career and technical program compared against leading states and countries that was completed by the National Center for Education and the Economy, and a [financial study](#) completed by Miller and Associates. The financial study was presented to the Kentucky Board of Education this week and there were seven specific recommendations.

1. Base funding for Career and Technical Education on state goals and business and industry needs.
2. Convene a committee to explore ways of funding state operated and locally operated centers equally.
3. Provide adequate funding for CTE in order to accomplish state determined priorities.
4. Create a proactive, intentional process of funding large equipment purchases and maintaining and/or upgrading current equipment.
5. Allow locally operated centers and schools to set a budget for the entire school year.
6. Consider an additional per-pupil funding formula weight tied to state-prioritized occupational and program areas based on state and regional industry needs.
7. Explore CTE performance funding.

The next steps for the CTE plan include the development of draft legislation titled the Kentucky Economic Competitiveness Act. The Education Commission of the States is supporting us in looking at model legislation from other states. We will provide a brief overview of the CTE work to date at the July meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education. The Kentucky Board of Education will review the outline for the draft legislation at the August meeting.

Finally, we will be working with advisory groups over the next three months to finalize cost estimates related to the recommendations above. A statewide committee that has been working with the National Governor's Association on workforce and economic development issues will provide support and coordination for this work.

EVERY state in the nation is working on workforce development and economic development issues. Jobs and improving the quality of life for our citizens are at stake. I feel confident that Kentucky will rise to the top based on our history of collaboration and innovation.

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Education Commissioner