

Editor's Note

Valerie Norville
Editorial Director

Schools in many states and districts can boast that career and technical education for their rising graduates is not their parents' CTE. Where students were once tracked into one path or another, there is broad agreement that every student needs academic and technical skills to prepare them for life and every student needs to plant their feet on a career pathway during their K-12 journey.

Kicking off this issue, Kathleen Mathers of the Education Strategy Group paints a national landscape of burgeoning opportunities for readying students for the world of work. As states expand career pathways that students can embark on before they leave high school, state boards of education have a role to play in ensuring these programs are high quality and truly reach all students. She lists four actions for state boards to take.

Challenges remain, and this issue lays out several. In their piece on equity in CTE, Austin Estes and Brianna McCain at Advance CTE conclude, "With the right policies, systems, and attitudes, CTE can be a powerful tool for closing achievement and opportunity gaps." To overcome a past in which schools often enrolled minority and low-income students in CTE courses aimed at low-wage employment, state boards should examine disaggregated program data, talk to diverse students and parents, and remove barriers to program access, they write.

Amber Northern and Michael Petrilli give us a rundown on a recent Fordham Institute study that asks how states and districts can determine which CTE course enrollment in high school aligns with the work available in local labor markets. The study concluded that state boards and agencies can do more to make

CTE courses more relevant to the local employers hiring local graduates.

Wanda Monthey details the different types of apprenticeship programs available for students, and she says state boards should encourage these options for on-the-job learning. Kathy D'Antoni of the West Virginia Department of Education writes that the state expanded its work-based learning by marshaling cross-agency and business support for a program that transformed traditional CTE classrooms into student-led companies.

Alex Perry of Foresight Law + Policy lays out the timeline for developing state plans for implementing a key federal law, the reauthorized Perkins Act (aka Perkins V), and he suggests ways state boards might best take advantage of the opportunity it represents.

Rachel Wise, chair of NASBE's board and herself a former CTE educator, teams up with state chief Matt Blomstedt and Ryan Foor to tell Nebraska's CTE story. They see the development of their state plan under Perkins V as an opportunity to knit together ongoing initiatives to expand students' career options into a guiding vision for career education in the state.

Finally, we have bottled the great conversation that Scott Stump, Rachel Wise, and Byron Ernest had during NASBE's 2019 legislative conference. Stump describes the opportunity for states to make hay with the flexibility and alignment created by the triple reauthorization of Perkins, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act. "We need to make sure that pathways that empower individuals to thrive are not just there but are equally valued," he said. ■

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