



NEWSLETTER

Why Do I Have to Learn This?

THE OFTEN ASKED QUESTION, “WHY DO I HAVE TO LEARN THIS?” IS HARDLY UNIQUE TO THE CURRENT GENERATION OF STUDENTS. WHEN STUDENTS ASK THAT QUESTION, IT IS TELLING EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE NOT ENGAGED IN THEIR CLASSES; NOR ARE THEY FINDING THEM RELEVANT OR MEANINGFUL TO THEIR LIVES. WITH THIS ISSUE OF THE *NEWSLETTER*, WE LOOK AT A STRATEGY THAT ADDRESSES THOSE CONCERNS OF ENGAGEMENT AND RELEVANCE. ONE OF THE NATIONAL DROPOUT PREVENTION CENTER’S 15 EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES IN DROPOUT PREVENTION IS CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION OR CTE. WE HOPE YOU WILL LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW CTE IS PLAYING A MAJOR ROLE, NOT ONLY IN PREVENTING DROPOUTS, BUT IN SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVES NATIONWIDE.



CTE does provide an educational environment that addresses three areas of concern in dropout prevention: engagement, achievement, and transitions.

Lack of student engagement is a major cause of dropout. Creating learning experiences where students are able to connect to the curriculum is one of the challenges schools are facing today. CTE provides a framework for courses that provide students with meaningful learning experiences. When students have ideas for their future careers in mind, the courses that relate to these goals suddenly become more interesting and motivating. Students begin to go beyond the cursory approach to learning—just getting by—to really delving into the curriculum and its applications.

This leads to the next component of dropout prevention afforded by CTE. Students who drop out tend to have low academic grades and test scores, related to their lack of engagement, perhaps, and interest in what is happening in school. When increased engagement occurs, improved academic achievement is not far behind. Students will come to school more;

spend more time on their classwork; apply what they are learning to activities that are important to them; and consequently their achievement as seen in grades and test scores rises.

Transitions between middle and high school, and then to postsecondary options, have traditionally been difficult times for students, and 9th grade has often been a place where students drop out. With the CTE framework of career planning and goal setting, suddenly transitions become facilitated in a way that supports the students’ growth. With planning beginning in middle school, a pathway to the future helps students understand where they are headed and provides purpose for them. These are critical factors in dropout prevention, and they foster resilience in students as well.

Once considered a form of education for only some students, CTE is becoming a framework for all students, whether their career pathways are in engineering, medicine, cosmetology, or teaching. All students benefit from a sense of direction, and with CTE they can find both the relevance they seek, the rigor that is

in today’s challenging world, and the relationships they need (e.g., through the strong counseling component) to be successful in school and life.

This issue of the *Newsletter* begins to highlight much of what is going on in Career and Technical Education. Career planning is shown at McCormick High School in South Carolina. Dropout recovery with CTE is illustrated in the Gateway to Success program in Cincinnati, Ohio. Resources including a book review on integrating academic and technical education, one of the challenges of CTE, is included along with some excellent Web sites for further information. An examination of the research in CTE and dropout prevention is the focus of Alisha Hyslop’s article, and Jim Stone, the director of the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, makes the case for CTE being an evidence-based solution to dropout prevention.

We appreciate the collaborative assistance of Sabrina Kidwai of the Association of Career and Technical Education in providing the articles for this issue.

2008 NDPN Crystal Star Winners

AdvancePath Academics, Inc. provided generous support for the 2008 NDPN Crystal Star Awards program.

Program Winners



Clark Pleasant Academy

Clark Pleasant Academy in White-land, IN, offers a fresh alternative for students on their educational path toward graduation. The mission of the Academy is to provide an opportunity for students to earn a high school diploma in order to have a better life. The target population is students who

have dropped out and agreed to re-enroll in high school or students who are failing in a traditional program and have expressed a serious intent to drop out.



Simon Youth Foundation
Education Resource Centers

Simon Youth Foundation (SYF) is dedicated to providing at-risk and underserved youth the extra support needed to succeed in their education and throughout their lives. SYF's work is focused on two issues: the national dropout rate and college access. Through its Education Resource Center (ERC) and scholarship programs, SYF is currently celebrating its 10th anniversary of service to youth.

Individual Winners



Dr. Sandy Addis, Executive Director of Pioneer Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) in Cleveland, GA



Dr. Judith Ann Pauley and Mr. Joseph F. Pauley, Process Communications, Inc., Potomac, MD



Mr. Brian Sites, alternative teacher at River's Edge High School, Richland (WA) School District.



Star Academy Program™

The award-winning Star Academy Program™ is a school-within-a-school designed to serve the needs of disengaged 7th, 8th, and/or 9th grade students in a safe, happy, and productive environment. Students complete a rigorous one-year academic program and learn coping skills as well as life skills that eventually enable them to successfully complete 10th through 12th grades in a regular school environment.

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network salutes the individual and program winners of the National Dropout Prevention Network's Crystal Star Awards of Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention.



National
Dropout Prevention
Center/Network

NEWSLETTER

The *National Dropout Prevention Newsletter* is published quarterly by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. Your comments are always welcome. Please address mail to:

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Network Notes

2008 NDPN Distinguished Leadership Award



■ John Murray, Chairman and CEO of AdvancePath Academics, Inc., has served the National Dropout Prevention Network in an exemplary fashion since joining the NDPN Board in 2003. In his role as Board Chair, he has led the NDPC/N through a period of long-range strategic planning, laying the groundwork for the challenges that lie ahead in solving our national dropout issue. Through AdvancePath Academics, John has provided significant financial support for many of the conference activities of the Network. Rarely has an individual committed so much personal time and energy to the purposes of the Network.

Because of this extraordinary record of commitment, John Murray was chosen to receive the 2008 Crystal Star Award of Excellence for Distinguished Leadership and Service to the Network. We congratulate John on this achievement, even as we also extend our appreciation to him for his years of service to the Board.

Solutions Begins Second Year

■ The NDPC/N monthly radio webcast, *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis*, enters its second year. Thanks to the continued support of Penn Foster, this successful new, and free, professional development program continues to bring a wide variety of national experts on a host of issues to a worldwide audience through the Internet. Recent programs have included comprehensive planning, family engagement, and middle college high schools, and these programs

are archived for your professional development use.

Go to www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast to find the current and all past programs.



Co-host Sam Drew interviews Network member, Deb Dillon of Fargo, ND

Fifty Years and Counting!

■ Fifty years ago this January, the Director of the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, Dr. Jay Smink, stepped into a classroom for the first time as a teacher in Industrial Arts and Drafting, in a new junior-senior high school in Central Pennsylvania. The room he entered was totally vacant, so he had to build the entire program—the curriculum, the equipment and materials, the instructional strategies—and this first challenge became one of many over the years—in his mind, always a wonderful opportunity to be creative.



Jay Smink in an industrial arts classroom.

Industrial Education was part of what was called in those days Vocational Education. Now known as Career and Technical Education (CTE), this educational approach is high on the list of effective dropout prevention strategies.

Many things have changed over the years, but for Jay much has

remained the same—his belief in the importance of CTE and his desire for new challenges and opportunities to build new programs. It is why Jay came to Clemson University over 20 years ago, to help build the new National Dropout Prevention Center into what it has become today—the nation's leader in dropout prevention.

NDPN Board News

■ Stuart Udell, CEO of Penn Foster, has been elected to be the new Chair of the NDPN Board. Joining him as officers are Andrea Foggy-Paxton, Program Officer for Education for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as Vice Chair; and Mary Jo McLaughlin, principal and director of the Academy of Creative Education, as Recording Secretary.



Pictured with outgoing Chair, John Murray, are Mary Jo McLaughlin, Stuart Udell, and Andrea Foggy-Paxton.

The Network also welcomes to the Board the following: Martha Barrett of Bank of America; Diane Castellbuono of the Pennsylvania Department of Education; Michael Kaufman of Specialized Educational Services, Inc.; Susan Siegel of Communities In Schools, Inc.; and Denine Torr of Dollar General Corporation.



NDPC/N Executive Director, Jay Smink, and Georgia Governor, Sonny Perdue, at the 20th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference in Atlanta, GA

Program Profile

Effective Freshman Transition for School Improvement

by David Livingston, John Greene, and Lindy Stahlman

The South Carolina General Assembly enacted the Education and Economic and Development Act in 2005. This act requires that students be provided with academic and real-world problem-solving skills.

The administration of McCormick High School made an analysis of issues that needed to be addressed concerning graduation rate and passage rate on high-stakes testing after receiving its 2004 report card from the South Carolina State Department of Education in October of 2005, in which it was graded as below average.

McCormick High School is a rural school that serves all of the high school students in the county. It has a population of 257 students in which 88% are minorities and 88% qualify to receive free or reduced lunch.

Research was conducted to determine what type of program could be implemented within the high school to enable students to make connections between real-world problems, increase academic achievement, promote the development of reading and mathematical skills, and increase high school graduation. The decision was made to implement a daily advisory program in the middle of the school year for all students beginning January 2006 and a freshman academy, which would begin in August of 2006.

The *Career Choice* curriculum was adopted, and textbooks and consumable workbooks were purchased for use in the freshman academy. The principal sent four teachers to attend a two-day *Career Choices* workshop in Atlanta, Georgia, for the teachers who would work in the freshman academy. The decision was made that the curriculum for the sophomore, junior, and senior advisory classes would build upon the curriculum from *Career Choices*, enabling the students

to become career focused and career committed while promoting academic achievement leading to effective decision making.

All students in the state of South Carolina are required to pass the High School Assessment Program (HSAP). The spring 2006 score for students taking the test for the first time in the areas of English Language Arts and mathematics were used to establish a baseline since this group had not participated in the yearlong *Career Choices* curriculum. The passage rate for the first attempt in the area of English Language was 84.9% while mathematics was 63.5%. The 2007 students were the first group of students who had yearlong exposure to the *Career Choices* curriculum. The results of data from this year showed growth in English Language Arts with a passage rate of 93.4% while mathematics was 66.7%. The 2008 students were the second group of students with yearlong exposure to the *Career Choices* curriculum. The results of data from this year showed a passage rate of 91.5% for English Language Arts while mathematics was 83.3%.

Year	English Language Arts	Mathematics
2006	84.9%	63.5%
2007	93.4%	66.7%
2008	91.5%	83.3%

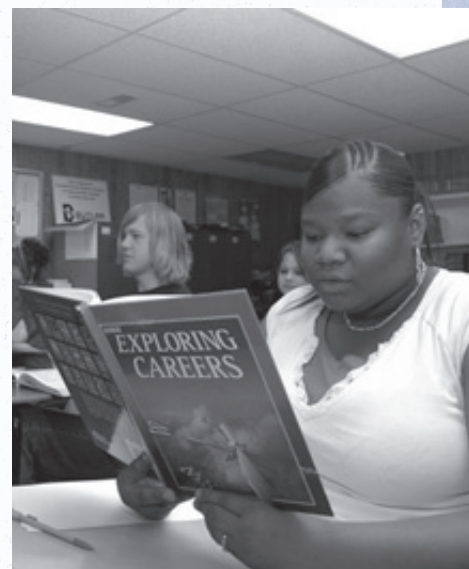
The graduating class of 2006 was used as a baseline to measure improvement in retaining students in high school until they have earned a high school diploma versus dropping out of school. The students in

the classes of 2007 and 2008 did not have the opportunity to participate in the yearlong *Career Choices* curriculum; however, the advisory programs of these classes were designed on the bases of the skills and activities of *Career Choices*.

Year	Graduation Rate
2006	73.3%
2007	89.3%
2008	87.8%

We have established baseline data in the freshman academy from the state required test in English Language Arts, physical science, and algebra 1, which was mandated in 2007. This data will be evaluated when our second group of freshmen take these exams in May.

—David Livingston
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Program Profile

Gateway to Success Offers Students an Opportunity

by Terry Meinking, Debra Frantz, and Nelda Sheafer

Having a high school diploma is growing in importance due to the advances in technology that have transformed the labor market into one that demands highly-skilled workers with, at minimum, a high school diploma. Nearly one-third of the fastest growing occupations will require an associate's degree or a postsecondary vocational certificate, according to a 2006 Bureau of Labor Statistics report. America is facing a dropout crisis, and Great Oaks wanted to develop a program that caters to students and helps them earn a diploma.

The Gateway to Success program began in 2006 to provide dropouts with an alternative option to earn a diploma and partnered with the University of Cincinnati's Clermont College. Since the program started, it has expanded to Cincinnati State Technical and Community College and Southern State Community College. The program's main goal is for enrolled students to obtain their high school diplomas. The program is computer-based, and students complete coursework in a self-paced environment using online resources, software, and materials aligned to state standards.

Classes are held on the college campuses and are open to 18–21-year-olds who have been out of high school for at least a year and whose class has already graduated. Students are able to attend class from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Fridays, in order to meet the diverse needs of the student population. Because students work at their own pace, they can enroll at any time during the year, under the stipulation that they attend a minimum of 15



hours per week and maintain regular attendance. It provides students an opportunity to put in their hours after working full-time jobs during the day or to attend specific days when they are able to secure child care or transportation. Some coursework can be completed at home.

One unique aspect of the Gateway to Success program is that students can actually earn diplomas from the high school they had attended rather than a GED. This means, though, that the student must meet the graduation requirements of their school district. When students enter the program, they take an assessment of their current skills and counselors review the student's high school transcript to determine which credits are needed. The students develop Individualized Gradation Plans (IGP) to ensure that every class they take counts towards graduation. Guidance counselors also work with students' IGPs to help them make a transition into postsecondary programs.

The majority of coursework that is offered online is supplemented by assignments from the program's teachers to meet state standards for awarding credit. Mastery testing is used to allow students to move more quickly through coursework. Students can also get a jump-start on postsec-

ondary education, taking dual enrollment courses in areas relevant to future career interests. The program receives strong support from the local school districts, which award the high school diplomas.

Gateway to Success is funded by Ohio's Career-Based Intervention Program, a program for youth who are identified as disadvantaged and have barriers to achieving academic and career success. About 60% of the students in Gateway to Success are male, and many had attendance

issues, discipline issues, or problems at home that led them to leave school. These students often did not feel comfortable or welcome at school.

During the program's first year, approximately 50 students participated and almost 70% of the program's participants who took the Ohio Graduation Test passed on the first try. More than 260 students are currently enrolled in the Gateway to Success program, 52 students have graduated from the program, with 12 additional students earning their GEDs. Of those students who have graduated from the program, 21 are currently in postsecondary classes.

Before entering the program, many of these students didn't believe they were going to finish high school, and they are now in college. The Gateway to Success program provides students with the flexibility, career guidance, and environment to accomplish their goals. If you would like more information on the Gateway to Success program, please feel free to visit [http://www.greatoaks.com/pages/-5130/-](http://www.greatoaks.com/pages/-5130/).

—Terry Meinking
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Book Review

Teaching for Understanding through Integration of Academic and Technical Education, 1996. Gene Bottoms and Deede Sharpe, Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta, GA [Eric Document ED409291]

One of the highest rated series on the PBSKIDS television network is “Bob the Builder.” In each episode, “Can we build it? Yes we can!” is Bob’s rallying call, as he inspires his fun-loving machine team to get the job done. Bob is a leader prepared with the right tools—teamwork and a positive attitude—for overcoming any obstacle. As they follow their “Big Plan,” Bob encourages his team to take pride in their work and the great results they accomplish together.

In their book, *Teaching for Understanding through Integration of Academic and Technical Education*, veteran educators Gene Bottoms and Deede Sharpe can be considered “Bob the Builders” for high school success. The authors offer “Big Plans” to motivate educational teams to increase students’ understanding, raise their achievement, and equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and further education.

Based on the experiences of the Southern Regional Education Board’s (SREB) High Schools That Work initiative, this book is a blueprint for introducing teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, and community representatives to research findings and strategies designed to support the integration of academic and technical studies. In the blue-colored sections, high school sites that feature successful team teaching, short-term projects, long-term and capstone senior projects, student portfolios, and thematic units are profiled. Tables and charts serve as valuable resources. Alternating with these site-based examples are instructional theory and statistical data designed to help educational teams answer four basic questions concerning academic and technical integration: What is integrated learning? Why integrate? What conditions must exist to support integrated learning? and Where do you begin?

In the can-do spirit of “Bob the Builder,” Bottoms and Sharpe have laid the foundation for your educational team to tap into its leadership and problem-solving skills. Following this blueprint, your team can design and build to completion innovative projects integrating academic and technical education for student success.

*Susan C. Bantang, Academy Coordinator
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Also Recommended:

Issue Brief: Career and Technical Education’s Role in Dropout Prevention and Recovery, 2008, Association for Career and Technical Education.

This *Issue Brief* from ACTE explores the critical role that career and technical education plays in dropout prevention and recovery. High quality career and technical education can help more students persist in and complete high school by preparing them for the postsecondary education and training that will be critical to future success by increasing student engagement, building positive relationships, and providing innovative delivery methods.

Resources

Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE)

ACTE is the largest national education association dedicated to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for careers. www.acteonline.org

National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRC-CTE)

NRC-CTE is the primary agent for generating scientifically based knowledge, dissemination, professional development, and technical assistance to improve career and technical education (CTE) in the United States. www.nrccte.org/

Career Aisle is a feature on the South Carolina Department of Education and SC ETV Web site. Videos and other resources have been created to enhance career guidance and counseling. <http://knowitall.sctev.org/careeraisle/index.cfm>

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)

SREB is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that helps government and education leaders in its 16 member states work together to advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region. www.sreb.org/

Solutions Radio Webcast

“Connected Counseling: Connecting Students to Success” with Kitty Johnson of St. Paul Public Schools. This program is found in the Archives. www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast

Events

March 9-11, 2009 Arlington, VA
ACTE National Policy Seminar
www.acteonline.org/nps.aspx

April 19-22, 2009 Phoenix, AZ
The National Forum on Native American Dropout Prevention Strategies
www.dropoutprevention.org

November 19-21, 2009 Nashville, TN
2009 Convention & Career Tech Expo
www.acteonline.org/convention.aspx

CTE's Role in Dropout Prevention and Recovery

by Alisha Hyslop

According to the ACTE *Issue Brief* "CTE's Role in Dropout Prevention and Recovery," high quality career and technical education (CTE) can help more students persist in and complete high school, preparing them for the postsecondary education and training that will be critical to future economic successes.

Dropping Out of High School and the Place of Career and Technical Education, an October 2005 report by the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, found that students who entered high school at a normal or younger age had a decreased risk of dropping out of high school as they added CTE courses to their curriculum, up to a point at which they were taking one CTE course for every two academic courses. The report suggests that this mix of CTE and academic courses lowers the dropout rate for students because the course balance offers them a broader array of experiences that can identify and encourage pathways to success.¹

Another study conducted in 1998 by the University of Michigan found that high-risk students are 8 to 10 times less likely to drop out in the 11th and 12th grades if they enroll in a career and technical program instead of a general program. The same study also reported that a quality CTE program can reduce a school's dropout rate by as much as 6%.² Students drop out of high school for a number of reasons, such as family problems, to find a job, substance abuse, or because they have fallen behind in their course taking or have received failing grades. However, another significant reason for dropping out is emerging. Many students lose interest and motivation in education because the curriculum does not seem to have a real-world application.

According to a recent report, *The Silent Epidemic*, surveys conducted with 16-24-year-old dropouts revealed that 47% said that they dropped out of high school because classes were not interesting. Furthermore, 69%

indicated that they did not feel motivated. Within both of these findings, the report states that respondents consistently noted how they felt that school did not seem relevant. For example, one student stated that "they make you take classes in school that you're never going to use in life."³

A 2006 poll of at-risk California 9th- and 10th-graders found that 6 in 10 respondents were not motivated to succeed in school. Of those students, more than 90% said they would be more engaged in their education if classes helped them acquire skills and knowledge relevant to future careers.⁴ Today's CTE offers students relevant learning experiences that answer the age old question "Why do I have to learn this?" while at the same time enhancing students' academic achievement and meeting industry needs.

Students also need to be known as individuals within the school community and be connected to their peers and to positive adult relationships in order to be successful in high school. In the *2006 High School Survey of Student Engagement*, 24% of students who have considered dropping out of high school cited the reason "No adults in the school cared about me."⁵

One of the leading efforts in building positive adult-student relationships is the growth of smaller learning communities. Smaller learning communities with a focus on CTE, often known as career academies, have been found to increase the attendance rate and the likelihood of staying in school for students who entered the programs at high risk of dropping out. In 2004, a study conducted by MDRC found that "Career academies significantly cut dropout rates and increase attendance rates, credits earned toward graduation, and preparation for postsecondary education." The career academy group's dropout rate was reduced by one-third from the rate for the non-academy group.⁶

Another core component of CTE is the long-standing existence of Career and Technical Student Organizations

(CTSOs) that engage students in co-curricular activities that are closely related to CTE classroom programs. Nearly 2 million young people involved in CTOSs work regularly with adult advisors. A recent study found that CTSO activities positively affect students' academic engagement, and the stronger the student's involvement, the better the results.⁷

The full *Issue Brief* is available from the Association for Career and Technical Education at www.aceonline.org.

Endnotes

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4. Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., "Report Findings Based on a Survey Among California Ninth and Tenth Graders," www.connectedcalifornia.org/downloads/irvine_poll.pdf.
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7. Stone, J., "Making the Case for CTE" (presentation at the ACTE National Policy Seminar, Washington, DC, March 2006).

—Alisha Hyslop,
Assistant Director of Public Policy
at the Association for Career
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Viewpoint

Your child is *less likely to graduate from high school than you were* according to the Education Trust. By their estimates, 1 in 4 youth drop out of high school. Other estimates place the figure closer to 1 in 3.

These are national averages. Some sub-groups, e.g., Hispanics, experience even higher dropout rates. Average state completion rates vary widely from 87% (NJ) to 57% (NV). Variability within states is similarly large. Baltimore County Maryland graduates 82% of its high school students; Baltimore City, only 39%.

One of the many challenges confronting high schools today, especially those in poor or urban communities, is the large number of entering 9th graders woefully unprepared for high school level work. This has led to interventions targeted at these youth, e.g., 9th grade academies, “double dosing” of core academics, among other interventions. Yet the evidence of effectiveness on these measures is, at best, limited; at worst, nonexistent.

There is, however, one intervention readily available to most American high schools that research has consistently shown reduces the

likelihood of dropping out: career and technical education (CTE). Over the past decade, the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education conducted studies that yielded convergent findings on the value of CTE participation to the high school experience of youth, especially regarding student retention.

In two of the studies, researchers found that a ratio of one CTE class for every two academic classes (i.e., math, science, English, social studies) was the optimal mix. While the effects were most profound for lower achieving students, there was a positive, significant effect for CTE participation for all students regardless of academic ability.

In another study, for 5 years researchers followed cohorts of 9th and 11th graders in high poverty communities that implemented different whole school reforms. The only consistent finding across all three sites was that regardless of high school attended, as the ratio of CTE courses to total courses increased, the probability of graduating from high school increased.

That is the good news.

The bad news is that the opportunity to participate in CTE may be on the decline. The school day and the school year is essentially a zero-sum game. As schools have ramped up credit requirements in traditional academics (e.g., four years of mathematics), opportunities for CTE have declined. The recent *Condition of Education* report published by the National Center on Educational Statistics shows a 17% decline in the average number of CTE credits earned by high school students. It is the only curricular area showing a decline.

Keeping youth engaged so that they can develop the academic and social skills required for successful adulthood is today’s critical education problem. CTE can be an evidence-based part of the solution.

—James R. Stone, III, Ed.D.

Director

National Research Center for
Career and Technical Education

The purpose of Viewpoint is to allow professionals to express their opinions about issues related to dropout prevention. The opinions expressed by these authors do not necessarily reflect those of the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network.

 National Dropout Prevention Center/Network

NEWSLETTER

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Permit No. 10
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