

PRINCIPLES FOR REAUTHORIZATION: THE PERKINS ACT



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Career and technical education (CTE) provides secondary students with engaging, relevant, and hands-on learning opportunities that lead to higher graduation rates and a range of post-secondary education and career options. CTE also prepares post-secondary students for careers and provides opportunities for degree and credential attainment.

A reauthorized *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act* should produce policies that create sustainable, high-quality technical programs and yield viable opportunities for students and communities. The federal government should serve as a partner to states to strengthen programs, encourage collaboration, and foster innovation. Updates to the law should be systemic, and resources should be targeted without compromising broad access to funds. On behalf of our members – more than three million teachers and education support professionals across the nation – and the students they serve, we offer these guiding principles to Congress for Perkins reauthorization:

- ▶ **All students should have access to high quality CTE programs, including nontraditional students.** The federal government plays a critical role in ensuring that all students – especially the most disadvantaged – have access to an education that will prepare them to succeed in the 21st century. Strengthening post-secondary readiness through an effective blend of college and career skills offers students a competitive edge. Perkins provisions should reinforce these strategies in addition to ensuring access to CTE programs to underserved and nontraditional students. Support also should be available for initiatives that offer early exposure to programs of study.
- ▶ **Students need real career pathways.** Increasingly, employers across the nation are stressing the need for well-trained workers to fill vacancies. The education and training supported by Perkins are vital to addressing the skills gap. Reauthorizing Perkins offers a new opportunity to foster collaboration among the business, labor, employment, and economic development sectors to produce meaningful programs of study and build cooperative data systems to track program success. Preparing students for their technical work of choice should also include an assurance of access to the most up-to-date equipment, student support services, and support for related certifications.
- ▶ **A comprehensive curriculum provides students with options and keeps them in school.** Educating our students is not a one-size fits-all proposition. Research shows that when students are engaged in school, they are less likely to drop out. While industry has pressing needs for skilled workers – particularly in the sectors of healthcare, technology, and advanced manufacturing – room exists for courses that include quality CTE programs as well as integrated arts education programs taught by certified arts specialists. In reauthorizing Perkins, care should be taken to not narrow support for programs that also may offer students careers in public service and emerging industries.

- ▶ **Strong programs require a strong pipeline of quality, credentialed, and experienced educators.** Teachers of record should be fully prepared and certified regardless of the subject matter. In renewing Perkins language for teacher recruitment and retention, it is essential that CTE instructors receive appropriate training in pedagogical practices and mentoring by experienced teachers. Provisions should also ensure that more CTE teachers are involved in decision-making activities, including program and curriculum design. Resources for professional development should also include training to improve instruction of students with disabilities and English-language learners.
- ▶ **State and local collective bargaining for school employees and faculty must be respected.** As educators' working conditions are students' learning conditions, everyone gains by addressing school and campus issues. Where teachers, education support professionals, and their employers are allowed to collaborate, improvements to student learning are the result.
- ▶ **The federal government should serve as a research and best practices clearinghouse.** In partnering with states, the federal government should house and support the most innovative CTE program strategies, which provide a wealth of knowledge about the intricacies of maintaining successful programs of study and related improvements to instructional practices.