

**AYPF Field Trip to Sacramento, California**  
**Infusing Career and Technical Education into High School Reform**

**November 12-14, 2008**

**Background**

Career Technical Education is receiving increased attention from policymakers, educators, and the public due to its pivotal potential to drive education reform and stimulate workforce and economic development. Faced with high school student dropout rates, escalating competition in the global labor market, and a pressing need for skilled workers, states are re-examining the role of CTE. As high school drop-out rates hold steady at 30 percent over the past 25 years, and it becomes evident that the public school system is failing to engage and graduate large numbers of youth, the need to engage students in their classes and coursework becomes critical. At the same time, employers are seeking workers for jobs that are increasingly technical, and that require postsecondary training, technical expertise, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as analytical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills. Congress has responded to this need by passing the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. The Perkins Act provides federal funding for career and technical education programs that provide students with multiple post secondary options and the skills necessary to compete in the workforce, whenever they choose to enter it.

**How is California addressing CTE?**

The Governor, Legislature, CA Department of Education, businesses, industry sector, community colleges, University of California and California State University systems, foundations, and the public are all examining CTE with a view to preparing students for college and the global labor market. Moving beyond traditional vocational education, the successful implementation of the new CTE relies on all of these various stakeholders working cooperatively to prepare students for lifelong education, long-term careers, and participation in the workplace. However, this very cooperation is itself a challenging prospect.

California's Legislature and Governor have worked together to pass important legislation that improves the academic rigor and quality of CTE programs and instructors, and provides funding to support these initiatives. The state has developed and adopted CTE Standards and Framework that raise the bar for CTE courses. The standards provide learning goals and 58 career pathways in 15 industry sectors. The framework is designed to provide structure in the planning and delivery of rigorous and relevant curriculum. The career pathways and industry sectors allow CTE programs to respond to the current labor market. Career Pathways provide courses that follow a sequence and teach students increasingly advanced technical skills as they complete each course. The division into industry sectors allows students to explore other career options within the field of their interest.

In addition to passing legislation, the challenge of adequately preparing teachers is being tackled. Currently, there are 19 education agencies approved by the state of California to provide CTE teacher preparation programs, including the California State University, the University of California, private and independent institutions of higher education, county offices of education, and school districts. Due to the difficulty of meeting credential requirements, California faces a shortage of CTE instructors. California's Career Technical Education Panel was created to provide program standards for the 19 education agencies and to increase the CTE teacher supply by rewriting credential

requirements. Further challenges include exploring ways to improve the professional development of CTE and academic teachers, who need to be able to work together effectively to meld career technical education with academic knowledge.

*Where* CTE is delivered is as important as who is teaching students. In CA, a variety of entities provide career technical education, ranging from middle and high schools to Regional Occupation Centers and Programs (ROCP), apprenticeships, community college programs, and foundation-led programs. Ensuring a bridge between secondary and postsecondary education is vital to the successful career paths of students/future employees, and California is working on improving the academic rigor of its CTE courses by aligning curricula with the University of California's A-G admission requirements. The University of California has approved 5,614 CTE courses as satisfying an A-G requirement, accounting for 20% of all CTE courses. Work remains regarding coordinating the different programs being offered, and ensuring alignment between secondary and post-secondary levels.