



LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

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Commission Urges New CTE Money be Used to Drive More Rigorous Curriculum

The Little Hoover Commission on Thursday urged the governor and the Legislature to create and implement a strategy for career technical education that evaluates, expands and replicates proven programs in school districts that demonstrate they can support them.

In its report, *Career Technical Education: Creating Options for High School Success*, the Commission recommends that new funds the state has earmarked for CTE be used to drive adoption of new, more rigorous curriculum to meet the state standards. The Commission recommends linking new money for CTE to requiring programs to evaluate outcomes so that the state can build on programs that have demonstrated success. Additionally, the Commission recommends the state foster the development and expansion of regional partnerships between education and workforce development and eliminate barriers that make it difficult for people to enter the CTE educational workforce.

California is struggling to keep more students in school long enough to graduate and, at the same time, ensure that California's students achieve sufficient academic proficiency so they are ready for college, postgraduate training or work. In this study, the Commission found promising evidence that CTE – in its modern, academically demanding form – can deliver an alternative approach to learning that can keep students engaged, help improve grade point averages and prepare students for success after high school.

The research, though compelling, is not comprehensive or conclusive. Far more is needed to determine what works in CTE classrooms to boost student outcomes. However, given the promising results and the fact that the current educational system is failing to serve many of California's students, the Commission supports lawmakers' recent push to expand CTE.

The state plans to invest nearly \$400 million in new money over the next seven years on CTE programs. An additional \$500 million was approved by voters in 2006 for bond-financed expenditures on CTE infrastructure.

"California should invest this money wisely, targeting those schools and districts that show they can implement proven career-themed education models," Commission Chairman Dan Hancock said. "The state should assist those schools willing to commit to developing curriculum that meets the state standards and that matches the demands of regional and state workforce needs. And the state should require those schools to measure outcomes, so the state can build on proven models."

In this study, the Commission found that CTE, formerly known as vocational education, is a term that can mean vastly different things to different people. The Commission concluded that, from the state's perspective, the definition is clear: CTE means education that combines academic rigor and real world relevance.

The California Department of Education developed, and the State Board of Education adopted, CTE standards and a CTE curriculum framework considered world-class by many. But the hard work is ahead – ensuring that CTE courses embed the state's new standards and that CTE teachers receive the professional development required to teach to the new CTE standards.

In *Career Technical Education: Creating Options for High School Success*, the Commission made the following recommendations:

Develop a strategy for CTE. California must develop a strategy to, in the short term, evaluate, expand and replicate proven programs in school districts that demonstrate they can support them. The state must use research results from its short-term strategy to create a long-term, evidence-based strategy to fully integrate academically rigorous career technical education into general education programs. Specifically, the Commission recommended that the state:

- Expand and replicate successful career-themed high schools and effective CTE programs.
- Expand the availability of academically rigorous CTE curriculum and align CTE courses into streamlined sequences.
- Improve the process to qualify CTE courses to meet college entry requirements.
- Simplify and integrate CTE funding.
- Measure results by fully implementing the longitudinal data system currently in development.

Align California's education, workforce development and economic development strategies. The state should use existing money, including federal money, to develop and expand strong, high-level regional business and education partnerships.

Expand the qualified CTE educational workforce. The state must implement policies to expand the ranks of CTE teachers, administrators and counselors. Specifically, the state should update and streamline the CTE teacher credentialing process and require all CTE grant recipients to provide structured staff development on rigorous CTE curriculum. Additionally, the state should implement programs and incentives to encourage mid-career and retiring professionals to enter the CTE teacher workforce and remove unnecessary barriers that bar them from entering the teacher workforce.

The Little Hoover Commission is a bipartisan and independent state agency charged with recommending ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of state programs. The Commission's recommendations are sent to the governor and the Legislature. To obtain a copy of the report, *Career Technical Education: Creating Options for High School Success*, contact the Commission or visit its Web site: www.lhc.ca.gov/lhc.html.