Expanding Middle School CTE

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Advance CTE

Why Focus on Middle Grades CTE?

Occupational identity

High school planning

New opportunity within Perkins V

Increased interest

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Strengthening CTE in the Middle Grades

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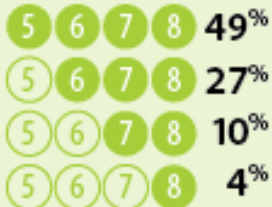
Perkins V* emphasizes career exploration and career development activities in the middle grades — a critical time for learners as they form their occupational identities.

90% of states allow local districts to use Perkins funds at the middle grade level

GRADES

5 6 7 8 **49%**
5 6 7 8 **27%**
5 6 7 8 **10%**
5 6 7 8 **4%**

States chose to prioritize middle grades Career Technical Education (CTE) in different ways:

20% Prioritizing in the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment or local application

18% Targeting Reserve Funds
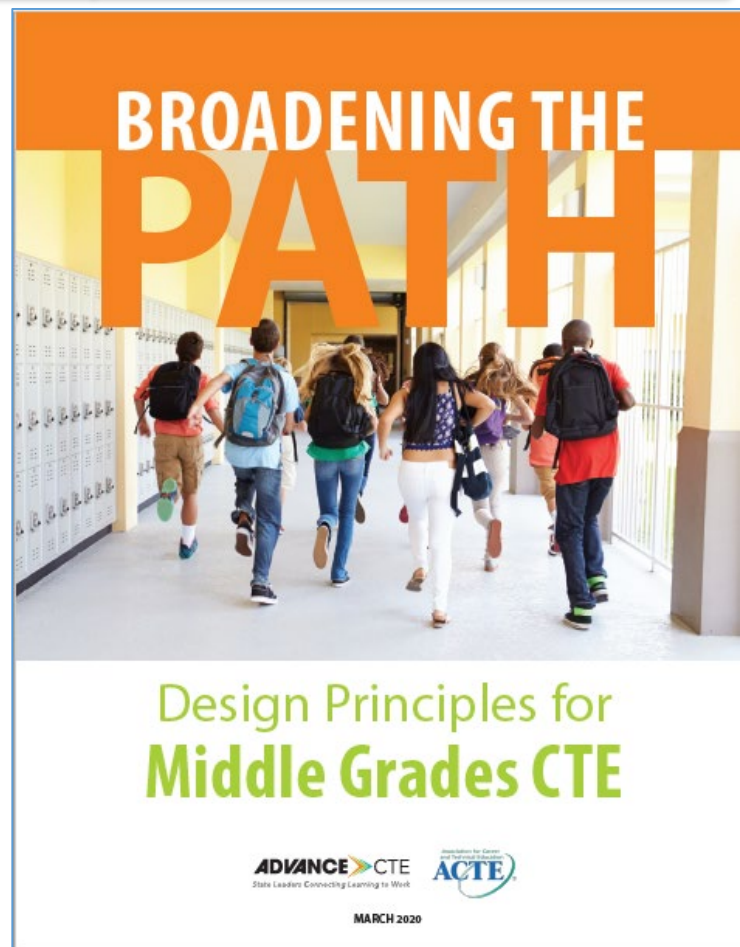
18% Developing standards or curriculum

14% Offering professional development or technical assistance

*Perkins V is the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act.

To learn more, visit **careertech.org/resource/state-cte-perkins-v** and **careertech.org/resource/broadening-path-middle-grades**

Shared Solutions Workgroup

- Convened by Advance CTE and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

- Comprised of national, state and local leaders

- Created several deliverables:
  - Broadening the Path: Design Principles for Middle Grades CTE
  - Blog series
  - State repository

BROADENING THE PATH

Design Principles for **Middle Grades CTE**

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ACTE
Association for Career and Technical Education

MARCH 2020

Theory of Action for Designing Middle Grades CTE

IF

states design middle grades CTE to:

1. Be equitable and inclusive of each student
2. Be anchored in careers
3. Be standards based
4. Be grounded in experiential and hands-on learning
5. Balance breadth and depth across the curriculum
6. Be integrated into the broader K-12 — or P-20 — career development system
7. Include intentional and meaningful employer engagement
8. Involve dedicated instructional time
9. Be communicated effectively to students and their families
10. Focus on student growth

AND

they apply these principles through the core programmatic elements of middle grades CTE:

- Standards, curriculum and assessment
- Course/activity structure and scheduling
- Career advisement
- Experiential learning
- Teachers and leaders
- Data and measurement

THEN

middle grades CTE students will:

- Gain awareness of and exposure to a wide array of careers
- Increase self-awareness and begin to form their potential occupational identity
- Develop employability skills
- Develop foundational technical skills as appropriate
- Be positioned to make more informed educational choices
- Transition to high school with an actionable plan for next steps

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Program Elements

Standards, Curriculum and Assessment

- Are there middle grades CTE standards that apply to all students or only to students who choose to enroll in specific courses?

- If there are standards, are they designed to support learners at different academic levels, and are they free from bias?

- Are the standards flexible enough to enable a mix of instructional strategies, including experiential or hands-on projects?

- Do the standards and related curriculum balance breadth of career exploration with depth of knowledge?

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Standards, Curriculum and Assessment Examples

- Nebraska has developed a Career Development Model and Toolkit that includes a library of lesson plans for PK-12 learners that can be filtered by each of the state's career readiness standards.

- Idaho partnered with Education Northwest to create standards by gathering input from stakeholders through a statewide survey, regional focus groups and research on middle grades standards in other states. This process has led to a set of standards organized around three questions—"Who am I?" (self-evaluation), "What's out there for me?" (career exploration) and "How do I get there?" (future planning).

- Peoria Unified School District in Arizona has a two-year curriculum for seventh- and eighth-grade students called Technology, Life & Careers (TLC), which includes:
  - Classroom- and lab-based instruction across multiple CTE subject areas
  - Career assessments and interest inventories
  - Work-based learning experiences and CTSOs.
  - The program flows into their state-mandated Education and Career Action Plans.

Course/Activity Structure and Scheduling

- Are CTE courses or experiences structured in such a way that all students have access — or do students have to make choices?

- Are there efforts to identify and eliminate barriers to participation and success in CTE courses or experiences?

- How are experiences/courses sequenced as part of a broader continuum?

- Is CTE content delivered through dedicated instructional time, or does it primarily occur outside of the school day?

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Course/Activity Structure and Scheduling Examples

- Maine is in the process of [developing standards](#) for middle school CTE and [awarding grant funding](#) to pilot a range of middle grades CTE delivery models.

- These pilot projects are developed in partnership among career and technical centers, CTE regions and area middle schools.
    - Some are school based
    - Some are afterschool programs
    - Some are focusing on career exploration and others are technical skills

Career Advisement

- Is career advisement provided to all students? Is it designed to provide individualized supports to students?

- Are career advisement activities sequenced as part of a broader continuum?

- Are career advisement activities prioritized within instructional time?

- Do counseling professionals get the supports, training and tools necessary to deliver effective career advisement?

- How are families appropriately involved in student career planning activities?

Career Advisement Examples

- Wisconsin's [Academic and Career Planning (ACP)](#) begins with helping students in grade 6 explore their interests and strengths and then guides them through career exploration and planning, with regular check-ins throughout middle and high school to recalculate plans as needed.

- North Carolina supports [career development coordinators](#) (CDC) across the state. Randolph County Schools has a full-time CDC at each high school who also support middle school CTE courses and course selection, work-based learning experiences, career exploration events, career and academic planning, and a career exploration and management course for ninth graders.

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Experiential Learning

- Are experiential learning activities, such as work-based learning and CTSOs, available to all middle grades students?

- Are there efforts to identify and eliminate barriers to access, participation and success in experiential learning?

- Are there clear standards for experiential learning opportunities?

- Is there a clear continuum of experiential learning experiences?

- How are employers involved in offering these experiences to students or supporting their work?

Experiential Learning Examples

- Denver Public Schools CareerConnect provides opportunities for K-8 learners to begin exploring their interests and passions, and how these connect to the world of work. One option, Spark Industry Introduction, enables students in grades 6-8 to visit workplaces, where they meet industry professionals and engage in hands-on projects.

- Utah has a one-credit College and Career Awareness course required for all students in grade 7 or 8 and uses project-based learning to help students explore high school, postsecondary and career options; investigate programs of study relevant to the Utah labor market; and develop workplace skills. It requires a minimum of six WBL experiences across multiple career fields, including career fairs, field studies, guest speakers and job shadows.

- CTSOs will be one of four key components in North Carolina's new middle grades CTE framework, which will be supported by 15-hour modules for CTE instructors that address career exploration, essential employability skills, basic concepts and nomenclature, and the integration of CTSO activities within programs.

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Teachers and Leaders

- Are there currently enough qualified and certified educators to deliver quality CTE content to all middle grades students?

- Do teachers and administrators have access to meaningful professional development?

- How can all teachers and staff in the school be involved in delivering quality middle grades career development experiences?

- How can new educators be recruited or resources used creatively to build capacity?

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Teachers and Leaders Examples

- To integrate grade 6-12 education and career planning more holistically across the education system, Georgia has developed a [Teachers-As-Advisors Framework](#).

- The framework is linked to the National Career Development Guidelines and includes goals organized by grade level and by three domains: career management; academic achievement, educational attainment and lifelong learning; and life skills.

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Data and Measurement

- How can data on the full range of students participating in CTE-related activities be collected?

- How might data already being collected within the broader educational system be used to evaluate middle grades CTE programs?

- What new data need to be collected, and how can burden of new data collection be reduced?

- What are the priority indicators of success for middle grades programs?

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Data and Measurement Examples

- Utah requires each local education agency to submit an [End of Year Summary](#) to describe how the College and Career Awareness requirement was delivered, how it was integrated with other subjects, what teachers were involved, how the required workplace skills were addressed and demonstrated by students, which CTSOs were explored and how, what WBL experiences were offered, and how teachers and counselors collaborated to advance middle grades students' college and career awareness.

- Delaware requires all teachers to bi-annually develop goals based on the state's framework for teaching. The state has created [specific guidance and tools for middle grades CTE teachers](#) on how they can establish clear, measurable goals that are aligned with their schools' focus and priorities and CTE performance data.

Self-Assessment

To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy:	Equitable and inclusive of each student?	RATING 1 2 3 4 (circle one)
Sample evidence	**1 = Emerging** → Middle grades CTE is optional or an elective for students not taking arts, music or additional academic coursework. → The middle grades CTE curriculum is narrowly designed and does not allow for much modification to account for different learning styles or regional economies. → Certain populations of students make up the majority of middle grades CTE participation.	**4 = Strong** → Every student is required to engage in middle grades CTE regardless of achievement level. → School schedules ensure that students do not have to choose between middle grades CTE exposure and pursuing other interests (such as fine arts) or receiving enhanced academic services. → Instruction is scaffolded to account for different learning styles. → Supports are provided to special populations to ensure their appropriate access, participation and success. → Professional development and supports around middle grades CTE instruction a

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Self-Assessment Report Out

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Chat Storm

- What is one action you will take coming out of this webinar?

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https://careertech.org/resource/broadening-path-middle-grades

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