

Written Testimony to Senate Education Committee

From: Jody Emerson, Superintendent/Director of the Central Vermont Career Center School District (CVCCSD)

January 26, 2023

Good afternoon, my name is Jody Emerson and I am the Superintendent of the Central Vermont Career Center School District, a role I was given when the district began last spring. Previously, I was the Associate Principal of U-32 for 8 years, and before that, a History teacher at Spaulding High School for 14 years, both sending schools to CVCC. My son is a graduate of the Randolph Technical Career Center and I, like many parents, watched my son bide his time until he could access the education that was most engaging to him.

Until my son attended a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, I didn't really know the opportunities that exist for students in CTE, despite working in education and 14 years of working in the same building as a CTE center. The number of Industry Recognized Credentials (IRCs) and college credits that students have access to, due in large part to Perkins requirements, don't get enough recognition. That said, there could be more opportunities for our kids. Of critical importance is to find a method of funding CTE that allows collaboration and doesn't continue to pit CTE centers against high schools and CTE centers against colleges. This opportunity to fund a pilot program (or 2) allowing VTC to collaborate with CTEs is a good start. While the work has been delayed, likely due to covid, we are able to again start looking ahead and planning for the future.

I have been fortunate enough to have a small pilot program taking place in my center. My Emergency Services Instructor, in collaboration with the VTC Paramedic program in Williston, took on 2 second year EMS students in his program. During their first year in the EMS program, students earn credits from Special Topics in Paramedicine/EMS-1710, and they can earn their EMT - B certification and a National Career Readiness Certificate. As seniors, they are often unable to access work based learning or co-op opportunities because they are not yet 18, so we provided an opportunity for two of our students to remain in the program and access VTC's paramedic program. The students are at CVCC Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and go to VTC on Thursday all day. They completed 12 credits of the program this fall by taking EMS 1111 Principles & Practices of Paramedicine I, and are taking EMS 1121 Principles & Practices of Paramedicine II this spring for another 12 credits. Our agreement with VTC in this situation was that we would pay for the credits beyond the Fast Forward voucher amount of 6 per semester at the Fast Forward rate and CVCC has directly paid VTC for this, which is not a sustainable option moving forward. These students will need to take the remaining course, EMS 1131 Principles & Practices of Paramedicine III during the summer and participate in a field internship to complete the program. The summer coursework starts in May, before the students have graduated from high school, we have not yet developed a plan for how the summer coursework might be funded (This is included in a Health Sciences partnership [proposal](#)). Often the students in our EMS or Medical Professions courses would like to jump into their career as high school students and a barrier to that has been their age. Though there are waivers for hazardous occupations for CTE students in many areas, that has not been the case in Health

Care and our students are not able to get on the job training until they are 18. This barrier could be eliminated by dropping the age to 17.

Our ability to collaborate will enhance the education of our students and support workforce development. Which brings me to other thoughts I've had over the last few years. Are there ways to strengthen CTE pathways by partnering with our sending schools? Is it time to let go of the industrial revolution model of high school and strengthen the interest based models that exist? How might we truly ensure that all students have access to rigorous and relevant training for career and college readiness? Our communities and industries will be strengthened if we work together to build pathways to CTE in our middle and high schools to provide opportunities for experiences that help students to determine their path to career and college. It will invigorate, the Vermont workforce for us to work together to open doors for students in CTE to achieve an associates degree while in high school. If we develop these opportunities for students, we diminish the amount of costs they face should they continue with their college education and/or we strengthen their career preparation.

Again I think of my son's experience. He attended the Diesel program for 2 years at RTCC and then was accepted to and attended the University of Northwestern Ohio - there are multiple reasons why he left our state - his dream is to work in NASCAR (he has been), his goal was to get as much hands on training as possible and UNOH offered that while his perception of VTC was that he would be required to do a lot more "book work" and general education courses (it really is about the sales pitch). However, he soon learned that students from other states are able to access programming earlier and for longer in Technical High Schools and are then, often through articulation agreements, able to receive credit for their high school coursework and move beyond the basic first year courses - courses he was forced to take because he didn't have the same opportunity in VT and courses that he found boring because he had already done all of those things as a high school junior and senior. Currently Vermont doesn't allow Technical High Schools, students graduate from their sending schools. Changing that law could help us to open up regional Technical High Schools that allow us to meet the demand for CTE and ensure our students get the same opportunities as their peers across the country.

Last year as a new CTE Director I heard our representative from the Agency of Education state that students who attend CTE tend to stay in Vermont. When asked if there was evidence of that, the response was that there likely was and I believe our own data could also show that. By providing students with opportunities to connect with the Vermont State University system, it is likely our students will stay in Vermont whether choosing college or career immediately after graduation. CVCC students work in Vermont as Bakers, Chefs, Electricians, Plumbers and HVAC Technicians, Mechanics, Certified medical assistants (and this year phlebotomists), EMTs (and this year paramedics). We also have students who take part in Building Trades, Digital Media Arts programming, Natural Resources.

By partnering with post secondary institutions, we can engage students in a college right here at home just as we do in our Coop program when we place students in jobs as seniors in high

school and they build their skills in a local company making connections within their community for a lifetime in the Vermont workforce.

Career and Technical Education Funding is part of ACT 127 and the Vermont Association of CTE Directors (VACTED) expects that the report from APA Consulting in early March will recommend a new formula for supporting CTE. Here is [our stance on Act 127](#).