



MEMORANDUM

TO: Representative Sharpe, Chair, House Committee on Education
Representative Botzow, Chair, House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

FROM: Sherry Lussier, Ed.D., Director, GMTCC

SUBJECT: Testimony on An Act Relating to Career and Technical Education

DATE: April 15, 2016

1) How do we facilitate better pathways from secondary school to trade certificates of value?

As part of any Career and Tech Center, students can get IRCs (Industry Recognized Certificates). They get OSHA cards and ServSafe Certs, LNA licenses and college credits. Pathways to diversified careers in each program are built into the curriculum. This is often done at the local level to best suit the local CTE Center students and surrounding industries.

2) What are the challenges in rural communities?

*Travel – students travel up to 90 minutes or more to go to regional CTEs, more for some Co-operative work experiences – if they have transportation.

*Lack of industry – Cooperative Education in CTE works well with local business and with the Dept of Labor, but as the new mandates of Act 77 begin to come about, some businesses will equate poor matches of students from middle and high schools with ALL schools and CTE may bear the brunt of those strained and severed relationships.

*For all of Vermont, lack of post secondary options in-state. Many states have Community colleges and schools that further train students in the trades. Vermont students must leave the state. Or if there is a program within the state, they will pay double or more in tuition, etc.

*On the plus side, students in rural communities see every day, and can be CTE trained in Entrepreneurship, giving them tools to continue the Vermont independent character.

3) How do we better connect schools with businesses?

Again, this happens in CTE. At GMTCC, and I'm sure this happens throughout the state, we have businesses that no longer advertise for job openings. They prefer to call their local Tech Center to get their next new hire, whether it is a 12th grade student or an adult student. See c. and d. However, once the workplace experience mandate of Act 77 is fully up

and running, there will not be enough businesses to voluntarily be open to this type of relationship.

4) How do we connect silos in state government to be supportive of CTE?

For the most part, CTE is supported by both DOL and AOE. Through Economic Development groups, there is support from Commerce. But here is the elephant in the room, where the rubber meets the road, and where the question should be more in tune with this proposed bill:

The student loses when CTE is tuition based. It is getting to crisis mode now because of declining student population in Vermont and local budgets being stretched too far. But this is not a new concept. CTE educators truly believe that Applied learning with the best technology and equipment makes learning relevant and keeps students interested and engaged in their own learning.

But as much as all educators want “what’s best for the student”, high school principals, teachers, and school counselors know that every student leaving their school to attend a regional Tech Center takes his/her funding with him/her. And now, every time a school counselor hears a student talk about taking classes at the Tech Center, they can look around and see colleagues with too small class sizes and teacher RIFs looming.

CTE should NOT be tuition based education. Support from legislature, AoE, Commerce, DOL, Voc Rehab, and other agencies and entities should come in the form of change for funding of CTE.

5) What are the next steps?

In the mid 1990s, I was a part of a task force that aimed to show the need for at least some Career and Tech exploration for every Vermont student. We made a plan, using an earmark of \$100,000 to begin with three or four schools. In this plan, ALL high school students would spend at least six to eight weeks in programs in the local Tech Center. ALL Tech Center teachers would spend some period of time teaching or co-teaching in the high schools.

Time and technology changes since the mid 1990s have probably lost the documentation of this plan, and the day before we were to present it to the state Board of Education, then Governor Howard Dean froze the budget, so it never happened. But I bring this up as a possible inspiration to legislators and agencies to think outside the box with CTE. Next steps could be found in this old idea.

6) What are the major issues that have been identified and how do you expect to address them?

1. Tuition based CTE means public schools are competing for the same student.
 - a. As a Tech Center, we can only beef up our marketing and relationships with sending schools and the community. We at GMTCC have great connections, but our class sizes have decreased as much of the state has.
2. Vermont colleges do not teach the trades so that students must leave the state to go to appropriate post secondary education.
 - a. We cannot in good conscience encourage our students to “make do” with in-state colleges that either don’t have what they need or charge far too much.

We have articulation agreements with multiple Vermont schools and more out-of-state schools.

- b. State statute for Tech Centers considers that the facilities should be used more than just for secondary schooling and that local colleges should build relationships with Tech Centers to use the facilities.
 - c. For both high school daytime students and CTE adult students, more work needs to happen to promote and make happen stackable credentials and credits for post secondary level training at Tech Centers. GMTCC and Stafford Tech Center have been at the center of this Technical Certificate idea for several years. It is time to act on it.
3. Most VT Tech Centers do well in relationships with local businesses, in matching programming to needs of the regional economy, and in managing the new technology needs. Governance as it relates to the results of Act 46 have yet to determine what shake-ups may occur for CTE.
 4. The workplace learning section of Act 77 may damage CTE relationships with businesses. Will middle and high school students be trained and prepped (in transferrable skills and safety) for their experiences as their CTE classmates? Do high schools have the risk management level needed for these student/workplace placements as Co-op students from CTE do?

7) What can the legislature do to facilitate in helping make sure this happens?

1. This legislation is a start to look into alternative funding for CTE. Legislators must be open to ALL findings of this directive. They should also tour several Tech Centers to better understand the situation.
2. Revisit state statute around usage of Tech Center facilities. Encourage local colleges to work with Tech Centers, especially in course offerings, stackable credentials, and cooperative trainings. This includes remedies to the fact that CTE students, young and adult, cannot receive federal financial aid for CTE trainings.
3. Monitor possible unwanted results of Act 46 as it relates to Tech Centers. Major shifts in sending school populations due to Act 46 changes could be very detrimental to some Tech Centers.
4. Understand and be proactive to correct possible problems with Act 77's workplace learning language. Tech Center relationships with businesses and high school risk management (including student injuries or company damage) could be extremely problematic.