

Career Clusters Initiative

Mission, Goals, Criteria

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Career Clusters Mission

Career Clusters -- a career-focused strategy for Career Technical Education that supports workforce preparation, economic development and educational reform.

Career Clusters Goals for Learners (secondary, postsecondary, adult)

The following are long-term goals for learners (secondary, postsecondary and adult) based on the implementation of the Career Clusters framework:

High Learner Achievement

Learners will meet rigorous technical standards drawn from industry.
Learners will receive reinforcement of state and national academic standards.

Successful transition between secondary education, post-secondary education, and/or employment

Learners will apply knowledge and skills defined for a cluster and a pathway to transition to specific post-secondary, occupational education and training, including:

- *employability* knowledge and skills standards defined for a cluster and a pathway
- *technical* knowledge and skills standards defined for a cluster and a pathway

- *academic* knowledge and skills standards defined for a cluster and a pathway

Better Prepared to Succeed in Careers (technical skills, employability skills)

Learners will:

- research career clusters,
- assess their skills, interests and abilities in relation to particular clusters, and
- translate their skills, interests and abilities to one or more clusters.
- apply knowledge and skills defined for a cluster and a pathway to transition to high-skill, high-wage career pathways.

Promotes/Supports Economic Development to Increase Productivity

Learners will apply knowledge and skills defined for a cluster and a pathway to build the pool of qualified human resources needed for economic productivity in each cluster of occupations by being better prepared and qualified to:

- retain their jobs,
- advance in their jobs (both vertically and horizontally),
- participate in cross-training opportunities, and
- be economically self-sufficient tax payers

Career Clusters Criteria for System Development

On the SYSTEM or state level, in order to successfully implement the Career Clusters framework and meet the Career Cluster goals for learners, the following criteria need to be met:

Criteria	Benchmark
State Plan	State CTE, field staff and industry/education partners develop and adopt a statewide vision, mission, goals, and strategies for Career Cluster implementation.
Statewide Administrative Support	State CTE staff and statewide administrators are informed of the career cluster process and components.
Statewide Professional Development	State CTE staff, statewide administrators, counselors and teachers/faculty jointly participate in professional development activities that help build their skills and knowledge in the career cluster area and teaching strategies.
Statewide Career Development	Statewide career education plan templates are available for each of the 16 clusters. Each CTE learner in a career cluster has a scheduled meeting with a career counselor, teacher

	advisor or faculty advisor at least on two occasions each school year to develop and/or revise his or her career-education plan.
Standards-Based Curriculum	Curriculum is designed to address both the career cluster foundation/pathway standards and appropriate academic standards. Curriculum expands, enhances and reinforces academic content and as a result improves cluster knowledge and skills as well as academic achievement.
State Education Partnerships	Elementary school, middle school, high school, career technical school and college/university faculty are included in the career cluster-learning continuum. Career technical schools, community college and university articulation agreements are negotiated and in place. When appropriate, shared faculty and labs are utilized.
Industry Partners	A statewide business/industry partner advisory committee representing all 16 clusters is in place to provide input into the system.
Multi-Measure Assessments/Industry-Based Credentials or Certifications	Statewide assessment includes both cumulative (projects, research papers, portfolios, workplace learning or community service) and on-demand (multiple choice, presentation, demonstration, scenario response) measures. Certifications and/or credentials are industry-based and transportable.
Parent and Community Involvement	Parents/guardians and community groups are informed of the career cluster process and components.
Economic Development Involvement/Workforce Preparation	Statewide economic development and workforce preparation groups/agencies are informed of the career cluster process and components and are involved in the implementation of the system.

Career Clusters Criteria for Local Development

On the local level, in order to successfully implement the Career Clusters framework and meet the Career Cluster goals for learners, the following criteria need to be met:

Criteria	Benchmark
Administrative Support	Local education and business/industry leaders are informed of the career cluster process and components. They provide scheduled chunks of time for the teaching/faculty team to meet together, professional development opportunities for

	the teaching/faculty team and encourage learner participation and community/parent support for the cluster.
Shared Planning Time	Teaching/faculty team schedules are designed to provide regularly scheduled large chunks of time for program planning and curriculum design. They have at least one full day each month to work together, compare learner progress and curriculum effectiveness.
Career Development	Each learner in the career cluster has a scheduled meeting with a career counselor, teacher advisor or faculty advisor at least on two occasions each school year to develop and/or revise his or her career-education plan. Learners base their career plan on a solid foundation of career awareness and exploration experiences, including interest and achievement assessment results and input from parents and educators.
Professional Development	The administration, teaching faculty and career counseling staff jointly participate in professional development activities that help build their skills and knowledge in the career cluster area and teaching strategies. They also join their industry partners for training on new equipment and processes.
Standards-Based Curriculum	Curriculum is designed to address both the career cluster foundation/pathway standards and appropriate academic standards. Curriculum expands, enhances and reinforces academic content and as a result improves cluster knowledge and skills as well as academic achievement.
Learner-Centered Learning	Learners are involved in the design and development of their coursework. When working with projects, for example, they select the topic, complete the research and design and participate in the presentation of their work.
Education Partnerships	Elementary school, middle school, high school, career technical school and college/ university faculty are included in the career cluster-learning continuum. Career technical schools, community college and university articulation agreements are negotiated and in place. When appropriate, shared faculty and labs are utilized.
Industry Partners	Industry partners are representative of the entire Career Cluster community, as available. They include all aspects of the industry. The industry partners are members of the teaching/faculty team and participate in shared professional development and curriculum design. They

	also provide supervision and assessment of learners during workplace learning explorations and internships.
Multi-Measure Assessments/Industry-Based Credentials or Certifications	Assessment includes both cumulative (projects, research papers, portfolios, workplace learning or community service) and on-demand (multiple choice, presentation, demonstration, scenario response) measures. Certifications and/or credentials are industry-based and transportable.
Inter-disciplinary Teams	Curriculum is created and taught by teams of academic and cluster-specific technical teachers/faculty and addresses specific standards for each participating discipline. The content is typically designed around a common theme with a culminating activity, product or service as a result of the instruction.
Flexible Schedules	Schedules are flexible and allow for interdisciplinary team managed blocks of time as needed for projects, labs and other action-based activities. Teacher/faculty teams design the schedule, weekly or monthly, depending upon the focus of the curriculum component during the selected time period.
Integrated Curriculum	A team of teachers/faculty representing the academic content that will be integrated into the career cluster program or that will integrate the career cluster content into the academic program develops the integrated curriculum. Standards from the subjects included in the integration are identified and noted.
Creative and Innovative Teaching Strategies	Thematic instruction, projects, role-play, demonstrations, panel discussions, debates, team building, complex thinking, problem solving activities, leadership and other teaching strategies are incorporated into the program as appropriate. Learner-centered learning is applied when practical. All content is reinforced through application and practice. Workplace learning is incorporated into the program.
Workplace Learning	All learners participate in one or more workplace learning experiences consistent with their career plans. The workplace learning may include volunteering, explorations, job shadows, community service, service learning and internships. They may take place in industry locations, university, college or career technical sites or other community facilities. They may also include virtual visits for those in remote locations. The workplace learning

	is directly related to and consistent with the classroom instruction.
Parent and Community Involvement	Parents/guardians are informed of the program content, participate in the career decision-making process, assist in the classroom as needed and support the program in various settings. Community groups offer program support through sponsorships and publicity. They assist with identifying workplace learning sites and building industry partnerships.

Career Clusters Essential Classroom Practices

These are classroom practices that answer the question: *If the Career Clusters framework is being implemented in the classroom, what does it look like?*

1. The curricula include the Cluster foundation knowledge and skills as well as the knowledge and skills for each pathway within a cluster.
2. The curricula are developed cooperatively with partnership teams that include secondary and postsecondary instructors/faculty, academic and technical instructors/faculty, and business and industry representatives.
3. State academic standards are clearly identified and reinforced in the curricula.
4. Communication (reading, writing, listening and presenting) activities are pervasive in the curricula.
5. The curricula provide broad information and preparation for multiple careers.
6. Assessments and industry-based credentials related to each cluster and its pathways are incorporated.
7. Learners develop a career educational plan with instructor/faculty support.
8. The curricula supports state and local economic development plans.
9. Results are assessed; data are collected and used for accountability and continuous improvement.
10. A professional development plan is followed to assure instructional improvement.