Session 1

Career Readiness Definitions and Measurement Landscape



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Measuring Career Readiness:

Across Top Performing Systems



RILS Conference
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Who we are

NCEE



Non-profit
based in Wash DC.
35+ years



Study **high-performing, equitable global** education systems



Insights inform work with US partners

How do top performers measure career readiness?

Approach rests on:

- A different high school structure
- A different assessment design



A different high school structure

- General education ends at about 10th grade
- Choice of upper secondary specialized program
- Lower secondary prepares students for choice



A different high school assessment

Two-tier:

- 10th grade: assessment of foundational academic knowledge and skills
- End of secondary: specialized program assessment



What do assessments look like?

- 10th grade: subject-based, “AP-like”
- End of secondary: mixed formats, vary by program



What does early choice mean for students?

- Paired with flexibility to pivot
- Additional time built in, if needed



How do broader skills fit in?

- Not measured independently but experimenting
- Focus on how to develop, not measure



Takeaways

- Systems are clear/transparent
- Credentials have value
- Career skills rest on a strong foundation



Thank You!

For more, visit www.NCEE.org

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Career Readiness Definitions and Measurement: Landscape

Kate Kreamer
Executive Director, Advance CTE
September 24, 2026



ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

Our Why

46%

report being **most engaged when they can participate in hands-on learning activities** such as simulations, demonstrations and experiments.

Just 23%

of students have opportunities to work on projects related to their desired jobs.

https://nextgeninsights.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/resources/2024-voices-of-gen-z-study/

Students often are given grades of A, B, C, D and "fail" on the quality of their work. What grade would you give your school when it comes to:

	2023 Average Grade	2024 Average Grade	2025 Average Grade	2025 % A's Awarded
Your school overall	B-	B-	B	31%
INDIVIDUAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE				
Using technology in new and exciting ways to help you learn	B-	B-	B-	29%
Teaching you in ways that adapt to your unique learning needs	C+	C+	B-	23%
Making you excited about learning	C+	C+	B-	19%
SCHOOL EXPERIENCE				
Helping you succeed in main subjects like math and reading	**	B	B	38%
Quality of relationships with your teachers	**	B-	B	36%
The quality of teaching	B-	B-	B	30%
Preparing you to succeed in school next year*	**	**	B	38%
POSTGRADUATION PREPARATION				
Teaching you skills that are relevant to your future	**	C+	B-	26%
Helping you figure out what type of career you would like to have	**	C+	B-	22%
Preparing you for education after high school	**	B-	B-	33%

*Includes 6th-11th grade students.

**Indicates no data collected on the item in the indicated year.

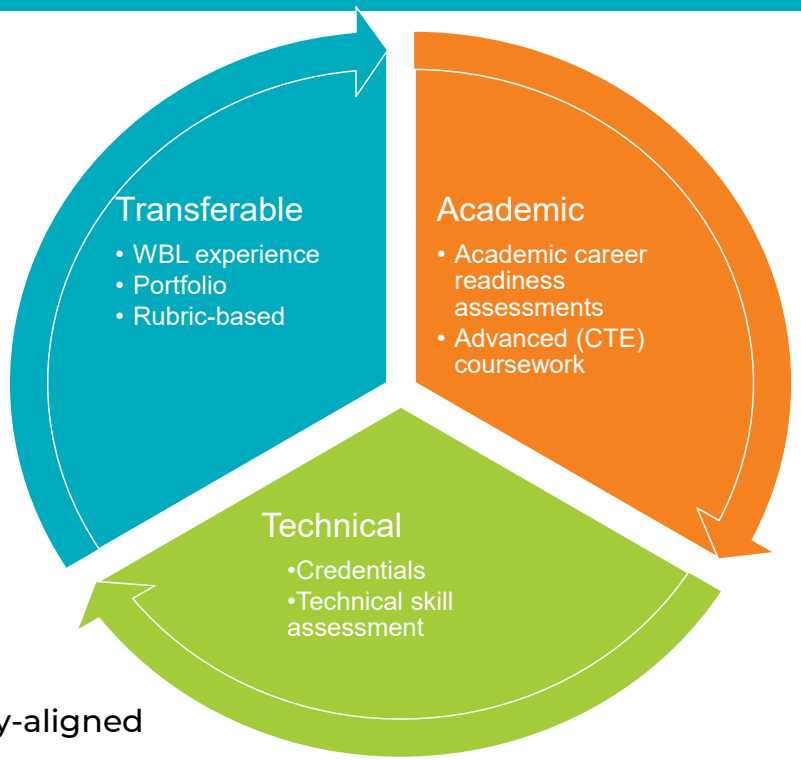
https://www.gallup.com/analytics/506663/american-youth-research.aspx

Career Readiness is Multi-Dimensional

Defining Career Readiness

PROS: Applicable for all learners, across disciplines

CONS: No large-scale assessments exist (yet)



PROS: Validates academics as part of career-ready programs

CONS: Can be duplicative with existing state assessments

PROS: Industry-aligned

CONS: Variation in quality

Modernized Career Clusters

Career Clusters
Pathways to College & Career Readiness

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Construction
- Supply Chain & Transportation
- Arts, Entertainment, & Design
- Hospitality, Events, & Tourism
- Financial Services
- Education
- Healthcare & Human Services
- Public Service & Safety
- Agriculture
- Energy & Natural Resources
- Digital Technology
- Marketing & Sales
- Management & Entrepreneurship

Making Career Readiness Count

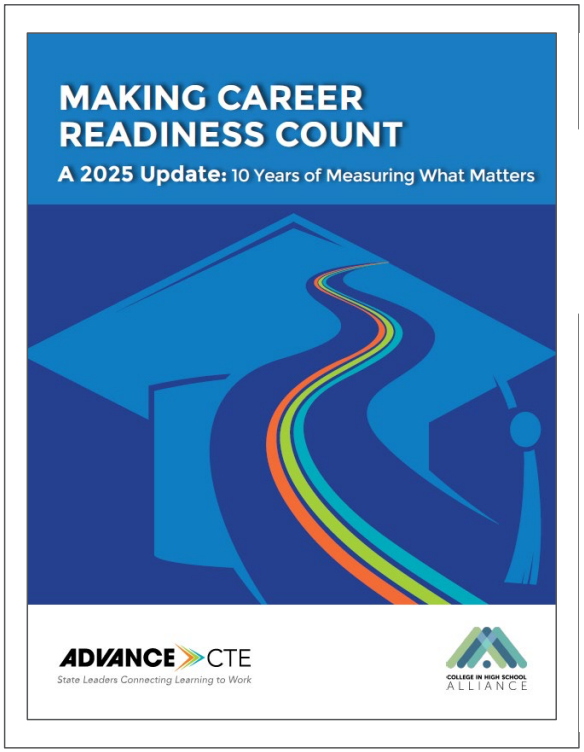
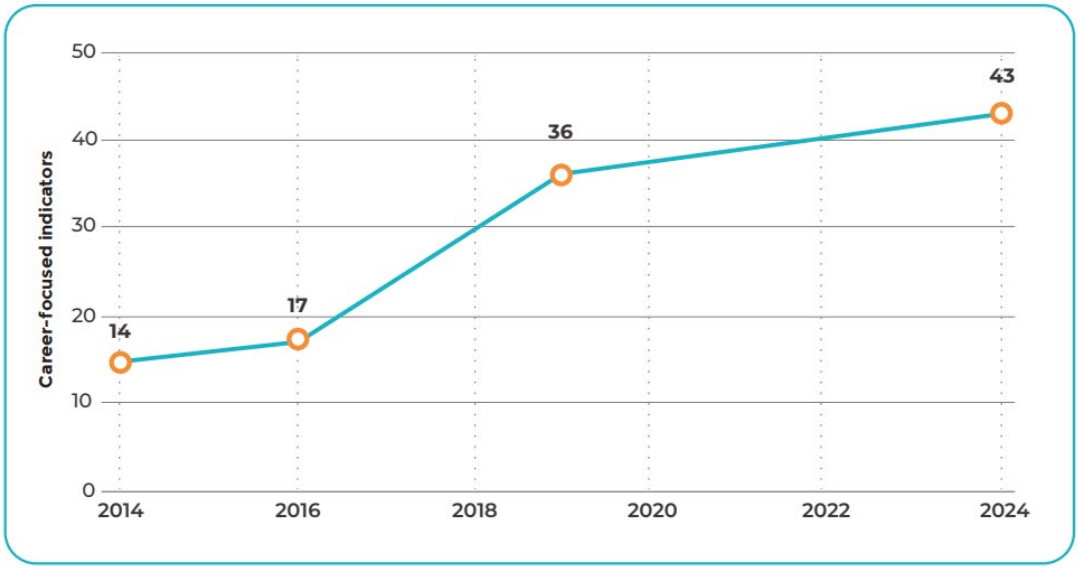


Figure 2: States including career-focused indicators in one or more accountability systems over time (2014-24)



What States Count Today

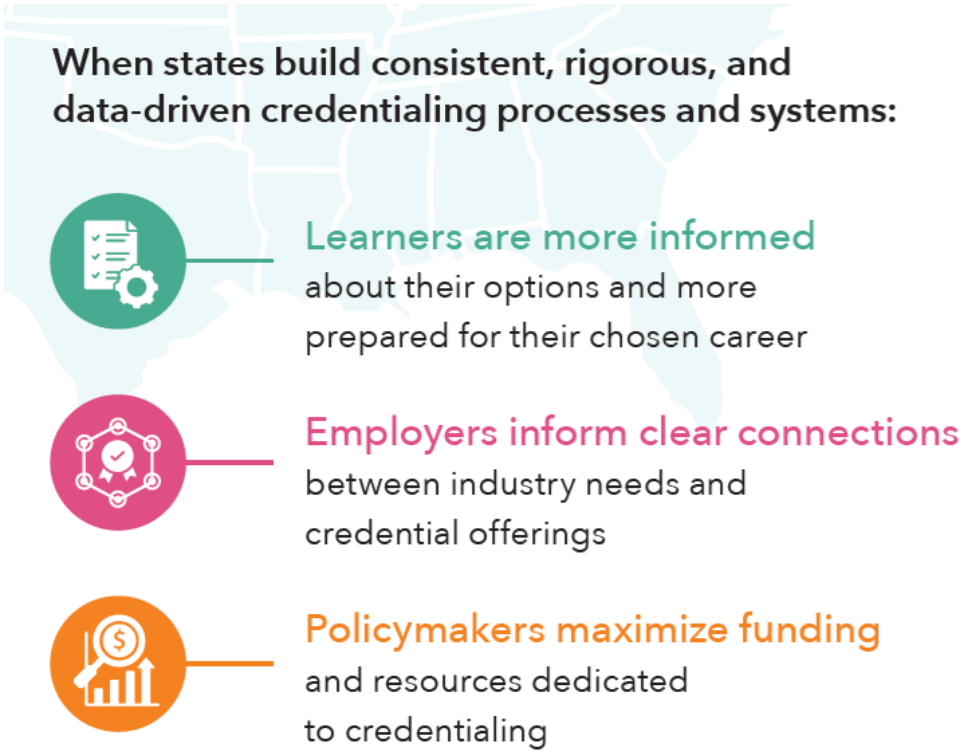
Career-Focused Indicator	2014	2016	2019	2024
Achievement on an academic career readiness assessment	0	5	16	21
Achievement on technical skills assessment	9	6	5	5
Attainment of an industry-recognized credential	9	12	25	26
CTE completion (pathway/program completion and concentrators)	4	7	17	21
CTE diploma/endorsement	3	2	N/A[a]	4
CTE participation	0	1	7	5
Dual enrollment participation	N/A[b]	2	10	15
Dual enrollment success	11	13	27	32
Experiential/work-based learning	0	2	12	16
Pre-/youth apprenticeship	0	0	3	8
	Postsecondary Enrollment			Postgraduation Placement
	0	4	3	8

Nearly every state leverages “meta-indicators” – allowing learners to count as “college and career ready” if they meet a single indicator (college and/or career focused)

ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

State of CTE: Credentials of Value

Advance CTE conducted a national landscape scan, 50-state survey, and conducted interviews with states to uncover how states are identifying, approving, incentivizing, and collecting data on credentials of value



https://careertech.org/resource-center/series/credentials-of-value/

State of CTE: Credentials of Value

IN 2024

44 states had publicly available lists of industry-recognized credentials

Common strategies for assessing credentials' value:

- Employer Recommendations
- Educator Recommendations
- Occupational Demand
- Wage Data

Common Strategies for Assessing Credentials

CRITERIA TO ASSESS VALUE AND/OR QUALITY	COMMONLY USED EVIDENCE
Alignment of the credential to local, regional, or statewide employer needs (as evidenced through labor market information or employer signals)	Traditional and/or real-time labor market information; employer engagement, including surveys, focus groups, and advisory groups
Alignment of the credential to state-determined high-skill, high-wage, and/or in-demand definitions	Traditional and/or real-time labor market information, including wage and demand data
Evidence of wage increase as a result of the credential	Pre- and postcredential wage data for credential earners or wage data for similar noncredential earners for comparison
Evidence of career advancement connected to attainment of the credential	Information about the career trajectories of credential earners; employer policies related to hiring and/or advancement as the result of credential attainment
Credential portability	Real-time labor market information; employer engagement that demonstrates wide acceptance of the credential across employers
Credential stackability	Demonstrated connection to additional credentials that can build an individual's skills or qualifications over time
Alignment of the credential to program/course standards or learning outcome	Demonstrated connection between program/course learning outcomes and competencies assessed by the credential
Transparent evidence of competencies demonstrated through the credential	Assessment materials and/or feedback reports that demonstrate which competencies are assessed/demonstrated through the credential
Assessment integrity	Evidence of strong and consistent assessment procedures, including assessment security

https://careertech.org/resource-center/series/credentials-of-value/

Pushing Ahead – the New Frontier

The Opportunity: Assess Across Disciplines

- The challenge: the most cross-disciplinary dimensions – durable / transferable skills – are the hardest to and least measured
  - *Skills for the Future Initiative*
  - *National Work-Based Learning Alignment Project*
- The opportunity: assessments that let learners show what they know and can do in multiple ways and applications – not one test, one moment