Agenda Topic: Career and Technical Education (CTE) Task Force Recommendations

Materials: “A New Vision of Education”
“Goals for a New Vision of Education”
List of Task Force Members

Staff Contact(s) Diana Robinson
Fran Beauman
John Klit

Purposes of Agenda Item

• To present to the Board the preliminary recommendations and next steps of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Challenge Task Force.

• To receive Board direction for future action.

Expected Outcomes of Agenda Item

• Direction to staff and the task force regarding next steps.

• Authorization of the distribution of a portion of the task force recommendations for public comment and a request for submission of a final report from the task force in mid-2001.

Background

In March 2000, the Board was presented with a proposal developed jointly by the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Community College Board, in collaboration with the Governor’s Office, to reposition Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Illinois. The context within which the proposal was made was that CTE has the potential to help all students meet the Illinois Learning Standards while improving the employability and technical level of Illinois’ workforce. Currently, 328,900 students or 58% of all high school students take at least one CTE course.

The proposal to the Board called for the creation of a CTE Challenge Task Force. The task force would be charged with developing a comprehensive blueprint to reposition CTE in Illinois to support high educational achievement for all CTE students while preparing them for the high-performance workplace. Over 40 knowledgeable
representatives of business, education, labor and other stakeholders were identified as potential task force members.

The Board approved implementation of the proposal at its March Board meeting. Since then, the task force has met monthly and has crafted a vision of education that rests on eight guiding principles and three broad components that must be made available to every student:

- Rigorous and relevant learning;
- Career awareness, exploration and planning; and
- Career specific preparation.

In addition, the task force developed six broad implementation goals and associated short- and long-term actions. The six goals are in the areas of equity and access, standards-based instruction and assessment, teacher preparation, curriculum and instruction, accountability and governance.

The work plan of the task force next calls for an opportunity for broad public input to review the vision and goals (the action steps would not be included for public comment). Prior to this step, direction and endorsement from the ISBE Board is being sought. The task force’s products were reviewed at a recent ISBE Policy Council meeting and comments from that discussion have been incorporated into this Board report.

**Overview and Analysis of the Task Force’s Recommendations**

The work of the CTE Challenge Task Force was co-facilitated by Diana Robinson and Virginia McMillan, Senior Vice-President of ICCB. The products are consensus documents and there were no minority or dissenting versions.

The task force requested and received significant background and briefing information. In addition to historical perspectives on the national and Illinois systems of CTE, the most progressive thinking available was sought on CTE and its relationship to the broader statewide educational system at the state and national levels. Thirteen states were identified as wrestling with similar system change and improvement issues as Illinois, and key respondents from ten of those states were contacted for in-depth telephone interviews. The ten states were Texas, New York, Michigan, Florida, Ohio, Iowa, Wisconsin, North Carolina, South Carolina and Washington.

Questions were asked in the areas of defining CTE; the relationship between CTE and school-to-work and/or school reform; state vision statements and images of vocational education; standards, evaluation and assessment; teacher shortages; funding and legislation; and challenges and changes.

Highlights from this research include the following:
1. **CTE and school reform.** Texas, Ohio, Iowa, North Carolina and Washington are moving to an all-students focus for CTE and institutionalizing it as a school improvement strategy, and Ohio is using “High Schools that Work” as a springboard for education reform.

2. **Articulation with post-secondary.** Stronger linkages are being forged in Iowa between high school and community college by encouraging dual enrollment and in North Carolina through Tech Prep.

3. **CTE standards.** New York and Wisconsin have CTE standards in place and Washington is developing two types: exploratory and preparatory.

4. **Teacher Shortages.** Michigan, Iowa and Washington cited significant CTE teacher shortages and all states responding to this question are developing alternative certification routes.

5. **Challenges.** States are working on comprehensive career guidance models, strengthening linkages between secondary and post-secondary education, increasing accountability, consolidation (reducing regionalization and tying together career preparation, Tech Prep and Perkins-funded programs), integrating Baldrige principles into CTE, and standards implementation.

While there were relatively few statements by recognized national leadership addressing the future of CTE, two such documents were identified. One was a recent speech delivered by U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary Patricia McNeil entitled “Reinventing High School: The Role for Career and Technical Education, Tech Prep and School-to-Work.” The other was a draft document by Dan Hull, President and CEO of the Center for Occupational Research and Development in Waco, Texas, entitled “Education and Career Preparation for the New Millennium.” There is strong concurrence between the work of the CTE Challenge Task Force and these two documents.

For example, Dr. McNeil writes: “Especially in the past decade, CTE has been in flux. Schools have been steering away from forcing students to decide between a route that leads to immediate entry into the workforce or one that leads directly to college, particularly when so many of today’s jobs require at least two years of postsecondary education. The current thinking is that all students, regardless of their course concentration in high school, should be held to rigorous academic standards so they are prepared for further education and careers.”

Dr. Hull complements these observations by writing: “A new educational system is evolving throughout this nation to prepare our youth for rewarding, high-performance careers. It should become a first-class “system of choice” that will support and strengthen the goals and standards set for all secondary and postsecondary students. If we grasp this opportunity, this new system will provide the “career context” that most students want and need; it will also address the employment standards that most organizations will require to ensure flexibility, performance, and continuity for economic competitiveness and employee growth and advancement. But, for this system to become a successful reality, educators, employers, and policymakers must develop a
common vision for the critical elements of this system and a plan to set all the elements I place in every community of our country.”

Most recently, Anthony Carnevale, Vice-President for Public Leadership at Educational Testing System, spoke at the 2001 Illinois Business-Education Partnerships Conference on January 8. He alluded to the “New Vocationalism” which he described as a strategy to keep students in school who would otherwise drop out and as a better way to teach all students. Dr. Carnevale stated that the growth of this applied, hands-on educational approach, which is at the heart of the CTE Challenge Task Force’s recommendations for increased relevance, is being “stymied” by the multiple-choice academic tests that his institution, among others, produces.

**Vision Document.** The task force expressed early and strongly the need for a shared vision of the relationship between school and work. The document “A New Vision of Education” was the result. It builds on Illinois’ philosophy for Education-to-Careers, the P-16 agenda and ISBE’s Board priorities.

The substance of the vision flows from eight principles or assumptions that the task force made in proceeding with their work. Each of these principles is consistent with the P-16 tenet that students completing high school must be prepared for both post-secondary education and the workplace.

In addition to these principles, the other major driver of the vision was a belief that there must be only one system of education for all students. Developing a separate system of vocational education or career and technical education, regardless of the quality, will inevitably result in students being tracked or labeled. The task force was adamant that there was no such thing as a “CTE student.” Rather, every student must have access to the educational opportunities articulated by the task force in their vision. As a result, the task force products attempted to avoid language and terminology that evoked either the “old” system of vocational education or a separate system of education.

It is this combination of eight explicit assumptions or guiding principles, the belief that every student must be prepared for post-secondary education and the workplace, and the assertion that there can only be one system of education that compelled the CTE Challenge Task Force to describe their vision as “new.”

The three educational components described in the vision paper, as mentioned above, mirror the concepts in Education-to-Careers. The first component, rigorous and relevant learning, must undergird every student’s education. Rigor is addressed by aligning all instruction with the Illinois Learning Standards. Relevance is achieved by using real-world examples in the classroom, teaching basic workplace readiness skills, expanding the classroom into the community and workplace, and addressing technology literacy.

The second component, career education, describes a continuum of career-related education that begins in elementary school with career awareness activities. These
segue into exploration of preliminary career interests, and culminate in a career plan that evolves with students’ interests, aspirations and accomplishments.

The third component, career-specific preparation, is essentially the task force’s reworking of vocational education or career and technical education. Career-specific education is not a requirement, but an opportunity for any student to go as broad and as deep in their career interest as they desire. All career-specific education must address rigorous academic and technical standards and prepare students for a wide array of occupations. In addition, all career-specific educational programs must:

- Enable students to experience and understand the nature of work in their chosen career cluster;
- Incorporate high levels of academic preparation into any technical course; and
- Provide opportunities for entry-level employment within their chosen career cluster.

Goals and Actions. Once the vision was articulated to the satisfaction of the task force, work began on translating the vision to implementation goals. Six goals were identified as most critical to achieving the vision:

1. All Illinois students will have access and opportunity to participate in a new vision of education;
2. Align the instructional content for all students with rigorous and recognized standards;
3. Integrate the relationship between school and careers throughout the teacher preparation, certification, and continuing development system;
4. Provide instructors with the resources and knowledge they need to infuse the relationship between school and careers throughout the curriculum;
5. Hold all educational programs accountable for outcomes and progress; and
6. Ensure that system planning, coordination, implementation strategies, policy-making and legislation support the new vision of education.

These six goals reflect the task force’s contention that system change requires that movement occur in all key system areas simultaneously. Thus, activity was targeted for a range of key educational reform areas in Illinois.

Specific actions recommended by the task force will not be distributed for public comment, but are included for the Board’s preliminary review and feedback. It is anticipated that over the next several months, the Policy Council will discuss these at length so that staff recommendations may be provided to the Board on each of these activities. However, five of the recommended activities are drawn to the Board’s attention due to their potential policy and resource implications.

1. Development of additional fundamental learning areas. The task force recommends that learning standards be developed for all students in the area of workplace skills and career development. These standards would be separate but be assessed within the context of other fundamental learning areas. For example, communication
skills, a major component of the employer-identified workplace skills, could be assessed through English Language Arts activities.

It was further recommended that an additional voluntary learning area (comparable to foreign language) be developed for career-specific standards in whatever career typology is adopted by ISBE and ICCB.

2. Curriculum redesign. If all career-specific programs offered in Illinois are to be standards-based, a significant retooling of instruction must occur in most occupational areas. Integrating technical curriculum with math, science and other learning areas is essential. The agricultural education model was identified as one in Illinois worth emulating.

3. Professional development. Personnel involved in instruction, administration and support at all levels would require in-service and ongoing professional development in a number of areas, including career awareness, varied assessment techniques, interactive learning, problem-based instruction and contextual learning. In addition to these areas, career-specific instructors would require preparation and development in the Illinois Learning Standards, occupational skill standards, innovative teaching strategies and different learning styles.

4. Teacher certification. Acute teacher shortages are evident in Illinois in all occupational areas. Task force recommendations include development of an alternative teacher certification system and expediting the process for any certified teacher to gain additional certification in another fundamental learning area (including the proposed new ones).

5. Legislative changes. A number of changes to the Illinois School Code may be required to provide local districts, boards and administrators with the flexibility to implement the recommended changes.

Alignment of Task Force Recommendations with Board Goals. The ISBE Board’s system goals and priorities were included in the extensive briefing received by the task force. It was clear that task force success would correlate strongly with congruence between the task force’s recommendations and the Board’s goals and priorities. Thus, the vision and goals align strongly with the Board’s five system goals most of the 15 leadership goals.

Illinois Education System Goals.

1. All Illinois students meet rigorous learning standards and leave high school prepared to succeed in post-secondary education and the workplace. The task force recommendations propose how to integrate workplace success into K-12 education for every student as well as how to ensure that students pursuing career-specific preparation are also equipped for success in post-secondary education.
2. *All Illinois students have equitable access to high-quality, standards-led educational programs and support services.* The first principle in the task force vision is that “every student should have access to rigorous, relevant courses and varied teaching and learning strategies.” This principle is reflected throughout the vision, implementation goals and activities.

3. *A stable, sufficient corps of competent and caring teachers and other personnel supports student learning in all Illinois schools.* A number of specific actions recommended by the task force address the need for professional development in a variety of career-related areas. Another area of concern was the shortage of teachers in a variety of career areas. There are currently 5,000 CTE instructors, of which 20 percent are provisionally certified.

4. *All Illinois schools are safe and provide an environment that is conducive to learning.* The task force recommendations focus on how learning can be made rigorous and relevant for every student, with emphasis on varied teaching and learning styles and using a variety of settings, like the community and the workplace, in addition to the classroom. The focus on safety, particularly as students move increasingly outside the school, is an area that should be considered by the task force before it adjourns.

5. *The Illinois educational system is effective, efficient, innovative and accountable for student performance, financial management, and continuous improvement.* All four system descriptors—effectiveness, efficiency, innovation and accountability—are evident in the products of the task force’s work. Based on comparisons with other states and current views of CTE leadership, the work of the task force is clearly in the vanguard.

In addition to these five system goals, the task force recommendations support in a significant way seven of the Board’s 15 leadership goals:

1. The Illinois Learning Standards are the foundation for the Illinois educational system.
6. All schools have the resources necessary to prepare students to meet the Learning Standards and succeed in post-secondary education and the workplace.
7. All students, including those at risk of academic failure and those with disabilities, meet the Illinois Learning Standards and succeed in post-secondary education and the workplace.
11. All students can make knowledgeable choices about their future careers and about the education and experience necessary to achieve their goals.
12. The Illinois educational system provides a well-articulated continuum of high-quality learning opportunities from pre-school through college)P-16.
13. Partnerships of key education stakeholders, including parents, employers and social services providers, support efforts to achieve the educational system goals.
15. The State Board of Education explores the educational implications of the changing world and uses that information to plan and develop educational policies, programs and learning environments.
In addition to these seven goals, the task force has addressed five more by recommending new assessment practices; stronger academic and financial accountability; more and better prepared teachers and support personnel; increased student proficiency in reading, writing and math; and improved integration of learning technologies.

**What Does This Mean for CTE in Illinois?**

To assist in understanding the implications of the task force’s work for CTE in Illinois, staff have developed a chart that compares seven elements of the current CTE system and how deliver of career-specific education might change if the task force recommendations were implemented. This chart is presented on the following page and highlights where the greatest impact would likely occur.

**Superintendent’s Recommendations**

The Board should direct staff to distribute the vision and goals products as called for in the task force work plan. Public input should be collected and incorporated into a revised set of task force recommendations. While this public input process is unfolding, ISBE and ICCB staff, as appropriate, should address the policy issues and actions associated with the task force and submit their recommendations to the Board for its consideration and action.