

## **The School Counselor and Career and Technical Education**

(Adopted 2018)

### **American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position**

School counselors provide all students with counseling that facilitates academic, career and social/emotional development, helping all students develop plans for choosing a career. School counselors demonstrate their understanding of rigorous career technical education (CTE) programs when they join with other CTE stakeholders to advocate for these programs, which are designed to guide students to success in their chosen careers.

### **The Rationale**

Ferguson and Lamback (2014) noted that increased attention on career-focused education has been the objective of many education reform efforts striving to strengthen educational relevance, improve students' school and career preparation planning and increase student readiness for workplace demands. According to Advance CTE (n.d.), an association of CTE state directors dedicated to linking learning and work, more than 12 million high school and college students are enrolled in CTE programs across the nation. These students are learning academic and technical skills to prepare for the world of work through the introduction of workplace competencies that are most often provided through a hands-on environment.

Employers frequently express frustration that new hires often lack well-developed communication skills, problem-solving skills, motivation, persuasion and critical-thinking skills that define soft skills (MacDermott & Ortiz, 2017). DiBenedetto and Myers (2016) noted that CTE courses provide “contextual real-world learning experiences that have engaged students and exposed them to opportunities to transfer and apply those skills in occupational settings” (p. 31). School counselors agree with DiBenedetto and Myers (2016) that CTE courses help students develop core academic skills; employability skills; and job-specific, technical skills related to career pathways.

In their study on the influence of career-focused education on career planning and development, Mobley, Sharp, Hammond, Withington and Stipanovic (2017) observed that real-world experiences and hands-on projects are generally much more likely to happen in CTE courses. They noted that CTE students are more likely to have a clear understanding about their career goals, and they concluded that non-CTE students would benefit with advising, real-world experiences and hands-on integrated CTE/academic projects like those available to CTE students.

### **The School Counselor's Role**

School counselors play an integral role through the context of comprehensive school counseling programs to facilitate students' acquisition of attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to achieve positive postsecondary and career outcomes. School counselors at all levels recognize that employability skills align well with ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (2014). Consequently, they integrate a structure for organizing and delivering information about various careers and corresponding clusters such as The National Career Clusters Framework (Advance CTE, 2018).

This national framework or a similarly developed local framework informs the use of career development interventions for all students to help them navigate their way to postsecondary training intended to foster greater career success. When school counselors provide all students with information about high-quality CTE programs, they help all students consider all of their options following high school completion, including directly entering the world of work.

School counselors are aware that preparing 21<sup>st</sup>-century students to be career-ready requires collaborative efforts. As concluded by Conneely, Fitzgerald, Cook and Vrbka (2009), “There are advantages for CTE and comprehensive school counseling programs to coordinate their efforts to better serve all students in achieving postsecondary and career readiness” (p. 4). When school counselors demonstrate a shared understanding of CTE programs with other CTE stakeholders (e.g., teachers, administrators, legislators and employers), they are better equipped to encourage all students and their families to consider the advantages of enrolling in rigorous and relevant CTE courses.

A brief, "School Counselors as CTE Stakeholders," prepared as a collaborative effort with ASCA and the National Association of State Directors of CTE, noted that school counselors can explain CTE options to students in the framework of career clusters and programs of study to inform student planning (Conneely et al., 2009). Mobley et al. (2017) added that students are often more motivated to stay in school when enrolled in career-focused education. Additionally, their study provides evidence that "an emphasis on career-focused education for all students can result in less stigmatization of two areas that are often negatively viewed by students: taking CTE or career-focused classes and visiting the school counselor" (p. 70).

The findings by Mobley et al. (2017) underscore the importance of school counselors using their leadership and influencing skills to create awareness of CTE programming options for students and their families. School counselors also advocate for the continued growth, development and expansion of rigorous CTE programs. These efforts provide an increase in awareness of CTE opportunities prior to entering postsecondary endeavors in hopes that students will be more informed and focused, offering students and their families savings of time and money on postsecondary training.

### Summary

School counselors improve their service to their students when they understand CTE offers numerous benefits, including rigorous programs of study, academic and CTE curriculum and productive relationships within the business community. These advantages serve as effective means that school counselors can use to help all students make informed career decisions. Comprehensive school counseling programs provide a way for school counselors to help students understand all of their options that lead to the world of work, including CTE courses, through organized and structured individual student planning.

### References

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