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Career Technical Education: A Future with Promise

By Dwight Johnson, State Administrator, Idaho Career & Technical Education

Career & Technical Education (CTE) in Idaho is not your grandfather's shop class. It is high-skill, in-demand training that leads to high wages and satisfying careers that run the gamut from nursing and health care, business and accounting, hospitality, computer networking, robotics and high tech, agriculture and food processing, and to a wide range of skilled trades in construction and advanced manufacturing.

CTE programs resonate with students because the skills are obtained through applied learning. Every student has asked themselves two basic questions: "Why do I need to know this and when am I going to use it?" The answers are simple; CTE instructors apply various subjects to real-world situations, enhancing students' abilities to understand and retain information from science, math and English to technical training. A student's applied learning skills are put to use the first day on the job.

Our national leaders are helping with overwhelming bi-partisan support for CTE even in these times of frequent partisan debate. Late last month, President Trump signed the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act* (generally known as "Perkins V") after Congress passed it on a unanimous voice vote in both the Senate and House. Federal funding helps make CTE programs available to students. The Act also gives Idaho and other states more authority and autonomy to set performance goals for our state and increases what we can spend to address needs in rural communities.

Opportunities for obtaining this valuable training are blossoming throughout our state. Colleges and universities are partnering with business and local school districts to open and equip facilities and to prepare students.

Here are just a few examples:

- In Coeur d'Alene, North Idaho College recently opened a new facility adjacent to the Kootenai Technical Education Campus (KTEC) so that students can transition from the region's technical high school to a college level career technical program by simply walking across the parking lot after high school graduation.
- Lewis-Clark State College is opening a similar facility next to the new Lewiston High School currently under construction. LCSC also recently obtained a \$1.5 million federal grant for equipment to support the program.

- In Pocatello, Idaho State University's College of Technology will soon complete its move into the new Eames Advanced Technical Education and Innovations Complex, a state-of-the-art 150,000 square-foot facility that will help ISU meet growing enrollments associated with increased demand for CTE programs.
- The College of Western Idaho, the College of Southern Idaho and the new College of Eastern Idaho are seeing higher enrollments, much of it driven by CTE programs.

Demand is driven by the economy. Employers need skilled workers so they are partnering with education to make sure the talent pipeline is producing the workers they need to expand and be successful.

Thanks to Governor Otter and the legislature, Idaho has made significant investments in CTE, increasing funding for programs by over 23 percent in the past four years. [Idaho's Opportunity Scholarship](#) is also now available to adult learners interested in returning to school and completing their professional certificate or degree.

CTE offers technical degrees, two-year degrees, industry certificates, and apprenticeships. CTE offers a competitive advantage for all students who are looking for successful careers in the 21st Century knowledge-based economy. The results show in the numbers:

- 96 percent of Idaho CTE concentrators found jobs after graduation or decided to continue their education;
- 64 percent of high school CTE concentrators went on to college compared to just 46 percent of all Idaho high school graduates;
- CTE concentrators have a higher than average high school graduation rate; and
- CTE concentrators have less student debt when they complete college than the average college graduate.

Idaho has an ambitious goal in place to help 60 percent of Idahoans ages 25-34 earn and hold a professional certificate or degree. Career Technical Education provides many different pathways for Idahoans to become part of that cadre working professionals, benefiting themselves, their families and our state.

I want to thank our national, state and local leaders for their continued and united support of CTE. As we head into the coming school year, that strong, on-going support is critically important for our students' future careers and for Idaho's future economic growth.

To learn more about what Career Technical Education can mean for your future or that of someone you know, please visit our website <https://cte.idaho.gov/>

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