



# Office of the Washington State Auditor

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## Pat McCarthy

## Leading Practices for the State's Secondary Career and Technical Education Programs

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# Focus of career and technical education audits

## **First CTE audit**

- Published in December 2016; focus on student outcomes

## **Second CTE audit**

- Focus on leading practices to improve the secondary CTE system to provide greater benefits for students and employers

# This audit identified four key areas for improvement

1. Career guidance
2. Employer engagement
3. Program oversight
4. CTE dual-credit opportunities

# Audit objectives

This audit answered these questions:

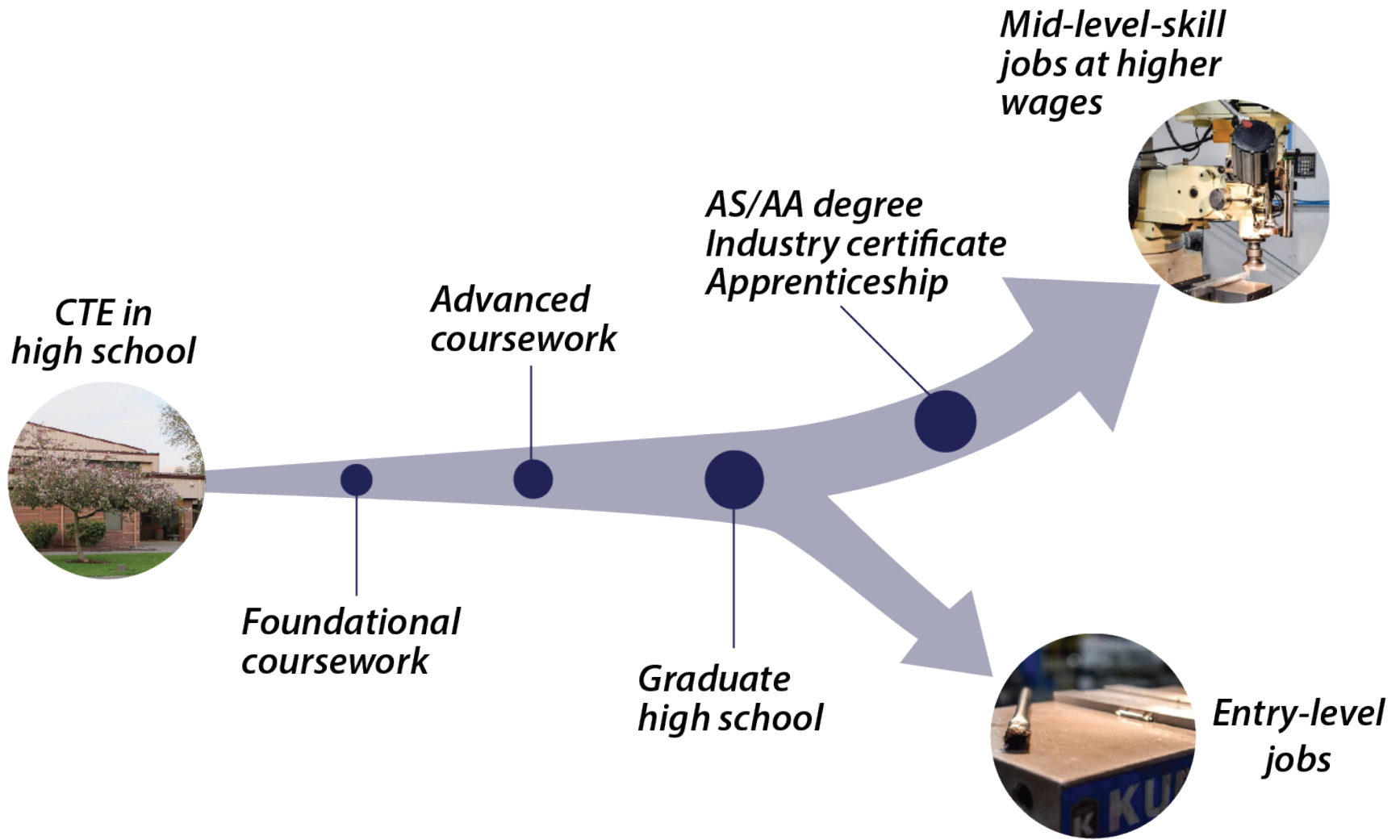
- Are secondary CTE programs and courses aligned with the needs of students and employers?
- Are there leading practices that could improve the success of the state's secondary CTE programs?

# What is CTE?



*Photo courtesy of Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee*

# CTE courses and pathways



# What is the state's oversight responsibility?

Four agencies provide oversight and establish policy and standards for the career and technical education system:

- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
- State Board of Education
- Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

# Washington students fall out of education over time



**80,800**  
start  
9th grade

**20,100**  
drop out  
before graduation

**14,000**  
graduates do  
not enroll in  
a postsecondary  
program

**21,200**  
fail to earn a  
postsecondary  
degree



**25,500**  
obtain a  
postsecondary  
credential



# Why is CTE important?

- CTE helps students:
  - Prepare for future careers
  - Meet the one-credit occupational education graduation requirement
- Washington spent \$450 million for K-12 CTE programs in 2016
- Most students take at least one CTE course



*Photo courtesy of Pierce County Skills Center*

# How are businesses involved?



## Local CTE advisory committees

- Include representatives of business and labor
- Offer perspectives about employment needs
- Help school districts develop CTE programs

# 1. Career guidance

Students and parents are often unaware of CTE benefits. Why?

- Too few counselors
- Online career guidance tools could be easier to navigate
- An occupational education requirement that does not introduce students to the many available CTE opportunities

# 1. Career guidance

To help school districts increase student awareness of CTE and apprenticeship opportunities:

- Workforce Board can make the Career Bridge website more accessible for students
- OSPI can develop a model course that teaches students about multiple career opportunities



*Photos courtesy of PCSC and AJAC*

## 2. Employer engagement

Employers reported these challenges:

- Finding candidates with the technical skills they need
- Engaging the many stakeholders to discuss employment needs
- Coordinating between educators and advisory committees

## 2. Employer engagement

Exploring the relationship of CTE course enrollments to forecasted job openings

CTE courses with highest enrollments could align better with  
high-paying, high-growth occupations



### 3. Program oversight

To both address the state's skills gap and strengthen program oversight:

- Update OSPI's list of high-demand CTE programs
- Require districts to submit labor market data or analysis that demonstrates high demand
- Define key terms in state laws that govern CTE

## 4. CTE dual credit opportunities

Dual-credit courses allow students to earn college credit for work done in high school

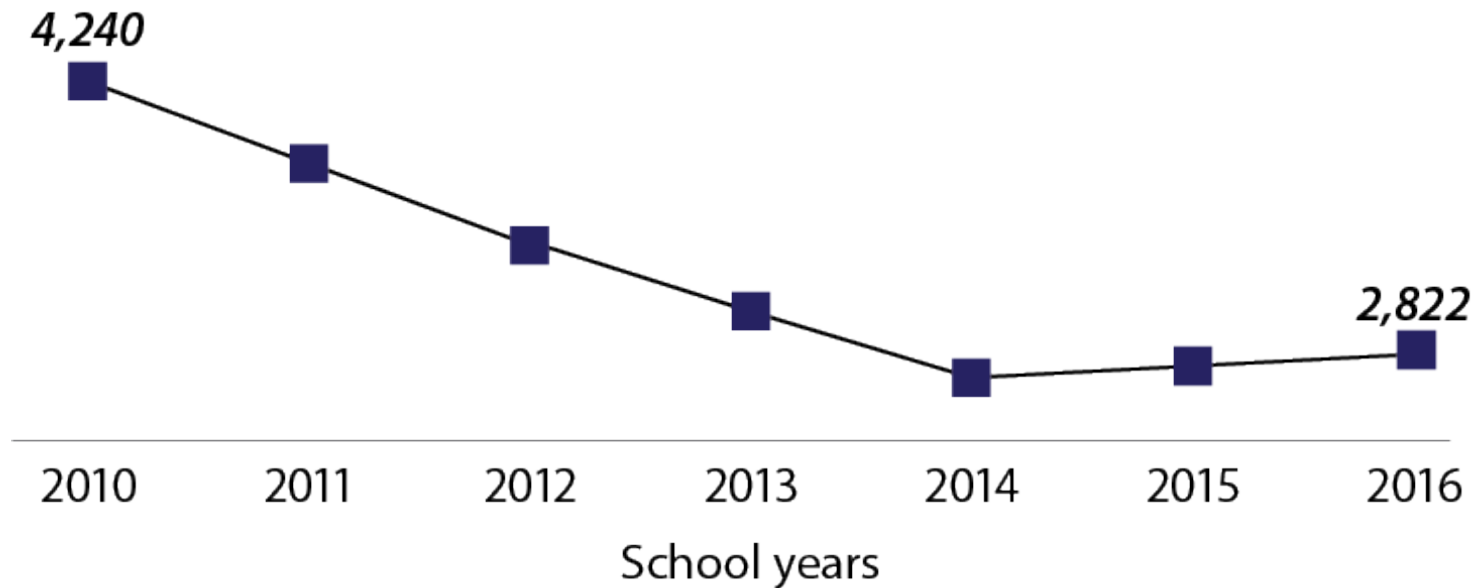
- Articulation agreements specify required curriculum and teacher qualifications
- Agreements are typically negotiated between one college and one school district





## 4. CTE dual-credit opportunities

The number of articulation agreements has dropped over time



Two challenges to maintaining and expanding these agreements:

1. Loss of Tech-Prep federal funding
2. Long distances between districts and colleges

## 4. CTE dual-credit opportunities

Expanding articulation agreements beyond one district and one college can help broaden student opportunities.

Regional articulation at Pierce County Career Connections (PC3) achieved:

- 113 articulation agreements
- Used by 16 school districts, 4 skill centers and 3 colleges

These regional benefits show opportunities for the state.

## 4. CTE dual-credit opportunities

Two leading practices help students transfer high school credits into college:

- Statewide articulation agreements
- Common course numbering



# Barriers to addressing four areas for improvement

- School districts and colleges make CTE decisions at the local level, resulting in student experiences that vary across the state
- Agencies, colleges and districts lack statutory authority to require cooperation from one another
- No one agency is responsible for system-wide oversight, resulting in a fragmented CTE system

# Recommendations in brief to the Legislature

## Require:

- OSPI to establish a model course to increase awareness of multiple career opportunities through CTE
- Workforce Board to establish a workgroup that is:
  - ✓ Funded by the Legislature
  - ✓ Consists of staff from the Workforce Board, OSPI and SBCTC, to address statewide articulation and employer engagement

## Revise statute to:

- Define the terms “skills gap” and “high wage”
- Require districts to submit evidence of high local labor demand for existing CTE programs

# Recommendations in brief to agencies

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## **We recommend OSPI:**

- ✓ Emphasize to school counselors the importance of discussing CTE and apprenticeship paths with students
- ✓ Update the list of high-demand CTE programs
- ✓ Strengthen requirements to assess whether CTE programs correspond with local high demand

## **We recommend the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges:**

- ✓ Share labor market data and analysis that colleges and SBCTC consider when developing postsecondary CTE programs and courses

## **We recommend the Workforce Board:**

- ✓ Enhance the Career Bridge website
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