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New workgroup to examine CTE credentialing difficulties

by Alisha Kirby

(Calif.) The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing approved the launch of a workgroup that will include WestEd, the California Department of Education and other stakeholders with an interest in increasing the number of teachers with career technical education credentials.

The expansion of career options included in programs in recent years combined with the development of more CTE courses offered overall by state and local education agencies has led to a shortage of educators who have both the industry experience and also the academic content knowledge to obtain a CTE credential and to teach the appropriate courses, according to commission staff.

Jake Shuler, a consultant for the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, said that although the education department and commission met in 2016 to develop ideas to address the shortage of qualified CTE teachers, the proposed solutions that resulted have been met with skepticism from commission members or stakeholders.

“Some of these proposals included ways to create a streamlined process for general education teachers or community college teachers to earn their CTE credential,” Shuler told commission members last week. “At this point, each of those proposals that staff has brought to the commission has been met with various concerns from both commissioners and stakeholders, and while the discussions have continued, there’s been no forward progress on solutions at this point.”

Research has shown the students who participate in CTE coursework are less likely to drop out than their peers, and often demonstrate higher academic motivation and engagement, better grades, college aspirations and more employability skills.

With such benefits in mind, California lawmakers appropriated a total of \$500 million in one-time grant money to support programs that linked rigorous academic curriculum with career pathways beginning in 2013 and 2014. A year later, the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown agreed to provide another \$900 million over three years for similar programs. Additional funding has been included in the state's 2018-19 budget as well.

Career pathways in many districts now include courses related to jobs in agriculture, media arts, building trades, engineering and architecture, health care, information technology, fashion design and public services.

Though the commission reports an increase in the number of CTE credentials issued—growing from 869 in 2013 to 1,827 in 2016—fewer have gone forward to fulfill all requirements of the license. Only 826 teaching candidates did so in 2016.

The approved workgroup will respond to questions regarding credentialing that need to be addressed in order to develop an appropriate and responsive approach to staffing CTE programs statewide. Some questions submitted to the commission by staff include:

1. What are the knowledge and skills that a CTE teacher needs? Does this change if the course is also getting academic (A-F) credit? How does this knowledge and skill differ across industry sectors?
2. Would there be a benefit to structuring the CTE credential around the 58 Pathways rather than the 15 Industry Sectors? Currently, the CTE credential is focused on the 15 industry sectors. Someone with three years or 3,000 hours of industry experience in one sector is eligible for a Preliminary CTE credential. Fifty-eight industry pathways have been identified within these 15 sectors.
3. Across the 15 industry sectors, what types of K-12 courses are offered?
4. Are there appropriate “bridges” between the CTE and general education teaching credentials, and, if so, what would these “bridges” consist of?
5. Should there be a CTE credential renewal requirement that districts provide current CTE teachers with professional development or time for additional industry hours in order to ensure they stay current with industry standards?

Commission members Bonnie Klatt and Marquita Grenot-Scheyer noted at the commission meeting last week that they would like the workgroup to also examine how to increase the number of CTE credentialed educators in rural areas, and to collect both statewide and regional data related to CTE staffing.

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