**Unpacking Putting Learner Success First – Discussion Questions**

***About Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE***

*Putting Learner Success First: A Shared Vision for the Future of CTE* – released with support from seven national organizations in May 2016 – calls for a re-imagined education system where all learners have access to high-quality experiences that put them on a path to career success. This vision boldly challenges the status quo and calls for a transformation of the education system while also defining CTE’s role in igniting and achieving this goal.

The vision is anchored in five inter-related and equally important principles:

* **All Career Technical Education (CTE) programs are held to the highest standards of excellence.**
* **All learners are empowered to choose a meaningful education and career.**
* **All learning is personalized and flexible.**
* **All learning is facilitated by knowledgeable experts.**
* **All systems work together to put learner success first.**

***Key Policy Questions to Ask to Get Started***

As you consider how to implement the various principles and actions of the vision, below are some guiding policy questions to jumpstart the process, organized as a worksheet.

The questions aim to support state leaders as they reflect on the progress their states have made and where progress is most needed, and can be used internally or to facilitate cross-sector and multi-stakeholder discussions.

***All CTE Programs Are Held to the Highest Standards of Excellence***

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| ***Develop and implement rigorous review and approval processes and policies to ensure only high-quality programs of study exist*** | |
| Does your state have a clear definition or construct of a “high-quality CTE program of study?” If so, how do your state’s program approval processes and/or requirements at the secondary and/or postsecondary level reflect statewide commitment to this definition? |  |
| If your state does not currently have a clear definition or construct of a “high-quality CTE program of study,” what are the first steps that need to be taken to develop one? What barriers are in the way? |  |
| What processes, policies or strategies are in place to ensure access to and completion of high-quality programs is equitable across learner subpopulations across the state at the secondary and postsecondary level? |  |
| How is data being collected and used to analyze and inform decisions about equitable access to high-quality programs in high-demand fields? |  |
| How do accreditation requirements for postsecondary CTE programs support quality? How can they be built upon to raise the bar if they are set too low? |  |
| ***Align funding to high-quality programs of study*** | |
| How does your state’s program of study funding formula at the secondary and/or postsecondary level support quality? Innovation? Industry demand? |  |
| How can your state leverage federal and/or state funding to promote quality programs, including transforming, scaling down or defunding programs that are not meeting quality benchmarks? |  |
| ***Develop and implement sustainable processes for employers to inform, validate and participate in the implementation of programs of study*** | |
| Is there a state or regional structure or process in place that regularly convenes the K-12, postsecondary education, employer and workforce development communities to review labor market information and establish priorities for programs of study? |  |
| What role do employers currently play in reviewing, approving and/or validating CTE programs of study, standards and/or credentials at the secondary and postsecondary levels? Is this sufficient? Sustainable? |  |
| How often are current and projected labor market needs assessed? How do those analyses impact the approval and implementation of CTE programs of study? |  |
| Are there local practices of successful employer engagement or program validation that can be scaled? |  |

***All Learners Are Empowered to Choose a Meaningful Education and Career***

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| ***Develop and implement a career advisement system that allows all learners to be successful in a career pathway of interest*** | |
| How does, or will, your state define “career advisement?” In what ways do existing career advisement activities, programs and policies align with each other and make up a coherent system? |  |
| How many learners in your state receive adequate and sustained career advisement in K-8? High school? Postsecondary? What would it take to answer this question accurately? |  |
| What tools or resources are available to learners at the K-12 and/or postsecondary level to explore career opportunities and options? How well are they utilized? |  |
| Are there local practices of successful career advisement programs or efforts that can be scaled? |  |
| How can the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act and/or the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act be leveraged to support meaningful career advisement? |  |

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| ***Provide all learners with authentic, real-world experiences linked to a career interest of their choice*** | |
| How does, or will, your state define work-based learning? What are the range of activities and experiences that fit within the full work-based learning continuum? |  |
| How many learners in your state participate in meaningful experiential learning? What would it take to answer this question accurately? |  |
| What state policies currently support or incentivize work-based learning along the full continuum in your state? What state policies may prohibit or limit work-based learning along the full continuum in your state? |  |
| Are there successful local work-based learning programs or practices that can be scaled? |  |

***All Learning Is Personalized and Flexible***

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| ***Identify, build and scale policies and models that fully integrate academic and technical expectations and experiences*** | |
| What state policies currently support or incentivize the integration of academic and technical expectations? What state policies may prohibit such integration? |  |
| What resources or assistance does the state provide to support the integration of academics and technical instruction at the K-12 and/or postsecondary level? |  |
| Are there successful local integration practices or efforts that can be scaled? |  |
| ***Identify, build and scale models of K-12 and postsecondary competency-based systems*** | |
| Does your state have an overall strategy for K-12 competency-based pathways? If so, where is or can CTE be embedded in this strategy? |  |
| Does your state have an overall strategy for postsecondary competency-based pathways? If so, where is or can CTE be embedded in this strategy? |  |
| Are there successful local competency-based programs or practices that can be scaled? |  |
| How is your state supporting districts, schools and institutions that are already pursuing competency-based pathways (e.g., targeted technical assistance, resource development, communities of practice)? How do or can those support efforts align with CTE? |  |
| How can the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act be leveraged to support competency-based pathways at the secondary or postsecondary levels? |  |
| How can the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act and/or the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act be leveraged to develop and scale competency-based systems? |  |
| ***Fully align secondary and postsecondary programs of study to ensure seamless transitions*** | |
| What state policies currently support or incentivize full alignment of secondary and postecondary programs of study? What state policies may prohibit such alignment? |  |
| How effective are your state’s dual/concurrent enrollment, articulation and transfer policies and programs for connecting secondary and various postsecondary programs? |  |
| To what extent are the state’s career pathways aligned across education levels? |  |
| What types of professional development are provided to assist secondary and postsecondary educators in designing and implementing pathways that span education levels? |  |
| Are there successful local aligned pathway or programs of study that can be scaled? |  |
| How can the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act and/or the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act be leveraged to support more seamless transitions across systems? |  |

***All Learning Is Facilitated by Knowledgeable Experts***

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| ***Modernize K-12 certification programs to ensure all learners have access to educators  who are able to facilitate learning that prepares them for both college and careers*** | |
| How effective are your state’s certification options at meeting your state’s teacher needs? |  |
| Which certification programs are the most effective at placing qualified experts into the classroom? |  |
| Does your state have any policies, programs or incentives to help districts and schools recruit industry professionals with sought-after technical knowledge and skills and demonstrated teaching ability? |  |
| What barriers stand in the way of streamlining certification procedures to make teaching more attractive to knowledgeable experts? |  |
| How are your state’s teacher preparation programs readying educators to teach career-ready skills, such as collaboration and teamwork, leadership, problem solving and career planning? |  |
| ***Prioritize professional learning opportunities that focus on retention of quality instructors, contextualized teaching and learning, and learner engagement*** | |
| What professional learning opportunities does your state offer or require that bring core academic and CTE instructors together? |  |
| What professional learning opportunities does your state offer or require that focus on contextualized learning? |  |
| What professional learning opportunities does your state offer or require that focus on student-centered or competency-based instruction? |  |
| Which professional learning opportunities are the most effective at supporting contextualized teaching and learning? Student-centered instruction? Cross-disciplinary collaboration? |  |
| Are there successful local professional learning practices or programs that can be scaled? |  |
| How can the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act and/or the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act be leveraged to support this type of professional learning? |  |
| ***Build and support a pool of experts that instructors may draw upon to supplement learning*** | |
| What statewide policies or programs exist to help industry experts into secondary schools, as a full-time, part-time or adjunct instructor or in a more informal capacity? |  |
| What statewide policy barriers limit or prevent bringing industry experts into secondary schools? |  |
| Are there successful local practices or programs that can be scaled? |  |

***All Systems Work Together to Put Learner Success First***

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| ***Establish a common statewide vision and commitment to providing all learners with meaningful career pathways*** | |
| To what extent are the state’s career pathways aligned across education levels? |  |
| In addition to secondary and postsecondary institutions, how well are other key institutional stakeholders, including workforce development agencies and business and industry engaged in pathway development in your state? |  |
| What barriers exist to better connecting business and industry to pathway development in your state, and how are you overcoming them? |  |
| ***Coordinate federal and state policies, programs and funding to maximize investments and reduce inefficiencies*** | |
| What assets does your state have that are currently being utilized for education, career training and workforce development purposes (e.g., federal, state, local or private funding or programs)? What assets does your state have that can be utilized for education, career training and workforce development purposes? |  |
| How effectively is funding being leveraged to expand and equalize access to high-quality career pathways? |  |
| What barriers exist to braiding funding at the state, regional, or local levels, and how are you overcoming them? |  |
| Are there any local or program-level examples of asset mapping or braided funding that can be learned from and replicated? |  |
| How can the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act and/or Higher Education Act be leveraged to support geater system-level alignment? |  |
| ***Develop and support sustainable partnerships and intermediaries to accelerate learner success*** | |
| What organizations or entities (e.g., non-profits, workforce boards, sector partnerships, industry associations) currently support the development and implementation of career pathways in your state? What roles do those organizations and entities play? |  |
| In what ways does your state most need support from intermediary organizations and partners? |  |
| With what organizations does your state have the strongest partnerships? What are the elements in place that makes these partnerships so strong and how can they be replicated in other partnerships? |  |
| What support, resources or assistance does your state provide to local districts and institutions for supporting partnerships and/or intermediaries? |  |
| ***Build indicators of career readiness – for all learners – into federal and state accountability systems*** | |
| How is your K-12 accountability system promoting, valuing and/or incentivizing learners to demonstrate career-ready outcomes? |  |
| How is your postsecondary accountability system promoting, valuing and/or incentivizing learners to demonstrate career-ready outcomes? |  |
| Do indicators of career readiness have sufficient weight in calculating school, district and/or postsecondary institution performance? |  |
| If your K-12 and/or postsecondary accountability system does not currently include any indicators of career readiness, what are the outcomes or measures that are the highest priority for your state? |  |
| What recognition or incentives does the state offer to learners for demonstrating career readiness? |  |
| What is the defined role of cross-system partners (e.g., higher education and employers) in reviewing and revising these indicators? |  |