

By John Gaal and Andrew Wermes

# Certifying High-Quality CTE Educators

THIS ARTICLE LOOKS AT DEVELOPING THE PROCESS AND PORTFOLIOS THAT ADDRESS EFFECTIVENESS.

**T**HE ASSOCIATION FOR SKILLED AND TECHNICAL SCIENCES (ASTS) serves as the professional organization for Trade and Industrial Education (T&I) teachers. As part of its mission, ASTS is committed to providing leadership, voice and support for its membership. Nearly one year ago, driven by its concern that federal or state education agencies should not independently establish and dictate quality benchmarks for the T&I education profession, the ASTS Board of Directors (BOD) determined that it would be in the best interests of its membership to define what constitutes a high-quality career and technical education (CTE) educator.

Other professions have established criteria that identify the “gold standard” of professionalism in their industries (*i.e.*, CPA for accountants, CSP for safety managers, etc.). But as noted by Thomas and Wingert (2010) posit, “In no other socially significant profession are the workers so insulated from accountability” (p. 25). To this end, ASTS felt immediate action was required. The ASTS BOD appointed a committee of five subject matter experts (SMEs) to develop a relevant and rigorous certification program for review by and approval of its membership.

## Step One

The official process to establish a bona fide certification began in March 2010 with committee chair John Gaal, director of training and workforce development with the Carpenters’ District Council of Greater St. Louis and Vicinity, contacting the Certified Career and Technical Educator (CCTE) committee members

and providing them an overview and timeline for this project. As noted in the sidebar on page 42, the SMEs represented various aspects of the secondary and post-secondary CTE community impacted by a potential certification system: secondary education, higher education, and business and industry.

The committee focused on crafting a structure that would be inclusive of the CTE field. Initially, original documents only considered a system that certified one level of high-quality instructor/teacher. As e-mails were sent back and forth to all CCTE committee members, the types of certifications, rules, etc. developed in an iterative manner. Often, sticking points were resolved more efficiently by means of phone calls versus e-mails.

Accordingly, the CCTE committee “cast a wider net” to include educators (instructors/teachers and administrators) and all areas of CTE—not just T&I educators! In addition, it turned to other industry models to develop a two-tier certification system (*e.g.*, American Welding Society’s Certified Welding Inspector and Associate Certified Welding Inspector). When the ASTS BOD met in Kansas City for the SkillsUSA Convention in late June of 2010, the CCTE committee was prepared to present a two-tier system of certification for their consideration.

## Step Two

At the June 2010 ASTS BOD meeting, the BOD instructed the CCTE committee to be “more inclusive” by adding a third tier to the certification process presented. The BOD supported the resulting structure, and recommended its approval



PHOTO BY ISTOCK.COM



PHOTO BY ISTOCK.COM

by the ASTS membership. The three-tier certification program was adopted by the ASTS membership and presented, as follows:

### Certified Career and Technical Educator (CCTE) Levels:

#### Master CCTE

(Platinum Portfolio—MCCTE)

- **Higher Education:** Possess at minimum an earned master's degree (*i.e.*, M.S., M.A., M.Ed., MAT, etc.) from a regionally accredited institution;
- **Pedagogy:** Possess at minimum a current state teacher's license (permanent or lifetime) or one of the following nationally recognized credentials related to CTE: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification or Praxis II;
- **Occupational Technical Qualification:** Possess a current professional industry-recognized credential (*i.e.*, RN for nursing, U.S.-Department of Labor Journeyworker certificate, etc.) or equal (*i.e.*, an A.A.S. in Automotive Technology plus a current Gold National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC)—WorkKeys);
- **Occupational Training Qualification:** Possess at minimum a current industry training (TTT) credential (*i.e.*, OSHA 500, American Welding Society's CWI/CWE, etc.);
- **Career Commitment:** Provide evidence of a minimum of eight years teaching experience in a secondary and/or postsecondary CTE program that includes structured practical and applied theoretical instruction;
- **Community of Professionals:** Provide evidence of current membership in a CTE-related professional organization that promotes improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning (*i.e.*, ASTS, ACTE, SkillsUSA, etc.); and
- **Continuing Professional Development:** Submit a professional development plan. In addition, provide proof of a recently (within the past 12 months) approved professional development activity focused on teaching effectiveness (*i.e.*, regional/national workshop presentation related to your area of study, professional/peer-reviewed journal article related to your area of study, school-related mentoring relationship, etc.).

## Associate CCTE

(Gold Portfolio—ACCTE)

- **Higher Education:** Possess at minimum an earned bachelor's degree (*i.e.*, B.S., B.A., etc.) from a regionally accredited institution;
- **Pedagogy:** Possess at minimum a current state teacher's license (permanent or lifetime) or one of the following nationally recognized credentials related to CTE: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification or Praxis II;
- **Occupational Technical Qualification:** Possess a current professional industry-recognized credential (*i.e.*, RN for nursing, U.S.-DOL Journeyworker certificate, etc.) or equal (*i.e.*, an A.A.S in Automotive Technology plus a current Gold NCRC—WorkKeys);
- **Occupational Training Qualification:** Possess at minimum a current industry training credential (*i.e.*, OSHA 500, CWI/CWE, etc.);
- **Career Commitment:** Provide evidence of a minimum of eight years teaching experience in a secondary and/or postsecondary CTE program that includes structured practical and

applied theoretical instruction;

- **Community of Professionals:** Provide evidence of current membership in a CTE-related professional organization that promotes improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning (*i.e.*, ASTS, ACTE, SkillsUSA, etc.); and
- **Continuing Professional Development:** Submit a professional development plan for review and approval.

## Initial CCTE

(Silver Portfolio—ICCTE)

- **Higher Education:** Possess at minimum an earned associate degree (*i.e.*, A.A., A.A.S., etc.) from a regionally accredited institution;
- **Occupational Technical Qualification:** Possess a current professional industry-recognized credential (*i.e.*, RN for nursing, U.S.-DOL Journeyworker certificate, etc.) or equal (*i.e.*, an A.A.S. in Automotive Technology plus a current Gold NCRC—WorkKeys);
- **Career Commitment:** Provide evidence of a minimum of five years teaching experience in a secondary and/or postsecondary CTE program that includes structured practical and applied theoretical instruction;
- **Community of Professionals:** Provide evidence of current membership in a CTE-related professional organization that promotes improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning (*i.e.*, ASTS, ACTE, SkillsUSA, etc.); and
- **Continuing Professional Development:** Submit a professional development plan for ASTS approval. (For additional CCTE information, visit [www.astsonline.org](http://www.astsonline.org).)

## Factors for Success

The categories within each portfolio noted above were developed to benchmark

current certification qualifications, and to provide professionals with a scaffold structure for continued further certification development based on multiple factors. The importance of including documentation of achievement by educational or industry-related recognized third parties was included to ensure validation of those entities' standards as well as a benchmark of quality assurance. With an emphasis on industry credentials as required student outcomes, the CCTE committee recognized the teacher as technician and as trainer. Wagner (2008) insists that we need to move beyond the traditional isolationism of our profession by sharing what does and does not work in our shops, labs and classrooms.

This sharing is demonstrated by factors that include commitment to the profession as a career, staying connected to a community of professionals, and developing a professional development plan that seeks to measure and improve teaching and learning effectiveness. Accordingly, Darling-Hammond and Berry (2006) profess that systems must be in place to ensure that teachers can work safely and effectively with students.

## Transparency

In order to establish a credible system, ASTS will contract with a third-party administrator (TPA) to design, develop and maintain a database for record-keeping and initial approval of all portfolios submitted for certifications. The TPA's work will be reviewed quarterly by ASTS' BOD as a means to determine annual contract renewal. To date, ASTS has entered into an agreement with the Regional Center for Education and Work in the College of Education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

## Next Steps

Now the real work begins! Marketing the CCTE concept will require a two-pronged effort. First, ASTS wants to

## ASTS CCTE Sub-Committee:

### Secondary Education—

- Gavin Allan  
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Andrew Wermes  
Iowa State Department of Education

### Higher Education—

- J. Chip Harris  
Tennessee State University
- Ed Mann  
Southern Mississippi University

### Business & Industry—

- John Gaal  
St. Louis Carpenters JAP

**"RAISING STANDARDS IS AN ABSOLUTE GAME-CHANGER!"—  
U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION  
ARNE DUNCAN**

encourage all career and technical educators to join them in changing the game; by defining and certifying the high-quality CTE educator, "we" will move the CTE profession to a higher level. (Please visit [www.astsonline.org](http://www.astsonline.org) for more information regarding applications, fees, renewals, etc.) Second, ASTS encourages you to contact your state and federal education officials to encourage their support for certifying and recognizing high-quality CTE educators. This framework represents a legitimate means of elevating teaching and learning effectiveness and professionalism for CTE. **I**

## References

Darling-Hammond, L. and Berry, B. (2006, November). "Highly Qualified Teachers for All." *Educational Leadership*, 64, 14-20.

Duncan, A. (Interviewee). (2010, July 28). "Race to the Top" successfully incentivizes reform, Secretary of Education claims [Radio Broadcast: *All things Considered*]. Washington, D.C.: NPR.

Thomas, E. and Wingert, P. (2010, March 15). "Why We Can't Get Rid of Failing Teachers." *Newsweek*, 115, 24-27.

Wagner, T. (2008). *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need—and What We Can Do About It*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

### John Gaal, Ed.D.,

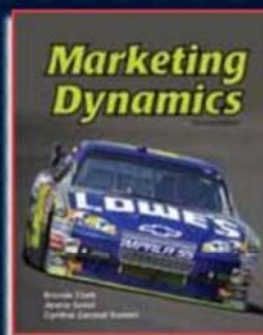
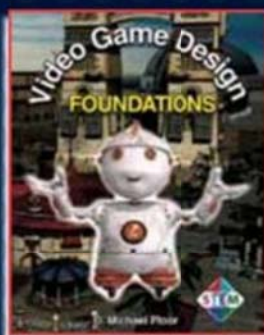
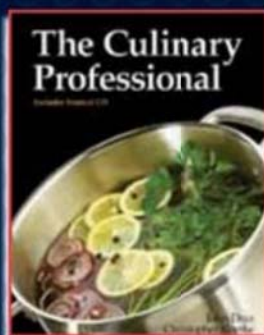
is the director of training and workforce development with the Carpenters' District Council of Greater St. Louis and Vicinity. He can be contacted at [jgaal@carpcd.org](mailto:jgaal@carpcd.org).

### Andrew Wermes

is the Iowa Department of Education Consultant for Career and Technical Sciences. He can be contacted at [Andrew.Wermes@iowa.gov](mailto:Andrew.Wermes@iowa.gov).

# Content for **SUCCESS**

Accurate | Authoritative | Dynamic



Choose **G-W**, the best products  
for Career and Technical Education



Goodheart-Willcox Publisher  
[www.g-w.com](http://www.g-w.com) • 800.323.0440