

The COMMUNITY



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must work for CTE

NASDCTEc's "CTE: Learning that works for America" campaign calls on CTE community to advocate

BY KIMBERLY GREEN

Funding threats have long loomed over career and technical education (CTE). However, congressional advocates have faithfully preserved investments in CTE—until fiscal year 2011. Despite many years of unwavering bipartisan support, even the most coveted programs are being held to a higher standard to showcase their worth and document their impact in order to survive these tough economic times. Global competition and a weak economy are game changers in terms of how policymakers perceive the value of CTE and education overall. And the CTE community must convince policymakers that CTE has been able to evolve to meet the new demands of the economy.

Unfortunately, like most in the education world, CTE has not been diligent about documenting and broadcasting its success. We have not been vocal and clear enough in communicating who we are, who we serve, and the impact and growth of our programs. Now, on the heels of

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economic and educational shifts, a strong communications and marketing initiative is needed. In response to this demand, the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) recently launched the "CTE: Learning that works for America" campaign. The initiative is designed to increase awareness of, and support for, CTE by providing advocates with the tools to communicate the value of CTE clearly and effectively. We hope you will join us!

The CTE Brand Promise

Think of your favorite chain retail establishment. One of the things that makes

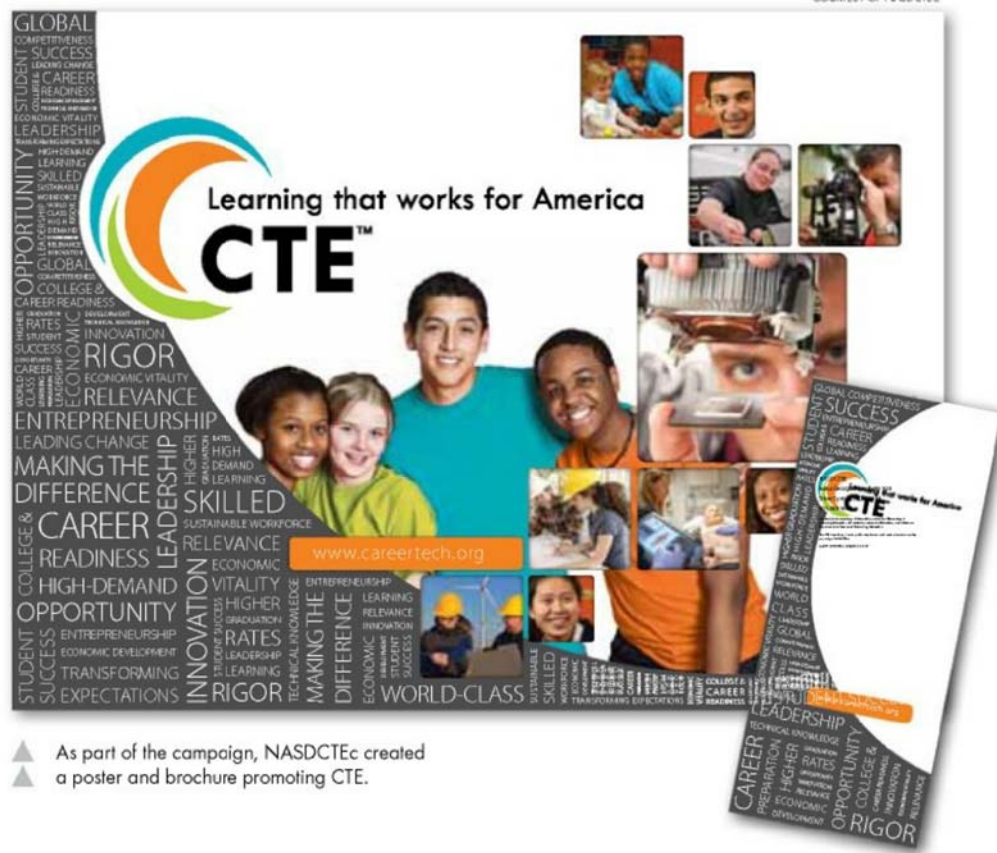
these chains successful is consistency in the experience and product they offer. What is the CTE brand experience? It varies tremendously across the country, within states and even within schools. To apply these expectations of a brand—delivery of the exact same thing every place across the country—wouldn't be appropriate in an educational environment. But given recent concerns raised by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan that CTE has "islands of excellence," consistency in the CTE brand has been called into question. To be clear, we do not believe in building a cookie-cutter approach to CTE. Instead, the CTE

COURTESY OF NASDCTEC

brand is about achieving a level of agreement and consistency in our core beliefs—what we stand for and what we hold ourselves accountable for.

To truly understand the CTE brand promise—the spirit and ambitions of “CTE: Learning that works for America”—it is important to understand the efforts and ideas that led us to this point. *Reflect, Transform, Lead: A New Vision for Career Technical Education*, located on the Web at www.careertech.org/resources/workforce-education.html, is the result of collaboration among CTE leaders from a range of organizations, including the Association for Career and Technical Education. The vision is framed by five principles:

- CTE is critical to ensuring that the United States leads in global competitiveness.
- CTE actively partners with employers to design and provide high-quality, dynamic programs.
- CTE prepares students to succeed in further education and careers.
- CTE is delivered through comprehensive programs of study (POS) aligned to the National Career Clusters Framework.
- CTE is a results-drive system that demonstrates a positive return on investment.



▲ As part of the campaign, NASDCTEC created a poster and brochure promoting CTE.

These five principles were our guideposts by which we crafted the “CTE: Learning that works for America” campaign. They define where CTE is headed and how we will get there. The brand promise defines our common core beliefs, which are critical to achieving the vision. And the campaign is about building awareness, consistency and advocacy for

where we are headed and the resources we need to get there.

It is significant to note that the CTE brand promise is not intended to imply that CTE has achieved all of its goals; rather we are aiming to highlight the value of CTE and the pursuit to achieve an ambitious, yet tangible vision. The campaign is as much about defining where we are, as it is about where we plan to go. It is an expression of our dedication to ensuring CTE leads in the evolving landscape of our nation’s educational and economic future by providing quality programs. We are moving toward a common goal and we are leading the direction and shape of CTE’s future.

Get Involved

The “CTE: Learning that works for America” campaign provides tools to help you get involved and advocate in a clear, consistent manner regardless of in what state you reside, institution you represent, or organization in which you are

CTE Brand Promise

Career and technical education promises an unrelenting commitment to:

- Continually improve the relevance and value of a student’s educational experience.
- Prepare students for success in both careers and college by employing career clusters and their curriculum framework, to ensure contextual learning and academic standards that reflect the

goals and interests of all learners.

- Provide American business and industry with a highly skilled, sustainable workforce.
- Provide dynamic, innovative leadership for the nation’s educational systems.
- Serve as a strategic partner with secondary and postsecondary educators, business and industry to strengthen America’s competitive position in the global economy. **I**

a member. The NASDCTEc Web site, www.careertech.org, offers a range of free resources to help initiate your outreach to policymakers, business and industry, state leaders, affiliate advocacy groups and others who can serve as allies in our advocacy efforts. Some resources to help you include:

- **CTE campaign logo**—Sign a User Agreement that ensures your commitment to upholding the brand, and you can obtain the files for the “CTE: Learning that works for America” logo.
- **Talking points**—Key and brief digestible messaging to engage audiences based on their specific interests and perspectives.
- **CTE fact sheets**—Data will grab the attention of individuals who want to be convinced that CTE provides

a positive return on investment.

- **Brochure**—A go-to document that clearly and concisely explains the “CTE: Learning that works for America” campaign; serves as a conversation starter for your outreach efforts.
- **10 things to do now**—Get started with the top 10 items you can implement to support the campaign today.

Tough economic times have created challenges for CTE, but have also opened a window of opportunity for us to prove that CTE can do its part in shaping the landscape of the nation’s future in education and the economy. Expressing our commitment to CTE in a consistent voice is critical to ensuring that we provide the impact that is needed to garner the support for CTE.

We urge you to affirm your commitment to the “CTE: Learning that works for America” campaign. The time for leadership and commitment to CTE has never been greater. Recent funding cuts to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act have fanned the flames behind the campaign. The fight is only expected to continue. We have the direction and the tools; the time is now for us to work for CTE. **I**

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Interested in exploring this topic further? Discuss it with your colleagues on the ACTE forums at www.acteonline.org/forum.aspx.

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