



Career Readiness in Kentucky

Recommendations and Guiding Principles

Presented by the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE), March 28, 2011

As the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) fulfills the mandates of Senate Bill 1 (2009) to increase the number of high school graduates prepared to perform college-level work, the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE), a professional association comprising Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers and administrators, congratulates KDE and the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) for seeking a unified strategy for college

AND career readiness. An educational system assessing accountability for both college and career readiness offers all students an opportunity to succeed in the ultimate goal of attaining a self-sufficient life. KACTE offers the following, hoping the definition of career readiness, guiding principles, and recommendations for assessment and implementation contribute to development of an accountability system measuring students' achievement toward college, work and life.

Career Readiness consists of three elements:

- *the level of preparation attained by students in **core academic communication and math skills**, which will allow students to function and excel in the classroom, at the workplace or in routine daily activities;*
- ***employability skills**, such as critical thinking and responsibility, which are essential in any career area; and*
- ***technical and job-specific skills** related to a specific career pathway that offers life-sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement.*

Guiding Principles

KACTE's goal in this proposal is to define "career readiness," and in so doing provide the educational community with guidelines, that if implemented, could offer each student served by Kentucky's educational system an opportunity to achieve success in life. To support the goal, KACTE presents the following principles to frame development of a Career Readiness definition:

- College Readiness and Career Readiness are two separate concepts; there are commonalities between them, but also some significant differences.
- There is a difference between being job ready (entry level) and Career Ready.
- The definition of Career Readiness must identify the components of knowledge, skills, and aptitudes needed for a student to be Career Ready.
- A student can be College Ready, Career Ready or both College and Career Ready.
- There is more to College Readiness than ACT scores; for example, the ability to apply knowledge to real-life situations.

Any student eventually has a career as a goal. Thus, Career Readiness is for ALL students as each of the three skills -- academic, technical and employability -- are a necessary foundation on which students can build lives and be prepared to confront the inevitable changes life brings.

Supporting the premise that College and Career Readiness are for ALL students, KACTE cites the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) Issue Brief, "What is Career Ready?" Further, ALL students need employability skills, a key component of career readiness. ACTE cites the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in the "What Is Career Ready?" Issue Brief: "Overall, employers placed the greatest weight on employee adaptability and critical thinking skills." A recent American Management Association survey of what employers want in employees are skills in: 1) critical thinking and problem solving; 2) effective communication; 3) collaboration and team building; and 4) creativity and innovation.

Recommendation for Assessment

At this time, there is no single measure for Career Readiness for every possible job in the marketplace, or even for every possible job in any of the 14 Career Clusters

recognized by KDE. KACTE believes a composite system of measures, captured in a continuously updated Individual Learning Plan (ILP) containing all appropriate attainment information, would best serve as a judgement of College AND Career Readiness.

The suggested Career Readiness measures are divided into the categories of technical skills, academic proficiency skills, and employability skills. The categories reflect research of what is needed to be successful on the job or in the workplace. To be truly career ready, KACTE suggests at least one measure must be attained in each of the three categories. Within each category, there are several potential measurement tools for consideration. It is essential to use measurements that can be or have been validated through research and evaluation.

Category	Measurement
Technical Skills	Industry Certification KOSSA *
Academic Proficiency Skills in Communications/Math	ACT COMPASS KYOTE ASVAB WorkKeys/NCRC (applied math, locating information & reading for information)
Employability Skills	ASVAB WorkKeys/NCRC (listening & teamwork) NOCTI-Job Ready

KACTE recommends a student must meet the following two criteria to be considered career ready and to obtain a Career Readiness Certificate.

1. He or she should obtain at least one of the measures in each of the three skill categories.
2. Each measure could be weighted with a point value and recorded in a student's ILP. The tabulation of accomplishments will result in an individual score of Career Readiness, with a minimum score necessary to earn a Career Readiness Certificate.

A Career Readiness Certificate documents that a student earned a minimum score with at least one measure attained in each of the three skill categories.

Recommendations for Implementation

KACTE recognizes there may be no easy or inexpensive way to account for career readiness. Nonetheless, to provide guidance for all students toward a career and to give students the ability to depict their accomplishments to both potential postsecondary institutions and employers, KACTE suggests statewide implementation of the Career Major Certificate (outlined in the 2002 KDE document, *A Guide to Selecting Career Clusters and Career Majors in Kentucky*). The Kentucky Career Major Certificate represents the culmination of the high school portion of the ILP for students who major in a specific career in high school. It

requires the completion of four elements: graduation requirements, an approved course sequence in any career cluster, related work-based learning, and a culminating project demonstrating communications, math and technical skills.

KACTE believes all students will benefit from the full implementation of the ILP and comprehensive advising process identified as Strategy 3 of the *Unified Strategy for College and Career Readiness Senate Bill 1 (2009)* prepared by KDE and CPE. The ILP can include: GPA in academic and technical courses, attendance, leadership activities such as participation in Career and Technical Education Student Organizations (CTSOs), skill demonstrations through CTSO events, work-based learning of all types (accompanied by external evaluation), and examples of work accomplished. If maintained, the ILP remains with the student following graduation and can document skills, experience and accomplishments for postsecondary education applications and potential future employers. An example of a completed ILP is used in Ohio.

Pairing attainment measures in each skill category with the nationally recognized career pathways movement unites ALL students in a single system of College and Career Readiness.

KACTE acknowledges this process of identifying Career Readiness will increase the amount of time spent in administering assessments, collecting data, and maintaining records. However, KACTE believes a process identifying true Career Readiness within the context of the academic knowledge, skills and aptitudes needed by American workers now and into the future requires such diligence and time. It would diminish the potential of Career Readiness if all aspects of skill development were not considered in defining it.

Citations

KACTE relied on several sources in developing this proposed definition and related recommendations.

1. *What is Career Ready?*, Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), Arlington, VA
2. *Reflect, Transform, Lead: A New Vision for Career and Technical Education*, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc), Silver Spring, MD
3. Proposed College and Career Ready Performance Index, Georgia Department of Education, Atlanta, GA
4. *Unified Strategy for College and Career Readiness (Senate Bill 1, 2009)*, Kentucky Department of Education and Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, Frankfort, KY, June 15, 2010
5. *A Guide for Selecting Career Clusters and Career Majors in Kentucky*, Kentucky Department of Education, Frankfort, KY, 2002
6. Career Passport, Grant Career Center, Bethel, Ohio; Kenneth D. Kappel, Principal

* KOSSA (*Kentucky Occupational Skill Standards Assessment*). KACTE supports external evaluation of KOSSA. These skill standards assessments, developed by KDE with business and industry support, provide a measure of technical skill attainment for some careers that do not have currently developed or recognized industry certifications.