Hierarchical Benefits of Credentialing

After extensive formal and informal dialogue throughout NC concerning the benefits of credentialing was conducted a hierarchical list were codified. For several years now the state NC CTE staff has disseminated this listing in an effort to educate others about and promote increased credentialing opportunities for CTE students.

• **Instruct – Assess – Instruct**

A prime outcome of credentialing assessments for educators is the ability to gage the level of student understanding regarding specific skills and knowledge within a course of study and adjust instruction as needed to ensure student competence. While all NC CTE courses have state-wide EOC assessments, credentialing scores provide additional data for the instruction/assessment loop.

• **Career and Continuing Education Preparation**

Students who have attained a credential have a documented skill set and are more marketable in the employment arena and better prepared to succeed in a post-secondary environment. Nationally, CTE has excelled in its competency-based approach to teaching and instructional evaluation. NC CTE credentialing offers students authentic evidence of skill attainment that is relevant to careers and continuing education.

• **Workforce Development Component**

CTE programs are major contributors to a local education agency’s reputation as a prime supplier of skilled entry-level workers for local communities as well as transferable skills throughout the state and world. Business and industry normally consider external credentialing a reliable “predictor of success” for entry-level employment.

• **Highly Qualified Teachers**

In a number of cases NC CTE teachers are required to become certified in order to teach a course that offers credentialing opportunities for students. It is highly recommended in all courses that have credentialing as a component. Earned teacher credentials, with related training, expands a teacher’s content background in the skill set areas and job roles for which they instruct students. It also enables them to better explain the requirements of specific jobs.
• Elevates the Image of CTE

Decades after Vocational Education became CTE many people still think of it as cooking and sewing, shop class, or where the students who are not academically focused go. However, NC CTE programs offer worthy credentialing opportunities that document learned skills by students and have begun to alter those negative, erroneous, and outdated sentiments.

Criteria For Selecting Credentials

For the NC CTE state staff there was a natural progression from documenting the benefits of credentialing to developing criteria for selecting credentials that would allow all intended parties to reap the intended benefits. The CTE state staff developed the following criteria that would guide the 115 local school systems in NC when acquiring credentials:

• Credential assessments should be criterion-referenced tests. Criterion-referenced test scores reflect the skill or behavior expected of a student having taken a specified course. Norm-referenced tests in comparison identify whether the student performed better or worse than other students, but not to what degree a student can perform a skill or demonstrate a certain behavior.

• Credentials should be industry driven or at least recognized. If national standards exist for the career area or specific occupation, the credential should reflect the appropriate scope of the national standards.

• Credentials should align directly with some or all course objectives and/or provide proven value to employers.

• When used for end-of-the-course tests, at least 80% of course content must be assessed by the credential examination.

• Credentials should be skill/experience appropriate for grade level. Even though a credential is a criterion-referenced test, is nationally recognized, and aligns with course content, in some cases the credential examination targets test takers that have years of experience in the career field. Hence, most secondary school students would not possess that depth of experience. At the other end of the spectrum are assessments that are aligned to introductory skills that are best offered in the middle school.

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