

Aligning career and technical education

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ABSTRACT

The issues and concerns facing Kentucky Career and Technical Teacher Education (KY CTTE), university teacher educators and state department Career and Technical Education (CTE) leaders in providing and preparing the best CTE teachers possible are not unique to Kentucky. In an effort to better understand these issues and concerns a team of state and national CTE leaders charged with planning Kentucky's annual CTE teacher education conference decided to use the conference proceedings as an avenue to stimulate discussions and gain insights on problems new and in-service teachers may be experiencing. The February, 2009, Kentucky Career and Technical Teacher Education Conference's theme "Aligning Career and Technical Education" allowed planning for a collaborative effort among Kentucky universities; the Kentucky Office of Career and Technical Education; the Kentucky Department of Education, Secondary Division of Career and Technical Education; and the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education. The conference planning process, the conference problem solving driven agenda and a manifest of the issues and concerns facing Kentucky CTE as indicated by conference participants and presenters; can provide useful information for state and national CTE leaders.

Keywords - Career and Technical Education, Teacher Education

ALIGNING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Kentucky has seen numerous changes over the past 15 to 20 years. James A. Gregson and Jeff M. Allen (2005, 2) state that “CTE is practiced at the high school and pre-baccalaureate postsecondary level. Each had undergone changes at the end of the 20th century that have implications for CTE teachers and teacher preparation programs.” The nation has also experienced many changes in CTE; the most notable would be the name change from “Vocational Education” to “Career and Technical Education”. Although the name changed, many of the issues and concerns facing university CTE teacher educators and state CTE leaders did not change or go away. These changes have, however, helped to create the impetus for research. A state CTE teacher education conference was used as a mean to gather insight into dealing with the issues and concerns facing Kentucky CTE and CTTE programs.

THE CONFERENCE PLANNING PROCESS

The Kentucky Career and Technical Teacher Education-University Coordinating Committee (KY CTTE-UCC) is charged with guiding the direction of Kentucky university CTE teacher education programs and state CTE leadership initiatives. Its members represent universities, state department personnel, and representatives of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). The annual state conference is hosted by a selected regional university or KCTCS. Northern Kentucky University CTE teacher educator, Dr. Ed Workman, chaired the 2009 conference committee. The theme “Aligning Kentucky Career and Technical Education Programs” was chosen as action driven by discussions at an October, 2008, meeting of the KY CTTE-UCC.

With the conference theme driving discussions, the KY CTTE-UCC met with Dr. Jim Stone and Dr. Donna Pearson of the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) to discuss how the 2009 KY CTTE Conference would provide an environment for open discourse on aligning Kentucky university CTE teacher education programs. It was decided to use the 2009 KY CTTE Conference as a forum for creating an environment where Kentucky CTE teacher educators and leading Kentucky CTE administrators could gain information on state and national CTE issues and openly discuss how Kentucky could better align CTE teacher education programs. It was also decided that Kentucky should partner with the NRCCTE in planning for the possibility of Kentucky hosting a National Conference for CTE Research in the near future.

CONFERENCE AGENDA/PROCEEDINGS

A mixture of presentations, panel discussions, and break-out sessions with follow-up discussions provided direction for seeking input from all conference participants. The conference was designed to be extremely participant interactive and driven. National speakers were provided to enlighten conference participants on findings from the American Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE) and the NRCCTE. The conference agenda is Appendix A.

Stephen DeWitt, ACTE Senior Director of Public Policy, presented “CTE Teacher Quality and Support” in the early morning session of the first day’s agenda. He gave an overview of President Obama’s focus for education as related to teacher education. Emphasis was on

recruitment and training of new and better teachers. Steve provided data resulting from an ACTE task force charged with examining issues related to CTE teacher quality and insight on defining high quality CTE teachers. His presentation provided some foundation for determining Kentucky CTE teacher issues and concerns.

Following Steve Dewitt, Jay Rojewski, University of Georgia, presented “Conceptual Frameworks for CTE Teacher Education”. He encouraged the group to seek alternative philosophies for CTE. Fewer CTE teacher education programs, less CTE teacher educators as leaders and discussions needed for alternative CTE teacher education programs were presented as CTE concerns. Jay assured the group that a continual assessment of CTE and its mission will be needed to provide future CTE teachers.

Following Steve Dewitt and Jay Rojewski, Jim Stone, NRCCTE, facilitated a follow-up session charging participants to break out into groups in order to openly discuss the information provided by previous speakers. The groups were to prepare a list of Kentucky’s CTE teacher education issues and concerns. Each group was diversified by program area in order to assure most teacher education programs were represented. As a result of the group breakout sessions and a final Friday morning open forum on the last day of the conference, the following issues and concerns were decided as the major opportunities for the organization to consider.

MANIFEST OF THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Relevance of CTE Teacher Education Curriculum

How relevant are KY CTTE programs? Are they meeting CTE teacher needs? Kentucky CTE teachers are usually classified as pre-service or in-service. Final discussions called for a review of CTTE programs for relevance to teacher needs using national and state teacher education standards, academic and CTE, as program adequacy indicators.

Aligning KY CTTE programs

Lack of alignment across KY in CTE disciplines and across disciplines for pre-service and in-service CTE teachers has become more of an issue in Kentucky due primarily to combining programs such as agriculture education, business education, occupational education, and possibly technology education under one program to provide services to ever smaller groups of teachers. Each group of teacher educators tends to protect their own pedagogical ideas and methods. Coupling this with different programs from university to university within the state creates a caveat of means to meet teacher needs for classroom planning, organization and presentation. For example Business Education methodology is often quite different than Agricultural Education. It was also obvious from small and large group discussions that the larger the number of students in a program the less the teacher educator felt the need to align programs. Programs where adequate student numbers are enjoyed feel less need to change. It was a consensus, however, that in the future all CTE teacher education programs could profit from a continuing curriculum alignment. It was also a consensus that students would be much better served by a state-wide CTE curriculum addressing Kentucky and national standards.

CTE Image/Identity

There was much discussion concerning the image/identity problem facing KY CTE programs. Participants felt that there needed to be research on how CTE programs were being perceived by all constituents. Are good students seeking CTE programs and if so are they being allowed to pursue CTE programs by counselors, teachers, administrators and even parents? Many KY CTE programs may be eliminated in the near future due to low student numbers and budget constraints. The high cost of CTE programs is more frequently making them targets of budget cuts and even program cuts.

Evidence of increasing percentages of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), by conference participants' perceptions at least, was a major concern for teacher educators. Pre-service and in-service teachers alike are requesting teacher educators to provide more tools for dealing with the special needs of IEP students.

Integration of CTE and academics

Are CTE teachers provided with tools to integrate their teaching activities with academic teachers? Kentucky has offered Integration of CTE and academic workshops since the beginnings of Kentucky Tech Prep implementation. Participants suggested CTE teacher education programs provide teachers with more tools to integrate curriculum, align CTE programs with academic content, gain academic credit for technical content and remove barriers between professional arenas. It must be noted that after nearly 20 years of Kentucky Tech Prep, this problem was still felt by participants to be a major issue.

Need for Teacher Education Leadership

Participants expressed the need to better prepare teachers for leadership positions. CTTE programs need to put more emphasis on leadership skills, group dynamics and administrative capabilities. Additionally developing CTE teachers as policy makers/leaders outside of CTE is essential in providing a full teacher education program. Stressing the importance of professional membership and participation should be ingrained in CTTE programs.

CTE Teacher Prepared to be Student Organization Advisors

Participants also expressed the need to embed skills dealing with student organizations in in-service and pre-service programs as well as the need to emphasize more active experiences for teachers already in the teaching arena. Pre-service programs should create a means to allow experiences for students to learn more about student organizations, to better embrace the need for teacher participation in them and to have skills in meeting the needs of student organizations. Participants expressed a concern that CTE teachers were not well versed in sponsoring student organizations. It was suggested that CTE teachers be given opportunities to sponsor student activities during their teacher education programs. Instruction for planning, organizing and managing student organizations could encompass a stand-alone class in CTTE programs.

CTE Teacher's Education Requirements

A major topic of discussion, brought on somewhat due to the conference presentation by Steve Dewitt of ACTE, was CTE teacher education requirements. Steve suggested national initiatives were driving the needs for higher levels of education for all CTE teachers. He presented the case for Kentucky possible reviewing its CTE teacher certification legislation. The group felt that this topic should at least be one for further study in Kentucky.

Participant overall consensus indicated in-service Occupational based CTE Teachers should pursue a B.S. degree within ten years. Many teacher educators expressed the need for more course content beyond just an Associate degree or 64 Hour Planned Occupational based CTE Teacher Curriculum was needed. Presently a 64 Hour planned Occupational based CTE Teacher Curriculum approved by the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board along with three years Occupational based CTE Teacher teaching experience is required for Occupational based CTE teacher certification.

CTE Recruitment and Retention/Teacher Shortage

Participants were made aware by state administrators that Kentucky has teacher shortages in some program areas. High teacher turnover was also indicated. Many factors were discussed which might cause less teacher recruitment and retention. Shortages were thought to be due to salary, stress on the job, lack of student interest, and negative student behavior. Participants felt teacher shortages could be improved by putting a stronger emphasis on national, state and local recruitment.

Many of the issues above are discussed in *The History and Growth of Career and Technical Education in America* (Gordon, 2008). This work suggests that the issues are national issues not issues unique to Kentucky.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the aforementioned issues and concerns for Kentucky CTTE and CTE programs were considered by the 2009 KY CTTE conference participants to be the most important facing Kentucky CTE. It was felt that further study of these issues and actions to be taken should be directed through the KY CTTE organization. It was a consensus of all participants that the issues brought forth during the group breakout sessions and further defined during the "What Have We Learned" conference session merit further discussions. It was concluded that future conference proceedings should provide avenues for addressing these issues.

APPENDIX

**2009 Kentucky Career and Technical Teacher Education Conference
Conference Agenda**

Thursday, February 5, 2009

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| 8:45 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. | Conference Registration (Thomas L King Leadership Center) Continental Breakfast |
| 9:15 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. | Welcome and speaker/panel introductions |
| 9:30 -10:15 | “CTE Teacher Quality and Support” Steve DeWitt, ACTE |
| 10:15 -11:00 | “Conceptual Frameworks for CTE Teacher Education” Jay Rojewski, University of Georgia |
| 11:00 -11:15 | Break |
| 11:15 – 12:00 | Panel with Q&A from audience, Dr. Jim Stone facilitator |
| 12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. | Lunch |
| 12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. | “The Role of Program Assessment in Aligning Kentucky CTE Programs.” Myra Helphinstine, Wayne C. King, Dr. Larry Helphinstine |
| 1:00 p.m. – 2:45:00 p.m. | Focus on Kentucky Issues |
| 2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Break |
| 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. | “What Have We Learned” Dr. Jim Stone, NRCCTE |
| 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Discipline Specific Break-Out Sessions Business Education Family and Consumer Sciences Education Industry/Technical Education Agricultural Education |

Friday, February 6, 2009

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| 8:00 a.m. – 8:10 a.m. | Opening remarks |
| 8:15 a.m. – 8:55 a.m. | “Video Podcasting and Its Impact on Student Achievement” Steve Stubbs, Newport H S and Dr. Joyce Stubbs, Morehead State University |
| 8:55 a.m. – 9:35 a.m. | “Aligning Kentucky Career and Technical Education Programs: The Hard Facts about Soft Skills” Dr. Donna R. Everett, Morehead State University |
| 9:35 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. | Teacher Certification Update Dr. Robert Brown, Kentucky EPSB |
| 10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | KCATE Update Mike Stone, Kentucky ACTE |
| 10:30 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. | Break |
| 10:40 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | “Future of Kentucky Career and Technical Education/Issues and Concerns”, Forum Dr. Ed Workman and Dr. Jack McElroy, facilitators |
| 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | Concluding Luncheon |

REFERENCES

- DeWitt, S. (2009, February). *CTE Teacher Quality and Support*. Invited presentation at the Kentucky Career and Technical Teacher Educators Conference, Georgetown, KY.
- Gordon, H. R.D. (2008). *The History and Growth of Career and Technical Education in America*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Gregson, J. A. and Allen, J. M. (2005). *Leadership in Career and Technical Education Beginning the 21st Century*. Columbus, OH: University Council for Workforce and Human Resource Education
- Rojewski, J. W. (2009, February). *A conceptual framework for CTE teacher education: Implications for teacher training programs*. Invited presentation at the Kentucky Career and Technical Teacher Educators Conference, Georgetown, KY.

