



State of Maine
131st Legislature, First Regular and First Special Sessions

**Task Force to Study the
Creation of a Comprehensive Career
and Technical Education System**

January 2024

Office of Policy and Legal Analysis



**STATE OF MAINE
131st LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR AND FIRST SPECIAL SESSIONS**

**Task Force to Study the
Creation of a Comprehensive Career
and Technical Education System**

Members:

**Sen. Joe Rafferty, Chair
Rep. Kelly Noonan Murphy, Chair
Rep. David Woodsome
Sen. James Libby
Rob Callahan
David Keaton
Anthony H. Sirois
Tom Danylik
Julie Kenny
James Ford
Garrett Stewart
Dr. Terri Cooper
Rebecca Birrell Smith
James S. Grant
Grace Leavitt
Robert A. Burr
Krista Okerholm
Ashley B. Richards, Jr.
Rosa Redonnett
Dwight Littlefield**

Staff:

**Steven Langlin, Legislative Analyst
Hillary Risler, Legislative Analyst
Office of Policy & Legal Analysis
13 State House Station
Room 215 Cross Office Building
Augusta, ME 04333-0013
(207) 287-1670
<http://legislature.maine.gov/opla>**

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Executive Summary

The 131st Maine Legislature established the Task Force to Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System (referred to in this report as the “task force”) with the passage of Resolve 2023, chapter 92 (Appendix A). Pursuant to the resolve, 20 members were appointed to the task force:

- Two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including one member from each of the two parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature and one of whom is a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs;
- One member who is a current career and technical education high school administrator, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- One member who represents a statewide association of career and technical education administrators, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- One member who is a member of a skilled trades union or representative of a skilled trades business or industry, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- One member who is a principal of a secondary school, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- Two members of the House of Representatives, including one member from each of the two parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature, one of whom is a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One member who is a current career and technical education high school administrator, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One member who is on the State Board of Education, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One member who is a member of a skilled trades union or representative of a skilled trades business or industry, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One member who is a superintendent of a school administrative unit, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One member who is a Maine Community College System administrator, appointed by the Governor;
- One member who is on a local board of education in a Maine community, appointed by the Governor;
- One member who is an officer of the Maine Education Association, appointed by the Governor;
- Three members who are members of a skilled trades union or representatives of a skilled trades business or industry, appointed by the Governor;
- One member who is an administrator at the University of Maine System, appointed by the Governor; and
- The Commissioner of Education or the commissioner's designee.

A list of task force members can be found in Appendix B.

The duties of the task force, which are set forth in Resolve 2023, chapter 93, are as follows:

1. Examine the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive four-year high school career and technical education program to provide a technical high school setting for middle school students to attend at the completion of the eighth grade, including but not limited to the advantages and disadvantages of a comprehensive four-year high school career and technical education model, obstacles to implementation of a comprehensive four-year high school career and technical education model and other models for comprehensive four-year high school career and technical education that exist around the State and on a national level; and
2. Examine increasing crosswalks and intersections between technical and occupational knowledge and curricula and academic standards in order to promote multiple pathways for awarding content area credit to students enrolled in career and technical education programs, including but not limited to building on prior and current work among the Department of Education, superintendents of school administrative units and career and technical education administrators.

Over the course of four meetings, the task force developed the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1. Support the ongoing work of CTE centers and regions and their respective governing or affiliated SAUs in developing equivalency agreements for credit gained through a CTE program to be accepted as core credit toward a high school diploma as required by Public Law 2023, chapter 247 (LD 436). Support should include periodic updates on the progress to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs to determine when and where additional resources, financial or otherwise, may be needed.

Recommendation #2. Support the State's existing 27 CTE centers and regions to increase capacity, grow programs, increase exposure to CTE programs (especially for 9th and 10th grade students), and require the data collection necessary to capture the true scope of needed resources to address barriers.

Recommendation #3. Explore ways to increase capacity at CTE centers and regions specifically for oversubscribed programs.

I. Introduction

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2. Examine increasing crosswalks and intersections between technical and occupational knowledge and curricula and academic standards in order to promote multiple pathways for awarding content area credit to students enrolled in career and technical education programs, including but not limited to building on prior and current work among the Department of Education, superintendents of school administrative units and career and technical education administrators.

The task force is also directed to submit a report with recommendations for presentation to the Second Regular Session of the 131st Legislature. The report due date is January 15, 2024.

II. Background

Career and technical education (also referred to as CTE) in Maine is built on a model of providing secondary students opportunities for relevant and challenging applied learning to enhance their occupational, personal and academic success, while at the same time preparing them for their next steps after graduation, whether that be continued education or entering the workforce. Throughout Maine there are 27 CTE centers and regions. CTE Centers are governed, operated and administered by a single school administrative unit (SAU) and make its programs available to serve secondary students from the SAU with which it is affiliated. A CTE region is a quasi-municipal corporation established by the Legislature to provide CTE to secondary students that is comprised of all of the SAUs within the geographical boundaries of the region and is governed by a cooperative board.

Across the State, almost 9,800 students are enrolled in a CTE program. While programing has traditionally been geared towards juniors and seniors, there has been an increase in enrollment in CTE Exploratory programs, which primarily serve freshmen and sophomores and are designed to introduce students to multiple CTE programs on a small scale with the goal that the student will gain interest and become more focused during the student's junior and senior years. Middle school pilot programs introduced in recent years have also seen growth, with enrollment during the 2021-2022 school year reaching 4,431 students at 21 CTE schools.

However, even with this growth, there are many barriers to students accessing CTE programs. As noted in the authorizing legislation, this task force was charged with examining two specific

issues related to CTE in Maine: the feasibility of a comprehensive four-year high school CTE program to provide a technical high school setting for high school students and increasing crosswalks and intersections between technical and occupational knowledge and curricula and academic standards in order to promote multiple pathways for awarding content area credit to students enrolled in CTE programs.

In Maine, the instructional requirements leading to a high school diploma must be part of a program of at least four years that meets the requirements of Title 20-A, section 4722 and any other instructional requirements established by the Commissioner of Education and the local school board. Minimum requirements established by state statute include four years of English, two years of social studies and history, two years of mathematics, two years of science and one year of fine arts. However, most, if not all, local school boards include additional requirements. A secondary school student may earn a diploma if the student has satisfactorily completed all diploma requirements in accordance with the academic standards of the SAU and the statutory requirements. CTE students may satisfy the diploma requirements through separate or integrated study within the career and technical school curriculum, including through courses provided through CTE centers and regions, on the approval of the commissioner and the local school board.

In recent years bills have been presented to the Legislature aimed at increasing the ability of CTE students to gain core academic credit for the work and courses they complete through the CTE centers and regions. When the initial bill to establish a task force to study the creation of a comprehensive CTE system and establishing a comprehensive four-year high school CTE program was introduced during the 129th Legislature, the sponsor of the legislation testified that he was seeking clarity on what such a program would look like.¹ The committee at that time also heard about a potential project coming out of the Region 10 Technical High Cooperative Board, which was exploring a proposed 4-year technical high school model similar to those found in Massachusetts and Connecticut.²

Although that task force from the 129th Legislature was never convened, subsequent legislation did focus on increasing access to CTE. For example, the 130th Legislature also passed LD 313, which directed the Department of Education to convene a stakeholder group to explore innovative approaches to advancing CTE opportunities, including by identifying existing systemic barriers to expanding access to CTE programs.³ That bill resulted in two reports

¹ See Public Hearing Testimony of Representative Norm Higgins on LD 1036, “Resolve, Establishing a Task Force to Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System to Support Workforce Development” 129th Legislature.

² See Public Hearing Testimony of Nancy Weed, Superintendent/Director of Region 10 Technical High School in Brunswick, on LD 1036, “Resolve, Establishing a Task Force to Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System to Support Workforce Development” 129th Legislature.

³ Finally passed as [Resolve, 2021, chapter 36](#), Resolve, to Advance Career and Technical Education Opportunities in Maine.

submitted to the Legislature.⁴ Simultaneously, the State Board of Education was also including in its five-year strategic plan for CTE, the goal of promoting CTE program alignment including ensuring congruence between CTE coursework and district-wide graduation requirements and standards.

Subsequently, the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, through its contract with the Maine Education Research Policy Institute (“MEPRI),” directed MEPRI to examine challenges faced by Maine CTE students in earning core academic graduation credits and some of the strategies currently in use for overcoming those challenges. That report⁵ which was presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs in September 2023 and to the task force at its first meeting in October, included that the two biggest barriers to CTE are limited seats in preferred programs and CTE schedule conflicts with preferred academic courses. The MEPRI survey found that 5% to 33% of CTE students are challenged to earn the academic credits they need to graduate, in part due to scheduling misalignment, relevance and rigor of high school English and math courses and lack of math credit recovery options.

Of those who responded to the survey, 60% said their sending high schools award academic credit to at least some students for work done in CTE programs through integrated, embedded and newly-created options and that 20% of CTEs offer discrete core academic classes on site at the CTE center or region. However, academic credit is often awarded for coursework in CTE programs “as needed” or on a case-by-case basis rather than in a uniform, systematic way. Recommendations from sending school staff and administrators include to “[r]equire or at a minimum incentivize, districts to provide pathways for students to earn core academic credit through CTE programs, and support schools with knowledge and financial resources to make it possible.” Ultimately, even where the work is being done, successful crosswalks need agreement between sending schools and CTEs, dedicated, well-qualified staff with time to build and continuously update the program, strong support from school leadership, buy-in from high school teachers, and student awareness of the options available to them. The survey also noted alternative strategies, such as offering core academics at more CTE centers and regions, leveraging early college courses beyond elective credits at more CTE centers and regions, and exploring adopting a technical high school model.

Simultaneous to the formation of this task force and the MEPRI study, another piece of legislation was winding its way through the process: LD 436, “An Act to Provide Career and Technical Education Students with Credit Toward High School Graduation for Work Completed in Career and Technical Education Centers and Regions” (sponsored by Rep. David Woodsome). LD 436 was ultimately enacted as Public Law 2023, chapter 247, and it requires that, before the school year beginning after June 30, 2025, cooperative agreements between school

⁴ Interim Report (December 15, 2021) available here: <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/7793>; Final Report (March 16, 2022) available here: <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/8627>.

⁵ Available here: https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/wpsites.maine.edu/dist/e/97/files/2023/06/Models_for_Earning_Academic_Requirements_for_High_School_Graduation_Through_Career_and_Technical_Education_Programs.pdf

administrative units and career and technical education centers and regions must include an equivalency agreement for credit gained through a career and technical education program to be accepted as core credit toward a high school diploma and provides that career and technical education students may satisfy local diploma requirements in accordance with the equivalency agreements included in the cooperative agreements.

As the members heard during the first meeting of the task force, by the time this task force convened in the Fall of 2023, the Department of Education, Maine Administrators of Career and Technical Education (MACTE), the Maine Curriculum Leaders Association (MCLA), and superintendents across the State had made great strides in improving these academic crosswalks and intersections.

III. Task Force process

The task force held four meetings on the following dates: October 18, November 8, November 30 and December 14.

A. First Meeting: October 18, 2023

The first meeting of the task force was held on October 18, 2023. The meeting began with task force member introductions. Legislative staff provided an overview of the enabling legislation (Resolve 2023, chapter 92 in Appendix A) covering the duties, process, and timeline for the task force's work.

The focus of the first meeting was on the background related to the second duty of the task force – to “[E]xamine increasing crosswalks and intersections between technical and occupational knowledge and curricula and academic standards in order to promote multiple pathways for awarding content area credit to students enrolled in career and technical education programs.”

Accordingly, the task force heard a presentation by Amy Johnson and Jennifer Chace from the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) drawn from their report on this issue, *Models for Earning Academic Requirements for High School Graduation Through Career and Technical (CTE) Programs* (May 2023). More information and details of what was included in this report and its presentation are included in Section II. Amy and Jennifer were joined by Dwight Littlefield, Career and Technical Education Team Coordinator at the Maine Department of Education (DOE) to provide further background.

The task force ended the meeting with a robust discussion of what each member hoped to get out of the task force. Overall, members expressed that they hope to expand capacity of CTE programs to increase access for students, explore statewide approaches that will benefit all students across the State, ensure equitable access for students and preparing students for the next steps in their lives, whatever it may be, increasing awareness of CTE programs, and minimizing barriers.

B. Second Meeting: November 8, 2023

The second meeting of the task force was held on November 8, 2023. The focus of the second meeting was on the task force’s first duty to “[e]xamine the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive four-year high school career and technical education program to provide a technical high school setting for middle school students to attend at the completion of the eighth grade, including but not limited to the advantages and disadvantages of a comprehensive four-year high school career and technical education model, obstacles to implementation of a comprehensive four-year high school career and technical education model and other models for comprehensive four-year high school career and technical education that exist around the State and on a national level.”

Accordingly, the task force heard from two other states on the models that their respective states use for providing comprehensive CTE high schools, as well as a presentation on a feasibility study conducted for a comprehensive CTE high school in Region 10 Technical High School, located in Brunswick, Maine.

Massachusetts

Erin Orcutt, Business Administrator at Cape Cod Regional Technical High School located in Harwich, Massachusetts, presented details on how Cape Code Regional Technical High School operates, as well as a brief overview of career and technical education in Massachusetts generally. Orcutt noted that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has 28 regional technical/vocational high schools, as well as 47 state-approved “Chapter 74 programs,” which are programs that meet the definition of vocational technical education pursuant to Massachusetts law. Districts apply for program approval to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Educations Office for College, Career, and Technical Education (OCCTE) pursuant to Chapter 74 and the Vocational Technical Education Regulations.⁶

Orcutt explained that in Cape Cod Regional Technical High School there are currently 666 students. Of that total, 43.5% of the district comprise of low-income students, while 22.2% of the district comprise of students with disabilities.

The school offers traditional academics, such as social studies, as well as CTE courses. Also included are Advanced Placement (“AP”) courses, as well as supports for students with individualized education programs (IEPs). Orcutt said that at Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, students complete two-week rotations between academics and “shop,” a CTE program, such as health sciences or automotive technology. At her high school, students take English language and mathematics courses for the full school year (180 days) in 9th and 10th grades, while students take science for the full school year (180 days) in 9th grade. In addition to

⁶ <https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/programs/>

Commonwealth of Massachusetts requirements for graduation, Cape Cod Regional Technical High School requires a senior project that students must complete.

The school is organized into “academies” based on CTE fields.

Orcutt told task force members that there are challenges that the school faces while conducting its CTE to students. She specifically mentioned scheduling is challenging, particularly for students on a pathway toward college who often take AP courses. Because of the two-week rotations, students are only in traditional academic courses 90 days per year. In order to make up for time spent in CTE, students often commit one Saturday per month during the academic year to stay prepared for AP exams.

Also challenging is the commitment to collaboration and professional development, which Orcutt told the task force is essential. She said that for one hour per week, 17-25 teachers get together and work on possible projects that align with student work and the cross-curricular learning.

Other challenges include community buy-in and the financial cost of CTE. Orcutt explained that the school needed new facilities, which ultimately cost approximately \$120 million for a 220,000 sq. ft. education center. Voters in Harwich, Massachusetts and the surrounding communities voted overwhelmingly to approve the construction of the new facilities.

New York

Dr. James Neidermeier, Associate Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Accountability at Questar III Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), presented a model of CTE in New York. BOCES was founded by the New York State Legislature in 1948 to provide shared educational programs and services to school districts within the state.⁷

As a BOCES, Questar III serves about 700 students in CTE, with the option for students to choose from 24 programs. Dr. Neidermeier told the Task Force that 30-40% of CTE students have an IEP and that 98.2% of students graduate with a Regents Diploma.⁸ A Regents Diploma is one of three diplomas available to New York State high school graduates. For a student to receive a Regents Diploma, a student must achieve specific scores on exams in math, social studies, English language arts and science. Additionally, students must earn 44 credits in high school in core classes such as math, world languages, English, social studies, arts education, science, physical education and electives.⁹ Dr. Neidermeier told the Task Force that 60% of graduates attend postsecondary education.¹⁰

⁷ <https://www.boces.org/about-boces/>

⁸ <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10412>

⁹ <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/student-journey/graduation-requirements>.

¹⁰ <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10412>

Dr. Neidermeier highlighted two specific New York State High Schools that Questar III BOCES works with: Tech Valley High School and STEM High School.

Dr. Neidermeier explained that Tech Valley High School opened in 2008 and is project-based learning focused. About 30% of students have an IEP or a 504 plan. In order to be admitted to Tech Valley High School, students are chosen by a lottery. There are about 150 students from 30 school districts enrolled at Tech Valley High School. Each student participates in a two-week annual career exploration program, where the student explores each CTE program that the high school offers. In addition to traditional academic courses, students must also perform 100 hours of community service to graduate and take 4 years of math and science. Additionally, two years of Mandarin Chinese must be taken. Dr. Neidermeier said that the average number of college credits earned by graduating seniors is 19, but that a 60-credit associate degree option is also available.

STEM High School opened in 2021 and is designed to give students historically underrepresented at the postsecondary level a jumpstart on their college education and careers. There are several career pathways available to students, including computer information systems and civil engineering. There are currently 100 students enrolled in grades 9-11. Dr. Neidermeier noted that because the school only opened in 2021, data is preliminary. However, he noted that in the last academic year, 169 college credits were earned by students attending STEM High School.

Region 10 Technical High School Brunswick, Maine

The Task Force also heard from John Stivers, Assistant Director, and Shawn Chabot, Superintendent, both from Region 10 Technical High School. Stivers and Chabot presented findings from a feasibility study on a four-year technical high school in Region 10 in Brunswick, Maine. Hart Consulting, Inc. conducted the study, which was sponsored by the Harold Alford Foundation.

Stivers and Chabot noted that part-time CTE models lead to scheduling challenges for the State's high schools, as well as in Region 10. There are limited seats for programs, with some high-demand programs seeing waitlists. In order to attend the program, students have to be in good academic standing and a student's sending school determines whether a student can earn specific academic credit for CTE. They said that CTE programs can only offer academic courses in cases where scheduling conflicts would prohibit a student from attending the program.

In conducting the feasibility study, assumptions were made about a proposed comprehensive high school, including:

- The school will be a public day school;
- It will be a full-time comprehensive technical high school with traditional part-time CTE program access;
- It will award high school credits and diplomas;
- It will be located at Brunswick Landing;
- It will attract at least 300-350 full-time students;

- It will provide all required services and extra-curricular activities (either on-site, or as a cooperative agreement with other schools); and
- It will have inclusive admissions, including those with special education needs and those whose second language is English.

Stivers and Chabot noted that in 9th grade, students will take foundational coursework; in 10th grade, intermediate coursework; and in 11th and 12th grades, students will take advanced coursework, have dual enrollment in CTE programs and perform work-based learning at job sites.

In describing the location at Brunswick Landing, Stivers and Chabot noted that there are 18,000 high school students in towns within 30 miles of Brunswick and that 3,200 students attend high schools in districts that have large populations commuting to the Bath/Brunswick area of the State. They also noted that 80% of Brunswick’s workforce comes from neighboring communities and there is opportunity to be on or close to Brunswick Landing, with 150 companies in the surrounding area in diverse industries such as energy, aviation and manufacturing. There are also regional campuses of the University of Maine at Augusta, Southern Maine Community College and four aviation schools.

Stivers and Chabot also showed data from a survey sent to students of schools who currently send students to complete CTE programs at Region 10. The survey was designed to gauge their interests in a comprehensive high school and asked what features a comprehensive high school should include. Fifty-one percent of respondents showed medium to high interest in attending the four-year, full-time comprehensive high school. This includes 41% of eighth-graders indicating they were interested or very interested. When asked about the most important features of the new school, 68% of respondents said hands-on learning was the most important, followed by 56% indicating a clear pathway to a career or postsecondary education.¹¹

A survey was also distributed to caregivers of students of the sending schools. When asked how interested the caregivers would be in sending their student to a new comprehensive high school, 47% indicated they were “extremely interested,” with 22% indicating “very interested” and 21% indicating “somewhat interested.”

Stivers and Chabot explained that as of October 2022, Region 10 receives \$2,893,205 for its CTE program from the State’s Essential Programs and Services formula. The two estimate that additional funding of about \$3.6 million will be needed if the comprehensive high school at Brunswick Landing is to go forward. Additionally, Stivers and Chabot explained that the feasibility study estimates a construction cost of at least \$60M, assuming a footprint of 130,500 sq. ft. This \$60M+ figure comes from Sanford High School and Regional Technical Center, which is 330,000 square feet but cost about \$100M, plus an estimated 40% increase in costs due to inflation.

¹¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10412>

Stivers and Chabot admitted there are many unknowns and uncertainties about opening and operating a comprehensive high school, including but not limited to any necessary statutory changes and identifying a funding model that does not take funding away from CTE centers and regions currently operating.

C. Third Meeting: November 30, 2023

The third meeting of the task force was held on November 30, 2023. After taking the first two meetings to examine the duties laid out in the authorizing legislation, the task force then turned its focus to discussion of what findings and recommendations the task force wanted to include in its report. Preliminarily, the task force received an overview of the state of CTE in Maine from Amanda Peterson, Director, Maine Administrators of Career and Technical Education (MACTE), who is also the Director at United Technologies Center in Bangor. Petersen was joined by Bobby Deetjen, Director of the Mid-Coast School of Technology in Rockland.

Peterson spoke about the challenges to CTE in Maine, barriers in CTE and how to serve more students in CTE.

She said that next year she will have 7 open teaching positions due to the expansion of programming offered. Attracting industry professionals to teach CTE programs is challenging because of certification requirements and because industry professionals are often unsure they want to work with teenagers. Those that do leave their fields and come to CTE programs to teach are often looking for a better lifestyle balance than their industry currently provides. Peterson said that is one way they recruit educators, by selling the stability of the profession and the predictability of an academic schedule to professionals. The other piece that makes it difficult to retain CTE program educators is that they are often taking a pay cut. By teaching their craft to the next generation, they often give up making more money than they would if they had stayed in their industry.

Peterson also said that funding is a huge challenge, particularly with special education, transportation, infrastructure and supplies required to teach the CTE programs. She said that in the first 30 days of the last academic school year she lost 55 students with individualized education programs because the CTE center did not have support for the students.

Speaking to barriers, Peterson said that resources vary heavily among the State's 27 CTE centers and regions. Each CTE center and region has its own culture, buildings and communities, which can make it challenging when trying to garner resources. She also said a lack of data is also a hindrance, acknowledging that superintendents, guidance counselors, the Maine Department of Education and CTE centers and regions could do a much better job in uniformly tracking this information so it is available when requested and necessary.

Peterson recommended building capacity statewide so students will be able to attend a desired CTE program without being turned away due to spacing or staffing issues. Also important to building capacity is to take a statewide approach when examining increasing capacity. She also recommended tying CTE in with the State's economic growth strategy, which seeks to attract 75,000 people to the State's talent pool.¹²

Following Peterson's presentation, the task force discussed at length some of the potential recommendations, specifically regarding supporting the ongoing work of increasing crosswalks and intersections between technical and occupational knowledge and curricula and academic standards to meet the timeline required in LD 436, and increasing support and resources, as needed to the current 27 CTE Centers and Regions, and to the extent that the level of support required is unknown, recommending the data collection needed to understand the extent of resources needed. The task force also discussed recommending a potential pilot project for a comprehensive four-year technical high school.

D. Fourth Meeting: December 14, 2023

The task force held its fourth meeting on December 14, 2023. The task force reviewed a draft report as well as comments, questions and feedback on the draft report that had been submitted by members prior to the meeting. The information regarding the substantive discussions, votes and recommendations are included in the recommendations section of this report.

IV. Recommendations

Votes on recommendations were taken during the third and fourth meetings of the task force. As previously summarized, the task force met four times in the development of its findings and recommendations and examination of the issues as required by the authorizing legislation. Over the course of those meetings, the task force heard from many of the stakeholders on the work that is currently being done to overcome many of the barriers to access to CTE. The task force is cognizant of the importance of supplementing – rather than supplanting - that ongoing work. The task force also recognizes that there are numerous other areas that may require further study and/or support but that went beyond the scope of the duties of this task force. Those additional issues and recommendations are included below and discussed in “Other Considerations.”

Recommendation #1. Support the ongoing work of CTE centers and regions and their respective governing or affiliated SAUs in developing equivalency agreements for credit gained through a CTE program to be accepted as core credit toward a high school diploma as required by Public Law 2023, chapter 247 (LD 436). Support should include periodic updates on the progress to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural

¹² https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov/decd/files/inline-files/DECD_120919_sm.pdf

Affairs to determine when and where additional resources, financial or otherwise, may be needed. (Unanimous).

As noted above, Public Law 2023, chapter 247 requires that in the school year beginning after June 30, 2025, a cooperative agreement between a CTE center equivalency agreement for credit gained through a CTE program to be accepted as a core credit toward a high school diploma for each of the school administrative units governing or affiliated with the center. This could mean, for example, that a student is able to receive credit for a geometry course at their sending high school that counts towards a high school diploma for successful completion of a construction math course at a CTE center.

This will avoid situations in which a student is precluded from participating in CTE simply because the student is missing required core academic credit that is perhaps only offered at a particular time during the school day, because the student needs to make-up a credit, or any other reason. Although many SAUs and CTE centers and regions engage in this kind of credit-work on a case-by-case or as-needed basis, a more systematic process will ensure that credits are awarded equitably and that students are able to plan ahead to achieve their academic and applied learning goals. As the task force heard, because curriculum and graduation requirements – beyond those minimally required by the State – are local decisions, each SAU may have different requirements. This makes uniformity across the State especially difficult. To lessen this burden, and in order to implement the new requirement, the task force learned that MACTE, MCLA, DOE, and other stakeholders have formed a working group, identified a working plan to audit CTE curriculum program and are working on guidelines that can be distributed to sending SAUs. The working group is expected to have a draft document complete in February 2024. Task force member Rob Callahan noted that the intent behind the document is to put that guidance in the hands of all CTE center directors and the sending school administrators to facilitate conversations between sending high school and the CTE centers about crosswalks between academic core credit and CTE program credit. Thus, even though local graduation requirements differ across the State, sending schools CTE will be able to utilize this document as a basis for determining necessary crosswalks and intersections between the sending school requirements and the programs and coursework at the affiliated CTE.

Because of Public Law 2023, chapter 247, the task force discussed and ultimately recommends ensuring that the progress toward implementation is continuous and that the timeline is on track. In discussing how to do this, members recommended that the Legislature's Education and Cultural Affairs Committee request updates from MACTE and its working group on the progress. In demonstrating its commitment to the law's implementation, the task force also recommends that the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee provide MACTE, CTE centers and sending schools with resources, including financial resources, if necessary, as the law nears implementation and as the work is being complete by MACTE and all of the other stakeholders.

One potential recommendation that was discussed but rejected was to add CTE curriculum into the Maine Learning Results. However, the task force ultimately decided this could further prohibit the offering of CTE education to students because of varying graduation requirements

among school districts. While the State sets minimum graduation requirements, some school districts go further and require additional coursework or activities to graduate, such as with volunteer hours. If CTE were included among these requirements, the task force felt it would have an adverse effect on CTE participation and decided not to recommend that.

Ultimately, the task force emphasizes that this work will require ongoing effort and initiative. Over time, local graduation requirements change, new CTE programs are added and current program curricula is amended, and national industry standards are updated. The equivalency agreements will need to be continuously updated and amended to ensure that they reflect the current needs of the SAUs, CTE centers and regions, and most importantly the students. The task force encourages the Legislature, through the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, to remain committed to the ongoing work and the time, commitment, and resources necessary to make this work successful today and into the future.

Recommendation #2. Support the State’s existing 27 CTE centers and regions to increase capacity, grow programs, increase exposure to CTE programs (especially for 9th and 10th grade students), and require the data collection necessary to capture the true scope of needed resources to address barriers. (19 In favor; 1 opposed)¹³.

Task Force members repeatedly heard throughout their meetings and from each other that demand for specific CTE programs surpasses supply. This results in CTE centers and regions turning away students who may have otherwise been successful in the programs simply because the center does not have enough capacity to accept the student. This capacity limitation is due to a number of factors, including physical space and staff recruitment and retention.

One issue that was continuously raised is that while there is ample anecdotal evidence of waitlists for programs, staffing shortages and physical capacity limitations there is no systematic data collection to truly understand the scope of the needed resources. The task force heard from presenters and its own task force membership that most, if not all, CTE centers and regions have programs with these waitlists and that the CTE centers and regions cannot accept eligible students for no other reasons other than physical space limitations and lack of educators for that program. However, no data collection is required or in a centralized location, legislators are not in a position to know about the needs of each CTE center and region and cannot make decisions that reflect the on-the-ground needs of the CTE programs. The State does not have adequate data identifying how many students would like to attend a CTE program but can’t because of space, how many teachers are needed to fill vacant and new positions, and what is the cost to fill those gaps. The task force recognizes that this puts policymakers and legislators at a disadvantage in trying to determine how many resources are needed, and where to direct those resources to make the most impact. Without having this data accessible, any numeric funding recommendations would be estimates. Accordingly, task force members also recommend that data collection be required so that legislators can make better decisions about what CTE centers and regions need generally.

¹³ Opposed: James Ford.

However, while task force members recommend increased investment, including financially, some members also expressed concern that an increase in CTE funding could have an adverse effect on other school funding by drawing funds from the other necessary costs of public education in the State. To avoid this, Rep. Woodsome expressed the idea that the State should provide all funding for CTE centers and that local communities should be spared from having to increase local taxes for such a statewide need.

Another area of concern and identified need for resources is that there should be more support for CTE specifically in the area of special education. Currently, when a student who needs one-on-one support via an education technician due to an individual education plan, the financial calculation of that need is distributed to the student's high school. If the student decides to attend a CTE program at a CTE center or region, that one-to-one support does not automatically translate to that student being able to take that educational technician with them to the CTE center or region. Members expressed that they are currently educating students unsupported, as the CTE center or region does not get funding to employ an education technician for that student. This is likely to become an increasing problem as more students are anticipated to be attending CTE centers and regions once the equivalency agreements for core academic credit are implemented in accordance with LD 436.

Members also recommend that funding be expanded to include more CTE program exposure to 9th and 10th grade students. Members agreed that the earlier a student's interest in the CTE fields can be captured, the more likely the student is to be successful and to know that CTE can lead to a pathway that works for the student and is desired by the student. Task Force member Dr. Terri Cooper expressed that if the students are not taken care of during their education years, then they will need to be taken care of as adults. Early exploration, even at the elementary and middle school levels, will help students understand the different pathways available to them and help ensure their successful futures.

Recommendation #3. Explore ways to increase capacity at CTE centers and regions specifically for oversubscribed programs. (Unanimous).

As noted in the previous recommendation, increasing capacity at CTE centers and regions is crucial to expanding access for students. The task force at its fourth and final meeting talked at length about the fact that there are specific programs, in particular, that are over capacity and regularly have waiting lists and sought to explore solutions that could alleviate the capacity issues in these oversubscribed programs.

Accordingly, the task force specifically recommends further exploring ways to increase capacity at CTE centers and regions specifically for these oversubscribed programs. A number of potential avenues for increasing programmatic capacity were put forth by the task force that should be considered by the Legislature, Department of Education and local communities. In exploring these options, the task force emphasizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach that will work for each CTE center, region, SAU or local community. Rather, each local community

will best be able to identify the local, existing resources that could be tapped to increase programmatic capacity.

One area that deserves further exploration would be adding a so-called “3rd option,” where another cohort of students could be accommodated to increase the number of times a particular CTE program is offered. This 3rd option could be offered after school or during the evening hours while still utilizing existing teaching staff and facilities, and would allow an additional cohort of students to be enrolled. Providing programming outside of the traditional school day alleviates some of the issues surrounding gaining necessary graduation credits and having to choose between CTE programs and courses at the local sending school, as discussed previously in this report. This 3rd option would give students more flexibility and choice in pursuing CTE education.

Program-specific expansion could also be accomplished through the use of off-site locations and collaboration with partners supplementing, not supplanting, the existing staff and facilities. Task force members discussed the use of collaborations and partnerships, including with adult education, the Maine Community College System, the University of Maine System and the use of unions and the trades. Task force members Robert Burr and Anthony Sirois, members representing skilled trades, discussed how their respective trade unions offer apprenticeship training for many fields that are common in CTE centers and regions such as welding and plumbing. Task force member Robert Burr also said that the Maine State Building and Construction Trades Council, consisting of 20 affiliated unions representing over 6,000 craftspeople across Maine, may be an avenue to explore solutions with. Additionally, there was discussion about possibly utilizing mobile resources, where a trade organization supplies a mobile classroom to help students learn a specific trade. Alternately, CTEs could explore the leasing of space in a former business or other available buildings or structures in the community, if physical space is a barrier.

Again though, the task force acknowledges that each CTE center and region is different and has different limitations within its community; what works for one may not work for another. The task force recommends that each CTE center and region think creatively on how to come up with a way to offer more space and programming options.

Another area of exploration recommended by the task force is an examination of the Department of Education new CTE program application and the timeline that is required for submission by a CTE center or region when a new program is added. Currently, a CTE program must be approved by the Commissioner of Education in order to be offered by a CTE center, region or affiliated unit, receive state subsidy or receive approval for federal funding (although some *federal* funding may be approved for new or emerging industry programs prior to granting approval for the CTE program).¹⁴

¹⁴ See 20-A MRSA §8306-B.

Task force members noted that this application could be modified, or a new application process could be modeled off of this process, for a CTE program that is interested in expanding or modifying its current operations to serve more students. CTE programs aim to educate students to meet the needs of a diverse – and everchanging – workforce. Accordingly, which programs are gaining interest and seeing waitlists may vary from year to year and the expansion and/or modification of those programs often lags behind the need. Offering a new cohort of students within an existing program incurs additional expenses such as employee pay, transportation expenses or new equipment and supplies.

Accordingly, task force member Dwight Littlefield emphasized that one issue to consider around funding is this a lag time between when funding is applied for and when it is received by the CTE center or region. Task force member Dave Keaton noted that it would be beneficial if there was a fund at the Department of Education that could be designated to pay for materials and supplies to help expand or modify a CTE offering that is seeing high-demand. Having funding available immediately for the pressing need of expanding or modifying current CTE programming would allow the CTE centers and regions react quickly to the needs of the State’s workforce, local community, and the interests of the students, and ultimately be better-situated to serve more students.

Regardless of how a CTE center or region ultimately addresses the oversubscription of some of its programs, the task force recommends local solutions that work for that CTE center or region. The task force recognizes that each CTE center and region is different and has varying needs, so members expressed their desire that local CTEs maintain their creativity and flexibility when considering serving the needs of CTE students and getting more students into oversubscribed programs.

V. Additional Considerations

At its final two meetings, task force members discussed and voted¹⁵ on creating a pilot project for a four-year comprehensive high school, where students attend one school after eighth grade that includes both core academic offerings and CTE programs in one location.

Members supporting this recommendation noted that an innovative pilot project could serve as a model for future CTE education throughout the State. The pilot project would help identify those aspects that could be replicated elsewhere, as well as those that would need to be different depending on location and interest. The pilot could be implemented as a complement to the existing CTE structure and would not preclude improvement, support and innovation of the existing 27 centers and regions. Given the current capacity issues and waitlists for programs, this pilot project would not be in competition with current programming, but would instead provide an opportunity to serve more students. Furthermore, an all-inclusive comprehensive

¹⁵ Favor: Anthony H. Sirois, James Grant, Sen. Rafferty, Sen. James Libby, Ashley B. Richards, Jr., Robert Burr, Dr. Terri Cooper. Opposed: Dave Keaton, Dwight Littlefield, Grace Leavitt, Rosa Redonnett, Krista Okerholm, Rep. Woodsome, Tom Danylik, Becky Smith, Julie Kenny and Rep. Murphy; Abstain: James Ford; Absent: Rob Callahan and Garrett Stewart.

CTE school would be beneficial and students would have a sense of pride in participating in extracurricular activities at the same place that they participate in CTE and regular education programming.

Except as noted below, task force members in support of this recommendation did not make a specific recommendation or endorsement of the Region 10 proposal as part of the pilot project nor recommend any specificity in terms of the location of the pilot project. The details of the location and scope of the pilot project would need to be determined as part of the planning process prior to moving forward with the pilot project.

Task force member Ashley B. Richards, although voting in favor of the recommendation, noted that the four-year comprehensive high school model is successful in other states and that recommending merely a pilot project is inadequate. He noted that the recommendation should go further and that the State should move forward with Region 10 proposal as presented during the second meeting.

Task force members in opposition to this recommendation expressed concern with recommending such a full-scale proposal when there are immediate needs that have not yet been solved within the existing CTE centers and regions. Task Force member Rob Callahan, in expressing his opposition, noted that Maine has the lowest participation rates among the U.S. in CTE programs. After the completion of a pilot project of a comprehensive CTE high school, he further questioned whether that school would then be in the same predicament as the 27 CTE centers and regions are in now, with waiting lists for high-demand programs. Concern was also raised that a pilot project would be competing with other local schools for students, staff and funding. Thus, while generally not opposed to the idea of a pilot project, he could not support this recommendation.

Task force members in opposition to the recommendation also noted the potential cost of the pilot project, and felt that funding and resources are better directed at supporting the three previous recommendations and ensuring that the existing CTE structure has what it needs to be successful. Additionally, there were concerns that, by its very nature, the pilot project would be inequitable as it would only serve students in a specific region in the State and not provide statewide benefits. The pilot project would also likely affect local budgets in the region in which it is located.

Those in opposition noted that at this time they could not support a proposed pilot project for a four-year comprehensive high school.

Ultimately, the proposed recommendation was not adopted because it did not receive majority support of the task force.

VI. Conclusion

The task force's work and the publication of its report comes at a time of great interest and support for improving and expanding CTE in this State. All task force members reiterated throughout the task force's meetings the need to reduce barriers for students, respond better to industry and workforce needs, and expand capacity of CTE programming throughout the State. While task force members recognize that investment in CTE can require a lot of resources, the benefits of doing so are innumerable and critically necessary to support the State's future.

And, this work does not end with the task force's report; the task force hopes that the recommendations contained in this report encourage further discussion and action by the Legislature, Department of Education, and local communities in reducing barriers to CTE access and improving and expanding CTE programs.

Finally, the task force would like to thank all of its members and presenters for generously offering their time, expertise and advice on the complicated issues involved in supporting CTE in this State. The knowledge, perspectives, and previous research provided through the task force's work were invaluable in developing the findings and recommendations of the task force. Ultimately, CTE in this State would not be what it is without the dedicated and devoted teachers, administrators, schools, local communities, tradespeople, and – most importantly – students that work and learn every day to improve CTE, and the task force would like to thank them all for continuing their important and critical work.

APPENDIX A

Authorizing Legislation: Resolve 2023, c. 92

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-THREE

S.P. 520 - L.D. 1283

**Resolve, to Reestablish the Task Force to Study the Creation of a
Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System**

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the Task Force to Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System is reestablished pursuant to this legislation to study the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive 4-year high school career and technical education program to provide a technical high school setting for students; and

Whereas, the study must be initiated before the 90-day period expires in order that the study may be completed and a report submitted in time for submission to the next legislative session; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1. Task force established. Resolved: That the Task Force to Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System, referred to in this resolve as "the task force," is established.

Sec. 2. Task force membership. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the task force consists of 20 members as follows:

1. Six members appointed by the President of the Senate as follows:
 - A. Two members of the Senate, including one member from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature, one of whom is a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs;
 - B. One member who is a current career and technical education high school administrator;
 - C. One member who represents a statewide association of career and technical education administrators;

- D. One member who is a member of a skilled trades union or representative of a skilled trades business or industry; and
- E. One member who is a principal of a secondary school;
- 2. Six members appointed by the Speaker of the House as follows:
 - A. Two members of the House of Representatives, including one member from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature, one of whom is a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs;
 - B. One member who is a current career and technical education high school administrator;
 - C. One member who is on the State Board of Education;
 - D. One member who is a member of a skilled trades union or representative of a skilled trades business or industry; and
 - E. One member who is a superintendent of a school administrative unit;
- 3. Seven members appointed by the Governor as follows:
 - A. One member who is a Maine Community College System administrator;
 - B. One member who is on a local board of education in a Maine community;
 - C. One member who is an officer of the Maine Education Association;
 - D. Three members who are members of a skilled trades union or representatives of a skilled trades business or industry; and
 - E. One member who is an administrator at the University of Maine System; and
- 4. The Commissioner of Education or the commissioner's designee.

Sec. 3. Chairs. Resolved: That the first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the task force.

Sec. 4. Appointments; convening of task force. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the task force.

Sec. 5. Duties. Resolved: That the task force shall:

- 1. Examine the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive 4-year high school career and technical education program to provide a technical high school setting for middle school students to attend at the completion of the 8th grade, including but not limited to the advantages and disadvantages of a comprehensive 4-year high school career and technical education model, obstacles to implementation of a comprehensive 4-year high school career and technical education model and other models for comprehensive 4-year high school career and technical education that exist around the State and on a national level; and
- 2. Examine increasing crosswalks and intersections between technical and occupational knowledge and curricula and academic standards in order to promote multiple pathways for awarding content area credit to students enrolled in career and technical education programs, including but not limited to building on prior and current work among

the Department of Education, superintendents of school administrative units and career and technical education administrators.

Sec. 6. Staff assistance. Resolved: That the Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the task force, except that Legislative Council staff support is not authorized when the Legislature is in regular or special session.

Sec. 7. Report. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, no later than January 15, 2024, the task force shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the Second Regular Session of the 131st Legislature.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

APPENDIX B

Membership list: Task Force to Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System

Task Force to Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System
[Resolve 2023, Ch. 92](#)
Membership List

Name	Representation
Senator Joe Rafferty - Chair	Member of the Senate
Representative Kelly Murphy – Chair	Member of the House
Rep. David Woodsome	Member of the House
Senator James Libby	Member of the Senate
Rob Callahan	Member who is a current career and technical education high school administrator
David Keaton	Member who represents a statewide association of career and technical education administrators
Anthony H. Sirois	Member who is a member of a skilled trades union or representative of a skilled trades business or industry
Tom Danylik	Member who is principal of a secondary school
Julie Kenny	Member who is a current career and technical education high school administrator
James Ford	Member who is on the State Board of Education
Garrett Stewart	Member who is a member of a skilled trades union or representative of a skilled trades business or industry
Dr. Terri Cooper	Member who is a superintendent of a school administrative unit
Rebecca Birrell Smith	One member who is a Maine Community College System administrator
James S. Grant	One member who is on a local board of education in a Maine community
Grace Leavitt	One member who is an officer of the Maine Education Association
Robert A. Burr	Member who is a member of a skilled trades union or representative of a skilled trades business or industry
Krista Okerholm	Member who is a member of a skilled trades union or representative of a skilled trades business or industry
Ashley B. Richards, Jr.	Member who is a member of a skilled trades union or representative of a skilled trades business or industry
Rosa A. Redonnett	Member who is an administrator of the University of Maine System
Dwight Littlefield	Commissioner of Education or the commissioner’s designee