

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

Resolve 2023, chapter 92

December 14 – 10 AM

Room 208, State House (EDU Committee Room), Augusta, ME

Agenda: Meeting #4

1. Welcome - Chairs, Senator Joe Rafferty and Representative Kelly Murphy;

Commission member introductions
2. Review of draft report

Possible re-vote on recommendations
3. Adjourn

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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 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.

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, ch. 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. Create a pilot project for a four-year comprehensive high school.

Commented [LS1]: Tentatively – see p. 16

I. Introduction

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:

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Legislature and one of whom is a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs;

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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 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.

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 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 career and technical education in Maine: the feasibility of a comprehensive 4-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. Career and technical education 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.

Over the past few years there have been bills presented to the Legislature aimed at increasing the ability of career and technical education 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 also heard at that time about a potential project coming out of the Region 10 Technical High Cooperative Board, which was exploring a proposed four-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 the Legislature also passed LD 313, which directed the Department of Education to convene a stakeholder group to explore innovative approaches to advancing career and technical education opportunities, including by identifying existing systemic barriers to expanding access to career and technical education programs.³ That bill resulted in two reports 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

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

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>.

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 this past September 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. However, academic credit is often awarded for coursework in CTE programs “as needed” or on 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 their options. The survey also noted alternative strategies, such as offering core academics at more CTEs, leveraging early college courses beyond elective credits at more CTEs, and exploring adopting a technical high school model.

Simultaneously 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 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 committee 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

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

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. All meetings were held in a hybrid (remote and in-person) format and were open to the public. Each meeting was livestreamed via the Legislature’s audio and video streaming service.

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 of the second duty of the task force, which was 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 the Background Section. 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 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.”

Accordingly, the task force heard from two other states on the models that their respective states use for providing comprehensive career and technical education high schools, as well as a presentation on a feasibility study conducted for a comprehensive career and technical education 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 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. 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 career and technical education 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 career and technical education 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 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 career and technical education fields.

Orcutt told Task Force members that there are challenges that the school faces while conducting its career and technical education 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

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

year. In order to make up for time spent in career and technical education, 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 career and technical education. 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 career and technical education 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 career and technical education, with the option for students to choose from 24 programs. Dr. Neidermeier told the Task Force that 30-40% of career and technical education 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

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 career and technical education 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 four years of math and science. Additionally, two years of Mandarin Chinese must be taken. Dr. Neidermeier

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>

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 Alfond Association.

Stivers and Chabot noted that part-time career and technical education 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 to attend a career and technical education program and a student's sending school determines whether a student can earn specific academic credit for career and technical education. They said that career and technical education 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 career and technical education 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
- 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 career and technical education 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 Brunswick imports 80% of its workforce 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 career and technical education programs at Region 10. The survey was designed to gauge their interests in a comprehensive high school and 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 career and technical education 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 sq. ft. but cost about \$100M, plus an estimated 40% increase in inflation costs.

Stivers and Chabot admitted there were many open questions, including statutory changes to allow the comprehensive high school to proceed, as well as identify a funding model that holds other schools harmless.

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

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

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 seven open teaching positions due to the expansion of programming offered. Attracting industry professionals to teach CTE programs is challenging because of certification requirements and that 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. Each CTE center 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 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 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 commission 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

¹² https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov/decd/files/inline-files/DECD_120919_sm.pdf
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required is unknown, recommending the data collection needed to understand the extent of resources needed. The commission 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 also 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 commission 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 or in a different section...TBD]

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, ch. 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. (17 IN FAVOR; 2 ABSENT; 1 ABSTENTION)¹³.

As noted above, Public Law 2023, ch. 247 requires that in the school year beginning after June 30, 2025, a cooperative agreement between a career and technical education center equivalency agreement for credit gained through a career and technical education 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 career and technical education 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

¹³ Abstaining, Becky Smith; absent: Sen. James Libby and Dave Keaton.

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. (16 IN FAVOR; 1 OPPOSED; 2 ABSENT; 1 ABSTENTION)¹⁴.

Task Force members repeatedly heard throughout their meetings and from each other that demand for specific career and technical education programs surpasses supply. This results in career and technical education 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 career and technical education centers and regions need generally.

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 CTEs 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, that one-to-one support does not automatically translate to that

¹⁴ Against: James Ford; absent: Sen. Libby and Dave Keaton; abstaining: Becky Smith.

student being able to take that educational technician with them to the CTE center. Members expressed that they are currently educating students unsupported, as the CTE center 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 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. Create a pilot project for a four-year comprehensive high school¹⁵ (9 IN FAVOR; 5 AGAINST; 3 ABSTENTION; 3 ABSENT).

Members expressed both support and opposition the recommending a pilot project for a comprehensive career and technical education high school, where students attend one school after 8th grade that includes both core academic offerings and career and technical education 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 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 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.

Commented [LS2]: To be a formal recommendation, must receive 11 votes (majority). If it doesn't receive this, the minority recommendation will be memorialized in the report but not as a formal recommendation.

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

Rep. Woodsome expressed reservations about the pilot project and noted that he still has some concerns. Nevertheless, in recognition that at this stage, it is just a recommendation to the Legislature for further discussion, voted “Yes” to advance the proposal to allow for that further discussion within the Legislature.

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 believes 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. 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 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.

Commission 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 two previous recommendations and ensuring that the existing CTE structure has what it needs to be successful. And, 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.

VI. Conclusion

To be written...