Restructuring Career and Technical Education in Rhode Island

A Report Presented to

Governor Lincoln Almond

by the

Career and Vocational Education Task Force

MARCH 2000

Task Force Members

James A. DiPrete, Co-Chair Chairman, Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education	**Bernard A. Jackvony, Co-Chair** Former Lieutenant Governor
Lee Arnold Director, Department of Labor and Training	**Doreen Corrente** Principal/Director, Woonsocket Area Career and Technical Center
Stanley Goldstein Chairman, Board of Trustees, The Met School	**Clark Greene** Director of Policy, Office of the Governor
Gary Grove Member, Board of Regents	**Michael Haynes** Teacher, Warwick Area Career and Technical Center
Rosemarie Kraeger Superintendent, Middletown Public Schools	**Edward Liston** President, Community College of RI
Peter McWalters Commissioner, Department of Education	**George Nee** Secretary/Treasurer, RI AFL-CIO
Paul Sams Director, Economic Development Corporation	**Thomas Tanury** Chairman, Board of Trustees, Davies Career and Technical High School

Consultant to the Task Force

Charles Mojkowski
Director, Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
Feinstein Graduate School
Johnson & Wales University

Restructuring Career and Technical Education in Rhode Island

A Report Presented to

Governor Lincoln Almond

by the

Career and Vocational Education Task Force

James DiPrete

Bernard Jackvony

Co-Chairs

MARCH 2000

Restructuring Career and Technical Education in Rhode Island

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If Rhode Island's economy is to thrive in the next century, its schools will need to contribute to the development of a capable workforce. All graduates—not just some or even many, but all, including students with special learning needs or who speak languages other than English—must be prepared to successfully continue in post-secondary learning, join the work force, and develop a career.

The state's career and technical education centers have traditionally served those students who are not successful in the traditional high school program and prepared them to enter the workforce upon graduation. But this success is mitigated by some discomforting outcomes. Graduates may move into entry-level, low-skill jobs upon graduation, but many if not most have not met high academic standards, nor are they prepared for lifelong learning and career development. As a result, the career and technical education system graduates many young adults who are inadequately prepared for developing a career and learning both on the job and through formal post-secondary education.

Incremental improvements within the current design will not address this problem. Restructuring the career and technical education system requires a thorough reexamination of its mission and focus, governance, and funding.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

The task force's assessment of the current career and technical education system yielded several important findings.

THE SYSTEM

Regional character. The number of students attending the career and technical education centers from sending districts is very low and declining. The centers are losing their regional character.

Student profile. There are approximately 5,000 places in the career and technical education centers and 4,000 of those are occupied, representing about 10 percent of the secondary school population.

Performance data focused on results. There is little data about student, program, and system performance. Most student performance information is obtained in the tenth grade, thus serving as an evaluation of the high schools the students came from rather than the centers they are attending.

Image. The public image of the career and technical education system is not a positive one. The system is often viewed as a place for poor students, for those who can't or won't go on to college, and for those who will have low-paying jobs.

PROGRAMS

Program focus and quality. Programs are of varying appropriateness and quality. Many program offerings, sometimes those most heavily attended, do not address "high skills and major growth sectors."

Fragmented programs. The split-time programs (between the sending high school and the career and technical education centers) offered by most centers provide a fragmented learning experience for students and impede the seamless integration of academic and technical knowledge and skills. Academic and technical learning are often provided in separate schools, if not separate classrooms.

Weak articulation. Linkages between the career and technical education centers and post-secondary institutions are weak. Few career and technical education centers have articulation agreements with Rhode Island's community college system.

GOVERNANCE

State governance. There is little state-level coordination of the career and technical education system. The Department of Education provides policy and program oversight for the career and technical education centers, but state-level programs—School-to-Career, Skills Commission, Tech-Prep—are not well integrated.

Center governance. The governance system as defined by state regulation is variously implemented across the regions. The local school committee in the host district has substantial governance authority because it is responsible for, among other things, the district budget and the management of the collective bargaining agreement with the teachers who work in the center.

Business involvement. Business involvement in the development and implementation of center programs varies considerably across the career and technical education centers. Most often it is superficial or non-existent.

FUNDING

Inadequate funding. Funding for program development is inadequate and episodic, driven more by shifting federal priorities than by a coherent and strategic state plan. The state's financial commitment to career and technical education has been uneven and weak. Most notably, there is really no financing "system" for career and technical education in that funding is provided through a combination of federal, state, and local sources and varies across regions. While the Davies and Met centers are fully state funded, the other centers must use local dollars. Funds for the other eight career and technical education centers are not targeted in state aid allocations to the host districts.

Inadequate building maintenance and equipment repair and upgrading. The centers' facilities are inadequate to support the programs offered. The Department of Education estimates the backlog of needed repairs and upgrades to center facilities and equipment at about $15 million.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND FEATURES

These principles and understandings are essential to the design for the new career and technical education system. We believe that an exemplary career and technical education system must:

- Focus on preparing students for lifelong learning and work and careers in high-growth industries. This requires that graduates demonstrate mastery of high academic competencies as well as workplace readiness skills.
- Provide a coherent and holistic program of studies for all students.
- Link to the K-12 system and particularly to high schools. Integrate the School-to-Career, Tech-Prep, and CIM initiatives into a coherent support system for both career and technical education centers and high schools.
- View the career and technical education centers not as places for low performing and poorly motivated students, but as a destination of opportunity for which students must prepare.
- Have the support of state and local governance mechanisms that are committed to cutting-edge career and technical education.
- Focus on student and program results, assess them, and use the information to drive improvement and redesign.
- Include a strong commitment from the Board of Regents and the Department of Education to provide direction and oversight to the system.
- Include strong business and higher education alliances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force proposes a package of interdependent recommendations in three areas—programs, governance, and funding. The recommendations are focused on achieving the state's dual mission of high performance on high-level academic standards for every student coupled with preparation for immediate entry into a career path in a promising industry, supported by continuing learning on the job and/or in post-secondary institutions.
These recommendations are interdependent and will require a three- to five-year phased implementation.

Programs

Career development. Focus career and technical education programs on preparing students for employment in industries with specific standards and certification requirements. Such a focus need not eliminate non-certificated programs altogether, but special attention shall be given to ensuring that graduates of all programs are prepared for future learning and career development, not merely for an immediate job upon graduation.

High-growth industries. Support the development of programs that address industry clusters identified by the Department of Education and the Economic Development Corporation and supported by the Department of Labor and Training in cooperation with the Human Resource Investment Council. Programs in these clusters shall focus on high performance, high skills, high wages, and the major growth sectors of Rhode Island's economy.

Integrated programs. Ensure that all programs provide a seamless integration of generic workplace skills, high academic standards required of all high school students (part of Rhode Island's Comprehensive Education Strategy and aligned with the focus of the federal Office of Vocational and Adult Education), and industry-specific standards where they are available.

Full-day, stand-alone schools. State-certified career and technical education centers shall provide full-day, two- to three-year programs. These centers shall operate on an extended year and offer expanded hours to provide supplementary learning opportunities. These centers shall operate as stand-alone schools, as do Davies and the Met.

Open access. Expand access to the state-certified career and technical education centers so that students from throughout the state can attend a certified program or certified program component of their choice, for which they are qualified and for which space is available. Such access shall be to the closest center to the student's community.

Program entrance and exit criteria. All state-certified center programs shall have entrance and exit criteria based on high standards and a structure and process for assessing them.

Collaboration with high schools. Career and technical education centers shall work with middle and high schools to help all students understand program requirements/entrance criteria and prepare for them. Center personnel shall collaborate with high school counseling personnel to assure comprehensive program information to students and their families. The faculties of the centers and the high schools shall work together to provide student access to sports and extracurricular activities.

Shared diploma. Graduates of the state-certified career and technical education centers shall receive a diploma from their home community with a special certificate/endorsement issued by the career and technical education center.

Collaboration with post-secondary institutions. Strengthen collaboration and articulation with the post-secondary education system to provide learning opportunities for all graduates. Establish articulated programs and articulation agreements between the centers and post-secondary institutions where program exit criteria require additional preparation beyond the two to three years provided at the centers.

Business involvement. Strengthen involvement of business and industry representatives in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs and curricula.

Family and community engagement. Develop high-engagement activities for families and community members.

Governance

Regents State Schools Committee. The State Schools Committee of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education shall provide policy direction and oversight to the career and technical education system. This committee shall give special attention to these functions:

1. Establish program priorities based on labor market information.
2. Develop a strategic plan for career and technical education.
3. Establish program quality criteria.
4. Develop and employ program certification and evaluation systems.
5. Develop industry and higher education partnerships and alliances.
6. Conduct public information campaigns regarding exemplary career and technical education.

The Department of Education shall work closely with the Department of Labor and Training, the Human Resource Investment Council, and the Economic Development Corporation in assisting the committee in carrying out these functions.

Center criteria. The Board of Regents shall establish criteria for serving as a state-certified career and technical education center. Criteria shall include:

1. Focus on industry-specific certificated programs.
2. An independent board of trustees.
3. Active involvement of business and industry groups in program and curriculum design and implementation.
4. Active family and community involvement.
5. A student population drawn primarily from the regional area with open access to students from throughout the state.

Transfer process. For those career and technical education centers that choose not to, or cannot, meet the criteria for a state-certified center, the Department of Education shall develop a process for transferring the buildings and land to the district while providing support for a successful transfer and appropriate use of the facility. The transition plan shall take into account the individual circumstances and capabilities of each center.

Center Boards of Trustees. Establish at each state-certified center, consistent with the 1991 legislation, a board of trustees to provide policy and program guidance. Each board shall:

1. Establish program priorities based on local needs and resources.
2. Develop and implement programs in collaboration with business and industry.
3. Develop industry and higher education partnerships and alliances within the state frameworks established by the Board of Regents.
4. Evaluate student and program performance.
5. Market program offerings to students and their families. Communicate that the community of residence provides tuition for attendance at any state-certified center.
6. Create a budget for the operation of the center.

Funding

Center facilities. The state shall prepare a statewide bond request to bring all centers' facilities up to acceptable standards, including necessary information technology infrastructure. A current estimate for such work is $15 million.

Operations. Provide the Department of Education with funds to prepare a detailed design and implementation plan for the restructured system, provide increased support and technical assistance to the state-certified centers, and conduct the expanded functions of the Regents' subcommittee. This assistance shall include at a minimum program and curriculum development, faculty education, training, and support, and student and program assessment. The Department shall certify programs and centers and shall develop substantive working agreements and relationships across state agencies and with business, industry, and labor. These partnerships shall be created to support the career and technical education system as well as each program.

Center funding. Place all state-certified centers on full state funding to provide the Boards of Trustees with operational funds. This might be accomplished by funding one center at a time.

Fund pilot programs. Identify and support three to four promising programs for incorporation into the restructured career and technical education system. Each program shall include an emphasis on integrating high academic and industry standards in the "high performance, high skills, high wages, and major growth sectors of Rhode Island's economy."

Conduct public engagement. The redesigned and restructured career and technical education system shall require major public engagement in order to alter the public's current negative mindset of the centers and to create an image of centers as desirable locations and appropriate options for children.

Incentives. Target discretionary federal and state grants to programs that address state education, training, and economic development priorities and are certified by the Regents.

Implementation

We believe these recommendations are essential and compelling. Nevertheless, they call for substantial and complex changes in nearly every aspect of the system. Each center has unique capabilities, needs, and circumstances. Successful implementation, therefore, will require a careful staging and phasing over three to five years. The Department of Education shall develop a customized transition plan with and for each state-certified center. This plan shall focus first on upgrading programs and strengthening partnerships with business and higher education.

Immediate attention shall also be given to state and center governance structures and to establishing the policy guidance and operational support systems required for redesigning programs, preparing staff, creating new organizational structures, marketing, and student and program evaluation. The new foundation and funding will allow the system to bring to scale those exemplary but isolated programs that point the way to the career and technical education system that Rhode Island needs.

Letter from Task Force Members

Dear Governor Almond,

The Governor's Career and Vocational Education task force first convened in September 1999 and has just now completed its work. We did not start with a blank slate; many before us have attempted to craft strategy and policy for Rhode Island's career and technical education system. We found as they did that rapid and substantial changes in work and the workplace, combined with a dynamic and increasingly global economy, make the task most challenging.

We found that a great deal has been accomplished by the current career and technical education system. It is credited by many with keeping in school many young people who might otherwise have dropped out, to their disadvantage and society's. We learned as well about many exemplary programs operating in the career and technical education centers.

Our enthusiasm was tempered, however, by the realization that the career and technical education system, whatever its successes to date, is not up to the challenges before us. In order to ensure that the graduates of these centers are ready for careers as well as jobs and for lifelong learning as well as work, we need to redesign and restructure the career and technical education system. Among the several recommendations we make regarding the restructuring of the present system, we particularly commend to your attention our recommendations regarding a more focused mission for the system and a revitalized state and center governance structure. These changes will do much to realize the restructuring you called for in your directive to us.

Cordially,

James A. DiPrete, Co-Chair	Bernard A. Jackvony, Co-Chair
Lee Arnold	Doreen Corrente
Stanley Goldstein	Clark Greene
Gary Grove	Michael Haynes
Rosemarie Kraeger	Edward Liston

Peter McWalters

George Nee

Paul Sams

Thomas Tanury

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Foreword

The 1990 report, *Restructuring Vocational Education in Rhode Island,* recommended that the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education develop a new career and technical education system that transformed the existing schools into independent, regional, full-day schools focused on preparation for careers through a hands-on, experiential program involving apprenticeships and other forms of integrated learning and work experiences. In 1991, legislation (P. L. 16-45-6) based on the recommendations of the 1990 report established a Board of Trustees for the Davies Vocational School and directed the transformation of the center into an independent, full-day school. The legislation and a subsequent bond issue (1993) supported the development of a second school in the system, the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Education Center.

And then the transformation stopped. Without full state funding, the conversion of the other eight career and technical education centers was put on hold. Currently these eight centers continue to operate as regional schools, most providing a partial program in grades 10-12 in combination with an academic program provided at the sending districts' high schools.

In his 1999 State of the State Address, Governor Lincoln Almond called for a review and restructuring of career and technical education. In August 1999 he formed a Career and Vocational Education task force and charged it with developing recommendations for restructuring the career and technical education system.

The Governor directed the task force to "review current practices, to consult with experts in relevant fields, and to formulate policy recommendations on restructuring Rhode Island's career and technical education system." Governor Almond directed the task force to develop their recommendations "within the context of high achievement for all students as presented in Rhode Island's comprehensive education strategy" (a.k.a. "standards") and to do so "with the aim of expanding the high performance, high skills, high wages, and major growth sectors of Rhode Island's economy."[1]

The Governor's charge presents an opportunity to restart the transformation and to undertake a fundamental redesign of the career and technical education system, acknowledging that this transformation must be accomplished within the context of secondary school reform in order to address high standards for all learners in preparation for citizenship, lifelong learning, and work. This report proposes recommendations for undertaking that transformation.

[1] The full text of the Governor's charge to the task force is provided in the Appendices.

Restructuring Career and Technical Education in Rhode Island

I. Framing the Challenge

If Rhode Island's economy is to thrive in the next century, its schools will need to contribute to the development of a capable workforce. All graduates—not just some or even many, but all, including students with special needs or who speak languages other than English—must be prepared to successfully continue in post-secondary learning, join the work force, and develop a career. All graduates must demonstrate high performance on high-level skills in order to reach their full potential. That is the central mission of the state's Comprehensive Education Strategy.

The state's high schools and the career and technical education system are charged with this mission, and both systems have been working on a reform agenda for several years. The state's career and technical education centers have traditionally served those students who are not successful in the traditional high school program and prepared them to enter the workforce upon graduation. In doing so the system has been viewed as providing a "last chance" and "safety net," keeping in school students who otherwise might have dropped out of high school.

But this success is mitigated by some discomforting outcomes. Graduates may move into entry-level, low-skill jobs upon graduation, but many if not most have neither met high academic standards, nor are they prepared for lifelong learning and career development. As a result, the career and technical education system graduates many young adults who are inadequately prepared for developing a career and learning both on the job and through formal post-secondary education. Moreover, many graduates do not actually obtain jobs in the field in which they received training. The declining market value of a high school diploma and the declining number and percentage of entry-level, low-skill jobs available to high school graduates militate against a strengthening of the state's workforce readiness. A job upon graduation can no longer serve as a sufficient goal for the career and technical education centers.

The limited successes of the career and technical education system will not be sufficient to contribute to the state's growth. Indeed, the rapidly shifting and escalating demands of the workplace require that the system continually renew itself to remain vital and responsive. It will need to redesign its mission, strategies, and structure, and it will require an increased and more focused state commitment to the educational foundations of workforce and economic development. The career and technical education system's mission must contribute to the core Comprehensive Education Strategy: the preparation of graduates who can successfully enter career paths in promising industries upon graduation while continuing their learning.

This call for restructuring does not deny that change is not taking place. The career and technical education centers have made some changes—a greater use of academies, increased collaboration with business and industry, and expanded articulation with post-secondary learning institutions. But these improvements are islands of innovation in an otherwise fragmented system that is failing to address the high standards requirements of the Comprehensive Education Strategy or the increasingly exacting standards of industry.

Changes are taking place in the general education K-12 system as well. Career awareness and exploration are increasingly a part of K-12 education. Many high schools are beginning to bring community-based, work-based, and workplace learning into their programs primarily to better ground traditional academic learning in real-world contexts. A few are beginning career academies in specific industries such as finance and travel and tourism.

Nevertheless, incremental improvements within the current design will not be sufficient. Restructuring the career and technical education system requires a thorough reexamination of its mission and focus, governance, and funding. Failure to address these issues will prevent the system from realizing its fullest potential in contributing to workforce and economic development and to the lives of those students it serves.

Several key points help to frame the task of restructuring the career and technical education system.

It's about high standards. Career and technical education is not about jobs alone; it's about assuring that every graduate has the high levels of knowledge and skills to start a career and continue the learning that is essential to long-term success as a contributing member of society. High-level skills are likely to lead to work with a future and to easy transitions to new jobs and careers when existing work and jobs are made obsolete by a rapidly shifting and increasingly global economy.

"It's not your father's Oldsmobile." One need only observe the high technology industries to witness the fundamental changes still emerging but already forcing nearly every industry and business to rethink everything—its customers and consumers, its products and services, its production and delivery. Technology is turning every industry into a high-tech enterprise and transforming nearly every job and career into a high-tech position. In short, the very nature of learning and work is changing.

It's about careers. Career and technical education is not merely about jobs. In an economy that makes obsolete hundreds of kinds of work even as it creates thousands of new ones, the mandate to prepare all students at high standards for lifelong learning, successful careers, and involved citizenship is more important than ever. And the challenging hands-on, minds-on learning opportunities provided by exemplary career and technical education programs can meet that requirement.

Image. The image of career and technical education as a second-class education meant for those who can't succeed in the traditional college-oriented system is pervasive and persistent. The career and technical education system is sometimes viewed as a "safety valve" for high schools. Students not succeeding in the traditional high school college preparatory curriculum often are counseled to attend the career and technical education centers, thus reducing the pressure on the high schools to design highly motivating and engaging learning opportunities and environments for these students and to employ diverse and innovative teaching strategies.

The finest career and technical education programs provide much more than "safety valve" programs and attract and serve students of all abilities. Moreover, a large and rapidly growing number of careers do not demand a traditional four-year college degree, instead requiring a solid high school diploma, focused post-secondary learning (most

typically a two-year technical degree), and the ability and disposition to learn for a lifetime through several job and career changes. Students and their families need to be informed about this new image of career and technical education and know how to access the best and most appropriate programs.

Connections to high school reform. High schools and career and technical education centers are joined at the hip. Both are needed to prepare the graduates our society and economy require. Moreover, it is not possible to design policy, program, and organizational options for career and technical education without taking into account the fundamental reform that is required for all high schools.[2] High school reform must include career awareness and exploration and linking learning to the real world outside the classroom in the workplace and the community.

Restructuring the career and technical education system will be hard work not only because the issues are complex. Changing the perceptions many educators, policy makers, and the public have about career and technical education will present an equally difficult challenge.

It is this challenge to design a restructuring and change perceptions that task force members accepted. The task force included representatives of the major stakeholders: teachers, career and technical education center directors, superintendents, business and industry, the Board of Regents, and several state agencies working with and for the career and technical education centers. James DiPrete and Bernard Jackvony co-chaired the task force.[3]

The task force met nearly every week from mid-September through mid-January to review relevant documents, hear testimony, discuss issues, develop findings, and prepare conclusions and recommendations. Those providing testimony included state and local education officials, national experts, and business representatives.[4] The testimony received helped to clarify needs, issues, and options. Discussions stimulated by the testimony helped the task force to forge a set of recommendations that might be used to guide the restructuring of career and technical education in Rhode Island.

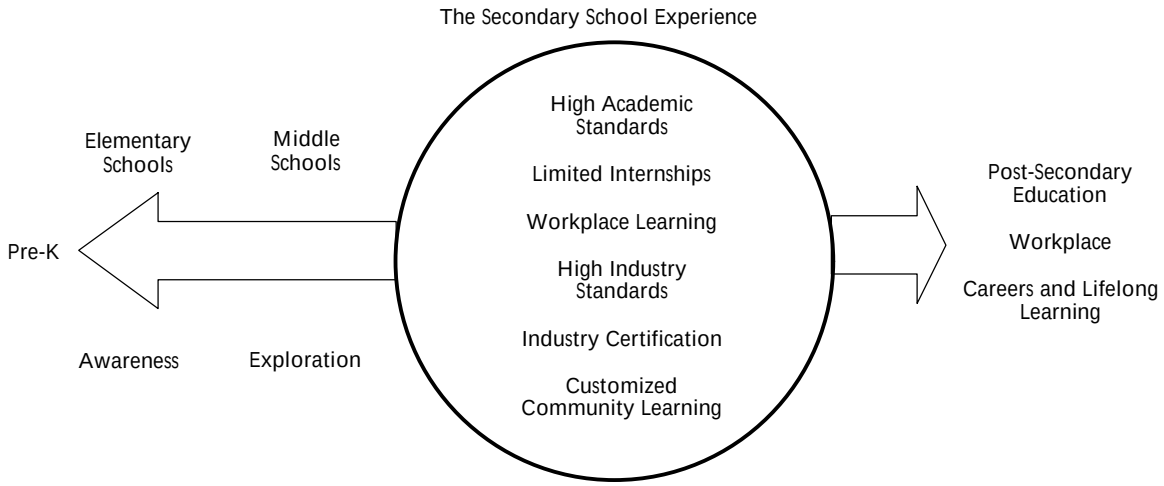
To assess the relevance and suitability of the task force's conclusions and recommendations, selected task force members conducted telephone surveys with selected school committee chairs, superintendents, and career and technical center directors. The survey addressed such issues as satisfaction with the current system, student access, program quality, system governance, and funding.[5]

[2] Adria Steinberg, Testimony provided to the task force, November 2, 1999.
[3] A list of task force members is provided in the Appendices.
[4] A list of those persons providing testimony is provided in the Appendices.
[5] A list of the survey questions is provided in the Appendices.

II. The Current Career and Technical Education System

The career and technical education system is part of a lifelong learning and work continuum that includes career awareness and exploration infused into the regular K-12 curriculum and into formal post-secondary learning, work, and continuing learning (Figure 1).

Figure 1
The Lifelong Learning and Work Continuum



Historically, career and technical education has been the exclusive domain of the centers. Recently, however, many high schools have formed career academies (e.g., travel and tourism, technology, and finance) similar to those offered by the centers.

THE CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTERS

Regional Centers. Eight of the career and technical education centers (Chariho, Cranston, East Providence, Hanley, Newport, Warwick, West Bay, and Woonsocket) constitute the core of the system. They operate in cooperation with sending high schools in their respective regions and, with few exceptions, operate half-day or part-time programs. A small minority of their students comes from high schools outside the host district; in two of the centers all or most of the students come from the host district's high schools (grades 10-12). These centers operate a diverse set of programs ranging from career exploration to job-specific skills development.

Davies Career and Technical High School. Davies is a stand-alone secondary school (grades 9-12) offering a comprehensive, full-day program focused on several technical skill areas. It, along with the Met Center, is fully state funded and operates in accordance with the provisions of the 1991 legislation, which requires a separate board of trustees to

provide direction, oversight, and advocacy. Davies serves students from Central Falls, Lincoln, North Providence, Pawtucket, and Smithfield.

The Metropolitan Career and Technical School. The Metropolitan Career and Technical Center (the Met) combines academic, workplace, and community-based and service learning with active parent involvement and control. The Met is an innovative hybrid of a traditional academic high school and a traditional vocational school. It serves students of all abilities and interests who wish to learn through real work in real-world contexts. The Met prepares high school-aged students for citizenship, work, and future education by engaging them in real work—in area businesses, community-based agencies, civic and government organizations, and in personal or group projects. Seventy-five percent of the Met's students live in Providence; the balance comes from about ten communities throughout Rhode Island.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

The task force's assessment of the current career and technical education system yielded several important findings.

THE SYSTEM

Regional character. The number of students attending the career and technical education centers from sending districts is very low and declining. The centers are losing their regional character.

Student profile. There are approximately 5,000 places in the career and technical education centers and 4,000 of those are occupied, representing about 10 percent of the secondary school population. Establishing high-standards program entrance requirements may change the profile of the students entering to more approximate that of the high schools. Nevertheless, it is possible that the demand for career and technical education could outstrip supply if the program offerings were substantially improved and marketed aggressively.

Performance data focused on results. There is little data about student, program, and system performance. Most student performance information is obtained in the tenth grade, thus serving as an evaluation of the sending high schools the students come from rather than the centers they are attending. Centers have inadequate student and program performance information systems and do not conduct valid and reliable follow-up studies of their graduates.

Isolation. Each center operates as an independent entity in the system. There are few cross-center program and professional development activities. Linkages with other secondary education reform initiatives are weak.

Image. Testimony received described exemplary programs and exemplary teachers striving to make a difference in the lives of young people, many of whom had been written off by the traditional high school and who perhaps had written off themselves. There are many success stories in each career and technical center. Nevertheless, the public image of the career and technical education system is not a positive one. The system is often viewed as

a place for poor students, for those who can't or won't go on to college, and for those who will have low-paying jobs.

PROGRAMS

Program focus and quality. Programs are of varying appropriateness and quality. Many program offerings, sometimes those most heavily attended, do not address "high skills and major growth sectors." Many focus on immediate employment following graduation and not on career development and lifelong learning. Most programs are not addressed to high academic and industry-specific certification standards.

Fragmented programs. The split-time programs (between the sending high school and the career and technical education centers) offered by most centers provide a fragmented learning experience for students and impede the seamless integration of academic and technical knowledge and skills. Academic and technical learning are often provided in separate schools, if not separate classrooms.

Weak articulation. Linkages between the career and technical education centers and post-secondary institutions are weak. Few career and technical education centers have articulation agreements with Rhode Island's community college system.

GOVERNANCE

State governance. There is little state-level coordination of the career and technical education system. The Department of Education provides policy and program oversight for the career and technical education centers, but state-level programs—School-to-Career, Skills Commission, Tech-Prep—are not well integrated. The Interagency Team established by the Department of Education and the Department of Labor and Training supports communication and collaboration.

Outdated regulations. The Department of Education has administered the state system of career and technical education centers since 1967. The current regulations employed to administer the system were first promulgated in 1981 and are not uniformly implemented. State-regional-local policy and administrative decision making is fragmented.

Center governance. The governance system as defined in the state regulations is variously implemented across the regions. The local school committee in the host district has substantial governance authority because it is responsible for, among other things, the district budget and the management of the collective bargaining agreement with the teachers who work in the center. The judgments of the Area Coordinating Committees (ACC) are, by state regulation, advisory and may be overruled by the school committee of the host district.

The ACC's composition and level of participation vary considerably across regions, influenced in part by the number/percentage of students sent to the centers by the sending districts. Districts that send few students to the regional center have fewer incentives to commit time and energy to ACC participation.

Business involvement. Business involvement in the development and implementation of center programs varies considerably across the career and technical education centers. Most often it is superficial or non-existent. The relatively low level of business involvement in some of the centers contrasts with that of the boards of trustees established for the Davies and Met Centers, where business is well represented and heavily involved.

FUNDING

Inadequate funding. Funding for program development is inadequate and episodic, driven more by shifting federal priorities than by a coherent and strategic state plan. There is considerable variation in financing systems and funding support across the career and technical education system. The state's financial commitment to career and technical education has been uneven and weak. Most notably, there is really no financing "system" for career and technical education in that funding is provided through a combination of federal, state, and local sources and varies across regions. While the Davies and Met centers are fully state funded, the other centers must use local dollars. Funds for the other eight career and technical education centers are not targeted in state aid allocations to the host districts.

Inadequate building maintenance and equipment repair and upgrading. The centers' facilities are inadequate to support the programs offered. The Department of Education estimates the backlog of needed repairs and upgrades to center facilities and equipment at about $15 million. Funds for emergency repairs, operations, and capital improvements have historically been used to maintain a safe environment but have been insufficient to meet other needs.

Expenditures. Per-pupil expenditures vary considerably across the ten centers. Current financial accounting systems do not enable a breakdown of per pupil expenditures between elementary and secondary schools. It appears, however, that the career and technical centers have higher per pupil expenditures than the state's high schools.

Cost for results. The current financial accounting system does not provide valid and reliable data on what it costs to provide specific career and technical education programs or to produce a graduate who is proficient in the core competencies (academic and work related) and is ready for employment and continued learning either on the job and/or in a post-secondary school.

III. Restructuring the Career and Technical Education System

Based on our assessment of the current system, we believe a comprehensive redesign and restructuring are needed. Key elements of what we propose, particularly with respect to programs, already exist in the current system. We propose to strengthen and build upon them, adding the governance and funding components that are essential to a coherent and comprehensive system.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND FEATURES

These principles and understandings are essential to the design for the new career and technical education system. We believe that an exemplary career and technical education system must:

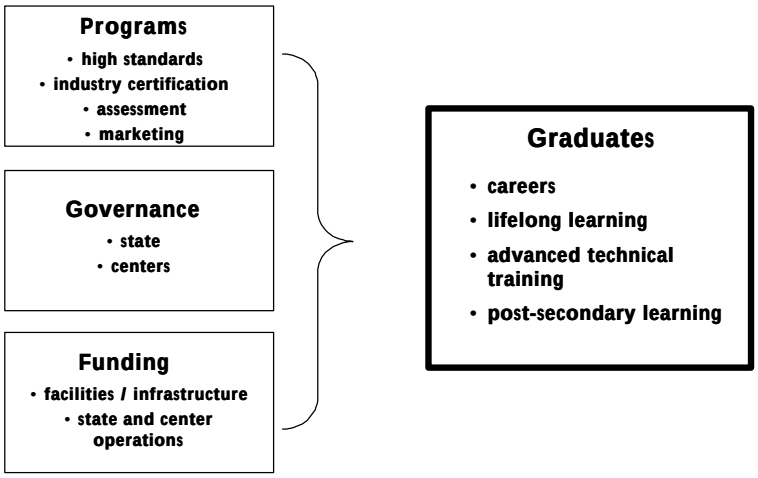
- Focus on preparing students for lifelong learning and work and careers in high-growth industries. This requires that graduates demonstrate mastery of high academic competencies as well as workplace readiness skills.
- Provide a coherent and holistic program of studies for all students.
- Link to the K-12 system and particularly to high schools. Integrate the School-to-Career, Tech-Prep, and CIM initiatives into a coherent support system for both career and technical education centers and high schools.
- View the career and technical education centers not as places for low performing and poorly motivated students, but as destinations of opportunity for which students must prepare.
- Have the support of state and local governance mechanisms that are committed to cutting-edge career and technical education centers.
- Focus on student and program results, assess them, and use the information to drive improvement and redesign.
- Include a strong commitment from the Board of Regents and the Department of Education to provide direction and oversight to the system.
- Include strong business and higher education alliances.

These principles and key features guide a system design that starts with a deep understanding of the students the centers are serving, the graduates they need to produce, and the nature of the learning opportunities, learning environments, organizational structures, and support systems that are required to best serve those students.

CORE SYSTEM COMPONENTS

Restructuring the career and technical education will require simultaneous attention to strengthening three components: programs, governance, and funding (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Core Components of the Restructured Career and Technical Education System



Programs

A student entering a program offered by a career and technical center will be proficient in the high academic skills necessary to succeed in the program. The Certificate of Initial Mastery is an example of how a student might demonstrate readiness to enter a state-certified center program.

Programs will provide a holistic experience for the student, seamlessly weaving high-level academic and industry certification standards into the learning opportunities provided to each student.

Teachers and community-based and work-based mentors and coaches will work as a team to design and implement a program of studies for each student.

A rich portfolio of assessment information will be available for each student. Each state-certified center will conduct follow-up studies to determine how their graduates are developing their careers and continuing their learning.

Governance

The Board of Regents and the Department of Education will:

- Provide overall direction and oversight for the career and technical education system, working in close collaboration with other state agencies.
- Establish working agreements with businesses to design and support career development programs addressed to industry standards and certificate requirements.
- Establish working agreements with post-secondary education institutions to support state-certified center programs that require post-secondary learning.

- Certify center programs.
- Provide technical assistance to state-certified centers in customizing programs and assessing student and program performance.
- Inform the public about the new career and technical education system.

Each state-certified center's Board of Trustees will:

- Establish program priorities based on local needs and resources.
- Develop and implement programs in collaboration with business and industry.
- Develop industry and higher education partnerships and alliances within the state frameworks established by the Board of Regents.
- Evaluate student and program performance.
- Market program offerings to students and their families. Communicate that the community of residence provides tuition for attendance at any state-certified center.
- Create a budget for the operation of the center.

Funding

Funding for career and technical education will become more stable, allowing for sustained planning and development. Facilities will be upgraded to provide an information technology infrastrure as well as basic maintenance and safety.

Parents will know that there are no financial impediments to their children's participation in a program of choice as long as they are qualified.

The Department of Education will have sufficient funds to fulfill its expanded governance, technical assistance, and oversight responsibilities.

IV. Making the Transition

Restructuring the career and technical education system cannot be accomplished in a piecemeal fashion. The task force, therefore, proposes a set of interdependent recommendations in three areas—programs, governance, and funding. The recommendations are focused on achieving the state's dual mission of high performance on high-level academic standards for every student coupled with preparation for immediate entry into a career path in a promising industry, supported by continuing learning on the job and/or in post-secondary institutions.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations will transform the design presented in Section III into a real system. Many of the recommendations cut across categories and are interdependent. For example, a change in focus on industry-specific careers and standards will require the use of program entrance requirements, resulting in changes in the types of students who attend the state-certified centers.

These recommendations are interdependent and will require a three- to five-year phased implementation.

Programs

Career development. Focus career and technical education programs on preparing students for employment in industries with specific standards and certification requirements. Such a focus need not eliminate non-certificated programs altogether, but special attention shall be given to ensuring that graduates of all programs are prepared for future learning and career development, not merely for an immediate job upon graduation.

High-growth industries. Support the development of programs that address industry clusters identified by the Department of Education and the Economic Development Corporation and supported by the Department of Labor and Training in cooperation with the Human Resource Investment Council. Programs in these clusters shall focus on high performance, high skills, high wages, and major growth sectors of Rhode Island's economy.

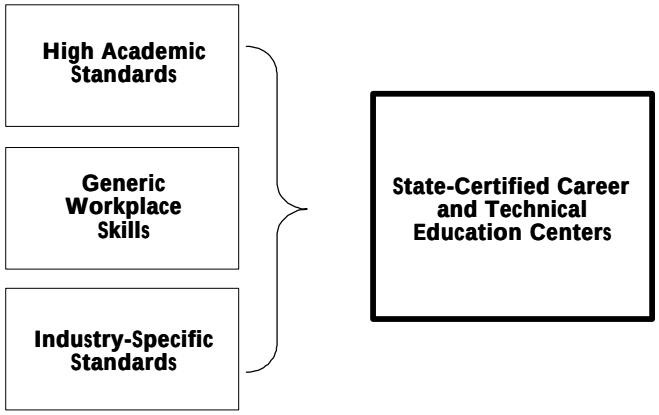
Integrated programs. Ensure that all programs provide a seamless integration of generic workplace skills, high academic standards required of all high school students (part of Rhode Island's Comprehensive Education Strategy and aligned with the focus of the federal Office of Vocational and Adult Education), and industry-specific standards where they are available (see Figure 3).

Full-day, stand-alone schools. State-certified career and technical education centers shall provide full-day, two- to three-year programs. These centers shall operate on an extended year and offer expanded hours to provide supplementary learning

opportunities. These centers shall operate as stand-alone schools, as do Davies and the Met.

Figure 3

Integration of Academic and Technical Standards



Open access. Expand access to the state-certified career and technical education centers so that students from throughout the state can attend a certified program, or certified program component, of their choice and for which they are qualified and for which space is available. Such access shall be to the closest center to the student's community.

Program entrance and exit criteria. All state-certified center programs shall have entrance and exit criteria based on high standards and a structure and process for assessing them.

Collaboration with high schools. Career and technical education centers shall work with middle and high schools to help all students understand program requirements/entrance criteria and prepare for them. Center personnel shall collaborate with high school counseling personnel to assure comprehensive program information to students and their families. The faculties of the centers and the high schools shall work together to provide student access to sports and extracurricular activities.

Shared diploma. Graduates of the state-certified career and technical education centers shall receive a diploma from their home community with a special certificate/endorsement issued by the career and technical education center.

Collaboration with post-secondary institutions. Strengthen collaboration and articulation with the post-secondary education system to provide learning opportunities for all graduates. Establish articulated programs and articulation agreements between the centers and post-secondary institutions where program exit

criteria require additional preparation beyond the two to three years provided at the centers.

Business involvement. Strengthen involvement of business and industry representatives in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs and curricula.

Family and community engagement. Develop high-engagement activities for families and community members.

Governance

Regents State Schools Committee. The State Schools Committee of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education shall provide policy direction and oversight to the career and technical education system (Figure 4). This committee shall give special attention to these functions:

1. Establish program priorities based on labor market information.
2. Develop a strategic plan for career and technical education.
3. Establish program quality criteria.
4. Develop and employ program certification and evaluation systems.
5. Develop industry and higher education partnerships and alliances.
6. Conduct public information campaigns regarding exemplary career and technical education.

The Department of Education shall work closely with the Department of Labor and Training, the Human Resource Investment Council, and the Economic Development Corporation in assisting the committee in carrying out these functions.

Center criteria. The Board of Regents shall establish criteria for serving as a state-certified career and technical education center. Criteria shall include:

1. Focus on industry-specific certificated programs.
2. An independent board of trustees.
3. Active involvement of business and industry groups in program and curriculum design and implementation.
4. Active family and community involvement.
5. A student population drawn primarily from the regional area with open access to students from throughout the state.

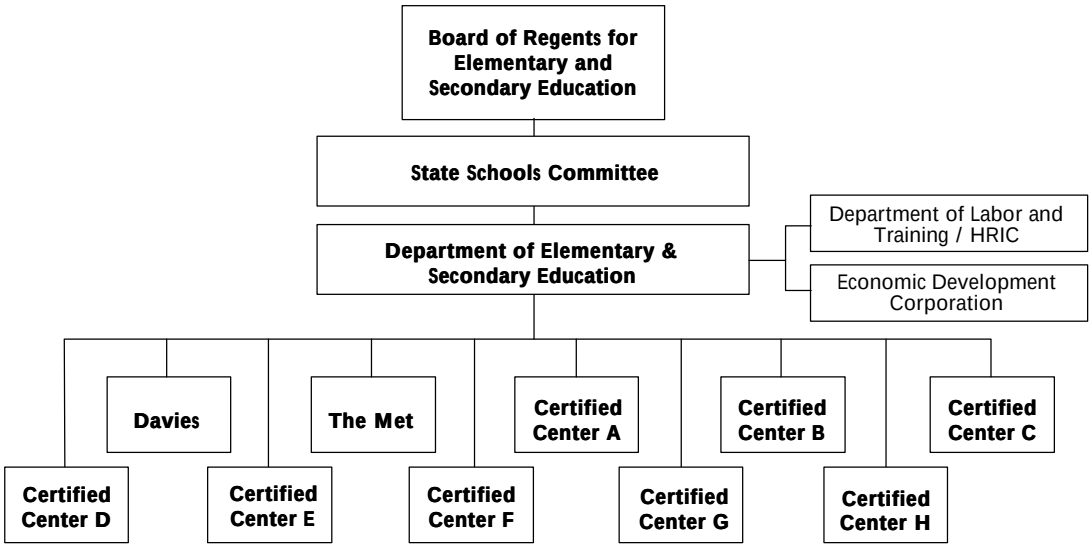
Transfer process. For those career and technical education centers that choose not to, or cannot, meet the criteria for a state-certified center, the Department of Education shall develop a process for transferring the buildings and land to the district while providing support for a successful transfer and appropriate use of the facility. The transition plan shall take into account the individual circumstances and capabilities of each center.

Center Boards of Trustees. Establish at each state-certified center, consistent with the 1991 legislation, a board of trustees to provide policy and program guidance. Each board shall:

1. Establish program priorities based on local needs and resources.

2. Develop and implement programs in collaboration with business and industry.
3. Develop industry and higher education partnerships and alliances within the state frameworks established by the Board of Regents.
4. Evaluate student and program performance.
5. Market program offerings to students and their families. Communicate that the community of residence provides tuition for attendance at any state-certified center.
6. Create a budget for the operation of the center.

Figure 4
Governance Structure for the
Career and Technical Education System



Funding

Center facilities. The state shall prepare a statewide bond request to bring all centers' facilities up to acceptable standards, including necessary information technology infrastructure. A current estimate for such work is $15 million.

Operations. Provide the Department of Education with funds to prepare a detailed design and implementation plan for the restructured system, provide increased support and technical assistance to the state-certified centers, and conduct the expanded functions of the Regents' subcommittee. This assistance shall include at a minimum program and curriculum development, faculty education, training, and support, and student and program assessment. The Department shall certify programs and centers and shall develop substantive working agreements and relationships across state

agencies and with business, industry, and labor. These partnerships shall be created to support the career and technical education system as well as each program.

Center funding. Place all state-certified centers on full state funding to provide the boards of trustees with operational funds. This might be accomplished by funding one center at a time.

Fund pilot programs. Identify and support three to four promising programs for incorporation into the restructured career and technical education system. Each program shall include an emphasis on integrating high academic and industry standards in the "high performance, high skills, high wages, and major growth sectors of Rhode Island's economy."

Conduct public engagement. The redesigned and restructured career and technical education system shall require major public engagement in order to alter the public's current negative mindset of the centers and to create an image of centers as desirable locations and appropriate options for children.

Incentives. Target discretionary federal and state grants to programs that address state education, training, and economic development priorities and are certified by the Regents.

IMPLEMENTATION

We believe these recommendations are essential and compelling. Nevertheless, they call for substantial and complex changes in nearly every aspect of the system. Each center has unique capabilities, needs, and circumstances. Successful implementation, therefore, will require a careful staging and phasing over three to five years. The Department of Education shall develop a customized transition plan with and for each state-certified center. This plan shall focus first on upgrading programs and strengthening partnerships with business and higher education.

Immediate attention shall also be given to state and center governance structures and to establishing the policy guidance and operational support systems required for redesigning programs, preparing staff, creating new organizational structures, marketing, and student and program evaluation. The new foundation and funding will allow the system to bring to scale those exemplary but isolated programs that point the way to the career and technical education system that Rhode Island needs.

Appendix A

Governor's Charge

Appendix B

Persons Providing Testimony

Name	Title / Organization	Date of Testimony
Pricilla Abrahamson	Teacher, Barrington High School	10/26/99
David Andrews	Principal, Narragansett High School	10/12/99
Colleen Bielecki	Co-Director, RI Skills Commission	11/2/99
Michael Brustein	Brustein & Manasevit, Washington, D.C.	10/26/99
Doreen Corrente	Director, Woonsocket Area Career and Technical Center	9/28/99
John Deasy	Superintendent, Coventry Public Schools	10/12/99
James DeLuca	Principal/Director, Warwick Area Career and Technical Center	10/12/99
Todd Flaherty	Deputy Commissioner, RI Department of Education	9/21/99, 10/5/99
Mary Beth Pike	Principal/Director, Newport Career and Technical Center	10/26/99
William Potter	Chairman, Coventry School Committee	10/12/99
Rocco Rainone	Co-Director, RI Skills Commission	11/2/99
Adria Steinberg	Program Director, Jobs for the Future, Cambridge, MA	11/2/99
Stanley Thompson	Chairman, Breaking Ranks Network	10/26/99
Stephen Thornton	Principal/Director, Davies Career and Technical High School	10/5/99, 11/2/99

Appendix C
Telephone Survey Questions

1. Are you satisfied with the current career and technical education system?
2. What issues are critical for you?
3. What is your perception of who uses the current system and how can all kids have better access?
4. How could program quality be assured?
5. How should the system be governed?
6. How would you fund the system?
7. How should the system be promoted for fair and equal access for kids?