

Preparation for Tomorrow

“This is what modern career-tech education looks like — it’s not your father’s shop class. This is the best way I know to keep more students engaged in school. We want them not only to graduate, but to learn at a much more rigorous level so they are ready for what comes next in life, both in the workplace and in college.”

— Gene Bottoms, senior vice president, Southern Regional Education Board

FACTS

Nearly 7,000 students at our nation’s public high schools drop out each school day.

Most of these young men and women will enter the workforce at the lowest levels, unprepared to support themselves or their families adequately and poorly positioned to help our nation continue to progress in a highly competitive global economy.

The stats for students who stay in high school are similarly bleak.

- Less than 75% of all students earn their high school diplomas.¹
- Graduation rates are even lower for students from rural, high-minority, or low-income schools.²
- Only 25% of the students who graduate high school are academically prepared for college.³
- 44% of first-time, full-time college students fail to complete their degrees within six years.⁴

Students who take a four-course career/technical (CT) sequence graduate high school and enroll in postsecondary studies at higher rates than their peers.⁵

OVERVIEW

The *Preparation for Tomorrow* initiative aims to prepare all groups of students, and especially high-risk students, for the highest levels of education possible by creating multiple paths to college and careers that keep academic and upper-level job options open.

Incorporating a rigorous academic core with job-ready technical skills in engaging CT courses can significantly increase the percentage of these students who meet college- and career-readiness goals in reading, mathematics and science.

To this end, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is partnering with a consortium of states and industry leaders to develop sequences of academically rigorous, standards-based CT courses in high-demand, high-skill, high-wage career areas targeted to the economic needs and opportunities of each participating state.

PARTICIPATING STATES

Each state is developing a four-course sequence of study around a career area(s) the state has identified as important to its economic development and for which there is a growing demand.

- Alabama: Aerospace Engineering
- Arkansas: Innovations in Science and Technology
- Kansas: STEM Education and Training
- Kentucky: Advanced Manufacturing, Informatics
- Nebraska: Food and Nutritional Sciences
- New Jersey: Entrepreneurship, Global Logistics
- North Carolina: Project Management
- Ohio: Automated Materials Joining Technologies, Health Informatics
- South Carolina: Clean Energy Technology
- West Virginia: Energy and Power

INTENT

Well-developed career pathway courses enable all students, and especially underachieving, unmotivated students, to refocus their high school years before it's too late. Students can:

- Discover if they enjoy doing the work that high-skill and middle-skill workers often do.
- Deepen understanding of literacy, mathematics and science concepts by completing authentic projects.
- Increase their motivation to take and succeed in advanced mathematics and science courses.
- Identify and explore newfound academic interests and pursuits.
- Complete an accelerated program of studies with projects collaboratively planned and supported by academic and CT teachers.

Deliver a fresh context for learning by using authentic, project-based experiences that allow students to develop the habits and behaviors of highly skilled and qualified workers.

KEY ELEMENTS

The *Preparation for Tomorrow* framework advances a broader definition of rigor.

- Application-based learning of essential academics in reading, writing, mathematics and science and of rigorous technical content
- Rich contextual curriculum mapped to the Common Core State Standards that enables students to reach greater depths of understanding through hands-on learning
- Fully developed units of study with authentic, project-based scenarios that ground students in the real-world use of technical and academic knowledge
- Teacher training designed to prepare teachers to implement rigorous CT courses with embedded academics

Preparation for Tomorrow curricula incorporate engaging instruction, guidance and advisement, extra help, formative and summative assessment of academic and technical knowledge and skills, and 21st-century skill development — elements required for ensuring students meet high standards.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Increase the percentage of students, particularly low-income and minority youth, who leave high school prepared for postsecondary study, advanced training and work. Impact will be measured by the proportion who:

- Complete a college-ready core including four years each of English, mathematics and lab-based science.
- Participate in a sequence of four CT courses requiring the successful use of Common Core standards to complete authentic, project-based assignments.
- Commit to pursuing postsecondary study or advanced training in a career field.
- Graduate from high school meeting readiness standards in mathematics and literacy.

Increase the number of rigorous CT programs of study provided in states.

- Participating states will have access to all curricula developed.
- Non-participating states may have access to curricula, teacher training and assessments. (For information, contact pft@sreb.org).

¹ Chapman, Chris, et al. *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2008*. NCES, 2010.

² “Youth from Low-Income Families.” *ASPE Fact Sheet*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009.

³ *The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2012*. ACT, 2012.

⁴ *SREB Fact Book of Higher Education*. Southern Regional Education Board, 2011.

⁵ *CTE Learning That Works for America* — www.careertech.org/career-technical-education.