

# WHITE PAPER

2022

## Highlights and Best Practices for Youth Development and Youth Leadership in Career Technical Education

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## Table of Contents

<b>Evidence-Based Practices .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in an Urban Setting .....</i>	5
<i>Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in a Suburban Setting .....</i>	5
<i>Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in a Rural Setting .....</i>	6
The EdVenture Group’s Simulated Workplace Leadership Series.....	6
<i>Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in a Student-Run Business.....</i>	6
<i>Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in a Student-Led Organization.....</i>	7
<b>Recommendations for CTE Leadership.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Highlighted Publications on Youth Development and Youth Leadership in CTE.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>

## Introduction

Increasing the number of students in schools throughout the United States who are provided with the education, skills, and training to lead the future of our nation's workforce and economy is both a strategic and multi-faceted task. To meet the ever-changing needs of the modern workforce and economy, U.S. schools are faced with the challenge of creating innovative ways through which students can engage in **hands-on, skills-based learning** beyond merely a textbook alone. Increasing the number of opportunities for students to actively participate in Career Technical Education (CTE) will enable students with a diverse range of interests and academic abilities to gain enhanced academic, technical, and employable skills needed to both succeed and lead in postsecondary and/or workforce pursuits and better prepare them to graduate college and/or be career ready.

### Work-Based Learning:

"...an educational strategy that enables students to develop technical and employability skills through authentic work experiences."

**Work-based learning**, an educational strategy that enables students to develop technical and employability skills through authentic work experiences, has become a core component of a high-quality CTE program. Within work-based learning centered CTE programs, students are provided with the opportunity to learn

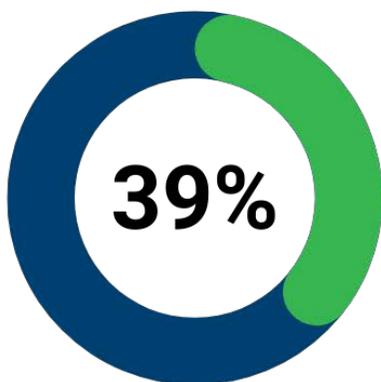
CTE is a key component to creating future leaders that will play an integral role in the future of the nation's workforce. *ACTE, 2012*

key development and leadership competencies including **collaboration, communication, professionalism, and problem solving**. The teamwork and project-based learning components of CTE programs provide ideal opportunities for students to apply leadership skills during instructional time which are directly related to those they will utilize in their future careers. As the needs of our workforce and economy continue to change, CTE students gain comprehensive skills aiding their development and leadership capabilities, positioning them to be well prepared to pivot alongside workforce and economic changes and ultimately lead the future of our nation's workforce into one of economic prosperity and positive change.

CTE curriculum and programs play an integral role in **addressing the leadership skills gap** facing employers. The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE, 2012) found that CTE fosters future leaders by providing leadership training in class and through related activities, by placing students in workplace contexts where they can receive mentorship and observe leadership in action, and by empowering students with authentic leadership roles.

ACTE (2012) authored an issue brief on CTE's role in Leadership Development demonstrating the need for enhanced CTE initiatives to ensure students learn, observe, and practice highly employable leadership skills. The brief found that CTE is a key component to creating future leaders that will play an integral role in the future of the nation's workforce. Within the brief, a cited 2011 study by the Society for Human Resource Management found that that 39% of Human Resource professionals surveyed reported that job applicants in

their industry have leadership skills gaps. This workplace leadership deficit, combined with complexities of teaching leadership to students, demonstrates the importance of CTE programs in developing students' understanding of leadership and their capabilities in taking on leadership roles. Since CTE courses are typically project-based and career-focused, these programs not only provide a diverse range of opportunities for students to develop leadership skills, but often require them to do so.



of HR professionals reported job applicants in their industry have leadership skills gaps.

### Evidence-Based Practices

Multiple examples of best practices of youth development and youth leadership in CTE are highlighted in current literature. To develop students' leadership skills and enable them to practice leadership, a group or classroom goal is needed. Within CTE, to accomplish this group or classroom goal, students must **gain and inspire confidence, build trust with their classmates, and enhance classroom cooperation**— skills that are taught especially well within the workplace-based learning centers of CTE classrooms.

Providing students with an opportunity to increase both academic and

employability skills, as well as real-world application, are invaluable components within CTE. Students are immediately poised to gain skills related to fostering **youth development and youth leadership**. These programs grow future leaders by teaching students to lead through in-class opportunities and

provide them with opportunities to observe leadership in action in work-based contexts. CTE programming additionally teaches leadership theory along with identifying key qualities of effective leadership. This not only fosters students' overall development and builds their core competencies, but also empowers students with the initiative to take on leadership roles both in the present and future. The following

sections further explore evidence-based practices within different geographic regions as it relates to youth leadership through CTE.

### **Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in an Urban Setting**

An example of youth leadership through CTE within an urban setting is demonstrated at Eureka High School in Eureka, California. Eureka City Schools offers students a wide variety of CTE learning opportunities where students form deep connections with the local community. Students apply real-world skills through local business and industry partnerships, and hands-on learning opportunities help prepare students to be college and/or career ready.

Eureka City Schools' health sector CTE program includes a mentorship opportunity in its HealthPlan integrated academic career pathway program. Eureka High School sophomore students apply with an essay for student blood drive coordinator positions. Those selected must shadow the current junior-year coordinators, who are responsible for all aspects of running the drives, including communicating with the local blood bank, coordinating with teachers, recruiting blood donors, managing necessary donor permission slips, and soliciting food donations for the blood donors.

### **Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in a Suburban Setting**

An example of youth leadership through CTE in a suburban setting is shown in Western Carolina University's Kimmel School Construction Training Program, a summer program for high school

students aimed at addressing worker skill shortfalls. These 7-day, 6-night on-campus programs include a 10-hr Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) safety course, in which students earn OSHA Safety certification. Students also complete a 16-hr Contren learning module titled, *Introduction to Basic Crew Leadership*. During the remainder of the week students meet and interact with various construction organizations and companies through an assortment of engagement activities.



Students enjoy fun team building and leadership activities, as well as participate in a formal presentation on the last day of the program in front of potential future employers. The program builds development and leadership skills through **broad-based knowledge of the construction industry and extensive training in business and management applications**. The curriculum includes multiple aspects of the profession, such as contracts and specifications, safety, quality control, land development, computer applications, business, finance, accounting, teamwork, communication skills and leadership.

### **Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in a Rural Setting**

An example of youth leadership through CTE in a rural setting is shown in the student-run businesses of the West Virginia Department of Education’s Simulated Workplace program. The Simulated Workplace program enables students to develop leadership skills as they take accountability for the products and services provided by their Simulated Workplace and make business-related decisions in real time.

States, particularly those in rural geographies, can draw on industry expertise to ensure high-quality work-based learning. *Advance CTE, 2022*

### **Simulated Workplace Program Objectives**

1. Present curriculum in a relevant and purposeful manner.
2. Place business and industry processes directly into CTE programs.
3. Incorporate foundational academic and career ready skill sets.
4. Provide students an understanding of all aspects of an industry or business and how their individual success leads to company profitability.
5. Provide each student an understanding and knowledge of how STEM, along with ethics, workplace processes, and behavior are integral skills to successful employment.

Advance CTE (2022) notes that West Virginia’s Simulated Workplace program demonstrates how states, particularly those in rural geographies, can draw on industry expertise to ensure high-quality work-based learning within a classroom setting.

### **The EdVenture Group’s Simulated Workplace Leadership Series**

Accompanying the work-based learning approach of West Virginia’s Simulated Workplace program is The EdVenture Group’s **Simulated Workplace Leadership Series**. The Simulated Workplace Leadership Series promotes youth development and youth leadership in WV CTE programs through **leadership capacity-building and entrepreneurial training**. The program includes a professional development workshop for CTE instructors, foundational leadership training for Simulated Workplace students, self-paced online learning modules on design thinking and innovation, and a culminating leadership legacy project in which CTE students identify, collaborate, and solve a problem in their local community.

### **Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in a Student-Run Business**

An example of youth leadership through CTE in a student-run business is shown at Eleva-Strum High School in Wisconsin. Their CTE program has a successful student-run business, Cardinal Manufacturing, serving as both a machine shop and manufacturing business. Although the classroom instructor does monitor students, student “employees” lead all aspects of Cardinal Manufacturing, including client meetings, consulting meetings with

engineers, order completion, equipment maintenance, and business advertising.

Through this student-run business, students work with the manufacturing industry daily. Cardinal Manufacturing typically has 8-15 manufacturing jobs in process, and each of the **student “employees” lead these individualized projects** based on their expertise. Students are also assigned responsibility for an area of the shop, where they must maintain equipment and troubleshoot any issues with equipment that may arise. Within this student-run business, all students are required to take ownership of the products and processes required to create the products, providing them with real world examples that are truly applicable to their future within the manufacturing workforce.



### ***Evidence-Based Practice of CTE in a Student-Led Organization***

An example of youth leadership through CTE in a student-led organization setting is shown at the Ponitz Career Technology Center in Dayton, Ohio. At Ponitz Career Technology Center, the Business Professionals of America student organization includes approximately 10 percent of the student body and plays an integral role in student leadership development. Students are provided with **opportunities for leadership development both within and beyond the student-led organization.**

Through participation in this student organization, students compete in regional and state level business competitions. These business-based competitions provide participating students within the organization with the opportunity to engage in real-world leadership opportunities through managing projects, tasking, and deadlines like what they would experience in a real-world workplace. In 2011, the Ponitz Career Technology Center video production team won both the regional and state competitions with a student directed and produced public service announcement warning about the dangers of texting while driving. For this video, student leaders from the Business Professionals of America student organization planned and implemented each stage of video project development and delivery, collaborating with various community and business organizations to produce the award-winning video.

## Recommendations for CTE Leadership

For youth development and youth leadership to be enhanced within the CTE classroom, leadership must embrace the idea of learning beyond textbooks and provide opportunities for student-led collaboration and innovation, combined with real world practice and application. Both observation of and education in leadership provide integral ways for students to gain insight into leadership development. However, it is only by implementing authentic leadership opportunities in which students experience both setbacks and successes within the CTE learning model that they are able to truly learn and grow in their development and leadership skills.

**Leadership must embrace the idea of learning beyond textbooks and provide opportunities for student-led collaboration and innovation.**

The Association for Career and Technical Education (2012) notes the importance of student-led programming, stating that “Student-led Career Technical Education initiatives enable students to experience communication and execution challenges and discover how their actions or inactions, and professionalism or lack thereof, directly impact the success or failure of an endeavor.” For example, student-centered CTE initiatives cited in the evidence-based examples above provide students with real world application and the opportunity to directly see and

experience how they contribute to the success of a business endeavor.

In each of the cited examples, CTE instructors, leadership, and the accompanying business communities **enable the students to act independently to take accountability and ownership of the work-based projects** they are pursuing. To both build and expand development and implementation of leadership efforts, CTE classrooms should utilize the following core practices.

### Key Recommendations CTE classrooms should utilize:

- Student-led class teams
- Business-related competitions
- Student-run businesses
- Work-based learning
- Real world practice & application

## Conclusion

CTE plays an integral role in youth development and enhancing leadership skills among today’s students. In the current and future workforce, it is vital that employees bring leadership skills to their positions. However, these skills are often lacking in potential employees. CTE helps bridge this gap by enhancing youth development and youth leadership and providing students with the means through **which to learn, observe, and practice critical leadership skills and real-world application.**

CTE is vital to the future of the nation’s workforce as it ensures more students entering the workforce will be prepared with the authentic leadership skills needed for success in leading in their

future workplace. CTE programs help to ensure a robust future for the next generation of economic and workforce development. Students are provided with the foundational skills necessary to lead and grow future businesses and industry. By empowering students to

grow their overall development and leadership competencies, CTE strengthens students' future employability prospects and ability to enact positive change within the workforce of the future.



**This white paper was developed by The EdVenture Group, Inc.** The EdVenture Group is a national education non-profit inspiring lifelong learning at all levels by developing and delivering innovative solutions for K-12 education. This paper was authored by Dr. Meaghan Cochrane, Education Researcher, and edited by Dr. Lydotta Taylor, President & CEO, and Mrs. Amber Ravenscroft, Manager of Innovation.

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## Highlighted Publications on Youth Development and Leadership in CTE

For additional reference, highlighted publications on youth development and leadership in CTE cited in the Association for Career and Technical Education (2012) issue brief are shown below:

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