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## Best Practices

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We appreciate your interest and hope you will buy yourself a copy of our recently released book **High-Quality CTE Curriculum: A Practitioner’s Guide**. To give you an idea of the innovative ideas you will find in the book, enjoy this compilation of our “Best Practices.” Our challenge to you—see which best practices you can put into practice in the next year. Be sure to join our CTE Curriculum Community for more best practices and collaborations at [curriculumcte.com](http://curriculumcte.com).

### A Best Practice

**Gain more value from your Occupational Advisory Committee (OAC).** Have OAC members review the POS competency task list annually to give recommendations on the latest advances in the industry, sequence of instruction, and how much emphasis to place on each task.

### Another Best Practice

**Team up to teach employability!** CTE schools have hired a professional to teach “soft skills.” List these classes on your curriculum map. Topics could include time management, communication in the workplace, teamwork, and job acquisition tasks. Activities might include guest speakers who focus on employability, field trips, and job shadowing experiences.

### Another Best Practice

**Recognize the value of having a strong online presence.** Post your course descriptions on the school’s website and represent your programs in the best possible light. This is your chance to really promote your program!

### Another Best Practice

**Analyze your verbs!** Focusing on the action verb for a student performance objective can help you identify the student performance level and perhaps lead you to designing a *higher-level* activity that would result in a greater depth of learning.

### Another Best Practice

**Sign off on that!** Good teachers ask parents to review the course syllabus and then have both students and parents sign off on rules and expectations. File those signed documents for any further discussions.

### Another Best Practice

**Leave a legacy!** Take the time to develop high-quality curriculum materials and know that when you share them with your successor, you are helping the students, the new teacher, the program, the school, and the industry as well. Too many new teachers walk into a classroom to find empty folders and no curriculum documents for them to use. A best practice is to develop, store, and share high-quality unit plans and other curriculum documents for future use.

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## Best Practices

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### Another Best Practice

**Invest in your programs!** Have a CTE curriculum or instructional supervisor obtain DACUM facilitator certification, scheduling DACUM workshops for each POS on a regular schedule, possibly every four or five years.

### Another Best Practice

**Manage that inbox!** With learning guides, the student works independently through a series of learning activities but can receive support from the teacher or an instructional aide as needed. A best practice is to assign a given number of learning guides for the students to complete per quarter. The CTE teacher should strive to evaluate completed learning guides daily, so the inbox stays manageable, and students receive prompt feedback on their work.

### Another Best Practice

**Hire Academic Subject Experts.** Be sure to accurately align technical competencies to the correct academic standards. An excellent way to achieve that is to hire math, English, and reading teachers to work with technical teachers in finding academic content within the technical content and then accurately aligning the two.

### Another Best Practice

**Size up the job.** Integrating math, science, reading, and writing standards with the technical standards can be a giant undertaking. Depending on the number of programs of study and the resources of the school, you might integrate all the content in one year. Or it might take two years.

Once you know the type and quantity of resources needed (i.e., technical faculty, academic faculty, access to academic standards, time to differentiate grade levels, and time to adopt instructional strategies) for the first academic content area, the effort to integrate the following standards becomes easier and more thorough.

Start with the easiest academic standard—math is a good place to start. Go heavy on the resources, especially faculty time. Be ready to finish the effort the following year. And when it is all done, you will have enhanced the teaching-learning process.

### Another Best Practice

**How's your DOK?** An excellent way to assess the level of DOK in the program of study is to review and rate lesson plans, unit plans, or student learning guides. With a copy of Webb's DOK Levels at your side, look at the student performance objective of the plan, find the verb in the task, and look at what section of the DOK pie chart has the verb.

It is best to look at different instructional *periods* (i.e., first quarter, second quarter) and different instructional *levels* (i.e., first year, third year). While an administrator rating lessons and giving feedback to the teachers is helpful, real value comes from teachers assessing their own lessons. They see 'their ways' and become more conscious of DOK levels and the 'verbiage' linked to the levels.

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### Another Best Practice

**Use their lingo!** The language used in high schools and colleges is often different. A clever way to help colleges recognize content in the high school program of study is to use identical language found in a college's course catalog or on their website. When the high school content is identical to that of the college, then the high school should change their course titles and units of study to mirror the college language. An added benefit of adopting this practice is that students and parents think more highly of your program of study. After all, they are learning 'college stuff' in your program.

### Another Best Practice

**Support the effort!** Task a CTE curriculum supervisor with researching accreditation, curriculum certification, student licensure, and student certification possibilities. The coordinator will work with the CTE teacher to collect and keep required documentation of industry standards. Meeting deadlines for application dates, mid-point reviews, and final site visitation activities will lead to successful program accreditations. The tasks of identifying, preparing for, and scheduling industry certification and licensure exams will require oversight and support. A CTE curriculum supervisor should budget for accreditation, curriculum certification, licensure, and student certification fees as needed.

### Another Best Practice

**Embrace the diversity!** Good organizations have a set of principles that guide everyday decisions and actions. One of five principles promoted at our school was 'Embrace the diversity in our classrooms.' For the teachers and staff at our school, it was easy to grasp. What did it look like in our classrooms? The school's population and staff were predominantly white, but there was a racial mix. We had a broad range of socio-economic diversity in our student population, from kids who lived in homes with dirt floors to children of corporate executives.

There were also noticeable intellectual differences in our students—National Honor Society members to other students with learning disabilities. We had diversity in non-traditional enrollments from young women in our automotive and manufacturing programs to young men in our early childhood education and cosmetology programs. And at times, it was a challenge, but we welcomed

### Another Best Practice

**Summertime, summertime!** *Summer Curriculum* sessions with faculty are especially effective in building and refining programs of study. You should hold the sessions right after the end of the school year. At this time of the year, curriculum issues are still fresh in the teachers' minds. And the teachers have just enough energy left to spend a week or two carefully grooming their programs of study.

Keep the environment casual with snacks and music. Have the teachers work in one room so they can work jointly and creatively to enhance their courses. The curriculum supervisor should be available to guide practice, watch progress, and serve as an advisor.

### Another Best Practice

**Buy books on a cycle!** Schools with a focus on continuous improvement will task a curriculum specialist with tracking copyright dates of textbooks used in each program and will ensure that programs receive new books every 5 or 6 years. Budgeting for textbooks annually, on a rotating program basis, helps schools deliver current, industry-validated information for students.