

Career and Technical Education Report Needs Work

Reference Publication:

[Review of Updating Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century](#)

Problems include thin claims of successful programs and a failure to capture the potential of CTE programs to offer both career- and college-readiness

Contact:

William J. Mathis, (802) 383-0058, wmathis@sover.net

Marisa Saunders, (213) 280-3235, Marisa_saunders@brown.edu

URL for this press release: <http://tinyurl.com/pby4qn2>

BOULDER, CO (March 18, 2014) – A recent report purporting to highlight effective models of career and technical education doesn't deliver on its stated objective, according to a new review released today.

Worse still, the report reinforces the harmful mindset that considers career and technical education (CTE) as somehow in conflict with college preparatory curricula, writes reviewers Marisa Saunders and Jaime L. Del Razo.

The reviewers, who are affiliated with the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, reviewed the February 2014 report *Updating Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century*, published by the Lexington Institute.

Their review for the Think Twice think tank review project is published today by the National Education Policy Center, housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education.

The Lexington report was written by Kristen Nye Larson, identified as a Lexington adjunct fellow. The report asserts that CTE enables students to graduate from high school equipped to meet the needs of employers in a rapidly changing economy, but that schools are failing to unleash CTE's potential.

The report falls well short of its promise to highlight the "most effective models" for CTE in the U.S. and to discuss elements best suited for replication, the reviewers find.

"The showcased program descriptions provide limited evidence regarding effectiveness, and the report neglects to identify how programs and practices could be replicated," Saunders and Del Razo write.

Further, the report fails to detail the importance or impact of programs that bridge CTE and academic curricula, they point out – even though it does refer to some programs with the

potential to make that bridge. In its push for revamping existing CTE programs or creating new ones, it only superficially explores the areas it claims need attention from policymakers and educators.

Saunders and Del Razo say the report manages to over-reach and under-reach simultaneously: It uses “a few poorly developed examples to make broad claims about key attributes of successful programs”; at the same time “it does not fully capture the potential of high school CTE.”

The report ignores the need to ensure students graduate with a broad range of skills and knowledge, equipped “to move between higher education, on-the-job training, and work,” they write. As a result, it seems likely to reinforce longstanding divisions by social class that funnel students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds disproportionately toward a vocational track, while affording those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds greater access to higher education – and the higher incomes associated with it.

Saunders has conducted extensive research on efforts to improve the high school experiences and outcomes of students through approaches that integrate an academic and career-based curriculum.

Find the review by Marisa Saunders and Jaime Del Razo on the NEPC website at:
<http://nepc.colorado.edu/thinktank/review-updating-career-technical-ed>

Find *Updating Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century*, by Kristin Nye Larson and published by the Lexington Institute on the web at:
<http://www.lexingtoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Career-and-Technical-Education1.pdf>

The Think Twice think tank review project (<http://thinktankreview.org>) of the **National Education Policy Center (NEPC)** provides the public, policymakers, and the press with timely, academically sound reviews of selected publications. NEPC is housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education. The Think Twice think tank review project is made possible in part by support provided by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.

The mission of the National Education Policy Center is to produce and disseminate high-quality, peer-reviewed research to inform education policy discussions. We are guided by the belief that the democratic governance of public education is strengthened when policies are based on sound evidence. For more information on the NEPC, please visit <http://nepc.colorado.edu/>.

This review is also found on the GLC website at <http://www.greatlakescenter.org/>.