

MONITORING REPORT: Policy R-6 (Career Readiness)

PHASE ONE: Interpretation, Benchmark Data, and Goals

DATE: September 2018

Policy

All students will graduate from high school Career Ready.

Interpretation

We understand this policy expresses the deep value the Board places on career-focused education. The Board expects us to ensure all students leave our school system with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue a “career,” which in today’s economy is more than just a job. A career provides a family-sustaining wage and pathways to advancement and requires postsecondary training or education. A job, on the other hand, may be obtained with only a high school diploma, but offers no guarantee of advancement or mobility. Being ready for a career means that a high school graduate has the knowledge and skills needed to qualify for and succeed in the postsecondary job training and/or education necessary for his/her chosen career (i.e. community college, technical/vocational program, four-year college, apprenticeship, or significant on-the-job training).

We further understand that the Board recognizes Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs as a key piece of our overall career readiness efforts. They value the fact that CTE programs have traditionally been hallmarks of excellence at Ferndale High School. They fully endorse the mission of CTE, which is “to prepare students for success in post-secondary education and careers by helping them develop the skills, technical knowledge, academic rigor, and real-world experience for high-skill, high-demand, and highly successful careers.” They are committed to maintaining CTE as a major focus area at FHS.

At the same time, the Board knows that an effective system of career-focused education must begin long before high school. As early as kindergarten, students can benefit from being exposed to various occupations and practicing job skills. Therefore, our career readiness program needs to encompass grades K-12.

The Board also knows that, once students get to high school, they do not all concentrate their studies in CTE courses. Therefore, even at this level, CTE programs must be considered part of a larger district-wide and, preferably, community-wide emphasis on developing the career readiness of every young person. The economic future of our society depends on this work.

Through this policy, the Board acknowledges a range of benefits resulting from Career & Technical Education (CTE) specifically and career-focused instruction in general. Through such experiences, students are able to:

- Explore various career clusters.
- Find connections between their academic coursework and their career goals, thereby making classroom learning more relevant and engaging.
- Develop the skills demanded by both the labor market and post-secondary degrees in technical fields.
- Develop positive attitudes and build self-esteem.
- Acquire such transferable employability (“soft”) skills as critical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, professionalism, creativity, etiquette, public speaking, and cultural competency – all of which will provide them with a competitive edge for college and/or careers.
- In some CTE courses, earn high school credits in math, science, English/language arts and/or social studies in a context where these academic disciplines are applied to real-world problems.
- In some CTE courses, earn both high school and postsecondary credit simultaneously.
- Find their passion in a particular career field as the first step toward figuring out how to turn a passion into a paycheck.
- Learn about multiple pathways to success.
- According to research, be more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in a two-year college, be employed, and earn higher wages.

Background Information about Career & Technical Education

Every Career & Technical Education (CTE) class in our State and across the country falls into one of 16 “Career Clusters” defined by a group of jobs and industries related by skills or products. These 16 Clusters were established at the National level by the States’ Career Clusters Initiative, and they are recognizable across the United States in middle schools, high schools, community and technical colleges, and the workforce.

Within each of the 16 Clusters, there are specific “pathways” that correspond to a collection of courses and training opportunities designed to prepare students for a given career field.

Each CTE course is required to follow an established and adopted course framework. Every framework aligns national standards for a particular industry to State core content standards (in ELA, math, science, etc.), performance assessments, leadership expectations, employability skills, thinking skills, and relevance to the current needs of the workforce -- all in one document. In short, these frameworks provide an overview of the outcomes students are expected to meet in each CTE course. They also support the continuous improvement of CTE programs because they are reviewed annually by local Program Advisory Committees and Program Supervisors at OSPI.

In Ferndale, we have CTE Program Advisory Committees for each of the pathways included in our curriculum. These Advisory Committees are made up of members representing business and industry, the District teaching staff, labor organizations, special populations, community, students, parents, and building or District administration. A majority of the members on each committee possesses a working knowledge of the skills and competencies required for the particular occupation(s) they represent, current needs of the labor market, and the kinds of coursework necessary to prepare future workers to

meet these needs. As such, the Advisory Committees provide advice to educators about the design, development, delivery, evaluation, and continuous improvement of our Career & Technical Education programs.

The goals of Ferndale High School's program-specific CTE Advisory Committees include the following:

1. Review skill gap data for Whatcom County and the State of Washington to ensure alignment between community needs and CTE programs offered at FHS.
2. Conduct and/or audit annual program evaluations.
3. Identify and prioritize program gaps and needs.
4. Maintain a five-year program improvement plan.
5. Stay up-to-date on State budget allocations for CTE programs and provide input into budgeting at the local level.

Available Career & Technical Education Results Data for 2017-2018

Enrollment

- Total number of students enrolled in a CTE course = 1033 students
- Number of CTE "Concentrators," defined as any student who completes two or more courses in a particular CTE Cluster with a "B" or better grade = 558 students
- Tech Prep "Concentrators," defined as any student who completes two or more Tech Prep courses (eligible for dual college credit) with a "B" or better grade = 302 students

Improvement Goals

Creating this report has caused us to reflect on what data we currently have available to demonstrate the success and/or shortcomings of both our high school CTE programs and our K-12 career-focused education programs – and also the data we wish we had that we are not currently collecting. We have established the following goals in order to (1) provide a more complete data-rich picture of our career-focused education programs; (2) identify gaps in our current programming; and (3) develop continuous improvement goals related to our efforts to ensure all students graduate from high school career ready.

1. Show evidence that all students enrolled in CTE courses and/or pathways are being provided State-defined CTE content and are meeting State-defined outcomes aligned with those courses and pathways.
2. Present more detailed data related to CTE offerings and student participation in each. Include which career clusters are represented at FHS, what pathway courses are offered in each cluster, how many students are enrolled in each course, and what percentage this number represents of the whole student body.
3. Continue to develop and facilitate strong program-specific CTE Advisory Committees and document their progress toward meeting defined goals.

4. Upon the advice of CTE Advisory Committees and other representatives of local and State employers, create a five-year plan for updating overall CTE programming in the Ferndale School District.
5. Assess our current STEM programs in order to work with local businesses and other organizations to create stronger STEM-related pathway(s) that (1) meet the interests of our students, (2) fulfill the needs of the local community, and (3) complement the workforce requirements of the next decade.
6. In partnership with the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce, launch a District-wide, community-supported initiative – branded as *Ferndale Futures* -- aimed at providing all Ferndale students with quality career-focused learning experiences. Document the results in terms of student participation.
7. In collaboration with the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce, reignite our Work-Based Learning (WBL) Program. Document the results in terms of student participation.
8. Review and expand our Tech Prep efforts with local community colleges (Whatcom Community College and Bellingham Technical College) to better leverage dual credit options for students in our CTE programs. Keep data on the number of students availing themselves of Tech Prep credits in order to set improvement goals.
9. Continue to develop our FHS Career Center to meet the career needs of our high school students more effectively. Keep records of the activities sponsored by the Career Center and the number of students impacted by each.
10. Assess career-focused education programs and opportunities currently being offered in grades K-8, identify gaps, and establish improvement goals to fill those gaps.
11. Continue to define and develop District expectations for each student's High School and Beyond Plan.