California Department of Education memo-sscrb-cctd-item01

Executive Office

# SBE-002 (REV. 11/2017)

# MEMORANDUM

**DATE**: June 13, 2025

**TO:** MEMBERS, State Board of Education

**FROM:** TONY THURMOND, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT:** Career Technical Education Model Curriculum Standards Update

## Summary of Key Issues

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform the State Board of Education (SBE) that the California Department of Education (CDE) has begun leading the work to update the Career Technical Education (CTE) Model Curriculum Standards and Framework (MCS), with plans to propose updated MCS for approval in three phases grouped by industry sector, beginning in fall 2025.

With the increase in CTE enrollment of approximately 200,000 students between 2012 and 2025, and California’s investment in high quality, industry-aligned pathways, the CDE is responsible for ensuring CTE programs are linked directly to workforce needs and for ensuring that students have access to meaningful and relevant opportunities for career exploration and preparation.

Since the most recent update to the MCS in 2013, there have been significant technological advancements and changes across industries. Additionally, the state’s education and workforce priorities have shifted in response to industry needs as outlined in California’s Master Plan for Career Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction’s (SSPI) initiatives. The updated MCS will better align CTE and apprenticeship programs throughout California’s kindergarten through grade twelve   
(K–12) and community college systems, grounding programs in a skills-based framework that more effectively develops California’s future workforce.

The proposed updates the MCS will be developed in alignment with the Advance CTE’s National Career Clusters Framework (Framework) and reorganizing of the current 15 industry sectors into 14 “industry-oriented, sector-specific Career Clusters defined by labor market information and industry sector research and validation”.[[1]](#footnote-2) By adopting the Advance CTE Framework, California CTE will align with the same sector names and code sets (i.e. O-Net Standard Occupational Classification [SOC] and North American Industry Classification System [NAICS]) used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, making labor market information easier to collect and streamlining alignment to workforce development efforts. If adopted, labor market information will directly map to pathways, and CTE programs will have updated guidance on how to teach competencies specific to occupations. These data coding systems are used by all workforce systems in the state and nation and aligning K–12 programs with these systems will facilitate the development of CTE programs informed by labor market data and offer visibility into high-wage, high-need occupations and industry sectors for their respective regions. Additionally, the Framework allows for responsiveness to shifting industry priorities and a streamlined cyclical review process conducted by the CDE’s industry advisory groups.

As this update to the MCS entails the development of skills-based programs and alignment with other labor-related data systems, this work is a timely reflection of the vision set forth in the Governor’s Master Plan for Career Education and the SSPI’s CTE Initiatives, ensuring that California’s TK–12 CTE teachers are provided with updated instructional guidance and students are well-prepared for the ever-evolving world of work.

The following table shows the CDE’s timeline for the phases of update the MCS:

| **Phase** | **Timeline** | **Project Work** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Planning Phase | January 2025 | Project Planning & Initiation |
| Planning Phase | February – March 2025 | CDE Internal Workgroup: Alignment of CA CTE Framework with Advance CTE |
| Phase One | March – October 2025 | **Career Clusters:**  Arts, Entertainment, and Design  Management and Entrepreneurship  Marketing and Sales  Education |
| Phase One | November 2025 | Phase One MCS Proposed for SBE Approval |
| Phase Two | July 2025 – February 2026 | **Career Clusters:**  Hospitality, Events, and Tourism  Digital Technology  Public Safety and Services  Energy and Natural Resources  Healthcare and Human Services |
| Phase Two | March 2026 | Phase Two MCS Proposed for SBE Approval |
| Phase Three | July 2025 – February 2027 | **Career Clusters:**  Agriculture  Finance  Construction  Advanced Manufacturing  Supply Chain and Transportation |
| Phase Three | March 2027 | Phase Three MCS Proposed for SBE Approval |

Note: *Arts, Entertainment, and Design;* *Marketing and Sales;* and *Management and Entrepreneurship; and Education* will be the first MCS documents to be submitted for approval by November 2025 based on work already completed for those sectors. Phase 2 and Phase 3 Career Clusters are subject to change based on state workforce priorities.

## Attachment(s)

* **Attachment 1:** National Career Clusters Framework Background and Alignment (2 Pages)
* **Attachment 2:** Definitions of Key Terms (1 Page)

# Attachment 1

## Background on the Advance CTE Framework

Advance Career Technical Education (CTE) is the national association of State CTE Directors and related professionals. The Framework serves as a guiding organizational structure for CTE leaders and partners to create inclusive, industry-responsive, and learner-centered CTE programs and experiences. The Framework was first established in 2002 through a collaborative effort by the federal government and states, facilitated by Advance CTE. Since that time, Advance CTE, on behalf of the states, has continued to serve as its steward. The original Framework design was used in some form in all 50 states and multiple territories, and it was used around the world to inform career development tools and platforms. In 2022, Advance CTE launched the multiyear initiative to modernize the Framework, releasing the updated Framework in October 2024. For more information visit the Advance CTE webpage at <https://careertech.org/>.

## California CTE Framework Alignment

California will reorganize industry sectors and pathways to align with the Advance CTE National Career Clusters Framework, with minimal disruption to local educational agencies (LEAs). The updated MCS will include career pathways organized by Career Cluster, which require moving pathways to the appropriate Career Cluster, and adding additional sub-clusters when necessary and as determined by the CA CTE Industry Sector Advisories.

Only a few organizational changes are needed for the current industry sectors to align with the National Career Clusters Framework. These organizational changes are summarized here:

1. California’s Fashion and Interior Design industry sector will merge with Arts, Media, and Entertainment and become the Arts, Entertainment, and Design Career Cluster.
2. California’s Engineering and Architecture industry sector will merge with Manufacturing and Product Development to become the Advanced Manufacturing Career Cluster
3. California’s Business and Finance industry sector is divided into two new Career Clusters: Financial Services and Management and Entrepreneurship.

Other notable changes will take place in the re-organization of pathways and alignment of pathways to sub-clusters. Many of these changes will occur in our least enrolled pathways, so we should have minimal disruption to the field. The most significant changes occur with the following:

1. The Natural Resources pathway will move from Agriculture and Natural Resources to the Energy and Natural Resources Career Cluster.
2. The Welding and Materials Joining pathway will move from Manufacturing and Product Development to the Construction (Skilled Trades) Career Cluster.
3. The Personal Services pathway will move from Fashion and Interior Design to the Health and Human Services Career Cluster.
4. The Architectural Design pathway will move from Engineering and Architecture to Construction Career Cluster.

Some industry sectors will take more work than others. For instance, the Health Sciences and Medical Technology industry sector (Health and Human Services Career Cluster) is perfectly aligned to the new Career Clusters and Sub-Clusters and will require minimal effort. Other sectors like Information and Communication Technology (Digital Technology Career Cluster), Business and Finance (Financial Services Career Cluster) and Transportation (Transportation and Logistics Career Cluster) will need to incorporate new subclusters not currently represented and will require more effort.

The Arts, Entertainment, and Design Model Curriculum Standards (MCS) update is complete once the Fashion and Interior Design pathways are added. The Marketing and Sales, and Management and Entrepreneurship MCS update has already been through an industry validation process and is nearly complete, and the Educationpathway will be completed for submission in November of 2025. These sectors will be the first to be submitted for approval in alignment with the National Framework.

# Attachment 2

## Definitions of Key Terms

Cluster Groupings: Large purpose-driven meta-sectors that help guide young people toward Clusters that are aligned with their interests, their sense of purpose, and the impact they want to make on their communities including Caring for Communities, Investing in the Future, Building and Moving, Creating and Experiencing, Cultivating Resources.

Career Clusters: ***Industry sectors*** as defined by groupings from Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes. California Model Curriculum Standards (MCS) will organize our industry sectors into career clusters and align with relevant Occupational Information Network (ONET) SOC codes for occupational training specific to the appropriate cluster.

Sub-Clusters: Major groupings of career areas, or ***pathways*,** within a given field that have similar skills as defined by industry area. Career Clusters (below) are organized by Cluster Grouping. Cluster Groupings can be used to support introductory-level career technical education (CTE) students in selecting appropriate pathways or “Sub-Clusters”.

Cross-Cutting Clusters: Clusters that are based on *both* sector-specific and contextualized functions instead of purely discrete industry sectors. These Clusters have both Sub-Clusters and implications for courses taken in all other Career Clusters. The updated MCS template has included a new section for Cross-Cutting Sectors.

Career-Ready Practices: The Career Ready Practices, built on a meta-analysis of over 30 different listings of general professional skills developed by industry and educational institutions, represent the skills needed to succeed in the modern workplace. These practices should be embedded across the pre-kindergarten to workforce continuum.

1. “Frequently Asked Questions: National Career Clusters Framework.” *Advance CTE*, 2023 Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work, 26 Dec. 2024, careertech.org/resource/frequently-asked-questions-national-career-clusters-framework/. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)