THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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The Future of Career Technical Education (CTE) Assessment
Executive Summary

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PURPOSE OF THIS WHITE PAPER
On behalf of the states that participated in the 2009–10 State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) on Technical Skills Assessment, this paper addresses two significant issues facing our nation: ensuring that more students are both college and career ready and addressing the need for better and more quality data to evaluate the effectiveness of career technical education (CTE) programs. Global competition, declining student achievement, and the skills gap bring a sense of urgency to address these issues. We believe a major focus and investment in building large-scale CTE assessments that result in nationally portable credentials is an important part of the solution. We also believe that we need better accountability data to evaluate the effectiveness of CTE and to compete better internationally. The use of multiple measures is preferred when we need both to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and student achievement. This white paper is a call to action for states, the federal government, and testing companies.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Develop a national common core of technical standards that builds on the National Career Cluster Knowledge and Skills statements. A national approach to CTE assessment requires common standards, and they must define more than general workplace readiness skills. The Career Cluster Knowledge and Skills define the rigorous, transferrable skills needed across all occupations in each of the 16 industry career clusters and 79 subsequent career pathways. There is also a role for occupation-specific standards common to many CTE programs, but we believe these are best left to states and industry groups to steward.

2. Create a national comprehensive college and career ready assessment system that measures both academic and technical knowledge and skills. All components of a CTE assessment approach, regardless of the format, should include multiple measures for student achievement and program performance. Components of the CTE approach should, where possible, integrate with states’ broader assessment systems to measure academic achievement and manage student data. Rigorous programs of study aligned to the National Career Clusters framework should be the method of delivery for all CTE curriculum and assessment.

3. Build high-quality technical assessments that examine proficiencies as defined by the academic and technical common cores and that may lead to industry-recognized, nationally portable credentials. We believe that a shared item bank could facilitate the development and delivery of large-scale state assessments that address many areas of the national common core. Performance and portfolio assessment may be required for some skill areas, but a collaboratively developed and managed shared item bank provided with protocols for valid and reliable test form development and delivery provides the best opportunity to pursue nationally portable credentials as advanced placement, transcripted credit, and industry-recognized certification.

4. Create a national clearinghouse of current industry-based assessments and related credentials/certifications. There will continue to be a need for assessments other than those generated from the shared item bank, such as assessments for industry certification, state licensure, occupation-specific skills, and performance assessments for skill areas unsuitable for multiple-choice testing. A national clearinghouse of these assessments will serve CTE and education leaders seeking to identify all additional tools to form a complete assessment approach.
**NEXT STEPS**

The Council of Chief State School Officers has long sponsored a program of State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS). Beginning in 2009–10, the Career Technical Assessment Collaborative (CTAC), a SCASS on Career Technical Assessment, was founded and authored this white paper. The steps enumerated below are those that CTAC is fostering during the 2010–11 year.

- Identify opportunities to collaborate with consortia developing assessment systems and approaches.
- Collaborate with testing companies to explore the possibilities of win-win relationships to advance student achievement assessment in CTE for both college and career readiness.
- Seek input from chief state school officers and assessment directors.
- Create coalition of states to begin planning development of published instruments for use in CTE as well as possibilities for developing an item bank and a clearinghouse.
- Communicate strategy and plan to broader education community.