

How are Career & Technical Education standards organized?

Overview

Career & Technical Education (CTE) standards provide middle school and high school students with the opportunity to explore careers and develop technical skills in a variety of industries in order to prepare them to be successful in postsecondary experiences and the workforce.

Unlike other content areas which are primarily organized by grade spans, CTE standards are organized by career clusters, pathways, and courses.



Career Clusters

Career clusters are groups of careers that share common features and encompass almost all occupations from entry through professional level. Career clusters identify a pathway from secondary to two- and four-year colleges, graduate school and the workplace so students can link what they learn in school and what they can do in the future. In South Dakota, CTE courses are delivered in 16 career clusters, such as Finance, Health Science, and Manufacturing.

Pathways

Each career cluster is divided into different pathways that are grouped by the knowledge and skills required for a given career. For example, the Information Technology career cluster contains four pathways: Networking Systems, Programming & Software Development, Information Support Services, and Web & Digital Communications.

Each pathway contains a planned sequence of courses which includes both academic and technical coursework. The sequence of courses prepares students for entry-level careers and lays the foundation for postsecondary training related to their career of choice.

Courses

Courses within each pathway are divided into standards. The standards provide expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of the course.

Courses are categorized as foundational, cluster or pathway courses. Foundational courses apply to all career clusters and provide students with the opportunity to explore careers and develop leadership and work readiness skills. Cluster courses help students develop knowledge and technical skills that apply to all pathways within a cluster, and pathway courses allow students to further develop knowledge and skills at a more advanced level.