

Broadening the Path: Design Principles Self-Assessment

INSTRUCTIONS: This self-assessment breaks down each design principle so that state and local leaders can fully analyze their policies and programs. To use this rubric, examine each design principle; assign it a rating of 1, 2, 3 or 4 based on how your current policy or program compares to the examples in the chart; and provide written evidence for that rating. Below is a general description of each rating, and more principle-specific descriptions are provided under “1 = Emerging” and “4 = Strong” in the charts in this document.

RATINGS DEFINITIONS:

- 1 (EMERGING)** This design principle is not yet represented in your current or proposed middle grades CTE policy or program.
- 2 (BUILDING)** This design principle is somewhat represented in your current or proposed middle grades CTE policy or program, but many improvements still need to be made.
- 3 (PROMISING)** This design principle is fairly well represented in your current or proposed middle grades CTE policy or program, although some improvements still need to be made. The program or policy is considered to be more developed than one that is rated a 2.
- 4 (STRONG)** This design principle is fully represented in your current or proposed middle grades CTE policy and program with clear evidence of its impact, even if minor adjustments still need to be made.

Importantly, the sample evidence provided in the self-assessment is simply that — samples. The samples are by no means exhaustive but are meant to serve as *illustrative* examples of how a less-developed or well-developed middle grades CTE policy or program would play out at the school or student level. In some cases, a program may need to meet all of the criteria to be considered “strong”; in others, the criteria are not cumulative but identify different ways that a program can demonstrate its effectiveness for learners.

| To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy: | Equitable and inclusive of each student? | | RATING 1 2 3 4 <i>(circle one)</i> |
|--|---|---|--|
| Sample evidence | 1 = Emerging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Middle grades CTE is optional or an elective for students not taking arts, music or additional academic coursework. → The middle grades CTE curriculum is narrowly designed and does not allow for much modification to account for different learning styles or regional economies. → Certain populations of students make up the majority of middle grades CTE participation. | 4 = Strong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Every student is required to engage in middle grades CTE regardless of achievement level. → School schedules ensure that students do not have to choose between middle grades CTE exposure and pursuing other interests (such as fine arts) or receiving enhanced academic services. → Instruction is scaffolded to account for different learning styles. → Supports are provided to special populations to ensure their appropriate access, participation and success. → Professional development and supports around middle grades CTE instruction are strong. | |
| Evidence | | | |
| Areas for improvement and/or action steps | | | |

| To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy: | Anchored in careers? | | RATING 1 2 3 4 <i>(circle one)</i> |
|--|--|--|--|
| Sample evidence | 1 = Emerging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Programming focuses on building only life or employability skills that can be applied across any/all careers. ➔ Programming has some technical component (e.g., shop class, cooking) but does not draw explicit connections between the skills learned and career options. ➔ Middle grades CTE does not take into account or provide any instruction or professional development around the use of labor market information. | 4 = Strong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Students explore a wide breadth of careers and engage in projects or activities that offer deep linkages to those careers. ➔ Students make connections between the variety of potential careers and the skills and preparation necessary to access those careers. ➔ Skills addressed through hands-on projects and lab activities are clearly connected to specific career tasks (while maintaining developmental appropriateness). ➔ Teachers, students and counselors use labor market information to identify and research career options. | |
| Evidence | | | |
| Areas for improvement and/or action steps | | | |

| To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy: | Standards based? | | RATING 1 2 3 4 <i>(circle one)</i> |
|--|--|--|--|
| Sample evidence | 1 = Emerging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There are no state-developed middle grades CTE standards or approval processes for locally developed standards. → The state provides only sample projects and activities for middle grades CTE. → The middle grades CTE standards focus solely on employability skills. → The middle grades CTE standards are vague and provide limited guidance to local districts or educators. | 4 = Strong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The state-developed/state-approved middle grades CTE standards are rigorous, relevant and learner centered. → The standards integrate academic, technical and employability skills across multiple Career Clusters. → The standards provide specific statements about what a learner should know and be able to do at the end of a course or program. → The standards align with high school-level CTE standards and career development standards across the education continuum. | |
| Evidence | | | |
| Areas for improvement and/or action steps | | | |

| To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy: | Grounded in experiential and hands-on learning? | | RATING 1 2 3 4 <i>(circle one)</i> |
|--|--|---|--|
| Sample evidence | 1 = Emerging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Middle grades CTE is delivered solely through online career assessments or experiences. ➔ Middle grades CTE is a stand-alone, “sit and get” course with no opportunities for work-based learning, CTSO participation or engagement with employers. ➔ Teachers receive no professional development or supports focused on experiential or project-based learning. | 4 = Strong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ All students engage in a mix of school-based and work-based experiences in middle grades CTE. ➔ Middle grades CTE blends technology; classroom instruction; and authentic hands-on, real-world activities. ➔ Middle grades teachers have ongoing professional development opportunities that focus on embedding experiential and project-based learning in their instruction. | |
| Evidence | | | |
| Areas for improvement and/or action steps | | | |

| To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy: | Balanced in breadth and depth across the curriculum? | | RATING 1 2 3 4 <i>(circle one)</i> |
|--|---|---|--|
| Sample evidence | 1 = Emerging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Middle grades CTE is solely a feeder for high school CTE pathways. → Students are exposed to only a small subset of the 16 Career Clusters®. → Students learn about the Career Clusters only at the highest level and do not have opportunities to learn about specific careers or career pathways within that framework (or its equivalent). | 4 = Strong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Students are exposed to all 16 Career Clusters (or their equivalent). → Students have opportunities to learn more deeply about a subset of Career Clusters through additional research, projects or engagement with employers. → Students gain information about potential CTE pathways in their community, region or state, along with other options for pursuing a career field. → All students have the opportunity to enroll in CTE programs of study starting in the middle grades. | |
| Evidence | | | |
| Areas for improvement and/or action steps | | | |

To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy:

Integrated into the broader K-12 — or P-20 — career development system?

RATING
1 2 3 4
(circle one)

Sample evidence

1 = Emerging

- Middle grades CTE is disconnected from both K-5 career development and 9-12 CTE/career development experiences and activities.
- Middle schools have no supports or opportunities to partner with elementary or high schools around CTE and career development.
- Individual career and academic plans begin in grade 9 with no input from middle grades teachers or counselors.
- Middle grades counselors receive no explicit support or training around CTE or career development.

4 = Strong

- There is a K-12 or P-20 career development continuum or framework that clearly and comprehensively aligns CTE and career development across elementary, middle and high school (and potentially postsecondary).
- The state or district provides supports and assistance to help elementary, middle and high schools collaborate around career development.
- Individual career and academic plans start in grade 7 or earlier and include specific activities and expectations for middle grades students.
- Middle grades counselors are fully trained and prepared to support CTE and career development.
- Content standards related to middle grades CTE are clearly aligned with standards in related high school programs to ensure smooth transitions.

Evidence

Areas for improvement and/or action steps

| To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy: | Inclusive of intentional and meaningful employer engagement? | | RATING 1 2 3 4 <i>(circle one)</i> |
|--|--|--|--|
| Sample evidence | 1 = Emerging → Employers play no role in the development or validation of middle grades CTE standards, competencies or curricula. → No work-based learning activities are offered for middle school students. → Employers play no role in the development or assessment of project-based activities. | 4 = Strong → Middle grades CTE program standards, competencies and/or curricula are informed or validated by employer partners. → All students have opportunities to engage directly with employers through middle grades CTE. → Employers play a role in the assessment of students' skills and growth. | |
| Evidence | | | |
| Areas for improvement and/or action steps | | | |

| To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy: | Inclusive of dedicated instructional time? | | RATING 1 2 3 4 <i>(circle one)</i> |
|--|---|---|--|
| Sample evidence | 1 = Emerging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There are not enough middle grades teachers to provide instruction, or middle grades CTE is usually taught by whichever teachers are available. → Middle grades CTE is solely the responsibility of elective teachers with no connections to academics. → Middle grades CTE is delivered solely through after-school experiences. | 4 = Strong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There are clear requirements and qualifications in place for middle grades CTE teachers. → Middle grades CTE teachers receive specialized professional development on both content and age-appropriate pedagogy. → Schools and districts can calculate and report how much instructional time is dedicated to CTE. → All students take at least one year-long course during the middle grades focused on CTE/career development. → Career development activities are embedded meaningfully across academic and technical content areas. | |
| Evidence | | | |
| Areas for improvement and/or action steps | | | |

| To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy: | Communicated effectively to students and their families? | | RATING 1 2 3 4 <i>(circle one)</i> |
|--|--|--|--|
| Sample evidence | 1 = Emerging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Families of middle grades students receive no specific or targeted information about careers or CTE. → No state- or locally provided or supported materials communicate the value proposition of CTE for families or students. → Families of middle grades students are not brought into the career development process. | 4 = Strong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The state or district provides CTE communications and marketing materials or supports for schools focused on middle grades students, with particular attention to special populations (e.g., materials feature non-traditional learners, materials are translated into commonly spoken languages, etc.). → All families of middle grades students receive information on career options and opportunities in their community and state or region. → All families receive information and tools to support their middle grades students' career development and choices. → Families are engaged directly in middle grades CTE through involvement in the career/academic plan. | |
| Evidence | | | |
| Areas for improvement and/or action steps | | | |

| To what degree is your state or local middle grades CTE program or policy: | Focused on student growth? | | RATING 1 2 3 4 <i>(circle one)</i> |
|--|---|---|--|
| Sample evidence | 1 = Emerging → No processes or requirements are in place around the collection of student-level middle grades CTE data beyond participation. → Teachers must make independent and subjective judgments about what students have learned. | 4 = Strong → Schools and districts collect student-level data on learning that occurs inside and outside of the classroom. → Teachers have clear and easy systems for reporting on student growth and competencies. → There are multiple opportunities and ways for students to demonstrate what they have learned (e.g., CTSO competitions, projects, assessments, etc.). → Students contribute to the evidence of what they learned through middle grade CTE (e.g., through journals or self-assessments). → Employer partners (as appropriate) contribute to the evidence of what students learned through middle grades CTE (e.g., through feedback reports). | |
| Evidence | | | |
| Areas for improvement and/or action steps | | | |