***Tips to help students understand Career Clusters***

Assist your students in choosing the most appropriate Career Cluster. The career opportunities within these clusters range from entry-level positions to professional degrees. Many CareerTech programs will have an appropriate fit with one or more of the pathways. For example, whether a student is interested in Health Science Technology, Health Careers Certification, Practical Nursing, or a Respiratory Therapy program, each of these would align with the Health Science Career Cluster model. Some CareerTech programs or courses could have an alignment with more than one cluster; for example, some students currently enrolled in a Business, Marketing, Information Technology Education (BMITE) program could have options within the Arts, A/V Technology and Communications Cluster, the Business Management and Administration Cluster, or the Information Technology Cluster.

The key is to use the Career Cluster that best fits with an individual student’s career goals!

Each Career Cluster model identifies common cluster knowledge and skills. These knowledge and skills cut across each pathway found within the Career Cluster.

All sixteen clusters use common cluster knowledge and skill headings, but the actual knowledge and skill statement, as well as the performance elements and measurement criteria, are unique to that cluster. The major

headings within each cluster are Academic Foundation; Communication; Problem Solving and Critical Thinking; Information Technology Applications; Systems; Safety, Health, and Environment; Leadership and Teamwork; Ethics and Legal Responsibilities; Employability and Career Development; and Technical Skills.

The next level within the model identifies the career pathways designated within the cluster. For example, the Health Science Cluster has five different pathways: Therapeutic Services; Diagnostic Services; Health Informatics; Support Services; and Biotechnology Research and Development. Within each of these pathways are multiple occupations.

Remember, as students’ progress through the cluster model (i.e. their education and training), the core cluster knowledge and skills reach across all pathways within the cluster and coursework. Training and degree programs will become more focused as students choose a pathway and finally an occupation. Students need to understand they have the ability to move from occupation to occupation or to a different pathway within the cluster model, but they also need to realize that mobility could require additional technical training, an apprenticeship, or completion of a degree.

Traditionally, we haven’t always approached preparation for a career field with this broad approach. We have thought in terms of a specific occupational program or a specific occupation. In today’s world, it is very important for students to understand the broader concept of a Career Cluster. It is also very important for them to understand the foundation, knowledge, and skills that they learn will help them transition to several different career pathways and multiple occupations within that pathway. The addition of skill sets, and other forms of education will help students transition from entry-level careers up the career ladder

Career Clusters bring additional benefits to students such as the latest knowledge and skills, a tool for curriculum alignment, and meeting regional demands. In addition, the model of foundation skills is recognized nationally and supports certification and degree advancement.

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| **Sample Career Specialties/Occupations** |
|  | PATHWAYS |  |
| **Cluster Knowledge and Skills**\* Academic Foundation \* Communications \* Problem Solving and Critical Thinking\* Information Technology Applications \* Systems \* Safety, Health, and Environment* Leadership and Teamwork \* Ethics and Legal Responsibilities \* Employability and Career Development \* Technical Skills
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