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## Fordham Institute Report Highlights Value of CTE

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A recent report from the Fordham Institute titled, “[Career and Technical Education in High School: Does it Improve Student Outcomes?](#)” answers its own question with an emphatic “Yes!” The study used longitudinal data from Arkansas to examine course taking and both educational and employment outcomes for ninth-grade students entering high school in 2008, 2009 and 2010, examining data related to their time in high school and one year following. In short, the study found that “Greater exposure to CTE is associated with better outcomes for students.” More specifically, findings included:

1. Most students in Arkansas take CTE, with limited evidence of “tracking.
2. White and female students are more likely to concentrate, and some concentrations are more or less popular depending on a student’s gender, race, income level, and disability status.
3. The more CTE courses students take, the better their education and labor market outcomes.
4. Students who concentrate see additional benefits, especially when it comes to high school graduation.
5. Male and low-income students see the largest benefits to concentrating.

These findings can be summed up well by a paragraph from the study’s “Forward”:

*Arkansas students with greater exposure to CTE are more likely to graduate, enroll in a two-year college, be employed, and have higher wages. Furthermore, those students are just as likely to pursue a four-year degree as their peers. In addition, students who “concentrate” their CTE coursework are more likely to graduate high school by 21 percentage points compared to otherwise similar students—a truly staggering number. Concentration has positive links with the other outcomes as well. Moreover, the results of this study suggest that CTE provides the greatest boost to the kids who may need it most—boys, and students from low-income families.*

The findings echo much of the previous research in CTE, but provide a fresh new look with more current data. One of the study's top recommendations is for states and the federal government to invest more heavily in secondary CTE. In addition, recommendations include:

1. Examine state labor market projections to identify high-growth industries.
2. Offer CTE courses aligned to skills and industry-recognized credentials in these fields, and encourage (or require) high school students to take them.
3. Encourage (or require) students taking multiple CTE courses to concentrate, rather than enrolling haphazardly.
4. Support and encourage dual enrollment and make credits "stackable" from high school into college, so that high school CTE courses count toward specific postsecondary credentials.

Summed up: "Make high-quality, labor-market-aligned CTE available to all students, and encourage (and enable) them to participate." This recommendation aligns well with ACTE's Perkins priorities and we are pleased to see it echoed and supported by rigorous research!