

OVAE CONNECTION

OECD Study to Compare Postsecondary CTE in 18 Countries

The U.S. Department of Education has recently commissioned the Education Policy Committee of the [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\)](#) to conduct a study of postsecondary CTE in the United States. The OECD is an international economic organization of 34 countries founded in 1961 to support economic progress and world trade. It is a forum for democratic and economically advanced countries to compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, and identify good practices.

The Education Policy Committee of the OECD conducts periodic reviews and analyses of the education and training systems of member countries, as well as international rankings of countries' educational systems. In 2010, the OECD published [Learning for Jobs](#), an international study of CTE at the secondary school level, with the goal of helping countries make their systems more responsive to labor market needs. The study included 17 individual case studies from countries around the world and an in-depth examination of secondary school CTE systems and policies in South Carolina and Texas.

Recognizing that countries increasingly want to provide their people with more advanced qualifications and the skills needed in many of the fastest-growing technical and professional jobs, the OECD is conducting a second review of its member states' CTE. Postsecondary CTE also plays an essential role in helping adult and dislocated workers upgrade their skills. Persistent unemployment and under-employment, combined with the threat of skill shortages, has underscored the significance of postsecondary CTE. The search for effective program models and policy support is a shared goal across many OECD countries.

The ongoing study of CTE, [Skills Beyond School](#), focuses on how countries equip students and workers with training after high school. The report, due out in 2013, will significantly expand the evidence base around CTE and help individual countries identify policy options for improving their CTE systems. Eighteen countries are participating in the study, including the United States where it will focus on both federal and state policies in the CTE arena. Individual case studies of Florida, Maryland and Washington will be included. The study will place the U.S. system for CTE in a comparative international context and assess its strengths and challenges. It will also provide a set of policy recommendations, backed by evidence and analysis, for improving the development and implementation of CTE. Finally, the review will be an opportunity to identify innovative and promising practices and research evidence of relevance and value to other OECD countries.

Department Releases *Adult College Completion Tool Kit*

As part of the third annual back-to-school [bus tour](#), Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Assistant Secretary of vocational and adult education (OVAE) Brenda Dann-Messier, [announced](#) the release of the [Adult College Completion Tool Kit](#).

Education remains *the* essential currency in a knowledge economy and the means by which we ensure our nation's prosperity in a highly competitive global arena. Given this reality, our citizenry must dramatically increase overall rates and levels of educational attainment. This includes adult learners who must succeed in postsecondary education in ever greater numbers. Yet, approximately two-thirds of adults age 25 and older do not persist in postsecondary education long enough to earn a credential, and many others do not even enroll. For adults with low literacy and numeracy skills and those learning English as a second language, the transition to and completion of postsecondary education and training can be even more difficult.

With these issues and goals in mind OVAE developed the *Adult College Completion Tool Kit* to help policymakers at the state and local levels implement practical evidence-based solutions that increase the number of graduates who earn the high-quality degrees and certificates required to compete for good jobs. The tool kit is designed to connect state administrators and local practitioners to strategies, resources and technical assistance tools. It is organized by three key areas: access, quality, and completion. Each section provides information to enhance and support state adult education administrators, local adult education practitioners, and adult education students in their efforts to increase the number of adults who complete at least one year of higher education or training. The information is aligned with the needs of four critical student populations—veterans, adult basic education students, incarcerated individuals, and high-skill immigrants.



Brenda Dann-Messier speaks with students on Sept. 10 at the Veterans Tribute & Career Academy in Las Vegas, the only school of its kind in Nevada that focuses on preparing students for careers in public service. Photograph by Leslie Williams, U.S. Department of Education.