

2025 Delegate Assembly Proposed Legislative Resolution

TITLE OF RESOLUTION: Career Pathways and Technical Education

SUBMITTED BY: Hastings Public Schools, ISD 200, Matt Bruns and Jessica Dressely,
Board Directors

RECOMMENDATION: Passage

BE IT RESOLVED, THAT MSBA URGES THE LEGISLATURE TO invest in Career Pathways and Technical Education by Allocating Targeted Funds to Fully Implement Minnesota Statutes, Section 127A.70, Subdivision 2a. Strategic investment would:

- Strengthen career pathways by ensuring consistent access for students in all regions, not just those with local resources.
- Expand technical education aligned with workforce needs, giving students valuable skills and credentials before graduation.
 - Build stronger partnerships between K–12, postsecondary institutions, and employers, resulting in seamless transitions into higher education and high-demand careers.
- Advance equity by ensuring all students, including those from rural, and urban communities, can access high-quality career-connected learning opportunities.

DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM:

Many students leave high school without clear, practical pathways to employment or further training. Minnesota law establishes a clear framework for a comprehensive career pathway program that integrates academic learning with hands-on, project-based experiences in trades, technology, healthcare, and other high-demand fields. Under Minnesota Statutes, section 127A.70, (Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership) Subdivision 2a the state calls for collaboration among K–12 schools, higher education, employers, and community partners to prepare students for both college and careers. This subdivision outlines the state’s intent to align education with workforce needs and includes key elements for early and ongoing career exposure, and integrated academic and technical instruction. Yet, without dedicated and sustained funding, implementation of the state’s framework to prepare students for college and careers remains underdeveloped.

EXPLAIN WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM:

This particularly impacts students with disabilities, students from rural districts, and first-generation college-bound students. As a result, too many students face underemployment, limited options, and disengagement after high school. Meanwhile, data from DEED and MDE highlight urgent workforce shortages in skilled trades and healthcare, and show the need for earlier career exposure to address these gaps. The framework to expand resources for career pathway programs, already exists in Minnesota Statutes, section 127A.70, subdivision 2a. What is needed now is the legislature’s commitment of targeted funding to turn law into practice. By fully funding this mandate, Minnesota can position itself as a leader in preparing students for

both postsecondary education and meaningful careers, while also strengthening our state's economy and addressing critical workforce shortages.

CURRENT LAW:

Minn. Stat. 127A.70, Subd. 2a requires the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership (which includes key leaders from education, labor, and business) to recommend comprehensive policy and statutory changes for creating a unified system from pre-kindergarten through career. The goal is to ensure all students have individualized career and college readiness plans supported by competency-based training, seamless course transferability, and redesigned educator licenses.

127A.70 MINNESOTA P-20 EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP.

Subd. 2a. Career pathways and technical education; key elements; stakeholder collaboration.

(a) The partnership must work with representatives of the Department of Education, the Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Department of Labor, the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, the Board of School Administrators, trade associations, local and regional employers, local school boards, adult basic education program providers, postsecondary institutions, parents, other interested and affected education stakeholders, and other major statewide educational groups and constituencies to recommend to the legislature ways to identify specific policy, administrative, and statutory changes needed under sections [120B.11](#), [120B.125](#), [122A.09](#), [122A.14](#), [122A.18](#), and [122A.60](#), among other statutory provisions, to effect and, if appropriate, revise a comprehensive, effective, and publicly accountable P-20 education system premised on developing, implementing, and realizing students' individual career and college readiness plans and goals. In developing its recommendations, the partnership must consider how best to:

- (1) provide students regular and frequent access to multiple qualified individuals within the school and local and regional community who have access to reliable and accurate information, resources, and technology the students need to successfully pursue career and technical education, other postsecondary education, or work-based training options;
- (2) regularly engage students in planning and continually reviewing their own career and college readiness plans and goals and in pursuing academic and applied and experiential learning that helps them realize their goals; and
- (3) identify and apply valid and reliable measures of student progress and program efficacy that, among other requirements, can accommodate students' prior education-related experiences and applied and experiential learning that students acquire via contextualized projects and other recognized learning opportunities.

(b) The partnership must recommend to the commissioner of education and representatives of secondary and postsecondary institutions and programs how to organize and implement a framework of the foundational knowledge and skills and career fields, clusters, and pathways for students enrolled in a secondary school, postsecondary institution, or work-based program. The key elements of these programs of study for students pursuing postsecondary workforce training or other education must include:

- (1) competency-based curricula aligned with industry expectations and skill standards;
- (2) sequential course offerings that gradually build students' skills, enabling students to graduate from high school and complete postsecondary programs;

- (3) flexible and segmented course and program formats to accommodate students' interests and needs;
 - (4) course portability to allow students to seamlessly progress in the students' education and career; and
 - (5) effective and sufficiently strong P-20 connections to facilitate students' uninterrupted skill building, provide students with career opportunities, and align academic credentials with opportunities for advancement in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations.
- (c) Stakeholders under this paragraph must examine possibilities for redesigning teacher and school administrator licensure requirements, and make recommendations to the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board and the Board of School Administrators, respectively, to create specialized licenses, credentials, and other endorsement forms to increase students' participation in language immersion programs, world language instruction, career development opportunities, work-based learning, early college courses and careers, career and technical education programs, Montessori schools, and project and place-based learning, among other career and college ready opportunities. Consistent with the possibilities for redesigning educators' licenses, the stakeholders also must examine how to restructure staff development and training opportunities under sections [120B.125](#) and [122A.60](#) to realize the goals of this subdivision.
- (d) The partnership must recommend to the Department of Education, the Department of Employment and Economic Development, and postsecondary institutions and systems how best to create a mobile, web-based hub for students and their families that centralizes existing resources on careers and employment trends and the educational pathways required to attain such careers and employment.

BACKGROUND PROVIDED BY MSBA:

This resolution seeks targeted legislative funding to fully implement Minnesota's vision for modern Career Pathways and Technical Education (CTE), which is already outlined in state law. This effort is rooted in a national shift away from traditional "vocational education" toward integrated, high-skill career preparation.

Background and Historical Context -The National Shift from Shop Class to Career Pathways

Historically, technical education was often siloed into separate "vocational" tracks, sometimes viewed as preparation only for students not bound for a four-year college or university. Over the past two decades, this perception has been radically transformed nationwide. The modern model, known as Career Pathways, Career and Technical Education (CTE), or College and Career Readiness, emphasizes that all students should be exposed to and prepared for high-demand, high-wage careers while simultaneously earning academic credentials.

Key to this evolution is the understanding that a strong economy requires skilled tradespeople, healthcare workers, and technicians. This shift necessitates stronger partnerships between K–12 schools, community colleges, and local employers to create "seamless transitions." The federal government supports this through legislation like the Perkins V Act, which focuses on program quality, alignment with workforce needs, and equitable access for all student groups.

The Minnesota Context: The Unfunded P-20 Mandate

Minnesota has established a highly progressive statutory framework to achieve this ideal through the P-20 Education Partnership (Preschool through post-secondary education). The partnership is tasked with creating a comprehensive system that includes competency-based curricula, flexible course formats, and even redesigning teacher licenses to accommodate specialized instructors.

The problem described in the proposed resolution is a classic case of an unfunded mandate: the state has the legal framework and the collaborative *intent* (Minn. Stat. 127A.70), but lacks the dedicated, sustained funding needed to move beyond planning and into broad, equitable implementation across all school districts. This lack of funding disproportionately impacts rural and urban districts that lack local employer or community resources, worsening the state's ability to address urgent workforce shortages in fields like skilled trades and healthcare.

What Other States Do to Fund Career Pathways

To turn their CTE frameworks into reality, many states have moved beyond general education aid and instituted targeted, categorical funding mechanisms similar to what this resolution advocates for. These strategies are designed to incentivize district participation, encourage quality program development, and promote industry partnerships:

1. *Student Performance/Credential Funding*: Several states provide districts with an add-on amount of funding for every student who earns a state-approved industry-recognized credential (like welding certification, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), or specialized IT certification). This directs state money toward measurable outcomes.
2. *Equipment and Facilities Grants*: Many states recognize that modern technical education requires specialized, expensive equipment (e.g., welding equipment, simulators, medical lab gear). They allocate one-time or revolving grant funds specifically for capital investments in CTE facilities and technology, ensuring programs remain aligned with current industry standards.
3. *Work-Based Learning Incentives*: States often provide financial support or tax credits to local employers who host rigorous apprenticeships or paid internships for high school students. This helps build the critical K–12/employer partnerships that Minnesota's statute requires.
4. *Teacher and Program Quality Funding*: Funds may be specifically designated to help districts cover the higher costs of hiring instructors with specialized industry experience (who may be paid more than standard teachers) or to pay for professional development that aligns with industry standards.

RATIONALE:

This resolution is about transforming Minnesota's ambitious law into an equitable, statewide educational reality. The rationale for passage is rooted in addressing a critical, unfunded mandate: The current law establishes a strong, collaborative framework for Career Pathways and Technical Education (CTE), but without dedicated, sustained funding, this system remains underdeveloped. Strategic investment is required to move beyond planning and ensure that core elements of the law, such as implementing competency-based curricula, building seamless

post-secondary course portability, and securing strong K–12/employer partnerships, are accessible to all students, regardless of their district's local resources.

Allocating targeted funds is crucial to resolving the state's dual crisis of student disengagement and workforce shortage. Currently, the lack of resources particularly impacts rural, urban, and special education students, who often leave high school without the practical skills or recognized credentials necessary for high-demand, high-wage careers, leading to underemployment. Conversely, state data confirms urgent shortages in fields like skilled trades and healthcare.

By fully funding the existing law, the Legislature directly addresses this economic need by guaranteeing a robust pipeline of skilled, career-ready graduates, effectively positioning Minnesota as a leader in linking education directly to economic prosperity and ensuring all students have a clear, viable path to future success.

Therefore, MSBA recommends passage.