

## VariQuest Checklist: *Are your CTE Initiatives Teaching 21st-Century Skills?*

### Introduction

A strategic and focused career and technical education (CTE) program should be a fundamental part of any secondary school. According to the Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE), [81 percent](#) of high school dropouts say that they would have stayed in school had they been offered more relevant, real-world learning opportunities.

Incorporating CTE programs into your course offerings will increase student engagement, but only insofar as it applies to your students' everyday lives. For today's students, that means CTE initiatives should align with and promote the 21st-century skills that they need, whether they attend a 2- or 4-year postsecondary program, or if they begin working right after graduation. Follow this simple checklist to ensure that your CTE programs emphasize these crucial skills.



**Do you understand how your CTE initiatives fit into the greater picture of 21st-century life and work by utilizing career clusters?**

Yes



No



In Progress



After receiving funding for VariQuest Tools, the Career Academy—a joint venture between Lincoln public school districts and Southeast Community College to provide high school juniors and seniors with credit courses in 16 different career pathways—implemented a professional development program based on common career clusters. Using graphic design, manufacturing, and production skills, students at the Career Academy created a customized water bottle company, successfully selling their products and even producing a [commercial](#) that was entered into a national competition.

**Do you coordinate with local universities, community colleges, and postsecondary schools to ensure that your standards cover the basic coursework required by those institutions?**

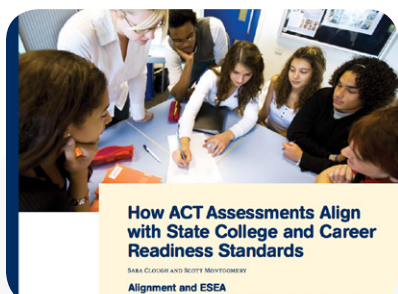
Yes No In Progress

Prep your students for success by working with higher-level administrators and educators in your community! By communicating directly with those stakeholders, you can craft CTE programs with a targeted emphasis on career- and college-readiness standards. Be aware of any [federal](#) or state-mandated career- and college-readiness standards to maximize the effectiveness of your CTE initiative.

**Are you utilizing high-quality assessments to measure students' progress in CTE coursework to accurately ensure that they are meeting Career and College-Readiness Standards?**

Yes No In Progress

The ACT is a ubiquitous, nationally standardized exam for measuring students' career- and college-readiness, and more broadly their level of preparedness for the 21st-century work world. This helpful [whitepaper](#) details how the ACT aligns with career- and college-readiness standards, making it an invaluable guideline for what skills you should be incorporating into your CTE programs.



To view the ACT case study click here.

**Are you providing your students with assignments that gauge real-world skills and allow them to apply the CTE concepts that they've been learning?**

Yes No In Progress

Students at [Venice High School in Florida](#) were able to start their very own print shop business with the help of the VariQuest Design Center, the Perfecta® 2400 printer, and a Cold Laminator. Rather than taking a test, they created posters, flyers, and more. Not only did they learn necessary career skills in business operations and management, production, and customer service, but they also provided a valuable service to their community.



Learn how Venice implemented VariQuest Tools in their school.

## Do you encourage participation in CTE student organizations?

Yes No In Progress

In 2013, Otterville High School applied for and received an Enhancement Grant which they used to purchase several VariQuest tools, including the Perfecta 2400, Cutout Maker, Design Center 2300, and a Cold Laminator 2510. Students have been able to use these tools to create customized flyers and order forms to advertise their services at sporting events and to local merchants. They also receive orders from neighboring schools for full-color posters and banners printed with the Perfecta, as well as, vinyl lettering cutouts. The student-based enterprise became a huge success in their district and engaged many students as they prepared for the transition from school to work life.



Read more about Otterville High School's implementation here.

## Are you educating yourself about available grants or other funding opportunities that could help offset the costs of launching CTE initiatives in your school or district?

Yes No In Progress

As with real-world businesses, there will be some overhead costs to starting a successful CTE initiative in your school or district. If the materials, technology, and space required for an effective program seem like too great a cost for your budget, look for funding earmarked specifically for CTE initiatives that your school or district can take advantage of. For instance, VariQuest has a number of tools to help your school fundraise in order to sustain operational and supply costs associated with a CTE program. Do your research, and keep in mind that the long-term benefits of CTE programs offset many of the initial costs. [Click here](#) for a list of available grants and funding opportunities!



For more information on how to create the most engaging, 21st-century-relevant CTE programs, contact a representative from VariQuest today who will help you craft the right initiative for your school's unique needs.

VariQuest

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