



New Directions for High School Career and Technical Education in the 21st Century

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by

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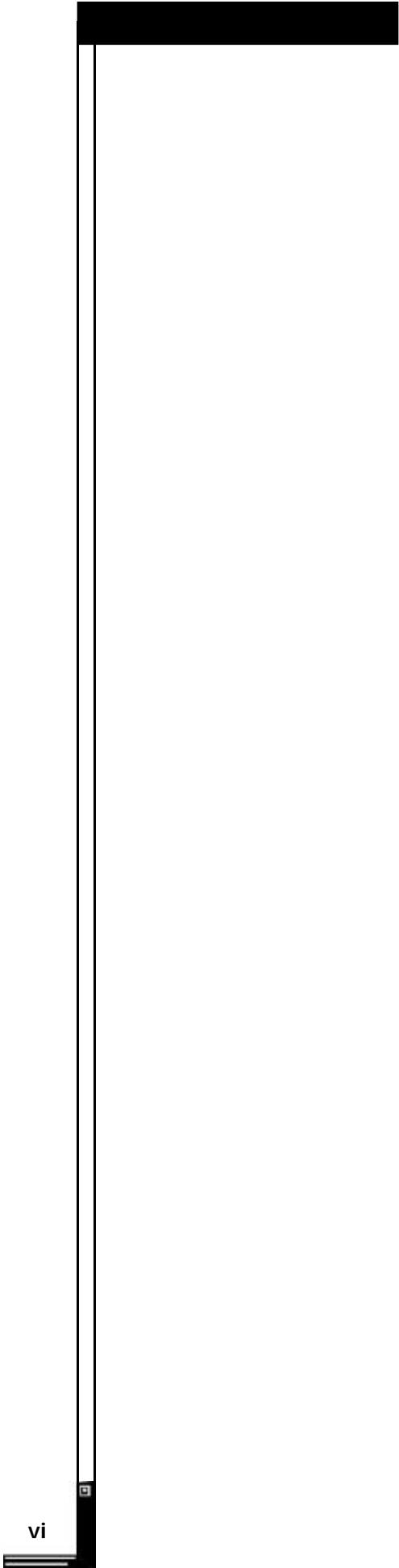
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The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is 1 of 16 clearinghouses in a national information system that is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. This paper was developed to fulfill one of the functions of the clearinghouse—interpreting the literature in the ERIC database. This paper should be of interest to vocational education teachers, researchers, and policymakers.

ERIC/ACVE would like to thank Richard L. Lynch for his work on this paper. The paper was prepared while the author was on assignment to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, from July 8, 1998 through June 30, 1999. Authority for the assignment was an agreement through the Intergovernmental Personnel Act and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Lynch is the former Director of the School of Leadership and Lifelong Learning and currently Professor of Occupational Studies, The University of Georgia. He has more than 30 years of experience in vocational education as a high school student and postsecondary teacher, teacher educator, researcher, and college administrator. He is the author of a related ERIC monograph, *Designing Vocational and Technical Teacher Education for the 21st Century: Implications from the Reform Literature*.

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A new vision for vocational education is integral to comprehensive reform of the high school in the United States. This paper identifies and describes new directions for vocational, or *career and technical, education* in high schools at the beginning of the 21st century. It synthesizes thought and opinion of a variety of stakeholders, gathered through interviews and a review of policy-influencing documents and research.

The paper begins with an historical overview of high school vocational education in order to understand the present condition of the field, depicting the turn of the 21st century as a crucial crossroads at which important decisions for the future must be made. Forces influencing high school career and technical education at this stage are described: the new economy, public expectations, new cognitive science research about learning, and a variety of school reform movements. The purposes of high school career and technical education are identified as—

- Providing career exploration and planning
- Enhancing academic achievement and motivation to learn more
- Acquiring generic work competencies and skills useful for employment
- Establishing pathways for continuing education and lifelong learning

The importance of early childhood and middle school years in laying the foundation for the high school and beyond is emphasized.

The remainder of the paper elaborates four themes for the new career and technical education: career planning and development, high school reform, upgrading of vocational education, and the K-14 model. These themes are discussed in terms of six components, four that contribute to student achievement (high school majors, contextual teaching and learning, work-based learning, authentic assessment) and two that relate to the organization of schools and school systems (career academies and tech prep).

Information on the topics in this paper may be found in the ERIC database using the following descriptors: Career Academies, *Career Education, Early Childhood Education, *Education Work Relationship, Educational Change, Educational Improvement, Elementary Education, High Schools, Integrated Curriculum, Middle Schools, Tech Prep, *Technical Education, *Vocational Education. Asterisks indicate terms that are particularly relevant.

