



Examining the Perceptions of Career and Technical Education in Nebraska

Nebraska Public Summary | July 2010

INTRODUCTION

This summary presents findings of the survey: “Examining Public Perceptions of Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Nebraska.” The purpose of the survey is to inform possible revisions to CTE standards in Nebraska. Thus, the results herein provide a snapshot of public perceptions of CTE among a randomly selected portion of the public in Nebraska. This survey was conducted during March, April and May, 2010. Both landline and cell phone users were surveyed. Of the 535 respondents, 447 (84%) were landline users, while the other 88 (16%) were cell phone users. The response rate for landline users was 33.9% and was 17.7% for cell phone users. The margin of error for this

study is 4.23%. The mean age for the entire sample was 55; the mean age for landline users was 57 and the mean age for cell phone users was 44. Respondents were primarily female (59%) and white (95%). Respondents were roughly evenly split between rural (52%) and urban (48%) areas of the state; urban areas were defined as Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy Counties, and rural areas were defined as any other county. Finally, 29% of respondents indicated that they had children in school in Nebraska. Where possible, researchers worded questions to allow for comparisons to responses to a similar survey that was administered to Nebraska educators in late 2009.

KEY FINDINGS | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Perceptions of CTE Courses

- The Nebraska public believes that CTE prepares students for careers and college, and that CTE courses are just as important as traditional academic subjects.
- However, substantial proportions of Nebraskans believe that CTE students are not as respected as students who take more traditionally academic courses.

Career Awareness and Exploration

- Most Nebraskans believe that students should begin to learn about potential careers in middle school and that activities such as job shadowing and internships should be made available in high school.
- Large proportions of respondents said they would favor a system of high schools that are focused on specific careers.

Attitudes about Career Information

- Nebraskans who have children in K-12 are interested in learning about career options available to children, but large proportions of parents do not feel that Nebraska schools are currently doing a good job of informing parents about careers and their related academic requirements.

Development of Course Content

- Nebraskans feel that course content should be developed based on:
 - 1) the skills required in the work place;
 - 2) the entrance requirements of Nebraska colleges and universities; and
 - 3) the academic standards and graduation requirements of a school district.

The Role of Local Employers

- Overwhelmingly, Nebraskans believe local businesses should work with schools to ensure that CTE courses are up-to-date and to provide unique learning and training experiences for students.

Skills Obtained by High School Graduates in Nebraska

- Large proportions of respondents feel that Nebraska graduates do not have the skills necessary for success in college and the workplace upon graduation.
- Paradoxically, most respondents also agree that Nebraska schools are doing a good job of preparing students for careers.

The Nebraska Economy and CTE

- Substantial proportions of Nebraskans say that economic activity in their area is directly tied to the education afforded students.
- The majority of Nebraskans believe that teaching students entrepreneurial skills is important for the future of the state’s economy.

Demographic Comparisons

- Parents of students are more positive about the skills received by Nebraska graduates than those without children in school.
- Urban respondents are more likely to say economic development is directly related to education and that local employers should be involved in course development.
- Rural respondents are more likely to believe entrepreneurship is important, and that economic development in the state will be directly related to CTE.

Comparison of Results to an Earlier Survey of Educators

- Both the public and educators feel that courses should be developed based on career considerations.
- The public is more likely than educators to say that CTE courses are rigorous and that CTE students are better prepared for employment than other students.
- The public is more likely to say that CTE focuses on students who won’t go to college and that CTE students are not as respected as other students.
- Educators are less likely to agree that graduates do not have the skills necessary for college and careers.