

# Technical Assessment Research Summary

## Executive Summary

Student assessments are commonly used in Career and Technical Education to test student knowledge and skills resulting from their instruction. In the spring of 2007, SkillsUSA discovered through third-party research that only half of students enrolled in CTE programs currently take assessments. While instructors most often make the purchase decision of such assessments, the responsibility for choosing and implementing these tools are shared by many, including State CTE Directors. Many factors drive the success of assessment programs, yet alignment with industry standards to provide a valued result for employers is the most important to educators today.

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**“If the industry doesn’t accept it, then it’s  
not worth a whole lot to the students”**

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## Respondents

- Conducted phone interviews with 32 state CTE leaders, representing 30 states
- Collected information via online survey from more than 1,200 CTE instructors from all 50 states
  - Represented nearly 50 occupational areas, most often auto/diesel, building trades, computer/internetworking and drafting/pre-engineering
- Analyzed information from national and regional perspectives

## Current Attitude and Use of Assessments

- Nearly 50 percent of CTE students are currently taking assessments
- Key reasons for not taking assessments were identified
  - Lack of perceived value by instructors and students was the main reason students did not take assessments
  - Nearly 15 percent said they did not administer assessments because a valid assessment specific to their technical area was not available

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**“If you want us to pay for an assessment, you would  
have to show us why it’s worth buying”**

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## Evaluation of Existing Assessment Tools

- Responsibility for choosing and purchasing assessments was shared by State CTE Directors and local school districts/instructors
  - Instructors were most likely to endorse assessments that were presented to them at conferences and workshops
- Instructors and supervisors consistently identified important attributes of assessments
  - Updated with consistent industry benchmarks
  - Provide diverse evaluation experiences for students (hands-on skills, technical knowledge, academic abilities and soft skills)

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**“With just a written assessment, we are only looking at their book smarts, and with just the hands-on, we don’t get to assess the true depth of their knowledge”**

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## Moving Forward with Future Assessments

- Industry alignment and recognition was the most important assessment attribute to instructors and state supervisors
  - 96.9 percent of state supervisors said employers recognized value of assessments
- Instructors said they wanted assessments that were aligned with their curriculum
- Other key needs identified included proven benefit for the cost, effectiveness of the overall program and user-friendliness for the teacher and student
- Other features mentioned that would add value to assessment tools included
  - National/industry standard instead of company or regional bias
  - Additional, more diverse technical areas should be served
  - Validate a mixture of industry and education standards

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**“Once these credentials become nationally known, they will be required for employment”**

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