



Career and Technical Education Committee

Maine State Board of Education

Minutes of December 17, 2025 Meeting

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) committee held a meeting on Wednesday, December 17, 2025, virtually on Zoom. The following were present: Committee Chair Edmond Morin, Committee Member Wendy Ault, and Committee Member Paulette Bonneau.

Guests: Amanda Peterson, Director, United Technology Center, Kevin Lavoie, Director, St. John Valley Technical Center, Mercedes Pour, Director of College Access and Secondary Partnerships, Maine Community College System.

I. Call to Order:

Chair Morin called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM under the State Board of Education's remote meeting policy, which requires vote be taken by roll call. He opened the meeting by reflecting on the successful Educate Maine Symposium held December 12th in Bangor. The State Board's presentation explaining the responsibilities of the State Board of Education drew a packed room, with attendees expressing surprise at the Board's scope of work. Several people commented throughout the day that they hadn't realized the extent of what the State Board does.

Paulette noted that the conference had excellent attendance, with some breakout sessions at standing-room-only capacity. She also reported that the State Board's most recent meeting devoted approximately an hour to discussing CTE, with some board members saying they hadn't realized the depth of CTE work happening statewide. Bonneau suggested that Mercedes might present to the State Board at a future workshop about CTE at the community college level, including relationships with technical schools and dual enrollment and related matters.

Mercedes responded enthusiastically, sharing that DOE CTE Director Dwight Littlefield had invited her to a national CTE convention in October. She found it eye-opening to see how integrated post-secondary and secondary CTE programs are in some states which showed her more possibilities for collaboration in Maine. She said she would welcome the opportunity to present to the entire State Board about both current partnerships and emerging opportunities. Wendy praised the symposium, particularly appreciating how MELMAC's partnership with Educate Maine exposes grantees to both business and education perspectives. She credited Paulette for organizing the State Board's participation and noted that the session exceeded her expectations for attendance. She continues to hear people express surprise at how busy the State Board is.

Ed shared that one of his major takeaways was learning about the number of free opportunities available for students through rehabilitation programs and various apprenticeships. He found it very encouraging that students can access these programs without cost.

Standing Reports and Updates

1) Department of Education Update (Prepared by Dwight Littlefield and DOE CTE Perkins Grant Manager Melissa Sherwood)

Since Dwight and Melissa were attending a Department of Education meeting, Ed read their submitted updates. Dwight reports they are working on the Consolidated Annual Report due to OCTAE on January 30th. He says that new staff member Nick Lebrek will join the CTE team in January as Middle School CTE/CTE Liaison Specialist. The Hall of Flags recognition for CTE Month will run February 10-12, 2026, expanded to three days with daily programs at 10:00 AM featuring student speakers. The team completed comprehensive on-site reviews at PATHS in Portland and WCTC in Belfast.

Melissa reports that CTEs submitted final invoices for FY25 Perkins reimbursement, with no updates yet on FY26 Perkins or Perkins Reserve. CTEs will begin comprehensive local needs assessments in the new year, required every two years under Perkins.

Regarding the Briggs Fund, as of December 15, 2025, there is a new funding allotment of \$46,640 (unobligated) plus a total unexpended cash balance of \$251,334.83, for a combined total of approximately \$298,000 available for awards.

2) Community College System Update (Mercedes Pour)

Mercedes acknowledged the generous support from Department of Education staff, particularly Melissa, following the departure of Joan DeCosta and Staci Grasky (?) within a three-week period. These two individuals represented the bulk of the system's Perkins knowledge, creating challenges since Mercedes had worked primarily on programming rather than grant management. She said she believes more people have to know about this area.

Mercedes announced that Jeanne Marie MacDonald-Johnson is taking over grant management for Perkins on the post-secondary side and that she is coming from the adult education world. She says McDonald- Johnson brings strong data management skills and is currently focused on the consolidated annual report. When Paulette asked for the last name, she realized McDonald- Johnson had previously worked for her, prompting laughter about how small Maine is. Bonneau confirmed that McDonald-Johnson is very detail-oriented.

On enrollment, Mercedes shared what she feels is encouraging news: despite the loss of free college, most technical programs are nearly full. She said students needed to register soon to secure spots. Following a question from Ed she said students with good advisors might be advised to go into another program. She expressed concern about students placed in general studies as a "holding pattern" when programs are full. The system is exploring "third path" options—interim steps between immediate employment and traditional two-year or four-year programs, including short-term training and apprenticeships.

Mercedes noted this is a statewide issue, for example for nursing programs where demand far exceeds capacity across both community college and university systems.

3) MACTE Update (Amanda Peterson)

Amanda reported that MACTE met the previous Monday at the RTI Center, the Army Guard Center in Bangor, with Dwight Littlefield's team and Laura Cyr to begin rewriting Chapters 232, 236, and 237. The group discussed what defines high-quality CTE. Since these rules are 40 years old, they'll require a complete rewrite rather than redlining. More work is coming in the next

few months, with a public comment period to be announced. These are routine technical rules that won't require legislative approval.

CTEs are entering recruiting season, with some schools having started in December and most active by January or February.

Reports from the Field:

A) United Technologies Center Report (Amanda Peterson)

Amanda described UTC's space constraints and exploration of satellite programs at some of their high schools including logistics such as transportation, potentially moving to full-day models. Currently, UTC runs a half-day model partly to accommodate three private schools which are not looking to change scheduling and one public school that's not changing its schedule.

The CTE Exploratory program is expanding to a seventh public high school within 18 months, which will cover all public high schools in the region. These programs serve 9th and 10th graders. UTC added a Special Education Coordinator this year who provides tremendous value supporting staff with accommodation and support and managing transitions for 8th graders moving to high school and sophomores transitioning to UTC.

Wendy Ault praised UTC staff members Rebecca Ouellette's SCORE mentoring program session at the Educate Maine symposium, where 13 students participated. Wendy says the students were poised, articulate, and confident, demonstrating the impressive work that Rebecca has done with them.

B) St. John Valley Tech (Kevin Lavoie)

Kevin says they are working on budgeting and reported progress on several fronts. Due to strong regional demand, the school hired a residential electrical instructor for the upcoming fiscal year after the program had been dormant for two years. They're developing co-op programming and shifting their advanced technologies program toward pre-engineering through collaboration with Twin Rivers Papers and continue to work with the NASA Hunch program and do some PLC work.

Kevin described an innovative partnership proposal with a goal of having students spend one day per week at the Twin Rivers facility for hands-on experience in live production environments. He says he believes he's been able to assuage some Company concerns about liability.

The school is also adding a teacher preparation component to their ECO program, focusing on pre-elementary through middle school preparation as part of the half day. They've had discussions about collaborating with the Maine Pulp and Paper Foundation and UMaine's Bot Lab, exploring summer programming and scholarship opportunities which could lead to enrollment at UMaine after graduation.

New Business

Item 1: Briggs Trust Fund Distribution Committee

Ed opened discussion about forming a committee to distribute just under \$300,000 in available Briggs Trust Funds. He noted that Dwight Littlefield had expressed willingness to serve on such a committee, and Morin himself would participate.

Kevin says he has no objections and supports the idea. He says state CTE directors have communicated and conversed on how the funds could be utilized, with an eye toward some upcoming strategic planning types of events, and collaborations. He says Directors have talked about a summit for MACTE rather than a director's conclave and the oversight of CTE in the state of Maine, workforce development, collaboration with businesses, and really enhancing their position in the business work world and putting MACTE out there as a real force of what they stand for, educating students in CTE. He says a committee to work on this would have to get things accomplished quickly with the opportunity for that money to come sooner than later. Kevin believes it could be great seed money for MACTE to really get where it wants to be.

He said the goal would be to enhance MACTE's visibility and establish it as a strong force in workforce development, comparable to the Principals Association and Superintendents Association.

Amanda Peterson suggested that the six directors who showed interest at the summer meeting, plus Dwight Littlefield and Ed Morin, could form an initial group to develop proposals to bring back to both this committee and the full MACTE board.

The discussion evolved into considering a two-tiered approach: a smaller working committee (under 10 members) managing decisions, with broader brainstorming sessions involving many constituencies. Wendy Ault strongly advocated for including diverse perspectives beyond CTE directors—business stakeholders, parents, students, nonprofits, school superintendents and principals. She cautioned against being "too incestuous" in approach, noting many organizations are currently involved in CTE with varying agendas. Drawing on her legislative experience, she emphasized the value of hearing challenging perspectives.

The committee discussed hiring a professional facilitator, with suggestions including Mike Felton and connections through Cianbro. Amanda described a successful Disney-inspired technique used at Cianbro that breaks problems into segments and involves all impacted parties in brainstorming. She suggested Dwight Littlefield would be an excellent starting point given his experience with this approach.

Paulette advocated for a series of meetings overtime rather than a one-day event, pointing to the successful quarterly business stakeholder meetings in southern Maine as a model. She noted meetings on different topics—such as a dedicated session on middle school issues—could be more effective than trying to accomplish everything at once. She also suggested that advocating for increased state funding for middle school CTE should be part of the strategic plan, noting that \$500,000 is insufficient for 27 tech schools plus numerous middle schools. Paulette noted that whatever, transpires, will be a big lift.

Wendy reminded everyone that whatever they develop must be student-focused per Briggs's intent. Kevin assured her that the entire MACTE strategic plan is student-focused first and teacher-focused as well, since supporting teachers is essential to serving students.

After extensive discussion, the committee agreed on next steps: Ed and Paulette will meet with Dwight Littlefield in January to develop the framework. Kevin will share MACTE's strategic plan work (noting it's preliminary, not complete). Directors will send ideas to Ed. Based on what emerges, they'll determine whether a special meeting is needed before the January 22nd regular meeting.

Item 2: State Board CTE Strategic Plan

Paulette Bonneau says the State Board is moving toward developing its new five-year Strategic Plan, saying the Board will hire a facilitator for strategic planning as it has done in the past. She reviewed the State Board's current five-year plan accomplishments (2021-2025) as they pertain to CTE. The Board advocated for sustainable funding, including the Governor's \$2 million allocation. They secured a CTE carve-out in Chapter 61 building standards recognizing that CTE spaces have different infrastructure needs than traditional classrooms. They supported exploratory and middle school programs, funded the Mann Report and Educate Maine barriers study, supported integrated credit legislation, and participated in the Chapter 115 rewrite with proposed changes going to the Education Committee by January 9th.

Paulette noted that CTE has been written into numeracy and literacy state plans and has representation on the new learning results review committee. She emphasized that CTE is in a position where people are listening and looking. Having a State Board Chair with a CTE background was also seen as a plus for Career and Technical Education in Maine, though Wendy jokingly noted not putting too much pressure on the Chair.

Ed proposed developing a survey asking CTE directors and other constituencies: "What can the State Board do for you in terms of CTE in the state of Maine?" Responses would be compiled to inform strategic planning. The committee supported this approach.

Adjournment

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 22, 2026, at 10:00 AM via Zoom (the fourth Thursday, not the last Thursday of the month). Ed thanked everyone for their time, wished them the best holiday season, and adjourned the meeting at 11:19 AM.