

## **Career and Technical Student Organizations**

### **Testimony Presented to the New NY Education Reform Commission on Behalf of the Career and Technical Student Organizations of NYS**

**Presented by Felix Fernandez-Penny, NYSTSA President  
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Members of the Education Reform Commission, I am Felix Fernandez-Penny, member and President of the New York State Technology Student Association from Ithaca Senior High School. I've come here today to share with you some thoughts on how we can make the education system in New York better without having to focus on new, untested programs, or having to spend a lot of money. The foundations for strengthening career readiness for our students are already in place through career and technical education (CTE), which offers this unique blend of skills through comprehensive programs of study. One of the most critical components of strong CTE programs is student participation in related leadership organizations, known as career and technical student organizations (CTSOs).

I am pleased to be here to represent the seven Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) that are an integral part of Career and Technical Education programs in schools and BOCES across New York State. These organizations are my own organization NYSTSA; Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA); the Association of Marketing and Management Students (DECA); Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA); Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA); New York State Association of FFA, and Skills USA. At the national, state and local levels, CTOS offer diverse programming that is designed to enhance classroom

instruction and four common organizational goals: leadership development; academic and career achievement; professional development; and community service. .

At a time when advocates are requesting billions of dollars in new funding for new educational programs, a far smaller investment of \$200,000 into time tested and proven programs of the CTSOs seems like an easy alternative. An amount of as little as \$30,000 for NYSTSA alone would cover the cost of the all statewide leadership activities and student competitive events.

Research shows that participation in CTSOs has a positive impact on students' overall career readiness:

- Students who participate in CTSOs demonstrate higher levels of academic engagement and motivation, civic engagement, career self-efficacy, and employability skills than other students<sup>1</sup>,
- Students who participate in school organizations in 10th grade have higher high school grade point averages and are more likely to be enrolled in college at age 21 than other students<sup>2</sup>.

In my four years as a TSA member I have acquired a world of knowledge that I know will help me, in whatever career path I take. Having come to TSA with a passion for photography, after discovering how much more TSA had to offer, my interests broadened allowing me to compete in events at both the state and international level including Fashion Design, Music Production, Video Production and Engineering Structure. I also developed a deep interest and passion for leadership and public speaking which later led me to run for office at

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<sup>1</sup> Alfeld, C., Stone, J. R., Aragon, S. R., Hansen, D. M., Zirkle, C., Connors, J., et al., *Looking Inside the Black Box: The Value Added by Career and Technical Student Organizations to Students' High School Experience* (St. Paul, MN: National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, University of Minnesota, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Eccles, J., & Barber, B., "Student Council, Volunteering, Basketball, or Marching-band: What Kind of Extracurricular Involvement Matters?" *Journal of Adolescent Research* 14, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>3</sup> ACTE. (June 2011), "Expanding Career Readiness Through Career and Technical Student Organizations. [www.acteonline.org](http://www.acteonline.org)

both the state and international level. Now as president this is my second year serving on the State Officer team. Having worked alongside only two other people to plan the NYSTSA State Conference in 2012, I learned important life skills in organization, and planning that will prove useful in a variety of settings. I could not be happier. My greatest wish is that future TSA students are provided with the great gifts given to me through NYS CTSO membership.

Can you imagine how great it would be if all students in the state could have that same opportunity...and they can, if only the organizations had more support to reach out into every school.

Thank you for your attention.

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