# Technical Skills Assessments

1. *The Technical Skills Assessments are developmental not standardized tests.* Because of changes in the workplace, the technical standards are reviewed and updated often. When standards change, assessment items are reviewed and edited, and new items are developed. New items need to be piloted and field-tested to achieve reliability and validity, or operational, status.

2. *The lack of common curricula and the experience of teachers often contributes to different interpretations of the content and the methodology used to teach skills, processes, and procedures.* Also, instructional time may differ from school to school, which affects the depth of instruction across programs. Teacher committees that work on assessment items have acquired a common understanding of the standards and an invaluable sense of community.

3. *The perception of CTE by school administration and parents and guardians and the knowledge of counselors about CTE programs often affects the kind of students who participate in CTE.* The profile of students in a program may vary widely by learning styles and performance indicators. Although CTE is respectful and responsive to all students no matter their special needs and competency levels, industry's requirements for entry-level performance in a job or occupation must not be jeopardized.

4. *Literacy and test-taking skills are important factors in assessment development.* Teachers report that some students do not finish the test because of their reading ability and/or the time limitation imposed on the computer lab. Although the aim is to test mastery of content and not reading comprehension, CTE programs do cover technical material that tends to heighten reading comprehension. Regarding time, the state does limit the amount of time students have to take the test. Ideally, there should be at least 2 hours with more time added if needed. Also, the same accommodations made for teaching students with special needs should be made for testing.

5. *Available funding influences the kind of testing that can be developed, maintained, and delivered across multiple CTE programs.* For example, there is a limit on the kind of assessment items—multiple-choice versus competency-based, interactive items—that can be maintained and delivered annually for all programs. Currently, there are 56 Technical Skills Assessments delivered online statewide at no-cost to students with immediate feedback on the assessment results.

6. *The TSA results focus on program improvement and high student achievement, and as well, they address high stakes accountability, namely, the A-F Report Card and the Performance Measures.* Assessment scores represent the extent to which students have met the standards. They provide feedback, help students evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and communicate student achievement to others. Teachers should not fear but embrace the test. There are several ways both teachers and students can ensure success on the TSAs.

   - Teach the content of the Technical Standards that are validated by Arizona's business and industry leaders.
   - Use the *Instructional Framework* to better understand the content of the standards and for occupational terminology.
   - Refer to the *Blueprint for Instruction and Assessment* for the recommended instructional time for standards, which also relates to the make-up of the Technical Skills Assessment.
   - Prepare students to take the test. Review the mechanics of multiple-choice questions and practice reading and interpreting multiple-choice questions.
   - Collaborate with other teachers to share good ideas and best practices.
   - Attend professional development events to improve knowledge and skills.
   - Participate in the Technical Skills Assessment Meetings to develop, analyze, and edit assessment items.