Every year, experienced teachers who hold teacher licenses in areas such as Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Industrial Technology and Early Childhood Education pursue Career & Technical Education (CTE) professional licenses while teaching on a supplemental teaching license. These individuals often question the need for the completion of additional university coursework and they are surprised to learn the differences between Career & Technical Education and other areas of education during their first months in their new positions.

This paper highlights the major differences between CTE and other fields.

1. CTE instructional competencies are drawn from the analyses of the skills needed in the workforce.
2. CTE instructional competencies require the teaching and assessment of higher order skills in the psychomotor and affective domains relating to tasks and duties found in occupations. Skills and attitudes matter in the workplace.
3. Psychomotor domain competencies require multiple practice activities over several months to infuse muscle memory and proficiency.
4. Affective domain competences also require multiple practice activities over several months. Although changes in attitudes can change behavior, behavior changes can also result in attitude changes. The wearing of professional uniforms is one such activity.
5. CTE places a greater emphasis on criterion referenced assessment than norm referenced assessment. Tasks must be completed fully and accurately before the student is rated competent. For example, auto technicians are expected to install brakes correctly 100% of the time.
6. All CTE lesson and unit plans should incorporate introductory statements that explain the importance of the unit and its applicability in real world work situations.

7. Since CTE programs are not required courses but, rather, electives based upon preferences and interests. CTE teachers must market their programs and recruit students.

8. CTE is strength-based education that builds on students’ demonstrated interests and aptitudes. Academic and Special Education models tend to focus on student deficiencies.

9. CTE programs are taught in larger time blocks and laboratories (sometimes in the community) that reflect the conditions in the workplace and through inquiry-based projects.

10. CTE laboratories require additional health and safety procedures and practices that prevent physical accidents and repetitive stress injuries through safety practices, correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE), correct ergonomics and the proper disposal of dangerous chemicals and materials.

11. CTE programs are held to higher levels of accountability standards including the short and long term placement of student completers in the workforce and related higher education programs.

12. CTE programs are required to develop and maintain Tech Prep linkages with colleges that provide college credits through dual enrollment courses and articulation agreements.

13. CTE programs are required to develop strong linkages with local business and employers through the creation and maintenance of locally board approve advisory committees.

14. CTE Programs require the inclusion of co-curricular Career & Technical Student Organizations (CTSO’s) that develop leadership skills and opportunities to compete in competitive activities at the local, regional, state and national levels based upon the curriculum. The CTSO’s are an integral part of the instructional program, not voluntary clubs.

15. CTE curriculum draws from competencies in multiple academic disciplines (Mathematics, Science, English/Language Arts, and Social Studies (especially economics)), as well as technological, business, and employability skills integrated into the curriculum.

16. CTE teachers use language specific to CTE and the career field.

17. CTE teachers coordinate experiences by students in the community, including job shadowing, research projects, and curriculum-based cooperative work experience.

18. With the constant changes in career fields, CTE teachers must stay current in their occupations as well as project trends that will impact their students, programs, academies, and schools.

19. CTE teachers lead teams of teachers in the development of interdisciplinary inquiry-based projects that draw from a variety of academic disciplines along with career field-specific competencies.
20. Last but not least, Ohio laws and administrative rules require that all teachers must be properly licensed in the areas in which they teach in order for the teacher to be paid and for the school district to be reimbursed from CTE funds.