

**NISTS 2023**

# BE A CONNECTOR FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS

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The following presentation was given at the 21st Annual Conference for the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students. Please cite responsibly and direct questions to the original presenter(s).

*Educational Session*

## **2755 - Transfer Things: Starring CTE Pathways and Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)**

Matriculation Trends and Issues, Transition Programs and Supports

Mike earns an employer certification while in high school. Will joins the army and earns credit through military training. Lucas does an apprenticeship in systems networking specialist and earns an industry credential. Dustin's manufacturing job is eliminated due to automation. These four friends want to return to school and transfer to a university. Enter El, who works at Hawkins Community College and created a transfer/PLA program that onboards students and accelerates completion. Learn more on how PLA can help students in their transfer journey.

**Rose Rojas**, *District Director for Curriculum and Transfer Articulation*

Maricopa Community Colleges

# **TRANSFER THINGS**

**Starring:**

**Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and  
Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

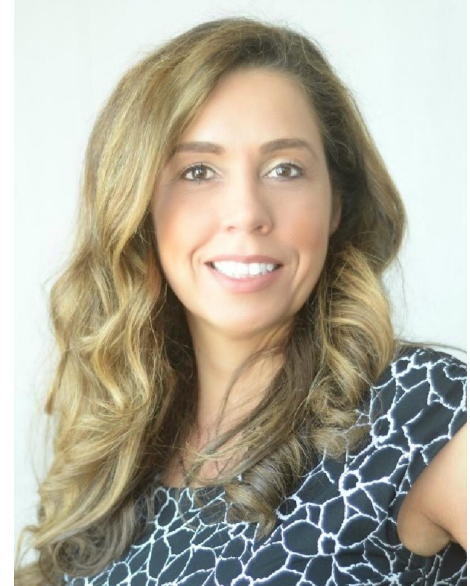
## Session Overview:

- Chapter 1: Building the Case
- Chapter 2: CTE and PLA in Action
- Chapter 3: Moving From the “Why” to the “How”:  
Steps to Make PLA Happen

## Session Competencies:

- Learners will be asked to critically examine how CTE and PLA align with (or contradict) their local context.
- Learners will gain insight and strategies to support CTE and PLA learners in their transfer journey.

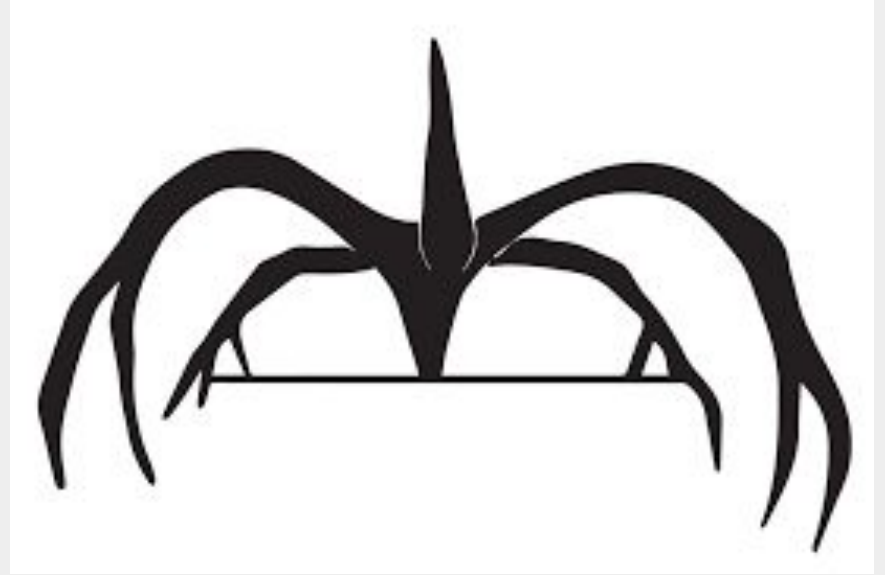
## Today’s Presenter:



Director, Curriculum and Transfer  
Maricopa Community Colleges

# Chapter One:

## Building the Case



# Issue At Hand...Our New Reality

community  
COLLEGES KEEP  
LOSING STUDENTS.

Transfer Student  
Disparities Grow Across  
Racial and Ethnic Lines  
During the Pandemic

**Latest Numbers Show Largest College  
Enrollment Decline In A Decade**

**First-time students have the steepest enrollment declines,  
especially older students and students of color**

A Historic Decline in  
U.S. Births Signals  
More Enrollment  
Troubles

*New Report: College Student  
Transfers Declined By Nearly  
300,000 During Pandemic*

Nationwide, fewer  
high-school seniors are  
choosing to enroll in college  
immediately after graduation

Increased learner disillusionment with traditional higher education due to high cost and low college completion rates are driving learners to look for alternative, low cost career paths. PLA is one solution.

# Career and Technical Education (CTE) Student Journeys

Will earns an industry credential while in high school as well as dual enrollment credits



Mike does an apprenticeship in systems networking specialist and earns an employer certification



Dustin's manufacturing job is eliminated due to automation



Luke joins the army and earns credit through military training



Meet Eleven ("El"), the Heroine

El created a prior learning program at Hawkins Community College to help these friends access a credential and transfer

***These four friends want to return to school, get a associate's degree, and transfer to a university.***

# CTE Stigmas

- CTE students are not college material
- It is outdated, lacking in rigor, or a last resort
- “Oh, you mean shop classes and basket weaving”
- Occupational courses do not transfer
- An applied (science) degree is a terminal degree
- CTE pathways lead to low wage jobs



CTE Students are often left out of the national transfer agenda and conversation. Oftentimes, we know very little about who takes these courses and what their goals are.

## ***CTE IS COLLEGE PREP!!!***

### **The Reality is....**

- According to the US Department of Education's Perkins Data Explorer, there were just under 11 million high school students enrolled in secondary CTE during the 2019-2020 school year.
- Over 75 percent of students taking a concentration of CTE courses enroll in postsecondary education after graduating high school.
- CTE brings relevance to education, helping students connect what they learn to their career aspirations.
- 91% of high school grads who earned 2-3 CTE credits, enrolled in college and they are half as likely to need remedial education (in college) as their peers (U.S. Dept. of Ed.).



# Level Setting: What is Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?

The process for recognizing and awarding credit for college-level learning acquired outside of the classroom.

Conceptual premise(s):

- College-level learning can take place in many environments
- Institutions should equitably recognize learning wherever it occurs
- Students should not have to take courses for content they have already mastered
- Recognized learning is equal, no matter the modality
- The focus is on the “what” not the “who” and “where”

# Level Setting: What Are The Types of PLA?

- Standardized exams (AP, CLEP, IB, DSST, Cambridge)
- Challenge/department exams
- Work experiences
- Licenses, certifications and industry credentials
- Military training
- Online and Open Educational Resources (OER)
- Seminars, workshops, in-service training
- Continuing professional education
- Non-credit courses
- Ed platforms (Coursera, Study.com, Straighterline, etc.)
- Transfer credit - regional and national

# Level Setting: Why PLA?

## PLA Boosts Credential Completion Rates for Adult Students

- 17% Increase in completion rate for adult students when controlling for other factors (and Hispanic, community college and pell grant students saw ever greater completion rates).

## PLA Saves Adult Students Time and Money

- \$1,500 to \$10,200: Estimated adult student savings through PLA, depending on sector.
- 9 to 14 months of schooling is estimated to be saved for students with 12 or more PLA credits.

## Institutions Also Benefit through Better Retention

- 17.6 Additional credits earned by students with PLA compared to non-PLA students.

**Students with PLA credit are retained, persistent, and complete at higher rates.**

# Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

- Creates equity within the transfer process by recognizing learning from other environments including other academic institutions.
- Recognizes the diversity of learning experiences and achievements.
- Builds inclusion by welcoming all prospective learners no matter where they started their pathway to completion or how they earned their credit along the way.
- Can include college-level learning from a variety of contexts, including learning gained from civic engagement, service learning, work-based learning, community-based social justice projects, and other unique and valuable experiences not typically considered for PLA.

# PLA Principles Are Similar To Those Of Transfer Articulation

- Learners should not be required to repeat and pay for competencies already achieved, regardless of the modalities.
- The evaluation of courses submitted by the sending institution for transfer to the receiving institution is based on the content and learning objectives/competencies.
- The transfer articulation process should be efficient, transparent, predictable, and sensitive to student needs.
- Articulation is built on standards and trust.

**The same principles apply to PLA.**



## Chapter Two:

## CTE and PLA in Action



# PLA In Action: A Strategy by Design, Not Default

<b>Curriculum Alignment</b>	Faculty review of high school curriculum (e.g. ADE-CTE standards) to identify cluster of MCCCDC courses that align with the curriculum
<b>High School Programs</b>	Generate a list of career and technical education programs per Local Education Agency (LEA)
<b>High School Certificates</b>	Generate a list of certificates earned or tested for each LEA program
<b>Prior Learning Assessment</b>	Faculty identify opportunities for PLA and initiate district process for documentation and site process for implementation
<b>MCCCDC Completion</b>	Clearly communicate the application of credits (course clusters) and PLA to MCCCDC certificates and degrees

# PLA In Action: Correlate Industry Certifications to Pathways

## 2022-2023 Credentials List (CTED)

Blue Text Represents Newly added Credentials

### CTE Industry Credentials

Industry recognized credentials are an important part of Career and Technical Education (CTE). Industry Credentials are a required performance measure of the Arizona Perkins V State plan for the federal Perkins V grant.

As part of Arizona state legislation, for a CTE program to receive Career Technical Education District (CTED) funding, a CTE program must lead to certification or licensure as appropriate.

CIP Code	Program Name	Credential	A-F Approved	AZ Industry Incentive Fund	CTED Eligibility Only	Community College	Statute
52.0301.00	Accounting	<a href="#">Certificate of Proficiency: Accounting</a>	No	No	Yes	Yes	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	Certificate: Bookkeeping (BKPC)	No	No	Yes	Yes	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) – Associate for 2016	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) – Associate for 2019	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) – Associate for Office 365	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) – Expert for 2016	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) – Expert for 2019	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) – Expert for Office 365	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	NAFTrack Certification – Academy of Finance	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	QuickBooks Certified User (QBCU) Desktop 2016	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	QuickBooks Certified User (QBCU) Desktop 2017	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	QuickBooks Certified User (QBCU) Desktop 2019 Pro	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
52.0301.00	Accounting	QuickBooks Certified User (QBCU) Online – U.S.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	American Meat & Science Association Meat Evaluation Certification	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	American Meat Science Association Food Safety and Science Certification	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	Arizona Agriculture Skills & Competencies Certificate	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	Arizona Landscape Contractor Association (ALCA)	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	BASF Plant Science Certification	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	Benz School of Floral Design Principles of Floral Design Certification	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	Certified Animal Care Worker	No	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	Certified Veterinary Assistant	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	Elanco Fundamentals of Animal Science Certification	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	Elanco Veterinary Medical Applications Certification	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3) – Snap-On – Horticulture	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	OSHA 10 – Agriculture	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	OSHA 10 – Construction Industry	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	OSHA 10 – General	Yes	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	Worker Protection on Standard Training Handler Verification Card	No	No	Yes	No	CTE
01.0000.00	AgriScience	Youth Quality Care of Animals	No	No	Yes	No	CTE
49.0100.00	Air Transportation	Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) – Fundamentals of Instrumentation	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
49.0100.00	Air Transportation	Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) – Ground Instruction Basic	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE
49.0100.00	Air Transportation	Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) – Ground School	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	CTE



# PLA In Action: Align Pathways with Transfer Options

Example: Empire-CAT training to Associate of Applied Science in Organizational Management to Northern Arizona University's BIS in Industrial Leadership 90/30

Graduation Credit Summary		
Requirement	Credits	Completed
Empire-CAT Training	24	
Organizational Management Certificate	9	
AAS Required Courses	8	
General Education Requirement	23-28	
AGEC and NAU Interdisciplinary Studies Requirements	13	
Electives to get to 90 credits	0-13	
NAU Core Classes	30	
<b>TOTAL CREDITS NEEDED TO GRADUATE</b>	<b>120</b>	

# PLA In Action: Navigating Challenges and Concerns

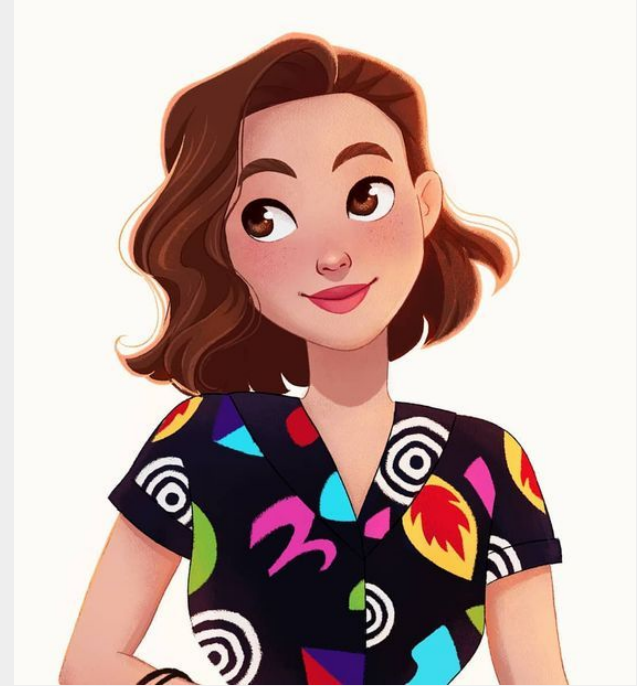


- Concerns about transferability and applicability at other colleges and universities
- Questions about rigor—how it compares to traditional instruction
- Fear of loss of control of curriculum, “selling” credit
- Perception that awarding credit for PLA will lower enrollment in courses (i.e. competition)
- Concerns about impact on accreditation
- Negative perceptions of prior learning from internal/external sources
- Varied levels of understanding create miscommunication
- Seat time vs. content learned
- Lack of familiarity and understanding

## Chapter Three:

How to be an Eleven  
(EI)...

Moving from the “Why”  
to the “How”



# Recommendations on How To Make CTE and PLA Happen

## Institutionally:

- Analyze the CTE secondary and postsecondary infrastructure
- Engage high school, CTEDs, community college, and university faculty and staff
- Review current policies and benchmark with national best practices
- Expand institutional to include multiple methods for awarding CTE and PLA credit
- Build a clear, transparent business process to evaluate PLA
- Establish a baseline data report for both CTE and PLA

# Recommendations on How To Make CTE and PLA Happen

## Institutionally:

- Include PLA as one of your early college strategies (dual enrollment, standardized exams, and industry recognized credentials)
- Aligning dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment programs, industry recognized credentials, standardized exams, etc. with Fields of Interests (FOIs) or career clusters to better inform/advise HS into certificates and degrees
- Backwards mapping early college course offerings with a Guided Pathways lens to: 1) create entry points utilizing PLA-based validation of competence, 2) align and weave industry, micro-, and other credentials, and/or work-based learning experiences within the pathways from high schools

# Recommendations on How To Make CTE and PLA Happen

## Institutionally:

- Build a community of allies by sharing the benefits of PLA with colleagues in all areas—business office, enrollment management, academic/student affairs, etc. Stay current on PLA research and share progress with these allies
  - Include external allies and advocates
- Identify components of PLA where efficiencies of scale across system are possible (e.g. professional development, certification/licensure crosswalks, market research, message testing)
- Communicate, communicate, communicate

# Recommendations on How To Make CTE and PLA Happen

## Community College and University Partnerships:


- Include CTE and PLA in your transfer strategy
- Align standardized exams, PLA decisions, and policies with your articulated partners
- Expanding partnerships between colleges/universities and feeder high schools in high-demand CTE fields
- Create CTE pathways into compatible university degrees
- Ensure that PLA is part of your articulation agreements to ensure transferability of credits
- Create partner success metrics for CTE and PLA
- Remove stigmas by changing the messaging and language around CTE, PLA, applied science degrees, and occupational courses

Are PLA options available and promoted as a key part of degree programs and transfer pathways?


Are CTE and PLA part of your partner/statewide transfer conversations?


On a scale of 1-10, was this presentation an 11? 🤪

 Yes

 Not Sure

 No

 Sort of

 Haha! Good one!





# Institutional Reflection Questions

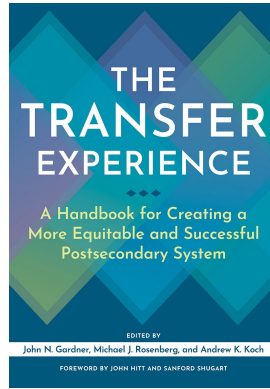
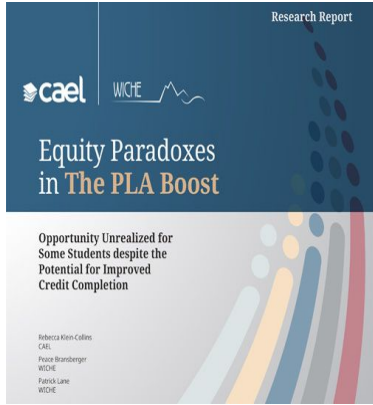
- Are your institution's prerogatives regarding transfer and PLA credit based on the principles of equity, access, and inclusivity?
- How can (or does) your institution create equitable access for high school and transfer students in CTE areas?
- Is your institution open to redressing long-standing policies and traditional practices in the evaluation of students' prior learning?
- How can higher education institutions in your state partner to ensure an equitable evaluation process and transferability of credit awarded through CTE and PLA?
- Is your institution creating equitable opportunities across the educational spectrum balancing CTE and academic pathways?

# Summary

- PLA increases degree and certificate completion among adult learners. Also, it can be leveraged to onboard prospective learners.
- Trust and collaboration among college and university partners are critical in maximizing the benefits of PLA for all learners especially CTE students.
- Institutional policies that support the blanket denial of transfer and PLA credits create barriers to inter-institutional mobility.
- PLA must be equitable, accessible and affordable for students to fully benefit.
- A one-size-fits-all traditional approach for awarding credit is not working for all learners.
- Behind every PLA request is a student looking to attend or transfer to your institution.

***It's time to make PLA a reality!***

# Reference and Resources



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**Disclaimer:** I hereby declare that I do not own the rights to this music/song/art used in this presentation. The images and music used in this presentation are for educational purposes only.

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