EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Credentials Matter

Report 1: A National Landscape of High School Student Credential Attainment Compared to Workforce Demand

May 2019
Executive Summary

Credentials Matter is a partnership between ExcelinEd and Burning Glass Technologies. This ongoing, comprehensive research project combines ExcelinEd’s policy expertise in college and career pathways with Burning Glass’ cutting-edge labor market analytics to provide new insights into the alignment between the credentials students earn and the demand for those credentials in the workforce.
The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- How many states are collecting data on student credential attainment and what data collection methods are they using?
- Which credentials are being earned by students?
- What is the employer demand for credentials?
- How do credentials earned align with employer demand?

Data Collection
States collecting data and how they are doing so.

Supply
Credentials earned by students in high school, generally in state CTE programs provided directly by state education agencies.

Demand
Employer demand for credentials according to actual job postings sourced from Burning Glass’ proprietary job postings database.

Alignment
Comparing supply to demand to determine how the credentials students earn align with workforce demand in each state.

This research, Report 1: A National Landscape of High School Student Credential Attainment Compared to Workforce Demand, along with the accompanying online interactive tool, CredentialsMatter.org, are the first products of this extensive data collection, analysis and partnership.

The research resulted in the most extensive collection and analysis of supply, demand and alignment of industry-recognized credentials in states to date.
**Findings**

1. Just over half of all states (28) collect quantitative data on the attainment of credentials.

2. States do not have consistent definitions for what constitutes an industry-recognized credential—even though U.S. high school students earn hundreds of thousands of credentials each year.

3. Many credentials are not explicitly requested in employer job listings, despite the fact that the credentials may be required or desired for the position.

4. Of the 24 states where data were available and analyzed, no state is highly aligned in terms of supply for credentials earned by high school students and the demand for those credentials in the job market.

**Recommendations**

- Business and Industry
- States
- Districts, Schools and Postsecondary Institutions
- Credentialing Entities
- Communication
- Interagency Collaboration
- Data Collection and Reporting
- State Policy Alignment
- Program Alignment and Quality
-Communication
Credentials Matter findings and recommendations represent a critical first step to helping a range of stakeholders understand the current landscape of credentials earned and evaluate whether those credentials have currency in the job market.

- **For Policymakers:** The findings can help inform efforts and strengthen policies to provide high-quality career pathways, including attainment of high-value industry-recognized credentials.

- **For Educators and Administrators:** The findings highlight the need to ensure local CTE programs are aligned with state and regional workforce needs and that each pathway leads to credentials that carry the highest value among employers.

- **For Employers:** The findings provide a view of what students currently earn as well as an opportunity to communicate more effectively with educators and potential employees about credentials that carry value.

- **For Credentialing Bodies:** The findings emphasize the opportunity to collaborate with states and educational institutions to improve data collection and reporting related to industry credential attainment.

- **For Students and Families:** The research can serve as starting point for conversations about which credentials can provide the greatest benefits for a future career and long-term success.