



EXCLUSIVE LICENSEE OF **ACTFL**

# Integrating Language Credentialing in Career and Technical Education (CTE)

---

## Case Study

Created by Language Testing International and Michael Herrera, Ed.D.,  
Executive Director of Upper Bucks County Technical School

## Summary

Upper Bucks County Technical School (UBCTS), under the leadership of Dr. Michael Herrera, has successfully integrated multilingual credentialing into its Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Partnering with Language Testing International® (LTI), the school has implemented a framework for credentialing language ability among CTE students. This initiative has opened doors to enhanced career

opportunities, especially for multilingual students, equipping them with industry-recognized credentials to compete in the global workforce.

This case study provides a blueprint for educational institutions aiming to integrate language proficiency into their programs while addressing the evolving needs of the workforce.

# Introduction

Upper Bucks County Technical School (UBCTS), located in scenic Bedminster Township, Pennsylvania, has been a leader in career and technical education since 1964, serving the Penridge, Quakertown, and Palisades communities. With 23 career-focused programs, UBCTS equips students with industry-recognized certifications, hands-on technical skills, and college credits, preparing them for success in college and careers.

In the evolving job market, multilingualism is increasingly valued across industries. Recognizing this demand, Dr. Michael Herrera, the Executive Director of UBCTS, partnered with LTI to create a pathway for CTE students to certify their language skills. This initiative bridges the gap between traditional CTE programming and the need for linguistic competencies, redefining how technical education and language education intersect.

*With innovative solutions, we can create pathways that accommodate students' technical and linguistic education, unlocking their full potential. By providing avenues to certify their language skills, we can ensure that students from diverse language backgrounds, often from underserved populations, receive equitable recognition for their abilities.*

**Michael Herrera, Ed.D.,**  
**Upper Bucks County Technical School**

## Challenge

While world language programs offer tests to measure language ability, these opportunities typically fall outside of CTE programming. Most students forgo world language courses due to credit limitations when enrolled in a CTE program or due to the lack of availability of language courses in their programs. Additionally, multilingual learners and English language learners often remain unaware of opportunities to certify their heritage or home languages, leaving them unable to leverage their linguistic abilities for academic and professional advancement. UBCTS addressed these issues by integrating a system that recognizes and certifies students' existing language abilities while maintaining a strong focus on technical training.

## Solution

UBCTS and LTI developed a "Language as an Employability Asset" framework, emphasizing the role of multilingualism in enhancing career readiness. Key components of the framework include:

**Comprehensive Assessment:** Using ACTFL assessments, such as the ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL), students' language abilities are measured in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**Credentialing:** Students earn awards such as the Seal of Biliteracy and official ACTFL language certificates, recognized by employers and post-CTE programs

**Training and Outreach:** Educators and administrators receive guidance on integrating language proficiency credentialing into CTE programming.

# Why it Matters

Multilingualism is increasingly vital in the global workforce. According to ACTFL's 2019 report *Making Languages Our Business*, one in four U.S. employers lost business due to a lack of foreign language skills, with 90% relying on employees who speak languages other than English. Key industries needing multilingual talent include manufacturing, hospitality, health care, and professional services.

The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2023* also ranks multilingualism among the top 20

in-demand skills, projecting a 38% growth in its importance by 2027, especially in sectors like media, government, electronics, and oil and gas. The U.S. Department of Education's "Raise the Bar" initiative further emphasizes that multilingualism and language credentialing are essential for building a diverse and globally competitive labor force, impacting both economic growth and career readiness across all pathways.

## Implementation

The implementation of the language credentialing process at UBCTS involved several key steps:

**Engagement:** Students were recruited through home language surveys and demographic data. Families were informed to ensure broad participation, and parents were sent permission forms to allow student testing. Word of mouth among students and faculty also resulted in several students signing up for testing.

**Preparation:** With assistance from LTI, UBCTS set up testing accounts, ordered necessary equipment (such as noise-cancelling headsets), and scheduled testing days.

**Execution:** Assessments were administered over multiple sessions to avoid test fatigue. Students were familiarized with the process through test demos. Forty-one students completed the AAPPL test in Spanish, Arabic, English, and French. These students represented a variety of disciplines, including cosmetology, dental careers, automotive, baking and culinary, and construction. Nine students received scores that qualified them for the Pennsylvania Seal of Biliteracy.

**Celebration:** Qualifying students were honored at a special award ceremony, showcasing and celebrating their achievements.

*“Leveraging language as an employability asset in CTE programming redefines traditional boundaries. This approach enriches educational experiences and equips students with a competitive edge in the job market.”*

*Michael Herrera, Ed.D.,  
Upper Bucks County Technical School*

# Results and Benefits

Reporting language abilities with industry recognized credentials, such as an official ACTFL rating, has numerous benefits for students.

**Enhanced Employability:** Multilingual students now have a competitive edge, validated by industry-recognized credentials.

**Equity and Access:** Students from diverse backgrounds, including non-native English speakers, are empowered to leverage their language skills.

**College and Career Success:** Graduates are better prepared for high-demand, multilingual roles in industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, and hospitality. Those pursuing college degrees can leverage their scores for course placement and other benefits.

**Students' self-perception and sense of identity:** For many multilingual individuals, their language proficiency may have been perceived as a barrier

or source of embarrassment in the past. However, initiatives like the one led by Dr. Herrera provide validation and recognition of students' linguistic talents, fostering a sense of pride and empowerment.

*“It feels so great to feel like my Spanish is valued instead of being something I was embarrassed of. I can't wait to share my language certificate with my boss and get paid more for my bilingual ability!”*

*Daniela C., student Upper Bucks County Technical School*

# Insights and Lessons Learned

**Engagement Matters:** Family involvement and targeted outreach are crucial to successful implementation. Additionally, having a dedicated individual to run the assessment process in the program is essential to successful implementation.

**Industry Alignment:** Collaborating with organizations like LTI ensures that credentialing meet workforce demands.

**Scalability:** The framework can be adapted for other CTE programs, making multilingual credentialing accessible to more students nationwide.

*“Historically, CTE programs have not emphasized language education, but UBCTS is changing this narrative. Incorporating language skills into our curriculum is not only about enhancing individual job prospects; it's about fortifying our economy and asserting our global leadership in innovation. The trades, healthcare, law enforcement, and manufacturing sectors are all increasingly seeking multilingual professionals.”*

*Michael Herrera, Ed.D.,  
Upper Bucks County Technical School*

# Conclusion

Language credentialing opens doors to better employment opportunities, particularly for non-native English speakers and students who have studied world languages or gained language experience through other means. Assessing language proficiency can improve academic performance, boost graduation rates, and inspire students to pursue higher education.

Incorporating language assessments into CTE programs transforms traditional approaches by positioning multilingualism as a valuable college and career asset. This equips students with a competitive

advantage, preparing them to meet the growing demands of a diverse and global workforce.

UBCTS's initiative demonstrates how recognizing language proficiency within CTE programming can revolutionize career preparation. By combining technical training with multilingual credentialing, the school empowers its students to succeed in a globalized economy. This case study serves as a model for other educational institutions seeking to integrate language skills into their curricula and align with workforce needs.



## Resources and Further Reading

ACTFL. (2019). *Making languages our business: Addressing foreign language demand among US employers*. <https://www.languageconnectsfoundation.org/programs-initiatives/research/making-languages-our-business>

Herrera, M. and Quinlan, J. (2024). *Validate Language as a Skill*. ACTE Online. <https://www.acteonline.org/blog/2024/10/14/validate-language/>

Jaros-White, G. (2024). *The power of multilingualism: Elevating employability in career and technical education*. <https://www.languagetesting.com/blog/the-power-of-multilingualism-elevating-employability-in-career-and-technical-education/>

Quinlan, J. (2024). *Leveraging language as an employability asset in career and technical education*. <https://www.languagetesting.com/blog/leveraging-language-as-an-employability-asset-in-career-and-technical-education/>

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Raise the bar: Lead the world*. <https://cte.ed.gov/unlocking-career-success/home>

World Economic Forum. (2023). *The future of jobs report 2023*. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/>