education. The legislature finds that the needs of the workforce and the economy necessitate enhanced vocational education opportunities in secondary education including curriculum which integrates vocational and academic education. In order for the state's workforce to be competitive in the world market, employees need competencies in both vocational/technical skills and in core essential competencies such as English, math, science/technology, geography, history, and critical thinking. Curriculum which integrates vocational and academic education reflects that many students learn best through applied learning, and that students should be offered flexible education opportunities which prepare them for both the world of work and for higher education. [1991 c 238 s 140.]