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BACK-TO-SCHOOL EDITION   

MEANINGFUL HIGH SCHOOL: PREPARING HIGH SCHOOLERS FOR LIFE

Over 40% of Illinois' 12th graders were chronically absent last year, and about 25% of high school students don't think what they learn in class prepares them for what they plan to do in life. It is clear that a large contingent of Illinois high schoolers feel disconnected from school.

The question remains: how can we reimagine high school to make it meaningful for all students? How can we ensure that every student has access to high school coursework, work-based learning and internships, early college or career training, clubs and extracurricular activities, and



PREPARING HIGH SCHOOLERS FOR LIFE

Tell us how you think we can make high school meaningful for **ALL** students





authentic relationships with peers and adults that give them a sense of belonging in their school community and a unique pathway to pursue their individualized goals for the future

We recently rolled out a 5-minute survey to help us

understand how to make high school meaningful for all students, and we invite you to take it and share it with your constituents! This survey is a first step in a larger campaign to reimagine high school to maximize its impact across the state.

STUDENT STORIES OF EARLY COLLEGE

OLIVIA always knew she wanted to be a registered nurse, but it wasn't until a career assembly her sophomore year at Rochester High School that she learned about a CTE Pathway that would give her a jumpstart toward that goal. Rochester is one of several neighboring school districts that partners with the Capital Area Career Center, which offers coursework that enabled Olivia to earn her CNA certification junior year. She also went back her senior year to work toward her Medical Assistant credential, but preferred the patient care opportunities with the CNA and, now a month after

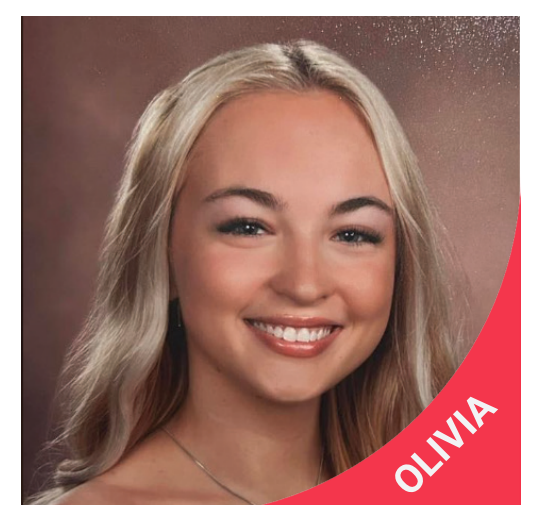
"...the skills, professionalism, and ethics she learned in high school have prepared her exceptionally well to continue her nursing career trajectory."

graduation, works at the local hospital as a CNA while pursuing her Registered Nurse credential at Lincoln Land Community College.

Junior and senior year, Olivia split her day between mornings at school and afternoon at the area career center. She earned 6.5 hours of college credit and shadowed medical professionals at numerous clinical visits. Olivia raved about the program. She says the skills, professionalism, and ethics she learned in high school have prepared her exceptionally well to continue

her nursing career trajectory.

Our take on Olivia's story: Healthcare pathways are such ideal programs to build out because they are highly marketable with multiple "on ramps" and "off ramps." While CNAs are not typically high-paying jobs, they are excellent stepping stones to additional credentials. Olivia's story shows a seamless partnership among her school, area career center, community college, and local hospitals that enabled her to have comprehensive experiences that will shape her future career.



Megan, Molly, and Theo (read more about Theo on page 5) enrolled in a “Pathways to Teaching” Program that Oak Park-River Forest High School offered in partnership with Concordia University. This was one CTE offering within the Human and Public Services CTE Pathway. Their senior year, they attended courses on the college campus - An Introduction to American Education and Human and Cognitive Development. They participated alongside college students who shared their passion for educational equity and teaching, while enabling them to earn early college credits and join 10 hours of classroom observation.

For Megan and Molly, the experience re-affirmed what they expected: they want to pursue their dream of teaching. It gave them a jumpstart on college and fulfills a broader policy goal of closing the teacher shortage gap that persists across Illinois and the nation. Both have enrolled in college and are continuing their quest

toward an educator license (Molly is at Triton Community College with plans to transfer to Illinois State University and ultimately teach Family and Consumer Sciences; Megan is at Western Illinois University in a 4+1 program earning a Bachelor’s in English and Psychology and a Master’s in Education.)



For Theo, the experience was also a positive, but in a different way: he learned that becoming a teacher is not for him. He enrolled at the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor in the School of Education’s Learning, Equity, and Problem Solving for the Public Good program. He is still passionate about education policy and systems change, but no longer plans to be a classroom teacher. His CTE experience helped him shift his focus into an area that



underrepresented students. She also took several dual enrollment courses, as well as continuing onto the increasingly more rigorous IB courses her junior and senior years, which she fully embraced as a globally recognized curriculum that helped her become a critical thinker, eloquent communicator, and academic leader. She wrote extended essays, completed internal assessments, and delivered presentations that sharpened her voice and vision. By the time she graduated high school, she had earned about 30 early

Iris (read more about her on page 5) had a dream from early in elementary school that she wanted to go to University of Illinois. Her mom and grandpa had aspirations for college, but they faced multiple barriers; Iris wanted to finally fulfill this dream, the first in her family who would go to college. She was determined to work hard toward her goal in high school, joining the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme at Farragut Career Academy in Chicago’s Little Village neighborhood.

Freshman and sophomore years of high school, mid-pandemic for Iris, nonetheless offered her access to IB Honors courses. She earned scholarships and was accepted into SMASH Academy, an intensive, STEM-focused program for

better aligns with the future he wants.

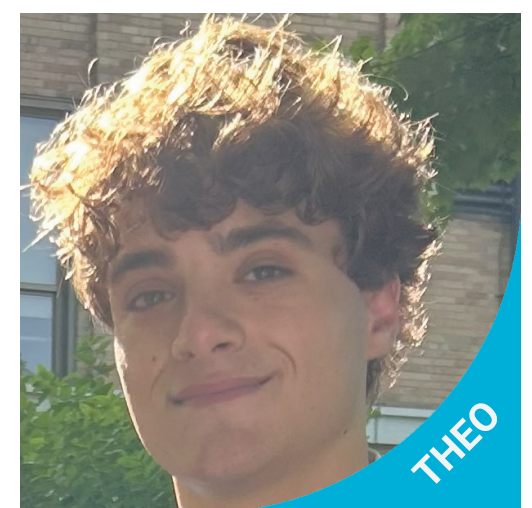
Our Take on Their Story: About five ago, the State added \$5 million to the Career and Technical Education appropriation to fund an Education Pathway. (Agriculture Education has long enjoyed dedicated CTE funding, but this would be the first other pathway specifically designated for a state allocation.) We wondered - did this program spring up as a result of the state’s funding efforts? The answer seems to be no, at least not directly. Oak Park-River Forest did not get any of those state funds. However, it was this intentional policy initiative that led to a state infrastructure that has seen numerous programs spring up. Northeastern Illinois University and Concordia University were two we heard about repeatedly that had built out robust programs and partnerships with numerous schools, creating opportunities for on a fulfilling career path that is also deeply important to the future of Illinois. And as far as CTE

college credits, passed rigorous IB exams, and received the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish. Farragut is one of several schools that Hope Chicago serves, offering scholarships and support to students to attend college.

Iris’s family celebrated and cried when she got her acceptance letter to UIUC and its competitive business school, fulfilling her dream, and her early college exposure while in high school prepared her well for the rigor she faces in college today.

From day one, Ximena was drawn to the idea of justice not just as a concept, but as a personal mission. She had seen the effects of inequality and systemic issues in her community and felt a deep calling to understand the laws that govern society, and how

programs go, this one is pretty affordable, with little to no start-up costs for equipment and infrastructure.



they could be used to make meaningful change. Ximena went to school with Iris at Farragut Career Academy.

In her freshman year, Ximena enrolled in Criminal Law, a foundational Career and Technical Education course that introduced her to core legal principles and the structure of the American justice system. Through online case studies, virtual class discussions, and independent research projects, she explored how laws are enforced, what due process means, and how bias and inequality show up in policing and sentencing. She enrolled in Civil and Constitutional Law her sophomore year, where she dove deeper into legal processes and began to explore the dynamics between individual rights and government powers. She participated in mock

trials, where she practiced crafting arguments, presenting evidence, and thinking on her feet during cross and direct examinations. Each experience widened her lens and helped her envision multiple paths toward her dream.

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Ximena transitioned into the full IB Diploma Programme in her junior and senior years, but remained deeply committed to the CTE Law Program, serving as assistant counsel during mock trials, mentoring younger (cont. on page 3) students, helping them understand courtroom procedures, and coaching them on how to build compelling arguments. She also took the initiative to join law school campus visits, where she met admissions officers, sat in real classes, and asked questions about the application process.

Through it all, Ximena’s passion for justice only grew stronger. She began volunteering for local civic engagement organizations, helping register voters and inform community members about their rights. She wrote opinion pieces for the school newsletter and participated in youth-led forums about equity and education reform. What began as a classroom curiosity had blossomed into a full-fledged mission. Now, Ximena is preparing for the next step in her journey. She will be attending Cornell University in the fall and school after on the horizon; she carries with her a powerful combination of knowledge, experience, and drive. Her story is one of determination, resilience, and the belief that justice is not just an ideal, but a goal worth fighting for.



Our Take on Iris and Ximena’s Stories: These are beautifully inspiring stories of two young women’s persistence and dedication - and of strategic investments that helped them achieve their goals in a high school that’s summative designation is the state’s most dire: “intensive.” (This designation is reserved for the lowest 5% of schools whose graduation rate remains less than 67% after one full round of intervention.) But for Ximena and Iris, the school offered them opportunities they knew would be helpful to propel them toward the future they envisioned for themselves. Few students at Farragut take Dual Enrollment (4%), though a growing proportion have enrolled in IB (14%) and more than that participate in CTE (17%). Though the graduation at Farragut is just 60%, among CTE students, the rate is especially high: 95%. Perhaps the most impressive statistic when looking at the school’s data is the steep growth in postsecondary enrollment rates over the last few

years. Despite the school’s 95% low-income student rate and 60% graduation rate, 69% enroll in two- or four-year colleges within 12 months of graduation according to the most recent report card data (2022 graduates). The rate from 2018 - 2020 averaged less than 45%. These opportunities to explore early college and see a pathway to afford higher education are making a difference.



CHEERS TO THE NEWLY ENACTED CTE FORMULA



In FY 2024, the ISBE disbursed \$44 million in state CTE appropriations to 53 Education for Employment (EFE) districts. FY24 is the “base year,” with subsequent years phasing in the new formula. This analysis does not include federal Perkins dollars, which are disbursed through a federal formula based on population and

poverty. Our analysis shows dramatic variance among EFE allocations with little correlation between funding and outcomes in this FY24 “base year” allocation. An analysis by CTE participants and concentrators yielded similar disparities in funding across EFE

districts. This strongly supports the transition to the new state CTE funding formula, which is being phased in slowly over time, 25% per year as long as the appropriation increases to ensure that no EFE loses funding over the prior year. The new formula allocated funding based on the funding adequacy of the districts in each region and the number of CTE concentrators, imposing a lens of equity and accountability to a funding structure desperately in need of modernization.

To calculate this information, we captured data from ISBE’s Financial Reimbursement Information System (FRIS) of CTE allocations from FY24 by EFE. We sorted each school district into its

corresponding EFE and calculated average percentages of adequate funding for each EFE based on its member school districts’ funding ratio average. We also integrated this financial data with Illinois report card data on the numbers of students enrolled, CTE participants, and CTE concentrators. With this integrated data, we were able to run various analyses comparing CTE allocation rates by funding ratio, per student, per CTE student, and per CTE concentrator.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the strongest correlation the analysis found is that EFE districts that had more funding per high school student were more likely to have higher rates of CTE (cont. on page 4)

participation and concentration. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has the lowest rate of CTE participation (12%) and the lowest amount of funding per high school student (\$34). Whiteside Regional Vocational System receives the highest rate per high school student (\$383) and a relatively high rate of students participating in CTE (72%). CTE participants, and CTE concentrators. With this integrated data, we were able to run various analyses comparing CTE allocation rates by funding ratio, per student, per CTE student, and per CTE concentrator.

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analysis found is that EFE districts that had more funding per high school student were more likely to have higher rates of CTE participation and concentration. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has the lowest rate of CTE participation (12%) and the lowest amount of funding per high school student (\$34). Whiteside Regional Vocational System receives the highest rate per high school student (\$383) and a relatively high rate of students participating in CTE (72%).

However, this was certainly not universal. For example, Franklin County Regional Delivery System and Two Rivers Career Education System each receive a relatively low amount of about \$50 per high school student, but have about 75% of students participating in CTE. ESL Regional Vocation System receives 83% more per high school student than the

average allocation (\$137, compared to the average of \$75), but has less than the average participation rate (44%, compared to the average of 50%) and concentration rate (concentration rate (7%, compared to 24%).

One limitation to this analysis is that school districts, not EFEs, report the numbers of students who participate and concentrate in CTE. Thus, if a student receives CTE service through a partnership with the community college or some other program not affiliated with the EFE, it would still look like the EFE is "credited" with that student's CTE success. However, the CTE funding per pupil correlates more strongly than how well-funded a region's schools are under EBF, suggesting that dedicated CTE dollars are more likely to drive CTE expansion than

non-directed general funding.

There was little correlation between CTE allocation and how adequately-funded a region is when averaging the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) adequacy percentages of each school district in the region. The new formula takes EBF funding adequacy into account when allocating new dollars, but in the base year, there was a very slight trend in the opposite direction, with funds skewing toward better-funded areas. See more about the outdated way CTE was funded before the FY25 change on our blog. We are excited ISBE and the legislature are phasing in their new model that prioritizes equity and accountability in disbursements, and look forward to sharing our analysis of the first year of allocation in our next NewsSTAND.

SOME KEY DIFFERENCES IN OTHER STATES' CTE POLICY




Career and Technical Education (CTE) Diploma/Designation

A growing number of states - about half of them - offer some variation of CTE diploma/designation options, such as CTE pathways, seals, and CTE-specific diplomas.

▶ In Indiana, the state's "New Indiana Diploma" allows students to earn an "Employment Honors Seal" on their high school diploma. To earn this seal, Indiana high school students can use their required 12 personalized electives to complete the requirements of an employment (CTE-specific) pathway.

▶ In Ohio, high school students are required to earn 2 seals out of a possible 12. One of these seals is an industry-recognized credential seal (IRC).

▶ In Louisiana, students have the option of enrolling in a CTE career pathway and receive a "TOPS Tech" Diploma, a CTE-specific high school diploma designed for students intending to enroll in a 2-year community or technical college or enter the workforce.

State	Diploma/Designation Option	Requirements
 Indiana	Pathway	Complete one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn IRC Complete 3 CTE courses Complete career preparation program Complete locally-created career pathway 150 hours of work-based learning
 Ohio	Seal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point based system for credentials/certifications Must earn 12 points worth of credentials in the same pathway area, or earn one 12 point credential
 Louisiana	Diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires successful completion of 23 high school credits along completion of credential/certifications Last 2 years of high school Choose a career-specific pathway Designed for students who intend to enroll in a 2-year community/technical college, or the workforce Unable to directly attend a 4-year university

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Diploma/Designation

There are typically five criteria areas for obtaining CTE teacher licensure: education, work experience, certification, assessments, and teacher/CTE training. States vary in their requirements. Illinois' three CTE licensure options are listed in the chart below.

Illinois has three CTE

licensure criteria, compared to states like Massachusetts, where all five areas may be required. Like all licensure regulations, there is an important balance to consider between ensuring instructors are well-qualified and having enough instructors available. The Foundation

for Excellence in Education's model policy calls for State Boards of Education to issue temporary teaching permits to qualified industry experts. The industry expert would provide technical and instructional support to a full-time, licensed teacher in a CTE course.

CTE License	Requirements
Educator License with Stipulations endorsed in CTE (ELS-CTE) (education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 semester hours • 2,000 of work experience • Valid for 5 years
Educator License with Stipulations for CTE Provisional (ELS-CTEP) (work experience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8,000 hours of experience • Valid for 5 years • Valid for grades 5-12 only
Professional Educator License endorsed in CTE Area (PEL-CTE) (CTE training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours (education and work experience) obtained from a regionally accredited institution or a trade and technology institution • For endorsements that require a specific number of semester hours, coursework must be 100-level or higher • Endorsed in one of Illinois' 7 CTE pathway areas

FREE RESOURCE

Writing Our World™ is a research-based writing and reading comprehension curriculum created to teach resistant students how to write, starting at the sentence level and progressing towards multi-paragraph essays. This free 3rd-12th grade curriculum was designed by teachers for teachers, complete with scripted lesson plans and printable student materials for eight objectives broken into 75 individual skills. This curriculum aligns with The Writing Revolution®, The Writing Rope®, and the Illinois State Literacy Plan, with progress monitoring tools built in. It's free for any teacher to access, and they can sign up here.



MEET THE INTERNS: THEO ROGERS



Education: University of Michigan - Ann Arbor, BA, Education, with a focus on Learning, Equity, and Problem Solving for the Public Good

What brings you joy? Seeing my dog smile when I walk in the door.

What's your favorite thing to do in the summer? Going to the beach with my friends.

Briefly, why Stand? Stand is dedicated to ensuring that every public school student has equitable access to high-quality education. To achieve this, policies must be designed with a holistic vision. I appreciate how Stand looks at education as a multi-faceted system, where everything is interconnected. I believe this point of view would benefit my understanding of education policy and the problems that need solving.

MEET THE INTERNS: IRIS GALICIA



Education: University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign-Pursuing a double major in Business Administration Management & Strategy, Innovation & Entrepreneurship with a minor in Advertising, at the Gies College of Business (Bachelors Degree)

What brings you joy? What brings me joy is constantly exploring different career fields to expand my knowledge and gain new experiences. I find happiness in making my parents and family proud and being someone my younger siblings can look up to. Knowing that I can set a positive example and contribute to my own personal growth at the same time is what truly fulfills me.

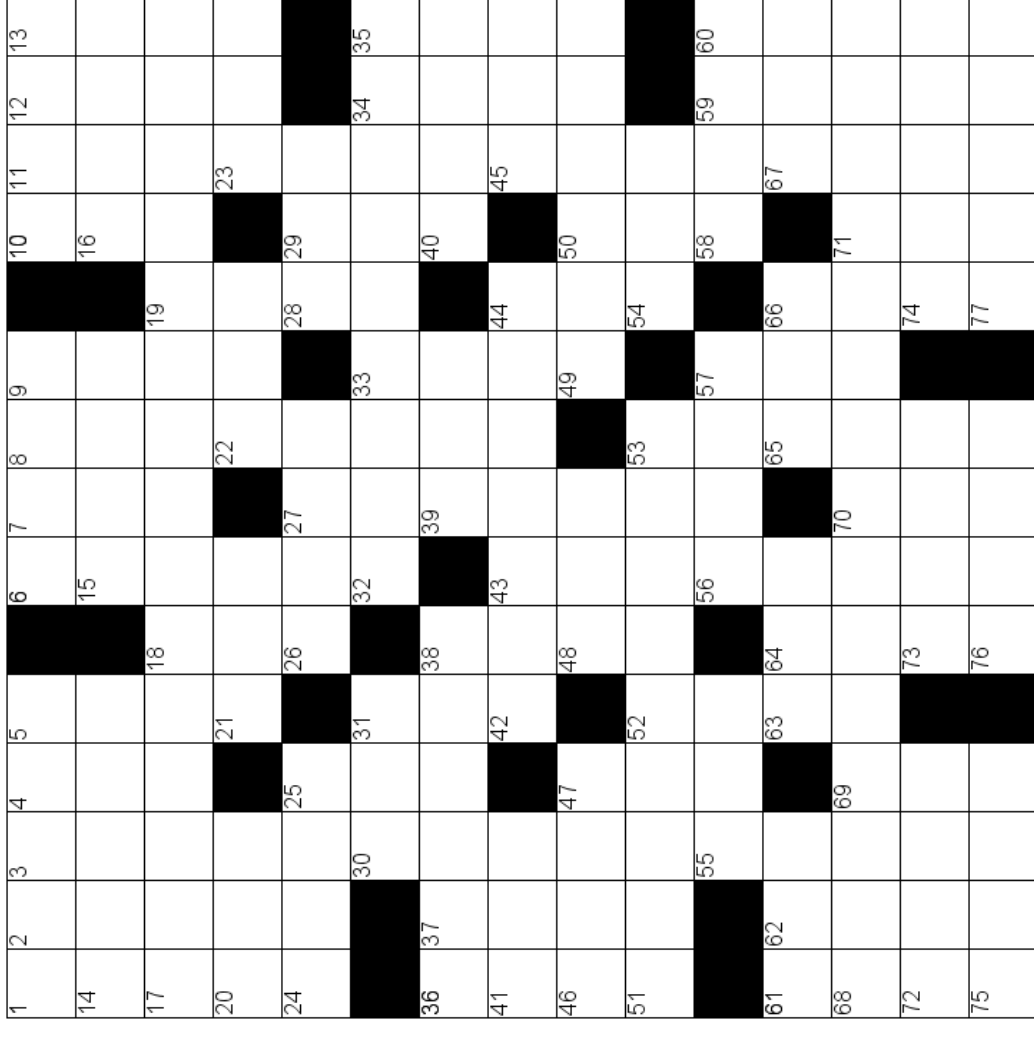
What's your favorite thing to do in the summer? In the summer, I love to unwind with a good romance novel and explore new places to eat with my family. I also enjoy gaining more career experience whenever I can, it's always exciting to learn something new. And of course, I love going on shopping trips to Ulta, Ross, Marshalls, and TJ Maxx with either a Starbucks Matcha or a Dunkin Lemonade Refresher in my hand. It's my perfect mix of relaxation, growth, and fun.

Briefly, why Stand? Stand is dedicated to ensuring that every public school student has equitable access to high-quality education. To achieve this, policies must be designed with a holistic vision. I appreciate how Stand looks at education as a multi-faceted system, where everything is interconnected. I believe this point of view would benefit my understanding of education policy and the problems that need solving.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

ACROSS

1. Most minimal
6. Frankly my dear, I don't give a _____
10. Symbol
14. One who persuades
15. Thought
16. Spanish other
17. An important high school indicator
20. Spanish so
21. Spfld to Champaign direction
22. Roofing material
23. Slyly hesitant
24. Faction
26. Mosquito bite aftermath
28. Fuss
30. Closest uni to the capitol
32. Professional development
36. Bully _____
39. "Waterfalls" and "Creep" group
40. Mimic
41. IL: CST as NY: _____
42. Chicken preparation
45. Common sushi sauce
46. Endangered fed dept
48. Precursor to text msgs
49. Put on
51. Fears
54. Permanent ink, e.g. "I <3 Mom"
55. Gasteyer or de Armas
56. Cut
58. Nudge
61. Haha
63. _____ Miserables
65. Plan ISBE's working on now, post-lit. plan
67. Blood class system
68. You might learn about one in computer science class
72. Step back
73. Device
74. Plural demonstrative pronoun
75. Tight
76. Forced bet
77. _____ to you



DOWN

1. George or Josh
2. Get rid of
3. Long-standing, well-developed CTE offering
4. Observe
5. Family diagram
6. Lead
7. Lemon or Kool
8. Pasta addition
9. Nothing
10. Charged particle
11. A HS student with 2+ CTE courses
12. More or less
13. Curious
18. Future careers for some Health Sciences CTE students
19. "If _____ the Zoo"
25. Advice
27. Craftsman
29. Game piece
31. Bro or sis
33. Coffee or tea option
34. Clarified butter
35. Bought
36. Spring candy
37. SNAP admin
38. Threesome
43. Exclusion
44. Speck
47. Cola vessel
50. Rest
52. Disney ioness
53. Uncoupled
57. Infection fluid
59. BMI designation
60. Capitol toppers
61. Dreads
62. Transparent
64. James or May
66. Legend
69. Betw. small and lrg.
70. _____ for profit
71. It might appear on a nametag or signature line