

Career Technical Education: Myths and Facts

Career Technical Education (CTE) is an educational strategy that equips learners with the academic and technical skills they need to be prepared for future careers. While research reveals myriad benefits of high-quality CTE, the field is dogged by outdated perceptions. These stigmas stem from low-quality programs of years past. Today's CTE delivers **real options** for college and rewarding careers, helps learners **build real-world skills** and **enhances the high school and college experience**.

Myth: Only non-college bound students take CTE classes

Fact: CTE provides a seamless pathway to postsecondary education

- CTE students exceed expectations. In fact, the graduation rate for students who take a concentration of CTE courses is about 93 percent, approximately 10 percent higher than the national average.¹



- The majority of CTE students go to college. Seventy-eight percent of CTE concentrators enroll in postsecondary education full-time immediately after graduating. Furthermore, 50 percent of CTE concentrators go on to earn a postsecondary credential or certificate, compared to 58 percent of non-concentrators.²

- CTE students have many opportunities to earn college credit in high school through dual and concurrent enrollment, which they can apply toward a postsecondary degree. In total, over 600,000 dual enrollment credits are earned in CTE courses, equaling approximately one-third of all credits earned.³

Myth: CTE is jobs training

Fact: CTE empowers learners to explore multiple career options

- CTE programs of study start broad, cementing the core competencies and knowledge learners must know to be successful within a specific Career Cluster,[®] before providing career pathway and career-specific knowledge and skills.⁴
- CTE allows learners to enhance their education with hands-on training, mentoring and internships that build employability skills and expand their professional networks. As a result, learners get a unique advantage and get a leg up on their future careers.
- Students understand the real-world value CTE provides. In a recent national survey, 82 percent of CTE students said they were satisfied with their opportunities to explore different careers of interest, compared to only 51 percent of non-CTE students.⁵
- And those who do go on to complete a postsecondary vocational, trade or technical program are more likely to be happy with their educational decisions than those earning Bachelor's or associate's degrees.⁶

A Program of Study

is a sequence of courses that links secondary and postsecondary education, integrates challenging academic and technical instruction and leads to an industry-recognized credential of value.

Myth: CTE serves only 'disadvantaged' students

Fact: CTE is for all learners

- CTE has become a standard part of the high school experience. Ninety-two percent of high school students take some form of CTE, making it the norm for just about everyone.⁷
- Contrary to common belief, 33 percent of students in the highest socio-economic status (SES) quartile took three or more CTE credits, as well as 44 percent of students in the second highest SES quartile.⁸
- More and more families are starting to recognize the value that CTE provides. A national 2017 survey found that parents of CTE students were more satisfied with their school experience by every measure compared to parents whose children were not involved in CTE, including the quality of classes, quality of teachers and their children's ability to learn real-world skills.⁹
- Additionally, American adults were more likely to agree that two-year public colleges – where CTE is primarily taught at the postsecondary level – prepare learners for success than other types of institutions.¹⁰

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of parents of CTE students were satisfied with the way CTE helps their students get a leg up on their future careers

Myth: CTE doesn't build academic skills

Fact: CTE blends academic and technical skills to enhance the learning experience

- In CTE programs, technical coursework reinforces core academics, enabling learners to strengthen their academic studies with real-world learning.
- In one study, high school students taught using an integrated Math-in-CTE curriculum demonstrated higher math proficiency and higher performance on college placement tests than students receiving a standard CTE curriculum.¹¹
- Additionally, states like **Maine** and **Vermont** are laying the foundation to integrate CTE into competency-based pathways, expanding opportunities for learners to build CTE into their graduation plans.¹²



¹ https://s3.amazonaws.com/PCRN/uploads/Perkins_RTC_2013-14.pdf

² http://s3.amazonaws.com/PCRN/docs/NACTE_FinalReport2014.pdf

³ <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013001.pdf>

⁴ https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/CTE_Programs_of_Study_2017.pdf

⁵ <https://careertech.org/resource/value-and-promise-of-cte-results-from-a-national-survey>

⁶ http://stradaeducation.gallup.com/reports/208535/gallup-strada-education-ecp-inaugural-report-2017.aspx?utm_source=www&utm_medium=copy&utm_campaign=20170601-opinion

⁷ http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/nrccte_cte_typology.pdf

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ <https://careertech.org/resource/value-and-promise-of-cte-results-from-a-national-survey>

¹⁰ <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/varying-degrees/explore-data/>

¹¹ <http://www.nrccte.org/resources/studies/math-cte-research-study-building-academic-skills-context-testing-value-enhanced>

¹² <https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/CTE-CompetencyBasedPathways.pdf>