

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. Despite a body of research proving myriad benefits of high-quality CTE, the field continues to be dogged by outdated perceptions. These perceptions 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, nearly every state reports higher graduation rates for CTE concentrators compared to all students.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.²
- CTE students have many opportunities to earn college credit in high school through dual and concurrent enrollment. In total, **over 600,000 dual enrollment credits are earned each year in CTE courses**, equaling approximately one-third of all credits earned in high school.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 two-year degree through a community or technical college are more likely than students at four-year schools to find their education relevant.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.

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Myth: CTE serves only 'disadvantaged' students



Fact: CTE is for all learners

- CTE has become a standard part of the high school experience. **Eighty-eight 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
- Parents of CTE students are more satisfied with the quality of their children's classes, the quality of their teachers and their ability to learn real-world skills compared to parents whose children are not involved in CTE.⁹
- 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.¹¹

91%

of parents of CTE students were satisfied with the way CTE helps their students get a leg up on their future careers¹⁰

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 did.¹²
- 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.¹³

¹ Represents data from the 2016-17 school year. Retrieved from <https://perkins.ed.gov/pims/DataExplorer/Performance>

² U.S. Department of Education. (2014). National Assessment of Career and Technical Education. Retrieved from http://s3.amazonaws.com/PCRN/docs/NACTE_FinalReport2014.pdf

³ U.S. Department of Education. (2013). *Dual Credit and Exam-Based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2010-11*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013001.pdf>

⁴ Advance CTE. "Programs of Study." Retrieved from <https://careertech.org/programs-study>

⁵ Advance CTE. (2017). *The Value and Promise of Career Technical Education: Results from a National Survey of Parents and Students*. Retrieved from <https://careertech.org/resource/value-and-promise-of-cte-results-from-a-national-survey>

⁶ Gallup & Strada Education Network. (2018). *From College to Life: Relevance and the Value of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://stradaeducation.gallup.com/reports/232583/from-college-to-life-part-2.aspx>

⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). Table H176. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/h176.asp>

⁸ National Research Center for Career and Technical Education. (2012). *A Typology for Understanding the Career and Technical Education Credit-Taking Experience of High School Students*. Retrieved from http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/nrccte_cte_typology.pdf

⁹ Advance CTE. (2017). *The Value and Promise of Career Technical Education: Results from a National Survey of Parents and Students*. Retrieved from <https://careertech.org/resource/value-and-promise-of-cte-results-from-a-national-survey>

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ New America. "In-Depth: Varying Degrees." Retrieved from <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/varying-degrees/explore-data/>

¹² National Research Center for Career and Technical Education. (2012). *Research Snapshot: Math-in-CTE Study*. Retrieved from http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/math_in_cte.pdf

¹³ Achieve and Advance CTE. (2015). *Building A Strong Relationships Between Competency-based Pathways and Career Technical Education*. Retrieved from <https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/CTE-CompetencyBasedPathways.pdf>

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