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 Despite a body of research proving myriad benefits of high-quality CTE, the field continues to be dogged by outdated perceptions stemming from low-quality programs of years past and a legacy of “tracking” economically disadvantaged learners and learners of color into vocational trades and away from academic pathways. Today’s CTE serves learners from all backgrounds and delivers real options for college and rewarding careers, helps learners build real-world skills and enhances the high school and college experience.

**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.
- 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.
- Among public school districts that offer CTE programs, 77 percent offer work-based learning experiences and 73 percent offer opportunities for learners to earn dual college credit.
- Learners understand the real-world value of CTE. In a national survey, 82 percent of CTE learners said they were satisfied with their opportunities to explore different careers of interest, compared to only 51 percent of non-CTE learners.

**Myth: CTE leads to ‘dead end’ jobs**
**Fact: CTE leads to well-paying careers with potential for career advancement**

- A 2019 study of California Community College CTE participants found that learners reported positive employment outcomes and greater increases in wages after completing their program.
- Workers with professional certifications and high school diplomas earn more and report greater opportunity for job growth than workers with only a high school diploma.
- CTE concentrators have opportunities to earn living wages, even while in high school, and experience career advancement after graduation.
- American adults were more likely to agree that two-year public colleges – where CTE is primarily taught at the postsecondary level – are worth the cost and contribute to a strong American workforce more than other types of institutions.
CTE students exceed expectations. In fact, nearly every state reports higher graduation rates for CTE concentrators compared to all students.\(^9\)

The most recent data shows that **77 percent of high school learners earn at least one CTE course credit including 80 percent White, 75 percent Black and 74 percent Latinx learners.**\(^10\)

The majority of CTE students go to college. **Seventy-two 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.\(^11\)

At the end of two years, **42 percent of learners in New York City P-TECH schools** – which provide industry-aligned CTE-focused pathways – **passed the New York State English Language Arts Regents exam with a score qualifying them for dual enrollment** in City University of New York (CUNY) courses, compared with 25 percent of comparison group students.\(^12\)

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1. [https://careertech.org/programs-study](https://careertech.org/programs-study)
2. [https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/cte/index.html](https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/cte/index.html)
5. [https://www.wboi.org/post/lumina-and-gallup-jobs-study-emphasizes-need-certifications#stream/0](https://www.wboi.org/post/lumina-and-gallup-jobs-study-emphasizes-need-certifications#stream/0)
8. Ibid
10. [https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/cte/index.html](https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/cte/index.html)
11. Ibid