

Career and Technical Education (CTE) provides all students access to high-quality, rigorous career-focused programs that result in attainment of credentials with labor market value.



Learning that works
for Utah

Did you know?

Career and Technical Education (CTE) provides all students access to high-quality, rigorous career-focused programs that result in attainment of credentials with labor market value.

Career and Technical Education encompasses a variety of programs structured to equip students for college and career readiness. In Utah, 187,580 secondary students participate in CTE courses that help them explore career options and develop occupational skills. The curriculum of CTE gives students the practical experience they need to succeed through a combination of classroom instruction, hands-on laboratory work, and on-the-job training.

CTE courses and programs are delivered through 177 public middle/jr. high schools, 157 public high schools and charter schools, and seven CTE centers. Most Utah colleges and universities offer postsecondary CTE programs.

Career and Technical Education jump-starts students' careers by preparing them for postsecondary education and training for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations while they are still in high school. By following a CTE Career Pathway students become college and career ready. Career Pathways give students many kinds of opportunities to acquire job skills and to get a head start in selected college programs. In Utah, all graduating students have taken a CTE course in high school. In 2018, 69.4 percent of Utah high school graduates attended college within one year of graduating from high school (Utah System of Higher Education, High School Feedback Report High School Graduating Class of 2018).

Preparing students for a meaningful career is an important goal of Career and Technical Education because of the widening skills gap in the nation's workforce.

Career and Technical Education prepares students for tomorrow's workplace. Career and Technical Education educators work closely with the Department of Workforce Services and Utah employers to make sure students have the skills the labor market demands.

CTE prepares students with technical skills to advance in the highly competitive workforce of the 21st century.

CAREER CLUSTERS®

Utah CTE Career Pathways align with and are categorized by the national Career Clusters, which include:

- Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources
- Architecture & Construction
- Arts, Audio/Visual Technology & Communications
- Business, Finance & Marketing
- Computer Science & Information Technology
- Education & Training
- Engineering & Technology
- Health Science
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Human Services
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
- Manufacturing
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

UTAH CTE SUPPORTING PROGRAMS

College and Career Awareness: Assists students in identifying their interests, abilities, and skills. The program offers exploration and preparation in college and career pathways focusing on jobs that are high-skill and in-demand, as well as satisfying and rewarding.

Skill Certificate Program: Provides statewide competency-based student assessments. Student skill attainment is measured by core standards and competencies needed to be successful in the workforce.

Work-Based Learning: Gives students the opportunity to learn a variety of skills by expanding the walls of classroom learning to include the community. By narrowing the gap between theory and practice, Work-Based Learning creates meaning for students.

***Our vision** is to see that every student has the opportunity to explore a variety of career areas, throughout high school, that will equip him or her with the academic knowledge, technical and employment skills vital for entry into the evolving workforce of the 21st century.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Career and Technical Education Produces Results

DROPOUT PREVENTION

- In 2024, Utah high schools graduated 88.8 percent of their students.
- In 2024, Utah's graduation rate increased from 88.3 percent in 2023 to 88.8 percent.
- In 2024, the Utah high school dropout rate was 3.8 percent.
- Students attending CTE high schools demonstrate higher rates of on-time graduation and credit accumulation and a greater likelihood of successfully finishing a college prep math sequence.¹
- CTE students are significantly more likely to report developing problem-solving, project completion, research, work-related, communication, time management and critical-thinking skills during high school.²
- By linking student learning to career pathways, work-based learning programs can lower the dropout rate.³

HANDS-ON APPROACH

- Career and Technical Education uses a hands-on approach that teaching experts believe is more effective with many students than reading or listening to lectures alone.
- Through Work-Based Learning activities, students participate in internships, job shadows, field studies, and career fairs. Through these activities students have the opportunity to see how classroom instruction connects to the world of work and future career opportunities.
- *Learning for Jobs* concludes that, done well, Work-Based Learning appears to be the best way for the majority of young people to prepare for the world of work.⁴
- The most intensive forms of workplace learning—apprenticeship and sustained internships—are especially effective in meeting the developmental needs of young people.⁴

CAREER AND TECHNICAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (CTSOs)

- CTSOs help students develop leadership skills and positive work values, while reinforcing the Career and Technical Education curriculum.
- Eight student organizations include: DECA, Educators Rising, FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, HOSA, SkillsUSA, and TSA.
- In Utah, 34,500 secondary and postsecondary students participate in student leadership organizations.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

- Today's best CTE programs do a better job of preparing many students for college and career than traditional academics-only programs.⁴
- Nationwide, more than 85 percent of CTE students are planning to continue on to postsecondary education.⁵
- Six out of ten students are planning to pursue a career related to the CTE area they are exploring in high school.⁵
- Almost one-third of CTE students have the opportunity to earn college credit and/or an industry certification through CTE.⁵
- 80 percent of students taking a college prep academic curriculum with rigorous CTE meet college and career readiness goals, compared to only 63 percent of students taking the same academic core who did not experience rigorous CTE.⁶

JOB PLACEMENT

- The more CTE courses students take, the less likely they are to suffer periods of unemployment.
- High school students who graduate with a Career and Technical Education concentration are 2.5 times more likely to be employed while pursuing postsecondary education.
- CTE students obtain skills to help them get jobs in the future.⁵
- Eighteen of the 20 fastest growing occupations within the next decade will require Career and Technical Education.⁷
- There are many high-tech jobs in Utah that students can perform as a result of taking CTE courses while in high school.
- Career and Technical Education enables students to acquire the skills necessary for entry into postsecondary training and careers with high potential for rapid financial growth, increased levels of responsibility, and a high degree of personal satisfaction.

ON-THE-JOB PRODUCTIVITY

- Today's labor market requires that workers have more advanced training and postsecondary education. As a result, CTE graduates are more employable and have higher earnings.
- Career and Technical Education in the high schools closes the workforce gap by giving students a jump-start in obtaining essential life skills and certified occupational skills.
- Career and Technical Education reduces the workforce gap by providing long-term job education and skills training for students, enabling them to reach their full potential. Studies reveal a strong correlation between education/technical skill levels and continued employment/lifelong earnings.
- Postsecondary CTE concentrators earn significantly more than those who majored in academic fields, particularly when employed in an industry related to their program of study.⁸

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR FURTHER LEARNING

- Since 1973, jobs that require at least some college have exploded, while opportunities for those with just a high school education have shrunk dramatically.⁵ Through hands-on training, CTE prepares students for college and careers by helping them obtain the technical skills to advance in the highly competitive workforce of the 21st century.
- There are eight postsecondary institutions in Utah that offer technical programs, including community colleges, technical institutes, skill centers, and other public and private two-year and four-year colleges.
- In Utah there are 187,580 secondary and 80,195 postsecondary students enrolled in CTE courses.
- According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, approximately 12 million secondary and postsecondary students nationwide participate in Career and Technical Education.

Utah CTE classes are open to all qualified students without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age.

¹Neild et al., *The Academic Impacts of Career and Technical Schools: A Case Study of a Large Urban School District*, 2013.

²Lekes et al., *CTE Pathways Programs, Academic Performance and the Transition to College and Career*, National Research Center to CTE, 2007.

³National Academy Foundation (NAF), 2011.

⁴Harvard Graduate School of Education *Pathways to Prosperity* Project, 2011.

⁵myCollegeOptions.org/ACTE Cooperative Research Program 2015.

⁶Southern Regional Education Board, *High Schools That Work 2012 Assessment*.

⁷Okou, PSU, 2004.

⁸Jacobson and Miker, *Florida Study of Career and Technical Education*, 2014, as cited in the 2014 National Assessment of CTE Final Report.

