

## 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 Despite a body of research proving myriad benefits of high-quality CTE, the field continues to be dogged by outdated perceptions stemming from low-quality programs of years past and a legacy of “tracking” economically disadvantaged learners and learners of color into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,<sup>®</sup> before providing career pathway and career-specific knowledge and skills.<sup>1</sup>
- 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.<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>3</sup>

#### 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.

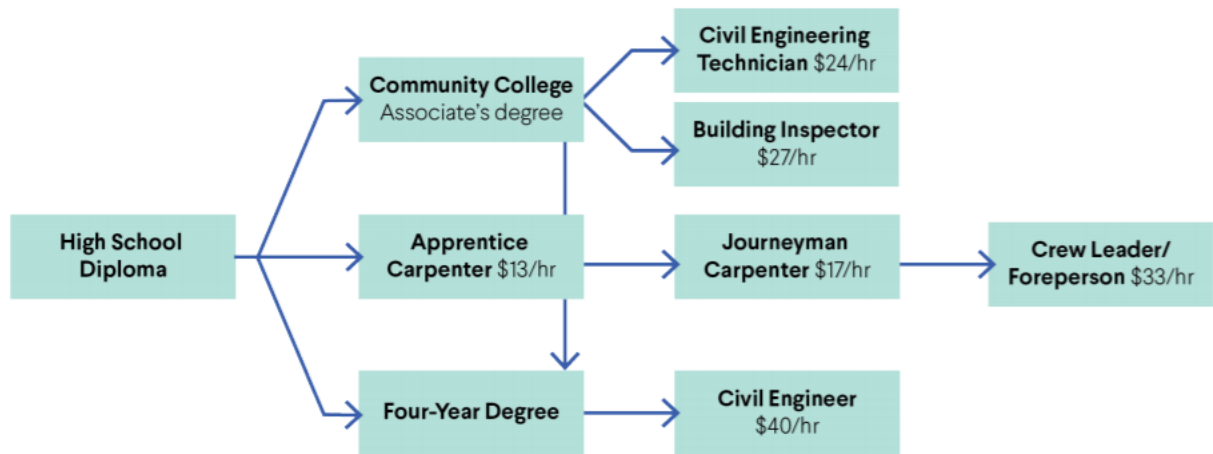
### Myth: CTE leads to 'dead end' jobs



### 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.<sup>4</sup>
- 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.<sup>5</sup>
- CTE concentrators have opportunities to earn living wages, even while in high school, and experience career advancement after graduation.<sup>6</sup>
- 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.<sup>7</sup>

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Sample Career Pathway in Construction. Source: JFF<sup>8</sup>

**Myth: Only non-college bound students take CTE classes**



**Fact: CTE provides ALL learners 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.<sup>9</sup>
- 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.<sup>10</sup>
- 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.<sup>11</sup>
- 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.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://careertech.org/programs-study>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/cte/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://careertech.org/resource/value-and-promise-of-cte-results-from-a-national-survey>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10668926.2019.1650843>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wboi.org/post/lumina-and-gallup-jobs-study-emphasizes-need-certifications#stream/0>

<sup>6</sup> [https://harborfreighttoolsforschools.org/wp-content/uploads/20.05.07-Breaking-Ground\\_Final-report-by-JFF-revised.pdf](https://harborfreighttoolsforschools.org/wp-content/uploads/20.05.07-Breaking-Ground_Final-report-by-JFF-revised.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/varying-degrees-2019/explore-the-data>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Represents data from the 2017-18 school year. Retrieved from <https://perkins.ed.gov/pims/DataExplorer/Performance>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/cte/index.html>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.mdc.org/sites/default/files/P-TECH\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.mdc.org/sites/default/files/P-TECH_Report_2020.pdf)