

# ALLIES IN POSTSECONDARY & CAREER SUCCESS: CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION PATHWAYS & COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Interest in Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways and college in high school programs is on the rise as education stakeholders embrace equity-seeking opportunities that put students on a pathway to postsecondary and career success. Both approaches improve student college and career success, particularly for learners of color, learners experiencing low income and other historically marginalized populations. By integrating these approaches, education stakeholders can design an education system that leverages targeted supports and high expectations to ensure every student has the knowledge and skills for future success.

## SHARED VALUES: CTE PATHWAYS AND COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Too often, there is a false choice between “college ready” and “career ready,” while the evidence is clear that all learners need some postsecondary education and training beyond a high school diploma to achieve career success. Both college in high school and CTE programs are designed to prepare secondary learners for their next step, be it in a two- or four-year institution, apprenticeship or direct entry into the workforce. They both serve as a bridge between secondary and postsecondary education and enable learners to get a leg up on their future education and training.

Research **consistently shows** when learners are able to participate in college in high school opportunities, they are more likely to graduate high school, complete college programs and be successful in their careers. Similarly, high-quality CTE pathways **are associated** with increased graduation rates, college-going and positive earnings. The benefits of each can be incredibly powerful, particularly for learners of color, learners experiencing low income and other historically marginalized populations.

## COMMON DESIGN ELEMENTS

A high-quality career pathway, as defined by Advance CTE, Education Strategy Group and JPMorgan Chase & Co. through the *New Skills ready network*, is a progressive sequence of at least three courses that:

- Is aligned to a high-skill, high-wage, in-demand occupation;
- Spans secondary and postsecondary;
- Reinforces academic learning with related work-based learning experiences; and
- Embeds opportunities for students to earn both related postsecondary credit in a degree-granting program and industry-recognized credentials.

Similarly, as defined by tools and frameworks from [Advance CTE](#), [Association for Career and Technical Education](#), [ExcelinEd](#) and others, high-quality CTE programs of study must include opportunities for learners to enroll in early postsecondary opportunities. Unique to CTE pathways are potential opportunities for learners to earn early postsecondary credit for experiences like work-based learning and industry-recognized credentials.

Simply put, a high-quality secondary CTE pathway includes dual/concurrent enrollment opportunities that are accessible and consistently articulate credits into postsecondary career pathways across the state. To date, [over half of states](#) do require evidence of dual/concurrent enrollment opportunities for CTE program approval. And [recent research](#) finds that 83 percent of families with a learner enrolled in CTE were satisfied with their ability to earn college credits in high school compared to just 61 percent of families without a learner enrolled in CTE.

## ALLIES IN ACTION: INTEGRATION OF CTE AND DUAL/CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

In 2016, Governor Matt Bevin launched the [Kentucky Dual Credit Scholarship \(DCS\)](#) program through an executive order, providing funding for high school juniors and seniors to complete up to two dual credit courses free of charge. Following the success of DCS, Kentucky then expanded the Work Ready Scholarship executive order to allow for two free CTE dual credit courses per year for students in grades 9–12 in addition to the two free courses through DCS. Both scholarship programs have since been formalized by state legislation. Critically, to ensure consistency across postsecondary institutions, the Kentucky Department of Education [issued guidance](#) specifying that CTE dual credit courses must be approved by the commonwealth, aligned to secondary CTE course standards, and within the learner's career pathway to be included in the state's accountability system.

In [Rutherford County](#), Tennessee, the state's [Ready Graduate indicator](#) increased the number of early postsecondary opportunities, including course options, certificates and credentials, in the district and at each high school. The number of learners accessing and completing these courses increased in all sub-groups, while the number of courses individual learners took also increased. Rutherford County's Ready Graduate rate is currently 48.1 percent, which is higher than the state average of 40.7 percent for 2019 graduates. At [Oakland High School](#), the Mechatronics program of study, developed collaboratively with Motlow State Community College (MSCC) and Middle Tennessee State University is designed with post-high school success in mind. After completing Algebra I and digital electronics, all juniors and seniors are fully dual enrolled with MSCC and Oakland High School. These students will leave high school with at least 16 credit hours, supported by Tennessee Promise funding to ensure learners earn college credits without accruing debt.