



Career & Technical Education Expert Review Team

Post-Visit Report
DORCHESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Governor's Workforce Development Board
Career and Technical Education Committee

December 2025

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The Governor's Workforce Development Board is grateful to the CTE Expert Review Team members that participated in the exploration of this District's CTE programs, as well as central office and school leadership, staff, and students that contributed valuable insights regarding CTE programs in their Local Education Agency (LEA).

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Executive Summary

The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("the *Blueprint*") established the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) to develop an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public schools, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce. As part of this effort, the *Blueprint* mandates that the CTE Committee establish, administer, and supervise Expert Review Teams (ERTs) to visit schools offering CTE pathways. These visits observe and track the progress of local education agencies (LEAs) in implementing CTE programs that align with the *Blueprint's* vision and the CTE Committee's framework and policies. In addition to reviewing progress, the visits are intended to provide support and identify technical assistance needs as LEAs build their CTE systems.

This CTE ERT visited Dorchester County Public Schools (DCPS), located on the Eastern Shore, on March 26, 2025. This was the ninth CTE ERT visit conducted by the CTE Committee during the 2024-2025 School Year (SY). DCPS offers CTE programs at both comprehensive high schools, Cambridge-South Dorchester High School and North Dorchester High School, but the majority of CTE programs are at DCPS's CTE Center, Dorchester Career and Technology Center (DCTC). The CTE ERT visited the DCTC in Cambridge, Maryland.

One representative from the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, one community college representative, two CTE Committee staff members/contractual support, two neighboring CTE Directors, one principal from a neighboring LEA, one CTE teacher from a neighboring LEA, two neighboring LEA administrators, one state CTE Director from Delaware, and one representative from MSDE, participated in the CTE ERT visit for Dorchester. Due to unforeseen circumstances, three members of the original CTE ERT team did not attend this visit, which is why the CTE ERT to Dorchester did not have the statute-mandated employer representative. Using the LEA's self-reported data, interviews, focus groups, school tours, and classroom visits, the CTE ERT organized their observations and preliminary analysis in this report.

DCPS's progress toward the *Blueprint's* goal that by the 2030-2031 SY, 45% of high school graduates shall complete the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship or another industry-recognized credential ("45% goal") is at 27.3%, according to the IRC guidelines determined by the CTE Committee.¹ All of DCPS's progress toward the 45% goal is attributed to industry-recognized credential attainment.

¹ Career and Technical Education. (December 2024). "GWDB CTE Committee Industry Recognized Credentials". Governor's Workforce Development Board. <https://tinyurl.com/3hxxuw2ub>

DCPS Internal Strengths

- CTE and DCTC Recruitment and Marketing
- Career Coaches Collaborate with School Counselors and External Partners
- Student, Teacher, Administrator, Staff, and External Stakeholder Buy-In for CTE Offerings and Student Success

DCPS Internal Challenges

- Opportunity for Collaboration with Teachers in Decision-Making That Impacts Teachers and Students
- All CTE Happens at DCTC, Leading to Transportation and Scheduling Issues
- Communication Gaps and Misaligned Expectations Between Home Schools and DCTC
- Unclear Roles and Low Staff Capacity Have Led to High Workloads

DCPS External Factors

- Strength: Connection with the Community and Relevant Industries
- Challenge: Competition Among Eastern Shore LEAs Over Apprenticeships
- Challenge: Career Coaches are Asked to Help Work-Based Learning Sponsors

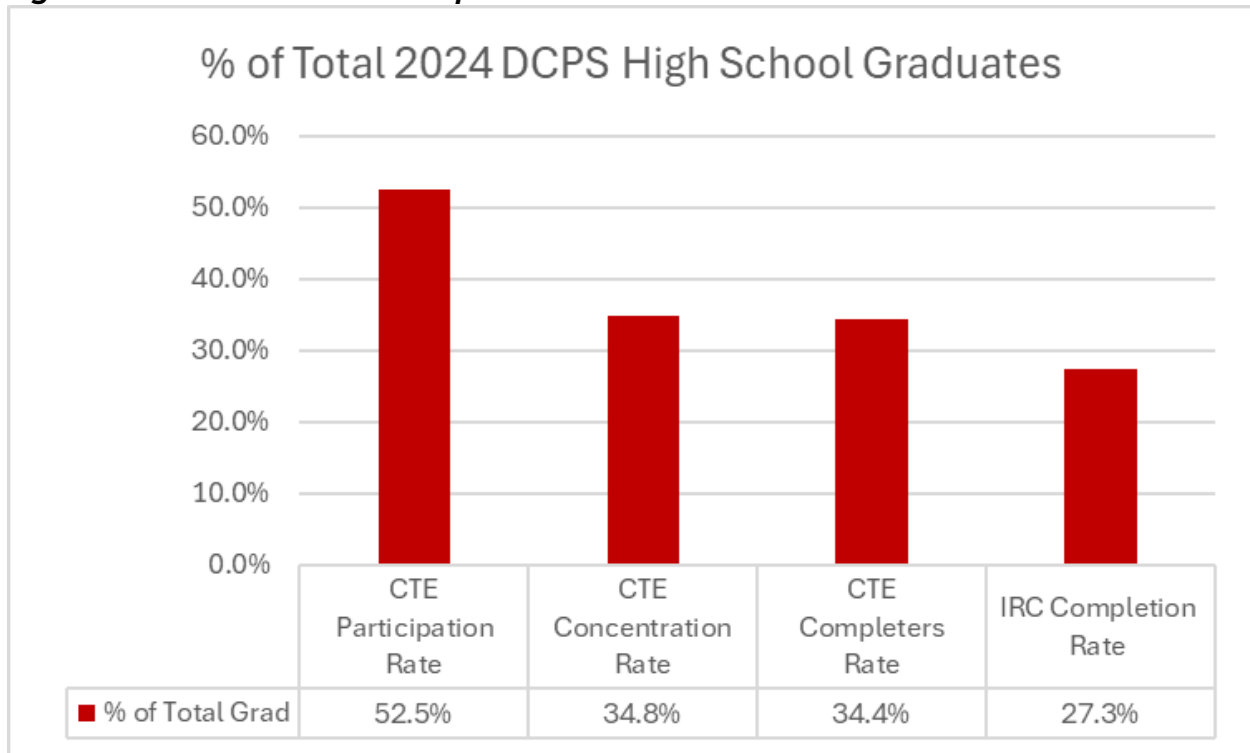
DCPS Potential Next Steps

- Identify More Opportunities to Collaborate with Neighboring LEAs instead of Competing
- Experiment with More Engaging Career Fairs
- Brainstorm Strategies to Improve Communication Between Home Schools and DCTC
- Explore Opportunities to Incorporate Teacher Perspectives into Decision-Making
- Explore Technical Assistance with MSDE, the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor), and the CTE Committee in meeting the *Blueprint's* 45% Goal

The CTE Committee staff, along with the CTE ERT, have collaborated on this report to provide observations and preliminary points of analysis to readers. In this document, readers will find the purpose of the CTE ERT, a brief explanation of DCPS, a summary of the CTE ERT visit, Strengths, Challenges, and External (SCE) analysis, and Potential Next Steps for the LEA to consider.

Please feel free to reach out to the CTE Committee or CTE Committee staff to answer any questions, comments, or concerns at GWDB.CTE@maryland.gov.

Figure 1: DCPS CTE and IRC completion rates.





Purpose of the CTE ERT

The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("the *Blueprint*"), Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, established the Career and Technical (CTE) Committee as a unit within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB).² The GWDB serves as the Governor's chief strategic and policy-making body for workforce development in the State of Maryland.³ The purpose of the CTE Committee is to build an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public schools, institutions of postsecondary education, and the workforce. The CTE Committee aims to fundamentally reimagine and redesign career-connected learning and career pathways to ensure all of Maryland's students have real access to fulfilling and family-sustaining careers.

The *Blueprint* requires the CTE Committee to establish, administer, and supervise CTE ERTs to visit schools with CTE pathways.⁴ The goals of these visits are to: 1) review alignment of district programs and practices with *Blueprint* vision and policies, 2) assure an LEA's CTE programs and practices are consistent with the Maryland CTE Framework and policies on the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and industry-recognized credentials (IRCs), and 3) support technical assistance needs for LEAs as they create new systems, programs and practices in order to support *Blueprint* goals and expand career-connected learning, especially RA and other IRC attainment, for their students. Ultimately, the CTE ERTs report back to the CTE Committee on district progress toward *Blueprint* goals, common challenges, and opportunities for policy change, technical assistance, or other support to meet those goals. The CTE Committee staff will publish a summary of findings from CTE ERT visits within the CTE Committee's annual report.⁵

The CTE ERT Program has three phases that transition from Phase 1: Discovery, to Phase 2: Analyze and Assist, and Phase 3: Evaluate. The primary goal in Phase 1 is to visit all 24 LEAs and build a baseline set of observations to understand the state of CTE in Maryland, along with common challenges LEAs face in creating a robust CTE system. The common challenges will inform what technical assistance sessions will be in Phase 2, which will focus on alignment, systemic data collection, and assistance. Phase 2 is set to begin in the 2026-2027 SY, so the specifics for Phase 2 will be planned in Spring 2026. Phase 3 will begin in the 2028-2029 SY and will focus on evaluating progress toward *Blueprint* goals, but will be more specifically planned during Phase 2.

The CTE Expert Review Team visit to DCPS consisted of members from various backgrounds and brought expertise in areas such as student learning, workforce development, and CTE, ensuring a comprehensive review of the LEA's CTE programs (see Appendix A).

² Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, <https://bit.ly/3W0J0eU>

³ Executive Order No. 01.01.2023.22. (2023). <https://tinyurl.com/execorder01012023>

⁴ Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §5-412 <https://tinyurl.com/5cb36cvy>

⁵ Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, <https://bit.ly/3W0J0eU>



About Dorchester County Public School System

Dorchester County Public Schools (DCPS), located on the Eastern Shore, enrolls 1,306 high school students, and has a 52.5% participation rate in CTE for graduating students. The LEA offers 17 CTE programs covering a wide range of areas of specialization, from Automotive Technology to the Teacher Academy of Maryland. DCPS is in alignment with the Eastern Shore Regional Workforce Plan's and the State's focus on building key sectors in healthcare, construction including skilled trades, and hospitality and food service.⁶ CTE programs in Biomedical Sciences, Medical Services, Engineering, Electrical Trades, Culinary, and Cosmetology are all at maximum enrollment. This demonstrates DCPS's focus on developing a robust workforce targeting key sectors identified in the Eastern Shore Regional Workforce Plan. One unique aspect about DCPS's program design is DCTC's recruitment and marketing strategy, which has resulted in every student in the focus group enrolling through different marketing avenues.

Students enrolled in CTE programs have the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials, and 27.3% of graduating students earned an IRC, based on the CTE Committee's approved list.⁷ DCPS has 52.5% of graduating students participate in CTE, and 34.4% of graduating students complete their CTE program.

DCPS has all CTE offerings at the CTE Center, Dorchester Career and Technology Center (DCTC). All of the district's CTE programs of study are exclusively offered at the DCTC. The Computer Science Introductory and Advanced Placement classes are offered at the home schools, but the Computer Science CTE program is only offered at the CTE Center. DCTC has a total of 18 CTE teachers with a combined 235 years of teaching experience, averaging over 13 years per teacher.

Students enroll in CTE offerings by requesting their desired courses during the registration window at their home school with a school counselor. If seats are available, then the students are easily enrolled, but if there is over-enrollment, then GPA and attendance are considered to fill available seats. DCPS students interested in the Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) go to Talbot County Public Schools and DCPS students interested in the Fire Fighter/EMT program go to Queen Anne's Public Schools to participate in these CTE Programs, while remaining students enrolled in their DCPS high school.

⁶ Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board and the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance. (2024). *Eastern Shore Regional Plan*. https://www.uswib.org/_files/ugd/fdb3f6_8274d54de0784885a4c00424fdafba46.pdf; pg. 4-6.

⁷ GWDB CTE Committee. (December 2024). *Career and Technical Education: Industry-Recognized Credentials*. <https://www.gwdb.maryland.gov/policy/gwdbcte2024commindustrycredentialpolicy.pdf>



Summary of Visit

Prior to the visit, the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Expert Review Team (ERT) members attended a virtual orientation to review the visit agenda, materials, and tools. During this session, Dorchester County Public Schools' (DCPS's) CTE Lead Staff provided an overview of the Local Education Agency's (LEA's) CTE system, highlighting key strengths and challenges. This pre-visit preparation helped the team understand the specific context and priorities of Dorchester County's CTE programs, setting the stage for focused observations and discussions during the visit.

During the visit, the CTE ERT visited one school: Dorchester Career and Technology Center (DCTC), DCPS's sole CTE Center. The CTE ERT did not visit the two comprehensive high schools because they do not have any CTE programs.

The CTE Expert Review Team visit to DCPS consisted of members from various backgrounds, and brought expertise in areas such as student learning, workforce development, and CTE, ensuring a comprehensive review of the LEA's CTE programs (see Appendix A). The CTE ERT separated into two teams and observed classrooms, completed student-guided tours, conducted focus groups and interviews, and learned about the state of CTE in DCPS. The team conducted focus groups with CTE instructors, students, school counselors, and career coaches to gather a range of perspectives on how the CTE programs are being implemented and the impact they have on students' career readiness. The CTE Committee staff created a set of questions for each focus group: leadership, teachers, students, career counselors/coaches, and school counselors (See Appendix D). These conversations revealed valuable information about how CTE supports students' postsecondary pathways and career goals, as well as areas where the LEA could enhance program access and resources.

After the visit, the CTE ERT compiled all their individual notes and shared it with CTE Committee staff. A week after the visit, the CTE ERT gathered together for a debrief, where the team members collaborated, reviewed, and discussed their compiled observations. These conversations revealed valuable information about how CTE in DCPS supports students' postsecondary pathways and career goals, as well as areas where the LEA could enhance program access and resources. Together, these data, observations, focus groups, interviews, and debrief help inform the following SCE analysis, which is a slight deviation from the more conventional SWOT analysis.



OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXPERT REVIEW TEAM VISIT

ABOUT THE SCE ANALYSIS

A SCE Analysis is meant to organize the CTE ERT's observations and notes into internal factors - Strengths and Challenges - and External factors. This method of analysis is based on the SWOT analysis method, which also differentiates between internal and external factors. This SCE analysis will help readers differentiate among internal Strengths, internal Challenges, and External factors, which are conventionally Opportunities and Threats. The CTE ERT did not have the opportunity to observe and coordinate with external stakeholders, but external factors came up in interviews, focus groups, debrief, and orientation that must be communicated. With a SCE Analysis, readers may use this section to target changes and best practices internally.

INDICATORS OF STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Strength: CTE and DCTC Recruitment and Marketing

As of the visit, 52.5% of the 229 graduating students have earned at least one credit in a MSDE-approved CTE program of study. This demonstrates there is great effectiveness enrolling students for CTE offerings and that there is effective marketing to interest students. Students in focus groups mentioned why they enrolled in DCTC and every single one of them had a different reason - one said an older sibling convinced them, another said a CTE teacher spoke to them in middle school, and yet another said a school counselor helped them find their fit at DCTC. Whatever their reason, DCPS has an effective plan to recruit students. In addition to effective recruitment, CTE Lead Staff have developed unique marketing strategies, including social media engagement, school tours of CTE Programs in 8th and 10th grade, and a professional development program that aligns career coaches, school counselors, and Special Education Teachers on CTE offerings. This collaboration has led to informed teachers, school counselors, and career coaches giving accurate advice to students. Career coaches also told the CTE ERT about how DCPS's home schools have registration information sessions to provide information about CTE, AP, and Dual Enrollment. After the registration information sessions, DCTC hosts "CTE Night" at the DCTC so that interested students and community members can see the facility and the projects CTE students complete.

Both of the CTE Lead Staff are relatively new to their roles, yet the impact of their leadership has helped maintain 52.5% of graduating students earning at least one credit in a CTE program despite the leadership turnover. CTE Lead Staff conduct an annual audit, evaluating unpopular programs and replacing them with more popular programs. For instance, CTE Lead Staff replaced an underenrolled program with the Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE) and CTE Lead Staff informed the CTE ERT that this program was overenrolled. For students who find themselves on waitlists, the career coaches, school counselors, and CTE teachers work together to help students find a second program with overlapping skills and goals to enroll in. The CTE Lead Staff's unique marketing and recruitment strategies have led to strong numbers in students enrolling in CTE offerings.

Strength: Career Coaches Collaborate with School Counselors and External Partners

There are a total of 331 8th grade students, but only 3 career coaches, yet every 8th grade student had a 5-year plan. School counselors had both paper and digital copies of these plans so they can track progress, edits, and developments as the students progress. This system also helped career coaches and teachers collaborate on students' 5-year plans. All three career coaches had dedicated office spaces and areas for students to write resumes and apply for jobs or apprenticeship opportunities. Career coaches tried many different ways to connect with students, but they found connecting with school counselors and Special Education teachers an effective way to reach students and meet with them individually. Moreover, the Coordinator for CTE and Career Counseling goes to individual schools and tells students about CTE offerings and the work career coaches do. The CTE Lead Staff also hold consistent professional development for school counselors and special education teachers to keep them up to date on CTE offerings. During the pre-visit orientation, CTE Lead Staff informed the CTE ERT about how pivotal it has been to collaborate with school counselors and special education teachers to ensure students know about CTE offerings.

In addition to collaborating with school counselors and special education teachers, career coaches commended the buy-in and participation from the Dorchester County Career and Technology Center Advisory Council (DCCTCAC), DCPS's Program Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC is a group of 10-12 representatives from business and industry who advise and assist instructors and students by sharing industry knowledge and providing up-to-date information on industry standards and needs.⁸ More specifically, career coaches created their own PAC, which CTE Lead Staff reported has engaged the business community in support of the career coaching programs. Career coaches informed the CTE ERT how engaged the DCCTCAC is in work-based learning initiatives at DCTC. For instance, the Dorchester Career fair at Cambridge-South Dorchester High School had high levels of engagement from employers in the county. Despite the high student-to-career coach ratio, the CTE Lead Staff have helped create a collaborative system where career coaches, school counselors, and special education teachers successfully coordinate to support DCPS's students' college and career readiness.

Strength: Student, Teacher, Administrator, Staff, and External Stakeholder Buy-In for CTE Offerings and Student Success

During the CTE ERT pre-visit orientation, DCPS's CTE Lead Staff informed the CTE ERT about how supportive the LEA is toward DCTC and CTE students. As mentioned above, the two CTE Lead Staff are relatively new, yet over the course of their leadership, they have instilled a culture of belonging and support that every student and employee participates in. Even when the CTE ERT first walked into DCTC, front office staff were welcoming and one CTE ERT member described them as "a bright light to welcome people to the building". This culture of belonging was found among all teachers, career coaches, school counselors, and staff. During focus groups, students described both their fellow students and the DCTC teachers and staff as a family and remarked on how everyone chose to be there so there was a level of commitment that was different from their homeschools.

DCTC operates in a cohort model, where students who enroll at the same time complete the program at the same time. Moreover, DCTC hosts 2nd-year students in the AM block and 1st-

⁸ Disher, L. (2022). "Advisory Council". *Dorchester County Career and Technology Center*. <https://tinyurl.com/2jsyardf>

year students in the PM block, creating a sense of community and identity through shared experiences and learning. These may be important factors in understanding the culture of belonging and welcoming students described during focus group discussions.

In addition to internal buy-in, career coaches told the CTE ERT about how engaged the DCCTCAC has been in conducting class presentations, community introductions, curriculum review and development, job placement, and other important services. The DCCTCAC is made up of mostly private sector volunteers from locally-owned businesses to support CTE work. A combination of internal culture-building that started with the two CTE Lead Staff and the external collaboration between the LEA and DCCTCAC has led to a level of buy-in from students, teachers, administrators, staff, and community members to see the value of supporting CTE in Dorchester County.

Challenge: Opportunity for Collaboration with Teachers in Decision-Making That Impacts Teachers and Students

Despite career coaches telling the CTE ERT about the benefits of collaborating with various stakeholders across DCPS and with external stakeholders, both teachers and administrators told the CTE ERT about how challenging it was when teachers' perspectives were not included in decision-making. Teachers told the CTE ERT how frustrating it was when career coaches would place a student into an apprenticeship or internship without consultation with the teacher. Teachers explained that career coaches would place students into apprenticeships and internships based on a first-come, first-serve model, leaving some high-performing students without an opportunity for an apprenticeship. After the visit, CTE Lead Staff told the CTE Committee that this issue was from before the *Blueprint* was implemented and that the counselor who did this no longer works for DCPS, yet this perspective among teachers remains. Moreover, teachers revealed their required professional development was irrelevant to their work or needs, especially in assisting students with disabilities. For instance, teachers reported to the CTE ERT that they were required to undergo professional development to learn about the work career coaches do, but the professional development was solely focused on the career coaching infrastructure, not their roles and responsibilities.

At the beginning of the 2024-2025 SY, administrators told teachers that they needed to adjust their curriculum so all students take IRC assessments, not just those they thought would pass the test. In early 2025, teachers were provided notice that new CTE programs of study (POS) were coming, but there was confusion among teachers about when those new POSs would impact them. Some teachers told the CTE ERT that they thought the upcoming changes to the CTE Programs of Study and the new IRC list were to be implemented in the 2025-2026 SY, but the new CTE Programs of Study will not go into effect until the 2026-2027 SY and the new IRC list does not go into effect until the 2025-2026 SY. This communication left many teachers both confused and overwhelmed as they thought they would have more time to make those adjustments.⁹ Teachers noted they wanted more input on who their students were and on scheduling. During focus groups, one teacher explained, "students don't even know why they're here." Students have open enrollment to CTE Programs, unless

⁹ Shortly after the visit, MSDE published a more detailed plan to inform stakeholders and collaborators there will be an opportunity for teachers and the public to offer comments on the updated Programs of Study. Moreover, these Programs of Study will not be implemented until the 2026-2027 SY.

there is overenrollment. When there is overenrollment, the two CTE Lead Staff evaluate students based on GPA relevant to the field they want to enter and consider any major absenteeism trends. For instance, if a student wants to enter the Engineering Program and has high grades in math courses, then they would be more likely to be enrolled in the Program than a student who has lower grades in math courses. Instead of prioritizing GPA, teachers want more input on what students they teach, and want their input in other decisions they feel the direct impact of, like Professional Development.

Challenge: All CTE Happens at the DCTC, Leading to Transportation and Scheduling Challenges

Related to the above challenge, neither Cambridge-South Dorchester High School (CSDHS) nor North Dorchester High School (NDHS) offer any CTE programs of study. CTE in DCPS is hosted solely at DCTC, where second-year students attend in the AM block and first-year students attend in the PM block. The CTE ERT observed DCTC does not serve lunch to students, so some students end up eating their lunch on the bus in between schools.

Creating even more of a challenge, scheduling for the DCTC happens at the homeschools, not at DCTC. While CSDHS is close to DCTC, NDHS is at least 20 minutes away from DCTC. Career coaches reported that Dorchester County has a large geographic footprint, so some students start the SY with a 2.5-hour commute as the bus system is figured out, but in March, students still reported a 1.5-hour commute. Because of these scheduling and transportation issues, some students will regularly miss 30 minutes of class time due to transportation challenges. For some, these transportation and scheduling hurdles turn them away from CTE offerings in favor of AP and Dual-Enrollment classes, athletics, and other extracurricular activities. The CTE ERT Program observed how hosting all CTE Programs at the DCTC was a challenge for DCPS because it led to transportation and scheduling challenges.

Challenge: Communication Gaps and Misaligned Expectations Between Home Schools and Dorchester Career and Technology Center

As stated above, DCTC is where most CTE offerings are, but many of the decisions that impact staff, teachers, and students at DCTC are made at the home schools. This decision-making process has led to communication gaps and misaligned expectations for what CTE is and how CTE benefits students. In both teacher and career coach focus groups, the CTE ERT learned about the negative perceptions non-CTE students and teachers have toward CTE students and teachers. Career coaches and teachers talked about how CTE was an afterthought in scheduling. Teacher focus groups pointed to social perspectives of CTE being inferior to college. Meanwhile, career coaches talked about how school counselors do not always have an effective or appropriate grasp of CTE offerings. The career coach focus group revealed some students were not ready for CTE, but school counselors placed them at DCTC because they did not know what else to do with them. They expanded, saying school counselors “prioritize ‘ok with being ok’ students out of the building [and to DCTC].”

Both of the CTE Lead Staff are relatively new to their roles, but they have put in a great deal of effort and planning to overcome these communication gaps and create alignment across DCPS. As previously mentioned, the Coordinator of CTE and Career Counseling makes monthly trips to DCPS's two high schools to meet with school counselors and recruit

students. The CTE Lead Staff has also led professional development with school counselors, career coaches, and Special Education teachers to create alignment between the home schools and DCTC. While CTE Lead Staff have worked to overcome these communication gaps and misaligned expectations for the value of CTE, these challenges persist.

Challenge: Unclear Roles and Low Staff Capacity Have Led to High Workloads

Between the two Lead CTE Administrators, three career coaches, and the 18 CTE teachers, there is far too much work to go around. As previously stated, an important strength at DCPS is the level of buy-in from all stakeholders, but this level of passion is not sustainable for the long-term effectiveness of DCTC. There are two Lead CTE Administrators who have to operate in several different roles at the same time. The Supervisor of CTE is also the Supervisor of Project Lead The Way (PLTW) and Computer Science. The Supervisor of CTE is also the Principal for DCTC. Then there is the Coordinator of CTE and Career Counseling, who not only serves as a school counselor at DCTC, but also oversees the Career Coaching Program, which, as previously mentioned, is at a ratio of 3:1637, meaning each career coach is responsible for around 545 students. In addition to these roles, the Coordinator of CTE and Career Counseling also serves as the Assistant Principal at DCTC. When behavioral issues arise at DCTC, one of the two CTE Lead Staff gets called to prioritize the more immediate concern, leaving other work to pile up.

Passion, especially for student success, is never in short supply at DCTC. This passion leads to teachers going above and beyond for their students, taking on extra responsibilities to ensure student success. The teacher focus group revealed teachers ended up taking on the roles of school counselors, career coaches, and Special Education teachers because of the shortages in these areas. Some teachers pointed to staffing challenges, enrollment and placement practices, and limited funds for why they are facing these challenges. Teachers kept coming back to one common theme: they wanted their input factored into decision-making. Ultimately, the teachers, administrators, and staff at DCTC have taken on a workload that is a challenge for DCPS.



INDICATORS OF EXTERNAL FACTORS AND INFLUENCES

A SCE Analysis is meant to organize the CTE ERT's observations and notes into internal factors - Strengths and Challenges - and External factors. This method of analysis is based on the SWOT analysis method, which also differentiates between internal and external factors. With a SCE Analysis, readers may use this section to advocate for change externally.

External Strength: Connection with the Community and Relevant Industries

The CTE ERT observed how DCPS has a deep connection with the Dorchester County and Eastern Shore communities through employer and industry connections, state agency collaboration, and career coaches' work. Teacher and career coach focus groups revealed how both have developed industry and employer connections. Teachers have long-standing industry connections that they leverage to help guide their curriculum and pedagogy, while career coaches have made strong connections with Program Advisory Councils (PACs) to support DCPS's CTE initiatives. While on the school tour at DCTC, the CTE ERT learned about how community and industry partners worked together to help clean and prepare the existing greenhouse space for use after CASE was reinstated in the 2024-2025 SY. This speaks to teachers' and career coaches' ability to leverage industry and community connections to support work-based learning at DCTC. In addition to the greenhouse, the strong connection with the PACs proves how the career coaches, CTE teachers, and CTE Lead Staff collaborate with external parties to support student success with relevant and informed coursework and curriculum.

Meanwhile, the two CTE Lead Staff have created partnerships with both neighboring LEAs and with state agencies to more effectively achieve the 45% goal. CTE Lead Staff have proven their ability to build relationships with both state agencies and neighboring LEAs by creating a system that effectively and efficiently responds to students' interests and needs. During the pre-visit orientation, DCPS administrators informed the CTE ERT about how they replaced an underenrolled program with CASE and in its first year, CASE was overenrolled. This demonstrates how DCPS administrators have built strong relationships with the community, with the Eastern Shore region, and with state agencies to synthesize local needs with *Blueprint* goals.

External Challenge: Competition Among Eastern Shore LEAs Over Apprenticeships

In both the pre-visit orientation and during the career coach focus group, the CTE ERT learned how the LEAs on the Eastern Shore - Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester - compete over a limited number of available high school level Registered Apprenticeships. According to the Eastern Shore Regional Workforce Plan, Dorchester is one of the counties building key sectors in healthcare, construction including skilled trades, and hospitality and food service.¹⁰ Finding or developing the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeships is a difficult task. Hospitality and food service is explained as seasonal, peaking between May and September. Many of the apprenticeship programs in healthcare have a minimum age requirement, so students

¹⁰ Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board and the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance. (2024). *Eastern Shore Regional Plan*. https://www.uswib.org/_files/ugd/fdb3f6_8274d54de0784885a4c00424fda4ba46.pdf: pg. 4-6.

under the age of 18 do not qualify. This means many of the available high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship programs in key sectors are mostly in construction including skilled trades. The nine counties then must compete with each other over a very small number of available apprenticeships. Further complicating this, focus groups revealed many of the available apprenticeships programs are in Easton in Talbot County and in Delaware. On the Eastern Shore, the demand for the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeships outpace the available supply. The scarcity of apprenticeships in rural communities and along the Eastern Shore LEAs is something the CTE ERT observed as a challenge.

External Challenge: Career Coaches are Asked to Help Work-Based Learning Sponsors

During the pre-visit orientation and during career coach focus groups, the CTE ERT learned that there was confusion about the role career coaches play in supporting students. Early in the 2024-2025 SY, career coaches were given responsibilities beyond what is outlined in the Statute 7-205.1.¹¹ One career coach told the CTE ERT the Work-Based Learning (WBL) sponsors had unrealistic expectations for the role of career coaches. More specifically, WBL sponsors would ask career coaches to do things like supervise students at work. Another career coach added that they were asked to help train students to do the work. As previously mentioned, the DCPS staff are passionate about the work they do and consistently go above and beyond for their students, but it took collaboration among DCPS career coaches and the Coordinator of Career Counseling, clarity from the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, and communication with the WBL sponsors to accurately understand what is expected of career coaches at DCPS.

The Coordinator of CTE and Career Counseling started in August 2024, which gave them no opportunity to prepare for the coming school year, and DCPS does not have a Work-Based Learning Coordinator. Staffing shortages may be one of the factors for why there was confusion surrounding the roles and responsibilities of the career coaches. As of the visit in March 2025, the career coaches have clarified what can be expected of them with the WBL sponsors, but the CTE ERT observed that DCPS's career coaches faced challenges in understanding their roles and responsibilities.

¹¹ MD Statute 7-205.1: <https://tinyurl.com/3ft7jaxc>



POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS

Although the CTE ERT has presented its observations in this report, these observations and potential next steps are preliminary. The purposes of Phase 1 of the CTE ERT are to establish a baseline for progress toward *Blueprint* goals across Maryland and identify key challenges. While the following Potential Next Steps are preliminary, they are areas DCPS may look for improvement in and something the CTE ERT will look at more closely as the CTE Committee transitions into Phase 2 in the 2026-2027 SY. In other words, these potential next steps are not a directive, but opportunities of improvement to explore. These Potential Next Steps are meant to be the beginning of a conversation with DCPS that will continue into Phase 2, and for this reason, these Potential Next Steps do not comprehensively address the challenges the CTE ERT notes in this report. In Phase 2, the CTE ERT will target specific areas to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the state of CTE in DCPS.¹² While Phase 2 is focused on analysis and assistance, it is when the CTE ERT Program can make recommendations to the AIB to withhold funding if there is resistance complying with the *Blueprint*.¹³

Identify More Opportunities to Collaborate with Neighboring LEAs Instead of Competing

The CTE ERT observed how DCPS is in competition with all of the counties in the Eastern Shore for a limited number of available apprenticeship opportunities. Career coaches shared with the CTE ERT that the majority of students who end up in any kind of WBL opportunities end up either in Easton in Talbot County, which is at least a 30-minute drive away from DCTC, or in Delaware. Moreover, the CTE ERT observed how responsive the CTE Lead Staff are toward enrollment trends, replacing unpopular or expensive programs with more popular and budget-friendly programs like CASE.

These challenges may be alleviated by collaborating with neighboring LEAs, like Talbot, Caroline, Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester Counties to establish a collaborative and proactive system for WBL instead of a competitive one. For instance, neighboring LEAs send their Navy Junior Reserve Office Training students to Talbot's CTE Program and neighboring LEAs send Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute students to Queen Anne's CTE Program. Collaboration with neighboring LEAs may lead to stronger coordination on what CTE Programs to replace and what CTE Programs to support. In addition to having more CTE offerings for students, more collaboration among DCPS and neighboring LEAs can lead to a more cooperative approach to the limited number of registered apprenticeship opportunities for high school students as opposed to competing over a small number of opportunities.

Experiment with More Engaging Career Fairs

In addition to offering more CTE Programs at homeschools, it may be worth experimenting with the structure and setup of Career Fairs in DCPS. Currently, DCPS hosts Career Fairs at the two home schools, with Cambridge-South Dorchester High School (CSDHS) hosting their

¹² GWDB CTE Committee. (July 1, 2024). CTE Committee Expert Review Team Deployment Plan School Year 2024-2025. https://gwdb.maryland.gov/ctecomm/ctecomm-ctedeploymentplan_draftsy24-25_62624.pdf

¹³ AIB's Updated Comprehensive Implementation Plan, August 2023, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PsYQGhld5Qwk7PgK2cEubr68SSKrG5dH/view?usp=sharing>.

Career Fair in April, lasting 90 minutes, and North Dorchester High School hosting their Career Fair in May. This Career Fair was advertised on social media and on the DCPS calendar, and included over 60 businesses, organizations, and colleges to recruit high school students. The CSDHS Career Fair also offered a 30-minute window for students to receive “call-back interviews” and meet one-on-one with employers, organizations, and colleges.

During the school tour at DCTC, the CTE ERT observed many of the completed projects students have completed in their CTE classes and were impressed. A Career Fair that also showcases CTE students’ work would not only benefit the students by exemplifying their skills to employers, but it would also work as a recruiting tool for students at homeschools to witness the kind of work CTE students complete. While the “CTE Night” does this to a certain degree, it targets parents/guardians and students as its primary audience because they are learning about what happens at DCTC. A more engaging Career Fair that presents students’ projects would encourage potential apprenticeship sponsors to create more apprenticeship opportunities because they see students have the skills they are looking for. In other words, a Career Fair that specifically targets community members and potential industry partners as its primary audience may be an effective strategy to reach toward *Blueprint* goals. Also, a Career Fair that highlights students’ accomplishments can lead to external partners, especially the Program Advisory Councils and the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, witnessing the outcome of their work, creating more opportunities and interest for future engagements.

Brainstorm Strategies to Improve Communication Between Home Schools and DCTC

For the CTE ERT, communication gaps seemed central to the challenges DCPS is facing in order to accomplish the 45% goal. In order to overcome these communication gaps, the CTE ERT recommends DCPS brainstorm strategies to improve and streamline communication, especially between home schools and DCTC. At Worcester County Public Schools, school counselors developed CTE Program of Study binders to overcome the same problems they had. These CTE Program of Study binders would house all of the relevant information about CTE Programs, WBL opportunities, and other relevant information to make sure there was alignment among administrators, teachers, career coaches, and school counselors to give students the most accurate and effective advice to be college and career ready. A larger LEA created a shared Google Document with all of the relevant information on CTE offerings, especially for the kinds of skills students are expected to have when first enrolling into a CTE Program.

CTE Lead Staff and career coaches have made great strides in overcoming communication gaps.¹⁴ Beginning in the 2024-2025 SY, the Coordinator of CTE and Career Counseling makes monthly visits to DCPS’s high schools to make sure the information relayed to students is accurate and in alignment with DCTC. The CTE Lead Staff also host school tours at DCTC for school counselors at the two homeschools so these school counselors have the most accurate information to relay to students. The CTE ERT found it impressive that every 8th grader had a five-year plan and that school counselors collaborate to track the progress of

¹⁴ Since the CTE ERT visit to DCPS, CTE Lead Staff shared that they reduced the career coaching team to 2 career coaches to address the misunderstandings and gaps in knowledge of CTE and DCTC with the career coaching team.

these plans and revisit them annually. DCPS is already working to alleviate these communication gaps, but should continue to explore opportunities to further enhance and optimize communication, especially the communication that happens between DCTC and DCPS's two high schools: Cambridge-South Dorchester High School and North Dorchester High School.

Explore Opportunities to Incorporate Teacher Perspectives into Decision-Making

One of the challenges DCPS is facing has to do with teachers having many responsibilities while simultaneously feeling like they have little input into decision-making. In order to alleviate teachers' high workloads and potential burnout, the CTE ERT recommends finding opportunities to incorporate teacher perspectives into decision-making. The DCPS Lead CTE Staff have done an excellent job maintaining CTE enrollment despite staff and administrator turnover, but finding a more systemic approach to incorporating teachers' perspective may have the potential to address some of the other challenges DCPS is facing. Teachers have the most interaction with students and they may provide some useful insights for how to improve retention among CTE students and other strategies to help DCPS accomplish the 45% goal. Perhaps DCPS can explore some sort of end-of-term survey, focus group, and/or debrief for CTE teachers to provide their input and perspective consistently so they can share what is working well and what needs improvement. The CTE ERT acknowledges that this would call for more work for DCPS's CTE Lead Staff, who, as previously stated, already face high workloads, but the CTE ERT is confident that engaging teachers' to incorporate their perspectives into decision-making will yield positive outcomes.

Explore Technical Assistance with MSDE, the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor), and the CTE Committee in meeting the *Blueprint's* 45% Goal

In order to achieve the *Blueprint's* 45% goal, establishing and expanding RAs should be one of DCPS' priorities. DCPS should explore closer collaboration with MD Labor's Apprenticeship Navigators on what opportunities are available for high school students in the region. DCPS should work with MD Labor's Apprenticeship Navigators to ensure employers understand scheduling options for students, as well as accessing available incentives such as grants and tax credits. DCPS may also seek technical assistance from MSDE and similar LEAs in strategies to increase IRC attainment, although their IRC attainment rate is higher than the statewide average. One of DCPS's greatest strengths is how much the entire set of stakeholders have bought into CTE, so DCPS should examine how to leverage this buy-in to support RA expansion and IRC attainment. The CTE Committee will also be developing more targeted technical assistance around this topic in Phase 2, and facilitating a community of practice utilizing findings from CTE ERT visits. The CTE Committee recognizes that policies defining the 45% goal were not issued until December 2024, and this CTE ERT visit took place in March 2025, so all of those implementing this work and the partnerships required are still in the early stages of development. Exploring technical assistance with MSDE, MD Labor, and the CTE Committee will prove to be a useful addition to meeting the 45% goal.



APPENDIX GUIDE

- A. Visit Participants
- B. LEA Brief
- C. Visit Agenda
- D. Interview & Focus Group Questions



Appendix A | Visit Participants

Linsley McCormick - CTE Director, Caroline County Public Schools
Courtney Handte - Principal, Caroline County Public Schools
John Strickland - Expert Review Team Manager, CTE Committee
Nick Werner - CTE Teacher, Talbot County Public Schools
Lauri Bell - Director of Dual Enrollment and Early College, Chesapeake College
Jon Wickert - Director, CTE and STEM Initiatives; Delaware Department of Education
Kristen Tilghman - Blueprint Coordinator, Talbot County Public Schools
Lateefah Durant - Vice President of Innovation, CityWorks DC
Cara Breeding - Career Counselor, Talbot County Public Schools
Shirley Lake - Blueprint Coordinator and Career Navigator, Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board
Ryan Sackett - Secondary School Support Coordinator, Maryland State Department of Education



Appendix B | LEA Brief

CTE LEA LEAD STAFF		
Name	Role(s)	Contact Info
Ashley Robinson	Supervisor of CTE, PLTW & Computer Science/Principal of Dorchester Career and Technical Center	robinsona@dcpsmd.org 410-901-6950 ext 3410
Angela Bozman	Coordinator of CTE & Career Counseling **Serves in the capacity of an AP, School Counselor and oversees Career Coaching Program	bozmana@dcpsmd.org 410-901-6950 ext 3402

COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS	
Cambridge-South Dorchester HS	North Dorchester HS

LEA CTE CENTER(S)
Dorchester Career & Technology Center

CTE ERT VISIT	
Date	School(s)
Wednesday, March 26, 2025	Dorchester Career & Technology Center

LEA CTE ENROLLMENT, PARTICIPATION and COMPLETION RATES

	Dorchester	DCTC	CSDHS	NDHS
Enrollment				
Total Enrollment (# of all HS students)	1306	410	788	518
Total Enrollment (# of all graduating students)	229	100	137	92
CTE¹⁵				
CTE Participation Rate (% of all graduating students)	52.5%	52.5%		
CTE Concentration Rate (% of all graduating students)	34.8%	34.8%		
CTE Completers Rate (% of all graduating students)	34.4%	34.4%		
IRC Completion Rate (% of all graduating students) ¹⁶	27.3%	27.3%		
Apprenticeship and Other Work-Based Learning¹⁷				
Work-Based Learning Participants ¹⁸ (# of all graduating students)	152	61		
Dual Enrollment Participants ¹⁹ (# of all graduating students)	67	28		
Dual Enrollment Completers ²⁰ (# of all graduating students)	60	25		
Apprenticeship Participants (# of all HS students)	RA: YA: 4	RA: YA: 4		
Apprenticeship Participants (# of all graduating students)	RA: YA: 4	RA: YA: 4		
Apprenticeship Completers (# of graduating students)	RA: YA: 3	RA: YA: 3		
Progress Towards 45% Goal²¹				

LEA CTE OFFERINGS

CTE Program Enrollment

Program Name	Total Enrollment	Overenrolled or Underenrolled?	Number of Students on Waitlist
Welding	26	Cluster	*
HVAC	16	Cluster	*
Masonry	4	Cluster	*
Electricity	21	Cluster	*
Carpentry	2	Cluster	*
Collision Repair	13	Cluster	*
Auto Technology	13	Cluster	*
Medium/Heavy Truck	17	Cluster	*
Culinary	22	Over	12
Cosmetology	43	Over	20
TAM	13	Under	0
Homeland/Criminal Justice	22	Under	0
Medical Services	37	Over	21
PLTW Biomedical Sciences	89	Over	42
PLTW Engineering	41	Over	7
Arch, Eng. Constr. Management	8	Under	0
CASE	16	Under	0
Apprenticeship	4	Under	0

Progress Towards the 45% Goal:

- What are you projecting, for next school year, in growth towards the 45% goal for your district? *This year, DCTC is projecting that our data will look very similar to the 2023 data at approximately 30%. All but 4 of our programs had attached IRCs entering the 24-25 school year. This year, we have identified IRCs for 2/4 of the remaining programs and will assess for the first time in Spring 2025. Additionally, IRC testing is now expected of all DCTC students.*
 - Next 3 years? *Entering the 25-26 school year, two of DCTC's largest enrolled programs will have associated IRCs which will increase the number of students who sit for an assessment. Due to the significant increase in test takers, we anticipate an increase in the number of students who earn IRCs. However, district high school enrollment has decreased by 8%. We are hopeful that we will have a 5% increase. Additionally, we are hoping to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities and with the switch back to semester schedules at the home high schools, we are in a good position to do so.*
 - Next 5 years? *District high school enrollment will stay rather stable during this time period. We should have hit our stride with offering IRCs in all programs, and should see continued growth as we ensure classroom instruction is aligned to the IRC. Our goal would be to increase by 5% thus bringing DCTC to 40%.*
 - By SY 2030-2031? *DTC hopes to be at 45% as a result of establishing strong instructional programs which are aligned to IRCs and building partnerships for apprenticeship opportunities with our business community..*
- What are your plans for expanding Registered Apprenticeships in your LEA? *We have assigned a career coach to work specifically with students who are interested in apprenticeship opportunities to help them prepare a professional resume and to practice interview skills. Additionally, we have established a PAC for our career coaching program and have included several key individuals who can help us spread the word about the apprenticeship program so that we can seek out additional opportunities for our students. It is important to note however that there is a lack of businesses in our rural community that have the capacity to be an apprenticeship site and that many of the businesses that are signed on are shared between several surrounding LEAs..*

Program Plans for Future

- Are there any new programs you plan on adding to your current programming within the next 2 school years? *Office Systems Management*
 - Why are you adding/not adding the program(s)? *Pathway completion option for students at the home high schools without significant impact to FTE allocations.*

- Are there any current programs you plan on expanding upon within the next 2 school years? *Medical Services*
 - Why are you expanding upon the program(s)? *Over-enrollment and waiting list size*
- Are there any programs you are taking away within the next 2 school years? *None at this time.*
 - Why are you taking away the program(s)? *If programs are removed, it will be due to staffing cuts outside of our control or low program enrollment.*

Enrollment Practices

- How do students enroll in programs? *Students enroll by requesting courses during the registration window at their home high school with a school counselor. If seats are available, students are enrolled. If there is over-enrollment, then GPA and attendance are considered to fill available seats.*
- Are all CTE programs offered to all students? *All high school DCPS students have the opportunity to attend.*
- Can a student participate in a CTE program at another school? *Students may take NJROTC at TCPS or Fire Fighter/EMT in QACPS*

Program Design

- What are some best practices from CTE in your LEA that you think are worth sharing with other CTE programs across the state? *I would highlight our recruitment process. All 8th and 10th grade students in the district come to our building just before registration opens for the following school year. They are able to visit all 17 of our programs and hear elevator pitches from current students and have the opportunity to ask questions.*
- Additionally, we have developed a PD opportunity for School Counselors in both middle and high schools as well as SPED Teachers/IEP Case Managers to gain a better understanding of CTE education and our programs. These educators visit 8-10 classrooms for approximately 20 minutes each. This allows them to be more informed when helping students select CTE programs.
- Finally, our Career Coaching Program has partnered with the SPED Department in improving Transition planning for our secondary students. Career Coaches participated in PD alongside SPED teachers to help improve opportunities for this group of students.
- Another area worth highlighting is our social media presence. We work very hard to ensure that students are highlighted for their achievements. One of the most popular posts is our Students of the Month post. Students are selected by their teachers as demonstrating one of the SkillsUSA Essential Elements that were presented that month. We are a PBIS district, but found it very difficult to implement PBIS as it is in a comprehensive school. To overcome this obstacle, we have incorporated SkillsUSA Essential Elements into our PBIS program and focus on 2 skills each month. These skills are presented on school-wide announcements, in the classroom and in school-wide lessons.

LEA Support for Schools

- How is CTE financial support structured within the LEA? *Local funding is provided based on Maintenance of Effort.*
- How is CTE staffing structured within the LEA? *Each program has 1 teacher who teaches all courses in the program in a cohort model. There are 2 teachers for Cosmetology and PLTW Biomed. DCPS has a 5 period A/B year-long scheduling model this school year and will be transitioning to a semester block schedule during the 25-26 school year.*

Career Exploration

- What career exploration is available to students in your LEA? *Students are provided the opportunity for job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, site visits, guest speakers, career interest inventories, classroom lessons, individual career coaching sessions, career fairs, exposure to CTE programs through student presentations and tours.*
- How do the students access their career coach(es)? *Students can self refer, teachers can make referrals, special populations get scheduled 1-on-1 sessions, classroom lessons, and field trip opportunities.*
- How does/do the career coach(es) serve students in your LEA? *DCPS has 3 middle schools and 3 high schools. Each career coach is assigned 1 middle and 1 high school to serve. The coaches work collaboratively on district wide events/trips and meet weekly.*

INFORMATION FOR VISITING SCHOOLS

Dorchester County Career & Technology Center

School Leadership: Ashley Robinson, Principal & Supervisor of CTE; Angela Bozman, Coordinator of CTE & Career Counseling

School Contact: 410-901-6950

School Website: <https://www.dcps.k12.md.us/o/dctc>



Overview of CTE Programs

CTE Program of Study available at: [Catalog of Approved High School Courses](#)

LEA STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Maryland ²²	Dorchester County
District Student Demographics (2023)	276495	4535
% Asian	7%	<1%
% American Indian / Alaska Native	<1%	<1%
% African American	33%	39.5%
% Hispanic	21%	12.2%
% Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%
% Two or More Races	4%	7.8%
% White	34%	39.1%
% Students with Disabilities	11%	9%
# of Multilingual Learners	9%	6.7%
% Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS)	47%	
Child Poverty Rate % (2022)	12%	
Unemployment Rate % (2024)	3%	

²² This is the most recent information according to the The Maryland Report Card
<https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Demographics/Enrollment/3/17/6/09/XXXX/2024>



COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Nearby Universities & Community Colleges

Chesapeake College (2 year)
Salisbury University (4 year)

Economic [Profile](#) & Educational Attainment

Leading Business Groups

Name	Industry	Size Category
Amick Farms LLC	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	100-249
Auxillary-The Eastern Shore	Health Care and Social Assistance	250-499
Cambridge Engineered Solutions	Manufacturing	500-749
Cambridge Mack Senior Ctr	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
Chesapeake Woods Ctr	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
Dorchester County Board of Edu	Educational Services	100-249
EGIDE USA	Manufacturing	100-249
Horn Point Laboratory	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	500-749
Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay	Accommodation and Food Services	100-249
Interstate Corrpac Inc	Manufacturing	100-249
Maces Lane Middle School	Educational Services	100-249
Mallard Bay Nurse-Rehab Ctr Hm	Health Care and Social Assistance	250-499
Maryland Wire Belts	Manufacturing	100-249
Preston Ford	Retail Trade	100-249
Preston Hyundai	Retail Trade	100-249
Sandy Hill Elementary School	Educational Services	100-249
Suicide Bridge Restaurant	Accommodation and Food Services	250-499
University-Md Shr Med Ctr	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
Walmart Supercenter	Retail Trade	1000+

*[data in this table](#) comes from the Maryland Department of Labor, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning

Appendix C | Visit Agenda

Visit Date: Mar 26, 2025 Time: 7:45am-3:00pm	Location: Dorchester Career & Technology Center 2465 Cambridge Beltway Cambridge, MD	Arrival Time: 7:45am-8:00am
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Dorchester Career & Technology Center

Team 1: John Strickland, Courtney Handte, Kristen Tilghman, Cara Bredding, Shirley Lake, Ryan Sackett		Team 2: Lindsey McCormick, Nick Werner, Lauri Bell, Lateefah Durant, Jon Wickert	
Time	Activity	Time	Activity
7:45am-8:15am	Meet and Greet Location: MPR A	7:45am-8:15am	Meet and Greet Location: MPR A
8:15am-10:15am	School Tour & Discussion with CTE Lead and Admin	8:15am-9:15am	School Counselor Focus Group Location: MPR B
		9:15am-10:15am	Student Focus Group Location: MPR B
10:15am-10:30am	Break	10:15am-10:30am	Break
10:30am-11:30am	Teacher Focus Group Location: MPR A	10:30am-11:30am	Teacher Focus Group Location: MPR B
11:30am-12:15pm	Lunch Location: MPR A	11:30am-12:15pm	Lunch Location: MPR A
12:15pm-1:15pm	Career Coach Focus Group Location: MPR A	12:15pm-2:15pm	School Tour & Discussion with CTE Lead and Admin
1:15pm-2:15pm	Student Focus Group Location: MPR A		

2:15pm-3:00pm	End of Day Debrief & Gathering Location: MPR A	2:15pm-3:00pm	End of Day Debrief & Gathering Location: MPR A
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Appendix D | Interview & Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Reminders

To be used by team facilitator for focus group participants before starting

- We're here on behalf of the CTE Committee, committed to improving CTE programs in line with Maryland's goals outlined in the *Blueprint*.
- Our team represents a variety of different perspectives. Our members here today are teachers, administrators, school leaders, researchers, employers, local workforce board members, and CTE Committee staff and board members.
- Our purpose in this visit is to try to understand what is in place now in your LEA, including plans for expanding or strengthening existing programs and current challenges. We also want to identify any strong practices in place that we might be able to highlight statewide. These visits will also inform the CTE Committee's development of the statewide CTE framework.
- We are not here to "assess" or grade CTE programming or CTE teachers in schools or LEAs.
- After the visit, CTE Committee staff will draft a LEA report summarizing what we saw and heard, including our understanding of the LEA's CTE strategy, current strengths and challenges, and suggestions to help the LEA reach its goals.
- We look forward to hearing about your experiences and your thoughts on what's working and where we can support CTE here in your LEA.
- We would like to record this session (except student groups) to capture your thoughts accurately—does that work for you all? To be clear, this recording is only for note-taking purposes; we ensure confidentiality meaning no names will be cited in our reports.
- Your contributions today will help us improve CTE programs both here and statewide. Any questions before we start?

Questions for School Leadership

Priority Questions:

1. How long have you been in your role? What is your background in CTE?
2. Can you give us an overview of the structure of CTE programs in your school / LEA? *If not addressed, ask about: Dual enrollment, WBL, Range of programs, Application process, Transportation*
3. What are the school's current priorities for CTE in your school/LEA? *If not addressed, ask about: Eliminate/add programs, Apprenticeship, Increasing enrollment, Working with industry*
4. In your opinion, how well does the programming at your school align with key (*high-growth, high-wage*) industries in your community and statewide?
5. Is there capacity for all interested students to participate in CTE programs? Are there any barriers to enrollment?
6. For those students who are not able to enroll and stay on a waitlist, what's the process for those students? What happens if they don't get off the waitlist?
7. How does the LEA/district update CTE programs? What are some current plans you have for adding new programs, expanding existing programs or eliminate current programs?
8. From your perspective, what are the strengths of your LEA/school's CTE program, and what have you made the most progress on recently?
9. What do you see as the key challenges facing your LEA/school now?
10. Where would you like the LEA to be in five years in regards to CTE?

Additional Questions:

- Are any CTE teachers earning National Board Certification? If so, have they been able to move into differentiated roles?
- How do you collaborate with local business and industry and community colleges?
- Do you have sufficient teachers for current programs? If not, what are the issues in recruiting them?

- What's your process for reviewing the IRCs currently offered to students as part of their CTE program?
- What measures are in place to assess the long-term impact of CTE programs on students' career trajectories and contributions to the local economy?
- Do certain programs have higher completion rates than others?
- Are there clear pathways from current CTE programs to community college certificate and degree programs?
- What strategies are employed to raise awareness and improve perceptions of CTE programs among students, parents, and the broader community?

Questions for CTE Teachers

Instructions for focus group lead: Please start by asking everyone to introduce themselves with the first question. Since there are a lot of questions to get through, ask for a few people, not everyone, to answer each of the following questions, asking for different perspectives as needed.

Priority Questions:

1. What program do you teach in? How long have you been in your role? What is your background in this area?
2. Can you give us an overview of your CTE program? *If not addressed, ask about: Dual enrollment, WBL, IRCs, completion rates, post-grad options*
3. Do you have contact with employers in your industry? If so, what partnerships have been most beneficial for students?
4. Where do students from your program go after graduating (i.e., further training, work, college, etc.)?
5. What support do you and/or the school provide to help CTE students develop post-graduation plans? *Are your students getting time with a Career Coach as part of that support?*
6. If you could redesign your subject's program of study, what would you change?
7. What professional learning opportunities are available for you?
8. From your perspective, what are the strengths of your school's CTE programs?
9. What do you need as a CTE teacher that you feel you may not be getting?
10. What do you see as the key CTE challenges facing your school now?

Additional Questions:

- How do you collaborate with your colleagues (CTE and academic teachers)?
- Do any of your programs have school-based businesses that serve the school community and/or local clients?
- Do you think the certification requirements for CTE teachers are well-aligned to what was needed to teach in the area you teach in?
- Do most students who enroll in your program intend on completing the program?
- Can you share a success story of a former student who has benefited from your program?
- How do you measure the effectiveness of your CTE program, and what data or feedback informs changes or improvements?

Questions for CTE Students

Priority Questions:

1. What year are you, what program are you enrolled in, and why did you choose the program you're in?
2. How did you learn about the program you are enrolled in now? What was the process of getting in to the program?
3. How has your experience in the classroom been for your CTE classes? Is it different from your other classes?
4. Have you had any work experience as part of your program?
5. If you have a different home school, how do you get to your CTE program and / or to your job (if applicable)?
6. Will you graduate with any certifications/credentials or college credits?
7. What is your plan post-graduation, and how did you develop it?
8. How much do you know about careers in your industry (salary, training paths)?
9. What would you say is the best thing about your program?
10. If you could change anything in your program, what would it be?

Additional Questions:

- Are there any CTE programs you think the school/LEA should offer that it does not now?
- Have you participated in any competitions or extracurricular activities related to your CTE program? If so, what was your experience like?
- How well do you feel your CTE program is preparing you for the workforce or further education in your chosen field?
- How do your family and friends perceive your enrollment in a CTE program, and has their perception changed since you started?
- How does your school promote CTE programs to students, and what improvements would you suggest to increase awareness and interest?
- Looking back on when you first enrolled in your CTE program, what advice would you give to students who are currently considering CTE as an option?

Questions for School Counselors/Career Coaches & Staff

Instructions for focus group lead: Please start by asking everyone to introduce themselves with the first question. Since there are a lot of questions to get through, ask for a few people, not everyone, to answer each of the following questions, asking for different perspectives as needed.

Priority Questions:

1. How long have you been in your role? What is your background in this role?
2. How is school counseling and career counseling organized at your school? Do the counselors work together?
3. Is there a work-based learning coordinator and if so what is their scope of work and how do they interact with counselors?
4. How does the school counseling staff and career counseling staff stay up-to-date with CTE programming and workforce trends in the LEA and the state?
5. How are students introduced to CTE programs? Do students have opportunities for career exploration/education?
6. How are CTE students supported in making post-graduation plans?

7. How are parents and families introduced to programs? Are there other efforts to publicize CTE in the community?
8. What do you see as the strengths of CTE in this school?
9. What do you see as the key challenges facing your LEA/school's CTE programs?

Additional Questions:

- Do you track post-graduation outcomes, such as enrolling in further education / training or entering the workforce?
- In what ways does the school involve parents and the community in the CTE program?
- How are students who change their mind about a career path supported?
- How do you think the CTE guidance could be improved? Is feedback on guidance and support collected from students?
- Are there issues with students being able to access CTE programs? If so, what are the reasons and what are current strategies to address access issues from a counseling perspective?



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