



Maryland

GWDB CTE COMMITTEE



Career & Technical Education Expert Review Team

Post-Visit Report
SOMERSET COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Governor's Workforce Development Board
Career and Technical Education Committee

January 2026



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Charnetia Young-Callaham
Lead Director, Workforce Initiatives
CVS Health

CONTRIBUTORS

Shamara Bownes
Senior Director, CTE Committee
Governor's Workforce Development Board

John Strickland
Expert Review Team Mgr (through June 30, 2025), CTE Committee
Governor's Workforce Development Board

Dr. Edrees Nawabi
Research Data Analyst, CTE Committee
Governor's Workforce Development Board

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* calls on the CTE Committee to establish, administer, and supervise Expert Review Teams (ERT) to visit schools offering CTE pathways. CTE ERTs are a key tool through which the state observes and tracks 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 Somerset County Public Schools (SCPS), located in the Eastern Shore, on January 29, 2025. This was the sixth CTE ERT visit conducted by the CTE Committee during the 2024-2025 School Year (SY). SCPS only offers CTE programs at the Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS), located in Westover, Maryland. There are no CTE programs offered at either Crisfield Academy and High School or Washington Academy and High School, which are SCPS's two comprehensive high schools.

Two CTE Committee members, one CTE Committee staff member, one CTE teacher from a neighboring LEA, two employer representatives, one Lower Shore Workforce Alliance member (local workforce development board), two CTE Directors from a neighboring LEA, one school principal from a neighboring LEA, one career counselor, two CTE administrators from neighboring LEAs, and one community college representative participated in the CTE ERT visit for Somerset. This report summarizes observations and initial recommendations that the CTE ERT developed by reviewing the LEA's self-reported data with district leaders and by conducting interviews, focus groups, school tours, and classroom visits during the CTE ERT visit.

SCPS'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 49%, according to the IRC guidelines for the 2024-2025 SY.¹ SCPS's progress toward the 45% goal solely comes from IRC attainment, with no students participating in a Registered Apprenticeship, but SCPS hired a new Apprenticeship Navigator for the 2024-2025 SY and nine students were on the path to complete their Youth Apprenticeship. SCPS had 72% of graduating students earn Concentrator status, meaning they completed at least two CTE courses in a Program of Study, and 70% of graduating students earned Completer status, meaning they completed their CTE Program of Study, demonstrating strong retention rates of CTE students.

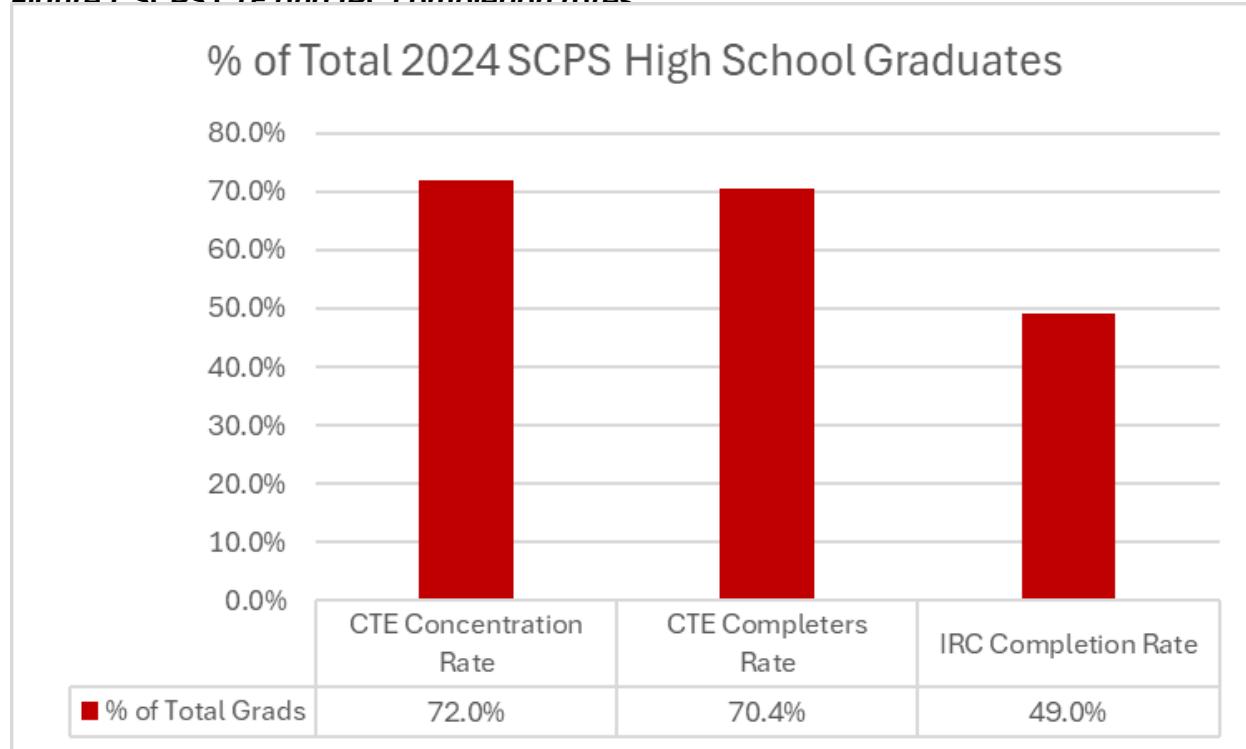
¹ Somerset County Public Schools measured IRC attainment using the MSDE IRC guidelines, not the updated [CTE IRC Policy](#), published in December 2024 effective starting the 2025-2026 SY.

Below is a summary of the observations and findings from this visit:

SCPS Internal Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCPS Has Made Exemplary Progress in Reaching the 45% Goal While Maintaining 70.4% CTE Completers Rate for Graduating Students • Teachers, Staff, and Administrators are Passionate About Supporting Students • Semester-Long CTE Exploration Course in 9th Grade • Driver's Education Classes Offered to SCTHS Students at No Cost • Apprenticeship Coordinator is Excelling at Role • Teachers Provide Adaptive Instruction to Students
SCPS Internal Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Coaching Structure and Focus Was Unclear • School Counselors at Home Schools Prioritize AP and Dual Enrollment for High-Performing Students • Scheduling and Lack of Flexible Learning Models for Students • Communication Pathways Between Home Schools and SCTHS • Sharing CTE Program Information to Students, Parents, and Community
SCPS External Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Strength</u>: Worksite Experiences with Industry Professionals • <u>Strength</u>: CTE Administrators and Teachers Want More External Collaborations and Professional Development • <u>Challenge</u>: Age Restrictions for Apprenticeship Opportunities and SCTHS's Two-Year Program Structure Leaving Gap Year in 12th Grade • <u>Challenge</u>: Employers Misunderstanding Students' Skill and Maturity Level • <u>Challenge</u>: Lack of Available Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities
SCPS Potential Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsider Sunsetting IT Computer Networking and Restrategize Marketing • Brainstorm How to Improve Communication Pathways Between Somerset County Technical High School and the Two Home Schools • Experiment With Offering Core Classes at SCTHS • Explore Flexible Learning Models for Students with SCTHS Teacher Input • Improve CTE Messaging with Both Internal and External Stakeholders • Explore Technical Assistance with MSDE and the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) in expanding RA to meet the <i>Blueprint</i>'s 45% Goal

The CTE Committee staff, along with the CTE ERT visit members, 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 SCPS, 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: SCPS 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). The GWDB serves as the Governor's chief strategic and policy-making body for workforce development in the State of Maryland.² 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.³ 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 registered apprenticeship 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 every December within the CTE Committee's annual report.⁴

The CTE ERT Program has three phases that transition from Phase 1: Discovery, to Phase 2: Analyze and Assist, and to 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 offered 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 SCPS 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 Executive Order No. 01.01.2023.22. (2023). <https://tinyurl.com/execorder01012023>

³ Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §5-412 <https://tinyurl.com/5cb36cvy>

⁴ Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, <https://bit.ly/3W0QjoeU>



About Somerset County Public School System

Somerset County Public Schools (SCPS), located in the Eastern Shore, enrolls 711 high school students, and has a 49% IRC Completion rate in CTE for graduating high school students. The LEA offers 15 CTE programs covering a range of areas of specialization, from Academy of Health (CNA) to Welding. SCPS is in alignment with the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance Plan's focus on building key sectors like healthcare, skilled trades (construction, plumbing, welding, HVAC), and manufacturing. The CTE programs with the highest enrollment are Biomed, Pre-Engineering, Academy of Health, and Criminal Justice, while Interactive Media Production, IT Computer Networking, and Teacher Academy of Maryland are all underenrolled. SCPS is considering sunsetting the IT Computer Networking program because of low enrollment. While SCPS is focused on developing a robust workforce targeting healthcare as a key sector, the CTE ERT observed low enrollment in IT Computer Networking and the skilled trades, sectors the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance targeted as key sectors in their Four-Year Local Plan 2024-2028.⁵ One unique aspect about SCPS's program design is the CTE Exploration course at Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS), which is a semester-long course where 9th grade students explore each CTE program for five-to-seven days. Students receive a comprehensive overview of all available options so that students can make informed decisions about which career paths they are most interested in and which align best with their skills and interests.

Students enrolled in CTE programs have the opportunity to earn IRCs and 49% of graduating students earn an IRC; however, this rate comes from the previously approved MSDE IRC list as the updated list approved by the CTE Committee does not go into effect until the 2025-2026 SY. The CTE ERT learned that SCPS did not have any students participate in Registered Apprenticeships, so SCPS's progress toward the 45% goal solely comes from IRC attainment. The CTE IRC Policy published in December 2024 may impact SCPS' attainment rate for 2025 and beyond;⁶ however, this is the highest IRC attainment rate that the CTE ERT has observed to date. Additionally, SCPS has 70.4% of graduating students complete a CTE program.

SCPS exclusively provides CTE programming at the CTE Center, Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS) and does not offer any CTE programs or courses at the two comprehensive high schools, Crisfield Academy and High School and Washington Academy and High School. As such, the CTE ERT only visited SCTHS, which is located in Westover, Maryland. Student enrollment in CTE begins with the CTE Exploration course 9th graders take, mentioned above. Whether they took the CTE Exploration course or not, interested students are asked to submit their top two CTE programs, then the administration selects students for each program, prioritizing 11th graders since each CTE program spans two years. In addition to standard selection criteria, special attention is given to identifying

⁵ Lower Shore Workforce Alliance Four-Year Local Plan 2024-2028: <https://tinyurl.com/bdfp4j58>

⁶ GWDB CTE Committee. (December 2024). *Career and Technical Education: Industry-Recognized Credentials*. <https://www.gwdb.maryland.gov/policy/gwdbcte2024commindustrycredentialpolicy.pdf>



nontraditional students for each program, supporting diversity and inclusion. All CTE programs are located at SCTHS and are offered to all students.

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, Somerset County Public Schools' (SCPS's) CTE Lead Staff provided an overview of the Local Education Agency's (LEA's) CTE system, highlighting key strengths and challenges. The Lead CTE administrator presented SCPS's district-wide focus areas, SCTHS's focus areas, the 2024-2025 SY enrollment data and trends, an overview for the 2024-2025 SY demographics and CTE programs, and SCPS's plan for the future. This pre-visit orientation helped the CTE ERT understand the specific context and priorities of Somerset County's CTE programs, setting the stage for focused observations and discussions during the visit.

During the visit, the CTE ERT visited Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS), SCPS's CTE Center, which includes 15 CTE programs. The CTE ERT conducted school tours to observe programs in action and held focus group conversations with students, teachers, administrators, and school and career counselors. At SCTHS, the team engaged in discussions with stakeholders to gain insights into the strengths and challenges of the CTE programs. 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.

The CTE Expert Review Team visit to SCPS 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). Throughout the day, the team engaged in observations, interviews, and focus groups with stakeholders to gain insights into the strengths and challenges of the CTE programs. 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 questions aimed to uncover the experience these stakeholders have in CTE by asking questions about professional development opportunities, their opinions on their experience in CTE classes, their perspective on hurdles, etc. (see Appendix D).

After the visit, the CTE ERT compiled 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 SCPS 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 and Potential Next Steps.

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 documented. With a SCE Analysis, readers may use this section to target changes and best practices internally.

INDICATORS OF STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Strength: SCPS Has Made Exemplary Progress in Reaching the *Blueprint's* 45% Goal While Maintaining 70.4% CTE Completers Rate for Graduating Students

SCPS reported 83 of 169 graduating students, or 49%, earned an IRC, meaning SCPS has made tremendous progress toward reaching the *Blueprint's* 45% goal; however, the IRC attainment rate is based on the previous MSDE-approved list. The CTE Committee approved list of IRCs will not go into effect until the 2025-2026 SY, so it is possible this IRC attainment rate will decrease during the 2025-2026 SY. During the school tour, the CTE ERT observed there were posters in multiple locations that indicated what industry-recognized credentials (IRCs) were available for students to obtain, so it is clear that IRC attainment is a priority at SCPS. There was some confusion from the CTE ERT because the LEA Brief reported no students participated or completed a Youth Apprenticeship (YA), but during focus groups, multiple stakeholders explained SCPS had five students participating in a YA. One SCPS student is participating in the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship (RA), and while RAs are the gold-standard for reaching the 45% goal, SCPS has a very strong IRC attainment rate amongst graduating students.

SCPS also had 119 of 169 graduating students, or 70.4%, complete a CTE program of study (POS), which requires completing 2 years of classes in a CTE program. At SCPS, the vast majority of students enroll in a CTE exploration course in 9th grade. This leads to most students enrolling in a CTE program in 10th grade and completing the program at the end of 11th grade. With almost half of SCPS graduates earning an IRC and creating a system where 12th grade students have the option to participate in work-based learning (WBL) opportunities related to their CTE POS, SCPS has a strong focus on achieving *Blueprint* goals. Ultimately, SCPS has a strong IRC attainment rate amongst graduating students; however, 36 of 169 students, or 21.3% of graduating students who complete a CTE program do not earn an IRC. This should be a gap SCPS explores closing in the future.

Strength: Teachers, Staff, and Administrators are Passionate About Supporting Students

In all of the focus groups and conversations the CTE ERT had with SCPS stakeholders, it was abundantly clear that everyone involved was passionate about supporting students.

Students had great things to say about teachers, career counselors, school counselors, staff, and administrators, giving great compliments to the Principal of Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS). The students could tell how dedicated everyone was to their success and they wanted to live up to the high expectations the CTE teachers set. Teachers talked about how they have high expectations of CTE students and that students want to reach those high expectations. During focus group conversations, one student said, "I really appreciate the more professional environment" when asked to compare CTE classes to classes at the home school. Another student agreed, "I really appreciate the more passionate people at the tech school [SCTHS]." During the CTE ERT visit to SCTHS, it was clear all the stakeholders were passionate about supporting students, which is a strength for SCPS.

"I really appreciate the more passionate people at the tech center [SCTHS]."

The CTE ERT observed how the SCPS administrators, particularly the SCTHS Principal, has a strong understanding for the community's needs and for students' needs. One of the Biomed teachers is planning to retire soon and SCPS plans to reallocate those resources toward reinstating the HVAC program and hiring an HVAC instructor. The HVAC program was temporarily discontinued due to funding issues and finding a qualified instructor, but it was a very popular program with strong industry representation in the Lower Shore. Additionally, SCPS is considering adding a Cosmetology program to meet students' interests in varied career paths. Finding qualified instructors and funding will be a challenge when establishing the Cosmetology program, but adding these programs demonstrates how SCPS staff balance both industry needs and providing options that support students' interests.

Strength: Semester-Long CTE Exploration Course in 9th Grade

The Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS) requires a CTE Exploration Course for almost all 9th grade students. In the 2024-2025 SY, 88% of 9th graders in SCPS attended SCTHS for a semester to explore the various CTE programs and teachers. The few students who do not participate in the Exploratory Course usually have a scheduling conflict with a required math course. The SCTHS Principal places students into programs based on students' surveyed interests after their 8th grade field trip to SCTHS. Students spend five-to-seven days in all 15 CTE programs, exploring the specific college and career paths connected to each CTE program and the type of learning they will do in the class. Students arrive in third period and stay for approximately 50 minutes, before getting bussed back to their home high school - Washington Academy and High School in the Fall semester and Crisfield Academy and High School in the Spring semester. Every five-to-seven days throughout the semester, students explore a new CTE program using the Career Readiness Checklist, which is a set of assessments, assignments, and tasks used to develop transferable skills and self-awareness.

The semester-long, 9th Grade CTE Exploration Course is a "best practice" other LEAs should consider adopting. This CTE Exploration Course is a useful marketing tool to get more

students interested in participating in CTE. During the Pre-Visit Orientation, the SCTHS Principal said, "By having them go through every program, I have seen an increase in non-traditional students." The Principal explained that more female students want to enroll in Carpentry and Auto Tech programs, which have been historically male by over 75%, and more

male students want to enroll in the Nursing program, which has been historically female by over 75%. Teachers agreed in focus group conversations, referencing that it was not only a great opportunity for students to explore their interests, but it was also a great opportunity for teachers to better understand incoming students' interests and skillset.

"By having them go through every program, I have seen an increase in non-traditional students."

Students also raved about the CTE Exploration Course, talking about how it gave them an opportunity to learn about CTE programs without having to fully commit. Students are not required to participate in the Exploratory Course to enroll in a CTE program, but it is highly advised that interested students complete the Exploratory Course. For instance, if a student moves to the area and enrolls in the summer between 10th and 11th grade, then this student may enroll in a CTE program without having to take the Exploratory Course. Ultimately, the semester-long CTE Exploration Course all 9th graders are encouraged to take at SCTHS is a strength at SCPS according to administrators, staff, students, and teachers.

Strength: Driver's Education Classes Offered to SCTHS Students at No Cost

Somerset County is a large geographical area with a rural population, so transportation is a difficult challenge for students, especially students interested in WBL opportunities. In order to remedy this, SCTHS offers free Driver's Education to qualifying students in partnership with the Drive on Time Student Driving School. Driver's Education classes are only offered at the CTE Center and students may receive their Maryland Driver's License after completing the course. SCPS earned a grant that allows them to enroll 120 students annually into Driver's Education courses. This grant is through the Tri-County Council and Rural Maryland Council's Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund. This grant also provides funding to support students participating in SkillsUSA competitions, summer enrichment camps, and five Youth Apprenticeship opportunities. During one of the teacher focus groups, the teachers agreed that the Driver's Education classes at SCTHS are a big strength for CTE in SCPS. The SCTHS Principal also noted how the Driver's Education classes are an effective marketing strategy to get more students interested in enrolling at SCTHS.

While the CTE ERT observed the Driver's Education classes as a strength, transportation is still a barrier for many students in Somerset County. Earning a driver's license is only one component of a complex web of transportation barriers, including access to a vehicle and insurance, etc. Access to free Driver's Education classes is an enormous help to students overcoming transportation challenges, but there are several other factors that prohibit a student from consistently and independently transporting themselves.

Strength: Apprenticeship Coordinator is Excelling at Role

The Apprenticeship Coordinator at SCTHS has been an excellent addition to the SCPS team, receiving praise from students, teachers, and staff. In their first year on the job, the Apprenticeship Coordinator collaborated between SCPS and Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) to expand industry partnerships from 1 approved employer for sponsoring a Youth Apprentice to 13 approved employers. As of the visit, the Apprenticeship Coordinator had filled all 13 available YA opportunities with students who were on track to complete their apprenticeship by the end of the school year. The Apprenticeship Coordinator has also made a concerted effort to continue growing and developing industry partnerships to find available apprenticeship opportunities that directly relate to the CTE programs available at SCTHS. The Apprenticeship Coordinator also developed a page on the SCPS website identifying all of the current apprenticeship positions and future openings for students to conveniently apply and for parents to learn more about the program.⁷ The Apprenticeship Coordinator's digital presence has become an added strength to SCTHS, but they are also highly regarded for their creative problem-solving skills as well. During focus groups with teachers and school counselors, the CTE ERT learned about how the Apprenticeship Coordinator makes intentional space and time to work on students' employment portfolios. Some students may require an individual approach and other students may work better in small groups, yet the Apprenticeship Coordinator always finds a way to adjust to the students' needs in order to help prepare them for their professional future.

While the Apprenticeship Coordinator received great praise from students, teachers, administrators, and school counselors, it should be noted that they will continue to have a challenging workload. The Apprenticeship Coordinator's work is going to become tougher because the Work-Based Learning Coordinator is planning to retire at the end of the 2024-2025 SY. After the visit, SCPS's Lead CTE Designee told the CTE ERT that SCPS will transition the Apprenticeship Coordinator to the Career Connected Learning Coordinator. SCPS also moved this individual to a 12-month position so they may support students during the summer months, which is when most students begin or continue apprenticeship experiences. The Apprenticeship Coordinator is excelling at their role in SCPS, but it should be noted that their work could become even more challenging in the 2025-2026 SY.

Strength: Teachers Provide Adaptive Instruction to Students

One frequent observation the CTE ERT made during the visit to SCTHS was the way CTE teachers provided individualized instruction to students. Both teachers and students reported how helpful it is for teachers to provide individualized instruction to promote students' strengths and improve weaknesses. For instance, teachers spent instructional time addressing foundational math and writing skills, like adding fractions and writing complete sentences, to address students' needs while reaching targeted outcomes. Staff and teachers both went above and beyond for their students, knowing exactly what help students needed

⁷ [SCPS Apprenticeship website](#)

and how to help each student. One teacher told the CTE ERT that they completed “van training” so that they can drop Teaching Academy of Maryland (TAM) students off at different schools to complete their internship, helping them overcome SCPS’s transportation challenge. Another teacher added that it is easier to go the extra mile when they make personal connections with students in a small community.

When the CTE ERT asked SCTHS teachers about this observation, teachers talked about how important it has been to have a collective CTE identity, with each program having its own identity as well. Teachers talked about how this collective identity creates communities within communities that make students feel like they belong. Teachers also talked about how important it was when administrators had teachers help design the specific layout of the building and individual classrooms. During the Pre-Visit Orientation, the Lead CTE Designee informed the ERT that teachers were heavily involved in the planning of the new SCTHS building. Teachers revealed how important it was for them to be involved this way because it gave them agency and ownership over their programs. Teacher focus groups revealed this agency and ownership over decision-making relevant to their program has led to a strong sense of community that makes students feel like they belong. As one teacher put it, “It’s a blast to support all these opportunities for our kids.” Another teacher agreed, “I’m always more proud of my students every year.” Giving teachers agency over micro-level decisions like instruction and macro-level decisions like classroom design has led to one of SCPS’s strengths: teachers providing adaptive instruction to students while creating a sense of identity and community at SCTHS.

“It’s a blast to support all these opportunities for our kids.”

Challenge: Career Coaching Structure and Focus Was Unclear

The CTE ERT observed a challenge that is related to the two previous strengths: an unclear career coaching structure. During conversations with the Lead CTE Designee and during the school counselor/career coach focus group, the CTE ERT learned that SCPS has one Career Coach. This Career Coach was unfortunately unavailable during the focus group, but it should be noted SCPS hired this individual, not the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance. During the Pre-Visit Orientation and in the LEA Brief, the Lead CTE Designee informed the CTE ERT that the Career Coach’s focus for the 2024-2025 SY was to build the career coaching infrastructure to support 6th to 9th graders. One priority area for the infrastructure the Career Coach is building is to develop the essential math and writing skills foundational to CTE curriculum. Focus group participants reported this individual was originally hired to work in the SCTHS building, but at the beginning of the 2024-2025 SY, the Career Coach was reassigned to the Student Services Division and was no longer in the SCTHS building. Teachers and counselors agreed they want this structure to be different because the Career Coach has done great work and they want to see more of the Career Coach in the SCTHS building. For now, the Career Coach is having to prioritize building the career coaching infrastructure for the 6th to 9th graders, leading to the Apprenticeship Coordinator and CTE teachers to pick up additional workload mentoring and providing career coaching to 10th, 11th, and 12th grade

students. Teachers had great things to say about the Apprenticeship Coordinator who had a strong presence in the SCTHS building and had helped many of the students find WBL opportunities. Under the *Blueprint*, career counseling has to be provided to all students starting in 6th grade; however, based on the focus group statements, it appears that some staff were unclear about the Career Coach's shift and what the plan was moving forward.

Overall, the CTE ERT observed that the structure for career coaching was unclear for both external parties like the CTE ERT and for internal stakeholders like teachers. More specifically, the CTE ERT was unclear on what collaboration looked like between school counselors and the Career Coach. The CTE ERT observed high workloads for both the Apprenticeship Coordinator and the teachers at SCTHS that included creating post-graduation plans, applying to jobs, writing resumes, etc. While the Career Coach prioritizes building the career coaching infrastructure for 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th graders, the Apprenticeship Coordinator and SCTHS teachers will continue to face a challenging workload because the career coaching structure is unclear.

Challenge: School Counselors at Home Schools Prioritize AP and Dual Enrollment for High-Performing Students

The CTE ERT observed how the school counselors at the two home schools, Crisfield Academy and High School and Washington Academy and High School, prioritized Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Enrollment (DE) for high-performing students. One school counselor talked about how SCTHS is reserved for students who perform poorly in traditional classroom settings, uncovering a common bias toward CTE curriculum. It is a common misconception that CTE is an option for underperforming students, and when one counselor asked, "if they are a good student, why should we send them to CTE?" This statement revealed that misconception is present at SCPS. Given the fact that school counselors have been historically trained to prepare students for college, it is understandable why these misconceptions persist; however, it creates a challenge for growing SCPS's CTE offerings when the individuals who help enroll students into CTE have a negative bias toward CTE. One teacher complained that they had 20 students, yet only 6 could write a complete sentence. Another teacher complained that basic math skills are a struggle for their students, so they have to teach academic skills students should have before enrolling in CTE. Another teacher elaborated on how they are impacted by the misconception that CTE is for students who do not perform well in a traditional classroom setting, explaining that some students they have are not mature enough to visit a jobsite, "yet we keep getting told to increase numbers; where are these numbers coming from?" Despite these misconceptions, SCPS does have a high CTE completer rate (70.4%) in comparison to their Lower Shore neighbors: Wicomico County Public Schools has a 40.2% completer rate and Worcester County Public Schools has a 60% completer rate. While the misconceptions around CTE are not specific to Somerset County Public Schools, it creates a challenge for CTE stakeholders at SCPS.

Teachers at SCTHS have attempted to address these misconceptions by scheduling meetings with the school counselors and administrators at the home schools, even inviting them to WBL opportunities and field trips, but these misconceptions continue to persist. One teacher told the CTE ERT that students are told that they are not allowed to attend SCTHS if they want to do afterschool programs like Band or Sports, which is inaccurate because buses

get students back to their home schools in time to participate in afterschool activities. Teachers at SCTHS said they have worked toward quelling these misconceptions with parents. That said, it is challenging when school counselors, who determine what classes students enroll in, have a negative opinion of CTE. It is particularly difficult to expand CTE in SCPS when home schools want to keep their best students and enroll them into AP because there is a misconception that CTE is for students who do not perform well in traditional classrooms. Students agreed that their underperforming peers would become uncommitted, leading to distractions in the classroom and difficulties with group work. While this misconception is not unique to Somerset County, it creates a challenge for SCTHS teachers who must adapt their curriculum to accommodate underperforming students. It is challenging for committed CTE students who become demoralized when having to work with uncommitted peers.

Challenge: Scheduling and Lack of Flexible Learning Models for Students

The CTE ERT observed SCPS is facing a set of nuanced challenges associated with scheduling, particularly with the lack of flexible learning models for students; e.g. virtual or hybrid learning. To begin with, SCTHS teachers told the CTE ERT they did not have enough time with CTE students. Class periods at SCTHS are 90 minutes, with second-year CTE students attending in the morning for a 90-minute class, CTE Exploration mid-day for a 50-minute class, and first-year CTE students attending in the afternoon for a 90-minute class. Teachers at SCTHS said both the CTE exploration course and the CTE courses are not long enough for students to have meaningful learning experiences while also taking advantage of the equipment and tools only available at SCTHS. For instance, a Carpentry student in the CTE exploration course will spend 15 minutes for set-up at the beginning of class and for clean-up at the end of class, leaving 35 minutes for combined instruction and projects. Students who are not able to complete the work in the allotted time do not have the opportunity to come back and work on their projects. With flexible learning models, the carpentry student would have previously completed instruction asynchronously so they would be able to dedicate the 35-minute block solely to their projects, making the most of their time with SCTHS resources.

As the first-year CTE students attend SCTHS in the afternoon, there have been disruptions, miscommunications, and other priorities leading to student absences. Teachers reported that some school counselors tell students that if they are interested in extracurriculars like Band or Sports, they may not enroll in CTE offerings, which is inaccurate because students make it back to their home school in time to participate in these extracurriculars. That said, these afternoon classes have had scheduling conflicts with home schools for school-wide assemblies, pep rallies, extracurriculars, etc. Teachers at SCTHS do their best to accommodate these students to make sure they stay on track, but according to SCTHS teachers, the two home schools occasionally fail to communicate when students are not going to attend SCTHS that day. Students in focus groups said they do not care about pep rallies and want to spend more time at the SCTHS, but because there is little flexibility for student learning, students who are kept at the home school end up falling behind in the curriculum.

As previously mentioned, SCTHS teachers have spent instructional time covering content students were expected to have learned before enrolling in CTE, like foundational math and writing skills. One SCTHS teacher told the CTE ERT that home schools are not doing enough to teach academic skills. SCPS has attempted to solve this issue by providing a virtual, asynchronous “self-taught math class - math accelerator - which is a big problem,” according to SCTHS teachers. While teachers wanted it in theory, the result of this self-taught math class is that many students are not appropriately prepared for their CTE courses. SCTHS teachers told the CTE ERT that they would prefer to have core classes, like career/technical-based Math and Language Arts classes at SCTHS or to be involved in developing the curriculum for the math accelerator. SCPS has tried to provide flexible learning opportunities to students, but it is a challenge for teachers when the math accelerator class does not appropriately prepare students for their CTE curriculum.

Conventional CTE students at SCPS complete their program in 11th grade, which means the majority of students do not attend SCTHS in 12th grade. Students and counselors both told the CTE ERT that 12th graders forgo participation in apprenticeship or internship opportunities because they must report to their home school for core classes. In order to accommodate students’ WBL opportunities, especially high school level Registered Apprenticeships, SCTHS teachers suggested it would be beneficial to explore alternative instruction for these core classes. SCTHS teachers said they would like flexible learning options like hybrid/virtual options or twilight CTE, which is available in neighboring Wicomico. An important caveat is that CTE teachers want to participate in developing or choosing the curriculum so they can overcome the shortcomings of the math accelerator class.

Finally, the most pervasive challenge associated with scheduling is that the vast majority of students complete their CTE program in 11th grade, so they no longer attend SCTHS in 12th grade. 11th graders are conventionally between the ages of 15 and 17, which means many students who have completed their CTE program do not qualify for many Registered Apprenticeships (RAs) because many RAs have an age requirement of at least 18 years old and require concurrent related instruction. Age requirements were also an issue for students completing an IRC assessment, especially in the Academy of Health program. SCTHS teachers informed the CTE ERT that conventional students have a gap year between when they complete the program - 11th grade - and when they meet the 18 year-old age requirement to take the IRC assessment. According to the SCTHS teachers, this is an important reason for students struggling to earn IRCs.

All of that said, SCPS is attempting to address their scheduling challenges with a new policy that allows students to leave school early for apprenticeship or employment. There are two pathways for this policy: 1) co-operative work where students have a paying job and free time in their schedule to accommodate and 2) directive work, which are students who completed their CTE program and are working in a related field. While SCPS’s scheduling challenges are nuanced, it is a strength that they have recognized this issue and are attempting to address it through this new policy. Ultimately, SCPS is facing a set of nuanced challenges when it comes to scheduling and flexible learning options.

Challenge: Communication Gap Between Home Schools and SCTHS

The CTE ERT observed that there was a large communication gap between teachers and staff at SCTHS and the school counselors and administrators at the two home schools, Crisfield Academy and High School and Washington Academy and High School. During focus groups, SCTHS teachers revealed that they have made a concerted effort to get administrators and school counselors from the home schools to participate in CTE events and field trips, but they rarely get a response. One teacher noted how important it was for their own professional development to attend field trips to worksites so they can learn what students need to be successful. The other teachers agreed that it would be great to have buy-in from the home schools on the value of CTE because there is a strong misconception that CTE is for students who do not perform well in a conventional classroom setting. Another teacher added that they have a stronger connection with teachers in Wicomico and Worcester Counties than they do within Somerset County. Not only do these communication gaps lead to misconceptions about the value of CTE, but these gaps also lead to scheduling mishaps where home schools do not communicate with SCTHS that there is an assembly so students will not be attending SCTHS that day.

Teachers also told the CTE ERT that there is not a lot of communication between guidance counselors and CTE teachers, which leads to a lot of misinformation given to students. For instance, students who want to go to college need to have a foreign language, but the home school will tell students that they do not need a foreign language, that they can be a CTE completer and enroll into college, but that is incorrect. SCTHS teachers also pointed out that it was the school counselors' responsibility to work with students to come up with post-graduation plans, but very few students have developed a post-graduation plan. One teacher said their child was in the SCPS school system and graduated without ever coming up with post-graduation plans. This teacher said it was up to the parents to come up with post-graduation plans for their children. Other teachers agreed, claiming that there is a considerable number of students in their CTE classes that do not have post-graduation plans. On the other hand, school counselors told the CTE ERT they meet individually with 11th and 12th grade students to create post-graduation plans and involve parents in this process too. This leads the CTE ERT to the conclusion that there is a communication gap between SCTHS and the two home schools in Somerset County Public Schools.

Challenge: Sharing CTE Program Information to Students, Parents, and Community

Relaying CTE program information to students, parents, and the Somerset County community is a challenge for SCPS, and even though Somerset County has unique contexts and nuances to marketing challenges, it is not a unique challenge for CTE across the country. This challenge is connected to the previously mentioned hurdles SCPS is facing, but both teachers and counselor focus groups revealed communicating information about CTE programs needs improvement. Of particular note is that the IT program is underenrolled, a program that is foundational to growing labor markets in Maryland. School counselors specifically mentioned that it is difficult for students to imagine themselves in IT because there are not many jobs in the area related to IT. On the other hand, one teacher said it was a cultural problem, that rural communities take more time to adjust to change because they operate at a slower pace than urban communities. This teacher followed-up, saying that parents in particular are changing their perspective on CTE, but not necessarily specific programs like IT. Currently, SCPS is considering sunsetting the IT Computer Networking

program, meaning those currently enrolled may complete the program, but no new students will be enrolled. On the other hand, Criminal Justice has done a phenomenal job of connecting students to the community and industry, and is consistently one of the highest-enrolled programs at SETHS. SCPS has demonstrated a commitment to changing perspectives toward CTE in the community, but it is still a challenge to enroll students into CTE programs that do not have industry representation in the community.

The CTE ERT observed SCPS is making a concerted effort to resolve this challenge by developing a strong Program Advisory Committee (PAC). Counselors talked about how involved the PACs were and how they assisted with events like Parent Night, Open Houses, and Career Fairs. While counselors agreed each program's PAC Parent provided valuable contributions, information and marketing pathways to parents and other community stakeholders could use improvement. Teachers agreed that the PACs at SCPS were a great resource, but that it was difficult to get information to parents and community stakeholders. That said, the SETHS Principal told the CTE ERT that one of SCPS's primary focus areas for improvement in the 2024-2025 SY is to "build a strong climate and culture to connect with students, staff, parents, and the community." While there is still work to be done, SCPS has recognized this as an important challenge and has taken steps to address it, like improving the relationship with PACs, who continue to show an impressive level of commitment.

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 with external partners.

External Strength: Worksite Experiences with Industry Professionals

In focus groups with students and teachers, the CTE ERT learned how students had learning experiences both at SETHS and in the field. Students referenced how the hands-on learning opportunities alongside industry professionals was an important motivation for them to complete their program. Students in the Academy of Health, Criminal Justice, and Teaching Academy of Maryland (TAM) programs all raved about the opportunity to work alongside industry professionals. The Academy of Health student talked about how, "I get to have on-site experience in nursing homes," while the Criminal Justice student raved about doing crowd control with Somerset County Sheriffs. It became a clear pattern that when students had industry professionals as role models and had the opportunity to complete WBL experiences alongside these individuals, it not only led to greater enrollment in the program, but it also led to more engaged and focused students.

Programs like Academy of Health, Biomed, Carpentry, Criminal Justice, Horticulture, and Pre-Engineering had a number of industry professionals who served as role models in the community, but programs like Interactive Media Productions (IMP) and IT Computer Networking did not have similar representation. SETHS teachers relayed the sentiment that when students do not see industry representation, they will be less likely to enroll in a related CTE program. The IMP and IT programs are the lowest-enrolled programs at SETHS, and perhaps one of the reasons for the low enrollment is because students do not see industry professionals in those fields represented in Somerset County. While SCPS considers sunsetting the IT Computer Networking program because of low enrollment, SETHS has done a great job of providing on-site experiences alongside industry professionals for CTE students. Providing learning experiences at both SETHS and on worksites helps students make the connection between what they are learning and what they will do as professionals.

External Strength: CTE Administrators and Teachers Want to Continue Building Collaboration Pathways with Lower Shore Counterparts

Both teachers and administrators at SETHS talked about how they have a strong connection with their counterparts in Wicomico and Worcester Counties. The SETHS Principal referenced many times throughout the CTE ERT Pre-Visit Orientation how much they treasure collaboration opportunities with their Lower Shore colleagues and want to find more opportunities to collaborate. For instance, the SETHS Principal referenced how they are considering offering "Twilight CTE" for students to attend CTE classes in the evening, similar to what Wicomico County Public Schools is doing with their Twilight CTE program. The collaboration pathways among the Lead CTE Designees in the Lower Shore is a strength that helps find innovative solutions to common challenges they are facing. This collaboration

among leadership is so strong that teachers have followed suit, with some CTE teachers across the Lower Shore regularly meeting.

SCTHS teachers referenced the collaborations with CTE teachers in Wicomico and Worcester as an important part of their professional development and ability to keep up with industry trends. The CTE ERT learned some teachers have regular meetings across the Lower Shore to talk about WBL opportunities, pedagogy, and common challenges, but other teachers noted they do not have the time to coordinate and attend external meetings like this. Some SCTHS teachers referenced how their connection with CTE teachers in Wicomico and Worcester Counties is stronger than the connection they have with the teachers at the two home schools, Crisfield Academy and High School and Washington Academy and High School. Overall, it was a strength for CTE teachers and administrators to explore external collaborators in the Lower Shore to make sure their curriculum is meeting industry standards and to brainstorm solutions to common challenges they are facing.

External Challenge: Age Restrictions for Apprenticeship Opportunities and SCTHS's Two-Year Programs Leaving Gap Year in 12th Grade

SCTHS teachers expressed frustration with age restrictions on apprenticeship opportunities and with IRC assessments. When asked about their most persistent challenges, teachers all agreed these age restrictions in the context of their CTE structure was the biggest challenge. At SCPS, 9th graders participate in CTE Exploration, and it is typical for most CTE students to begin their CTE program in 10th grade and complete the program at the end of 11th grade. Most 11th graders are between the ages of 15-17, but teachers complained that many of the IRC assessments and available apprenticeship opportunities, especially in Academy of Health, Biomed, Criminal Justice, Horticulture, and Pre-Engineering, required applicants to be at least 18 years old or that the assessment was too difficult for their students. For many students, there is a gap-year between when they complete a CTE program in 11th grade and when they complete their IRC assessment, leaving many students to score poorly because it is difficult to retain that information without being active in the program. This hurdle becomes even more challenging when students who complete their CTE program in the 11th grade no longer attend SCTHS in the 12th grade. Additionally, as SCPS seeks to expand apprenticeships, it should be noted that many RA sponsors require or prefer related instruction to occur concurrently to on-the-job training.

The intention behind this structure was two-fold: 1) to allow students to switch programs between 10th and 11th grade if it is not the right fit for them and 2) to allow students who complete their CTE program in 11th grade to explore apprenticeship opportunities in 12th grade. That being said, SCTHS teachers said they want the CTE Exploration Course to happen in 10th grade so that they have more mature and skilled students to teach. The age restrictions for apprenticeships and IRC assessments was a stated challenge for SCTHS teachers, but perhaps with the newly approved IRC list and the upcoming CTE Program of Study changes, this challenge may be a bit easier to overcome. Moreover, once more students are enrolled in and complete high school level Registered Apprenticeships, SCPS stakeholders may see the benefits from the majority of students completing their CTE program in 11th grade.

External Challenge: Employers Misunderstanding Students' Skill and Maturity Level

Another important external challenge that came up from the counselor, teacher, and student focus groups is around students' maturity level and employers' perceptions of high school students. This challenge is related to the previous one because counselors and teachers complained that many students do not have the maturity level to explore WBL opportunities. One teacher said that field trips to worksites are open to all students, but they wish they could limit it to only high-performing students because some students are simply not mature enough. Counselors agreed, adding that it is hard to prepare students for the workforce when many of them have the lasting impact of losing social skills during the COVID shutdowns and that many students lack the internal motivation to do the kind of work necessary for WBL opportunities. Students commented on how their peers' lack of motivation can be detrimental to their learning too. Students said that they have fewer behavioral interruptions in class at SCTHS than they do at their home schools, but that they become frustrated when there are class disruptions interrupting their instructional time. While counselors, teachers, and students agree these students are rare, one of SCPS's primary focus areas for improvement for the 2024-2025 SY is to "build strong social and emotional structures for support of students and staff." This not only demonstrates that SCPS recognizes these challenges, but that they are also making a concerted effort to overcome these challenges.

During the counselor and teacher focus groups, the CTE ERT learned that it is a challenge to overcome negative perceptions of students' maturity and skill level. The Apprenticeship Coordinator received great praise from both school counselors and teachers, but this individual noted how difficult it has been to convince employers that high schoolers are able to work as apprentices. According to the Apprenticeship Coordinator, some students are simply not ready to take on the responsibilities of being an apprentice, including showing up on time, asking for help, and other transferable skills. SCPS has improved their Youth Apprenticeship numbers, but still have no students completing a high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship, and these negative perceptions for students' maturity and skill will continue to be a challenge for SCPS.

External Challenge: Lack of Available Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities

There was a sentiment in all of the focus groups about how the *Blueprint* and its impact, goals, policies, and procedures do not account for the needs of rural communities, especially in Somerset County. Both teachers and administrators agreed that the gold standard of the high school level of Registered Apprenticeships (RAs) is not a feasible goal without significant overhaul of many stakeholder systems. According to SCPS's self-reported data, one student is currently participating in a RA in the 2023-2024 SY. The Apprenticeship Coordinator has done a great job of getting students enrolled into Youth Apprenticeship opportunities, but the Lower Shore does not have many opportunities for high school level Registered Apprenticeships. The Lead CTE Designee told the CTE ERT that Somerset County has zero high school level Registered Apprenticeship opportunities, and that their students have one

available RAopportunity in Wicomico County, Worcester County, and Delaware each, but students would have to find their own transportation there. Whether it was cultural or systemic, SCPS students do not have many RA opportunities to explore and this is an area the CTE ERT saw as an opportunity for improvement.

That said, the Apprenticeship Coordinator must be commended for obtaining a total of 12 approved apprenticeship sponsors in Somerset County, with a Youth Apprentice at all of those approved sponsors. This means SCPS is taking advantage of all the opportunities available to them. Perhaps there is an opportunity here for the Apprenticeship Coordinator to work alongside the MD Labor Apprenticeship Navigator to convince some of these YA sponsors to convert their program into a high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship.

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 SCPS 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 SCPS 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 SCPS.⁸ While Phase 2 is focused on analysis and assistance, it is when the CTE ERT can make recommendations to the AIB to withhold funding if there is resistance complying with the *Blueprint*.⁹

Reconsider Sunsetting IT Computer Networking and Restategize Marketing

SCPS is considering sunsetting the IT Computer Networking program because of low enrollment, which means those currently enrolled in the program may complete it, but the program will not enroll new students. The CTE ERT recommends SCPS reconsider sunsetting the IT Computer Networking program because it is a crucial sector for the future workforce. One of the important strengths the CTE ERT observed was how there was industry representation for the highest enrolled programs at SCPS, but IT Computer Networking did not benefit from having industry representation in Somerset County. The CTE ERT understands how challenging this must be, but that there are other districts, like Montgomery and Howard County Public Schools that have their IT students work alongside the IT professionals in the school system. Of particular note was how CTE students worked alongside IT professionals in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to complete projects. While Montgomery County has a very different context than Somerset County, including industry representation, it has proven to be a useful strategy for MCPS's marketing efforts. Applying this effort to the IT Computer Networking program may lead to increased enrollment in the program where SCPS administrators may reconsider sunsetting the program.

Improve Communication Pathways Between Somerset County Technical High School and the Two Home Schools

One of the most persistent challenges the CTE ERT observed came from the need for improvement in communication between Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS) and the two home schools, Crisfield Academy and High School and Washington Academy and High School. In order to overcome this challenge, the CTE ERT recommends that SCPS develop an effective communication plan between the home schools and SCTHS. The CTE

⁸ GWDB CTE Committee. (July 1, 2024). CTE Committee Expert Review Team Deployment Plan School Year 2024-2025. https://qwdm.maryland.gov/ctecomm/ctecomm-ctedeploymentplan_draftsy24-25_62624.pdf

⁹ AIB's Updated Comprehensive Implementation Plan, August 2023, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PsYQGh1d5Qwk7PgK2cEubr68SSKrG5dH/view?usp=sharing>.

ERT acknowledges that SCPS teachers, school counselors, and administrators have a high workload, but there is an opportunity for growth to improve communication. A useful starting point may be school counselors attending field trips to worksites. During focus groups, CTE teachers talked about how they reached out to administrators, teachers, and school counselors at both home schools to participate in field trips, but did not receive a response. Attending field trips would help establish communications between the home schools and SCTHS, while also learning about the kind of work CTE students can anticipate doing after graduation should they choose to pursue that career path. Once consistent communication has been established, perhaps the home schools can share a monthly email or newsletter with a list of all the upcoming scheduling conflicts to SCTHS staff and teachers. This monthly newsletter could highlight pep rallies, sporting events, and other events so teachers and staff at SCTHS can be prepared when students will be absent and more effectively accommodate student learning. It may also be worth exploring holding quarterly meetings between CTE teachers and school counselors at the home schools. Not only would this quell some of the misconceptions that CTE is for underperforming students, but it would also help school counselors have a clearer understanding of the benefits of CTE offerings.

Experiment With Offering Core Classes at SCTHS

SCTHS teachers were quite vocal about how challenging it is to work with students who do not have the prerequisite skills to be successful in their CTE programs. In order to overcome this challenge, many SCTHS teachers told the CTE ERT they would prefer to offer core classes like Math and English/Language Arts at SCTHS. SCTHS teachers agreed that “Career-Related Math and English/Language Arts” classes at SCTHS would be a great benefit to students because it makes a direct connection between the content they are learning and how it is applied in their professional area. Offering these classes at SCTHS would add more focused and engaged learning for students in core classes that are an important focus area for improvement at SCPS: “Accelerate Math and Reading Achievement Data for ALL Students.” Not only would offering core classes at SCTHS potentially improve Math and Reading achievement data, but it also has the potential to help SCPS overcome some of the nuanced scheduling challenges. Students made it clear that their preference is to be at SCTHS and offering core classes at SCTHS has the potential to free up students’ schedule for their 12th grade year for more WBL opportunities, especially with the new Directive Work policy at SCPS. Experimenting with offering core classes at SCTHS is a potential next step SCPS should consider to help support creating a robust CTE system.

Explore Flexible Learning Models for Students with SCTHS Teacher Input

During the visit to SCTHS, the CTE ERT learned how teachers, students, and administrators want flexible learning opportunities for students that are effective. SCTHS teachers talked about how the math accelerator course was ineffective because their perspective was not incorporated into the curriculum. The math accelerator course was a great idea in theory, but incorporating teachers’ perspective into whatever the next iteration of flexible learning models are will be crucial. The SCTHS Principal was already talking about exploring Twilight CTE after their neighbors in Wicomico County Public Schools had a similar program. Flexible learning models like the Twilight CTE program or offering courses virtually/hybrid may be a great opportunity for SCPS to overcome scheduling and transportation barriers, but they

must be in collaboration with CTE teachers at SCTHS. For instance, a hybrid refresher course for 12th grade students who completed the program in 11th grade and are preparing for their IRC assessment after they turn 18 would help overcome an important challenge at SCPS.

Consider Offering a “Practicum” Course for 12th Grade Students to Eliminate Gap Year

At neighboring Wicomico County Public Schools (WCPS), the structure for completing a CTE program of study is similar to SCPS, but they have strategized how to overcome the challenging gap year with a Practicum course. In order to overcome the challenges associated with students completing their CTE program in 11th grade, leaving a gap year in 12th grade, WCPS has established “Practicum” for 12th grade students. Students earn credit for this Practicum course as they complete research, act as a teacher assistant to the CTE program they completed, and continue their education. WCPS teachers referenced how they rely on Practicum students to assist teaching WCPS’s CTE exploration course, Applied Technical Exploration (ATEX). WCPS teachers and school counselors admitted this is still a growing program, but they reported that the Practicum course has been commended by students and teachers and it could be worth exploring something similar at SCPS. A “Practicum” course for 12th graders would be an effective way for students that are unable to participate in a WBL opportunity to continue developing their skills while earning practical experience that would look good in both college and career applications.

Improve CTE Messaging with Both Internal and External Stakeholders

School counselors at the home schools revealed they have some negative biases toward CTE and that employers misunderstand high schoolers’ skill level. There is an opportunity for SCPS to revise both their internal and external marketing strategies to clearly communicate the value of CTE and students’ skill level. Some professional development to make sure everyone at SCPS is in alignment on what CTE goals, outcomes, and benefits are would be a great place to start. It may also be worthwhile to have SCTHS teachers or the Apprenticeship Coordinator lead these professional development opportunities so that teachers at the home schools can become more familiar with CTE teachers and staff. Strategizing CTE marketing with external stakeholders may prove to be a more difficult challenge as employers having a negative perception of high school students’ maturity and skillset is a nationwide challenge, not just an SCPS challenge. A great place to start would be to consider making changes to the SCTHS Career Fair. The SCTHS Career Fair lasted from 7:30am-9:30am on a Monday in May, and while the CTE ERT did not obtain specifics about how many employers attended the Career Fair, the CTE ERT recommends having a longer career fair that combines a student showcase so employers may see the kind of work students complete in their CTE programs. For instance, a student who completed the Criminal Justice program may create a photoessay of their time doing crowd control alongside Somerset County Sheriffs or a set of Carpentry students who completed the program may showcase the project they completed. In this way, employers can see the kind of work students compete in CTE classes, quelling misconceptions about students’ skill level. Ultimately, the CTE ERT recommends SCPS to improve on CTE misconceptions both internally with home school colleagues and externally with employers.

Explore Technical Assistance with MSDE and the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) in expanding RA to meet the *Blueprint's* 45% Goal

In order to achieve the *Blueprint's* 45% goal, establishing and expanding RAs should be one of SCPS's priorities. The SCPS Apprenticeship Navigator should continue collaborating with MD Labor's Apprenticeship Navigators on what opportunities are available for high school students in Somerset County and the surrounding Lower Shore. At the time of the visit, SCPS' IRC attainment rate was 49%, but nevertheless, SCPS can seek technical assistance from MSDE and similar LEAs in strategies to increase the amount of students starting a RA. The CTE Committee will also be developing more targeted technical assistance around this topic, 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 January 2025, so all of those implementing this work and the partnerships required are still in the early stages of development. The addition of the Apprenticeship Coordinator is a great step in increasing apprenticeship rates at SCPS. Exploring technical assistance with MSDE, MD Labor, and the CTE Committee will prove to be a useful addition to SCPS meeting the 45% goal.

APPENDIX GUIDE

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

Appendix A | Visit Participants

Name	Role
Brian Cavey	VP, International Assoc. Of Heat and Frost Insulators & Allied Workers; Chair, MATC (CTE Committee Member)
Bryan Ashby	CTE Director, Wicomico County Public Schools
Brian Phillips	CTE Director, Worcester County Public Schools
John Strickland	Expert Review Team Manager, CTE Committee
Tony Bevilacqua	Principal, Worcester Technical High School
Matt Holloway	Owner, Quantico Creek Sod
Kristen Tilghman	Blueprint Coordinator, Talbot County Public Schools
Mathew Geel	Wor-Wic Community College
Julie Allen	Business Service Manager, Lower Shore Workforce Investment Board
Thomas Saito-Sherris	Career Coach Liaison, Lower Shore Workforce Investment Board
Georgeta Wainwright	Education and Compliance Manager, Delaware Elevator
Dr. James Bell	Director of Instruction, Academic Support, and Well-Being, Building African American Minds
Billy Witte	CTE Coordinator, Wicomico County Public Schools
Alex Sousa	Interactive Media Teacher, Worcester County Public Schools

Appendix B | LEA Brief

CTE LEA LEAD STAFF

Name	Role(s)	Contact Info
Cortney U Monar	Principal of Somerset County Technical High School Supervisor of CTE Supervisor of Athletics Supervisor of Adult Ed	410-651-2285 (office) 410-726-2631 (cell) cmonar@somerset.k12.md.us

COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS WITH CTE

There are no comprehensive high schools that offer CTE POS courses.

LEA CTE CENTER

Somerset County Technical High School

CTE ERT VISIT

Date	School
Wednesday, January 29, 2025	Somerset County Technical High School



LEA CTE ENROLLMENT, PARTICIPATION and COMPLETION RATES

FY24 DATA		
	Somerset County	SCTHS
Enrollment		
Total Enrollment (# of all HS students)	711	~331 (10-12th grade)
Total Enrollment (# of all graduating students)	169	122
CTE¹⁰		
CTE Participation Rate (% of all graduating students)		/169=
CTE Concentration Rate (% of all graduating students)		122/169=72%
CTE Completers Rate (% of all graduating students)		119/169=70.4%
IRC Completion Rate (% of all graduating students) ¹¹		83/169=49%
Apprenticeship and Other Work-Based Learning¹²		
Work-Based Learning Participants ¹³ (# of all graduating students)		
Dual Enrollment Participants ¹⁴ (# of all graduating students)		
Dual Enrollment Completers ¹⁵ (# of all graduating students)		
Apprenticeship Participants (# of all HS students)	RA: 1 YA: 5	RA: 1 YA: 5
Apprenticeship Participants (# of all graduating students)	RA: 1 YA: 5	RA: 1 YA: 5
Apprenticeship Completers (# of graduating students)	RA: 1 YA: 5	RA: 1 YA: 5
Progress Towards 45% Goal¹⁶		

LEA CTE OFFERINGS

CTE Program Enrollment

Program Name	Total Enrollment	Overenrolled or Underenrolled?	Number of Students on Waitlist
Academy of Health (CNA)	28		
Apprenticeship Maryland Program (AMP)	7		
Automotive	17		
Biomed- PLTW	52		
Business	21		
Carpentry	24		
Criminal Justice	28		
Culinary	21		
M/H Truck Diesel	22		
Horticulture	16		
Interactive Media Productions (IMP)	13	underenrolled	
IT- Computer Networking	8	underenrolled	
Pre-Engineering- PLTW	29		
Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM)	15	underenrolled	
Welding	20		

Progress Towards the 45% Goal:

- **What are you projecting, for next school year, in growth towards the 45% goal for your district?**
 - **For the next school year:** If the trend of increasing interest in SCTHS and the introduction of IRCs in new programs like Biomed and Pre-Engineering continue, we can reasonably project a slight increase, similar to the past year's growth from 48% to 49%. A realistic projection might be around 50%.
 - **For the next 3 years:** As the AMP program develops further and more businesses participate, combined with the maturation of newly added IRCs, a steady increase in the IRC attainment rate can be expected. Estimating a gradual growth of about 1-2% each year, the projection could be approximately 52-54%.
 - **For the next 5 years:** With ongoing improvements and the potential addition of new programs and business partnerships, a continued growth trajectory is likely. Projecting a 1-2% annual growth, the attainment rate could be expected to reach about 55-59%.
 - **By SY 2030-2031:** Over a longer term, with sustained efforts and potential expansions in programs and business collaborations, aiming for a substantial cumulative increase is feasible. Projecting the same rate of growth, the attainment percentage could be envisioned to be around 60-65%, significantly exceeding the initial 45% goal.
- **What are your plans for expanding Registered Apprenticeships in your LEA?** Our plans for expanding Registered Apprenticeships within our Local Education Agency (LEA) focus on enhancing our youth apprenticeship offerings by fostering strong partnerships with local businesses and collaborating closely with the Labor Department. Although the responsibility for expanding Registered Apprenticeships primarily falls on the Labor Department, we aim to ensure that our Apprenticeship Maryland Program (AMP) students gain valuable work experiences directly linked to an approved Industry Recognized Credential (IRC). Our AMP facilitator will continue to support these efforts by liaising with the Labor Department, but the facilitator's role will not include pressuring local businesses to establish Registered Apprenticeships. This approach acknowledges that Registered Apprenticeships require a broader commitment that extends beyond the high school experience, necessitating a coordinated effort at multiple levels.

Program Plans for Future

- **Are there any new programs you plan on adding to your current programming within the next 2 school years? Why are you adding/not adding the program(s)?**

- We are planning to reintroduce HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) to our programming within the next school year. The decision to bring back HVAC is driven by its previous popularity and the recognition of its importance in preparing students for high-demand, technical careers. The program was only temporarily discontinued due to funding issues and the challenge of finding a qualified instructor, both of which we are actively addressing to ensure the program's return.
- Additionally, we are considering adding a cosmetology program. The interest in cosmetology stems from its potential to attract a diverse student population and provide practical skills that align with direct career opportunities and licensing requirements. For this program, our next steps involve securing adequate funding and structuring the program to meet the state's required hours for licensure. Adding cosmetology would expand our vocational offerings and meet student and community interests in varied career paths.
-
- **Are there any current programs you plan on expanding upon within the next 2 school years? Why are you expanding upon the program(s)?**
 - Given the current limitations due to space and funding, we do not have plans to expand existing programs within the next two school years. These constraints make it challenging to allocate the necessary resources that expansion would require, such as additional classroom space, instructors, and materials. Our focus will be on maintaining the quality and success of our current programs, ensuring they continue to meet educational standards and serve our students effectively. This approach allows us to optimize our existing resources without overextending our capabilities, ensuring that each program can continue to provide valuable educational opportunities to our students.
- **Are there any programs you are taking away within the next 2 school years? Why are you taking away the program(s)?**
 - Within the next two school years, we are considering reducing our Biomed program from two classes to one due to the retirement of one of the instructors and potential funding challenges. This adjustment would allow us to reallocate resources towards hiring an HVAC instructor, which is a priority given the program's anticipated reinstatement and its relevance to current job market demands.
 - Additionally, we are contemplating the discontinuation of the IT Computer Networking program. Despite its importance in providing essential skills for the future, the program has faced persistently low enrollment over the past few years. This decision is challenging but necessary to ensure our resources are utilized efficiently and directed towards programs that can maintain a viable student population and

meet the broader educational and employment needs of our community.

Enrollment Practices

- **How do students enroll in programs?**

Enrollment into programs at Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS) begins with a comprehensive CTE Exploration semester for all 9th-grade students. During this semester, students have the opportunity to spend 5-7 days in each CTE program, gaining insight into the various careers each program supports and the skills they would develop. This hands-on exploration allows students to make informed decisions about their educational paths.

At the end of the exploration semester, students are asked to submit their top two program choices. The administration then selects students for each program, prioritizing eleventh graders since each CTE program spans two years. This prioritization ensures that students can complete the full course sequence before graduating.

In addition to standard selection criteria, special attention is given to identifying nontraditional students for each program, supporting diversity and inclusion within our CTE offerings.

- **Are all CTE programs offered to all students?**

Regarding accessibility of CTE programs, all programs are offered to all students at SCTHS, the sole provider of CTE programs in Somerset County. However, there is an important exception within the nursing program: students who have a record of fighting or violent acts are not eligible to enroll in this program. This restriction is in place because the board of nursing does not accept students with such offenses on their record, reflecting the high standards and ethical considerations relevant to healthcare professions.

- **Can a student participate in a CTE program at another school?**

Currently, students cannot participate in a CTE program at another school, as SCTHS is the exclusive CTE program provider in the county. This centralization ensures that resources, expert instructors, and specialized facilities are optimally utilized and maintained to deliver high-quality technical/ vocational education to our students.

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?**

The semester-long CTE Exploration course at Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS) is indeed a standout best practice that could be beneficial for other

CTE programs across the state. Here are a few reasons why this practice is effective and worth sharing:

1. **Broad Exposure:** By allowing students to spend 5-7 days in each CTE program, the exploration course ensures that students receive a comprehensive overview of all available options. This broad exposure helps students make more informed decisions about which career paths they are most interested in and which align best with their skills and aspirations.
2. **Informed Decision-Making:** This early exposure allows students to better understand the commitments and expectations of each program before making a choice. It prevents students from selecting a program based solely on assumptions or limited information, which can lead to better satisfaction and retention rates in the selected programs.
3. **Enhanced Recruitment:** The exploration course acts as a recruitment tool within the school by generating interest and excitement about the various programs. It can help boost enrollment numbers as students discover passions they might not have considered before the course.
4. **Equitable Access:** This model promotes equity by giving all students, regardless of their background or previous knowledge, the same opportunity to explore and consider all programs. It can be particularly empowering for nontraditional students or those who may not have access to career guidance at home.
5. **Feedback Mechanism:** The course also provides valuable feedback to program administrators and instructors about how each program is perceived by students, allowing for adjustments and improvements in how programs are presented and taught.
6. **Preparation for Success:** Students who choose their programs after thorough exploration are likely to be more engaged and motivated, leading to higher success rates in program completion and skill attainment.

Sharing this best practice with other CTE programs across the state could help enhance the overall effectiveness of CTE education, promoting a more workforce-ready and motivated group of students ready to enter various industries.

LEA Support for Schools

- **How is CTE financial support structured within the LEA?**
Perkins Funding: A substantial portion of CTE funding comes from the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which provides federal money to improve the quality of secondary and postsecondary CTE programs across the country. This funding is crucial for developing new programs, purchasing equipment, and training staff.
Local Funds (MOI Money): Maintenance of Effort (MOI) funds, which are local funds designated to ensure that the school doesn't reduce its spending on education, also support CTE programs. These funds help sustain the daily operational costs and essential resources needed for CTE courses.

Program-Generated Funds: Some CTE programs have the capability to generate their own funds, typically through services offered to the community (like automotive repair, culinary meals, etc.) or through products they create. These funds are often reinvested back into the programs to cover supply costs and other expenses.

Local Tri-County Grant: Grants from local or regional sources further bolster the financial resources available to CTE programs, often targeting specific needs such as driver's education for CTE students, SkillsUSA support, CTE summer camps, and wages for youth apprenticeship opportunities with SCPS.

- **How is CTE staffing structured within the LEA?**

Instructor Allocation: SCTHS employs 16 instructors to cover 15 different programs of study. This staffing level ensures that each program has dedicated instructional staff with specialized knowledge and skills relevant to the industry standards of their respective fields.

Tenure and Contractual Basis: Of the 16 instructors, 14 are tenured teachers, highlighting a stable and experienced teaching workforce. Tenure provides these educators with job security, which can contribute to a more stable and consistent learning environment for students.

Teaching Schedule: CTE instructors at SCTHS teach three classes a day, covering five of the six available periods. This scheduling allows instructors to dedicate substantial time to each class, providing students with intensive, focused instructional periods that are crucial for mastering technical skills.

Unit I Teaching Contracts: All CTE instructors follow the Unit I teaching contracts, which are agreements that define work conditions, responsibilities, and benefits for teachers. This standardization helps in maintaining consistency in teaching quality and instructor obligations across all programs.

Career Exploration

- **What career exploration is available to students in your LEA?**

Early Introduction: Starting in elementary school, students are introduced to various careers, fostering early awareness and interest in a range of professional paths.

Dedicated Career Coach: The county employs a career coach who ensures that all students in grades 6-12 develop and annually review a career plan. This year, the career coach is specifically focusing on students in grades 6-9, aiming to establish a solid foundation of career awareness and preparatory planning before they make decisions about high school pathways.

CTE Exploration Course: All 9th graders participate in the CTE Exploration course at SCTHS, which exposes them to different CTE programs and the careers associated with them. This course is pivotal as it helps students make informed decisions about enrolling in specific CTE programs when they enter 10th grade.

Interactive Opportunities: Within the CTE programs, students engage with guest speakers from businesses, colleges, and military branches, and participate in field trips to local businesses, trade schools, and colleges. These

interactions provide real-world insights and connections that are invaluable in shaping students' career aspirations and understanding.

SchoolLinks Platform: The use of SchoolLinks aids in career development by facilitating onboarding, interest inventories, career surveys, and in-depth career exploration activities. This platform serves as a critical tool in helping students navigate their career interests and educational pathways.

- **How do the students access their career coach(es)?**

Direct Communication: Students access the career coach through email and office visits, ensuring they have a direct line of communication for guidance and support.

Support from Guidance Counselors: Each school also has guidance counselors who assist with career guidance, complementing the work of the career coach by providing additional support and resources to help students in their career planning.

- **How does/do the career coach(es) serve students in your LEA?**

Focus on Middle and Early High School Students: This year, the career coach's efforts are concentrated on students in grades 6-9. The coach's role includes helping younger students start thinking about their futures and begin planning accordingly.

Integration with CTE Exploration: The career coach is knowledgeable of the CTE programs we offer and the skills the AMP facilitator covers in the CTE Exploration course to ensure all 9th graders receive comprehensive guidance about potential career paths and the educational routes available at SCTHS.

INFORMATION FOR VISITING SCHOOLS

Somerset County Technical High School

School Leadership: Cortney U. Monar

School Contact: 410-651-2285

School Website: <https://scths.somerset.k12.md.us/o/scths>

Overview of Meeting Participants

Name	Role	Location
Cortney U. Monar	CTE Supervisor / Principal SCTHS	SCTHS

CTE Lead, School Administrators & Staff

Teachers and Faculty

	Name	Subject	Years in Position	Classes
S C T H S	Paula Fisher	Academy of Health (CNA)	8.5	<i>Foundations of Meds. & Health Sciences Y1-S1 Structure and Function of Human Body Y1-S2 Certified Nursing Assistant ** Y2-S1 Clinical Internship Y2-S2</i>
	Jeremy Michalski	Apprenticeship Maryland Program (AMP)	1	<i>Related Instruction AMP I AMP II AMP III</i>
	John Ward	Automotive	11	<i>Electronic/Electrical and HVAC Y1-YL Suspension, Steering, and Brakes ** Y2-S1 Powertrain & Engine Repair Y2-S2</i>
	Tina Taylor	Biomed-PLTW	40	<i>Principles of Bio Med Sciences Y1-S1 Human Body Systems Y1-S2 Medical Interventions ** Y2-S1 Biomedical Innovation Y2-S2</i>
	Angleisa Hosfield	Biomed-PLTW	17	<i>Principles of Bio Med Sciences Y1-S1 Human Body Systems Y1-S2 Medical Interventions ** Y2-S1 Biomedical Innovation Y2-S2</i>

	Micheal Drake	Business	2 (6)	Prin of Business Mgmt and Entrepreneur Y1-S1 Principles of Accounting and Finance Y1-S2 Office Systems Management I ** Y2-S1 Office Systems Management II Y2-S2
	Joe Webster	Carpentry	12	Foundations Of Construction Y1-S1 Carpentry I Y1-S2 Carpentry II ** Y2-S1 Carpentry Capstone Project Y2-S2
	Wade Chambers	Criminal Justice	21	<i>Foun of Homeland Sec & Emg Prep</i> Y1-S1 <i>Administration of Justice I</i> Y1-S2 <i>Administration of Justice II</i> ** Y2-S1 <i>CJ Internship - Capstone Exp</i> Y2-S2
	Lisa Ward	Culinary	1	Basic Cooking Principals Y1-S1 Into. Of Professional Cooking Y1-S2 Professional Cooking ** Y2-YL
	Alex Johnston	M/H Truck Diesel	5	Suspenion, steering & Brakes Y1-S1 Electrical/Eleltronnic Systems Y1-S2 Diesel Engines/Preventative Maintenance ** Y2-YL
	Bethany Davis	Horticulture	1 (9)	Foundations of Horticulture Y1-S1 Plant Production Y1-S2 Landscape Design and Management ** Y2-S1 Horticultural Services Capstone Exp Y2-S2
	Jeremy Holland	Interactive Media Productions (IMP)	13	Prin of Art, Media & Comm -CTE Y1-S1 Interactive Media and Design Level I Y1-S2 Interactive Media and Design Level II ** Y2-S1 Interactive Media Portfolio Capstone Y2-S2
	Chris Parke	IT- Computer Networking	16	CISCO IT Networking I: IT Essentials Y1-S1 CISCO IT Networking II NDG Linux Essentials Y1-S2 CISCO IT Networking III: Network Essentials ** Y2-S1 CISCO IT Networking IV: Cyber Ops Y2-S2
	Zach Bartemy	Pre-Engineering- PLTW	7	IED- Intro. To Engineering Design Y1- S1 POE - Princ. Of Engineering Y1-S2 DE - Digital Engineering ** Y2-S1 AE- Aerospace Engineering Y2-Q3 EDD- Eng. Design and Development Y2- Q4
	Dawn Lankford	Teacher Academy of	24	Human Growth & Development Y1-S1 Teaching as a Profession Y1-S2

		Maryland (TAM)		Foundation Of Curriculum & Instr ** Y2-S1 Educational Academic Intern Y2-S2	
				Welding	2

OVERVIEW OF CTE PROGRAMS

The Somerset County Academic Handbook¹⁷ is available to the public. This handbook provides course descriptions of all courses choices provided to Somerset County high school students.

CTE PROGRAMS AND ENROLLMENT AT VISITING SCHOOLS

Schools with CTE Programs	CLUSTER	CTE PROGRAM	ENROLLMENT NUMBER	COMPLETION RATE	IRC ATTAINMENT RATE
Somerset County Technical High School Total Enrollment:	HB	Academy of Health (CNA)	22	8 of 8 =100%	7 of 8=88%
	AMP	Apprenticeship Maryland Program (AMP)	1	new	new
	TT	Automotive	9	4 of 5=80%	5 of 5=100%
	HB	Biomed-PLTW	43	17 of 17 =100%	NO IRC
	BMF	Business	17	7 of 9=78%	5 of 7=71%
	CD	Carpentry	28	11 of 12=92%	12 of 12=100%
	HRS	Criminal Justice	25	10 of 10=100%	NO IRC
	CSHT	Culinary	32	15 of 15= 100%	13 of 15=87%
	TT	M/H Truck Diesel	18	8 of 8= 100%	7 of 8=88%

¹⁷ [Somerset County Academic Handbook](#)

	EANR	Horticulture	14	7 of 7= 100%	6 of 7=86%
	AMC	Interactive Media Productions (IMP)	19	13 of 13=100%	10 of 13=77%
	IT	IT- Computer Networking	6	3 of 3= 100%	3 of 3= 100%
	MET	Pre-Engineering- PLTW	19	9 of 9=100%	NO IRC
	HRS	Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM)	20	9 of 9 = 100%	7 of 9=78%
	CD	Welding	10	new	new

LEA STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Maryland ¹⁸	Somerset County
District Student Demographics	276495	784
% Asian	7%	<1%
% American Indian / Alaska Native	<1%	<1%
% African American	33%	45%
% Hispanic	21%	11%
% Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	<1%	<5%
% Two or More Races	4%	7%
% White	34%	36%
% Students with Disabilities	11%	16.6%
# of Multi-Lingual Learners	9%	<5%
% Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS)	47%	72.5%
Child Poverty Rate % (2023) ¹⁹	12%	30.4%
Unemployment Rate % (2023) ²⁰	3%	3.2%

¹⁸ [Maryland Report Card](#)

¹⁹ [DataUSA](#)

²⁰ [MD State Archives](#)

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Nearby Universities & Community Colleges

WorWic Community College

Salisbury University

University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Economic [Profile](#)

Educational [Attainment](#)

Leading Business [Groups](#)

Appendix C | Visit Agenda

Visit Date: Wednesday, January 29, 2025 Time: 7:30am-3:00pm	<i>Location AM:</i> Somerset Technical High School 7994 Tawes Campus Dr, Westover, MD 2187	Arrival Time: 7:30am-7:45am
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AM Session: Somerset Technical High School

Team 1:		Team 2:	
Time	Activity	Time	Activity
7:30am-8:00am	Meet and Greet	7:30am-8:00am	Meet and Greet
8:00am-10:15am	School Tour & Discussion	8:00am-9:00am	Student Focus Group Location: Banquet Room
9:15am-10:15am	Counselor/AMP facilitator/ WBL Meeting Location: Banquet Room	9:15am-10:15am	Counselor/AMP facilitator/ WBL Meeting Location: Banquet Room
10:15am-10:30am	Break	10:15am-10:30am	Break
10:30am-11:30am	Teacher Focus Group Location: TAM Classroom (Rm:123)	10:30am-11:30am	Teacher Focus Group Location: Banquet Room
11:45am-12:45pm	Lunch	11:30am-12:15pm	Lunch
1:00pm-2:00pm	Student Focus Group Location: Banquet Room	12:15pm-2:15pm	School Tour & Discussion
2:15pm-2:45pm	End-of-Day Debrief	2:15pm-2:45pm	End-of-Day Debrief

Team Member Roles

Team 1		Team 2	
Facilitator/Recorder	John Strickland	Facilitator/Recorder	Brian Phillips
Notes/Time	James Bell	Notes/Time	Kristen Tilghman

LEA CTE Staff/School Administration	
Facilitator/Recorder	John Strickland
Notes/Time	Kristen Tilghman

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?



Maryland

GWDB CTE COMMITTEE

Governor's Workforce Development Board
Career and Technical Education Committee

www.gwdb.maryland.gov