

PA Schools Work When They Can Offer Students Career & Technical Education (CTE)

If Pennsylvania is to give every student a chance to succeed, it must do more for students seeking career and technical opportunities. Creating educational and career pathways for students is crucial to maintaining a competitive workforce, fostering economic growth, and bolstering Pennsylvania's middle class.



Career and technical education prepares students for successful careers and lifelong learning through higher-level skills and knowledge to enhance our workforce competitiveness in the 21st century global economy.

Policymakers understand the value of career and technical education, because they have invested in providing support to CTE over the last two state budget cycles. However, the Governor's 2020-21 state budget proposal does not include an increase.

Unfortunately, CTE is still not available to all students who want to attend, because many school districts simply cannot afford to enroll all interested students in those programs. This is troublesome, because data shows that career fields requiring CTE backgrounds are growing in demand.

The state Career and Technical Education Subsidy represents less than 8% of the total cost to fund career and technical education and federal Carl D. Perkins funding covers roughly 2% of a CTC's budget. **That leaves member school districts paying approximately 90% of the overall budget to send students to CTCs.**

At a time when many school districts in the state are continuing to struggle to meet basic education costs, this portion of the tab they are expected to pay for CTE is an added burden.

While competitive equipment grants of up to \$50,000 (requiring a \$50,000 local match for a total of \$100,000) are available through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, they defray only a fraction of the costs associated with providing a quality CTE experience for students.

Importance of 2020-21 Budget Investment

Members of the General Assembly have an opportunity to prioritize increased funding for career and technical education in the final 2020-21 state budget. This will ensure that all students who wish to be career-ready after graduation are prepared to enter the workforce and that no student lacks access to these programs.

While an increased investment was unfortunately not made a priority in the Governor's proposed budget, the legislature can capitalize on this opportunity and again make an increase of \$10 million in CTE in the budget.

The best use of this investment would be \$3 million allocated through the formula-driven Career and Technical Education Equipment Grant line and \$7 million appropriated through the Career and Technical Education subsidy.

Career and technical education is an integral part of the state system of economic and workforce development, and with support for CTE in the legislature, the business community and elsewhere at an all-time high, the failure to build on the momentum achieved in the past two budgets makes little sense, especially during a time when the focus on workforce development issues remains strong.

In some industries, employers are continuing to struggle to find qualified employees to fill vacancies, and yet, these positions go unfilled because prospective workers do not have the educational or professional background demanded by today's economy. Pennsylvania must be equipped to meet the demand to sustain economic growth and competitiveness by reliably and consistently investing in CTE at the state level.

PA Schools Work is a coalition of organizations from across Pennsylvania representing teachers and other educators; urban, suburban and rural communities; and parents and other community members working together to advocate for PA public schools, their students and the communities they serve.