



# Career & Technical Education Expert Review Team

Post-Visit Report  
TALBOT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Governor's Workforce Development Board  
Career and Technical Education Committee

April 2026

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

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# Executive Summary

The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("the *Blueprint*") established the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) to develop an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public schools, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce. As part of this effort, the *Blueprint* 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 Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS), located on the Eastern Shore, on April 9, 2025. This was the tenth CTE ERT visit conducted by the CTE Committee during the 2024-2025 School Year (SY). TCPS offers 15 CTE programs in Talbot County, which are offered at both TCPS high schools. Easton High School (EHS) located in Easton, Maryland and St. Michaels Middle and High School (SMMHS), located in St. Michaels, Maryland, serve as TCPS's comprehensive high schools, meaning they are traditional schools with core classes and include CTE offerings. The CTE ERT visited SMMHS in the morning session and visited EHS in the afternoon session, visiting all of the CTE programs offered in TCPS.

Three GWDB CTE Committee staff members, one CTE teacher from a neighboring LEA, two employer representatives, one Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board member (local workforce development board), one CTE Director from a neighboring LEA, two school administrators from a neighboring LEA, one career counselor from a neighboring LEA, one representative from a community college, and one representative from MSDE participated in the CTE ERT visit to TCPS. 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.

TCPS'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 14%, according to the Technical Skills Assessments (TSA) and IRC guidelines for the 2024-2025 SY.<sup>1</sup> TCPS's progress toward the 45% goal solely comes from IRC attainment, with no students completing the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship. For the 2023-2024 SY, 100% of graduating students in TCPS participated in CTE, meaning they had earned at least one credit in a CTE Program of Study. The 100% CTE participation rate among graduating students is a product of TCPS's curriculum design, where the introductory course for Interactive Media Production,

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<sup>1</sup> The updated [CTE IRC Policy](#), published in December 2024, does not go into effect until the 2025-2026 SY.

Computer Science, and multiple Engineering courses count toward graduation requirements. The difference between CTE participation rate at 100% and CTE concentration rate at 47% is therefore a reflection of this curriculum design as all students are exposed to CTE. TCPS's ability to retain CTE students is more accurately demonstrated through the difference between CTE concentrator rate at 47% of graduating students and CTE completer rate at 45% of graduating students, or 96% retention.

One unique aspect that may be considered a takeaway for the State would be how TCPS's career counselors teach Career Exploration, an elective course for middle school students that helps them better understand CTE pathways and how they connect to careers.

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

### **TCPS Internal Strengths**

- Teachers, Staff, and Administrators Go Above-and-Beyond for Students
- Teacher Legacy and a Strong New Teacher Mentorship Program
- CTE Program Access and Exploration
- Career Counselors Teach Career Exploration in Middle Schools
- School-to-Career Specialist Found Immediate Success
- School-Based Enterprises

### **TCPS Internal Challenges**

- Low Enrolment in Upper-Level CTE Courses
- Scheduling Hurdles
- CTE Teachers Have Difficult Workloads
- Career Counselors Seek Support and Clarity About Role
- Teachers Want More Internal Collaboration Opportunities
- IRC Assessments are Difficult and Do Not Prepare Students for Workforce
- Internal Communications
- Collaboration Gap Between School and Career Counselors

### **TCPS External Factors**

- Strength: Talbot County Community Support
- Strength: Teachers Want More PLC Opportunities
- Challenge: Varied Perspectives About the Relationship with Chesapeake College, the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, and Program Advisory Committees (PACs)
- Challenge: State Has Conflicting Messaging About CTE as a Priority
- Challenge: Participation in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs)
- Challenge: Lack of Available Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities

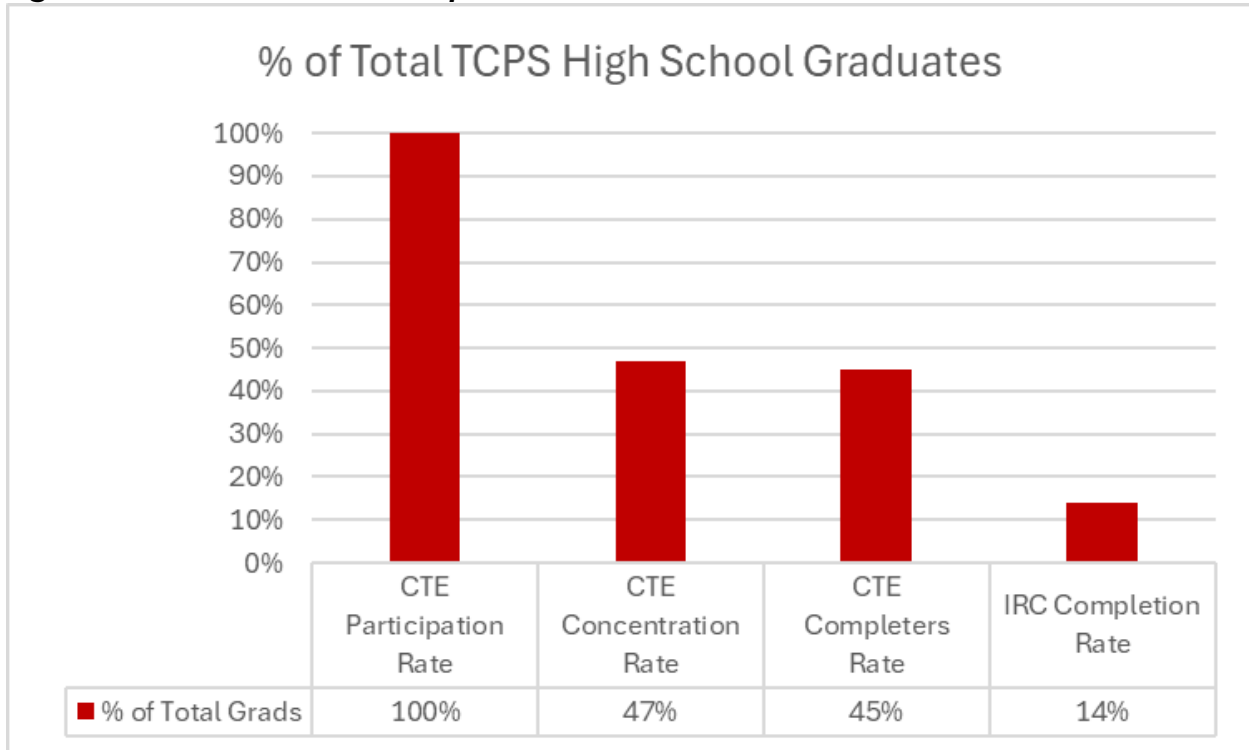
### **TCPS Potential Next Steps**

- Create Collaboration and Communication Pathways Among Career Counselors, CTE Teachers, and School Counselors
- Improve CTE Communication and Retention by Creating More of a "CTE Identity"
- Coordinate with TCPS Stakeholders on the Values of IRCs
- Explore External Collaborations in the Eastern Shore and Upper Shore
- Clearly Define and Communicate Career Counselors' Role and Include Them in Decision-Making
- Explore Technical Assistance with MSDE and the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) in meeting the *Blueprint's* 45% Goal

The CTE Committee staff, along with the CTE ERT, have collaborated on this report to provide observations and preliminary points of analysis to readers. In this document, readers will find the purpose of the CTE ERT, a brief explanation of TCPS, 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](mailto:GWDB.CTE@maryland.gov).

**Figure 1: TCPS CTE and IRC completion rates 2023-2024 SY.**



# 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> The goals of these visits are to: 1) review alignment of district programs and practices with *Blueprint* vision and policies, 2) assure a 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.<sup>4</sup>

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

The CTE Expert Review Team visit to TCPS 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).

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<sup>2</sup> Executive Order No. 01.01.2023.22. (2023). <https://tinyurl.com/execorder01012023>

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

<sup>4</sup> Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, <https://bit.ly/3W0JoeU>

# About Talbot County Public School System

Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS), located in the Eastern Shore, enrolls 1,454 high school students, and has a 14% IRC Completion rate for graduating high school students. The LEA offers 15 CTE programs covering a wide range of areas of specialization, from Automotive Technician to Teacher Academy of Maryland. TCPS is in alignment with the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board's (USWIB) and state's focus on building key sectors like healthcare, skilled trades, and food service. The CTE programs with the highest enrollment are Interactive Media Production and Computer Science because introductory courses in these pathways count for other graduation requirements. TCPS has plans to expand the CNA program to include the new CNA/GNA requirements to meet student interest and potential to begin an Entrepreneurship program to meet community interest. This demonstrates TCPS's focus on developing a robust workforce targeting computer science, food service, and healthcare as key sectors, sectors the USWIB and the state targeted as key sectors in their Four-Year Local Plan 2024-2028.<sup>5</sup> One unique aspect about TCPS is how they have assigned career counselors to teach a Career Exploration elective in the middle schools, which will be a required course for all 6th grade students in SY 2025-2026. Career counselors use Pathful and other career resources to help students make connections between career pathways and TCPS's offerings. This opportunity for career exploration in middle school allows for students to become familiar with career counselors, to begin creating plans for their career pathway, and to connect TCPS offerings to their career pathway.

Students enrolled in CTE programs have the opportunity to earn IRCs and 14% of graduating students earned an IRC; however, this rate comes from the previously approved Technical Skills Assessment (TSA) and IRC list as the updated list approved by the CTE Committee does not go into effect until the SY 2025-2026. The CTE ERT learned TCPS did not have any students participate in Registered Apprenticeships, so TCPS's progress toward the 45% goal solely comes from IRC attainment. The CTE IRC Policy published in December 2024 may impact TCPS' attainment rate for 2025 and beyond.<sup>6</sup> TCPS has 100% of students participate in at least one CTE course, with 45% of graduating students completing a CTE program.

TCPS has CTE offerings at both high schools, Easton High School (EHS) and St. Michaels Middle and High School (SMMHS). TCPS has an open enrollment process, meaning students face no barriers to CTE enrollment. Career and school counselors in middle schools collaborate with students to create 5-year plans in 8th grade, which charts out students' high school coursework. High school counselors meet with students annually to discuss any

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<sup>5</sup> Upper Shore Workforce Investment Four-Year Local Plan 2024-2028:

<https://tinyurl.com/mw5nm2wr>

<sup>6</sup> GWDB CTE Committee. (December 2024). Career and Technical Education: Industry-Recognized Credentials.

<https://www.gwdb.maryland.gov/policy/gwdbcte2024commindustrycredentialpolicy.pdf>



possible revisions to this plan. Students interested in Cosmetology, which is hosted in Caroline County Technical Center, or interested in a CTE program at a different high school in TCPS receive transportation to participate in those programs.

# 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, Talbot County Public Schools' (TCPS's) CTE Lead Staff provided an overview of the Local Education Agency's (LEA's) CTE system, explaining TCPS's data on students' demographics and enrollment in CTE, TCPS's career counseling structure, and CTE program insights. This pre-visit orientation helped the CTE ERT understand the specific context and priorities of Talbot County's CTE programs, setting the stage for focused observations and discussions during the visit.

During the visit, the CTE ERT visited St. Michaels Middle and High School (SMMHS) in the AM session and Easton High School (EHS) in the PM session. 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 both schools, 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 TCPS 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 TCPS 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: Teachers, Staff, and Administrators Go Above-and-Beyond for Students**

The most prevalent observation the CTE ERT made throughout the visit was how much passion TCPS teachers, staff, and administrators have for supporting students and how frequently they go above-and-beyond for students. The CTE ERT heard many times throughout the visit to TCPS, "We make it work." CTE teachers teach multiple sections in the same block and some teachers have as many as five preps, meaning they teach five different courses, whereas the standard tends to be for teachers to have three-to-four preps in a district the size of TCPS. Teachers told the CTE ERT about the connections they make with students and how crucial that is for their work:

***"They [students] spend so much time with us. They're not getting us for just a year. We know them more than other kids. If they start as a freshman, I see them grow up."***

Another teacher added, "We have a passion for our students. We have a passion for our community. Our students become our community." Another teacher agreed, adding, "They [students] really become your kids. I just want to help support them. I enjoyed being a CTE teacher to help students navigate life after high school." Administrators and staff also told the CTE ERT about how they do not say "no" to students and that they find, "We make it work" to be their unofficial motto. For instance, career counselors assist with arrival and dismissal, monitor lunch, or other duties as needed to support the school and informally connect with students.

Students acknowledged the ways TCPS faculty, staff, and administrators prioritize students' interests and needs, with one student telling the CTE ERT, "If I didn't do this program, I wouldn't know where I would be." Another student agreed, telling the CTE ERT they wish they could restart the program from the beginning. The CTE ERT observed how faculty, staff, and administrators figure out how to make it work in order to support TCPS students.

#### **Strength: Teacher Legacy and a Strong New Teacher Mentorship Program**

The CTE ERT observed the New Teacher Mentorship Program as a strength, especially in onboarding new teachers who have a plethora of industry experience. Many of the CTE teachers the CTE ERT spoke to had either worked at TCPS for a long time, graduated from a TCPS high school, or graduated high school from a neighboring LEA. One TCPS teacher has been a teacher at TCPS for over 50 years. Five other teachers reported they have been teaching for over 20 years. A handful of the CTE teachers the CTE ERT spoke to shared that they graduated high school from TCPS or a neighboring LEA. This plethora of teaching experience, paired with the knowledge for the Eastern Shore's local contexts, helps onboard new CTE teachers who may have industry experience, but do not have much teaching experience. Two CTE teachers who were recently hired spoke highly of the New Teacher Mentorship Program, especially for engaging students. New teachers are onboarded in the summer before they start teaching, where they learn about pedagogy and the curriculum they will be teaching. Teachers are assigned a mentor to meet with weekly to support them in lesson planning, assessment, classroom management, unpacking standards, and other subjects. Given the legacy of teachers at TCPS, paired with lived experience for Talbot County's specific local context, TCPS's New Teacher Mentorship Program is a strength because it helps prepare new teachers with a great deal of industry experience to transition to teaching and the needs of TCPS students. This legacy and New Teacher Mentorship Program have contributed to TCPS's informal motto: "We make it work."

### **Strength: CTE Program Access and Exploration**

The CTE Lead Designee shared with the CTE ERT that students sometimes try multiple programs before choosing their pathway. CTE exploration seems to be an important goal for TCPS, and having CTE integrated into each high school instead of at a separate CTE Center may be an important factor contributing to this mindset. The CTE ERT observed how CTE was integrated into school curriculum and students did not think of CTE as a separate entity, as the CTE ERT has observed in LEAs that have a CTE Center. The comprehensive high school model, where TCPS has traditional schools that also house CTE offerings, allows students to access CTE courses without committing to the entire program or committing to a different school. This allows students to enroll in multiple CTE courses before choosing the right program for them and it also allows for students to complete multiple CTE programs. All 346 graduating students earned at least one credit in a CTE program of study, demonstrating how accessible CTE is for TCPS students. Students do not need to apply to be a part of a CTE program and incur no costs during the program.

TCPS currently does not have any barriers to enrollment in CTE programs as there are no fees, waitlists, applications, assessments, or evaluations to enroll. In order to enroll in a CTE program, students complete their 5-year plans with school counselors in 8th grade, which maps out their high school journey. This information is then entered into PowerSchool to create student schedules. School counselors meet with students annually to discuss any possible revisions or modifications, but ultimately, school counselors either review or enter course requests. TCPS covers the cost of uniforms, assessment fees, transportation, etc., so cost is not a barrier to TCPS students for enrollment or participation. Through the "Cross-Campus" program, where students receive bus transportation to the other high school, students may enroll in a CTE program at the other high school in TCPS and receive bus transportation. The Cosmetology program in Caroline County Public Schools also hosts up to

eight TCPS students, who receive bus transportation to the Caroline Career and Technology Center. All of TCPS's graduating students earned at least one credit in a CTE program of study and TCPS has removed many transportation and budget barriers to enrolling into CTE, making TCPS's CTE program access and emphasis on exploration a strength.

### **Strength: Career Counselors Teach Career Exploration in Middle Schools**

Beginning in SY 2024-2025, TCPS began offering Career Exploration as an elective course, taught by TCPS's career counselors and classroom teachers using Pathful and other resources. According to the career counseling team, career counselors collaborated to create the curriculum and are categorized as the instructor of record for this course. This Career Exploration course is categorized as a Related Arts elective. TCPS leadership shared that this class has been doing so well that their long-term plan is to require all 6th grade students to complete the Career Exploration course. The CTE ERT saw this Career Exploration course as a strength because it helps students connect their career interest with a CTE Pathway. Moreover, the Career Exploration course helps build key, foundational skills that can translate into all CTE programs. Although the Career Exploration course is relatively new, it has great potential for career counselors to establish connections with students and sustain those connections throughout their TCPS journey and beyond. The CTE Committee will be eager to see how TCPS builds and expands the Career Exploration course in middle schools.

### **Strength: School-to-Career Specialist Found Immediate Success**

During focus group conversations, the CTE ERT learned about the success the School-to-Career Specialist has had in their first year. This is their first year in the role and this individual has received praise from career counselors, teachers, administrators, and neighboring LEA representatives. The School-to-Career Specialist has faced the daunting challenge of working with students to explore work-based learning (WBL) opportunities and has helped place 22 students into Youth Apprenticeships for SY 2024-2025, with 12 of them completing their Youth Apprenticeship. The School-to-Career Specialist admitted that it is more difficult to place students into apprenticeships than internships because apprenticeships have stricter guidelines. Overall, 87 out of TCPS's 346 graduating students, or 25%, participated in some form of WBL. Moreover, the CTE ERT learned that the School-to-Career Specialist is the instructor of record for WBL opportunities and created a syllabus students must follow in order to earn credit. Students must complete reflective assignments that help students build metacognition, which is the ability to observe and regulate how an individual learns or solves a problem. Ultimately, the School-to-Career Specialist has been one of TCPS's strengths.

### **Strength: School-Based Enterprises**

TCPS, especially Easton High School (EHS), has had a great deal of success with their school-based enterprises. Students from Graphic Design and Marketing collaborated to establish Easton High School Threads, a school-based enterprise that designs and creates some of EHS's jerseys and athletic wear for the sports teams as well as school-branded merchandise. The CTE Lead Designee shared with the CTE ERT that EHS Threads has created competition for local businesses that used to supply EHS's jerseys and athletic apparel. In addition, the Culinary teacher at EHS told the CTE ERT that they have catered over 85 events in SY 2024-2025 and that they hold a "Garden Bowl" event every Wednesday, where staff each pay \$5

and the Culinary program provides them with a multiple course meal for lunch. The Culinary teacher told the CTE ERT how much they have enjoyed working with students,

***“This has been a highlight of my life.”***

TCPS’s engagement with school-based enterprises is a strength because it helps students put what they learn to immediate practice while still in a learning environment.

### **Challenge: Low Enrolment in Upper-Level CTE Courses**

Throughout the CTE ERT visit, a theme that came up frequently was small class sizes in upper-level CTE courses as the root cause of some other challenges. At TCPS, 6 out of the 15 CTE programs are reported to be underenrolled. Even though TCPS has 100% of graduating students participate in CTE, 47% of graduating students, less than half, were a CTE concentrator, meaning they had completed at least two courses and are enrolled in a third course within a CTE program of study. Despite TCPS’s strong recruitment with 100% participation, the introductory course for Interactive Media Production, Computer Science, and multiple Engineering courses count for other graduation requirements. Often, students taking these courses are not doing so because they are exploring the CTE pathway, but they are taking a required course for graduation. In other words, the 100% CTE participation rate is a product of graduation requirements. Among graduating students, 47% were CTE concentrators and 45% completed a CTE program, indicating a 96% retention rate among those interested in a CTE pathway. TCPS also had some students complete multiple CTE programs, so there was confusion on how to differentiate “dual completer data” from “CTE completer data”, meaning it is possible for an individual student to be counted twice as a CTE completer.

Ultimately, the challenge teachers shared with the CTE ERT is that the reason classes are cut or combined is because students are not enrolling in upper-level CTE courses. It would be inaccurate to say this data analysis comparing CTE participation and CTE concentrator rates suggests TCPS is facing a challenge with retaining CTE students to complete their CTE program, but it would be accurate to say TCPS’s curriculum design has led to 100% CTE participation among graduating students. Several of the individuals the CTE ERT spoke to explained that the emphasis on career exploration should stay because students need the space to explore the kind of work that interests them. Teachers also told the CTE ERT that there were students in their introductory classes they felt were there because of scheduling constraints, not because they were interested in exploring that CTE program.

The CTE ERT learned that a few students had taken courses in multiple CTE programs without finishing any CTE program. The CTE Lead Designee told the CTE ERT that some students choose to take a CTE course for the experience rather than commit to an entire program. TCPS students earn elective credit for completing a CTE course and the CTE Lead Designee suggested that if these courses were not available in their local high school, it would be impossible for these students to explore those interests. Students earn elective credits for completing introductory CTE courses, but do not have as much of an incentive to complete a CTE program.

On the other hand, TCPS is also facing related challenges with informing students about CTE programs, which may be a factor for why upper-level CTE courses have low enrollment. Students told the CTE ERT that they learned about CTE during their 8th grade tour of CTE, but did not receive much guidance or information about CTE during their high school experience. During focus groups with students, the CTE ERT informally polled students and all of the students learned about their CTE program when they were in 8th grade, from a family member, or their own research. Teachers affirmed this perspective, with one teacher explaining that neither students on their athletic teams they coach nor their core classes knew much about CTE.

Another factor students and teachers both told the CTE ERT is that CTE is in direct competition with AP, Dual Enrollment, and other school-based programs. Teachers identified scheduling hurdles, which will be detailed later in this report, as an important factor for why students do not complete a CTE program. Especially in a district as small as TCPS, there may be only one section of an AP class, and if that AP class is at the same time as a CTE class, then a student must choose between an AP class and completing their CTE program. The CTE Lead Designee confirmed this perspective, informing the CTE ERT that many upper-level CTE courses are first period and so are AP classes.

Although TCPS is facing challenges with enrollment in upper-level CTE courses, students and teachers praised the work of the career counselors. Career counselors frequently put on events like their weekly “Lunch and Learns”, resume workshops, and other career advising events that simultaneously recruit CTE students. Moreover, the Career Exploration course the career counselors teach in the middle schools will serve as an effective recruiting tool to assist students with making the connections between their career aspirations and CTE programs. One career coach has partnered with local businesses to do a “Girls in the Shop Club”, where they complete building projects and break the stigma that the field is only for one type of person. Even though TCPS faces a set of nuanced challenges with enrollment in upper-level CTE courses, administrators, counselors, and teachers are working together to find solutions to alleviate this hurdle.

### **Challenge: Scheduling Hurdles**

Another theme that came up frequently during the TCPS visit was scheduling hurdles. Scheduling challenges are common for all school districts, but the set of scheduling challenges TCPS is facing are nuanced and interrelated to other factors. Teachers and career counselors expressed frustration over not knowing anything about how schedules are created in TCPS. It is common for there to be scheduling changes leading up to the beginning of a term, but career counselors were particularly frustrated with scheduling changes without much time to prepare. Teachers talked about how one teacher may end up teaching 11 courses over the course of the year, while another teacher may end up only teaching 4. One teacher told the CTE ERT that they only teach four class periods, but one of those class periods has three different sections they have to teach at the same time. Another teacher shared that they have five different sections to prepare for, but it is conventional for a district of this size to have teachers prepare for three or four sections.

One CTE ERT member shared with the team that it is not uncommon for CTE teachers in comprehensive high schools to be overloaded with course preparations because they may have been hired as a core subject teacher and still have to teach those core classes to reach FTE.<sup>7</sup> Districts with a dedicated CTE Tech Center allow CTE teachers to be pulled out of the comprehensive high schools to reach FTE by focusing strictly on CTE courses. Another CTE ERT member agreed, explaining that when not enough students sign up for a CTE course, teachers must choose between not teaching the CTE course or combining it with another course in the same scheduling block. A third member affirmed the other perspectives and noted that a school would never expect a math teacher to teach geometry and calculus at the same time, but that is essentially what is being asked of TCPS CTE teachers.

The CTE ERT observed challenges with teaching schedules that impact teachers and career counselors, but students offered a valuable perspective toward the scheduling hurdles TCPS is facing. Students face scheduling hurdles as a consequence of transportation challenges with the Cross-Campus program, which is the program that transports students to another TCPS high school to participate in a program that is only offered there. Students and teachers reported that students are frequently 15 minutes late for their first class. In addition, for whatever reason a student may not be able to fit a class they want into their schedule, teachers will do an “Independent Study” for students so they might sit in a different class and they will be independently aligned with the class that does not fit in their schedule. Even though students are still able to complete the course, they miss out on the classroom experience when in “Independent Study”.

Overall, at the root of the scheduling hurdles TCPS faces is inconsistent or a lack of interest in TCPS's upper-level CTE offerings. TCPS is facing these scheduling hurdles because programs are underenrolled, especially upper-level classes. TCPS will come up with innovative solutions to “make it work” to support students, but scheduling hurdles were a common theme heard throughout the CTE ERT visit to TCPS.

### **Challenge: CTE Teachers Have Difficult Workloads**

As previously mentioned, it is typical for a district the size of TCPS to have teachers prepare for three to four different sections, but the CTE ERT observed a difficult workload with one teacher preparing for five different sections, another teacher teaching a total of 11 classes, and teachers teaching up to three different sections at the same time. Teachers told the CTE ERT that this is an extremely challenging workload and it is leading teachers to burnout, with one teacher saying they are “barely hanging on.” In focus groups, CTE teachers explained that teaching in TCPS is not for everyone and that teachers must have a passion for their students. Teachers explained that there has been some turnover because some teachers were unable to keep up with the quantity of classes they teach at TCPS. One teacher described how this is not a sustainable model;

***“Students are at the mercy of teachers doing it out of the kindness of their heart,”***

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<sup>7</sup> Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) is a unit of measurement to represent a full-time workload; “reaching FTE” refers to a teacher fulfilling their contracted number of instructional hours, often by teaching additional core subjects when their CTE courses have low enrollment.

As mentioned above in the “Scheduling Hurdles” section, TCPS’s Comprehensive High School model may be an important factor for why some teachers seem to be facing a difficult workload. School districts will hire a teacher to teach a core subject, like science. Then, they will create a CTE program and convince the science teacher to teach in a program like Project Lead the Way (PLTW)-Biomedical Sciences. Enrollment in the program may decrease, especially for upper-level classes, which leads to a situation where the teacher must choose between teaching the CTE course with low enrollment and not reaching their full FTE or combining the CTE course with a core class and teaching them at the same time to maintain their full FTE. TCPS teachers face a challenging workload having to teach multiple sections at the same time or with an overwhelming amount of sections to prepare for.

CTE teachers have to do so many different tasks at TCPS, but several teachers explained how difficult it was to prepare students for IRC assessments. A few teachers explained their frustration with IRCs by claiming that it was not actually preparing students for the workplace. One teacher explained that they can teach students to pass an IRC assessment or be prepared for the realities of the workplace, but they do not have enough time with students to prepare them for both. In other words, it is not just the quantity of course preparations, but also the quality of instruction that seems to create a challenging workload for TCPS’s CTE teachers. While teachers conveyed appreciation for the work career counselors are doing in TCPS, teachers told the CTE ERT that they were reaching out to businesses for internship support. Some teachers told the CTE ERT that they were well-connected with the community and felt pressure to take the lead on helping students explore WBL opportunities. A lot of this work should be part of the roles and responsibilities of the School-to-Career Specialist who is still new to their role and a strength noted earlier in this report, so the CTE ERT expects at least part of the teachers’ workload to be easier to manage in the near future. Regardless, TCPS teachers face a difficult set of challenges with both the quantity and quality of their teaching workload.

### **Challenge: Career Counselors Seek Support and Clarity About Role**

The CTE ERT observed how TCPS’s career counselors were not included with the rest of the school or were left to figure things out on their own. Career counselors shared that they have a lack of support, resources, and structure to help them be successful at their work. In the summer before career counselors began their work in TCPS, their role was introduced to TCPS teachers, but the individual career counselors were not introduced to teachers or staff. Career counselors told the CTE ERT that they faced hesitation from teachers and staff at schools because they thought they were there to interrupt class time. Perhaps a factor for this slow introduction of career counselors was that both career counselors in SY 23-24 split their team between Easton High School/Easton Middle School and St. Michaels Middle and High School (SMMHS). Career counselors had to do push-ins to connect with students and teachers, which helped alleviate the lack of a structured introduction to onboard the career counselors. In SY 24-25, TCPS was able to add a career counselor who was specifically dedicated to SMMHS, creating more clarity about career counselors’ role at each school - Easton High School, Easton Middle School, and SMMHS. Despite the hesitation at the beginning, career counselors told the CTE ERT that teachers and staff are supportive and great colleagues.

Perhaps the lack of inclusion and guidance for career counselors in TCPS has led to a situation where career counselors are given tasks outside their role. The career counseling focus group revealed how they are “at the behest of the principal” and must work with the building managers too. Career counselors told the CTE ERT that they will be assigned tasks throughout the day, like coordinating student drop-off and pickup, calling parents to get chaperones for field trips, etc. without much consideration for what work they were doing at that time. That said, the career counseling focus group informed the CTE ERT that their biggest challenge was convincing both students and employers about the benefits of WBL opportunities, and that some sort of “Best Practices Report” would benefit them greatly. Despite a few strengths coming from TCPS’s Career Coaching team, the CTE ERT observed confusion about their role as a challenge, but TCPS has made substantial progress addressing this challenge. In an update from the CTE Lead Designee, the CTE ERT learned that TCPS has made substantial progress in implementing career advising across the curriculum by integrating career counselors into the schools with greater effectiveness.

### **Challenge: Teachers Want More Internal Collaboration Opportunities**

Career counselors were not the only ones who wanted more guidance in their role as TCPS teachers told the CTE ERT about how they want more opportunities to collaborate with each other. In the focus group at EHS, teachers told the CTE ERT about how they participate in Program Advisory Committees (PACs) at Chesapeake College. While the PACs may be helpful, especially in establishing industry connections and staying up to date with industry trends, teachers agreed that they wish they could collaborate amongst themselves and find opportunities for cross-program problem-solving. At both schools, teachers told the CTE ERT that they must attend professional development that is not geared toward CTE teachers. One teacher told the CTE ERT that CTE gets deprioritized because MSDE assesses schools using math, literacy, and science scores. Teachers shared that because of this dynamic, they must take it on themselves to find collaboration opportunities and keep up with industry trends.

One important area the teachers focused on was the ability to identify common challenges and strategize solutions. TCPS has multiple award-winning and highly regarded teachers who may be able to offer useful resources, support, and peer mentoring, especially for teachers who have a plethora of industry experience, but not much teaching experience. Although TCPS has the New Teacher Mentoring program, it became clear that teachers wanted the opportunity for continued and ongoing collaboration. SMMHS’s Teacher Academy of Maryland instructor has nearly two dozen years worth of experience and has instructed many TCPS graduates who became teachers in the Eastern Shore. Perhaps this individual may lend some of their teaching expertise to help create more support for CTE teachers. There is one Interactive Media Production teacher at each school and they encounter similar problems, but with some structured collaborative time, these two teachers would be able to collaborate on how to overcome these common challenges.<sup>8</sup> Both teachers

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<sup>8</sup> Under *the Blueprint*, teacher collaborative time is supposed to increase from 20% to 40% of teacher FTE, but there have been delays in the implementation of this change due to a teacher shortage in Maryland.

confirmed that they have had to find time to collaborate, but it is difficult for them to find the time because they are pulled in so many different directions.

Teachers told the CTE ERT that their planning period is frequently filled with students who need extra help, need more time in the lab, etc., which creates another hurdle when trying to collaborate with other teachers. TCPS's CTE teachers have a difficult workload and believe finding more structured time to collaborate with other CTE teachers can help them more effectively serve their students. In an update after the visit, the CTE ERT learned that Eastern Shore CTE teachers have created collaboration pathways with other CTE teachers and the feedback on this collaboration has been overwhelmingly positive. This regional collaboration and *the Blueprint* goal to increase teacher collaboration time has great potential for addressing this challenge.

### **Challenge: IRC Assessments are Difficult and Do Not Prepare Students for Workforce**

Both teachers and students told the CTE ERT that they believe their CTE curriculum can either help students obtain IRCs or prepare them for the workforce, but it cannot do both. Teachers told the CTE ERT that the current IRCs do not prepare students for the workforce and that many of the state-approved IRCs are not in alignment with workforce needs.<sup>9</sup> Teachers agreed that IRC assessments require a different skillset for students because they are performing lower-order cognitive tasks, like prioritizing passive recall rather than critical application or conceptual development. As one teacher noted in a focus group,

***“It’s [IRC assessments] more about vocabulary and topical understandings of concepts instead of application of knowledge.”***

Teachers told the CTE ERT that some students struggle with assessments and test-taking, so they seek out CTE courses because they tend to be project-based. These students will also struggle taking IRC assessments, suggesting that IRCs are not a comprehensive measure for skill or success. Teachers also shared their frustration that some IRC assessments do not have study guides that match the assessment, making it more difficult for teachers to know what content to teach. Considering “hands-on learning” seems to be one of the most frequently cited reasons why students enroll in CTE courses throughout the state, students and teachers agreed that IRC assessments are particularly challenging because they do not align with why students chose to enroll in CTE courses.

Not only did teachers and students categorize IRC assessments as challenging because it requires a different cognitive skill than their CTE curriculum, but they also explained that IRC assessments are not preparing students for the workplace. Students expressed frustration that CTE courses have too much breadth and not enough depth, but IRC assessments require depth of knowledge. For example, a student may earn the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) A5 certification (ASE Student Certification for Brakes), but because the assessment is about memorization rather than application of concepts, students are not prepared for the workplace. One student said,

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<sup>9</sup> While this may be the teachers' perspective, the IRC policy includes several required criteria to ensure it is aligned with workforce needs.

***“The CTE program is not realistic to what you’re doing in the field. It gives you all the knowledge, but the actual work you’re doing is not similar to how it is in the field.”***

Even though programs like Auto Tech have a high rate of IRC attainment, students and teachers believe that IRC assessments are difficult on students and do not help them prepare for the workplace. Several students shared that they would much rather “be prepared for college” than complete another assessment and earn a certification. Students also shared that they believe many of the IRCs that are offered in TCPS are not in alignment with industry needs. One CNA student said,

***“You learn so you can pass the tests, but the hospital is not the same. At the hospital, you’re focused on efficiency.”***

Another student agreed, explaining that their capstone project included research that will help them prepare to do the kind of research they will be doing in college. A few students disagreed; one student in the Interactive Media Production program explained that the IRC they earned has helped them prepare “for the realities of the profession.” Perhaps one of the reasons why students did not see the value of IRCs was because teachers either did not know about IRCs in their field or they did not see it as valuable for students to earn. A few teachers at both schools did not seem to know exactly what IRCs were available in their field for students to earn and were uninterested in getting to know more about the value of IRCs. Teachers at both schools explained that they can either teach students to pass a test or teach students how to develop industry-relevant skills, but they cannot do both. Ultimately, the CTE ERT observed how TCPS CTE teachers and students did not see the value of IRCs and this is a hurdle for TCPS accomplishing the 45% goal. That said, the implementation of the new CTE programs of study in SY 2027-2028 will help make a clearer connection between CTE programs and their corresponding IRCs.

### **Challenge: Internal Communications**

The CTE ERT observed internal communication as a challenge that was related to several of the other challenges the CTE ERT observed. Teachers and career counselors explained that the other challenges would be alleviated if there were clearer communication pathways in TCPS. Teachers told the CTE ERT that their schedule frequently changed in the weeks leading up to the beginning of the term, with teachers sometimes being assigned courses they have never taught before or have not taught in several years, giving them little time to prepare. One teacher told the CTE ERT that they lost two introductory sections because of scheduling issues, which leads to fewer students enrolled in the program overall, which may ultimately lead to the sunseting of their program. This teacher was instead assigned a different course in an unrelated subject they had no experience or expertise in, and learned about it in June and had to begin teaching the course in August. This teacher explained that this is a combination of scheduling and communication challenges because if they knew they were going to lose their introductory courses, they could have done more work to develop student interest. That said, this can happen to teachers that are dual certified - teaching CTE alongside core content, most commonly with Science/BioMed and Art/Graphic Design. Due to enrollment challenges, several CTE programs could not run in both schools if the teacher was not also teaching core content.

Students were also concerned about the lack of information they had about CTE offerings at both high schools. In the “Student Recruitment and Retention” section, this report outlined the challenges TCPS is facing with recruiting students into CTE and retaining those students to complete their CTE program. Students told the CTE ERT that they learned about CTE in 8th grade, but that they did not hear about it much over the course of their high school experience. Several students agreed that sharing information about CTE to students was a hurdle. In addition to lack of knowledge about CTE offerings, students shared that they enrolled in CTE programs to dive deeper into a niche they want to pursue, but the CTE courses they took covered a wide breadth of topics without allowing them to focus on their niche interests. For instance, one student shared that they were passionate about architecture and knew that is what they wanted to study and pursue, but their Pre-Engineering courses only vaguely touched on architecture and did not give them space to explore and pursue this specific area. Students told the CTE ERT that TCPS’s communication hurdles are associated with both knowing about CTE offerings and also what those course offerings entail and cover.

Career counselors told the CTE ERT that they were never formally introduced to teachers or students, and that this created extra challenges for them as they developed their foundation for career advising in TCPS. Career counselors explained that administrators introduced the staff and teachers to the career counseling team during an all-staff meeting, but that it was a quick introduction that told all the staff the career counselors’ role without going into detail about who they were or what they brought to TCPS. Career counselors shared how difficult it was to create connections with staff, students, and teachers because there was uncertainty about their role, but after they became familiar, it seemed like staff and teachers were very supportive. One teacher raved about the career counselors and the work they are doing to provide career advising to students and taking that workload off the teachers’ shoulders. Career counselors had a challenging time establishing a foothold in TCPS because of the lack of internal communication pathways to effectively introduce the career counseling team, but career counselors found a way to make it work and support students through their career advising work.

The School-to-Career Specialist told the CTE ERT that the biggest challenge they have with coordinating students to participate in WBL is that they simply do not know the opportunity is there. The School-to-Career Specialist explained that the students are frequently told and reminded about the benefits of college, but not about WBL opportunities. While TCPS is facing challenges associated with internal communications, the CTE ERT learned after the visit that TCPS has made a more concerted effort to include CTE teachers in student marketing and enrollment so they can more accurately anticipate what classes will look like in the following Fall.

### **Challenge: Collaboration Gap Between School and Career Counselors**

An important challenge that came up in the career counseling focus group was the lack of collaboration opportunities between school and career counselors. The CTE ERT learned that career counselors were using Pathful and school counselors were using Naviance, but career counselors went months without being able to access Naviance. Career counselors explained that their schedules can be chaotic and inconsistent as they are school employees and are at

the behest of their Principal and Building Administrator. Because of this, career counselors reported that they believe there is confusion amongst school staff about what their role is and may be a factor as to why there is such little collaboration between school and career counselors. There also seemed to be a bit of confusion about career counselors' role in creating connections external to TCPS and attending meetings off-campus, but the CTE Lead Designee acknowledged that this confusion about external collaboration has been rectified. The School-to-Career Specialist has taken on the role of creating connections with businesses, but both school and career counselors are student-facing and can potentially become more efficient and effective if they were to explore more opportunities to collaborate.

## ***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: Talbot County Community Support**

Teachers and career counselors from Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) told the CTE ERT about how critical community support has been. Career counselors shared the various programs they have with volunteers from the community to come speak to students about career opportunities, career advising, and career pathways. Career counselors and teachers raved about the success of the "Lunch and Learn" program where students may sign up to have lunch with a different industry professional every-other-Wednesday to learn about their perspective. The School-to-Career Specialist told the CTE ERT about the progress they have made in their first year to convince local employers to sponsor work-based learning (WBL) opportunities. The School-to-Career Specialist praised the previous WBL Coordinator, who is now a career counselor, for having detailed notes on all of the local businesses they have tried to recruit to sponsor WBL opportunities. While the School-to-Career Specialist acknowledged they face a set of nuanced hurdles with informing students about WBL opportunities, both teachers and career counselors expressed gratitude for the support they have received from the Talbot County community.

Teachers also raved about the community support they receive. As previously mentioned, the Carpentry teacher informed the CTE ERT that they receive donated lumber from a neighboring roofing company, which not only allows students to practice and develop their skills, but it is also an integral part of their school-based enterprise as they build and sell birdhouses using that donated lumber. The teachers from the Culinary program also raved about the community support they receive to help students develop their skills, explaining how local farms donate goods, like produce and dairy products, which are integral to their success. Teachers noted community support has been integral to the success of their CTE programs, and the CTE Lead Designee agreed, explaining the importance of community support for Youth Apprenticeships. Ultimately, the CTE ERT observed that the Talbot County community supports TCPS students, staff, and teachers through various ways and that their support has been integral to TCPS's CTE programs.

### **External Strength: Teachers Want More PLC Opportunities**

Teachers at both schools talked about how they are interested in finding more opportunities to develop professional learning communities (PLCs) both internally in TCPS and externally with other LEAs in the Upper Shore. Teachers at Easton High School (EHS) talked about attending PLC opportunities in Baltimore City and in Baltimore County. Teachers at St. Michaels Middle and High School (SMMHS) did not offer specifics for the type of PLC opportunities they participated in, but did acknowledge that administrators were supportive of teachers finding PLC opportunities. That said, teachers at both schools explained that they want more opportunities to build and participate in PLCs, especially with peers who teach

similar courses in the Upper Shore. Teachers at both schools acknowledged that many of the professional development opportunities they experience at TCPS are geared toward core classes and are sometimes irrelevant to CTE teachers. While it is a common occurrence for school districts, especially those without a CTE center, to prioritize professional development opportunities that may seem irrelevant to CTE teachers, it is a strength at TCPS to support CTE teachers' building and participating in PLC opportunities.

### **External Challenge: Varied Perspectives About the Relationship with Chesapeake College, the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, and Program Advisory Committees (PACs)**

TCPS teachers told the CTE ERT about the challenges they faced associated with collaboration with Chesapeake College and the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (USWIB). The CTE ERT learned that there were some communication challenges between the USWIB and TCPS that made it particularly difficult to collaborate. During focus groups with teachers, the CTE ERT learned that teachers attend PAC meetings because they appreciate collaborating with a few folks who represent industry or are their peer instructor in a neighboring LEA, but that Chesapeake College representatives had misaligned values compared to teachers. One teacher told the CTE ERT that they believe the Chesapeake College cohorts are not productive because they prioritize enrollment at Chesapeake College and other teachers in the focus group agreed, with one teacher explaining that Chesapeake is only worried about getting students ready to begin at Chesapeake College. Teachers explained to the CTE ERT that what is most valuable about the PAC meetings is establishing connections with industry professionals and peer instructors from neighboring LEAs, not collaborating with Chesapeake College. That said, one of the teacher focus groups had a different perspective, explaining that the PAC meetings have been very helpful and create great opportunities, not just for the teachers, but for students as well.

The CTE Lead Designee explained that the relationship with Chesapeake College is very strong and that many TCPS students attend Chesapeake College. The CTE Lead Designee explained that whenever TCPS is thinking about removing or sunsetting a CTE program, they consult with Chesapeake College to see if students may enroll there through Dual Enrollment so students have as many options. Although the relationship with Chesapeake College is strong, several TCPS stakeholders acknowledged the scheduling hurdles in this relationship, explaining that TCPS's schedule is not in alignment with Chesapeake College's schedule. During focus groups with teachers, the CTE ERT learned that many of the skilled trades are offered at Chesapeake College, but those classes would be at night and students would have to find transportation on their own. Ultimately, the CTE ERT observed that there were some conflicting perspectives about TCPS's relationship with Chesapeake College and the PACs.

### **External Challenge: State Has Conflicting Messaging About CTE as a Priority**

Teachers told the CTE ERT that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) evaluates schools using English-Language Arts, Math, and Science test scores, so CTE becomes deprioritized. Teachers who taught core subjects as well as CTE classes referenced how different support looks like in their classes. One teacher specifically noted that they

receive support, especially for students with disabilities, when taking exams in their core subjects, but that support is not available for some CTE classes when they take IRC assessments. The CTE ERT has observed this challenge in other LEAs, where the State has created a goal to increase IRC attainment, but has not provided enough support to reach that goal, especially for students who typically cite hands-on work and fewer assessments as important reasons for enrolling in CTE. Teachers also expressed frustration with losing their CTE classes and being reassigned to teach core subjects without enough time to effectively prepare to teach the course. CTE teachers in one focus group agreed that they frequently receive messaging about how the State is prioritizing CTE, but that it is not true in practice as they see their CTE classes become smaller or merged with another unrelated section. In addition to mixed messaging about the overall value of CTE, teachers were unsure about the emphasis on IRCs, explaining that teachers can prepare students for IRC assessments or they can prepare students for the workforce, but they cannot do both. Teachers acknowledged that they did not feel pressure from TCPS administrators to implement IRCs into their courses, but they felt that pressure from the State. Teachers also explained that there is a disconnect in the timelines between the *Blueprint's* 45% goal and the implementation of new IRCs and new CTE programs of study. TCPS is facing the external challenge of conflicting messaging about CTE as a priority because teachers are comparing the support and attention their core classes receive compared to their CTE courses.

### **External Challenge: Participation in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs)**

Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) are Perkins V authorized, co-curricular student-led organizations that are in alignment with a CTE program of study. Even though CTSO participation needs to be evaluated from a financial perspective, several other LEAs report positive outcomes from CTSO participation. CTSO participation supports the development of program-aligned academic and technical skills and leads to higher levels of academic engagement and motivation, civic engagement, career self-efficacy, and leadership skills. All that said, the CTE ERT did not observe CTSO participation throughout the visit, except for when the CTE Lead Designee told the CTE ERT during the pre-visit orientation that TCPS participates in FFA, which was formerly known as Future Farmers of America. Teachers and administrators raved about the school-based enterprises at TCPS and how successful they have been, so there is certainly student interest in exploring opportunities to take what students have learned and apply it in a CTSO setting. Several neighboring LEAs participate in various CTSOs, but SkillsUSA and its local and state competitions have yielded positive results, especially with engaging students. That said, teachers already report feeling overwhelmed and taking on multiple responsibilities, so asking them to take on the work participating in a CTSO requires would only add to an already challenging workload. The CTE ERT observed the lack of evidence for participation in CTSOs as a challenge.

### **External Challenge: Lack of Available Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities**

Teachers, career counselors, and administrators agreed that the focus on the high school level of Registered Apprenticeships is not a feasible goal without significant overhaul of many stakeholder systems. Administrators, teachers, and career counselors all agreed that Talbot County is a rural community and there are simply not enough employers who are willing to

sponsor a high school student in a Registered Apprenticeship. Students told the CTE ERT about how they faced transportation barriers that kept them from participating in work-based learning opportunities and some students also noted that they had to find their own opportunities. That said, TCPS's School-to-Career Specialist and Talbot County's Apprenticeship Navigator have regular collaborations and they have had success adding WBL sponsors, but given the evolving and growing student and workforce population in Talbot County, there are not enough WBL sponsors.

In the LEA Brief, TCPS reported 87 out of 346 graduating students, which is 25%, participated in WBL opportunities. While none of these students participated in the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship, it is commendable TCPS was able to coordinate this high of a rate for WBL participation given the lack of available Registered Apprenticeship opportunities in Talbot County. TCPS has come up with creative ways to find WBL opportunities for students by exploring opportunities in other districts and even in Delaware. While the School-to-Career Specialist is off to a great start after their first year, the career counselor focus group made it clear that the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship is not a feasible goal without added support and increased incentives for employers.

## **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 Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) may look for improvement in and something the CTE ERT will look at more closely as the CTE Committee transitions into Phase 2 in SY 2026-2027. 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 TCPS 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 TCPS.<sup>10</sup> 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*.<sup>11</sup>

### **Create Collaboration and Communication Pathways Among Career Counselors, CTE Teachers, and School Counselors**

The CTE ERT observed how internal communication pathways among administrators, career counselors, school counselors, and CTE teachers was a challenge that impacted many other factors. For this reason, it is recommended that TCPS leadership brainstorm strategies to improve internal collaboration and communication and possibly survey the groups mentioned above for ideas. Teachers talked about how challenging it was to adapt to a changing schedule, especially when they told the CTE ERT that they are not included in the scheduling process, so creating a communication pathway among teachers, school counselors, and those who create the schedule should also be a priority. The New Teacher Mentoring program has been effective, but a potential next step TCPS should consider would be to extend that program beyond the first year and potentially creating internal Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Teachers also noted that they wish there were more opportunities for cross-program communication, and perhaps there are ways for programs to collaborate on projects together. For instance, students from the Culinary program can work with students from the Biomedical Sciences program to create a project on the physiological impact of different foods.

Another good place for TCPS to start would be establishing consistent meetings between career and school counselors. There is overlap in the career counselors' and school counselors' roles and they should be in alignment. Career counselors noted the difficulties they faced when establishing a foundation in TCPS, so creating more collaborations between career and school counselors will alleviate some of the challenges. The CTE ERT has observed in other districts that it is a best practice to include teachers in decision-making that impacts

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<sup>10</sup> GWDB CTE Committee. (July 1, 2024). CTE Committee Expert Review Team Deployment Plan School Year 2024-2025. [https://gwdb.maryland.gov/ctecomm/ctecomm-ctedeploymentplan\\_draftsy24-25\\_62624.pdf](https://gwdb.maryland.gov/ctecomm/ctecomm-ctedeploymentplan_draftsy24-25_62624.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> AIB's Updated Comprehensive Implementation Plan, August 2023, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PsYQGhld5Qwk7PgK2cEubr68SSKrG5dH/view?usp=sharing>.

teachers and students, so whatever direction TCPS decides to go in, it is recommended to include teachers' perspective in decision-making. After the visit, the CTE ERT learned that TCPS has plans to update their CTE messaging to include the CTE program of study updates that will be implemented in SY 2027-2028.

### **Improve CTE Communication and Retention by Creating More of a “CTE Identity”**

The CTE ERT observed how CTE student communication and retention was at the root of TCPS's scheduling challenges. For this reason, it is recommended TCPS brainstorm strategies to improve CTE recruitment and retention, particularly focusing on the CTE programs that are underenrolled and those that have the lowest participation to completion rates. A few districts, like Somerset and Wicomico County Public Schools, have had great success with their CTE exploration course. Some sort of CTE exploration course that allows 9th grade students to spend a few weeks in the programs they are curious about may fulfill the preference for exploration the CTE ERT observed while students gain a clearer understanding of what will be expected of them in the CTE program.

TCPS should also consider engaging more with Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) because they have been proven to be an effective tool for recruiting and retaining CTE students. TCPS has great potential for this kind of engagement, as has been proven through TCPS's successful school-based enterprises and clubs like the Girls Who Build Club. That said, TCPS must conduct an evaluation whether their budget may accommodate further CTSO engagement. CTSO participation has helped several districts develop a CTE identity that students take on, which may help TCPS overcome student retention hurdles.

One of the prevailing observations the CTE ERT had was that CTE students did not have a sense of commitment linked to their program the way the CTE ERT has observed in other districts. In a few districts, school counselors auto-enroll CTE students into the next course in their pathway, which may be a direction TCPS explores. In other districts, the CTE ERT observed how a Plumbing student will commit to their career pathway as a plumber, but this was not the case at TCPS - there was little to no sense of commitment linked to students' participation in CTE. The CTE ERT observed how career counselors are hosting events so students can interact with industry professionals, which may alleviate this challenge as more students will be able to see themselves in that field. On school tours, the CTE ERT observed how TCPS's CTE classrooms and labs are spread throughout the building, but in other districts the CTE ERT visited, CTE was in one specific hallway or wing of the building. Perhaps one direction TCPS can start would be to put CTE courses in one wing or hallway of the building so when students travel through that portion of the building, they know they are where CTE happens. Creating some kind of “CTE Identity/Community” that students connect to will impact CTE student recruitment and retention, and career counselors have already begun this kind of work by hosting events where students may interact with industry professionals from the region.

### **Coordinate with TCPS Stakeholders on the Values of IRCs**

The CTE ERT observed how both students and teachers did not see the value of IRCs. Both students and teachers referenced how challenging IRC assessments were. Even when teachers revised their curriculum to focus on the content in the IRC assessment, students

and teachers both mentioned that they believe the class did not prepare students for the workplace. Perhaps this is an area where career counselors and school counselors may collaborate to brainstorm strategies to convince teachers and students about the value of IRCs. At other LEAs the CTE ERT has visited, administrators analyzed the IRC assessments students struggled in most and collaborated with teachers to figure out what support may be needed to improve IRC buy-in and attainment rates. At Wicomico County Public Schools, administrators created a phased-approach to first inform school administrators, then school counselors and teachers, and finally students on the value of IRCs and the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship. A strength at TCPS is their industry connections in the community, so business representatives could be asked to speak to the value of specific IRCs in their industry. For instance, one student told the CTE ERT about how the CNA/GNA IRC was not helpful in their field; however, this is a required credential for many entry-level jobs in the nursing field so this student may have benefited from hearing this from a hiring manager at a local nursing home. TCPS may also want to develop a crosswalk of their CTE programs with the IRCs they provide, and work with MSDE's IRC Coordinator to consider whether another approved IRC would be more appropriate for their CTE program.

### **Explore External Collaborations in the Eastern Shore and Upper Shore**

Administrators, teachers, and career counselors all expressed interest in finding opportunities to collaborate with their counterparts in Maryland and in the Eastern Shore region, especially the counties that make up the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties) who are more familiar with TCPS's local contexts. TCPS should explore creating collaboration pathways with counterparts in the Upper Shore, in the Eastern Shore region, and across Maryland. CTE teachers do not have many peers who have similar expertise in their district, but collaborating with CTE teachers from the Upper Shore may lead to opportunities for collectively overcoming similar challenges. For instance, TCPS is planning on adding a program that supports entrepreneurship and may find it useful to collaborate with neighboring LEAs to proactively address challenges associated with growing a program like this, especially in the Upper Shore. TCPS teachers went into detail about how conventional professional development opportunities are not relevant to their CTE courses, but these external collaborations and regional Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have the potential to at least validate the challenges TCPS is facing and potentially overcome those challenges. In the Lower Shore, which includes Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, teachers and administrators have been informally collaborating and this has led to useful conversations about common challenges and opportunities for stakeholders to brainstorm solutions. Additionally, increasing TCPS participation in CTSOs may provide CTE teachers further opportunities to network with other CTE teachers in Maryland and in other states during regional and national competitions. It is admirable that TCPS teachers want to do better - they want to become better teachers and serve their students to the best of their ability, and these external collaborations may be a useful way to accomplish this. After the visit, the CTE ERT learned that TCPS and the remaining eight LEAs in the Eastern Shore began CTE teacher collaborations and the immediate feedback on these collaborations have been overwhelmingly positive. Supporting these regional collaborations has great potential for overcoming common barriers while adapting to specific regional contexts.

### **Clearly Define and Communicate Career Counselors' Role and Include Them in Decision-Making**

The career counselors shared with the CTE ERT that they were not exactly sure what their scope of work was and that their day-to-day schedule can be chaotic as they get tasked with various responsibilities. Career counselors agreed that their first year working in TCPS was challenging as they had to lay the foundation for career advising with what they believed was a lack of support, but they have made significant progress in a short amount of time. Despite the foundation they have developed, career counselors are still confused about the scope of their work and it may be useful for TCPS administrators to collaborate with career counselors to help them identify what their roles and responsibilities are. It is also recommended that TCPS administration includes career counseling perspectives in decision-making when it comes to their roles and responsibilities. The CTE Committee staff understands that in a district the size of TCPS, all faculty and staff must be agile and wear multiple hats. It should also be acknowledged that there is a benefit to assigning career counselors to do other duties so they can be introduced to teachers, staff, and students. That said, career counselors told the CTE ERT that when they get assigned to be a substitute teacher or coordinate buses, it distracts from their career counseling responsibilities. Creating clearer swim lanes for the career counseling team may potentially lead to alleviating some of the other challenges the CTE ERT observed, like hesitation about IRCs, the lack of available Registered Apprenticeship opportunities, internal communication challenges, and CTE recruitment and retention.

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

In order to achieve the *Blueprint's* 45% goal, establishing and expanding RAs should be one of TCPS's priorities. TCPS already reports having a collaborative relationship between the School-to-Career Specialist and Talbot's MD Labor Apprenticeship Navigators. At the time of the visit, TCPS career counselors told the CTE ERT that the School-to-Career Specialist is relatively new at their job, but that they anticipate making significant progress toward the 45% goal because of this individual's work. Nevertheless, TCPS can seek technical assistance from MD Labor and similar LEAs in strategies to increase the amount of RAs available, which is the gold-standard for the 45% goal. It may also be worth exploring how to create strong communication and collaboration pathways with the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, who may be a useful collaborator in meeting the *Blueprint's* 45% goal. 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 April 2025, so all of those implementing this work and the partnerships required are still in the early stages of development. Exploring technical assistance with MSDE, MD Labor, and the CTE Committee will prove to be a useful addition to TCPS 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
Dr. James Bell	Director of Instruction, Academic Support, and Well-Being, Building African American Minds
Angela Bozman	Coordinator of CTE and Career Counseling, Dorchester County Public Schools
Dr. Billie Brice	Academic Dean, Queen Anne’s County Public Schools
Eric Cook	Coordinator of College, Career, and CTE, Caroline County Public Schools
Danny Insley	CTE Teacher, Dorchester County Public Schools
Shirley Lake	Blueprint Coordinator and Career Navigator, Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board
Lauren Martin	Owner, Seaside Plumbing
Jason Mullen	Dean of Workforce, Chesapeake College
Dr. Edrees Nawabi	Research Data Analyst, GWDB
Rachael S Parker	Executive Director, GWDB
Ashley Robinson	Principal at DCTC, Dorchester County Public Schools
Ryan Sackett	Secondary School Support Coordinator, MSDE
John Strickland	Expert Review Team Manager, GWDB

# Appendix B | LEA Brief

## TCPS CTE Information

### CTE Lead Staff

Name	Role(s)	Contact Info
Dr. Carolanne Burkhardt	Curriculum Supervisor (CTE, Career Counseling, HS Math)	<a href="mailto:cburkhardt@talbotschools.org">cburkhardt@talbotschools.org</a>

### Comprehensive High Schools with CTE

Easton High School

St. Michaels Middle High School

### CTE ERT Visit

Date: April 9, 2025

Schools: Easton High School and St. Michaels Middle High

## LEA CTE Enrollment, Participation, and Completion Rates

<b>All data from the Class of 2024</b>	<b>Talbot</b>	<b>Easton</b>	<b>St. Michaels</b>
Total Enrollment (# of all <b>HS students</b> )	<b>1,454</b>	<b>1,208</b>	<b>246</b>
Total Enrollment (# of all <b>graduating students</b> )	<b>346</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>63</b>
CTE Participation Rate <sup>12</sup> (% of all <b>graduating students</b> )	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
CTE Concentration Rate (% of all <b>graduating students</b> )	<b>47%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>63%</b>
CTE Completers Rate (% of all <b>graduating students</b> )	<b>45%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>60%</b>
IRC Completion Rate (% of all <b>graduating students</b> ) <sup>13</sup>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>19%</b>
Work-Based Learning Participants <sup>14 15</sup> (# of all <b>graduating students</b> )	<b>87</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>27</b>
Dual Enrollment Participants <sup>16</sup> (# of all <b>graduating students</b> )	<b>105</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>24</b>
Dual Enrollment Completers <sup>17</sup> (# of all <b>graduating students</b> )	<b>97</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>20</b>
Apprenticeship Participants (# of all <b>HS students</b> )	RA: 0 YA: 22	RA: 0 YA: 16	RA: 0 YA: 6
Apprenticeship Participants (# of all <b>graduating students</b> )	RA: 0 YA: 12	RA: 0 YA: 10	RA: 0 YA: 2
Apprenticeship Completers (# of <b>graduating students</b> )	RA: 0 YA(450): 11 YA(450+irc):1	RA: 0 YA(450): 9 YA(450+irc):1	RA: 0 YA(450): 2 YA(450+irc): 0
<b>Progress Towards 45% Goal<sup>18</sup> (Class of 2024)</b>	14%	12%	19%

<sup>12</sup> CTE Participants are students completing not less than one credit in a MSDE-approved CTE program of study. CTE Concentrators are students who have completed at least two courses and are enrolled in a third course in a single MSDE-approved CTE program of study. CTE Completers are students who meet all requirements in a state-approved CTE program of study, typically three or four courses.

<sup>13</sup> Defined as the percentage of all graduating students who have earned an IRC (as defined by the CTE Committee)

Students are also still testing in all areas this spring. Projected completion is determined using prior pass rates and students scheduled for exams Spring of 2025.

IRC Completion Rate <i>% of Class of 2025</i>	28 - 8% (3.25) 45 - 13% - current
IRC Projected Completion <i>% of Class of 2025</i>	33 - 9.5%
IRC Completion Rate <i>% of Class of 2026</i>	12 - 3%
IRC Projected Completion <i>% of Class of 2026</i>	35 - 9.5%
IRC Projected Completion <i>% of Class of 2027</i>	7 - 1.7%

<sup>14</sup> Participation is defined as the number of all high school students or all graduating students who have participated in the high school portion of a registered apprenticeship (RA) or an AMP youth apprenticeship (YA). Completion is defined as the number of all graduating students who have completed the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) or have completed both an AMP youth apprenticeship (YA) and an IRC (YA completers who don't earn an IRC will not count towards 45% goal).

<sup>15</sup> Work-based learning includes internships, job shadowing, and other job-based experiences.

<sup>16</sup> Participation is defined as the number of all graduating students participating in dual enrollment (does not count towards the 45% goal unless they earn an IRC).

<sup>17</sup> Dual enrollment completers is defined as the number of all graduating students who earned college credit through dual enrollment.

<sup>18</sup> This metric is calculated by adding together the Apprenticeship Completion Rate (RA completers plus YA completers who also earn an IRC) and the IRC Completion Rate (based on draft guidance from the CTE Committee), divided by the total number of graduating students.

## LEA CTE OFFERINGS

### CTE Program Enrollment

The numbers in this table represent students currently enrolled in a CTE course during the Spring 2025 semester. Students enrolled in a CTE program may have semesters without taking a course. For example - If I am in CNA and took Course 1 in Spring 24 and Course 2 in Fall 24 but couldn't fit clinical in during Spring 25, I will take that in Fall 25, so I would not be represented in the enrollment number. Also, some IMP, Comp Sci, and Engineering Pathways courses count towards fine arts and tech-ed credits. Not all enrollment indicates students in that pathway, but some are taking a course for other purposes.

Program Name	Total Enrollment Spring 2025	Overenrolled or Underenrolled?	Number of Students on Waitlist (N/A)
Interactive Media Production	94		
Marketing	36		
Cosmetology	8 <sup>19</sup>	Overenrolled <sup>20</sup>	
Carpentry	54		
Culinary Arts	77		
CASE	34	Underenrolled	
Firefighter & Emergency Medical Responder	0		
Biomedical Sciences (PLTW)	50	Underenrolled <sup>21</sup>	
CNA	33	Underenrolled <sup>22</sup>	
Teacher Academy of MD	16	Underenrolled	
NJROTC	14 TCPS 17 CCPS	Underenrolled	

<sup>19</sup> We send students to Caroline County for this program.

<sup>20</sup> Caroline County Public Schools has 5 spots per cohort for TCPS students.

<sup>21</sup> Decreased when CNA was added.

<sup>22</sup> in Foundational Courses

Computer Science (AP)	146 <sup>23</sup>		
Pre-Engineering (PLTW)	78	Underenrolled <sup>24</sup>	
Automotive Technician	46		
Apprenticeship Maryland	12		

**Progress Towards the 45% Goal:**

- What are you projecting, for next school year, in growth towards the 45% goal for your district?
  - I included a table of projected IRC attainment for the classes of 25, 26, and 27. We will see a consistent increase in Autotech and Carpentry as those IRC attainments have historically been low. I have been working with both instructors to support student attainment on the IRCs, and we are seeing results. Implementing BACE this year for the first time will help us gauge the instructional shifts and support needed for students to attain that IRC. Additionally, we must realign some pathways to support IRC alignment and attainment. Additionally, we have asked for Chesapeake College’s dual enrollment offerings to clearly state when there is an IRC aligned to the course. This information helps us when supporting dual enrollment offerings. These shifts should help us make steady progress toward the 45% goal.
- What are your plans for expanding Registered Apprenticeships in your LEA?
  - We currently do not have any Registered Apprenticeship sites. While looking for RA partners, we are also trying to grow our apprenticeship program as well. Along with creating visibility for the apprenticeship program in our junior and senior classrooms, we are creating awareness with our sophomore students and encouraging them to identify occupational areas of interest before they are eligible as juniors. We can then categorize the interests by career cluster and the applicable IRCs that are already approved to prioritize those that align with the in-demand occupations. Increasing the timeline that we work with students in our pipeline along with refining our approach to targeting employers/sponsors lends itself to expanding RA’s in the future. The challenges are identifying businesses that have the financial and human resources to invest in an RA.

**Program Plans for Future**

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<sup>23</sup> 27 in AP Courses.

<sup>24</sup> Numbers look large due to students taking intro course for tech-ed credit.

- 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)?
    - There is LEA and business sector interest in adding a program that supports entrepreneurship since that is relevant in many fields and something that would support our students who are venturing to start their own small business. Braiding this program with other CTE programs of study would also support collaboration and help students graduate with additional marketable skills.
    - We may also look into other data science programs that reach students interested in this field whose needs may not currently be met in our AP Computer Science pathway.
- Are there any current programs you plan on expanding upon within the next 2 school years?
  - We will be modifying the CNA program to include the new CNA/GNA requirements for the 25/26 school year since we currently are a CNA-only program.
  - Modifications will be made to programs based on the new MSDE CTE programs of study; however, we won't know the extent of these just yet. The goal is to use school year 25-26 to refine courses to the new Flex model and determine any more considerable course/pathway changes needed for the following school year.
- Are there any programs you are taking away within the next 2 school years?
  - I do not foresee removing any programs at this time; however, as we look at the newly realigned programs of study from MSDE, we may decide to change, add, or remove programs based on student interest and employer feedback.
  - Before removing any program, TCPS would consult with Chesapeake College to consider offering the program through Dual Enrollment so that we can provide as many options as possible to meet students' needs.

### **Enrollment Practices**

- How do students enroll in programs?
  - When students are in 8th grade, they complete 5-year plans with their school counselor. This plan roughly charts out their high school coursework, including the option to take CTE courses. This information is entered into PowerSchool to be used to create student schedules.
  - Once in high school, school counselors meet with their students to discuss schedules and make modifications to the plan yearly. Course requests are entered by the school counselor or the students and reviewed by the counselor.
  - Career Counselors at the middle school level have assisted the 8th-grade counselors with 5-year plan conversations and completion.

Additionally, high school career counselors work with students and support them in linking their career aspirations to opportunities at the school.

- Are all CTE programs offered to all students?
  - CTE programs are open to all students.
  - Some programs have pre-requisite courses for course 1, such as concurrent enrollment or achieved credit in Biology for CNA.
  - Students interested in cosmetology tour the program at Caroline County Technical Center with their school counselor and determine their level of interest after learning more about the program and requirements.
  - Students sometimes try multiple programs before choosing their pathway.
- Can a student participate in a CTE program at another school?
  - Yes. Students can take CTE programs at both EHS and SMMHS. TCPS provides transportation to students wishing to complete a program not offered at their home school. We call this cross-campus. Students take CTE courses at other high schools and core courses to fill their time there, then transport them back to their home school in the afternoon.
  - We also have an agreement with Caroline County where their students interested in NJROTC come to us, and we send students interested in Cosmetology to them. We have previously had similar agreements in Dorchester County as well.

### **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 comprehensive high school model allows students to access CTE courses/programs without committing to the entire program. This allows students to try different programs of study throughout high school before finding their fit. This also allows students to complete multiple CTE programs. It is not uncommon for students to take classes in several pathways before committing to a program. However, some students choose to take a CTE course for the experience rather than commit to an entire program. There are students who take courses in Automotive, Culinary, or Carpentry to gain experience and earn an elective credit without choosing to complete the entire program. If these courses were not available in their local high school, this might not be possible.
  - Our programs are available to all students at no cost. Students do not need to apply to be part of a CTE program and incur no costs during the program. TCPS covers the cost of uniforms, assessment fees, etc. Therefore there is no barrier for students to engage in CTE programs.
  - TCPS's new teacher mentor program has been incredibly valuable in supporting CTE instructors who come from an industry background rather than education. While they take part in new teacher on-boarding in the summer, they are also assigned to a mentor they meet

with weekly to support them in lesson planning, assessment, classroom management, unpacking standards, and many other topics. The support is tailored to the instructor.

### LEA Support for Schools

- How is CTE financial support structured within the LEA?
  - Perkins provides the bulk of our funding for CTE programming.
  - Our local budget accounts for stipends for staff to attend training, assist with programs outside of school hours, and work on curriculum development. Additionally, all technical assessment fees (now IRC fees) are covered locally.
  - Other grants or donations are occasionally utilized for specific programs - ie. MCCE grant for Comp. Sci teachers for professional learning.
- How is CTE staffing structured within the LEA?
  - The CTE Supervisor is housed at the Talbot County Education Center. I oversee 21 CTE teachers at the middle and high school level, 3, Career Counselors, and 1 School to Career Specialist who handles all apprenticeship and work based learning experiences.
  - SMMHS - 4 CTE Teachers, 1 Career Counselor
    - Two of the four also teach Middle School elective courses related to their pathway
    - Two of the four also teach HS Science courses as they are dual certified.
  - EHS - 14 CTE Teachers, 1 Career Counselor
    - Two AP Comp Sci teachers primarily teach Math Courses
    - One BioMed also teaches Science
  - EMS - 3 CTE Teachers, 1 Career Counselor
  - School to Career Specialist - Housed at EHS but serves EHS and SMMHS

### Career Exploration

- What career exploration is available to students in your LEA?
  - Beginning 24-25, middle schools offered Career Exploration as an elective course. This year, 16 sections were offered at EMS to 6th-8th graders, and all 6th and 7th graders at SMMHS will have taken it. Courses are taught by career counselors and classroom teachers using Pathful and other career resources. Next year, the career exploration course will be taken by all 6th-grade students to launch the Career Counseling program.
  - School counselors have also historically used push-in lessons and Naviance to do some career exploration with middle school students. Career counselors are collaborating with school counselors currently to co-teach career related lessons and in some cases develop plans on what topics are covered by whom.
  - During 5th and 8th grades, students all attend field trips to Easton High School for a CTE Tour. Every student tours all CTE programs available to

TCPS students to see “what’s possible.” In 5th grade, this opens the conversation, while in 8th grade, this serves as a focused opportunity for creating their 5-year plan and helps to connect career exploration to high school planning.

- Career counselors began facilitating lunch and learn events this year to bring in local employers to talk with interested students about their career fields.
- How do the students access their career coach(es)?
  - Each career counselor is assigned to a specific secondary school and has an office in that location.
  - Each career counselor has a Schoology page where they advertise events and resources for students in their school. They primarily use the schoology page and email to reach out to students. Additionally, they use Google forms that anyone can fill out to request a meeting with the career counselor.
- How does/do the career coach(es) serve students in your LEA?
  - Career counselors are assigned to a home school (middle, high, and middle high school). While each is responsible for serving students in their school, all three collaborate on activities such as career/job fairs, CTE tours, Junior Achievement events, etc. They formally meet twice a month to collaborate to ensure that opportunities are similar in nature despite school location.
  - Middle school career counselors currently teach and collaborate with other educators on the exploring careers course.
  - All career counselors push-in to classrooms, sometimes independently and others in collaboration with school counselors to do lessons that range from career exploration, resume writing, course planning etc.

**INFORMATION FOR VISITING SCHOOLS**

**School #1 St. Michaels Middle High School**

School Leadership: Ms. Theresa Vener, Principal  
 Ms. Rebecca Mielke-Mann, Assistant Principal  
 School Contact: 410-745-2852  
 School Website: <https://tcps.k12.md.us/st-michaels-middle-high/home/>

**School #2 Easton High School**

School Leadership: Ms. Sherry Spurry, Principal  
 Mr. TJ Thompson, Assistant Principal (CTE)  
 Ms. Bridget Harper, Assistant Principal  
 Ms. Nicole Sherrod-Hill, Assistant Principal  
 School Contact: 410-822-4180  
 School Website: <https://tcps.k12.md.us/easton-high/home/>

**Overview of Meeting Participants**

**CTE Lead, School Administrators & Staff**

Name	Role	Location
Dr. Carolanne Burkhardt	CTE Supervisor	
Ms. Sherry Spurry	Principal	Easton High
Mrs. Theresa Vener	Principal	St. Michaels Middle High
Mrs. Robin Werner	Director of Teaching & Learning Former CTE Supervisor	

**Teachers and Faculty**

**St. Michaels Middle and High School**

Name	Subject	Years in Position	Classes
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Gia Ristvey	Teacher Academy	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Human Growth &amp; Development</li> <li>→ Teaching as a Profession</li> <li>→ Foundations of Curriculum &amp; Instruction</li> <li>→ Education Academy Internship</li> </ul> <p><i>*Also teaches Science courses</i></p>
Lauren Greer	BioMedical Sciences	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Principles of Biomedical Sciences</li> <li>→ Human Body Systems</li> <li>→ Medical Interventions</li> <li>→ Biomedical Innovation Research</li> </ul> <p><i>*Also teaches Science courses</i></p>
John Adams	Carpentry	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Intro to Craft Skills</li> <li>→ Carpentry 1, 2, and 3</li> </ul> <p><i>*Also teaches a Carpentry Middle School elective course</i></p>
Lyndsey Basham	Interactive Media Production	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Principles of Art, Media, &amp; Communication</li> <li>→ Interactive Media Production</li> <li>→ Advanced IMP A &amp; B</li> <li>→ Foundations of Computer Science</li> </ul> <p><i>*Also teaches Middle School elective courses</i></p>

**Easton High School**

Name	Subject	Years in Position	Classes
Melissa Richardson	Interactive Media Production	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Principles of Art, Media, &amp; Communication</li> <li>→ Interactive Media Production</li> <li>→ Advanced IMP A &amp; B</li> </ul>
Rachel Eckman	Pre-Engineering	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Introduction to Engineering Design</li> <li>→ Principles of Engineering</li> <li>→ Engineering Design &amp; Development</li> <li>→ Technology Education</li> </ul>
Nick Werner	Marketing & Pre-Engineering	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Principles of Business, Administration and Management</li> <li>→ Principles of Accounting and Finance</li> <li>→ Introduction to Marketing</li> <li>→ Engineering Design &amp; Development</li> <li>→ Digital Electronics</li> </ul>

			→ Computer Integrated Manufacturing
Linda Brown	Culinary	50	→ Culinary Basics 1 & 2 → Culinary Pathway 1 & 2
Jody Candel	Culinary	21	→ Culinary Basics 1 & 2 → Culinary Pathway 1 & 2
Joan Gannon	CNA	1	→ Foundations of Medicine and Health Science → Certified Nursing Assistant Internship
Taylor Morton	CNA	1	→ Structure and Functions of the Human Body → Certified Nursing Assistant Internship
Ernie Burns	CASE	26	→ Intro to Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources → Plant Science → Animal Science → Animal & Plant Biotechnology → Agriculture Research & Development → Veterinary Science
Chris Stewart	Autotech	3	→ Automotive Technology 1 & 2
Charles Boulton	Comp. Sci	3	→ AP Computer Science A *Also teaches Math Courses
Chris Famularo	Comp. Sci	7	→ AP Computer Science Principles *Also teaches Math courses
Eric Moseley	Comp Sci	23	→ Foundations of Computer Science
James Gardner	NJROTC	13	→ Naval 1-4
Tracy Detrich	BioMedical	26	→ Principles of Biomedical Sciences → Human Body Systems → Medical Interventions → Biomedical Innovation Research *Also teaches Science courses

### CTE PROGRAMS AND ENROLLMENT AT VISITING SCHOOLS

\*Completion Rate - Concentrator vs Completer = Completer/concentrator+completer = %

#### Easton High School

Total Enrollment: 1,173

Cluster	CTE Program	Enrollment (S2 2025)	Completion Rate (Class of 2024)	IRC Attainment Rate (Class of 2024)
Arts, Media, & Comm.	Interactive Media Production	65	100% (3/3)	33%
Consumer Services	Culinary	77	90% (19/21)	100% (ServSafe)
Health & Biosciences	CNA	33	100% (30/30)	100% (29/29)
Human Resource Services	NJROTC	14	89% (8/9)	33% (1/3)
Manufacturing & Eng.	Pre-Engineering	78	63% (5/8)	No IRC

Business & Finance	Marketing	36	100% (15/15)	No IRC
Information Technology	Computer Science	146	78% (7/9)	No IRC
Health & Biosciences	BioMedical	31	85% (11/13)	No IRC
Transportation Tech.	AutoTech	46	100% (10/10)	No test takers
Env., Ag., & Nat. Res.	CASE	34	71% (5/7)	No IRC

**St. Michaels Middle and High School**

Total Enrollment: 442 (252 High School Only)

Cluster	CTE Program	Enrollment (S2 2025)	Completion Rate (Class of 2024)	IRC Attainment Rate (Class of 2024)
Arts, Media, & Comm.	Interactive Media Production	29	100% (7/7)	100%

Construction & Dev.	Carpentry	54	79% (11/14)	0%
Human Resource Services	Teacher Academy of MD	16	100% (8/8)	77%
Health & Biosciences	BioMedical Sciences (PLTW)	19	100% (8/8)	No IRC

**Caroline County Public Schools**

Cluster	CTE Program	Enrollment (S2 2025)	Completion Rate (Class of 2024)	IRC Attainment Rate (Class of 2024)
Consumer Services	Cosmetology	8	80% (4/5)	0%

## Overview of CTE Programs

[TCPS Program of Study](#) (CTE programming starts on page 29)

### LEA STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Maryland <sup>25</sup>	Talbot County
District Student Demographics (2023)	276,495	1,453
% Asian	7%	26; 1.8%
% American Indian / Alaska Native	<1%	<5%
% African American	33%	218; 15%
% Hispanic	21%	368; 25.3%
% Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	<1%	<5%
% Two or More Races	4%	71; 4.9%
% White	34%	769; 52.9%
% Students with Disabilities	11%	9%
# of Multi-Lingual Learners	9%	13%
% Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS)	47%	54%
Child Poverty Rate % (2022)	12%	
Unemployment Rate % (2024)	3%	

<sup>25</sup> This is the most recent information according to the The Maryland Report Card <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Demographics/Enrollment/3/17/6/99/XXXX/2023>

## COMMUNITY CONTEXT

### Nearby Universities & Community Colleges

- Chesapeake Community College
- Salisbury University

### Economic Profile

Maryland Department of Commerce Brief Economic Facts<sup>26</sup>

### Educational Attainment

Talbot County Census Data<sup>27</sup>

### Leading Business Groups\*

Company	Industry	Size Category
Univ. of MD - Shore Medical Center	Health Care and Social Assistance	1000+
Amick Farms	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	1000+
Sea Watch International	Manufacturing	250-499
Delmarva Foundation	Health Care and Social Assistance	250-499
Acme, Harris Teeter, Walmart, Kohl's, Target, Chesapeake Building Components, Hertrich	Retail Trade	100-249 per business
Chesapeake Group Home, Critchlow Adkins Children's Center, Pines, YMCA	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249 per business
Crab Claw, Inn at Perry Cabin, McDonald's, Olive Garden, Tidewater Inn	Accommodation and Food Service	100-249 per business
Star Democrat	Information	100-249 per business
Celeste Industries Corp	Manufacturing	100-249 per business
Easton High, Middle, and Elem. Schools	Educational Services	100-249 per business

<sup>26</sup> <https://commerce.maryland.gov/Documents/ResearchDocument/TalbotBef.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> [https://data.census.gov/profile/Talbot\\_County,\\_Maryland?q=050XX00US24041](https://data.census.gov/profile/Talbot_County,_Maryland?q=050XX00US24041)

Long & Foster	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	100-249 per business
Robertson Group	Other Services (except Public Admin.)	100-249 per business

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

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# Appendix C | Visit Agenda

Visit Date: Wednesday, April 9, 2025

Time: 7:50am-3:15pm

Location AM:  
 St. Michaels Middle High School  
 200 Seymour Ave.  
 St. Michaels, MD 21663

Location PM:  
 Easton High School  
 723 Mecklenburg Ave.  
 Easton, MD 21601

## AM Session: Saint Michaels Middle High School

Team 1:  
 John Strickland, Billie Brice, Ashley Robinson, Jason Mullen Lauren Martin, Rachael Stephens Parker

Team 2:  
 James Bell, Danny Insley, Angela Bozman, Eric Cook, Shirley Lake, Edrees Nawabi, Ryan Sacket

Time	Activity	Time	Activity
7:50am-8:20am	Meet and Greet (SMES Art Room)	7:50am-8:20am	Meet and Greet (SMES Art Room)
8:25am-9:15am	School Tour & Discussion	8:25am-9:15am	School Tour & Discussion
9:20am-10:15am	Student Focus Group (Rm. 547)	9:20am-10:15am	Teacher Focus Group (SMES Art Room)
10:20am-10:40am	Travel to Easton High School	10:20am-10:40am	Travel to Easton High School

## PM Session: Easton High School

Time	Activity	Time	Activity
10:45 - 11:00	Arrival and Check-In	10:45 - 11:00	Arrival and Check-In
11:00 - 11:30 11:30 - 12:00 12:00 - 12:45	School Tour Lunch Whole Group Tour Debrief	11:00 - 11:30 11:30 - 12:00 12:00 - 12:45	Lunch School Tour Whole Group Tour Debrief
12:50pm-1:45pm	Teacher Focus Group 1 (Culinary)	12:50pm-1:45pm	Student Focus Group (Media Center)
1:50pm-2:45pm	Career Coach/WBL Staff Focus Group (Culinary)	1:50pm-2:45pm	Teacher Focus Group 2 (Media Center)



2:50pm-3:15 pm	End of Day Debrief & Gathering	2:50pm-3:15 pm	End of Day Debrief & Gathering
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### Team Member Roles

Team 1:

Facilitator/Recorder: John Strickland

Notes/Time: Dr. Billie Brice

Team 2:

Facilitator/Recorder: Dr. James Bell

Notes/Time: Dr. Edrees Nawabi

# 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

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