

CTE Educator Workforce Priorities



Like many areas throughout the education system, CTE is experiencing critical shortages of qualified educators across the country. While systemically low pay and difficult working conditions are not unique to CTE teachers, the CTE teaching profession has the added challenge of needing to recruit and retain individuals with industry experience and credentials in high-paying, in-demand fields outside of education.

Only a small percentage of CTE educators are prepared through traditional CTE teacher preparation programs at universities; instead, CTE systems have had to develop high-quality alternative licensure pathways that allow for industry professionals to receive pedagogical training necessary for success as teachers. Further, CTE uniquely experiences faculty shortages at the postsecondary level, with community colleges and area technical centers reporting difficulty attracting qualified professionals to administer and teach programs in high-demand fields such as nursing and cybersecurity.

In order to effectively address CTE educator shortages and invest in high-quality CTE for all students, Congress must:

1. Improve recruitment and retention by making teaching a more financially attractive career to industry professionals.

The average base salary of full-time public school CTE teachers is [\\$57,400](#), lower than almost all other teachers, yet many CTE teachers could make substantially more money working directly in their industry. For example, aircraft mechanics earn [\\$96,320](#) on average, agricultural engineers earn [\\$82,640](#) and computer programmers earn [\\$93,000](#), making recruitment particularly challenging in CTE. In addition, in 15 states, Social Security's Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) have created unfair financial penalties for potential CTE teachers who have accrued Social Security benefits during their time in industry, reducing their willingness to transition to education.

To alleviate these issues, Congress should pass legislation that:

- Utilizes the federal income tax system to provide credits to CTE teachers.
- Ensures any teacher loan programs fully include CTE educators, shorten the time for full forgiveness, and include graduate and parent-held student loans.
- Repeals Social Security's Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset provisions.
- Consistently names CTE as a critical shortage area or high-need subject to ensure program benefits are available to CTE educators.

2. Make common-sense laws to incentivize interstate teacher licensure reciprocity.

When a CTE teacher moves across state lines, they are often confronted with the onerous and costly burden of re-licensure in order to remain in the profession. In fact, only [8 states](#) offer full teacher license reciprocity for all eligible, fully licensed teachers. Just last year, Congress passed the Military Spouse Licensing Relief Act, which will require states to create such compacts for military spouses, who may be forced to leave the teaching profession due to their frequent moves from base to base. Congress should pass legislation that incentivizes states to create interstate teacher licensure compacts that encourage high-quality teachers to stay in the classroom.

3. Increase access to high-quality CTE teacher preparation and professional development.

Given the unique and varied pathways into CTE teaching, the federal government must invest in a variety of programs that provide a diverse population of industry professionals with the pedagogy skills needed to be successful in the classroom. This includes both traditional CTE teacher preparation programs, which have been steeply declining over the past decade, and high-quality alternative licensure programs for transitioning industry professionals, as well as continued professional development and support once teachers begin their careers. Programs in these areas intended for the teaching profession should be more intentionally designed to be inclusive of CTE, and new initiatives are needed to meet the unique needs of CTE educators.

ACTE asks that Congress:

- Provide funding for registered teacher apprenticeship programs that make CTE teacher preparation programs an eligible recipient.
- Invest in traditional CTE educator preparation programs by thoughtfully including CTE in HEA Title II reforms.
- Increase funding and support for Grow Your Own (GYO) programs that foster CTE teacher recruitment, retention, and diversity.
- Ensure CTE educators are able to access professional development funding provided across federal programs.

4. Enhance data collection on the CTE educator pipeline.

The Department of Education's National Teacher Shortage Area (TSA) database utilizes state-reported data to identify shortages across subjects. This data collection, however, is not standardized across states – many of which undercount CTE needs – and provides little detail. Even still, 37 states reported CTE teacher shortages for the 2022-2023 school year. Both this database and the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) do not properly disaggregate data by subject areas that are consistent with standard CTE research and policy. Further, the federal government does not collect any data on the postsecondary educator workforce.

To provide better data on the CTE teacher workforce to CTE researchers and policymakers, Congress should direct the Department of Education to:

- Create nationwide standards for the reporting of CTE teacher shortages.
- Ensure more consistency in data disaggregation in the NTPS and the TSA database.
- Begin collecting data on the postsecondary educator workforce, particularly CTE teachers at community colleges and technical centers.

5. Address postsecondary CTE faculty shortages.

Postsecondary institutions are also facing challenges recruiting faculty to teach in CTE programs due to a variety of factors, including pay, competition from industry, and at times, accreditation rules. These shortages can have a [devastating impact](#) on students, businesses and the economy. Congress, however, has not focused significantly on this challenge. Committees of jurisdiction should call hearings on postsecondary CTE teacher shortages so that Congress can craft informed policies to address them.