



# 2026 NATIONAL POLICY SEMINAR

**March 22-25**

**Crystal Gateway Marriott  
Arlington, Virginia**

# The Power of Data-driven Storytelling

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[acteonline.org/nps](https://acteonline.org/nps)

**#NPSCTE26**

Exploratory storytelling

Explanatory storytelling



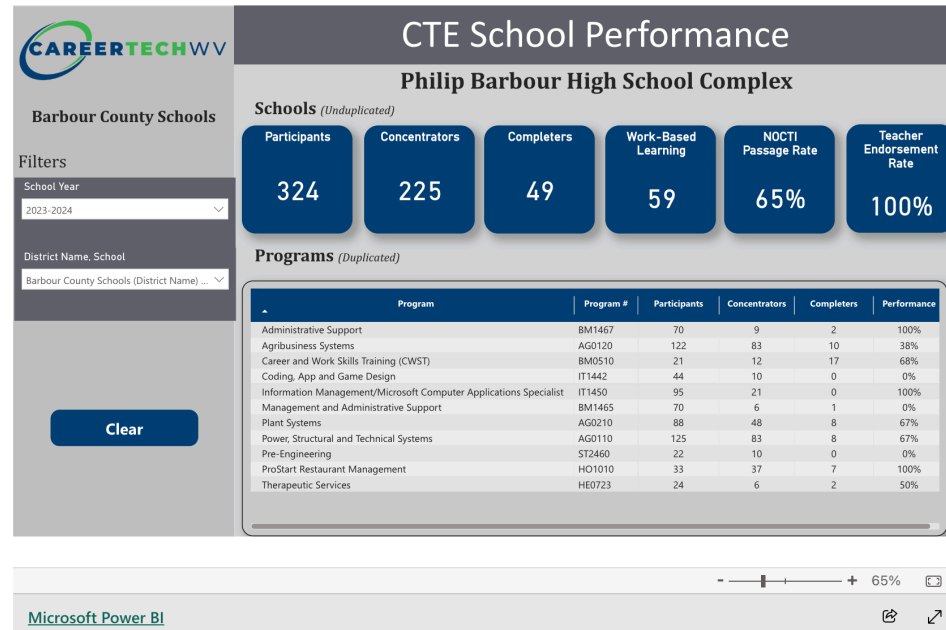
# Exploratory Storytelling

Allow users to **interact** with and **navigate** through the data

# Examples

## CTE School Dashboard

The CTE Schools dashboard gives key performance metrics for Career Technical Education (CTE) programs within West Virginia Middle and High Schools. This report summarizes school performance across key areas such as student outcomes, career readiness and career program engagement.



<https://wvde.us/academics/career-exploration-student-engagement/data>

## Texas Perkins V Postsecondary Dashboard

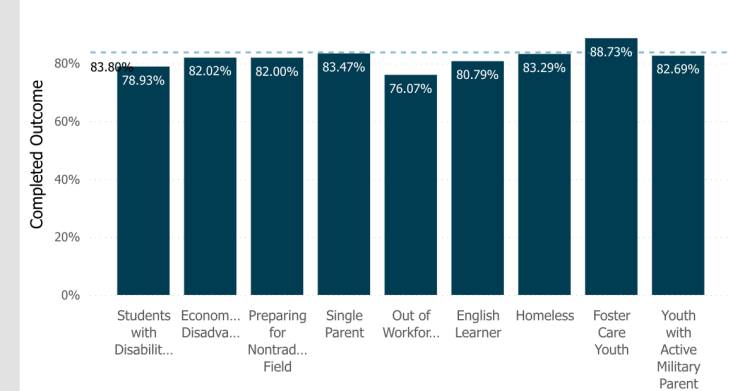
Reporting Year: 2023 - 2024  
College: Statewide  
Measure: 1P1: Post-College



**82.79%** College performance  
**83.80%** State target

76,602 out of 92,529 concentrators achieved the outcome. This is 98.79% of the state's target.

### Special Population Students



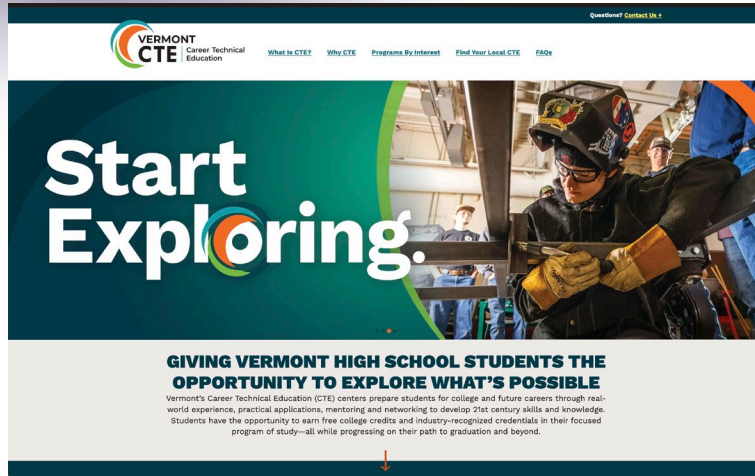
Career Cluster	Num/Denom	Percent
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	749/979	76.51%
Architecture & Construction	4,090/5,015	81.56%
Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	2,449/3,211	76.27%
Business Management & Administration	8,444/10,607	79.61%
Education & Training	803/1,074	74.77%
Finance	2,188/2,649	82.60%
Government & Public Administration	46/50	92.00%
Health Science	22,624/25,890	87.39%
Hospitality & Tourism	956/1,226	77.98%
Human Services	3,738/4,909	76.15%
Information Technology	7,531/9,302	80.96%
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	5,240/6,054	86.55%
Manufacturing	9,828/11,662	84.27%
Marketing	1,472/1,934	76.11%
Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics	398/484	82.23%
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	5,127/6,391	80.22%

Counts less than 5 are masked. \* indicates a masked count. "Other" career cluster indicates an undeclared CTE major.

populations | Three-Year Comparison | Region and Peer Benchmarks | 3P1: Nontraditional Fields Table | Technical Notes

<https://databridge.highered.texas.gov/theCb-perkins-v-postsecondary-data-dashboard>

# Example



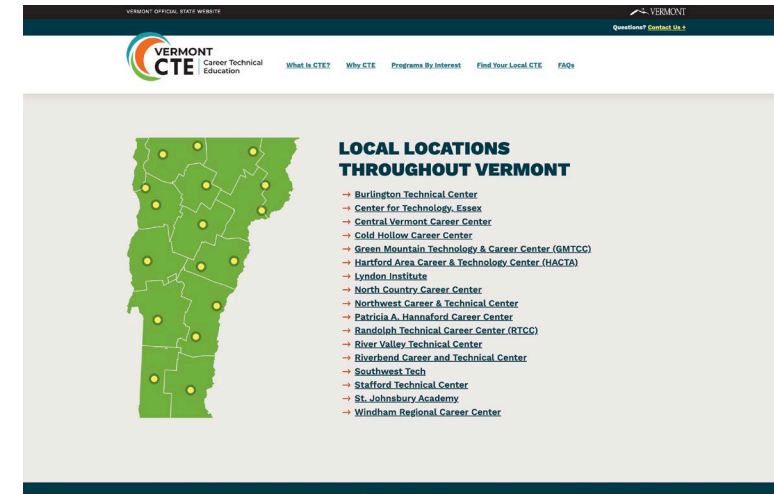
**Start Exploring.**

**GIVING VERMONT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE WHAT'S POSSIBLE**

Vermont's Career Technical Education (CTE) centers prepare students for college and future careers through real-world experience, practical applications, mentoring and networking to develop 21st-century skills and knowledge. Students have the opportunity to earn free college credits and industry-recognized credentials in their focused program of study—all while progressing on their path to graduation and beyond.

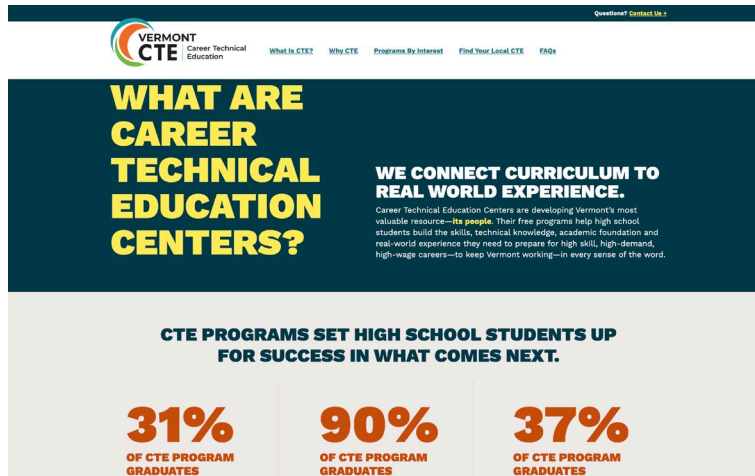
**BUSTING MYTHS ABOUT VERMONT'S CTE PROGRAMS:**

- CTE programs cost money and there are only a few CTE centers in the state. CTE programs are free to high school students! Applying is also free. There are 17 CTE centers located throughout Vermont—often close to local high schools, and transportation options are often available. [See our map of Vermont CTE center locations.](#)
- By taking a CTE program, it will effect a student's current high school experience. Career technical education IS a part of the high school experience! School counselors help to integrate a CTE program within a student's high school schedule—which can include sports, clubs, and other extracurriculars.
- High school students in CTE programs won't be prepared to apply for college. False! CTE programs not only prepare students for college, but can also set them ahead with opportunities to earn college credits!



**LOCAL LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT VERMONT**

- Burlington Technical Center
- Center for Technology, Essex
- Central Vermont Career Center
- Cold Hollow Career Center
- Green Mountain Technology & Career Center (GMTCC)
- Hartford Area Career & Technology Center (HACTA)
- Lyndon Institute
- North Country Career Center
- Northwest Career & Technical Center
- Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center
- Randolph Technical Career Center (RTCC)
- River Valley Technical Center
- Riverbend Career and Technical Center
- Southwest Tech
- Stafford Technical Center
- St. Johnsbury Academy
- Windham Regional Career Center



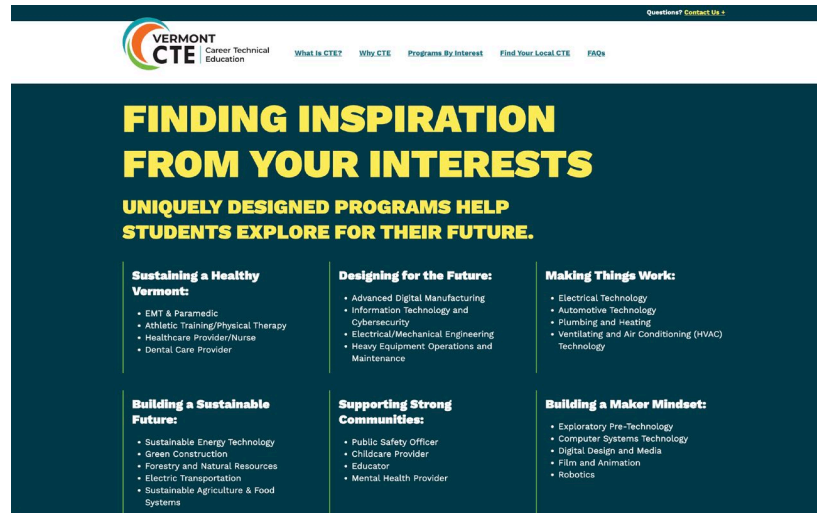
**WHAT ARE CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTERS?**

**WE CONNECT CURRICULUM TO REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE.**

Career Technical Education Centers are developing Vermont's most valuable resource—its people. Their free programs help high school students build the skills, technical knowledge, academic foundation and real-world experience they need to prepare for high skill, high-demand, high-wage careers—to keep Vermont working—in every sense of the word.

**CTE PROGRAMS SET HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS IN WHAT COMES NEXT.**

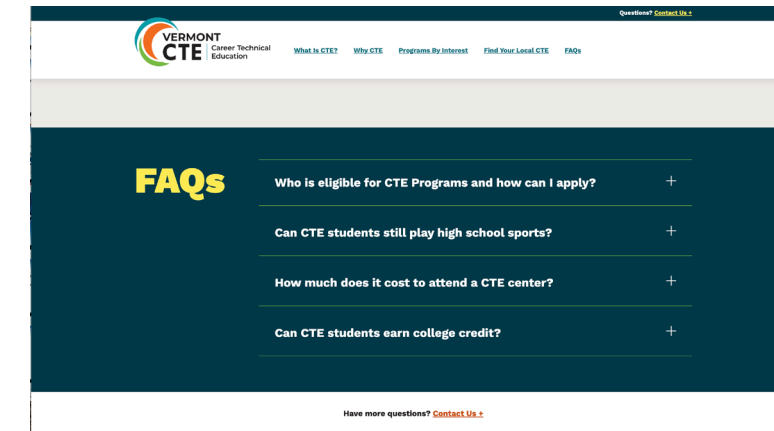
- 31%** OF CTE PROGRAM GRADUATES
- 90%** OF CTE PROGRAM GRADUATES
- 37%** OF CTE PROGRAM GRADUATES



**FINDING INSPIRATION FROM YOUR INTERESTS**

**UNIQUELY DESIGNED PROGRAMS HELP STUDENTS EXPLORE FOR THEIR FUTURE.**

- Sustaining a Healthy Vermont:**
  - EMT & Paramedic
  - Athletic Training/Physical Therapy
  - Healthcare Provider/Nurse
  - Dental Care Provider
- Designing for the Future:**
  - Advanced Digital Manufacturing
  - Information Technology and Cybersecurity
  - Electrical/Mechanical Engineering
  - Heavy Equipment Operations and Maintenance
- Making Things Work:**
  - Electrical Technology
  - Automotive Technology
  - Plumbing and Heating
  - Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Technology
- Building a Sustainable Future:**
  - Sustainable Energy Technology
  - Green Construction
  - Forestry and Natural Resources
  - Electric Transportation
  - Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems
- Supporting Strong Communities:**
  - Public Safety Officer
  - Childcare Provider
  - Educator
  - Mental Health Provider
- Building a Maker Mindset:**
  - Exploratory Pre-Technology
  - Computer Systems Technology
  - Digital Design and Media
  - Film and Animation
  - Robotics



**FAQs**

- Who is eligible for CTE Programs and how can I apply? +
- Can CTE students still play high school sports? +
- How much does it cost to attend a CTE center? +
- Can CTE students earn college credit? +

Have more questions? [Contact Us.](#)

<https://vermontcte.com>



2026 NATIONAL  
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National Policy Seminar 2026

## Explanatory Storytelling

**Informative** to users

Makes a specific insight **clear** and  
**understandable**

# Example

[https://www.icevonline.com/hubfs/Downloadables/Posters/iCEV\\_Rise\\_of\\_CTE\\_Poster.pdf](https://www.icevonline.com/hubfs/Downloadables/Posters/iCEV_Rise_of_CTE_Poster.pdf)

# Example

[https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/CTE-Data-Sheet-2023-2024\\_8.5x11.pdf](https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/CTE-Data-Sheet-2023-2024_8.5x11.pdf)

# Example

[https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/NSC\\_OlderYoungerWorkers\\_FactSheet\\_Mar2025.pdf](https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/NSC_OlderYoungerWorkers_FactSheet_Mar2025.pdf)



**National Policy Seminar 2026**

## **Breaking It Down**

**Messaging** that matters  
**Design** that focuses the attention

[acteonline.org/nps](https://acteonline.org/nps)

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# Audience

## Audiences

- First
- Second (if applicable)
- Third (if applicable)

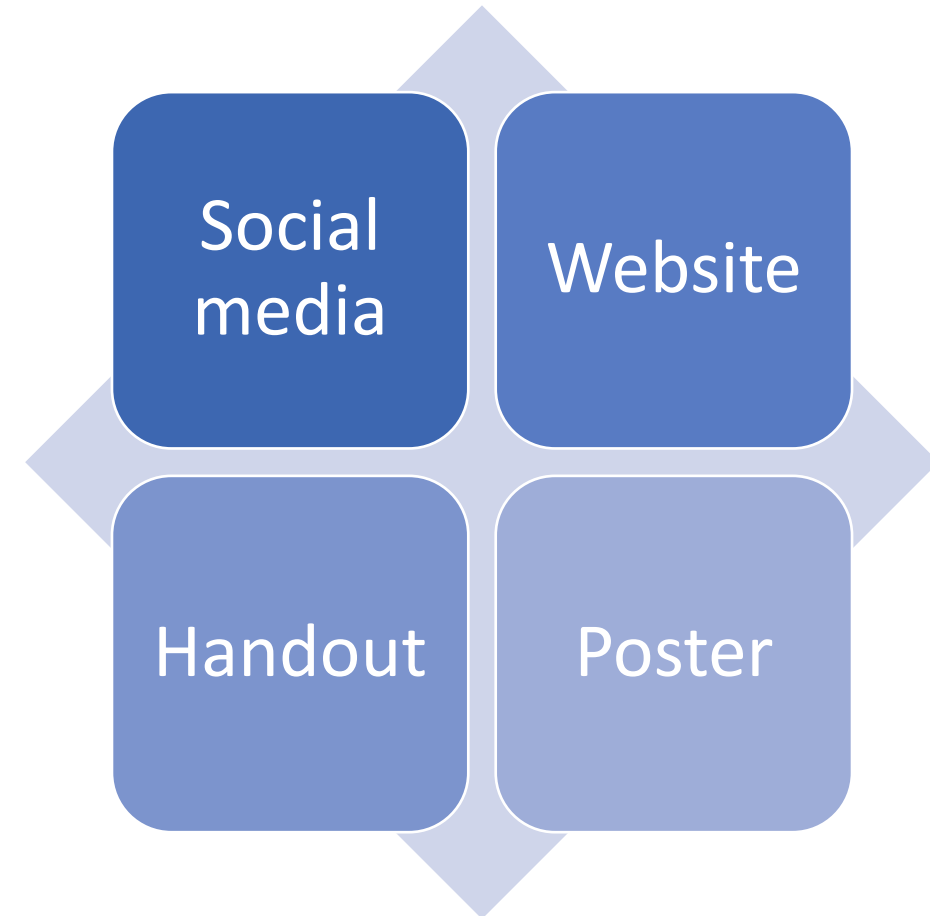
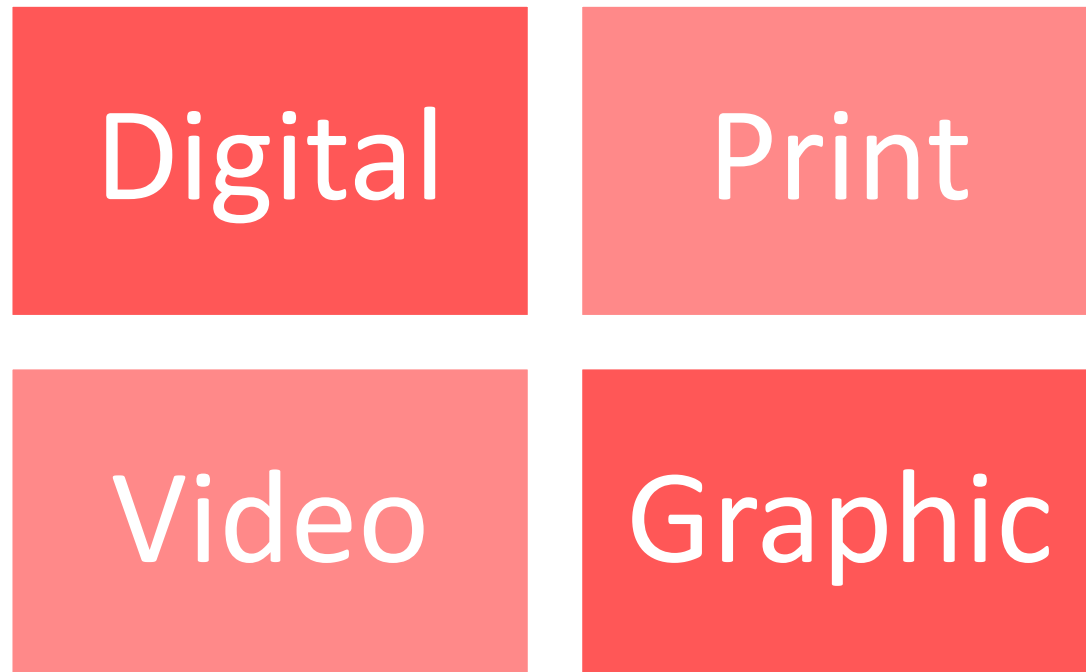
What matters to them?

What do you want them to know?

What do you want them to do?

What is their level of expertise about CTE?

# Formats & Channels



# Messaging

Explain why the information is important to them

Use asset-based framing

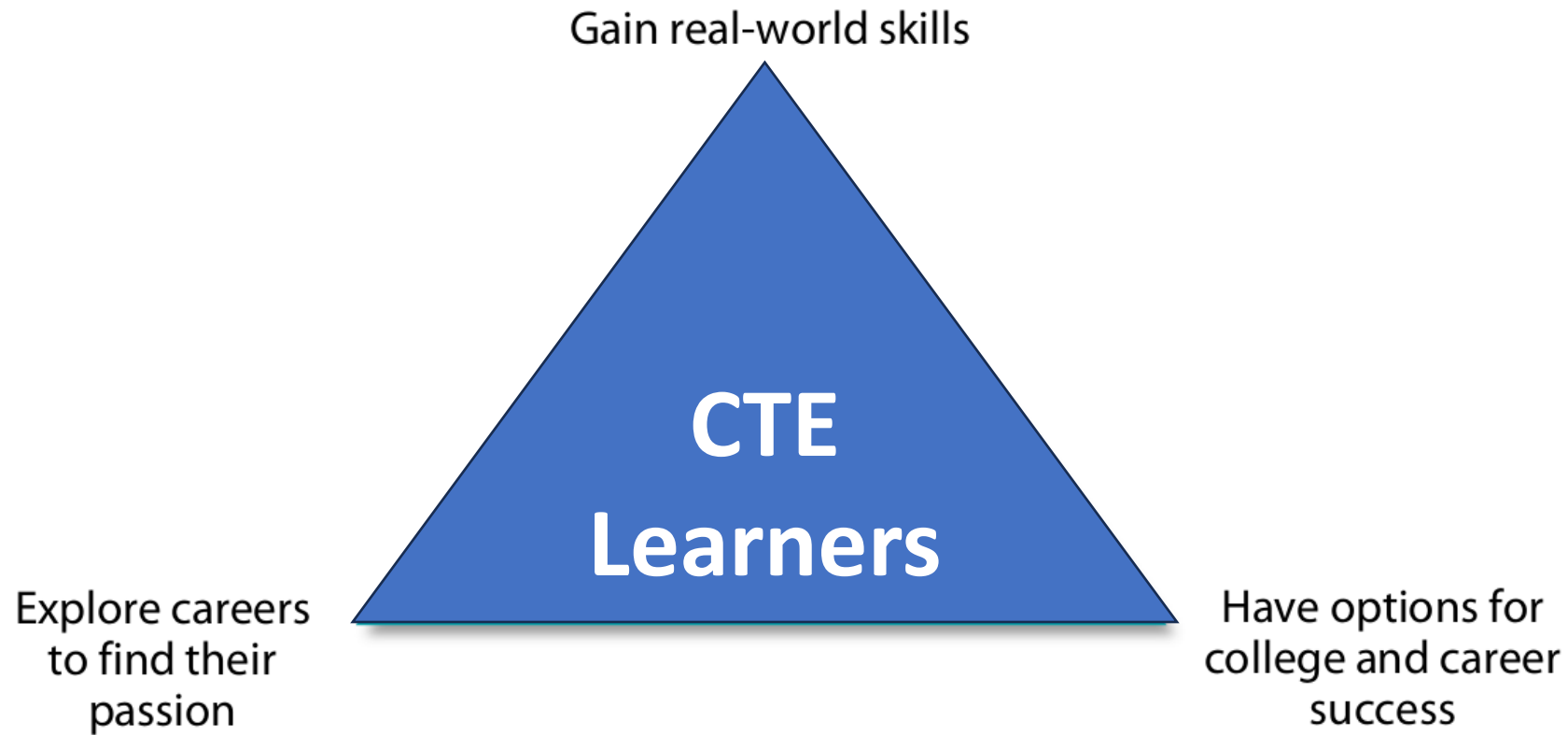
Write in plain language

Be aware of what terms mean in your context

Include an action item

Write graph and chart titles like headlines

# Messaging



<https://careertech.org/document/core-messages-for-attracting-learners-to-cte/>

# Design

Use a style sheet

Design for the intended format(s)

Employ the five-second rule

Use 2-3 primary colors and no more than five colors overall

Consider greyscale for less important data

Include comparison data

Use text size to highlight the most important points

Eliminate legends and include annotations directly on charts

Consider line charts over bar charts

# Common Graphic Elements

## BAR CHARTS

- Compare groups or categories of data
- Use grouped or stacked bars for two or more categories



Source: [RI DataHUB](#)<sup>10</sup>

## Percentage of high school students who were CTE participants

77 percent of high school students were CTE participants (earned at least one credit in CTE)



Source: [U.S. Department of Education](#)<sup>11</sup>

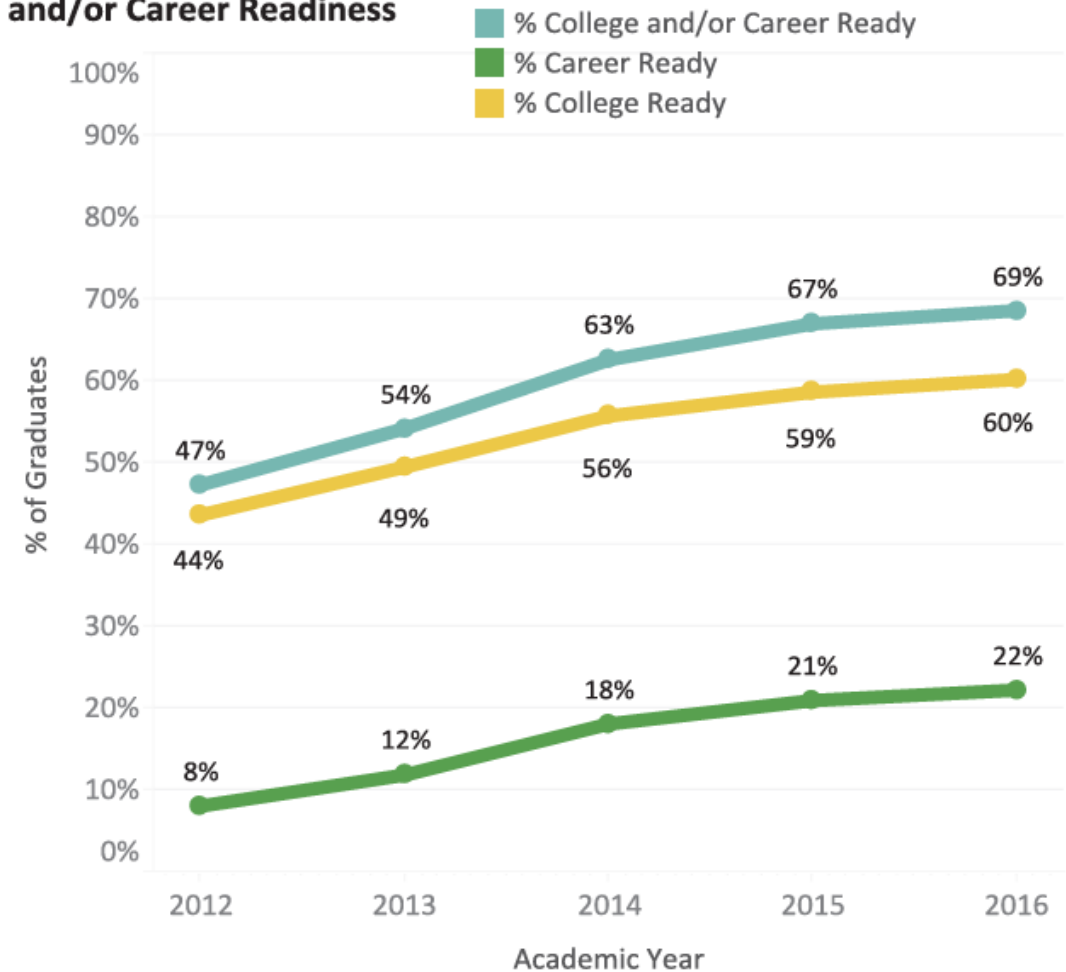
<https://careertech.org/resource/beyond-the-numbers-design-principles-for-cte-data-reporting>

## LINE CHARTS

- Show change over time
- Combine with a bar chart to make a dual axis or combination chart

Source: KYSTATS<sup>12</sup>

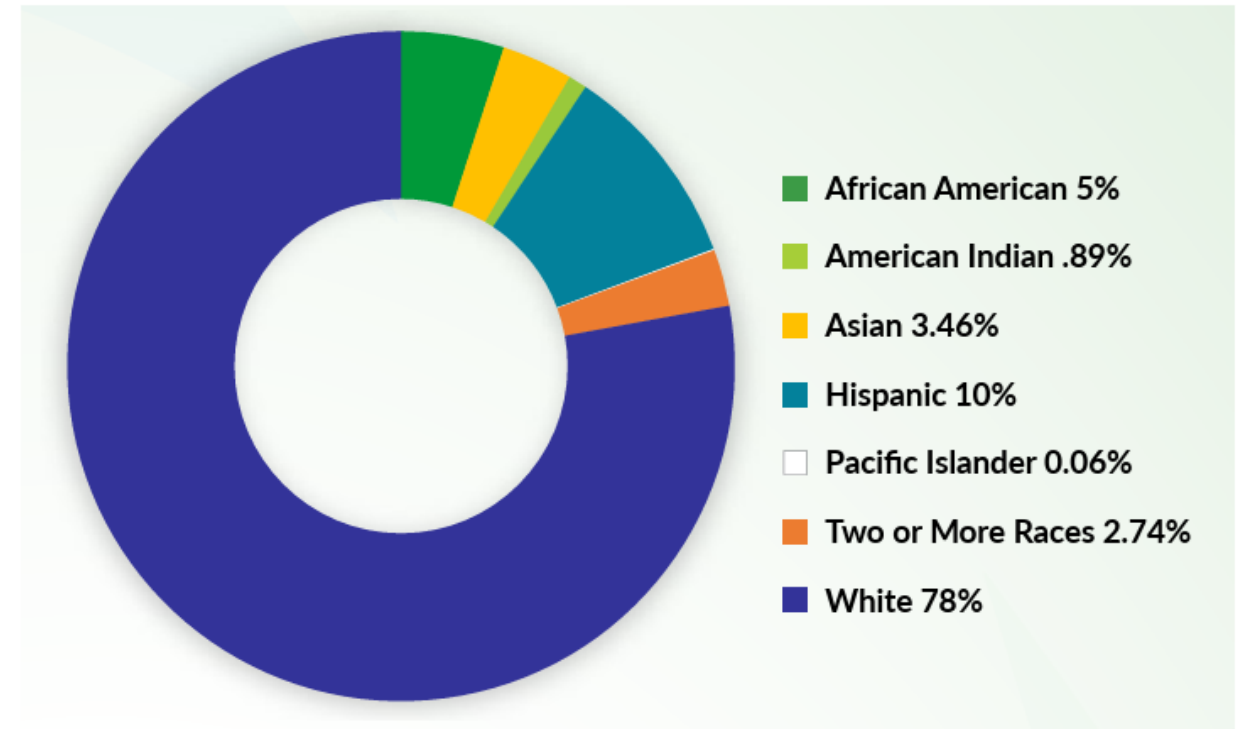
**Five Year Trend for Kentucky High School Graduates' College and/or Career Readiness**



## PIE CHARTS

- Depict groups or categories of data as part of a whole (i.e., all categories add up to 100 percent)
- Work best with relatively simple datasets

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction<sup>13</sup>



## PICTOGRAMS/UNIT CHARTS

- Use icons to represent quantities
- Work best with relatively simple datasets

Source: Ohio Department of Education<sup>14</sup>



98% of students graduate from high school



60% of students obtain further education



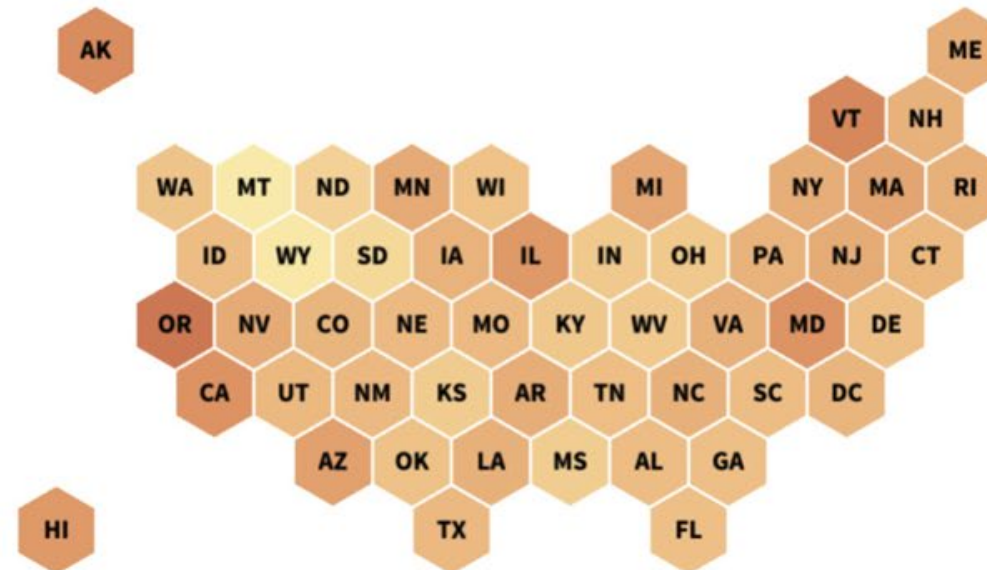
50%+ of students are employed within 9 months of graduation

## HEATMAPS

- Use color to define categories
- Can be applied to other visualization types, such as tables and maps

Source: *Opportunity Insights*<sup>17</sup>

## Percent Change in Employment





# Creating accessible data content

**Understandable** for  
**as many people** as  
possible

# Accessibility

Design for  
colorblindness

Incorporate  
alternate text

Use high  
contrast

Make sure  
fonts are  
readable

# Example

[https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NCEOutcomesInsights1617\\_Web.pdf](https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NCEOutcomesInsights1617_Web.pdf)

# Example

<https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Career-Tech/Contacts-and-Resources/Outcomes-and-Insights-Fact-Sheets/CTE-23-24-Fact-Sheet.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>



# GOALS

## Data-driven Storytelling

Make it

- understandable
- memorable
- actionable



# Checklist

- ✓ Is it exploratory or explanatory?
- ✓ What are the format(s) and channel(s)?
- ✓ Who are the audience(s)?
- ✓ What should the audience know after five seconds?
- ✓ What should the audience do afterward?
- ✓ Is it accessible?

# Free Tools

- Data Viz Project (library of visualizations): <https://datavizproject.com>
- ANDI (Accessible Name & Description Inspector):  
<https://www.ssa.gov/accessibility/andi/help/install.html>
- Advance CTE customizable recruitment templates:  
<https://careertech.org/resource-center/series/cte-communications-recruitment-toolbox>
- CTE Research Network Practitioner Training Modules:  
<https://cteresearchnetwork.org/training-modules>

# Questions?

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- Catherine Imperatore  
[cimperatore@acteonline.org](mailto:cimperatore@acteonline.org)