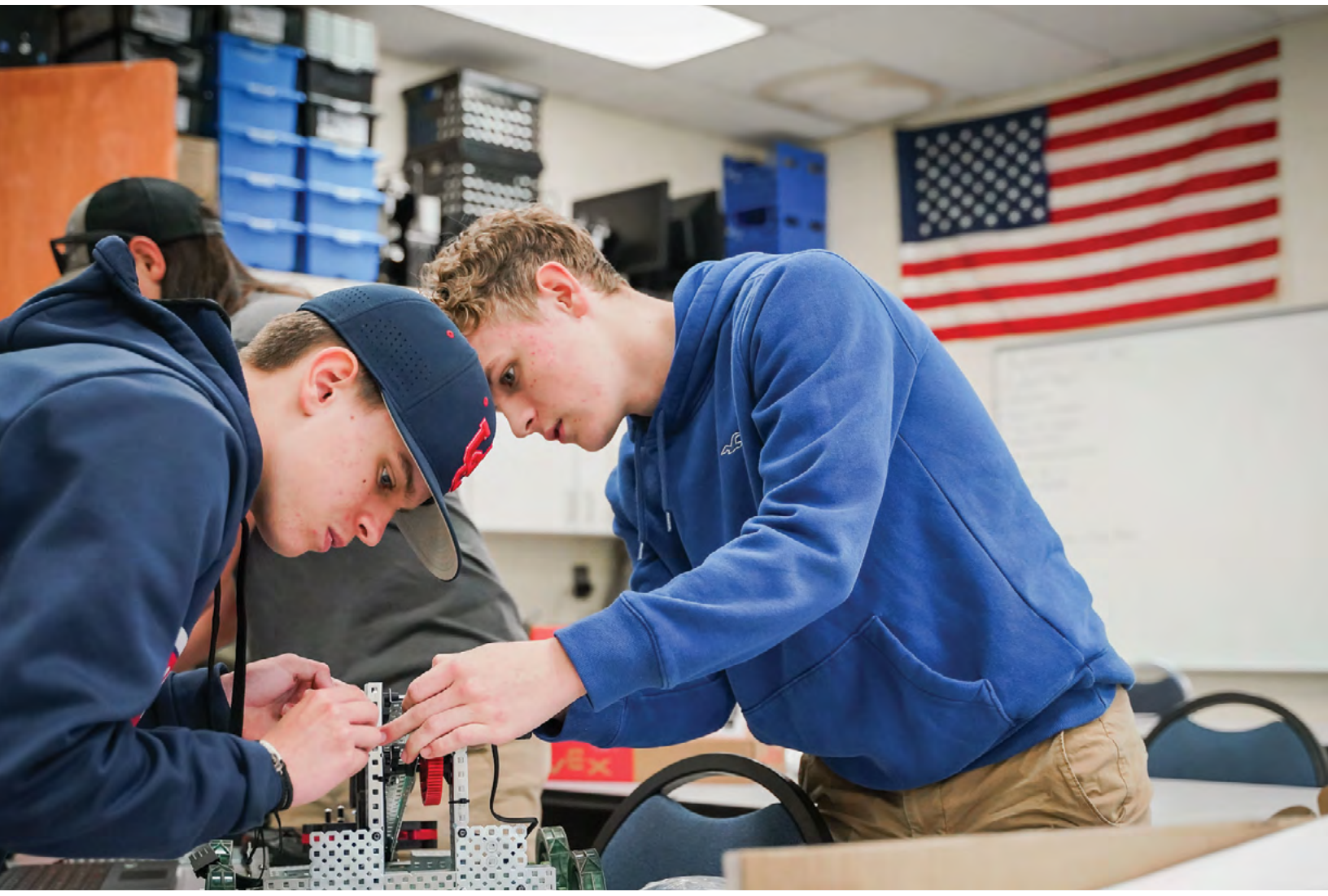

Postsecondary, Workforce, CTE, and Military Readiness

2024–25 Overview

Tennessee Department of Education | October 2025

TN Department of Education

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The high school experience in Tennessee will be transformed to ensure access to high-quality, postsecondary credentials of value so students are prepared to achieve their success through strong academic and workforce readiness.

All students deserve to know and understand their postsecondary, workforce, and military options through individualized support, personalized guidance, and a variety of experiences that allow them, in collaboration with the adults in their lives, to make informed decisions leading to high-skill and in-demand career opportunities.

Lizzette Reynolds

Commissioner of Education

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Introduction

In Tennessee, we believe that every student should graduate high school with purpose, direction, and real choices for their future. The Division of Postsecondary, Workforce, CTE, and Military Readiness (PWCMR) is making this vision a reality by leading efforts to modernize the high school experience and ensure all students are equipped for success—no matter the path they choose.

Our work is grounded in four strategic priorities, also referred to as pillars, that reshape how students prepare for life after high school:

These pillars are more than program areas—they represent a statewide commitment to helping students gain the skills, experiences, and supports they need to pursue meaningful futures. From earning industry-aligned credentials and accessing early college coursework, to building career plans with expert guidance and participating in hands-on, real-world experiences, Tennessee students are being better prepared to thrive in an evolving economy.

This past year, the department partnered with districts, postsecondary institutions, industry leaders, and community organizations to drive forward bold, student-centered innovations. Whether it is building professional development opportunities for educators, expanding access to dual enrollment, streamlining pathways into high-demand careers, or providing immersive work-based learning (WBL) opportunities, our efforts are rooted in ensuring students are seen, supported, and prepared.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on delivering high-quality experiences that connect classroom learning to real opportunities and support students in achieving long-term success. Together, we are building a future where every Tennessee high school graduate is confident in their direction, equipped with credentials that matter, and ready to contribute to a stronger, more competitive Tennessee.

As you explore the pages ahead, you will see how each pillar of our work is making a difference. We invite you to learn how we are building a future-ready Tennessee—every student is prepared, supported, and ready to lead.

SECTION 1 CREDENTIALS OF VALUE

Tennessee is dedicated to transforming the high school experience by providing students with access to high-quality postsecondary credentials that foster academic success and workforce readiness. By aligning secondary and postsecondary credentials with labor market demands, students seamlessly transition into postsecondary and in-demand careers.

SECTION 2 INDIVIDUALIZED ADVISING

Tennessee is establishing a statewide career coach network aimed at strengthening individualized advising for students across the state. This initiative is designed to ensure that every student has access to knowledgeable, well-equipped career coaches who can provide guidance based on the student's unique interests, aptitudes, goals, and aspirations. Through this effort, the state will explore and implement strategies to expand the capacity of career coaches and advising professionals. This includes providing targeted professional development, access to data-driven tools, and collaborative support systems that enable advising professionals to meet the diverse needs of students more effectively. By increasing the availability and quality of individualized career advising, students will be empowered to make informed, confident decisions about their postsecondary pathways, whether that means entering the workforce, enrolling in college or technical school, or enlisting in the military. As a result, career coaches and advising professionals will be equipped with the tools and training necessary to deliver high-quality, student-centered advising so that every Tennessee student graduates from high school with a clear, achievable plan and the support needed to be successful in the transition.

SECTION 3 SEAMLESS TRANSITIONS

Tennessee is committed to transforming the high school experience by ensuring that all students have access to high-quality postsecondary opportunities that promote academic success, military, and workforce readiness. Through intentional enrollment in early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs), enhanced college and career planning tools, proactive college admissions efforts, and improved postsecondary data integration, the state is building more seamless transitions from high school to postsecondary pathways. By equipping districts with robust resources and fostering collaboration with postsecondary institutions to streamline admissions processes, Tennessee is empowering students to confidently navigate their educational and career journeys. These efforts are designed to ensure that every student graduates with the experiences, skills, and support necessary to transition smoothly into college, the workforce, or the military, prepared to succeed and thrive in their chosen path.

SECTION 4 WORK-BASED LEARNING

Tennessee is dedicated to ensuring all students understand how high-quality curriculum and instruction allow them to pursue fulfilling careers in high-growth, in-demand, and high-wage industry sectors through capstone WBL experiences. The application of academic and technical knowledge in a work setting that involves actual work experience is a critical component of workforce readiness. The resources under this initiative allow all stakeholders to utilize the WBL Framework and offer immersive experiences where students leverage their interests and aptitudes to accelerate their careers based on labor market needs and available employment opportunities.

SECTION 5 EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The final section highlights how the department supports educators through professional development opportunities, while tying in initiatives within the four pillars. Through programs such as Occupationally Licensed New Teacher Training (OLNTT), Institute for CTE Educators, and computer science professional development, educators are up to date on best practices and aligning course work with updated standards, ensuring Tennessee students are equipped with the necessary skills to fill in-demand careers.

SECTION 1
Credentials of Value

"I got a certified as a medical assistant, along with getting my BLS certification, which is CPR, before graduating high school. I learned so much that most people don't get to experience until they're halfway through college.

KATELYN WILLIAMS, 2025 Graduate
Liberty Creek High School, *Sumner County Schools*

Tennessee Student Industry Credentials of Value

The Tennessee Promoted Student Industry Credential List is the result of a coordinated effort among several state agencies to identify and maintain a vetted collection of credentials that reflect the academic and technical skills and knowledge students gain through career and technical education (CTE) programs. These credentials are organized into tiers based on their value in the labor market and their connection to postsecondary credit, employment preferences, or direct job placement. Advancement within the tiered system depends on criteria such as alignment with postsecondary coursework, employment requirements, and long-term economic indicators, including wage earnings and job growth projections.

Impact on Tennessee

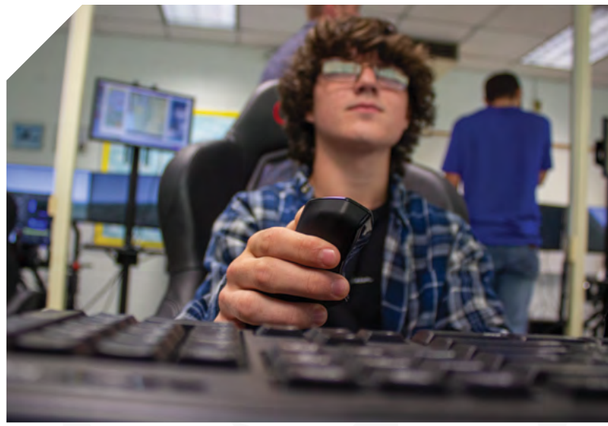
This initiative plays a critical role in preparing students for life beyond high school by aligning credential attainment with real-world workforce demands. By ensuring that industry credentials are directly connected to in-demand industries and postsecondary pathways, Tennessee strengthens its talent pipeline while expanding access to meaningful WBL experiences, apprenticeships, and early career opportunities. These opportunities not only reinforce the relevance of credentials but also provide students with practical, hands-on experiences that enhance their long-term earning potential and career mobility in high-demand industries.

Highlights this School Year

In 2024–25, Tennessee launched a targeted effort to unify and streamline its approach to industry credentials. The Tennessee Department of Education and Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) collaborated to consolidate industry credential lists and ensure alignment with in-demand occupations. The process included reviewing criteria for tier advancement, emphasizing the importance of employment relevance and economic value. These efforts established a more coherent structure, setting the stage for enhanced transparency and usability in future updates to the industry credentialing process.

What's Next

Looking ahead, Tennessee is working toward the development of a consolidated, statewide credential list designed to improve clarity for students, parents, educators, districts, and industry partners. A key next step includes clarifying and standardizing credentials of value terminology, mapping industry-recognized credentials to specific skill sets and competencies, and providing more precise data on what students know and can do. These refinements will strengthen the connection between industry-recognized credentials and career readiness, support data-driven decision-making, and ensure the process remains responsive to the evolving needs of postsecondary pathways and the state's workforce.



SECTION 2
Individualized Advising

When the opportunity presents itself for you to figure out what you're going to do with your life, you better jump on it. I'm thankful for all my advisors, my CTE director, my counselors, they've just really pushed me to the max.

MASON ALLEN, Senior
Milan High School, *Milan Special School District*

Career & Technical Student Organizations

Career & technical student organizations (CTSOs) in Tennessee are an essential extension of the CTE classroom experience. Designed to bridge education, workforce success, and military readiness, CTSOs empower students with the leadership, technical, and employability skills necessary after high school. Through hands-on learning, real-world application, and leadership development, CTSOs cultivate a future-ready workforce and support the state's economic growth.

Tennessee recognizes and supports seven CTSOs integrated into CTE classrooms statewide:

DECA: Prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management.

FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America): Inspires and prepares students to become community-minded business leaders in a global society through relevant career preparation and leadership experiences.

FCCLA (Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America): Focuses on leadership and career development in family and consumer sciences, human services, strengthening families and communities.

FFA: Enhances agricultural education by preparing students for careers in agriculture, leadership, and related industries.

HOSA-Future Health Professionals: Equips students with technical and leadership skills for careers in the healthcare field.

SkillsUSA: Supports students preparing for careers in trade, technical, and skilled service occupations through leadership, citizenship, and technical skill development.

TSA (Technology Student Association): Promotes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) career awareness through leadership activities, competitions, and hands-on classroom integration.

Impact on Tennessee

Through CTSOs, Tennessee students are better equipped to lead, innovate, and thrive in the workforce, higher education, and military service, making them a vital part of our state's future success. All CTSOs are designed to do the following:

- **Facilitate career exploration and decision-making:** Expose students to postsecondary opportunities, mentorship, and networking with industry leaders to inform their career paths.
- **Enhance career readiness skills:** Build technical expertise, leadership abilities, and essential employability skills aligned to workforce needs.
- **Integrate into the classroom:** Offer competitive events, projects, and leadership development resources that support academic and technical instruction.
- **Develop leadership abilities:** Create meaningful opportunities for students to lead, collaborate, and build confidence through officer roles, workshops, conferences, and team projects.
- **Promote academic and technical excellence:** Challenge students to apply classroom knowledge through competitions, community service, and professional development experiences.
- **Foster personal growth:** Support students in developing critical skills such as communication, problem-solving, and resilience.
- **Expand postsecondary opportunities:** Connect students with scholarships, internships, and partnerships with colleges, universities, and technical institutions.
- **Support military readiness:** Develop leadership, discipline, teamwork, and technical skills that align with military pathways and prepare students for service opportunities.
- **Strengthen industry connections:** Build bridges between students and industries through networking events, mentorships, and career exploration experiences.
- **Align with state goals:** Support Tennessee's strategic priorities for workforce development, postsecondary attainment, and economic growth through career-focused education and leadership opportunities.

Highlights this School Year

Tennessee's CTSOs continued their upward trajectory, demonstrating exceptional growth, expanded student engagement, and strong industry connections. With record-breaking participation across the state in leadership and competitive events, CTSOs are preparing more students than ever for postsecondary success, workforce leadership, and military readiness.

- Tennessee CTSOs grew membership to 70,694 members, building on a six percent increase from last year.
- The second annual Chapter Officer Leadership Training (COLT) had a 31% growth, with expanded participation from chapter officers and advisors.
- Fall leadership conferences (FLCs) attendance continued to rise with 2,829 students and advisors attending, reflecting Tennessee's strong CTSO engagement across the state.
- Over 20,000 students, advisors, postsecondary institutions, and industry partners participated in state leadership conferences (SLCs), reinforcing Tennessee's commitment to leadership development, showcasing student work, and industry collaboration.
- DECA had record numbers for their district conferences and broke their state career development conference attendance record with over 3,500 participating.
- FBLA expanded chapters and bridged the gap to have a continuum from middle school through postsecondary and added collegiate FBLA.
- HOSA – Future Health Professionals saw a 29% increase in SLC attendance this year, bringing in 3,500 members, industry partners, and guests from across the state. Through a partnership with the Tennessee Department of Health, HOSA members pursuing careers in public health were offered a new scholarship opportunity to support their postsecondary education and career advancement.
- FFA student engagement reached new heights with over 1,231 students competing in career and leadership-based competitions and 1,752 Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Award-based application submissions, which increased 16% from last year. FFA also expanded further into middle school offerings, increasing chapters for students in grades 6–8 by 21%.
- The "Tennessee Aspiring Educator Award," created to recognize Teaching as a Profession (TAP) students and FCCLA members, provided scholarship opportunities for members who competed at the FCCLA SLC and aspire to pursue careers in education.
- SkillsUSA expanded the Middle School State Leadership and Skills Conference (SLSC) with a 200% growth in attendance and competitive events tailored for emerging leaders.
- TSA membership saw a remarkable 58% increase over the previous year, accompanied by a 40% surge in attendance at the SLC, highlighting the organization's growing impact and engagement.
- Tennessee CTSO members earned 89 top ten national placements at National and International Leadership Conferences (NLC/ILC), celebrating excellence on the national stage.

- Scholarships awarded to Tennessee CTSO members totaled $391,000, helping students pursue postsecondary and career training.
- CTSOs launched enhanced industry partner engagement by strengthening partnerships with Tennessee employers and opening additional internship, mentorship, scholarship, and networking opportunities for students.

What's Next

In the 2025–26 school year, the department and Tennessee CTSOs will:

- expand recruitment efforts and increase advisor support in middle and high schools;
- increase CTSO and industry collaborative events and opportunities;
- provide targeted new advisor and middle school advisor training that focuses on leadership development, chapter programming, and integrating CTSOs into the classroom;
- develop CTSO programming and recognitions tied to military career pathways and public service fields; and
- focus on CTSO advocacy and awareness, promoting continued growth, support, and sustainability.

CTE Career Clusters & Standards

The Division of PWCMR has modernized the existing 16 career clusters into a streamlined framework aimed at bridging education and the workforce through high-quality CTE programs. This updated framework now features 14 career clusters and 59 programs of study (POS), organized into five meta clusters to assist students in identifying career paths that align with their interests and strengths. Each POS is justified using current Tennessee labor market data and developed with assistance from professionals from aligned postsecondary institutions, the workforce, and military branches.

Impact on Tennessee

CTE in Tennessee is designed to equip students with skills, knowledge, and hands-on experience necessary to succeed in postsecondary opportunities, the workforce, and military service. Through a rigorous combination of classroom instruction, work-based experiences, and leadership opportunities in the seven CTSOs, Tennessee's CTE programs assist students in preparing for their career of choice, earn valuable industry credentials and postsecondary credits, and gain a competitive edge in the growing job market.

Highlights this School Year

During the 2024–25 school year, Tennessee made significant strides in modernizing and restructuring CTE by reducing the number of career clusters from 16 to 14, organizing them into five meta clusters, and offering 59 POS.

The division introduced two new POS, Clean Energy as well as Ecological Research and Conservation, within the newly created Energy and Sustainable Resources career cluster to address growing workforce demands. Additionally, two new POS, Marketing Research Analytics and Data Science, were developed to meet emerging labor market needs.

Several career clusters were renamed to reflect current industry terminology, and programs were realigned for better coherence. Key mergers included Health Science and Human Services into Healthcare & Human Services, and Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security with Government & Public Administration into Civics, Public Service, & Safety. The STEM career cluster was dissolved, with its content integrated into Advanced Manufacturing and Healthcare & Human Services for more specialized instruction. These changes represent a strategic effort to ensure CTE programs align with current industry standards and workforce demands.

Career Clusters
Pathways to College & Career Readiness

What's Next

In 2025–26, the revised Career Cluster Framework will be implemented across the state. In addition to the new programs of study, all CTE students will be able to enroll in digital technology, business, and marketing courses to create a differentiated set of course offerings based on student interest and goals.

A new proposed POS is in development for the Agriculture career cluster. Technology in Production Agriculture will encompass innovations in agriculture and research in advanced practices in the field. It will incorporate modern technology coupled with computer science components, providing students with a greater understanding of the technological advancements and providing research-based skills for students to secure future farming practices specific to Tennessee.

Career Coach Network and Supports

The Career Coach Network is a growing statewide initiative designed to empower career coaches with the tools, training, and support needed to guide Tennessee students toward informed, future-ready decisions. The Career Coach Network will connect career coaches and advising professionals through a collaborative, supportive community and offer targeted professional development opportunities to help participants deepen their expertise, refine best practices, and stay aligned and informed with evolving and effective career advising strategies. This network will encourage knowledge sharing across districts by highlighting successes, exchanging ideas, and providing a space for valuable peer feedback. Participants will also gain access to curated resources developed to strengthen advising practices and promote consistency and innovation in career coaching efforts statewide.

Impact on Tennessee

The role a career coach plays is essential in bridging the gap between the classroom and real-world career opportunities. With guided interpretation of career assessments and exposure to aligned experiences, students can make more informed choices about courses, EPSOs, WBL opportunities, and postsecondary options. In a rapidly evolving job market, students need to know about in-demand careers, how to access training, and how to navigate various career pathways. Career coaches can provide this critical insight to students to better equip them to make important decisions regarding their futures.

Highlights this School Year

A database of district-supported career coaches has been started to ensure that communication updates reach all stakeholders serving in this capacity. More than 200 contacts have been added to the database, as well as contacts from nonprofit, external advising partners affiliated with the Ayer's Foundation, Niswonger Foundation, AdviseTN, TNGearUP, and others. A survey was distributed via email to district-supported career coaches to gather input on their professional development needs. More than 80 responses have been received, providing valuable insights that will inform the creation of impactful professional development opportunities through the Career Coach Network.

Additionally, several resources for the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) policy have been developed, including an FAQ document, a guidance document, and three journey guides that visualize the policy for educators, students, and families. Bi-weekly virtual office hours for HSBP and career coach support are ongoing and will continue through the spring of 2026.

What's Next

The development of the Career Coach Network continues. Once it is finished, career coaches and educators can expect to see more in-person professional development and collaboration opportunities, as well as the development and compilation of curated resources to advance advising practices across the state. Career coaches will also have access to a free specialized certification focused on improving high-quality advising practices to better assist students in reaching their goals. A Career Coach Advisory Council will also be established to share updates and best practices throughout the year. In addition, a pilot program will be developed for career coaches to implement with student focus groups.

Military Readiness

The department is dedicated to the inclusion of military career opportunities in career discussions and preparation.

Impact on Tennessee

Adding the military component to CTE work ensures that students will be aware of all opportunities in their career selection process. Educating school faculty, counselors, and administrators about these opportunities is crucial to ensuring the students and parents have the information needed. While military recruiters are essential in the process, students and parents trust their school leaders to share information and assist in the decision-making process. As gatekeepers, it is essential that they have the correct information.

Highlights this School Year

The department's senior leadership met with various military leaders to discuss the current involvement of recruiters and other military stakeholders in public schools. Those discussions have led to strategies in document and resource creation, communication, and student and parental awareness around opportunities for students interested in military service.

What's Next

In the spring of 2025, the department welcomed a fellow from the Governor's Veteran Fellowship Program to assist in creating resources and collecting information to assist school counselors and career coaches in the advisement of military career opportunities.

Sessions on military careers in the career clusters have been added to professional development opportunities to ensure teachers are aware of the careers available in their aligned industries.

SECTION 3
Seamless Transitions

> *This could be what I want to do in my future and with my life... The school has helped me towards the goal of going to the airlines and becoming a professional pilot in a lot of different ways.*

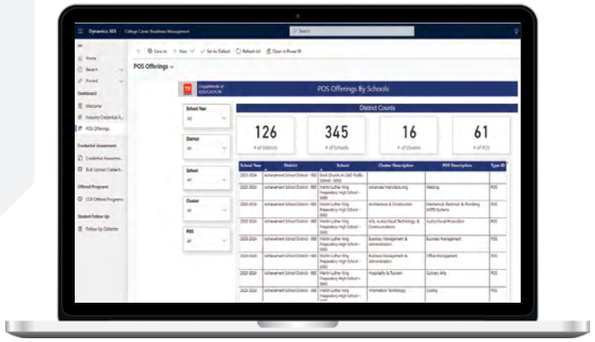
ANDREW RODABAUGH, Senior
Oak Ridge High School, *Oak Ridge Schools*

Accountability and Data Reporting

Tennessee CTE annually reports data to both federal and state agencies, including the number of students enrolling in courses, earning industry credentials, and continuing to postsecondary education, military, and/or the workforce.

These data points and required documentation are collected through the College and Career Readiness (CCR) portal. Prior to the portal opening in March 2024, the department utilized eTIGER, a system written more than 20 years ago. The new system assists in the accurate collection of data required for the federal Consolidated Annual Report (CAR), Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA), and CCR state accountability.

TENNESSEE CTE TISA
Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement



Impact on Tennessee

The CCR portal pulls enrollment information directly from student information systems and allows local education agencies (LEAs) to enter additional information, such as documentation of industry credentials earned for the year, programs of study offered at each school, and follow-up information on CTE graduates.

Highlights this School Year

The 2024–25 school year was the first full year the portal was open. Department staff and LEA representatives learned the system's capabilities and discussed actions that would make the portal more user-friendly.

In July 2024, the CCR portal collected documentation for over 60,000 industry credentials earned by students. In July 2025, that number rose to 64,000.

The department collected data on participation, student enrollment in more than two classes in a program of study, WBL enrollment, dual enrollment, school program of study offerings, and follow-up information on the class of 2023.

What's Next

In the 2025–26 school year, the department will utilize the student identification number as a key to connect course enrollment, CTSO membership, earned industry credentials, and student follow-up data. This means that the department will be able to determine how many CTE connection points students are experiencing at the school, district, and state levels. This data will inform work moving forward in professional development and technical support in areas that may be in deficit. The department will also be able to pinpoint LEAs that are successfully creating learning opportunities in each of the pillars, as well as Tennessee CTE.

Computer Science

The computer science project outlines the department's efforts aligned with Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-6-1010 key priorities. Although not every Tennessee student will enter a computer science or STEM field, all students will benefit from learning these concepts and practices, allowing them to better understand the world around them. Beginning in the 2024–25 school year, all students entering middle school and high school must complete a computer science course before moving on or graduating, and elementary students will be exposed to computer science content knowledge through integration in other content areas. By embedding computer science education in the K–12 curricula and leveraging industry and educational collaborations, Tennessee will ensure that students are well-prepared for the demands of a technologically driven future, thereby fostering a competitive and innovative workforce.

Impact on Tennessee

Tennessee has seen a consistent increase in computer science-related job opportunities in fields that require specific technical training and skills. Expanding computer science education is necessary to ensure Tennessee can take advantage of the high-wage occupations available and fulfill the changing demands of industry. Other trades are also evolving in the needs of their workforce as technology has become deeply ingrained in fields from agriculture to health science. It is imperative students are prepared with the foundational knowledge needed to be successful in whichever career path they choose.

Highlights this School Year

- In the 2024–25 school year, 178,670 students were enrolled in a computer science course from kindergarten through 12th grade. This represents an overall increase of 56% from the previous school year.

  K–5: 57,852 **6–8:** 79,990 **9–12:** 40,828

- In the 2024–25 school year, there were 2,509 different teachers of record for computer science courses, an increase of 222% from the previous school year.
- In the 2024–25 school year, 825 schools offered a computer science course, representing 138 districts.

What's Next

Throughout the first year of computer science implementation, the department has actively collaborated with teachers, schools, and districts to identify needs and address concerns. By analyzing individual feedback and school participation metrics, we can recognize statewide trends and gaps, enabling the department to better target our support and focus our efforts for the upcoming school year. To further assist educators, we will provide additional guidance documents for elementary teachers to support the integration of computer science standards in K–5 classrooms across all subject areas. The department will also continue offering free, high-quality instructional materials aligned with the state computer science standards for all Tennessee teachers. Regular office hours offer direct support to district leaders, sharing best practices for instruction and implementation with particular attention to rural districts and those that did not offer computer science courses during the 2024–25 school year.

Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs)

Early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs) are high school courses and programs that provide students with the chance to earn college credit and industry-recognized credentials before graduation. These opportunities expose students to college-level material and expectations while developing real-world, career-aligned skills, equipping them with the knowledge, experience, and confidence needed to thrive in both postsecondary education and the workforce. EPSOs include Dual Enrollment (DE), Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge International (CIE), Local Dual Credit (LDC), Statewide Dual Credit (SDC), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), and various industry credentials.

Impact on Tennessee

In Tennessee, EPSOs play a vital role in preparing students for success beyond high school by increasing college and career readiness, reducing the cost and time to earn a postsecondary degree, and creating more seamless transitions into college, careers, or the military. Participation in EPSOs helps students build academic momentum, explore career interests, and gain critical skills needed for in-demand industries, all while fostering confidence and competence to successfully continue any postsecondary pathway. Tennessee is committed to ensuring that all students, regardless of background or circumstance, have equitable access to these opportunities, so every learner can benefit from a strong start toward their future. By aligning K–12 education with postsecondary and workforce expectations, EPSOs support the state's broader goal of developing a strong, skilled talent pipeline for the future. These efforts are part of a strategic approach to grow Tennessee's workforce, capitalize on the return on investment in public education, and strengthen and expand the state's economic competitiveness through a well-prepared, locally developed workforce.

Highlights this School Year

- In the 2024–25 school year, student participation in EPSOs reached new heights, with over 221,000 course enrollments statewide.
- DE experienced a nearly 53% increase from the previous year, with over 55,300 unique students enrolling—representing nearly 30,000 more course enrollments—while maintaining a pass rate exceeding 90%.
- Participation in LDC and AP also grew, with more than 31,000 students enrolled in LDC courses and an increase of 1,600 AP students statewide, expanding student access to college-aligned coursework and opportunities to earn postsecondary credit.
- In response to continued growth in EPSO participation, the department conducted a comprehensive Landscape Analysis, detailing each EPSO's current status, benefits and flexibilities, barriers and opportunity gaps, best practices, CTE alignment, and available cost assistance. This report will inform efforts under the state's Seamless Transitions pillar, supporting more intentional and impactful EPSO implementation statewide.
- To promote higher-impact EPSO options, the department is phasing out SDC over the next two school years. Beginning in 2025–26, incoming freshmen will no longer be eligible to enroll in any SDC courses during high school. In 2026–27, only juniors and seniors may access a limited set of SDC courses:
  - Psychology (G04HB5)
  - Pre-Calculus (G02H74)
  - Introductory Statistics (G02H75)
  - American History (G04HB3)
  - World History (G04HB4)
- By the start of the 2027–28 school year, all SDC courses will be fully discontinued.

What's Next

Looking ahead, the next phase of Tennessee's EPSO strategy will focus on deepening impact through a comprehensive analysis of student access, participation, and success. By identifying and addressing structural, informational, and systemic barriers, the state aims to expand equitable EPSO access and improve outcomes for all students. This work prioritizes the intentional design of EPSO pathways that are personalized and purpose-driven, ensuring students graduate not just with postsecondary credit but with clarity, confidence, and career-connected competencies that prepare them for college, military service, or entry into the workforce. With the SDC program set to sunset over the next two school years, the department is supporting districts in transitioning to higher-impact EPSOs that more effectively align with evolving postsecondary expectations and workforce needs. A key focus moving forward is the intentional use of DE funding to ensure students are not only earning credit but also making meaningful progress toward postsecondary pathways.

As part of the Seamless Transitions initiative, the department is streamlining EPSO course codes to enable more accurate tracking of participation, credit transferability, and progress toward credential completion. This data-driven approach will shape future EPSO development and inform alignment with students' High School and Beyond Plans. Concurrently, the department is partnering with postsecondary institutions to establish streamlined admissions processes and proactive communication strategies that support confident, successful student transitions beyond high school. In addition, collaboration with state agencies is underway to provide districts with access to National Student Clearinghouse data, empowering local leaders to use actionable insights in EPSO planning and implementation.

Innovative School Strategies

Innovative School Strategies are a revolutionary way for districts to reimagine space, time, modes of learning, and partnerships for students in Tennessee. With a historic investment of over $500 million by Governor Bill Lee, LEAs and public charter schools have changed the middle and high school experience. Through Innovative School Strategies, students are completing more of their postsecondary education before high school graduation, accessing more advanced technology and equipment, and engaging with employers in new and more impactful ways. Consequently, students are far more engaged with their learning and are better prepared for their next steps after graduation.

Impact on Tennessee

The Innovative School Strategies project is important to Tennessee because it closes the biggest gap in the education to workforce pipeline: the transition from K–12 to postsecondary education and training. Prior to the Innovative School Strategies project, many students who were academically qualified to earn a postsecondary credential or degree never optimally pursued those opportunities. This project facilitates that transition by increasing student access to EPSOs, industry-recognized credentials of value, capstone WBL opportunities, and clearly articulated roadmaps to a successful career.

Tennessee's thriving business community relies on developing a strong workforce, and that work starts in education. Innovative strategies to ensure students are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow look entirely different than a traditional classroom or school setting. Innovative School Strategies provide unique learning experiences that prepare students for the future workforce.

Highlights this School Year

During the 2024–25 school year, Innovative School Strategies reported by districts led to the following:

- A total of 46,139 middle school students participated in new CTE programs across 165 districts and public charter schools.
- A total of 17,967 additional students participated in Innovative School Strategies WBL programs as a result of newly reimagined partnerships.
- A total of 42 districts reported increasing their career coaching staff to build student capacity around EPSOs, credentials of value, and WBL experiences.

Specific district outcomes related to their prioritized work around Innovative School Strategies included the following:

- In Tipton County Schools, labor market research led to the expansion of the mechatronics program to address critical employer needs, including Ford Motor Company's Blue Oval City. Innovative School Strategies efforts increased mechatronics participation by 29%.
- Over a three-year period, Hamblen County Schools experienced a 61% increase in middle school CTE participation, resulting from successful collaboration between schools and industry partners to provide students with hands-on experiences that align with high-demand skills in the workforce.
- Williamson County Schools broke ground on The Innovation Hub 2.0, a new building designed to integrate K–12, postsecondary, and industry partners under one roof to increase the number of students who graduate with postsecondary credit, industry-recognized credentials of value, and high-quality training and work experience.

What's Next

Moving forward, Innovative School Strategies will focus on two major priorities that enhance students' ability to gain hands-on learning experiences, obtain industry credentials, earn postsecondary credit, and contribute to the workforce.

First, to help LEAs and public charter schools fully accomplish their goals for Innovative School Strategies, LEAs and public charters will have the opportunity for a one-year, no-cost extension on grant funds. Grantees will continue to receive targeted guidance and have additional time to successfully complete capital projects, more acutely refine new programs, and increase positive outcomes for students.

Additionally, the department will continue to identify promising Innovative School Strategies to publish resources that build district capacity to scale new innovative programs across the state. Districts will have an opportunity to receive targeted training on building out Innovative School Strategies models, participate in department-led professional development, and create opportunities that better connect students with postsecondary offerings, industry credentials, and the workforce. Through data-driven research and collaboration, all students will receive the most relevant learning opportunities in Tennessee.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics

All students should have access to contextualized, integrated learning experiences supported by high-quality STEM, including arts and music (STE(A)M) education, which supports the state's efforts to prepare all students for postsecondary and career success. At its foundation, STE(A)M education is focused on building critical and creative thinking and analysis skills by addressing how students view and experience the world around them. Strong STE(A)M teaching and learning opportunities rest on inquiry, technology, and project-based learning activities and lessons that are tied to the real world. Schools that fully embrace the "STE(A)M approach" use its collaborative and interdisciplinary nature to fully transform the delivery of education at the classroom and school-wide level.

Impact on Tennessee

STE(A)M education is one of the most effective tools to prepare students for success in postsecondary education, the workforce, and the military. At its foundation, STE(A)M education is focused on building critical and creative thinking and analysis skills by addressing how students view and experience the world around them. Using STE(A)M as a foundational instructional strategy intentionally equips students with the skills, mindsets, and real-world competencies required in today's rapidly evolving workforce. Strong STE(A)M teaching and learning opportunities rest on inquiry, technology, and project-based learning activities that are tied to the real world. STE(A)M education is a critical factor to prepare our students to meet the demands of Tennessee's growing economy in fields that rely heavily on a workforce trained in STE(A)M disciplines. Furthermore, STE(A)M education creates an essential pipeline of students prepared with real-world, hands-on experience that connects classroom learning to in-demand career paths. Incorporating interdisciplinary, project-based learning experiences in STE(A)M classrooms mirror the collaborative, solution-oriented environments of modern workplaces. Students learn to approach complex challenges with innovation and resilience, preparing them not only for technical careers but for any profession that values adaptable thinkers. By embedding STE(A)M career awareness, industry partnerships, and employability skills within instruction, schools can ensure that students graduate with competencies to thrive in a dynamic, knowledge- and skill-based economy.

Highlights this School Year

Alongside the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network (TSIN), the department designated 19 schools across the state as new STEM or STE(A)M Designated Schools. This award is a year-long process that requires schools to use model teaching and learning strategies and excel in five identified attributes that foster a culture of STEM and STE(A)M education throughout a school building: STE(A)M infrastructure, curriculum and instruction, professional development, achievement, and community and postsecondary partnerships. Additionally, 28 schools earned a STEM or STE(A)M Re-Designation status.

In August 2024, over 200 courses were revised to contain STEM concepts in problem-based learning and the engineering design process (EDP). To prepare instructors for the new standards, regional training was offered in the fall and spring to share the basic components of EDP and discuss the integration of the process into CTE courses.

What's Next

The department will continue to work with TSIN to promote the STEM and STE(A)M School Designation process throughout the state and offer professional development and support for project-based learning. Fall professional development opportunities include problem-based learning labs that instructors can use in the CTE classroom.

Additionally, the department will work closely with TSIN as they expand their vision of STEM designation to include a strong alignment with workforce development. Furthermore, the regional STEM hubs will be enhanced to become workforce development and industry partnership hubs by assisting with the development of teacher externships and expanding industry engagement and workforce partnerships with area schools.

SECTION 4
Work-Based Learning

> *It's truly incredible—the program of work-based learning in itself, allowing kids to get out into the workforce during the school day, allowing them to search for their future career and get real world experiences.*

NOAH LAND, 2025 Graduate
Polk County High School, *Polk County Schools*

Enhance Work-Based Learning Experiences

In Tennessee, work-based learning (WBL) is defined as the application of academic and technical knowledge in a work setting that involves authentic work experience. Through intentional planning and collaboration between schools, employers, postsecondary partners, and workforce development groups, students participate in hands-on career awareness, exploration, preparation, and training activities that inform them about the world of work and accelerate their career trajectories. WBL allows all students to leverage their interests and aptitudes into a fulfilling career, connecting high-quality curriculum with meaningful workforce contributions.

Impact on Tennessee

Immersive WBL experiences are important to Tennessee because they allow students to better understand the world of work beyond a traditional school setting. WBL helps close skills gaps in industry, opens employment opportunities for students, and strengthens economies statewide by building a more skilled workforce. In essence, WBL in Tennessee is about creating a true extension of the classroom learning environment, where critical skills, both transferable and technical, align to prepare every student for the future they choose.

The importance of WBL in Tennessee is clear. Over the past 10 years, students who participated in WBL outperformed non-WBL students by a wide margin. According to a longitudinal study by the Office of Evidence and Impact at the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration:

- WBL students are nearly 25% more likely to seamlessly enroll in postsecondary education after high school than non-WBL students;
- WBL students are more likely to earn a postsecondary degree or credential; and
- WBL students without a postsecondary degree earn nearly $4,200 more on average per year than non-WBL students without a postsecondary degree eight years after high school graduation.

Highlights this School Year

During the 2024–25 school year, 46 WBL Certification and Recertification Networking Events were held, allowing 1,162 educators to obtain a certificate to oversee WBL programs statewide, which will build district capacity to understand and implement high-quality WBL experiences.

The inaugural Tennessee Flagship Industry Partner Award Ceremony recognized five of the top WBL partners throughout the state for their contributions to student workforce participation. These partners were celebrated for offering high-quality Tennessee Certified Pre-Apprenticeships, WBL experiences for students across multiple districts, and paid WBL placements leading to full-time employment at graduation.

Additionally, for the seventh consecutive school year, student WBL credit attainment increased. With 51,427 WBL credits earned during the 2024–25 school year, students have overwhelmingly surpassed the 43,435 WBL credits earned in 2023–24.

Lastly, 12 new course codes for dual enrollment WBL courses, or work-based courses (WBCs), were added to the Course Code Management System, resulting in K–12, postsecondary, and workforce partners collectively supporting students in postsecondary coursework that involves WBL placements. In partnership with Jobs for the Future, Tennessee is the first state to offer this course model for students in Computer Science, Advanced Manufacturing, and Health Science programs.

➲ What's Next

Moving forward, Tennessee will continue to build stakeholders' capacity so they can enhance WBL experiences for all students. This will be accomplished through four main initiatives:

- **WBL experience evaluation framework:** Tennessee is taking action to establish criteria for defining levels of quality for all WBL experiences. Definitions for each tier, along with guidance on how to achieve the top tier for all student placements, will be published and covered in WBL coordinator trainings.
- **Rural WBL pilot programs:** In partnership with Tennessee SCORE and District C, up to 10 districts will implement a virtual WBL experience for students who face barriers to in-person work placements. Other districts will build community partnerships with local and state government agencies to expand employer networks in an effort to continue increasing WBL credit attainment.
- **Stakeholder outreach:** The department will embark on a statewide WBL roadshow to better inform all stakeholder groups about the benefits of participating in WBL. Employer collaboratives, Local Workforce Development Areas, postsecondary partners, and the State Workforce Development Board will have the opportunity to learn about WBL and ask questions about how they can engage with districts and students.
- **Inter-agency collaboration:** In an effort to align workforce priorities across state agency partners, the department will collaborate with the Tennessee Departments of Labor and Workforce Development, Economic and Community Development, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and the Tennessee Board of Regents to establish common goals and leverage our networks to achieve those goals.
- **Employer incentives for WBL participation:** We understand that employers are critical to the expansion of quality WBL opportunities for students. As an extension of our employer recognition efforts, we will provide employers with incentives to offer students the highest quality WBL experiences and support them in their work. This initiative will ultimately be the catalyst for our vision of universal WBL participation for students in Tennessee.

SECTION 5
Educator Professional Development

"The OLNTT in my opinion was the single best thing that myself or any brand new teacher could receive... After this training, I truly feel like I have SO many tools to utilize now. I am leaving here with excitement and more confidence in my job now.

TENNESSEE EDUCATOR

Occupationally Licensed New Teacher Training

Occupationally licensed new teacher training (OLNTT) is Tennessee's required training for new occupationally licensed teachers to advance toward a professional license, as outlined in the Tennessee Educator Licensure Rule (Rule 0520-02-03-.04, Section (1)(b)). Designed for delivery during a teacher's first year in the classroom, OLNTT is a 20-hour, in-person training facilitated by experienced CTE teachers who hold occupational licenses themselves. The training spans three days and blends mentorship, small-group discussion, and hands-on learning to support new educators in understanding CTE instructional practices, classroom management, and student engagement strategies.

Impact on Tennessee

Tennessee's CTE programs rely on the expertise of industry professionals transitioning into education through occupational licensure. OLNTT ensures these new educators are not only certified but also well-prepared to deliver high-quality instruction aligned with Tennessee State Board of Education-approved standards. This training supports retention and effectiveness by equipping teachers with foundational skills, peer connections, and mentorship early in their careers. Strong induction experiences like OLNTT are vital to maintaining high standards across CTE classrooms and ensuring that students receive the workforce-ready education Tennessee is committed to providing.

Highlights this School Year

In the 2024–25 school year, the OLNTT program successfully hosted four training sessions—two in late September and early October 2024 and two in January 2025. These trainings were the first to occur after a revision of the content, bringing the training from five days to three.

A total of 211 new occupationally licensed teachers completed the training, gaining critical instructional and classroom management skills. The sessions were led by 16 veteran CTE educators who served as facilitators and mentors. End-of-session survey results showed that over 98% of participants found the content useful in their development as educators, reflecting the high quality and relevance of the training experience. These outcomes demonstrate OLNTT's ongoing impact on teacher preparedness and program quality across the state.

What's Next

For the 2025–26 school year, OLNTT is expanding to better meet regional needs and reduce logistical burdens on school districts. The training will increase to six sessions—three in the fall and three in the winter—with one session hosted in each of Tennessee's grand divisions during both seasons. This expansion responds directly to feedback from CTE Directors who identified travel costs and substitute teacher expenses as barriers to participation. By making the training more geographically accessible, OLNTT will continue to support new teachers while improving efficiency and equity for schools and districts statewide.

The Institute for CTE Educators

The Institute for CTE Educators is a professional development opportunity designed to equip CTE educators with the tools and knowledge needed to advance their teaching. Through a variety of sessions, workshops, and networking opportunities, participants explore effective instructional strategies, develop innovative educational resources, and build connections with peers. The Institute highlights key focus areas such as earning industry credentials, expanding CTE offerings in middle schools, strengthening WBL experiences, and building dual enrollment partnerships with postsecondary institutions. Educators complete this professional development with practical insights and strategies to enhance CTE instruction and better prepare students for future careers.

Impact on Tennessee

The Institute for CTE Educators plays a vital role in advancing Tennessee's workforce development goals by strengthening the quality of CTE across the state. As Tennessee continues to prioritize preparing students for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers, it is essential that CTE educators are equipped with current industry knowledge, innovative teaching strategies, and strong connections to both postsecondary institutions and employers. This investment in educator development directly contributes to building a skilled and competitive workforce for Tennessee's future.

Highlights this School Year

The 2024 Institute, held in Chattanooga, was a three-day event with all instructors attending opening sessions, career cluster-specific sessions, and vendor exhibitions. The Institute welcomed over 900 CTE directors, educators, and other stakeholders from across the state. There were 151 unique sessions presented, and instructors were able to visit 60 vendors, including 27 innovation lab booths, 39 high visibility booths, and five sponsors.

What's Next

Due to participant feedback, the Institute has been under revision over the past year.

In July 2025, CTE teachers gathered in middle Tennessee to participate in content-specific sessions aligned with the new career cluster framework and include information about the aligned CTSO. In addition, program-specific industry tours, industry discussion panels, and information on aligned military careers will be offered. The Institute will also provide instructors with valuable time to collaborate with peers who teach in the same content areas.

Fall Career Cluster Professional Development

In Fall 2024, senior coordinators of CTE programs and CTSO state advisors provided professional development for CTE educators throughout Tennessee. The goal was to facilitate sessions featuring the Comprehensive Career Cluster Review (C3R), share updates from industry, emphasize the integration of problem-based learning (PBL) and CTSOs into course standards, and have dedicated networking time. During these sessions, CTE teachers collaborated on developing PBL lessons and exchanged resources and instructional strategies with peers in their respective career clusters.

Impact on Tennessee

Professional development sessions for CTE teachers ensure our educational goals and instructional practices align with the skills and knowledge employers and postsecondary institutions expect. These sessions help teachers make connections to standards that are both relevant and engaging. Additionally, teachers gain strategies for implementing PBL, enhancing their effectiveness in the classroom, and increasing student engagement. Together, these efforts strengthen Tennessee's talent pipeline and support the state's long-term workforce development.

Highlights this School Year

The senior coordinators and CTSO state advisors spent time with instructors through sessions in the fall. Feedback suggested that teachers were grateful to have time to ask questions and understand the intent behind course standards.

Eight professional development sessions were provided across all three grand divisions. There were 1,057 CTE teachers in attendance.

What's Next

Fifty-four professional development sessions will be offered in all career clusters in the fall of 2025 across all three grand divisions in Tennessee.

The professional development sessions will include a focus on applying PBL to standards, the engineering design process (EDP), data analysis, and CTSOs in the CTE classroom, as indicated in the Perkins V State Plan. Teachers will have the opportunity to work through sample classroom projects to encourage the growth of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

CTSO Fall Leadership Conferences

The CTSO Fall Leadership Conferences (FLCs) provide targeted professional development for CTSO advisors across Tennessee. These sessions focus on building advisors' skills in CTSO chapter management, leadership development strategies, classroom integration of CTSO activities, and enhancing student engagement. Professional development offerings are tailored to the unique needs of each CTSO and support both new and experienced advisors, ensuring consistent, high-quality student leadership experiences statewide.

Impact on Tennessee

Advisor professional development is critical to strengthening Tennessee's CTSO programs, which are directly linked to student achievement, college and career readiness, and leadership growth. Providing advisors with training ensures that CTSOs are fully integrated into the CTE classroom and helps students connect academic learning with real-world experiences. Investing in advisor capacity directly impacts Tennessee's ability to build a future-ready workforce, expand industry partnerships, and sustain a strong pipeline of leaders across all sectors, including education, health, agriculture, business, public service, skilled trades, families, and communities.

Highlights this School Year

- FLCs across the state delivered CTSO-specific professional development.
- Resources and toolkits were shared for advisors to implement CTSO leadership activities within their CTE courses.

What's Next

Moving forward, the department will:

- expand FLC professional development offerings to include additional dates and tracks for advisors;
- increase alignment between CTSO and CTE educator professional development; and
- pilot new cohort training modules.

Computer Science Professional Development

The department, in collaboration with the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network (TSIN), offers multiple avenues for educators to learn about and collaborate around computer science education. The Computer Science Endorsement Pathway (CSEP) is the department's largest professional development initiative and provides licensed teachers with a no-cost route to computer science endorsement. This asynchronous course is offered every fall and spring semester and contains six self-paced modules that allow teachers to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of the computer science standards by embedding these practices into their current instruction.

Additionally, the department and TSIN host Computer Science Accelerator Week in the summer, which provides relevant and forward-thinking programming for teachers at all levels; these courses are offered both in person and virtually.

Another exciting professional development opportunity for teachers is the Computer Science Momentum Expedition (CSME), which offers teachers networking opportunities, dedicated time to discuss best practices with other computer science teachers and industry experts, as well as the option to hear from a dynamic keynote speaker. The expedition hosts field trips for teachers to see how computer science is applied within businesses and organizations in Nashville.

Finally, the department hosts year-round virtual and in-person regional professional development aimed at strengthening teacher capacity, addressing misconceptions, and aligning goals and expectations for computer science implementation across the state.

Impact on Tennessee

In order for Tennessee to remain a leader in computer science education, as well as meet the legislated requirements, it is necessary that the state increases the number of teachers certified to lead these courses and provide the resources and guidance required to ensure a strong foundation in content knowledge. Given the limited number of options for pre-service teachers to pursue a computer science endorsement, the department has stepped in to fill this gap by offering CSEP for any teacher with a professional or occupational license. Additionally, this area lacks the historical framework for professional development that supports other academic fields, and many educators struggle to find quality content to improve their practice. By collaborating with TSIN and our regional STEM hubs, we are working to build out the channels of communication and opportunities for continuing education to support the growing number of computer science teachers across the state.

Highlights this School Year

- In the Summer 2024 section of CSEP, 235 teachers earned their computer science endorsement.
- In the Fall 2024 section of CSEP, 284 teachers earned their computer science endorsement.
- In the Spring 2025 section of CSEP, 385 teachers earned their computer endorsement.
- Since the start of CSEP, 1,796 teachers have earned their computer science endorsement, and we met our goal of 1500 endorsement holders by June 2025.
- In 2024, the department had participants from 101 Tennessee school districts complete CSEP.
- Participation in computer science professional development included the following:
  - **Computer Science Accelerator Week:** 72
  - **Fall Computer Science Webinars:** 146
  - **Computer Science Momentum Expedition:** 228
  - **Spring Computer Science Workshops:** 76

What's Next

The division will continue to provide a no-cost route to computer science endorsement for certified teachers through CSEP and expand and improve professional development opportunities across the state with a predictable cadence and flexible attendance options. Additionally, the division will connect with content experts to provide additional guidance documents, ensuring that elementary teachers have a clear vision for integrating standards in other content areas, and middle or high school teachers can access materials and curricula that support their instruction.

School Visit Highlights

In the 2024–25 school year, the CTE team launched a focused initiative to visit schools across the state to observe career cluster-aligned programs of study in action. Each senior coordinator was tasked with conducting site visits to assess program implementation, engage directly with teachers and administrators, and observe students participating in hands-on learning. These visits aimed to bridge the gap between statewide policy and local classroom practice, while gathering qualitative insights to strengthen program support and development.

Impact on Tennessee

School visits allow the department's CTE team to see first-hand how programs of study are being delivered in classrooms and labs, ensuring alignment with state standards, labor market needs, and instructional best practices. Hearing directly from educators and students helps identify both strengths and gaps in program delivery, instructional resources, and teacher support. Senior coordinators can then provide one-on-one technical support, find trends that may need to be the focus of professional development, and facilitate networking between experienced educators and those beginning new programs. This ongoing engagement helps maintain the integrity and quality of CTE offerings, ensuring Tennessee students graduate with relevant, career-ready skills.

Highlights this School Year

Throughout the 2024–25 academic year, senior coordinators completed over 90 school visits to a diverse range of high schools across Tennessee. These visits included observing instruction across multiple career clusters, reviewing equipment and facilities, and meeting with teachers, school leaders, and students. The site visits provided valuable insights into the implementation of newer or updated programs of study, identified professional development needs, and highlighted exemplary practices worth sharing statewide. Key themes from the visits were compiled to inform technical assistance, update standards and supports, and inform the department's CTE strategic planning efforts.

What's Next

Building on the success and impact of the 2024–25 school visits, the senior coordinators anticipate continuing and expanding this initiative in future years, contingent on available resources. Plans include creating a more formalized observation and feedback process, developing tools to capture consistent data across visits, and incorporating insights from the field into future policy updates and program development. These visits will remain an essential tool for keeping Tennessee's CTE programs responsive, high-quality, and student-centered.

Career Cluster Realignment

Tennessee undertook a major realignment of its CTE career cluster framework to better prepare students for the workforce of today and tomorrow. The current career cluster framework has been in place since 2002, making it necessary to reorganize the career clusters based on current and future workforce needs. In partnership with Advance CTE and national industry leaders, Tennessee restructured the career clusters and programs of study, ensuring alignment with evolving labor market demands. As part of this effort, each of the state's 14 career clusters and 59 programs of study have been organized under newly established meta clusters, grouping fields by their broader contributions to society. Programs of study are designed with sequenced coursework that builds in complexity, integrating academic, technical, and employability skills, and culminate in practicum and WBL experiences. Students are encouraged to participate in CTSOs, earn industry-recognized credentials, and engage in meaningful WBL placements. Through this comprehensive approach, Tennessee is equipping students with the skills, experiences, and credentials needed to succeed in postsecondary education and thrive in high-demand careers.

Impact on Tennessee

The realigned career cluster framework is critical to ensuring that Tennessee students are better prepared for life after high school. By aligning national career pathways with up-to-date labor market needs and students' individualized career assessments, the framework helps students make informed decisions about their education and career goals. It ensures that students' learning experiences are directly connected to the skills, knowledge, and credentials valued by employers and postsecondary institutions. Through sequenced coursework, WBL experiences, industry credential attainment, and participation in CTSOs, students gain both technical and employability skills that set them apart in a competitive workforce. This intentional connection between students' interests, academic preparation, and real-world opportunities increases their chances of success in postsecondary and career, while also strengthening Tennessee's future economy.

✪ Highlights this School Year

During the 2024–25 school year, career clusters were restructured, reducing the number from 16 to 14, now aligned into five meta clusters, and incorporating 59 distinct programs of study. The division introduced two new programs of study, Clean Energy and Ecological Research and Conservation, under the newly created Energy and Sustainable Resources career cluster, responding to growing workforce demands in Tennessee. Additionally, two new programs, Marketing Research & Analytics and Data Science, were developed to meet the emerging labor market needs. These new courses were proposed to the State Board of Education and approved for implementation during the 2025–26 school year.

Several career clusters were renamed to better align with industry terminology, and some programs of study were shifted to new clusters. Notably, the Health Science and Human Services clusters merged to form the Healthcare & Human Services cluster, and the Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security and Government & Public Administration clusters merged into Civics, Public Service, & Safety. The dissolution of the STEM cluster into the Advanced Manufacturing and Healthcare & Human Services clusters allows for more targeted and specialized education, ensuring that students receive instruction aligned with specific industry demands and career paths. A new meta cluster, Cross-Cutting Sectors, was also introduced, encompassing courses applicable across multiple programs of study. These changes reflect a strategic approach to aligning CTE programs with evolving workforce needs and industry standards.

Professional learning sessions on the restructuring of career clusters were held for district leaders, school leaders, and school counselors so they had time to plan course offerings for 2025–26. Collectively, these initiatives mark a significant step forward in aligning CTE offerings with Tennessee's evolving workforce and industry priorities.

➲ What's Next

The career cluster realignment will be fully implemented in the 2025–26 school year. Tennessee is one of eight states creating the national model for implementation through the Advance CTE Early Adopter Cohort.

Conclusion

Looking forward, our focus remains steadfast on delivering high-quality educational experiences that bridge classroom learning with real-world opportunities. Together, we are shaping a future where every Tennessee high school graduate enters the world with confidence, a clear sense of direction, and the tools to succeed in any path they choose—whether through higher education, workforce entry, or military service. Our collective efforts are laying the foundation for a vibrant, dynamic workforce that drives Tennessee's continued economic growth and global competitiveness. We are committed to nurturing the next generation of leaders, innovators, and professionals who will shape the future of our state and beyond.

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Tennessee Department of Education, Authorization No. N16XV7-1; 400 copies, October 2025. This public document was promulgated at a cost of $4.82 per copy.