



90th Legislative Policy Agenda

STRENGTHENING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN TEXAS

Developed by the Career and Technical Association of Texas

Purpose

Texas leaders continue to prioritize expanding CTE to prepare students for high-demand skilled trades, post-secondary training, and the military. CTAT members have identified policy priorities to support strong CTE programs and successful outcomes for students. Strengthening accountability and financial support for programs will deliver desired results for students and help meet Texas's workforce needs.

CTAT supports legislation, rule changes, or updated Texas Education Agency (TEA) guidance to address recommendations.



PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION FUNDING

Recommendations

- ➔ Maintain the CTE allotment under §48.106, recognizing that CTE students generate both foundational educational costs and additional specialized instructional expenses.
- ➔ Preserve the 55% direct-spending requirement in §48.106 to ensure weighted CTE funds are reinvested into high-quality CTE programs and services.
- ➔ Protect dedicated CTE funding from being redirected into general district operating budgets unrelated to workforce education.
- ➔ Support state funding to recognize the increased costs associated with high-quality CTE programs, including specialized equipment and labs, industry-certified instructors, preparation for industry based certification exams, work-based learning coordination, technology upgrades, and industry partnerships.

Rationale

The standalone CTE allotment supports high-quality CTE programs that require greater investment than traditional instructional settings. The additional weighted funding supports the specialized equipment, facilities, instruction, certifications, and workforce partnerships necessary to prepare students for high-demand careers.

The 55% direct-spending requirement protects the Legislature's original intent by ensuring weighted CTE dollars generated by CTE students are reinvested into CTE programs. Without this safeguard, those funds would increasingly be absorbed into general district budgets, particularly during periods of financial strain.

Eliminating the direct-spending requirement would result in outdated equipment, fewer certification opportunities, reduced work-based learning experiences, and difficulty sustaining high-quality skilled trades and workforce training programs aligned to Texas workforce needs.

SUPPORT “STUDENT APPRENTICESHIP” PATHWAYS

Recommendations

- ➔ Allow ISDs to earn CCMR points when a student completes a skilled trades-aligned CTE program of study combined with documented apprenticeship training under the supervision of an appropriately qualified professional.
- ➔ Establish a grant program to start or expand “Student Apprenticeship” pathways in high-demand skilled trades occupations including electrical, plumbing, HVAC, welding, construction, industrial maintenance, automotive, diesel technology, and other TEA-approved workforce shortage areas.
- ➔ Authorize local districts and charter schools to approve apprenticeship placements that meet TEA-established standards for mentorship, safety, training documentation, and program alignment.

Rationale

Texas continues to face workforce shortages in high-demand skilled trades occupations critical to the state’s economy and infrastructure. Recognizing “Student Apprenticeship” completion within accountability would incentivize districts to expand high-quality skilled trades pathways that prepare students for advanced training and employment. Allowing local approval of apprenticeship placements under TEA-established standards would provide flexibility while maintaining program quality, safety, and workforce alignment.

WEIGHT SKILLED TRADES IN OUTCOMES BONUS FUNDING

Recommendations

- ➔ Amend the Texas public education Outcomes Bonus funding for College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) to include funding for students who complete a CTE program of study in the skilled trades and earn an aligned industry-based credential.

Rationale

High-quality CTE programs are a proven driver of student success and postsecondary readiness. By aligning Outcomes Bonus funding with completion of skilled trades programs of study and attainment of industry-based credentials, the state can incentivize districts to expand and strengthen these pathways. This targeted incentive supports state goals to increase CCMR attainment, addresses workforce shortages in high-demand trades, and provides students with clear, high-value pathways to employment and economic mobility.

INDUSTRY-BASED CERTIFICATIONS AND A–F ACCOUNTABILITY

Recommendations

- ➔ Align accountability incentives with state workforce priorities to encourage expansion of high-quality skilled trades programs.
- ➔ Support legislation, rule changes, or Texas Education Agency (TEA) guidance that elevates skilled trades Industry-Based Certifications (IBCs) to the highest possible tiers within the A–F accountability system.
- ➔ Reevaluate current IBC tiering methodology to ensure alignment with workforce demand, wage outcomes, and industry need, particularly for skilled trades occupations.
- ➔ Ensure transparency and stakeholder input including industry and CTE leaders in the process for assigning and updating IBC tiers.

Rationale

Texas leaders have made clear the need to expand student participation in skilled trades and other high-demand career pathways. However, current IBC tiering places many skilled trades certifications in Tier 2 or lower, diminishing their value within the A–F accountability system. This misalignment reduces incentives for districts to invest in and expand strong skilled trades programs. Elevating the accountability value of these certifications will better align education policy with workforce needs, incentivize program growth, and guide more students into high-wage, in-demand careers critical to the state's economy.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ALLOTMENT FOR CTE

Recommendations

- ➔ Support legislation, rule changes, or Texas Education Agency (TEA) guidance requiring that Instructional Materials Allotment (IMA) funds designated for CTE be used exclusively for CTE instructional materials and equipment.
- ➔ Establish clear definitions of allowable CTE expenditures, including industry-standard equipment, consumable materials, and instructional resources aligned to programs of study.
- ➔ Strengthen reporting and accountability measures to ensure funds are used as intended.
- ➔ Provide flexibility within CTE-specific use to allow districts to meet evolving industry standards and program needs.

Rationale

High-quality materials and equipment are essential to delivering effective, industry-aligned CTE programs. While demand for these resources continues to grow, current IMA allocations for CTE have few restrictions, allowing funds to be redirected away from their intended purpose. Without targeted safeguards, investments meant to support workforce development may not reach CTE classrooms. Ensuring that IMA funds designated for CTE are used exclusively for CTE purposes will strengthen program quality, support hands-on learning, and better prepare students for high-demand, skilled careers.

TRAINING FOR DISTRICT OF INNOVATION CTE TEACHERS

Recommendations

- Support development and delivery of training in pedagogy, instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment, and student engagement tailored to CTE settings.
- Incentivize participation and completion through stipends or continuing education credits aligned with teacher certification pathways.
- Ensure access for rural and underserved districts through virtual and regional delivery options.

Rationale

DOI flexibility enables districts to recruit highly skilled industry professionals into CTE classrooms, expanding access to real-world expertise. However, many of these educators lack formal training in teaching practice, which can limit their effectiveness and retention. Targeted, CTE-specific professional development equips DOI CTE teachers with essential instructional skills, improving classroom outcomes and student attainment of industry credentials. Strengthening educator effectiveness in CTE programs supports program quality, increases completion rates, and helps Texas meet growing workforce demands in high-skill, high-wage occupations.

CTE FUNDING WEIGHTS

Recommendations

- Increase the state funding weights for CTE courses to better reflect the true cost of delivering high-quality programs.
- Support funding to cover expenses beyond personnel costs to strengthen overall program quality.

Rationale

At the district level, approximately 90% of CTE funding is consumed by teacher salaries, leaving limited resources for essential components such as equipment, supplies, certifications, and training. Texas continues to prioritize expanding participation in CTE, yet current funding weights do not adequately cover the high cost of delivering rigorous, industry-aligned programs. Increasing funding weights will allow districts to build and sustain high-quality programs, attract and retain qualified instructors, and ensure students have access to hands-on learning experiences that lead to industry credentials and workforce readiness.

JET GRANT PROGRAM EXPANSION

Recommendations

- ➔ Amend statute to authorize a dedicated, formula-driven grant component within the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) program that awards a fixed number of grants tied to student attainment of industry-based certifications in high-demand skilled trades.
- ➔ Establish annual awards to eligible school districts and open-enrollment charter schools based on the number of students earning qualifying credentials.
- ➔ Maintain clear statutory language to limit administrative discretion and ensure timely and consistent distribution of funds by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).
- ➔ Set total program funding at approximately \$1 million annually for this component, with flexibility in distribution methodology as long as awards remain meaningful at the local level.
- ➔ Avoid reliance on external accountability frameworks (e.g., TEA tiers) to preserve program simplicity and accessibility.

Rationale

The proposed expansion creates a predictable, outcomes-based funding stream that directly rewards student attainment of industry-recognized credentials in high-demand fields. By specifying award amounts and the number of grants in statute, the policy reduces administrative uncertainty and minimizes delays in implementation. An annual investment is fiscally responsible while still providing meaningful incentives to districts and programs. This approach complements existing JET program goals of supporting high-quality CTE pathways while accelerating credential attainment aligned with workforce needs. It also ensures transparency and equity in funding distribution without introducing unnecessary complexity. No fiscal note.

YEARS OF SERVICE FOR TEACHING POSITIONS REQUIRING INDUSTRY WORK EXPERIENCE

Recommendations

- ➔ Increase the years of service from 2 years to 5 years reportable to TRS for teachers for positions requiring work experience in the industry.

Rationale

Work experience is required to teach courses included in Trade and Industrial, Marketing, and Health Science programs. Years of experience required range between 2 and 5 years depending on one's level of education.