

Philadelphia School Board Testimony
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Children First
August 22, 2024

A rigorous study of Philadelphia CTE high school students, 70% of whom are economically disadvantaged and 85% BIPOC, found that these students were 30% more likely to graduate on-time than students attending comprehensive/neighborhood high schools that shared nearly identical racial and economic composition. Students enrolled in Philadelphia’s CTE programs were more significantly more to complete the necessary sequence of math courses for college acceptance, algebra 1, algebra 2 and geometry than like students attending comprehensive high schools. These outcomes are evidence of program quality.

- **State Funding for District run CTE grew 31% in the last two years** – it’s now about \$3 million higher than in FY 23 (\$11.7 million). Approximately 5,700 students are enrolled in Perkins/State CTE designated programs. **Enrollment has remained essentially flat in the period of state funding expansion.**

- **These programs are succeeding with high need students.**

SPED	19%
Low Income	77.5%
ELL	12.6%
Foster Care	1.2%

- **New training options need to grow more quickly**

Culinary	606
Engineering Tech	243
Precision Machine Teck	32
Solar Energy Tech	28
Logistics and Materials Management	19

- **Building capacity is significantly greater than enrollment in some cases – approx. 1285 more students could be enrolled in CTE programs if building capacity could be fully utilized.**

School	Enrolled Capacity
Mastbaum	54%
Saul	56%
Dobbins	65%

- **The high school selection process appears to contribute to under-enrollment**

School	Apps	Offers	Accepts	Accepts to Apps
Mastbaum	900	900	296	33%
Saul	420	420	147	35%
Dobbins	1049	901	217	20%

- CTE students have impressive outcomes

Performance Measures <i>per Future Ready Index SY 22/23</i>
53% Students Scored Competent or Advanced on NOCTI
89% Students Earned Industry-Recognized Credentials
1% Students were enrolled in college courses (Dual Enrollment)
40% Students advanced to Post Secondary Education
59% Students Entered PA Workforce
15% Students Enlisted Military

The data above reflects the outcomes of students in programs supported with Perkins and state CTE subsidy funds. The results demonstrate that students in these programs are doing really well. We commend the leadership in the CTE office, Michele Armstrong, she is a stellar leader and has an abiding passion for making these programs great.

The district is poised to receive an in-depth review of the CTE programs supported by the federal and state funding streams. That report will help you understand the variation among programs, giving you a clearer picture of where things are going well and where improvements might be needed. Kudos to the district for embarking on this review. It’s exactly the kind of approach that a learning organization, intentionally focused on quality, should embrace.

You may be aware that there is a big appetite in the PA House and Senate to do even more to increase access to high school career training options. Further for the foreseeable future the labor market will rapidly absorb high school students who graduate prepared for good jobs. For these reasons, Children First is asking the Board of Education to be pro-active and build on the district’s success in this career-related high school options by adopting the following five recommendations:

1. Embrace an “broader CTE program” definition so that you and parents/students understand all career-related high school training options in the district. Across the district there are more than 100 training programs under the CTE office AND there are programs operated at the school level at the initiative of principals. There are also sub high school programs like academies and apprenticeships. And there are building-wide programs like the Workshop School. All of these options for students could and should be classified as Career Related High School Training Options. I am not suggesting a structural change, rather we are hopeful that you will adopt a planning, budgeting and operational integration approach that connects the dots from academics to talent, to facilities, to operations and governance and ends the “Perkins-only” silo for understanding career-related high school training programs.
2. Ideally the board would have a global career training high school budget that aggregates for you, state and city elected officials, parents and students the full breadth funding dedicated for career related high school options. Included in this budget should be all expenditures charged to Perkins, state CTE funds, other state funds such as BEF and SPED, federal or private grants and principal -directed investments for all career-related high school training programs.

3. The deep dive you are about to receive of the many Perkins funded programs can be a terrific starting point to adopt your own program indicators that are updated and released in an annual report that offers you a comprehensive and useful understanding of annual performance and trends overtime in all the full range of high school career training options.
4. During the school year, as part of the Goals and Guardrail oversight, it would be terrific if the board was briefed about the constraints on enrollment in these programs as it relates to resources, policy barriers, facility needs, faculty shortages and other inputs that are not aligned to permit maximum enrollment. Ideally you would also be apprised of practical solutions that ensure maximum enrollment in these programs within a school year or for the subsequent school year.
5. Finally, I urge the board to work with the district staff and external stakeholder to create a multi-year plan that cures factors that are currently contributing to under-enrollment of existing programs and identifies ways to grow programs that give students a wider breadth of options to graduate and get good paying jobs.