Maryland
GWDB CTE COMMITTEE

Career & Technical Education Expert Review Team

Post-Visit Report

WASHINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Governor's Workforce Development Board
Career and Technical Education Committee

November 2025

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The Governor's Workforce Development Board is grateful to the CTE Expert Review Team members that participated in the exploration of this District's CTE programs, as well as central office and school leadership, staff, and students that contributed valuable insights regarding CTE programs in their Local Education Agency (LEA).

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Executive Summary

The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("the *Blueprint*") established the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) to develop an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public schools, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce. As part of this effort, the *Blueprint* calls on the CTE Committee to establish, administer, and supervise Expert Review Teams (ERT) to visit schools offering CTE pathways. CTE ERTs are a key tool through which the state observes and tracks the progress of local education agencies (LEAs) in implementing CTE programs that align with the *Blueprint*'s vision and the CTE Committee's framework and policies. In addition to reviewing progress, the visits are intended to provide support and identify technical assistance needs as LEAs build their CTE systems.

This CTE ERT visited Washington County Public Schools (WCPS), located in Western Maryland, on December 4, 2024. This was the fourth CTE ERT visit conducted by the CTE Committee during the 2024-2025 School Year (SY). WCPS offers CTE programs at all seven comprehensive high schools, as well as WCPS's CTE Center, Boyd J. Michael III Technical High School (THS). The CTE ERT visited THS in Hagerstown, MD and Boonsboro High School (BHS) in Boonsboro, Maryland.

One representative from the Western Maryland Consortium Workforce Alliance, two community college representatives, two CTE Committee staff members, one CTE Director from a neighboring LEA, one CTE teacher from a neighboring LEA, one school administrator from a neighboring LEA, two agency partners, and two work-based learning sponsors participated in the CTE ERT visit for Washington County. This report summarizes observations and initial recommendations that the CTE ERT developed by reviewing the LEA's self-reported data with district leaders and by conducting interviews, focus groups, school tours, and classroom visits during the CTE ERT visit.

WCPS's progress toward the *Blueprint's* goal that by the 2030-2031 SY, 45% of high school graduates shall complete the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship or another industry-recognized credential (45% goal) is at 19.5% for 2024 graduates, according to the previous IRC guidelines, not the updated IRC guidelines approved by the CTE Committee in December 2024.[1] This self-reported data is accurate for the 2023-2024 SY, but it will not accurately depict year-to-year or cross-LEA comparisons as MSDE updates data collection and measurements across the State and the updated list of approved-IRCs does not go into effect until the 2025-2026 SY. All of WCPS's progress towards the *Blueprint's* 45% goal is attributed to IRC attainment.

Below is a summary of the observations and findings from this visit:

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[1] Career and Technical Education. (December 2024). "GWDB CTE Committee Industry Recognized Credentials". *Governor's Workforce Development Board*. https://tinyurl.com/3hxuw2ub

WCPS Internal Strengths

- CTE Student Participation and Completion
- Leadership Makes Responsive, Data-Informed Decisions, Leading to Alignment
- Career Coaches’ Involvement Have Led to Career-Driven Students
- Many Opportunities for Students to Develop and Showcase Skills

WCPS Internal Challenges

- Scheduling Barriers Limit Recruitment and Retention for CTE Students
- Facility Limitations and Access to Industry-Standard Technology
- Students Feel Stuck in CTE Programs with No Connection to Career Pathways
- CTE Instructional Staff Recruitment and Retention

WCPS External Factors

- Strength: Connection with the Community and Relevant Industries
- Challenge: MD Labor Apprenticeship Process Limits Participation
- Challenge: *Blueprint* and the “Gold Standard” of Registered Apprenticeships Do Not Account for Needs of Smaller and Rural LEAs
- Challenge: IRC Misalignment with Industry Standards and Student Needs

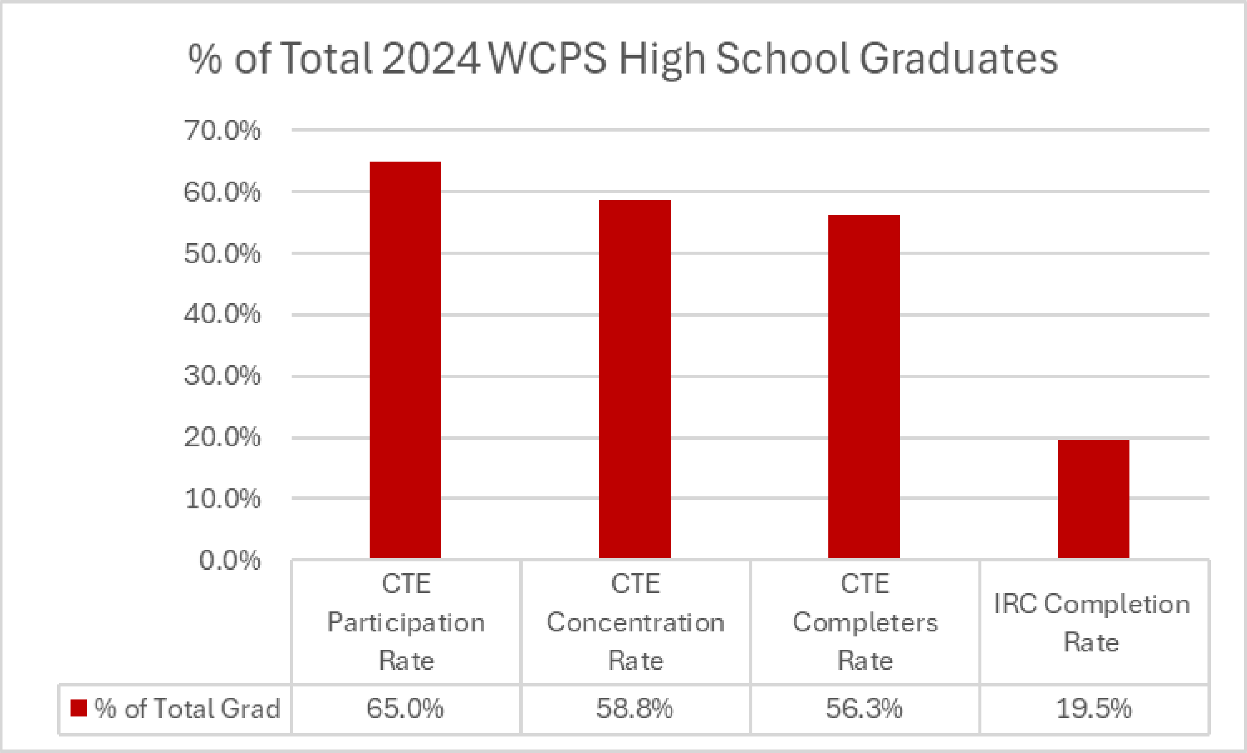
WCPS Potential Next Steps

- Explore Opportunities to Collaborate with Neighboring LEAs
- Experiment with School Schedules
- Brainstorm Strategies to Improve Communication Between WCPS and State Agencies
- Consider Expanding THS’s Offerings to 10th, 11th, and 12th Grade Students
- Explore Technical Assistance with MSDE, the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor), and the CTE Committee in meeting the Blueprint’s 45% Goal.

The CTE Committee staff, along with the CTE ERT, have collaborated on this report to provide observations and preliminary points of analysis to readers. In this document, readers will find the purpose of the CTE ERT, a brief explanation of WCPS, a summary of the CTE ERT visit, Strengths, Challenges, and External (SCE) analysis, and Potential Next Steps for the LEA to consider.

Please feel free to reach out to the CTE Committee or CTE Committee staff to answer any questions, comments, or concerns at GWDB.CTE@maryland.gov.

Figure 1: WCPS CTE and IRC completion rates for the 2023-2024 SY.[2] [3] [4] [5]



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[2] CTE Participants are students completing not less than one credit in a MSDE-approved CTE program of study.

[3] CTE Concentrators are students who have completed at least two courses and are enrolled in a third course in a single MSDE-approved CTE program of study.

[4] CTE Completers are students who meet all requirements in a state-approved CTE program of study, typically three or four courses.

[5] Defined as the percentage of all graduating students who have earned an IRC (as defined by MSDE)

Purpose of the CTE ERT

The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* ("the *Blueprint"),* Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, established the Career and Technical (CTE) Committee as a unit within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB).[6] The GWDB serves as the Governor's chief strategic and policy-making body for workforce development in the State of Maryland.[7] The purpose of the CTE Committee is to build an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public schools, institutions of postsecondary education, and the workforce. The CTE Committee aims to fundamentally reimagine and redesign career-connected learning and career pathways to ensure all of Maryland's students have real access to fulfilling and family-sustaining careers.

The *Blueprint* requires the CTE Committee to establish, administer, and supervise CTE ERTs to visit schools with CTE pathways.[8] The goals of these visits are to: 1) review alignment of district programs and practices with *Blueprint* vision and policies, 2) assure an LEA's CTE programs and practices are consistent with the Maryland CTE Framework and policies on the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and Industry-Recognized Credentials (IRCs), and 3) support technical assistance needs for LEAs as they create new systems, programs and practices in order to support *Blueprint* goals and expand career-connected learning, especially registered apprenticeship and other IRC attainment, for their students. Ultimately, the CTE ERTs report back to the CTE Committee on district progress toward *Blueprint* goals, common challenges, and opportunities for policy change, technical assistance, or other support to meet those goals. The CTE Committee staff will publish a summary of findings from CTE ERT visits every December within the CTE Committee's annual report.[9]

The CTE ERT Program has three phases that transition from Phase 1: Discovery, to Phase 2: Analyze and Assist, and Phase 3: Evaluate. The primary goal in Phase 1 is to visit all 24 LEAs and build a baseline set of observations to understand the state of CTE in Maryland, along with common challenges LEAs face in creating a robust CTE system. The common challenges will inform what technical assistance sessions will be in Phase 2, which will focus on alignment, systemic data collection, and assistance. Phase 2 is set to begin in the 2026-2027 SY, so the specifics for Phase 2 will be planned in Spring 2026. Phase 3 will begin in the 2028-2029 SY and will focus on evaluating progress towards *Blueprint* goals, but will be more specifically planned during Phase 2.

The CTE Expert Review Team visit to WCPS consisted of members from various backgrounds and brought expertise in areas such as student learning, workforce development, and CTE, ensuring a comprehensive review of the LEA's CTE programs (see Appendix A).

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[6] Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, https://bit.ly/3W0JoeU
[7] Executive Order No. 01.01.2023.22. (2023). https://tinyurl.com/execorder01012023
[8] Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §5-412 https://tinyurl.com/5cb36cvy
[9] Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art. §21-209, https://bit.ly/3W0JoeU

About Washington County Public School System

Washington County Public Schools (WCPS), located in Western Maryland, enrolls 6,820 high school students, and has a 65% participation rate in CTE for graduating students. The LEA offers 41 CTE programs covering a wide range of areas of specialization, from Construction Trades to Interactive Media and Design. WCPS is in alignment with the Western Maryland Consortium Workforce Alliance's and the State's focus on building key sectors in healthcare, manufacturing, information technology, and transportation.[10] CTE programs in Biomedical Sciences, Medical Services, Engineering, Construction and Building Trades, Software Specialist, and Automotive Technology are all at or near maximum enrollment. The three highest enrolled programs are Finance and Accounting, Marketing, and Software Specialist, all of which have at least 600 students. This demonstrates WCPS's focus on developing a robust workforce targeting key sectors identified in *the Western Maryland's Local Workforce Plan 2024-2028*. One unique aspect about WCPS's program design is the implementation of instruction through simulated workplace learning. Whether it is through digitized simulators or lab experience, students receive hands-on, real-world learning that lasts.

Students enrolled in CTE programs have the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials (IRCs), and 19.5% of graduating students earned an IRC, based on the previously-approved list, not the updated list approved by the CTE Committee, which goes into effect in the 2025-2026 SY.[11] WCPS's progress toward the 45% goal should not be compared year-to-year, nor should it be compared to other LEAs until the newly approved list of IRCs goes into effect. WCPS has 65% of graduating students participate in CTE, and 56.3% of graduating students complete their CTE program, exhibiting a high retention rate in comparison to the rest of Maryland.

WCPS has CTE offerings at all seven comprehensive high schools, which are public high schools that offer a traditional academic curriculum and a variety of CTE Programs, and at the CTE Center, Boyd J. Michael III Technical High School (THS). Students enroll in CTE offerings at their home school by requesting their desired courses during the registration window at their home school with a school counselor. If students are interested in enrolling at THS, they then need to complete an application process in 10th grade, which is evaluated using a standardized rubric. The rubric combines teacher recommendations, grade point average, state testing scores, and demographics for underrepresented programs as factors to evaluate in students' applications. Every program has a cap and many of the programs are competitive to enroll. Only rising 11th and 12th grade students may apply to enroll at THS. Students may apply for special permission to participate in any CTE Program at any high school in Washington County. Otherwise, students may enroll in one of the Programs at their home school because all of the high schools in Washington County offer CTE Programs.

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[10] Western Maryland Consortium Workforce Alliance. (2024). *Western Maryland's Local Workforce Plan 2024-2028.*
[11] GWDB CTE Committee. (December 2024). *Career and Technical Education: Industry-Recognized Credentials.* https://www.gwdb.maryland.gov/policy/gwdbcte2024commindustrycredentialpolicy.pdf

The CTE ERT observed a clear difference in students' attitudes towards CTE programming between THS and Boonsboro High School (BHS). At THS, there was noticeably more buy-in on the value of CTE, where students developed a CTE identity and sense of pride in their skills and accomplishments within CTE. At BHS, the general sentiment was that CTE programs were of some value, but that those truly interested in CTE should attend THS. There was a sense of superiority and belonging at the CTE Center that was not present at Boonsboro High School. The CTE ERT Program has noticed a similar trend across school districts in its first year of visits - that the culture of pride and value in CTE was strong at CTE Centers, but not at comprehensive high schools with CTE offerings.

Summary of Visit

Prior to the visit, the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Expert Review Team (ERT) members attended a virtual orientation to review the visit agenda, materials, and tools. During this session, Washington County Public Schools' (WCPS's) CTE Lead Staff provided an overview of the Local Education Agency's (LEA's) CTE system, highlighting key strengths and challenges. This pre-visit preparation helped the team understand the specific context and priorities of Washington County's CTE programs, setting the stage for focused observations and discussions during the visit.

During the visit, the CTE ERT visited two Washington County schools: Boyd J. Michael III Technical High School (THS), located in Hagerstown and serving 11th and 12th grade students only, and Boonsboro High School (BHS), a comprehensive high school serving 829 students. Comprehensive high schools are traditional high schools with available CTE programs for students to enroll in. The team visited THS in the morning and BHS in the afternoon, conducting classroom visits to observe programs in action and holding focus group conversations with students, teachers, administrators, and school and career counselors.

At each site, the team engaged in discussions with stakeholders to gain insights into the strengths and challenges of the CTE programs. These conversations revealed valuable information about how CTE supports students' postsecondary pathways and career goals, as well as areas where the LEA could enhance program access and resources.

The CTE Expert Review Team visit to WCPS consisted of members from various backgrounds, and brought expertise in areas such as student learning, workforce development, and CTE, ensuring a comprehensive review of the LEA's CTE programs (see Appendix A). Throughout the day, the team engaged in observations, interviews, and focus groups with stakeholders to gain insights into the strengths and challenges of the CTE programs. The CTE Committee staff created a set of questions for each focus group: LEA and school leadership, teachers, students, career counselors/coaches, and school counselors (See Appendix D). These questions aimed to uncover the experience these parties have in CTE by asking questions about professional development opportunities, their opinions on their experience in CTE classes, their perspective on hurdles, *etc.* (see Appendix D).

After the visit, the CTE ERT compiled all their individual notes and shared it with CTE Committee staff. A week after the visit, the CTE ERT gathered together for a debrief, where the team members collaborated, reviewed, and discussed their compiled observations. These conversations revealed valuable information about how CTE in WCPS supports students' postsecondary pathways and career goals, as well as areas where the LEA could enhance program access and resources. Together, these data, observations, focus groups, interviews, and debrief help inform the following SCE analysis and Potential Next Steps.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXPERT REVIEW TEAM VISIT

ABOUT THE SCE ANALYSIS

A SCE Analysis is meant to organize the CTE ERT's observations and notes into internal factors - Strengths and Challenges - and External factors. This method of analysis is based on the SWOT analysis method, which also differentiates between internal and external factors. This SCE analysis will help readers differentiate among internal Strengths, internal Challenges, and External factors, which are conventionally Opportunities and Threats. The CTE ERT did not have the opportunity to observe and coordinate with external stakeholders, but external factors came up in interviews, focus groups, debrief, and orientation that must be communicated. With a SCE Analysis, readers may use this section to target changes and best practices internally.

INDICATORS OF STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Strength: CTE Student Participation and Completion

As of the visit, 1,073 of the 1,650 graduating students, which amounts to 65% of graduating students, in WCPS have earned at least one credit in a MSDE-approved CTE Program of Study. This demonstrates there is great effectiveness enrolling students for CTE offerings and that there is effective marketing to interest students. In addition to participation, WCPS has 930, or 56% of graduating students complete a CTE program and meet all requirements in a state-approved CTE Program of Study. This means that of the 1073 graduating students who participate in CTE offerings, 930, or 87%, complete the program. This demonstrates WCPS has set up a system that gets students interested in CTE and supports them to complete their CTE program. The Career Technical Supervisor and CTE Curriculum Specialist at WCPS both informed the CTE ERT that their primary measure for success is CTE Completion. At Boonsboro High School (BHS), the goal is for 100% of graduating students to complete at least one CTE Program.

During the visit, the CTE ERT learned that students may decide whether to study foreign languages or leverage CTE credits toward graduation because the first two classes in a CTE program are counted as electives, which may be an important factor for why many students participate and complete CTE Programs of Study. Another factor for CTE Completion rates is WCPS's marketing strategy. 8th and 10th graders have the opportunity to shadow CTE students and CTE classes, drawing interest to their programs. Students also receive focused and clear advising, as focus groups revealed every student knew exactly what classes they needed to take to enroll at THS. THS offers academic classes as well, which is another factor that has led to a competitive application to THS: as one student put it, "more focused learning [happens] here at THS." During the pre-visit orientation, CTE Lead Staff informed the CTE ERT that WCPS's high retention rate is because of the relationships teachers build with students: students who appreciate their teacher and their pedagogy see the CTE Program through to completion.

> "More focused learning [happens] here at THS."

Strength: Leadership Makes Responsive, Data-Informed Decisions, Leading to Alignment

In addition to effective recruitment and retention of CTE students, CTE Lead Staff have developed a responsive system that gauges students' interest annually, and adjusts CTE offerings accordingly. These annual student-interest polls inform decision-making and the results prove there is high satisfaction among students in their CTE programs. Whether it is replacing a low-enrolled program with one students are more interested in or moving a program from Boyd Michael III Technical High School (THS) to one of the comprehensive high schools, CTE Lead Staff at WCPS have created a system that leverages data for responsive decision-making. For instance, during the pre-visit orientation, the Career Technical Supervisor told the CTE ERT that their most recent student polls revealed how WCPS's multilingual population is growing, so they are now developing strategies to support students who speak English as a secondary language. Students' opinions being a significant factor for decision-making may be an important factor for why WCPS has such high participation, completion, and satisfaction rates.

During the pre-visit orientation, the CTE ERT learned about the rubric the THS Principal developed to evaluate applicants for the CTE Center. According to WCPS administrators, this application prioritizes access by evaluating applicants based on grades, state testing, teacher recommendations, and demographics. During focus groups, it was clear there was alignment among all CTE stakeholders on the importance of apprenticeships and IRCs. During the visit, the CTE ERT learned that CTE Lead Staff tied their Computer Science Program to Aviation because there was a lot of overlap and because it led to a more manageable IRC. Teachers leveraged their industry connections to find apprenticeship opportunities for students while promoting the benefits of completing an apprenticeship. Career coaches found and promoted apprenticeships as well. All of the students in focus groups also seemed to know the benefits and usefulness of completing an apprenticeship.[12] That said, making the transition from Youth Apprenticeships to the gold standard of high school level Registered Apprenticeships should be a priority for WCPS moving forward.

Strength: Career Coaches' Involvement Have Led to Career-Driven Students

In the pre-visit orientation and during focus groups, the CTE ERT learned about career coaches' effective integration into WCPS. The CTE Lead Staff raved about the career coaches' work in helping students understand how to navigate a career pathway. The CTE Lead Staff pointed to the Apprenticeship Coordinator's ability to manage the career coaches and help them develop positive relationships with teachers, students, and staff at WCPS. Regular county-wide meetings, shared data systems, and clear communication protocols helped maintain alignment and supported individualized postsecondary planning. This tight-knit collaboration allows students to access timely resources like resume workshops, certifications, and apprenticeship placements, reinforcing a robust wraparound support structure.

Both teacher and student focus groups revealed how involved career coaches were in assisting students. One student said everyone has the same goals in CTE Programs at WCPS, treating school like a job, "learning for your career." Another student agreed and added,

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[12] It should be noted that students were likely referring to youth apprenticeships as WCPS did not have any students in a high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship as of this visit.

"students are career-driven." During the school tour, one student went into more detail, explaining there is "space to get to know the career you are interested in and surrounded by students with common interests." With strong leadership that has developed a system to seamlessly integrate Career Coaches, the result is a set of career-driven students at WCPS.

Strength: Many Opportunities for Students to Develop and Showcase Skills

The CTE Lead Staff at WCPS were proud of the implementation of instruction through simulated workplace learning. Throughout the visit, the CTE ERT observed modules and equipment available for students to understand and practice relevant skills for their pathway. Not only were the students learning the content, but they were immersed in a hands-on, real-world environment that helps drive home the soft skills they will need, as well as the hard skills. Focus groups revealed how students put the skills they learn during class to practice in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) and in Student Clubs. During the pre-visit orientation, the CTE ERT learned THS covers student's membership costs and all THS students are automatically enrolled in SkillsUSA. In 2025, THS sent 60 students to the Maryland SkillsUSA competition, where 25 earned medals. The students who won medals were then celebrated on both social media and in the THS hallways. Teachers and students also raved about students participating in Future Farmers of America (FFA). FFA is open to all THS students who have interest in agriculture, leadership, job skills, and fellowship. Meanwhile, BHS's FFA chapter collaborated with the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) to put on a community plant sale that both students and teachers said was successful.

In addition to strong engagement with CTSOs, both THS and BHS have a plethora of clubs for students to put what they learn into practice. At THS, students can join clubs like the Ecology Club, the Visual Arts Magazine, the Academic Team, and Robotics. These clubs are open to all students at THS. On the other hand, BHS has 37 clubs where students can pursue their special interests. There are academic clubs like FFA, FBLA, and Math Club, music and arts clubs like Color Guard, Jazz Band, and Orchestra, and social and service organizations like Bass Fishing Club, Diversity Awareness Club, and the Mental Health Awareness Club. Whether it was participating in CTSOs or in Student Clubs, when students had the opportunity to showcase what they learned or compete to demonstrate their skills, it led to students wanting to complete their CTE Program and it led to higher student interest in CTE offerings.

Challenge: Scheduling Barriers Limit Recruitment and Retention for CTE Students

During the pre-visit orientation, the CTE ERT learned some high schools at WCPS have block schedules with four-period days that alternate and other schools have set schedules with eight periods that repeat every day. For schools like BHS that have set schedules with eight periods, their class time is set at 45 minutes. Students in focus groups told the CTE ERT they were not able to learn in those 45 minutes and that it was not conducive to CTE courses in particular. One student told the CTE ERT they had to go back to class multiple times a day during lunch, during flex time, or even after school to work on a project. This was especially true for students in programs that require a lab, like Welding, Auto Tech, *etc.* where they cannot do the work outside the classroom. Meanwhile, at THS, the day is divided into two, two-and-a-half hour blocks. Senior students attend their CTE Programs in the morning block and Junior students attend in the afternoon block. This difference in scheduling has led to students deciding to prioritize other options than CTE. For instance, a student interested in an AP class that is only taught in the afternoon at BHS must choose between attending THS or that AP class.

Scheduling an eight-period day has some benefits for WCPS students, like students graduating early and 11th and 12th grade students having free blocks to complete apprenticeship duties or other work-based learning (WBL) activities. One student in the focus group said they preferred the eight-period day because it meant they graduate early and can enter the workforce full-time.

These scheduling barriers have led to transportation hurdles as well. For students who live in rural areas in Washington County or in Hancock, they may have up to a 45-minute drive to get to THS in Hagerstown. These transportation hurdles are further complicated when considering WBL options. For instance, if a 12th grade student lives in rural Washington County, then they will have a 45 minute-drive to THS, and another complication getting to their WBL.

Challenge: Facility Limitations and Access to Industry-Standard Technology

Throughout the visit, space and facility limitations were consistently cited as barriers to program growth and modernization. Many programs, including cosmetology and welding, are operating at full capacity or beyond, with physical constraints limiting enrollment and instructional flexibility. THS originally opened in 1972 and while WCPS has made significant improvements to the building, there are limitations to space because of the age of the facility. Staff also raised concerns about outdated or insufficient equipment, noting that in some cases the technology and tools used by students do not align with current industry practices. WCPS does not have funding to replace lab equipment in regular replacement cycles.

Further complicating the long-term effectiveness of the equipment, the maintenance and custodial staff at THS were given the same resources as comprehensive high schools, but THS has different needs. In addition to misaligned resources to supply maintenance and custodial staff to assure the longevity of THS's equipment, especially in labs, was the process maintenance staff must abide by to function at THS. Students in the Electrical Program work on projects where the power must be turned off, but CTE teachers do not have the authority to turn the power off, only the maintenance staff have that authority. When the Electrical Program works on a project, they must make an appointment with WCPS maintenance staff to disconnect the power and they must supervise the Electrical Program all day until they can turn the power back on. WCPS administrators have made a concerted effort to upgrade THS's classrooms and equipment, but they have not been completed due to funding challenges. While funding for upgrades is unavailable, administrative time and bandwidth to pursue facility improvements is also limited. These constraints reduce WCPS's ability to expand high-demand programs or align more closely with evolving workforce needs.

Challenge: Students Feel Stuck in CTE Programs with No Connection to Career Pathways

During the visit, the CTE ERT learned that 30% of students complete a CTE program as a graduation requirement, but some are not interested in a career aligned with the program they completed. One student during the focus group at THS said they will use the skills they developed in their CTE classes as an alternative form of income while they are at college. At WCPS, students have the option of either choosing foreign languages or two CTE courses as a graduation requirement. Many students end up choosing CTE programs because they see it as a path of least resistance. Students at BHS told the CTE ERT that school counselors would place them into CTE classes without consulting them or because they did not know what to do with them. Whatever the reason, many students were placed into CTE programs without it connecting to the students' career or professional interests.

Students who were placed into a CTE program they felt were not the right fit for them would then want to consider switching programs, but because of a reported misunderstanding between MSDE and school counselors, school counselors believed that transferring to a different CTE program was not allowed. One student told the CTE ERT they were interested in transferring to a different CTE program, but school counselors told them it was not possible. School counselors at WCPS believed that once students were in a CTE program, they could not switch to another program; they could only drop out of CTE. This was not an accurate interpretation of the CTE system in Maryland as students are allowed to switch into a different CTE program, but the ease of doing this is of course dependent on open seats in another CTE program and the student switching during the window at the beginning of the SY/semester when they can drop/enroll in a different course.

Challenge: CTE Instructional Staff Recruitment and Retention

A major constraint on program expansion and quality is the difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers who are both experienced in their trade and certified to teach. Several LEA staff noted that the certification process is overly rigid, preventing skilled professionals from entering the classroom, even when they possess the desired technical expertise. CTE Lead Staff told the CTE ERT that programs would only be removed if there is no student interest or if they are unable to fill a position due to staffing turnover. The Construction program had to significantly reduce enrollment because one of the teachers retired in September 2024 and WCPS could not hire a replacement in time for the 2024-2025 SY.

Recruitment of qualified and certified teachers was a challenge at WCPS, but so is retaining CTE teachers. CTE Lead Staff told the CTE ERT about how retaining students is all about the relationships students have with instructional staff, and that relationship is reciprocal: so much of instructional staff's retention happens because of the relationships they build with students. Another important challenge for retaining instructional staff was that there were few professional development opportunities to help technical experts gain the instructional or industry skills needed to succeed in a classroom, especially when there are challenges associated with space, equipment, and maintenance. This staffing barrier has reportedly forced some programs to reduce enrollment or operate under capacity, and it limits the district's ability to meet student demand or build partnerships with industry. This is not a unique challenge to WCPS, but reflects a broader State and national challenge in CTE hiring pipelines.

INDICATORS OF EXTERNAL FACTORS AND INFLUENCES

A SCE Analysis is meant to organize the CTE ERT's observations and notes into internal factors - Strengths and Challenges - and External factors. This method of analysis is based on the SWOT analysis method, which also differentiates between internal and external factors. With a SCE Analysis, readers may use this section to advocate for change with external partners.

External Strength: Connection with the Community and Relevant Industries

The CTE ERT observed how WCPS has a deep connection with the Washington County community through effective marketing strategies and a strong connection with their Local Advisory Councils (LACs). Teacher and career coach focus groups revealed how they have effective recruitment strategies to inform both students and parents about the benefits of CTE. Teachers talked about the success of school businesses, like the Plant Sale to support both FBLA and FFA, the Construction Program building and selling a house to support the program, and the WCPS Food Truck Curricular Lab. At THS, the community open house was attended by more than 1,000 people, including potential CTE students, parents, and community members. These programs and the THS Open House have helped develop a connection with the community to help students, parents, and community members see the benefits of CTE.

Career coaches noted how helpful it has been to work with the LACs. LACs are groups of volunteers, usually from represented industries, who leverage their industry experience and expertise to provide advice on CTE curriculum. Career coaches explained how their industry expertise has been vital in putting together CTE curriculum and offerings. Career coaches also noted their connection with the LACs have helped establish apprenticeship opportunities for students..

External Challenge: *Blueprint* and the "Gold Standard" of Registered Apprenticeships Do Not Account for Needs of Smaller and Rural LEAs

During the pre-visit orientation, the CTE Lead Staff informed the CTE ERT about the challenges of the *Blueprint* when it does not account for the needs of smaller and rural LEAs. WCPS was one of the pilot LEAs for Youth Apprenticeships (YA), so they set up their entire system to prioritize YA. In order to lead students to YA, WCPS prioritized students completing their CTE Program, which has led to 56% of graduating students completing a CTE Program. The *Blueprint's* change in priorities away from YA to YA with an IRC and high school level of a Registered Apprenticeships has been a significant shift. WCPS has observed the benefits of establishing their system to prioritize YAs and changing that has been challenging. CTE Lead Staff noted that Registered Apprenticeships require a much more formal process and businesses may not want to change into a new system when they are accustomed to YAs.

In focus groups, career coaches agreed, businesses do not have enough incentive to take on high school Registered Apprentices instead of YAs. CTE Lead Staff pointed to the culture in Washington County where secondary students are generally not apprentices. CTE Lead Staff had difficulty convincing CTE teachers of the benefits and prioritization of IRCs and high school level of Registered Apprenticeships. During the visit, the CTE ERT learned school counselors have reportedly been apprehensive to embrace *Blueprint* goals. One stakeholder said they have been trained to get students to college, so there is a mentality of “we’ve always done it this way, so why are we changing?” However, it should be noted that WCPS has ambitious goals and plans for reaching the 45% goal, and is already performing well at 13%, which is above the statewide average of 9% (see Appendix B).

External Challenge: IRC Misalignment with Industry Standards and Student Needs

The CTE ERT observed teachers and students did not see the benefit of IRC attainment, especially if a student is required to obtain a postsecondary degree for their career pathway. For instance, many students are interested in completing the Computer Science program, but students do not see the benefit of IRCs over Dual Enrollment (DE) when their career path requires a postsecondary degree. Another example is in Business, where students are offered Quickbooks certification, but it is not seen as valuable since most Business career pathways require a postsecondary degree. Instead, students would rather have 15 college credits in Business that would then carry into their postsecondary degree. Instructors in fields like Homeland Security and Health Professions mentioned that certifications students were expected to earn did not match the content or skills taught. Staff also reported that constant changes in state guidance, with little coordination or support, made it difficult to implement program improvements or maintain consistency across districts. For WCPS students, they saw the benefit of DE toward their career pathway, but DE does not count toward the *Blueprint’s* 45% goal.

Teachers and administrators expressed concern about perceived lack of alignment between state-mandated CTE curricula and actual industry expectations. Instructors noted that some programs are using content that is outdated, and that efforts to update or contextualize curriculum at the state level have not been successful. This misalignment creates challenges in preparing students for certifications or entry-level employment. While this is a challenge for WCPS, there is some potential relief as after the WCPS visit, the CTE Committee established a new set of criteria and a new list of approved IRCs and in 2025 MSDE has proposed a plan to revise CTE’s Programs of Study, which would go into effect in the 2027-2028 SY if adopted.

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS

Although the CTE ERT has presented its observations in this report, these observations and potential next steps are preliminary. The purposes of Phase 1 of the CTE ERT are to establish a baseline for progress towards *Blueprint* goals across Maryland and identify key challenges. While the following Potential Next Steps are preliminary, they are areas WCPS may look for improvement in and something the CTE ERT will look at more closely as the CTE Committee transitions into Phase 2 in the 2026-2027 SY. In other words, these potential next steps are not a directive, but opportunities of improvement to explore. These Potential Next Steps are meant to be the beginning of a conversation with WCPS that will continue into Phase 2, and for this reason, these Potential Next Steps do not comprehensively address the challenges the CTE ERT notes in this report. In Phase 2, the CTE ERT will target specific areas to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the state of CTE in WCPS.[13] While Phase 2 is focused on analysis and assistance, it should be noted that the CTE ERT can make recommendations to the AIB to withhold funding if there is resistance complying with the *Blueprint*.[14]

Explore Opportunities to Collaborate with Neighboring LEAs

The CTE ERT observed how the barriers WCPS faces toward growing CTE programs or establishing new CTE programs may be alleviated by identifying opportunities to collaborate with neighboring LEAs. WCPS has a strong connection with the community and a strong sense of what students' needs are, but lacks the budget, space, resources, and qualified experts to expand or establish CTE programs. Perhaps WCPS can explore CTE programs at neighboring LEAs to see what unique factors for success are available at Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, or Garrett County to be potentially adopted at WCPS. For instance, Frederick County Public Schools has a Homeland Security and Criminal Justice CTE Program as well, and it may be worth exploring what strategies they use to get students interested in the IRC and what pedagogical practices can be adopted at THS to increase enrollment and IRC rates for this Program.

CTE Lead Staff may also consider collaborating with neighboring LEAs to send students to join one of their CTE programs that is not offered at WCPS. For instance, on the Eastern Shore, neighboring LEAs send their NJROTC students to Talbot County and send their Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute students to Queen Anne's County's CTE program. In this way, WCPS may consider neighboring LEAs as an option when thinking about what CTE programs to expand, establish, or remove. Moreover, WCPS may be able to expand their community connections by connecting with the Western Maryland and Central Maryland regions, potentially creating pathways to apprenticeships. Exploring opportunities to connect with neighboring LEAs may alleviate some of the transportation challenges WCPS is facing, especially with their rural students. For instance, a student from Rohresville may have an easier time traveling to Frederick for an apprenticeship opportunity than to Hagerstown or Hancock.

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[13] GWDB CTE Committee. (July 1, 2024). CTE Committee Expert Review Team Deployment Plan School Year 2024-2025. https://gwdb.maryland.gov/ctecomm/ctecomm-ctedeploymentplan_draftsy24-25_62624.pdf

[14] AIB's Updated Comprehensive Implementation Plan, August 2023, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PsYOGhld5Owk7PgK2cEubr68SSKrG5dH/view?usp=sharing.

Experiment with School Schedules

It may be worth experimenting with WCPS's schedule structure and setup. Students and teachers at BHS talked about how difficult it was to accomplish their learning outcomes in an eight-period schedule. Students had to come back during their flex period or during lunch to finish projects for their CTE courses. Eight-period school days have many benefits for students, like being able to graduate early, having multiple opportunities to earn course credits without falling behind their peers, and consistency on when students arrive and leave from school, but it may be worth experimenting with a block schedule[15] or a set schedule[16]. Meanwhile, the schedule at THS is two, two-and-a-half hour blocks, which causes friction with comprehensive high schools. THS students expressed appreciation for the longer blocks, with one student even saying they wish they could spend more time at THS. THS 12th graders attend during the morning block, which allows students to participate in apprenticeships or other WBL opportunities in the afternoon. A set schedule would be the middle ground between BHS's schedule and THS's schedule as it has longer blocks, offers consistency, and allows 12th grade students to participate in apprenticeship or other WBL opportunities.

Brainstorm Strategies to Improve Communication Between WCPS and State Agencies

For many of WCPS's stakeholders, collaborating with State Agencies was a challenge. WCPS's collaboration with the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) encountered many hurdles, and school counselors demonstrated some misunderstandings from MSDE about a students' ability to transfer to a different CTE program. Creating communication pathways to set realistic expectations and to assist on projects may be a useful exercise. Setting up a biweekly meeting with the MD Labor liaison until both parties feel comfortable moving it to a monthly meeting may be a good start. It would also be worthwhile to set up regular meetings with MSDE representatives to assure WCPS has the most accurate information and for WCPS to communicate their concerns about the *Blueprint* not addressing Washington County's needs and the IRCs that are not in alignment with career pathways. Brainstorming some type of consistent stream of communication so WCPS can elevate their concerns to MSDE may benefit many of Maryland's small-to-mid-size LEAs, especially because WCPS has a strong, data-informed system tracking students' interests, enrollment, and completion in CTE offerings.

Consider Expanding THS's Offerings to 10th, 11th, and 12th Grade Students

Another potential next step WCPS should consider would be expanding Boyd Michael III Technical High School (THS) to also include 10th grade students. Currently, THS only enrolls 11th grade students, who attend in the afternoon session, and 12th grade students, who attend in the morning session, but other interested students may take CTE offerings at their home school if available. The benefit of having 12th grade students attend in the morning is that they have the opportunity to complete WBL offerings. WCPS could consider expanding

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[15] An example of block scheduling would be where every day's schedule alternates among four-period blocks, so Monday, Wednesday, and Friday would be "A Days" and the same four-period blocks, Tuesday and Thursday would be "B Days" and the other four-period blocks, and the next week alternates.

[16] An example of set scheduling would be where every Monday and Wednesday would be the same four-period blocks, or "A Days", and every Tuesday and Thursday would be the same four-period blocks, or "B Days", with Fridays alternating between "A Days" and "B Days".

THS's offerings to also include 10th grade students by continuing to have first-year CTE students attend in the afternoon session and second-year CTE students attend in the morning session. This would mean that 12th grade students would attend THS for two academic courses and then go out to complete their WBL opportunities. It would also create an opportunity for word-of-mouth marketing as 12th grade students would have plenty of opportunities to interact, market, and maybe mentor younger students. In observing other LEAs, the CTE ERT has seen how CTE Tech Centers, much like THS, are a desired destination for students, and by expanding offerings to include 10th graders, WCPS may make progress toward the 45% goal with more effectiveness. This potential next step is in alignment with the proposed new MSDE Program of Study model as well. Ultimately, expanding THS's offerings to 10th grade students would create an opportunity for students to complete WBL opportunities.

Explore Technical Assistance with MSDE, the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor), and the CTE Committee in Meeting the *Blueprint*'s 45% Goal.

In order to achieve the *Blueprint*'s 45% goal, establishing and expanding RAs should be one of WCPS's priorities. WCPS already has close collaborations with MD Labor's Apprenticeship Navigator on what opportunities are available for high school students in Washington County. The CTE Committee will also be developing more targeted technical assistance around these areas, and facilitating a community of practice utilizing findings from CTE ERT visits. The CTE Committee recognizes that policies defining the 45% goal were not issued until December 2024, and this CTE ERT visit took place in December 2024, so all of those implementing this work and the partnerships required are still in the early stages of development. The CTE ERT acknowledges that WCPS was an early adopter for establishing Youth Apprenticeships, but it is important for WCPS to navigate towards the gold standard of RAs. Exploring technical assistance with MSDE, MD Labor, and the CTE Committee will prove to be a useful addition to WCPS meeting the 45% goal.

APPENDIX GUIDE

A. Visit Participants
B. LEA Brief
C. Visit Agenda
D. Interview & Focus Group Questions

Appendix A | Visit Participants

Name	Role
Kristine Pearl	CTE Director, Frederick County Public Schools
Santita Prather	Talent Acquisition Specialist, Meritus Health
Shonda Wilson	Dispatcher, Maryland State Police
Michael Concepcion	Principal, Frederick County Public Schools
John Strickland	Expert Review Team Manager, CTE Committee
Korbin Shoemaker	CTE Coordinator, Frederick County Public Schools
Theresa Shank	Dean of Continuing Education and Workforce Development, Hagerstown Community College
Dawn Schoenenberger	Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Services, Hagerstown Community College
Misty Cubbage	Career Counselor, Western Maryland Consortium
Alexandra Chaillou	Associate Director of Institution Review, Maryland Higher Education Commission
Lateefah Durant	VP of Innovation, City Works DC and CTE Strategic Facilitator

Appendix B | LEA Brief

CTE LEA LEAD STAFF		
Name	**Role(s)**	**Contact Info**
Adam Parry	Career Technical Supervisor	parryada@wcps.k12.md.us
Tonya Rowe	CTE Curriculum Specialist	roweton@wcps.k12.md.us
Siona Escoto	Apprenticeship Coordinator	escotsio@wcps.k12.md.us

COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS WITH CTE	
Boonsboro High School	Clear Spring High School
Hancock Middle Senior High School	North Hagerstown High School
Smithsburg High School	South Hagerstown High School
Williamsport High School	

LEA CTE CENTER(S)
Boyd J. Michael III Technical High School

CTE ERT VISIT	
Date	**School(s)**
December 4, 2024	Boyd J. Michael III Technical High School
	Boonsboro High School

LEA CTE ENROLLMENT, PARTICIPATION and COMPLETION RATES

	Washington County	**BJMTH**	**BHS**
Enrollment			
Total Enrollment *(# of all **HS students**)*	**6820**	**585**	**829** (102 attend BJMTH)
Total Enrollment *(# of all **graduating students**)*	**1650**	**271**	**219** (48 attend BJMTH)
CTE[17]			
CTE Participation Rate *(% of all **graduating students**)*	**1073/1650**	**n/a**	**115/219 (53%)**
CTE Concentration Rate *(% of all **graduating students**)*	**971/1650 (59%)**	**n/a**	**161/219 (74%)**
CTE Completers Rate *(% of all **graduating students**)*	**930/1650 (56%)**	**n/a**	**153/219 (70%)**
IRC Completion Rate *(% of all **graduating students**)*[18]	**322/1650(20%)**	**n/a**	**58/219 (26%)**
Apprenticeship and Other Work-Based Learning[19]			
Work-Based Learning Participants[20] *(# of all **graduating students**)*	**195**	**0**	**27**
Dual Enrollment Participants[21] *(# of all **graduating students**)*	**141/1650 (9%)**	**54/271 (20%)**	**19/219 (9%) (4 attend BJMTH)**
Apprenticeship Participants *(# of all **HS students**)*	RA: 0 YA: 157	RA: 0 YA: 69	RA: 0 YA:10

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[17] CTE Participants are students completing not less than one credit in a MSDE-approved CTE program of study. CTE Concentrators are students who have completed at least two courses and are enrolled in a third course in a single MSDE-approved CTE program of study. CTE Completers are students who meet all requirements in a state-approved CTE program of study, typically three or four courses.

[18] Defined as the percentage of all graduating students who have earned an IRC (as defined by the CTE Committee)

[19] Participation is defined as the number of all high school students or all graduating students who have participated in the high school portion of a registered apprenticeship (RA) or an AMP youth apprenticeship (YA). Completion is defined as the number of all graduating students who have completed the high school level of a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) or have completed both an AMP youth apprenticeship (YA) and an IRC (YA completers who don't earn an IRC will not count towards 45% goal).

[20] Work-based learning includes internships, job shadowing, and other job-based experiences.

[21] Participation is defined as the number of all graduating students participating in dual enrollment (does not count towards the 45% goal unless they earn an IRC).

Apprenticeship Participants (*# of all **graduating students***)	RA: 0 YA: 110	RA: 0 YA: 55	RA: 0 YA: 9
Apprenticeship Completers (*# of **graduating students***)	RA: 0 YA: 109	RA: 0 YA: 25	RA: 0 YA: 9
Progress Towards 45% Goal[22]	**13%** **(230/1766)** (Current Senior Class)	**NA** This is a program not a school, and their data goes to each HS students are based out of.	**22.3%** **(62/278)** (Current Senior Class)

LEA CTE OFFERINGS

CTE Program Enrollment - SY24-25 Data

Program Name	**Total Enrollment**	**Overenrolled or Under Enrolled?**	**Number of Students on Waitlist**
Audiovisual Communications and Broadcasting Technologies	179	Under Enrolled - only 17 students scheduled to finish the completer	Zero
Computer Game Development & Animation	30	Adequate: Special program at our Arts Schools.	Zero
Interactive Media Production	545	Under Enrolled - Only 49 students scheduled to finish the completer	Zero
Photography & Cinematography	28	Adequate: Special program at our Arts School.	Zero
Business Management	0	We do not offer this completer	
Finance and Accounting	605	Under Enrolled - only 12 students scheduled to finish this completer	Zero

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[22] This metric is calculated by adding together the Apprenticeship Completion Rate (RA completers plus YA completers who also earn an IRC) and the IRC Completion Rate (based on draft guidance from the CTE Committee), divided by the total number of graduating students.

Marketing	721		Zero
Software Specialist	694	86 students scheduled to finish this completer	Zero
Career Research & Development	1239	Over enrolled - 360 students are set to complete this pathway where enrollment in an Apprenticeship would be of greater benefit.	Zero
Carpentry	476	??	Zero
Construction and Building Trades	58	13 students are scheduled to finish the completer, this is at our Technical HS	There is a wait list for this program since it is at the Technical High School.
Construction Design & Management	238	22 students are scheduled to finish the completer - this is under enrolled	Zero
Electrical	66	17 students are slated to finish the program, this is at our Technical HS	There is a wait list for this program since it is at the Technical High School.
Cosmetology	66	15 students are slated to finish the program, this is at our Technical HS	There is a wait list for this program since it is at the Technical High School.
Culinary Arts	58	14 students are slated to complete the program, this is at our Technical HS	Zero
Food and Beverage Management	477	53 students are slated to complete the program.	Zero
Hospitality & Tourism Management	354	31 students are slated to complete the program.	Zero

CASE Agriculture Engineering	269	33 students are slated to complete this program	Zero
CASE Natural Resources	276	33 students are slated to complete this program	Zero
Environmental Agriculture Science Academy - Animal Science	177	16 students are slated to complete this program - this is under enrolled	Zero
Environmental Agricultural Science Academy Environmental Completer	208	49 students are slated to complete this program	Zero
Environmental Resource Management	115	0 students are slated to complete this program	Zero
Horticulture	229	25 students are slated to complete this program	Zero
Power Mechanics	296	84 students are slated to complete this program	
PLTW Academy of Biomedical Sciences	94	23 students are slated to complete this program	There is a wait list for this program since it is at the Technical High School.
Academy of Health Professions	116	27 students are slated to complete this program	There is a wait list for this program since it is at the Technical High School.
Allied Health Completer - Sports Medicine	208	16 students are slated to complete this program. This is under enrolled	Zero
Academy of Teaching Professions	415	47 students are slated to complete this program	Zero

Fire and Rescue Academy	15	15 students are slated to complete this program	Zero
Homeland Security - Law Enforcement	120	28 students are slated to complete the program	Zero
Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness	480	54 students are slated to complete the program	Zero
Homeland Security Global Imaging & Communication Technology	54	9 students are slated to complete this program. This is a specialized class at our Tech High program	Zero
Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Cloud Computing	32	16 students are slated to complete this program. This is specialized at our Tech High program	Zero
CISCO IT Academy	32	23 students are slated to complete this program. This is a specialized at our Tech High program	Zero
Computer Science	319	16 students are slated to complete this program.	Zero
Applied Manufacturing Engineering	26	3 students are slated to complete this program. This is a Tech High program.	Zero
Engineering Academy - PLTW	36	12 students are slated to complete this program. This is a Tech High program.	Zero
Automotive Technology	60	14 students are slated to complete this program. This is a Tech High program.	There is a wait list for this program since it is at the Technical High School.

Collision Repair Completer	64	17 students are slated to complete this program. This is a Tech High program.	There is a wait list for this program since it is at the Technical High School.
Diesel Technology	49	12 students are slated to complete this program.	There is a wait list for this program since it is at the Technical High School.
Apprenticeship MD	415	104 students are slated to complete this program as a completer. These are youth apprenticeships.	Zero

Progress Towards the 45% Goal:

- What are you projecting, for next school year, in growth towards the 45% goal for your district?
        - In school year 25-26, Washington County Public Schools will reach 50% of CTE students achieving an IRC or a Registered Apprenticeship towards the 45% goal. That will be an increase of 9% compared to school year 23-24.
    - Next 3 years?
        - Within three years, Washington County Public Schools will reach 70% of CTE students achieving an IRC or a Registered Apprenticeship towards the 45% goal.
    - Next 5 years?
        - Within five years, Washington County Public Schools will reach 90% of CTE students achieving an IRC or a Registered Apprenticeship towards the 45% goal.
    - By SY 2030-2031?
        - By 2030-2031, Washington County Public Schools will reach 95% of CTE students achieving an IRC or a Registered Apprenticeship towards the 45% goal.

- What are your plans for expanding Registered Apprenticeships in your LEA?
    - WCPS will work collaboratively with the Maryland Department of Labor, our local workforce board and our local chamber of commerce to develop this program.
    - WCPS continues to offer current and prospective apprenticeship partners both the Registered Apprenticeship opportunity and if they are not interested, the Youth Apprenticeship opportunity.

    - WCPS will work with the Hagerstown Chamber of Commerce to enlist additional support in recruiting Registered Apprenticeship members, highlighting the benefits of participating to those candidates.

Program Plans for Future

- Are there any new programs you plan on adding to your current programming within the next 2 school years?
    - Why are you adding/not adding the program(s)?
        - We will explore adding a manufacturing program to North Hagerstown High School. There is student interest and currently staff availability to help support the implementation of this program.
        - Any changes to programs will be influenced by student interest, community need and Local Advisory Committee recommendations.
- Are there any current programs you plan on expanding upon within the next 2 school years?
    - Why are you expanding upon the program(s)?
        - Our current focus is to expand Industry Recognized Credential resources to programs as this provides students the greatest benefit from any program.
        - We are not exploring expanding and additional programs, but we are supplementing what we have presently by putting additional resources into awareness campaigns at the middle school level to help bolster interest and enrollment in programs at the high school level.
- Are there any programs you are taking away within the next 2 school years?
    - Why are you taking away the program(s)?
        - Programs would only be removed if there is no student interest or we are unable to fill a position due to staffing turn over.
        - MSDE requirements on staff hiring will impact our ability to fill specialty program positions.

Enrollment Practices

- How do students enroll in programs?
    - As of SY24-25 we have implemented CTE program awareness campaigns to help increase overall student awareness of CTE programs offered at their comprehensive high schools.
    - At several high schools, 8th grade students are invited to participate in tours of the high school and its programs.
    - As of SY23-24, Career Coaches have taken a prominent role in working with students in the middle school and high school level to help support career exploration
    - School counselors will enroll students into CTE completer programs.
- Are all CTE programs offered to all students?

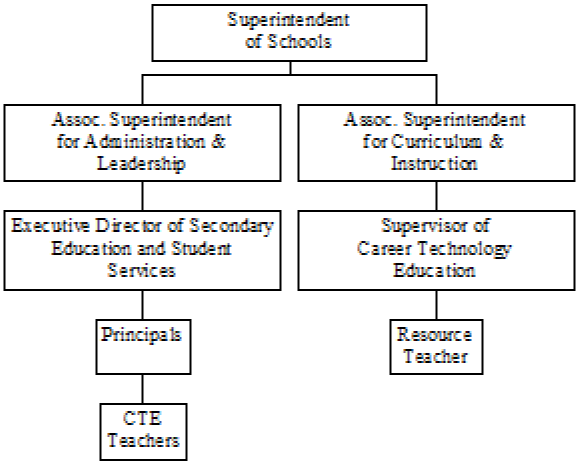
  - Students have direct access to any CTE program in their comprehensive high school. There are no barriers to entry.
  - Students wishing to avail themselves of the CTE programs at the Boyd J. Michael III Technical High School are provided a tour of the school and programs by WCPS, and they must apply for entry.
- Can a student participate in a CTE program at another school?
  - Students may apply for special permission to participate in any CTE program at any comprehensive high school in Washington County.

Program Design

- What are some best practices from CTE in your LEA that you think are worth sharing with other CTE programs across the state?
  - Some of WCPS's best practices come with the implementation of instruction through simulated work place learning. Not only are the students learning the content and earning an IRC, but they are being immersed in a hands on, real world learning environment that helps drive home the soft skills they will need in conjunction with the hard skills.

LEA Support for Schools

- How is CTE financial support structured within the LEA?
  - The CTE program is budgeted its own lines in our General Fund year-over-year. This funding is increased enough each year to meet the CTE MOE.
  - The CTE Supervisor can use the funds that are budgeted on staffing, items...etc. to increase CTE support throughout the district.
- How is CTE staffing structured within the LEA?


Superintendent of Schools
Assoc. Superintendent for Administration & Leadership
Assoc. Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction
Executive Director of Secondary Education and Student Services
Supervisor of Career Technology Education
Principals
Resource Teacher
CTE Teachers

Career Exploration

- What career exploration is available to students in your LEA?
  - The career exploration for WCPS students is available through career exploration lessons and skill/interest assessments are provided by school counselor in K - 12th grades. Career coaches collaborate on these lessons in 6th - 12th grades. Career coaches arrange career-related field

    trips, a diverse selection of local industry guest speakers, career fairs, employability skills workshops, additional career exploration lessons, and one-on-one meetings. Students also to learn more about career-related programs offered by WCPS, such as Career and Technical Education, Barbara Ingram School for the Arts, and Boyd J. Michael III Technical High School in middle and high school during the lessons.
- How do the students access their career coach(es)?
    - Students can access their career coach by email or in-person appointments. All career coaches have an office/workspace in their school building allowing for students to meet with the career coach by appointment or on a walk-in basis. Career coaches engage with students through one-on-one meetings, workshops or additional career exploration lessons, and arranging presentations or guest speakers at the school.
- How does/do the career coach(es) serve students in your LEA?
    - Career coaches serve students by providing additional opportunities for career exploration, career awareness, and career readiness to assist each student, in collaboration with the school counselor, to have a solid post-secondary plan for after high school. Each career coach is provided with the tools to offer career-related field trips, guest speakers from local industries, career fairs, employability skills workshops, self and career assessments, and one-on-one meetings for students in their schools.

INFORMATION FOR VISITING SCHOOLS

Boyd J Michael III Technical High School

School Leadership: Robert Stike
School Contact: stikerob@wcps.k12.md.us
School Website:
https://wcpsmd.com/schools/high-schools/boyd-j-michael-iii-technical-high

Boonsboro High School

School Leadership: Dr. Michael Kuhaneck
School Contact: kuhanmic@wcps.k12.md.us
School Website: https://wcpsmd.com/schools/high-schools/boonsboro-high

CTE PROGRAMS[23] AND ENROLLMENT AT VISITING SCHOOLS FOR SY23-24

those students enrolled in the Completer Course (final course) of the completer

Schools with CTE Programs	CLUSTER	CTE PROGRAM	ENROLLMENT NUMBER SY23-24	COMPLETION RATE	IRC ATTAINMENT RATE
Boyd J Michael III Technical High School	Construction and Development	Carpentry	13	100%	13
	Construction and Development	Electrical Construction	17	100%	17
	Consumer Services, Hospitality & Tourism	Culinary Arts	14	100%	1
	Consumer Services, Hospitality & Tourism	Cosmetology	15	100%	15
	Health and Biosciences	Academy of Biomedical Sciences (PLTW)	23	100%	0
	Health and Biosciences	Academy of Health Professions	27	100%	Not Reported
	Human Resource Services	Academy of Teaching Professions	32	100%	4
	Human Resource Services	Child Development	32	100%	15

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[23] A full list of the CTE programs and description of courses can be found in the WCPS Program of Studies located on their website; https://wcpsmd.com/sites/default/files/documents/WCPS_Program_of_Studies_24-25%C2%A0%E2%80%93%C2%A0FINAL.pdf

		Associate (CDA)			
	Human Resource Services	Homeland Security - Information Technologies	16	100%	0
	Human Resource Services	Criminal Justice, Law and Society	28	100%	0
	Human Resource Services	Fire & Rescue Academy	15	100%	13
	Information Technology	AI & Cloud Computing	15	100%	15
	Information Technology	CISCO Networking Academy	16	100%	15
	Manufacturing, Engineering & Technology	Mechanical, Manufacturing & Automation Engineering Academy	3	100%	3
	Manufacturing, Engineering & Technology	Engineering Academy (PLTW)	17	100%	0
	Transportation Technology	Collision Repair	17	100%	17
	Transportation Technology	Automotive Technology	14	100%	14

	Transportation Technology	Diesel Technology	12	100%	12
Boonsboro High School	CLUSTER	CTE PROGRAM	ENROLLMENT NUMBER SY23-24	COMPLETION RATE	IRC ATTAINMENT RATE
	Arts, Media & Communications	Interactive Media Production	4	100%	11
	Accounting & Finance	Software Specialist	14	100%	18
	Accounting & Finance	Finance & Accounting	18	100%	2
	Accounting & Finance	Marketing	33	36%	3
	Construction & Development	Carpentry	15	100%	40
	Construction & Development	Construction Design & Management	8	100%	0
	Environmental, Agriculture & Natural Resources	Environmental Resource Management	0	0	0
	Environmental, Agriculture & Natural Resources	Power Mechanics	20	100%	0
	Environmental, Agriculture & Natural Resources	Horticulture	10	100%	0
	Health and Biosciences	Allied Health Professions	12	100%	7

		- Sports Medicine/CNA&GNA			
	Human Resource Services	Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness	41	100%	0
	Information Technology	Computer Science	13	76%	0

LEA STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Maryland	Washington Co
District Student Demographics (2023)	276495	22549
% Asian	7%	2%
% American Indian / Alaska Native	<1%	<1%
% African American	33%	16%
% Hispanic	21%	16%
% Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%
% Two or More Races	4%	9%
% White	34%	56%
% Students with Disabilities	11%	12%
# of Multi-Lingual Learners	9%	5%
% Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS)	47%	61.%
Child Poverty Rate % (2022)	12%	18.4%
Unemployment Rate % (2024)	3%	3.5%

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Nearby Universities & Community Colleges

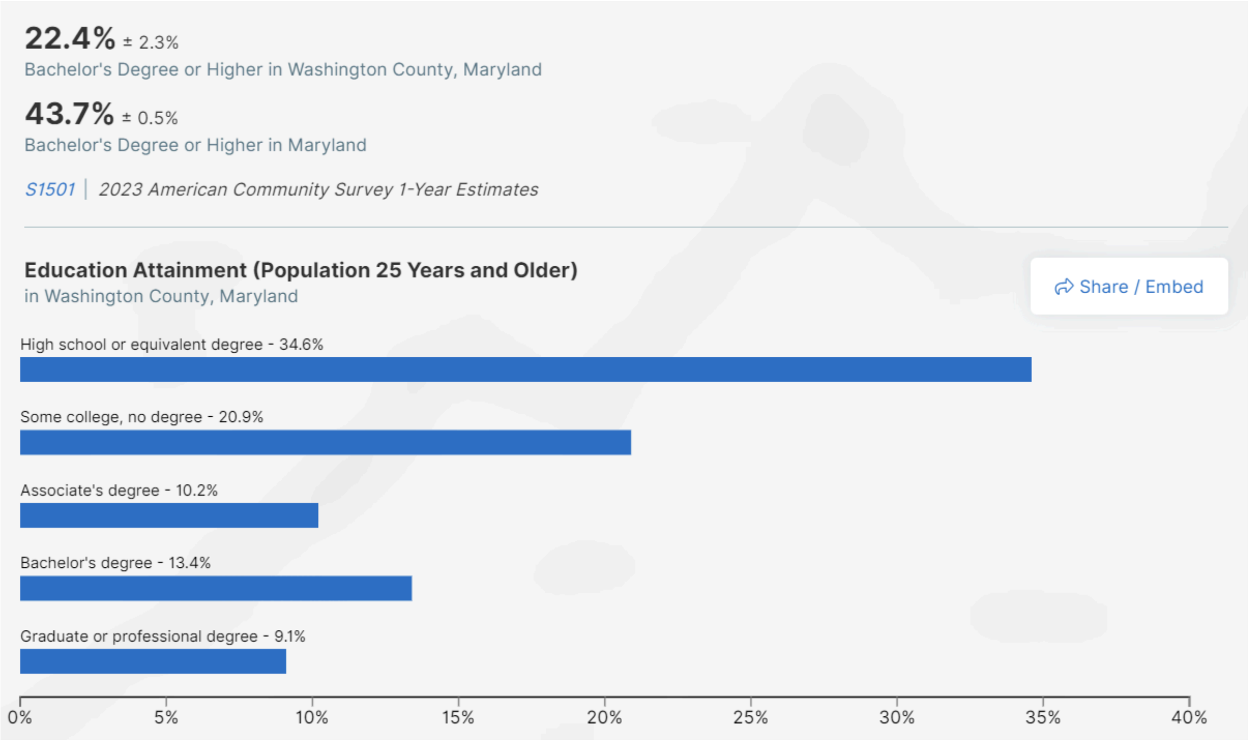
University/College Name

Hagerstown Community College
Shepherd University
Frostburg University

Economic Profile

Washington County is a major industrial and transportation hub in the MidAtlantic region. Interstates 81, 70, and 68, coupled with excellent rail service, provide easy market access. The Hagerstown Regional Airport is a fully instrumented airfield with the second longest commercial runway in the state. Hagerstown, the county seat, and business center, is Maryland's sixth largest city and is easily accessible to both Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Washington County's private sector industries generate nearly $7.8 billion in economic output. Key employers include Amazon, The Bowman Group, FedEx Ground, Meritus Health System, Sierra Nevada Corporation, Specialty Granules, Tractor Supply Co., and Volvo Group. Washington County is home to more than twenty industrial, technology and business parks, Foreign Trade Zone #255, and two State Enterprise Zones. Significant recent announcements include Johnson Development's $150 million investment of a 1.8 million square foot logistics center, Hitachi Rail's $80 million investment of a 300,000 square foot metro rail car manufacturing facility, and Trammel Crows $100 million capital investment of a 2 million square foot distribution center, all located in Hagerstown/ Washington County, MD. Construction is underway for a new Atlantic League Baseball team, the Hagerstown Flying Boxcars. It is expected to open May 2024. It will host sports, music, and other community events. Major tourist attractions in the county include the Antietam National Battlefield, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National historical Park, and Fort Frederick State Park.

Educational Attainment[24]



22.4% ± 2.3%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Washington County, Maryland

43.7% ± 0.5%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Maryland

S1501 | *2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*

Education Attainment (Population 25 Years and Older)
in Washington County, Maryland

Share / Embed
High school or equivalent degree - 34.6%
Some college, no degree - 20.9%
Associate's degree - 10.2%
Bachelor's degree - 13.4%
Graduate or professional degree - 9.1%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

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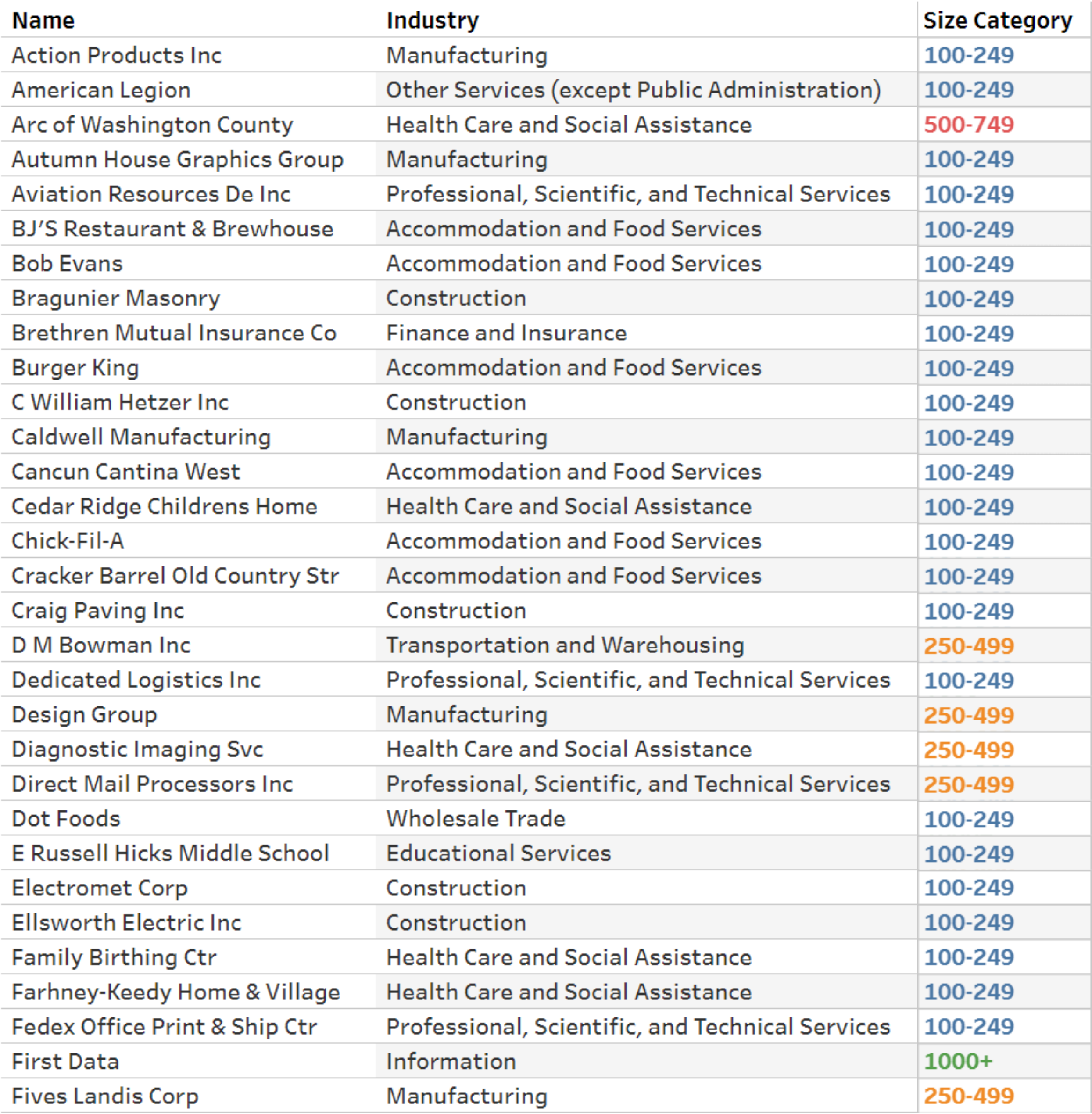
[24] https://data.census.gov/profile/Washington_County,_Maryland?g=050XX00US24043

LEADING BUSINESS GROUPS[25]



Name	Industry	Size Category
Action Products Inc	Manufacturing	100-249
American Legion	Other Services (except Public Administration)	100-249
Arc of Washington County	Health Care and Social Assistance	500-749
Autumn House Graphics Group	Manufacturing	100-249
Aviation Resources De Inc	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	100-249
BJ'S Restaurant & Brewhouse	Accommodation and Food Services	100-249
Bob Evans	Accommodation and Food Services	100-249
Bragunier Masonry	Construction	100-249
Brethren Mutual Insurance Co	Finance and Insurance	100-249
Burger King	Accommodation and Food Services	100-249
C William Hetzer Inc	Construction	100-249
Caldwell Manufacturing	Manufacturing	100-249
Cancun Cantina West	Accommodation and Food Services	100-249
Cedar Ridge Childrens Home	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
Chick-Fil-A	Accommodation and Food Services	100-249
Cracker Barrel Old Country Str	Accommodation and Food Services	100-249
Craig Paving Inc	Construction	100-249
D M Bowman Inc	Transportation and Warehousing	250-499
Dedicated Logistics Inc	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	100-249
Design Group	Manufacturing	250-499
Diagnostic Imaging Svc	Health Care and Social Assistance	250-499
Direct Mail Processors Inc	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	250-499
Dot Foods	Wholesale Trade	100-249
E Russell Hicks Middle School	Educational Services	100-249
Electromet Corp	Construction	100-249
Ellsworth Electric Inc	Construction	100-249
Family Birthing Ctr	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
Farhney-Keedy Home & Village	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
Fedex Office Print & Ship Ctr	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	100-249
First Data	Information	1000+
Fives Landis Corp	Manufacturing	250-499

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[25] Maryland Department of Labor, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/anteneh.gebremariam2677/viz/WashingtonCounty_16969573486920/WashingtonCounty

Appendix C | Visit Agenda

Visit Date: December 4, 2024 Time: 8:00am - 3:30pm	*Location AM:* *Boyd J. Michael III Technical High School* 50 W. Oak Ridge Dr, Hagerstown, MD 21740	*Location PM:* *Boonsboro High School* 10 Campus Ave, Boonsboro, MD 21713	Arrival Time: 8:00am-8:15am

AM Session: Boyd J. Michael III Technical High School

Team 1: John Strickland, Dawn Schoenenberger, Korbin Shoemaker, Misty Cubbage, Emily Dow		Team 2: A) Michael Concepcion, Theresa Shank, Chris Abell, Shonda Wilson B) Lateefah Durant, Santita Prather, Kristine Pearl	
Time	Activity	Time	Activity
8:00am-8:30am	Meet and Greet	8:00am-8:30am	Meet and Greet
8:30am-9:30am	School Counselors & Career Coaches Focus Group	8:30am-9:30am	Teachers Focus Group
9:35am-10:25am	Classroom Visits (5)	9:35am-10:25am	Classroom Visits (5)
10:25am-10:30am	Break	10:25am-10:30am	Break
10:35am-11:35am	Students Focus Group	10:35am-11:35am	Students Focus Group
11:35am-12:20pm	CTE Staff/School Admin Mtg. & Lunch	11:35am-12:20am	CTE Staff/School Admin Mtg. & Lunch
12:20pm-12:45pm	Travel to Boonsboro High School	12:20pm-12:45pm	Travel to Boonsboro High School

PM Session: Boonsboro High School

Team 1:		Team 2:		
Time	Activity	Time	Activity	
12:45pm-1:00pm	Arrival and Check In	12:45pm-1:00pm	Arrival and Check In	
1:00pm-1:54pm	Students Focus Group Media Conference Room	1:00pm-1:54pm	Team 2A Teachers Focus Group	Team 2B Counselors Focus Group
1:54pm-2:10pm	Break	1:54pm to 2:10pm	Break	
2:10pm-3:00pm	Classroom Visits (5)	2:10pm-3:00pm	Classroom Visits (5)	
3:00pm-3:30pm	End of Day Debrief & Gathering Counseling Conference Room	3:00pm-3:30 pm	End of Day Debrief & Gathering Counseling Conference Room	

Team Member Roles			
Team 1		**Team 2**	
Facilitator/Recorder	John Strickland	Facilitator/Recorder	Michael Concepcion
Notes/Time	Dawn Schoenenberger	Notes/Time	Lateefah Durant

Team 2A	
Facilitator/Recorder	Michael Concepcion
Notes/Time	Theresa Shank

Team 2B	
Facilitator/Recorder	Lateefah Durant
Notes/Time	Kristine Pearl

LEA CTE Staff/School Administration	
Facilitator/Recorder	John Strickland
Notes/Time	Lateefah Durant

Appendix D | Interview & Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Reminders

To be used by team facilitator for focus group participants before starting

- We're here on behalf of the CTE Committee, committed to improving CTE programs in line with Maryland's goals outlined in the *Blueprint*.
- Our team represents a variety of different perspectives. Our members here today are teachers, administrators, school leaders, researchers, employers, local workforce board members, and CTE Committee staff and board members.
- Our purpose in this visit is to try to understand what is in place now in your LEA, including plans for expanding or strengthening existing programs and current challenges. We also want to identify any strong practices in place that we might be able to highlight statewide. These visits will also inform the CTE Committee's development of the statewide CTE framework.
- We are not here to "assess" or grade CTE programming or CTE teachers in schools or LEAs.
- After the visit, CTE Committee staff will draft a LEA report summarizing what we saw and heard, including our understanding of the LEA's CTE strategy, current strengths and challenges, and suggestions to help the LEA reach its goals.
- We look forward to hearing about your experiences and your thoughts on what's working and where we can support CTE here in your LEA.
- We would like to record this session (except student groups) to capture your thoughts accurately—does that work for you all? To be clear, this recording is only for note-taking purposes; we ensure confidentiality meaning no names will be cited in our reports.
- Your contributions today will help us improve CTE programs both here and statewide. Any questions before we start?

Questions for School Leadership

Priority Questions:

1. How long have you been in your role? What is your background in CTE?
2. Can you give us an overview of the structure of CTE programs in your school / LEA? *If not addressed, ask about: Dual enrollment, WBL, Range of programs, Application process, Transportation*
3. What are the school's current priorities for CTE in your school/LEA? *If not addressed, ask about: Eliminate/add programs, Apprenticeship, Increasing enrollment, Working with industry*
4. In your opinion, how well does the programming at your school align with key *(high-growth, high-wage)* industries in your community and statewide?
5. Is there capacity for all interested students to participate in CTE programs? Are there any barriers to enrollment?
6. For those students who are not able to enroll and stay on a waitlist, what's the process for those students? What happens if they don't get off the waitlist?
7. How does the LEA/district update CTE programs? What are some current plans you have for adding new programs, expanding existing programs or eliminate current programs?
8. From your perspective, what are the strengths of your LEA/school's CTE program, and what have you made the most progress on recently?
9. What do you see as the key challenges facing your LEA/school now?
10. Where would you like the LEA to be in five years in regards to CTE?

Additional Questions:

- Are any CTE teachers earning National Board Certification? If so, have they been able to move into differentiated roles?
- How do you collaborate with local business and industry and community colleges?
- Do you have sufficient teachers for current programs? If not, what are the issues in recruiting them?

- What's your process for reviewing the IRCs currently offered to students as part of their CTE program?
- What measures are in place to assess the long-term impact of CTE programs on students' career trajectories and contributions to the local economy?
- Do certain programs have higher completion rates than others?
- Are there clear pathways from current CTE programs to community college certificate and degree programs?
- What strategies are employed to raise awareness and improve perceptions of CTE programs among students, parents, and the broader community?

Questions for CTE Teachers

Instructions for focus group lead: Please start by asking everyone to introduce themselves with the first question. Since there are a lot of questions to get through, ask for a few people, not everyone, to answer each of the following questions, asking for different perspectives as needed.

Priority Questions:

1. What program do you teach in? How long have you been in your role? What is your background in this area?
2. Can you give us an overview of your CTE program? *If not addressed, ask about: Dual enrollment, WBL, IRCs, completion rates, post-grad options*
3. Do you have contact with employers in your industry? If so, what partnerships have been most beneficial for students?
4. Where do students from your program go after graduating (i.e., further training, work, college, etc.)?
5. What support do you and/or the school provide to help CTE students develop post-graduation plans? *Are your students getting time with a Career Coach as part of that support?*
6. If you could redesign your subject's program of study, what would you change?
7. What professional learning opportunities are available for you?
8. From your perspective, what are the strengths of your school's CTE programs?
9. What do you need as a CTE teacher that you feel you may not be getting?
10. What do you see as the key CTE challenges facing your school now?

Additional Questions:

- How do you collaborate with your colleagues (CTE and academic teachers)?
- Do any of your programs have school-based businesses that serve the school community and/or local clients?
- Do you think the certification requirements for CTE teachers are well-aligned to what was needed to teach in the area you teach in?
- Do most students who enroll in your program intend on completing the program?
- Can you share a success story of a former student who has benefited from your program?
- How do you measure the effectiveness of your CTE program, and what data or feedback informs changes or improvements?

Questions for CTE Students

Priority Questions:

1. What year are you, what program are you enrolled in, and why did you choose the program you’re in?
2. How did you learn about the program you are enrolled in now? What was the process of getting in to the program?
3. How has your experience in the classroom been for your CTE classes? Is it different from your other classes?
4. Have you had any work experience as part of your program?
5. If you have a different home school, how do you get to your CTE program and / or to your job (if applicable)?
6. Will you graduate with any certifications/credentials or college credits?
7. What is your plan post-graduation, and how did you develop it?
8. How much do you know about careers in your industry (salary, training paths)?
9. What would you say is the best thing about your program?
10. If you could change anything in your program, what would it be?

Additional Questions:

- Are there any CTE programs you think the school/LEA should offer that it does not now?
- Have you participated in any competitions or extracurricular activities related to your CTE program? If so, what was your experience like?
- How well do you feel your CTE program is preparing you for the workforce or further education in your chosen field?
- How do your family and friends perceive your enrollment in a CTE program, and has their perception changed since you started?
- How does your school promote CTE programs to students, and what improvements would you suggest to increase awareness and interest?
- Looking back on when you first enrolled in your CTE program, what advice would you give to students who are currently considering CTE as an option?

Questions for School Counselors/Career Coaches & Staff

Instructions for focus group lead: Please start by asking everyone to introduce themselves with the first question. Since there are a lot of questions to get through, ask for a few people, not everyone, to answer each of the following questions, asking for different perspectives as needed.

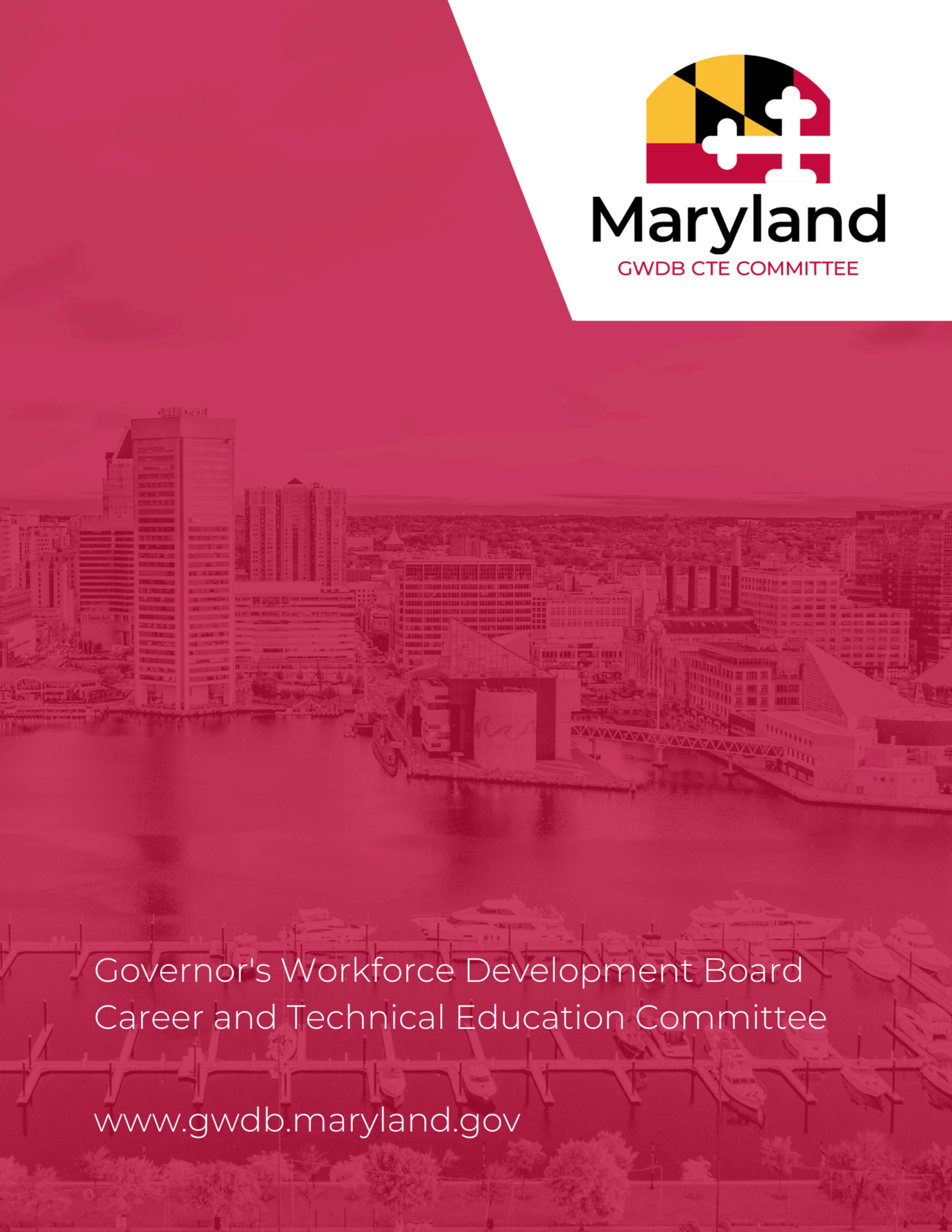
Priority Questions:

1. How long have you been in your role? What is your background in this role?
2. How is school counseling and career counseling organized at your school? Do the counselors work together?
3. Is there a work-based learning coordinator and if so what is their scope of work and how do they interact with counselors?
4. How does the school counseling staff and career counseling staff stay up-to-date with CTE programming and workforce trends in the LEA and the state?
5. How are students introduced to CTE programs? Do students have opportunities for career exploration/education?
6. How are CTE students supported in making post-graduation plans?

7. How are parents and families introduced to programs? Are there other efforts to publicize CTE in the community?
8. What do you see as the strengths of CTE in this school?
9. What do you see as the key challenges facing your LEA/school's CTE programs?

Additional Questions:

- Do you track post-graduation outcomes, such as enrolling in further education / training or entering the workforce?
- In what ways does the school involve parents and the community in the CTE program?
- How are students who change their mind about a career path supported?
- How do you think the CTE guidance could be improved? Is feedback on guidance and support collected from students?
- Are there issues with students being able to access CTE programs? If so, what are the reasons and what are current strategies to address access issues from a counseling perspective?



Maryland

GWDB CTE COMMITTEE

Governor's Workforce Development Board
Career and Technical Education Committee

www.gwdb.maryland.gov