



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE Joint Fiscal Office

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Issue Brief

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Career and Technical Education in Vermont: Governance and Funding

Executive Summary

Act 73 (2025; an act relating to transforming Vermont's education governance, quality, and finance systems) made significant changes to Vermont's education system. An important aspect of the State's high school education is Career and Technical Education (CTE), which offers students (primarily in grades 11 and 12) the opportunity to gain technical skills and experience. This brief provides a background summary on the current CTE system.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Vermont has a unique governance and funding structure. To achieve the goals stated in Act 73 for CTE, changes to that structure may be necessary.

This brief also provides considerations for legislators on how CTE may interact with the ongoing education transformation work under Act 73. Current CTE governance and funding structure may need revision to align with the Act's other goals. How different forms of CTE governance should be addressed, how program offerings should be structured, and how CTE students will be funded are all outstanding policy questions.

Background on CTE

CTE offers students a way to gain experience in technical fields prior to entering the workforce or enrolling in a credential or post-secondary program. In fiscal year 2024, approximately 20% of all Vermont secondary students participated in CTE.¹ Total in-state CTE enrollment in fiscal year 2024 was approximately 2,445 full time equivalent (FTE) students.^{2,3} Vermont CTE centers also educate students from other states. Through fiscal year 2024, there were roughly 182 additional FTE students attending from out of state.⁴

Varying models of CTE governance exist across the state with differences in leadership structures and staffing levels, program offerings, and available resources. Each of Vermont's 17 CTE centers falls within one of three models of governance: the Host Model, the Regional Tech Center School District Model, and the Independent Model.⁵ Additionally, there are two Comprehensive High Schools that offer limited CTE programs. Table 1 highlights the significant differences between the models.

¹ Fiscal year 2024 is the most recent year for which statewide secondary enrollment is available.

² This includes FTEs at independent centers and comprehensive high schools.

³ In-state enrollment is based on six-semester averages through the prior fiscal year; this count is used for current law funding. These are the FY24 FTEs which are reported for FY25.

⁴ Earliest year available for out-of-state data. In recent years, this figure tends to represent around 6.5% of CTE FTEs.

⁵ Model names are derived from the [2023 report by APA](#), page five.

Table 1: CTE Center Characteristics By Governance Model

	Host Model	Regional Technical Center School District (RTCSD) Model	Independent Model	Comprehensive High School Model
Number of centers statewide:	11	4	2	2
Percentage of Vermont's in-state CTE students educated:⁶	68%	23%	7.5%	1.5%
Resources shared with district(s):	Typically shares space and resources with host district	Standalone district which rents space and employ their own staff	Shares space and resources with the parent school	Shares space and resources with the parent school
Leadership structure:	CTE director reports to the superintendent, who reports to the school board; Regional Advisory Board (RAB) offers input	CTE director is also superintendent; reports to the RTCSD's governing board. RAB provides input	CTE director reports to the headmaster; reports to the board of trustees. An RAB is present	Building principal reports to the superintendent; reports to the school board
Budget approving authority:	The hosting district's voters	The RTCSD's voters	The board of trustees	The district's voters

CTE Center Programming

Students have different educational opportunities based on where they live.

Across all governance models, many programming decisions are made at the local level, and there is not a uniform set of course offerings among centers. While the Agency of Education (AOE) must provide approval, CTE centers, in collaboration with Program Advisory Committees (PACs), determine the programs offered and develop their curriculum. PACs are committees of local industry members and help align CTE programs with industry requirements. These PACs, as well as the availability of qualified CTE teachers and classrooms, are primary determinants of programs offered. Programming decisions are also influenced by Regional Advisory Boards, center governance boards, and labor market needs.⁷

Pre-Tech Availability

Another factor influencing CTE program access is Pre-Tech. Pre-Tech programs are eligible for federal funds and introduce CTE offerings to students, typically in grades 9 and 10.⁸ By introducing students to CTE earlier in their academic careers, students have more time to discover their interests.

Per AOE data, 17 of the 19 CTE centers offer at least one Pre-Tech program⁹. However, the vast majority of students who attend these programs often hail from one or two high schools within the CTE region (typically the school the center is attached to). Centers operate within a CTE region, which usually serves multiple high schools and multiple school districts. As students typically attend the CTE center in their region, students who attend the school the center is located at often receive different academic opportunities than students from neighboring districts.

⁶ Per AOE six-semester average FTEs.

⁷ Defined in 16 V.S.A. § 1542.

⁸Career and Technical Education Programs: <https://education.vermont.gov/student-learning/flexible-pathways/career-technical-education/career-and-technical-education>.

⁹ This includes the two comprehensive high schools.

CTE Center Funding

Under current law, CTE centers are dependent upon tuition to operate. Any change to tuition would impact center budgets. In Vermont, the majority of CTE centers' funding comes from tuition payments. Whether from out-of-state or in-state students, tuition payments make up over 60% of statewide CTE revenues.

CTE tuition is based on center enrollment and expenditures. Because of this, each center has a different cost of tuition. A CTE student's district of residence is responsible for paying their tuition. These tuition payments are included in the school district's budget and are thus paid for by the statewide Education Fund. Tuition payments are split into two rates:

- **Out-of-state tuition:** the rate charged to students from out-of-state sending schools. It is determined by dividing a center's costs net of offsetting revenues by its FTEs.¹⁰ Out-of-state students do not receive any tuition assistance.
- **In-state tuition:** the rate charged to students from Vermont sending schools. It is determined by dividing a center's costs net of offsetting revenues (including out-of-state tuition) by in-state FTEs¹¹. The in-state tuition rate is then reduced by the State's tuition reduction supplemental assistance grant.¹²

Over 87% of CTE center revenues come from Vermont's statewide Education Fund, with in-state tuition (about 59%) and the Tuition Reduction grant (about 14%) making up the lion's share. The remaining 13% comes from out-of-state tuition payments (about 4%) and federal funding (around 9%).

Recent Trends in CTE Enrollment

CTE enrollment has declined, but its share of overall enrollment has been stable in recent years.

As with overall Vermont enrollment, CTE enrollment has declined in recent years. In fiscal year 2024, total in-state CTE enrollment was approximately 2,445 FTE students.¹³ This represents a roughly 4% decline compared to the 2,536 FTEs reported through the end of fiscal year 2017. However, the proportion of CTE FTEs to public school students remained roughly constant across the same period.¹⁴

Another method for measuring CTE enrollment is the count of unique students participating in CTE. In school year 2025, approximately 5,030 unique students participated in CTE. This is equivalent to nearly 21% of the state's 9-12 grade students.¹⁵

Recently, the proportion of CTE students originating from another state has increased by approximately 3.5%; in fiscal year 2024 about 7% of CTE FTEs were from out of state.^{16,17} While this reflects slight growth in overall proportion, in-state students still comprise the vast majority of Vermont CTE center students.

It's worth noting that the out-of-state population is not distributed evenly among CTE centers – some centers are more reliant on out-of-state enrollment than others. In Vermont, out-of-state students make up anywhere from 0% to over 40% of enrollment, depending on the center and fiscal year.

While enrollment figures are one helpful metric to gauge CTE interest, they do not tell the full story. Capacity constraints, either from staffing shortages or facility limitations, lack of transportation or distance from centers, cultural views and local interest, and programming availability may also impact enrollment.

¹⁰ For out-of-state tuition, the FTEs used are actual out-of-state FTEs plus the six-semester average of in-state FTEs.

¹¹ A Vermont school district will pay the in-state tuition rate times its six-semester average FTEs.

¹² 16 V.S.A. § 1561. In fiscal year 2024, this grant provides \$4,375 per FTE in tuition reduction.

¹³ This includes FTEs at independent centers and comprehensive high schools.

¹⁴ An additional 41 Vermont FTEs attended technical centers outside of Vermont.

¹⁵ Based on single-year ADMs collected in fall of 2024.

¹⁶ Based on AOE two-semester average enrollment.

¹⁷ Increased from 6.5% of FTEs in fiscal year 2022.

Act 73 and CTE: Considerations for Legislators

Act 73 made significant changes to Vermont's education system. Intent language in Act 73 outlines goals related to CTE including:¹⁸

1. "Updating CTE governance systems at both local and state levels to be more reflective of the state's new, larger school districts."
2. "Creating a coordinated and coherent statewide strategy for CTE that is responsive to students and provides opportunities for more integration between CTE and traditional high school work."
3. "Ensuring that CTE is fully funded within the State's new foundation formula, while simultaneously maintaining current spending levels and not creating competition for funds within the system."

Considerations for Governance Structures

Different governance structures present different challenges in a consolidated system.

As outlined above, Act 73 includes intent language for "CTE governance...to be more reflective of the state's new, larger school districts." Structural differences between models may complicate the transition and consolidation process needed to achieve this. For example, as outlined in Table 1, different centers have different governance and leadership structures (and differing policies and requirements). Policymakers may need to consider how CTE governance should be reworked or incorporated into the broader education system. Policymakers may also need to consider if structural differences exist within governance models that raise costs, limit educational opportunities, or otherwise conflict with the charges of Act 73.

Considerations for Programming

Differences in program offerings create different programmatic opportunities across the state.

Centers differ in current programmatic offerings. For example, while 16 of the 19 centers offer a construction program, only six offer a dedicated electrician program. Similarly, while 14 centers offer a program within health services, only four offer an Emergency Medical Technician program. As noted earlier, not all CTE centers offer Pre-Tech. Policymakers may wish to consider how and what programming should (or should not) be offered across the state. If differences are maintained between centers, policymakers may wish to consider if the State should provide opportunities for students to attend programs regardless of what is offered in their home district.

Considerations for Funding

Current CTE funding practices may conflict with new funding system.

Another important consideration is the impact that Act 73's foundation formula would have on CTE centers as they currently exist. Prior to Act 73, districts set their budgets locally and, assuming they are approved by voters, can ensure they are set at a level sufficient to fund CTE tuition while also maintaining other educational objectives. Under Act 73, district funding is determined at the State level, with limited ability to raise funds at the local level. CTE's reliance on tuition for funding may complicate integration into a more consolidated system funded through Act 73's foundation formula.

Currently CTE centers have varying spending levels per FTE. Under Act 73, it is likely that this will change. The impact of this new fiscal environment will differ across centers and present different challenges for different centers, such as those with a more significant percentage of out-of-state students.

Additionally, other policy choices which may warrant further consideration are not thoroughly discussed here. These include differences in student counting methodologies (six-semester FTEs versus long term weighted average daily membership (LTWADM)), costs associated with differing staffing levels across CTE models, and programming choices that also impact costs. These and other decisions around CTE governance, programming, and funding will in turn affect the policy discussion surrounding the broader education transformation work of Act 73.

¹⁸ Act 73, Sec. 1(b)(A)(ii-iv)

Resources

- Joint Fiscal Office CTE report 2023: <https://lifo.vermont.gov/assets/Uploads/f97d32b9a4/Final-CTE-Study-Report-3.31.23.pdf>
- AOE CTE report 2025: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2026/Workgroups/House%20Commerce/Technical%20Education/Agency%20of%20Education/W~Zoie%20Saunders~Vermont%20Career%20and%20Technical%20Education%20Governance%20and%20Funding%20Report~2-27-2025.pdf>
- AOE Perkins V State Plan: <https://education.vermont.gov/src/doc/doc/career-technical-education/perkins-v>