

# Virginia ACTE Priorities for Education and Workforce Initiatives, 2024-2025

Virginia secondary and postsecondary educators, business representatives, and organizations representing career and technical education (CTE) professionals contribute to the development of the Virginia Association for Career and Technical Education's priority positions. Virginia ACTE welcomes comments from citizens, students, parents, and members of the boards that share our vision of providing opportunities for all Virginia students.

## IN BRIEF

**Tackling the CTE Teacher Shortage.** Virginia ACTE supports reducing barriers to teaching licensure and certifications for qualified, industry professionals seeking to teach relevant CTE Courses, to ensure our students are adequately provided with knowledgeable, experienced, and capable instructors with real-world experience in high demand and high wage employment opportunities.

**Sustaining Virginia's CTE Resource Center.** Virginia ACTE supports additional funding to ensure the Center keeps abreast of increased operating costs and continues its work in promoting career readiness through the development and implementation of curriculum aligned with evolving industry standards and workforce needs.

**Funding for Industry Credentials and Testing.** Virginia ACTE supports increased funding for industry-recognized credentials, course alignment, standards and assessments, and increased dual enrollment and articulation agreements for post-secondary opportunities to strengthen CTE programs, develop staff, and prepare students for the future workforce.

**Funding for Classroom and Lab Equipment.** Virginia ACTE supports additional funding for CTE classroom lab equipment and program growth, as well as funding for the integrated CTE curricula and specialized equipment in Governor's STEM Academies and Governor's Health Sciences Academies, to prepare students for a competitive workforce and for postsecondary education and training.

**Technical Career Exploration and CTE Program Awareness in 5th Grade.** Virginia ACTE supports expanding elementary school CTE awareness and opportunities consisting of initiatives that promote interest, and educate, students on secondary programs and postsecondary career pathways

**Funding for Work-Based Learning.** Virginia ACTE supports funding that would expand the hiring of work-based learning (WBL) coordinators, who will ensure high-quality WBL opportunities for students participating in registered apprenticeship programs and clinical experiences aligned with high demand and high wage jobs.

## **RECOMMENDATION – Tackling the CTE Teacher Shortage**

***Virginia ACTE supports reducing barriers to teaching licensure and certifications for qualified, industry professionals seeking to teach relevant CTE courses, to ensure our students are adequately provided with knowledgeable, experienced, and capable instructors with real-world experience in high demand and high wage employment opportunities.***

### **Rationale**

- Virginia continues to experience a critical shortage of qualified teachers, especially in its most challenged schools and in technical subject areas.
- CTE is ranked sixth in Virginia's 2024-2025 top-10 list of critical teacher shortage areas. CTE has been included in this listing since 2003-2004. School divisions increasingly have difficulty finding qualified CTE teachers; the shortage is predicted to worsen over the next five years.
- The National Science Foundation and the Virginia Office of Education Economics identified middle school and high school CTE teacher positions as important STEM professions.
- Demand for CTE teachers and programs is increasing:
  - Enrollment during 2022-2023 totaled more than 708,337 (duplicate count; some students took more than one CTE course).
  - Workplace Readiness Skills (taught in all CTE courses) are a priority for Virginia's employers.
  - Teachers in four CTE program areas (Agricultural Education, Business and Information Technology, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Marketing) comprise the largest number of instructors endorsed to teach Economics and Personal Finance, a graduation requirement for all Virginia students. Students in these courses score highest on average in the end-of-course WISE Financial Literacy Certification Test.

***Virginia needs highly qualified CTE teachers to meet increasing demand. Teacher preparation programs at the Commonwealth's colleges and universities, community colleges, and special initiatives, offer some solutions to these shortages, but more needs to be done.***

- The Appropriation Act requires the Department of Education to report annually to the General Assembly on the critical teaching shortage areas in Virginia. Each year since 2016, CTE has been included as a critical-shortage teaching discipline, allowing students enrolled in approved undergraduate or graduate teacher programs to apply for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

***Virginia ACTE proposes the following recommendations to strengthen and expand Virginia's supply of highly qualified CTE teachers:***

1. *The Virginia Board of Education and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) should prioritize support for teacher-education programs in CTE in Virginia's colleges and universities to encourage a supply of highly qualified teachers.*
2. *The career switcher programs should require rigorous pedagogy instruction, realistic endorsement requirements with relevant certifications, and professional experience.*
3. *Funding for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program should be increased, with*

*a portion of these funds set aside to target CTE teacher-shortage areas.*

4. *The SCHEV and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) should endorse the Virginia Teachers for Tomorrow program as a dual-enrollment community college course eligible for transfer to postsecondary teacher-education programs.*

## **RECOMMENDATION – Continued Financial Support for the CTE Resource Center**

***Virginia ACTE supports additional funding to ensure the Center keeps abreast of increased operating costs and continues its work in promoting career readiness through the development and implementation of curriculum aligned with evolving industry standards and workforce needs.***

### **Rationale**

Virginia ACTE supports the continued and inflationary matching funding to sustain Virginia's CTE Resource Center and its work that promotes career readiness through the integration of secondary CTE curricula with Virginia's Standards of Learning and alignment with industry and professional standards and industry certifications.

The CTE Resource Center's website is the primary distribution point for all CTE curriculum for the Commonwealth's public school CTE administrators and educators. The Center and its services and resources are free to CTE educators in Virginia. It is the source for comprehensive information about credentials offered to Virginia students and aligned with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate and the Ready for Life 3E Framework.

- New Work: Ready for Life 3E Readiness Framework Support
  - CTE curriculum and outcome alignment with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) 3E framework
  - Employment: alignment of courses to high-wage, high-demand occupations
  - Enlistment: ASVAB credential alignment with courses
  - Enrollment: alignment of courses with plans of study for postsecondary education.
- CTE Resource Center state funding (line item) was \$400,000 per year in the 2008-2009 biennial budget.
  - CTE Resource Center state funding was cut 35% in FY 2009-2010 and a further 38% in FY 2010-2011, leaving state funding at \$248,021.
  - The General Assembly restored \$50,000 of the funding in FY 2012, with funding staying at a flat level of \$298,021 through FY2024. In today's dollars, that funding would be approximately \$445,000.
  - For FY 2025, the General Assembly reinstated \$200,000 per year to the Center, less than the \$400,000 per year requested.
- Continual Work in Support of Virginia's Public School CTE Programs
  - Supporting regular reviews of CTE curriculum and alignment with SOL, national and state standards, credentials, and more.

- Maintaining more than 450 unique CTE courses, with input from business and industry and teacher review committees, and providing supplemental resources, including course sequences, and student competency records that allow teachers to track mastery of concepts.
- Cataloging, updating, and housing information on more than 650 Board of Education-approved industry credentials, including the provider, cost, and accommodations, for teachers, administrators, and students in public school divisions.

***Virginia ACTE proposes the following recommendations to support college and career readiness and sustained funding for the CTE Resource Center:***

1. *The General Assembly should restore funding by \$400,000 to \$698,021 to sustain the work of the CTE Resource Center.*
2. *The General Assembly should continue to provide permanent line-item funding to the CTE Resource Center.*

## **RECOMMENDATION – Increase Funding for Industry Credentials, Equipment and Testing**

***Virginia ACTE supports continued funding for industry-recognized standards, assessments, and credentials to strengthen CTE programs, develop staff, and prepare students for our future workforce.***

### **Rationale**

- Virginia employment projections suggest 500,000 new jobs will be created by 2026. As employers seek to fill these jobs, they rely on industry-recognized credentials as evidence of workers' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Virginia's future workforce must be ready for new growth opportunities in high-tech, high-growth industries.
- Virginia's high school students earned 147,481 credentials in the 2022-2023 school year. The Profile of a Virginia Graduate broadens student opportunities to earn a credential beginning with the ninth-grade class of 2018-2019, graduating in 2022.
- Credentialing assessments have been flat-funded for the past four years. Funding is divided among 131 school divisions, which serve over 1.25 million high school students.
- In previous years, these assessments cost over \$5.4 million, while state funding was only \$3.9 million. School divisions had to use over \$1.5 million in local funding to meet the shortfall. Requested funding would allow school divisions to encourage more students to pursue industry-recognized credentials.
- The current Standards of Quality state, "Career and technical education programs shall be aligned with industry and professional standard certifications, where they exist." (Code of Virginia §22.1-253.13:1B) The College, Career, and Civic Readiness section of the School Quality Profile documents these earned industry credentials.
- The 2022 General Assembly funded:
  - more than \$1.8 million for industry certification examinations, licensure tests, and

- occupational-competency examinations
  - \$308,655 for the Workplace Readiness Skills assessment and other board-approved industry certifications
  - \$500,000 for industry credentialing for students and professional development for instructors in STEM-Health and CTE programs
  - \$1.3 million for information-technology industry credentials.
- Section 22.1-298.1 of the Code of Virginia was amended in 2015 to state: “Every teacher seeking an initial licensure with an endorsement in career and technical education shall have an industry certification credential in the area in which the teacher seeks endorsement. If the teacher has not attained an industry certification credential, the Board may, upon request of the employing school division or educational agency, issue the teacher a provisional license to allow time for the teacher to attain such credential.”

**Virginia ACTE proposes the following recommendations:**

1. *Increase last year’s funding for credentialing assessments by \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million.*
2. *Increase funding for credentialing assessments to help students complete industry certifications, occupational competency exams, Workplace Readiness Skills assessments, state licensures, and other valid, high-quality assessments, as approved by the Virginia Board of Education, as a part of their secondary CTE studies, Standard Diploma requirements, and the Profile of a Virginia Graduate requirement.*
3. *Continue funding for CTE teachers to attain Virginia Board of Education approved, industry-recognized certifications.*
3. *Support and expand credentialing initiatives at the secondary-education level and recognize the importance of secondary-education credentialing initiatives for success at the postsecondary level and for career readiness.*

## **RECOMMENDATION – Increase Funding for Classroom and Lab Equipment**

***Virginia ACTE supports funding for CTE classroom lab equipment and program expansion, as well as funding for the integrated CTE curricula and specialized equipment in Governor’s STEM Academies and Governor’s Health Sciences Academies, to prepare students for a competitive workforce and for postsecondary education and training.***

### **Rationale**

- School divisions have multiple CTE programs requiring equipment and labs that must be updated regularly to meet industry standards.
- General Assembly funding has Virginia’s CTE classrooms equipped with the technology and materials that students will use in the workplace. General Assembly funds are distributed among 131 school divisions and 1,151 secondary schools and local and regional centers. These funds are used to provide project-based and industry-relevant educational experiences.
- The 2022 General Assembly flat-funded CTE equipment at \$1.8 million, with a base allocation of \$2,000 per school division and the remainder distributed based on CTE student enrollment.

- The 2022 General Assembly provided a supplemental \$600,000 in competitive innovation program grants for in-demand, fast-growth industry sectors, with priority given to state identified challenged schools and the Governor's STEM Academies and Governor's Health Sciences Academies.
- Funding of \$1.4 million was allocated for equipment in high-skill, in-demand, and fast-growth industry sectors identified by the Virginia Board of Workforce Development, based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Virginia Employment Commission.
- For each school-based CTE program, the average cost for equipment and software updates ranges from \$60,000 per program (e.g., Teachers for Tomorrow) to more than \$250,000 per program (e.g., Automotive Technology).
- Virginia's critical, technical workforce is experiencing shortages of qualified, skilled workers. Virginia's public schools can help close the skills gap through adequately funded CTE programs.
- Students perform better when they learn academic skills applied to real-world settings in CTE programs.
- Secondary CTE programs build on elementary STEM experiences and integrate STEM, using competency- and team-based instruction and encouraging critical thinking and problem solving.
- Governor's STEM Academies, Governor's Health Sciences Academies, and other STEM initiatives relevant to all CTE programs are growing.
  - Twenty-two Governor's STEM Academies expand options for students to acquire STEM literacy and technical skills while earning an industry credential.
  - Nine Governor's Health Sciences Academies represent partnerships between public school divisions, healthcare institutions, the private sector, and institutions of higher education to deliver rigorous programs that result in effective career preparation, with students earning relevant certifications and credentials.
- There is a need to provide reliable, sustainable, and identifiable funding for the Governor's STEM Academies to update labs to keep pace with changing curricula and to provide rigorous and relevant programs of study based on rapidly evolving industry needs.

***Virginia ACTE recommends the following to strengthen Virginia's CTE programs:***

1. *Increase funding for CTE equipment by \$1 million to \$2.8 million.*
2. *Continue funding for CTE expansion to meet the demands of high-skill, in-demand, and fast-growth industry sectors.*
3. *Increase funding for equipment and software updates for credentialing assessments required by industry standards.*
4. *Increase funding for Governor's STEM Academies and Governor's Health Sciences Academies using sustainable, reliable funding streams.*
5. *Recognize CTE as an integral component of K–12 STEM initiatives and acknowledge CTE's unique ability to provide STEM instruction in secondary schools.*
6. *Increase funding for competitive innovation program grants to support current and future Governor's STEM Academies and Governor's Health Sciences Academies.*

## **RECOMMENDATION – Expand Technical Career Exploration and CTE Program Awareness in 5th Grade.**

***Virginia ACTE supports expanding elementary school CTE awareness and opportunities consisting of initiatives that promote interest and educate students on secondary programs and postsecondary career pathways.***

### **Rationale**

- Younger learners have a limited view of possible careers, often limited to knowing only the professionals they encounter or the careers of parents, parents' friends, and friends' parents.
- Today's students will revise or reorient their career pathways multiple times, and they need a modern toolkit beginning in grades K-5.
- Integrating college and career awareness in elementary school instruction helps students imagine and explore careers in the context of their curricula, and supports the decisions they make in middle school and high school course selections.

***Virginia ACTE recommends the expansion of elementary school CTE opportunities:***

1. *Expose students in K-5 to a broad exploration of career pathways.*
2. *Increase the participation of business and industry partners in K-5 career awareness.*

## **RECOMMENDATION – Increase Funding for Work-Based Learning**

***Virginia ACTE supports funding that would expand the hiring of high-quality work-based learning (HQWBL) coordinators, who will ensure HQWBL opportunities for CTE students, and to align these opportunities with the Commonwealth's Profile of a Virginia Graduate.***

### **Rationale**

- Work-based learning refers to a collection of on-the-job experiences undertaken in partnership with local companies or organizations. Working with the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, and also our regional workforce councils throughout the Commonwealth, HQWBL opportunities in CTE are coordinated at the state, regional, and local school division levels and aligned with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate (8VAC20-131-70).
- Work-based learning experiences enable CTE students to apply classroom instruction; enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes; develop workplace skills; and experience a given career while experiencing a real-world work environment.
- Employers increasingly seek new hires who have HQWBL experiences. CTE students who participate in WBL experiences often work for their placement companies after high school graduation or even after college graduation. Virginia recognizes 12 HQWBL methods of instruction: job shadowing, mentorship, service learning, externships, school-based enterprise, internships, entrepreneurship, clinical experiences, cooperative education, youth-registered apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, and supervised agricultural experience.
- Schools must increase HQWBL opportunities for CTE students. Coordinators in each school



division are necessary to build relationships with the local and regional business community, screen and match qualified CTE students to HQWBL experiences in line with their career goals and interests, and oversee the school division's HQWBL program.

- These coordinators are a critical link between the classroom and the business community.

***Virginia ACTE proposes the following recommendation to assist school divisions and the business community in providing opportunities for CTE students to participate in HQWBL experiences and prepare all students to be career ready:***

1. *Provide state funding for the implementation of HQWBL coordinators in all school divisions to support opportunities to strengthen Virginia's future workforce.*
2. *Expand teacher professional learning options among higher education partners for coursework and certifications in HQWBL.*

### ***Affiliated Organizations***

Virginia Association for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences

Virginia Association of Agricultural Educators

Virginia Association of Career and Technical Education Administrators

Virginia Association of Marketing Educators

Virginia Association of Trade and Industrial Educators

Virginia Association of Career and Technical Education--Special Populations Division

Virginia Business Education Association

Virginia Health and Medical Sciences Educators Association

Virginia Technology and Engineering Education Association

Virginia Work-Based Learning

Division of Virginia Counseling and Career Development

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