

# Understanding Career and Technical Education: For Students and Parents

## What is Career and Technical Education (CTE)?

Career and technical education, or CTE, offers students both academic learning and hands-on technical skills training to prepare them for high-demand and emerging careers. CTE includes courses and programs for students in middle school, high school, technical school, and college. While some CTE programs prepare high school students to enter some careers straight out of high school, they can also give students a head start for more advanced CTE programs and even credit toward college degrees.

## How does CTE support students' future career goals?

With 17 career clusters to choose from, students can pursue CTE programs in a wide variety of fields, including education and training, energy, health sciences, and manufacturing, to name a few. CTE is proven to help prepare students for their future education and careers. For example, of Florida's high school seniors in 2020-2021 who took at least two CTE courses, 95% graduated high school and 72% are either employed or have continued their educations.

## Is CTE only for students who aren't college bound?

No. Many college students and college-bound high school students take CTE courses to develop technical skills and gain hands-on experience to prepare for their future careers. Although some CTE credentials are the highest level of education achievable in that field, many others are steppingstones to college degrees or higher credentials. Students today don't need to choose between college or CTE: they can do both.

## What does college CTE look like?

Most commonly, a student can choose to enroll in a CTE program at a technical college, state college, or state university, depending on the degree or credential they are pursuing. Additionally, students can also participate in business-sponsored pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.



## What financial aid is available to pay for CTE programs and pathways?

There are multiple financial aid programs available for students pursuing CTE programs after high school. They include Florida's Open-Door Grant Program, the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program, and the federal Pell Grant, which students can qualify for by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The chart below gives more information about financial aid available for various CTE programs.

## What degrees can you earn in a CTE pathway?

In Florida, students can earn seven different credentials tied to CTE programs such as industry certifications, career certificates, associates (two

year) degrees, and Bachelor of Science (four year) degrees. They vary in the length of time required to complete the program. More information on the credentials available, their descriptions, and the timeframe is in the chart below.

## Where can I find more information on Florida's CTE programs?

More information on CTE is available at [gettherefl.com](http://gettherefl.com), Florida's workforce education initiative. This website provides information on CTE pathways available in the 17 career clusters, resources from organizations committed to workforce education, information on which CTE programs translate to college credit, and additional tools to best inform you on your CTE search.

## About FCAN:

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida's collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and a rewarding career. We envision a Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all. As a nonpartisan organization, FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies, and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida. This paper is intended as an educational resource and does not constitute an endorsement or opposition to any specific bill or legislation. For more research and data from FCAN, visit [www.floridacollegeaccess.org/research-and-data/](http://www.floridacollegeaccess.org/research-and-data/). FCAN is a statewide organization hosted by the University of South Florida System (USF). The statements and positions presented are those of FCAN and are not made on behalf of the USF Board of Trustees or intended in any way to be representative of USF.

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## CTE Credentials in Florida

There are [seven types of CTE credentials](#) available to students in Florida:

Credential Type	Brief Description	Issuer/Timeframe*	Potential Aid Sources**	Link to CTE Course/Degree
Digital Tool Certificate	Independent, third-party assessment of digital skills.	Third-party (K-8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">CAPE Act</a></li> </ul>	Students must take one or more courses and pass an exam to earn this credential.
<a href="#">Industry Certification</a>	Time-limited credential issued by independent third-party and linked to an occupation in demand.	Third-party (K-12/Postsec. Inst.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">CAPE Act</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Bright Futures</a></li> </ul>	Students must take one or more courses and pass an exam to earn this credential.
<a href="#">Pre/Apprenticeship</a>	Successful completion of technical and academic standards of an apprenticeship program.	Postsecondary Inst. 1-4 years Up to 10,000 clock hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Pathways to Opportunities Grant Program</a></li> </ul>	Students must receive related technical instruction and on-the-job training to earn this credential.
Applied Technology Diploma	Provide career and technical instruction leading to employment in an occupation.	Postsecondary Inst. .5-2 years 11-59 college credits 1,000-1,200 clock hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Open Door Grant Program</a></li> </ul>	Students must take one or more courses for technical/college credit to earn this credential; generally earned while pursuing A.S. degree.
<a href="#">Career Certificate</a>	Clock hour postsecondary career education program that allows students to go directly into employment in field that requires postsecondary training.	Postsecondary Inst. 1.5 years 40-2,840 clock hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Florida Student Assistance Grant Program</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Open Door Grant Program</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Bright Futures</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Florida Prepaid</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">FAFSA***</a></li> </ul>	Students must take one or more courses to earn this credential and may be eligible to take an industry certification exam(s).
College Credit Certificate	Short-term programs that provide highly specialized core knowledge and skills.	Postsecondary Inst. .5-1.5 years 11-50 college credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Open Door Grant Program</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Florida Prepaid</a></li> </ul>	Students must take one or more courses to earn this credential; credential may be earned while pursuing A.S. degree.
<a href="#">A.S. / B.S. Degree</a>	Associate in Science (A.S.) Bachelor of Science (B.S) Multi-year program designed to prepare students for immediate specialized employment.	Postsecondary Inst. 2-4 years 60-134 college credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">FAFSA</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Bright Futures</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Florida Prepaid</a></li> </ul>	Students must take a series of specialized courses linked to a specific career to earn this credential.

\*Timeframes provided are for full-time study.

\*\*CareerSource has various funding and training initiatives available – check with your local CareerSource board.

\*\*\*Pell Grants are typically available for programs with 600 hours and above – check with your preferred technical college's financial aid office.