

Career and Technical Education Teachers' Experiences in Tennessee: *Trends from the 2022 Tennessee Educator Survey*

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Introduction

This brief describes the experiences of Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers in Tennessee. CTE, which aims to prepare students for postsecondary work and education, is an area of focus in Tennessee and is an important lever in [promoting positive student outcomes and addressing workforce needs](#) in the state. CTE programming for students across the state has greatly expanded since 2018 and 55% of students are now CTE concentrators as of 2022, according to the [State Report Card](#).

As CTE programming continues to expand in the state, more teachers will be needed to staff CTE classrooms. In recognition of this need and outstanding questions about CTE teachers' experiences, the Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA) added survey items for CTE teachers to the Tennessee Educator Survey in 2022. The survey asks CTE teachers about the primary features of their CTE program, as well as levels of engagement and interest from students and other stakeholders. These same questions will be asked in future years, enabling researchers to track teacher voice in this area over time.

This analysis of the Tennessee Educator Survey explores the program offerings at CTE teachers' schools, the extent to which CTE teachers are supporting and preparing students for their postsecondary transitions, and the ways in which CTE teachers engage with their colleagues and other stakeholders. We specifically focus our analysis on high school teachers.



Key Findings:

- 1** *Most CTE teacher respondents reported that their program of study offered opportunities for students to demonstrate readiness, and that they saw higher levels of student interest in CTE programs of study in contexts where students reportedly had more CTE program options.*
- 2** *CTE teacher respondents reported strong alignment between their program of study, labor market needs, and focus on college and career readiness.*
- 3** *Nearly three-quarters of CTE teacher respondents reported that students are engaged in the development, improvement, and evaluation of their program of study and that industry partners serve on their advisory committee; However, far fewer reported that core academic teachers or postsecondary partners engage in these same strategic planning activities.*

DATA AND METHODS

In this brief, we used data from the 2022 Tennessee Educator Survey (TES), specifically responses collected from CTE teachers across the state. To better account for differential response rates, we used analytic weighting in the analysis to produce results broadly representative of all public school teachers and school leaders in Tennessee. The CTE teacher survey sample includes 1,569 high school CTE teachers working in 319 unique schools across 128 districts in the state. Analysis of Tennessee Educator Survey data presented here uses analytical weighting to account for differential response rates of teachers from varying regions, school type, and school demographics.

As shown in Table 1 below, high school CTE teachers in the survey sample are similar to non-CTE high school teacher respondents (n=6,815) in terms of their background characteristics, but they appear to differ in their professional training and experience. A majority of CTE teacher respondents are white (91%) and female (57%), though a smaller percentage of CTE teacher respondents are female than their non-CTE teacher respondents (62%). CTE teacher respondents have slightly fewer years of teaching experience on average (12 years) than non-CTE teacher respondents (13.5 years) and a smaller percentage hold an advanced degree (56% versus 64%).

TABLE 1.

AGE GROUP SERVED	Non-CTE high school teacher respondents	CTE high school teacher respondents
Average years of teaching experience	13.47	12.04
Percentage who have a Masters degree, Educational Specialist degree, or Doctorate	64%	56%
Percentage who are female	62%	57%
Percentage who are white	90%	91%
Count of unique teachers	1569	6815



KEY FINDINGS

1

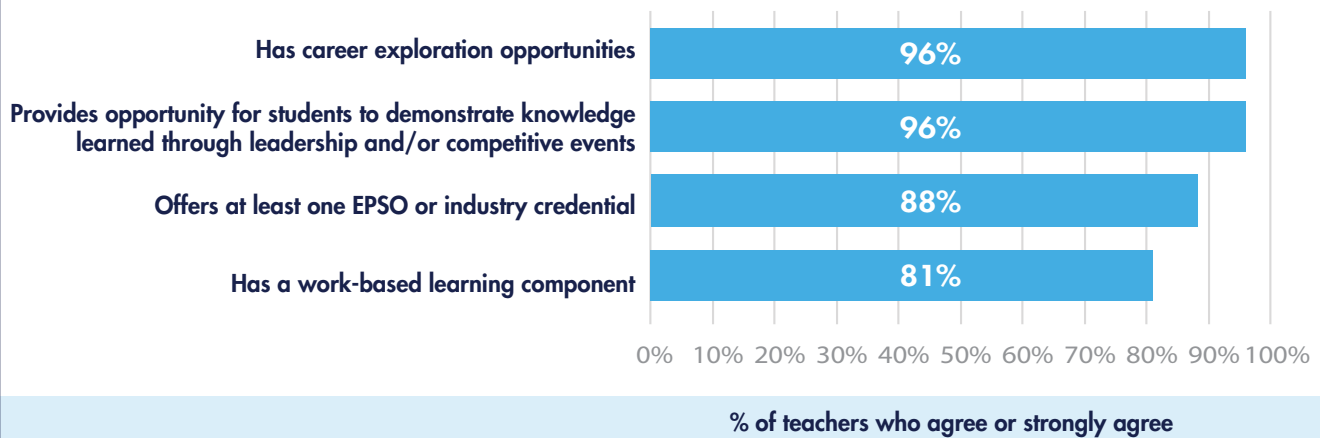
KEY FINDING 1

Most CTE teacher respondents reported that their program of study offered opportunities for students to demonstrate readiness, and that they saw higher levels of student interest in CTE programs of study in contexts where students reportedly had more CTE program options.

Almost all CTE teacher respondents (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that their program of study has career exploration opportunities and provides opportunity for students to demonstrate knowledge learned through leadership and/or competitive events. Teachers were slightly less likely to agree or strongly agree that their program offers at least one Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSO) or industry credential (88%) or has a work-based learning component (81%), but these percentages were still high. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: Most CTE teacher respondents reported their program of study offered opportunities for students to demonstrate readiness.

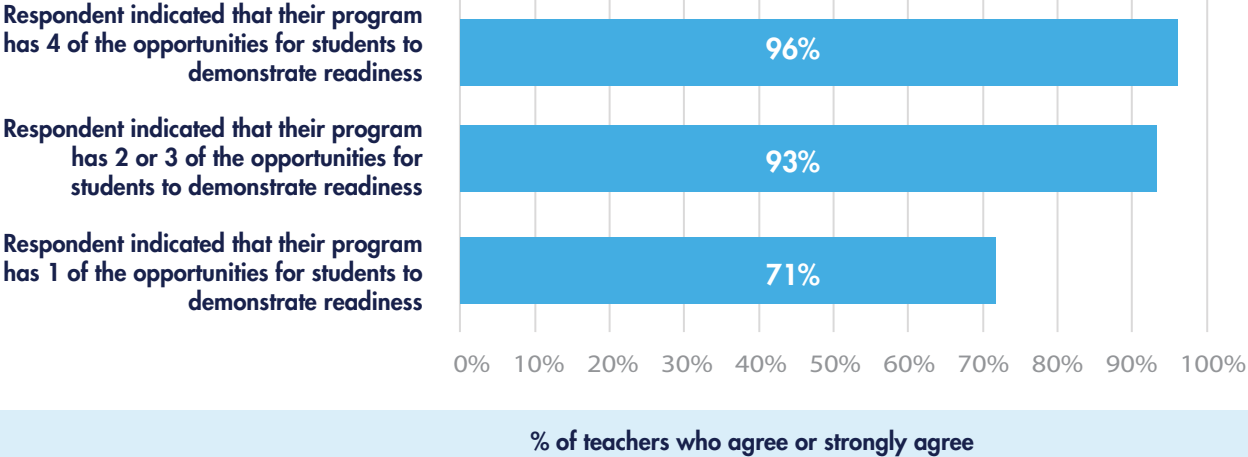
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your program of study's opportunity for students to demonstrate readiness. My program of study...



Further, while 94% of CTE teacher respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students are interested in their program of study, programs of study that potentially offer more of these opportunities may have higher levels of student interest. As shown in Figure 2, almost all (96%) of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed with all four of the statements above about whether their program offered opportunities for students to demonstrate readiness indicated that students were interested in their program. In contrast, a smaller percentage (71%) of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed with zero or one of the four statements indicated that students were interested in their program.

FIGURE 2: CTE teacher respondents expressed that there were higher levels of student interest in CTE programs of study in contexts where students reportedly had more CTE program options.*

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your program of study (Students are interested in my program of study).



*CTE teachers were asked about whether their program of study offered the four following opportunities for students to demonstrate readiness: 1) Has career exploration opportunities; 2) Provides opportunity for students to demonstrate knowledge learned through leadership and/or competitive events; 3) Offers at least one EPSO or industry credential; 4) Has a work-based learning component.



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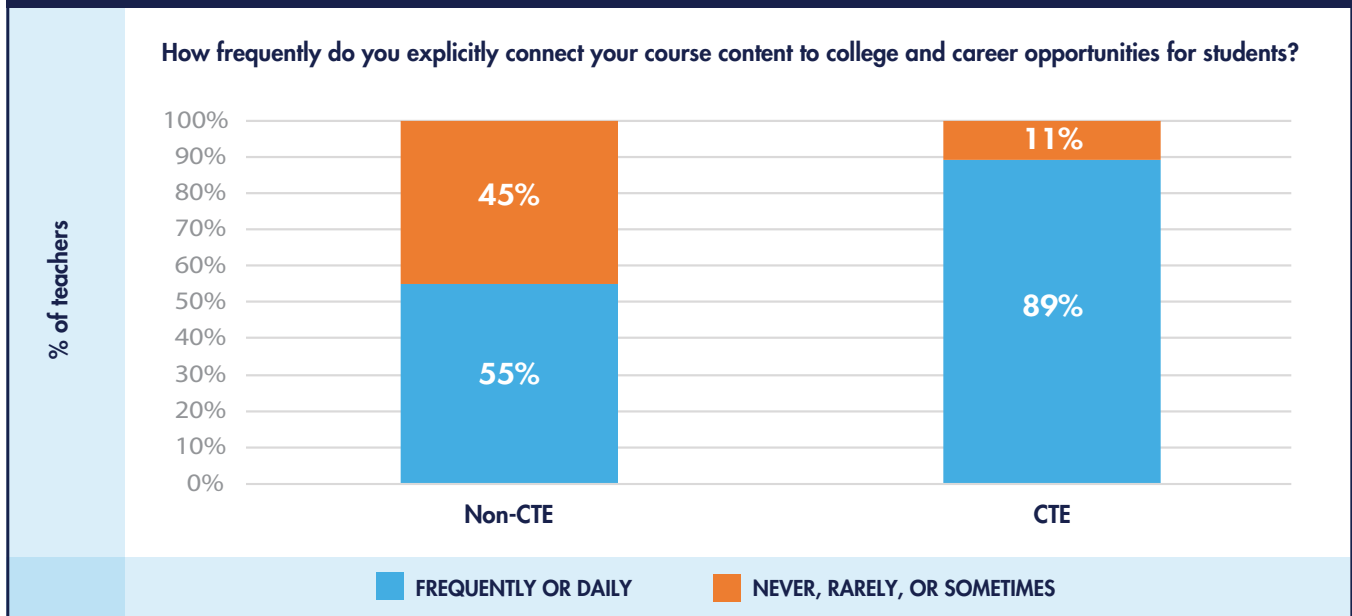
KEY FINDING 2

CTE teacher respondents reported strong alignment between their program of study, labor market needs, and focus on college and career readiness.

Almost all (97%) of CTE teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their program of study includes course offerings that reflect local labor market needs. This finding may suggest that CTE program alignment to workforce needs is strong, which is a critical feature of high-quality CTE.

Additionally, a slightly greater percentage (98%) of CTE teachers than non-CTE teachers (92%) reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that they are familiar with their students' career goals. However, a much higher percentage of CTE teachers than non-CTE teachers reported that they routinely connect their course content to college and career opportunities. As shown in Figure 3 below, just over half (55%) of non-CTE teachers reported that they frequently or daily connect their course content to college and career opportunities, while 89% of CTE teachers reported that they do so. These differences may highlight the ways that CTE teachers are uniquely positioned to promote connections between their content and their students' postsecondary goals and that CTE teachers may focus more strongly on these goals as part of their program of study.¹

FIGURE 3: A higher percentage of CTE teachers reported that they routinely connect their course content to college and career opportunities compared to non-CTE teachers.



¹ Most of the survey items used in this analysis come from the CTE teacher branch of the survey and are only asked of CTE teachers, but this question comes from the Teacher Core and was asked of all teachers.

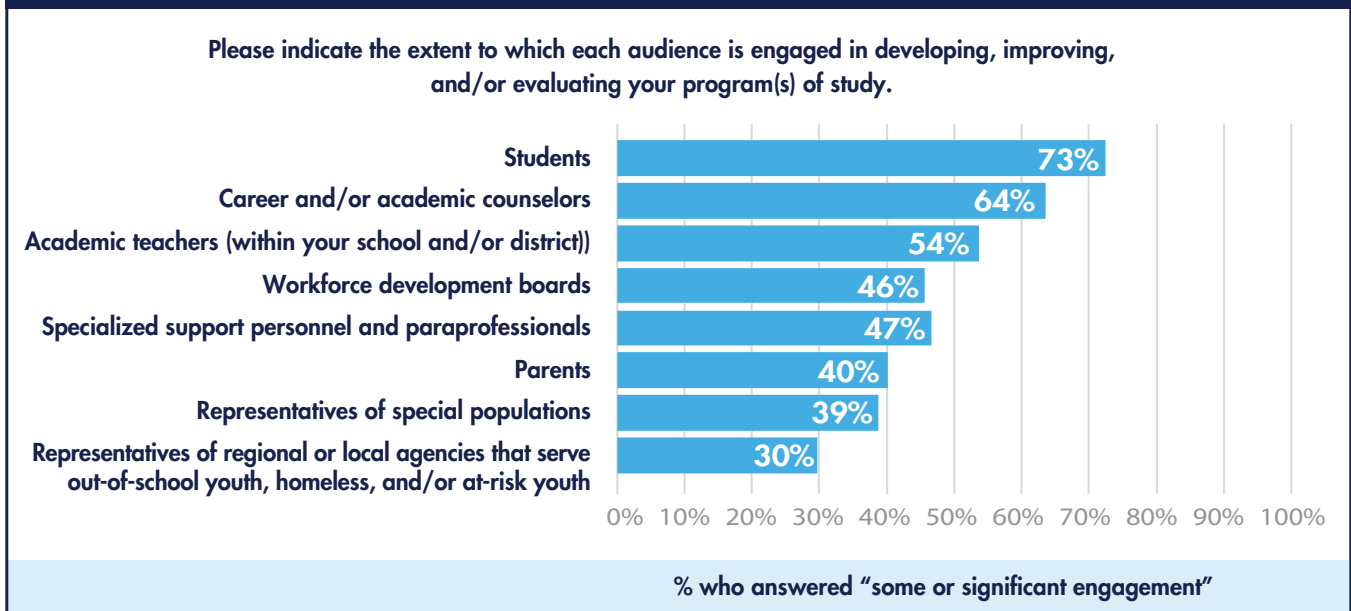
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KEY FINDING 3

Nearly three-quarters of CTE teacher respondents reported that students are engaged in the development, improvement, and evaluation of their program of study and that industry partners serve on their advisory committee; However, far fewer reported that core academic teachers or postsecondary partners engage in these same strategic planning activities.

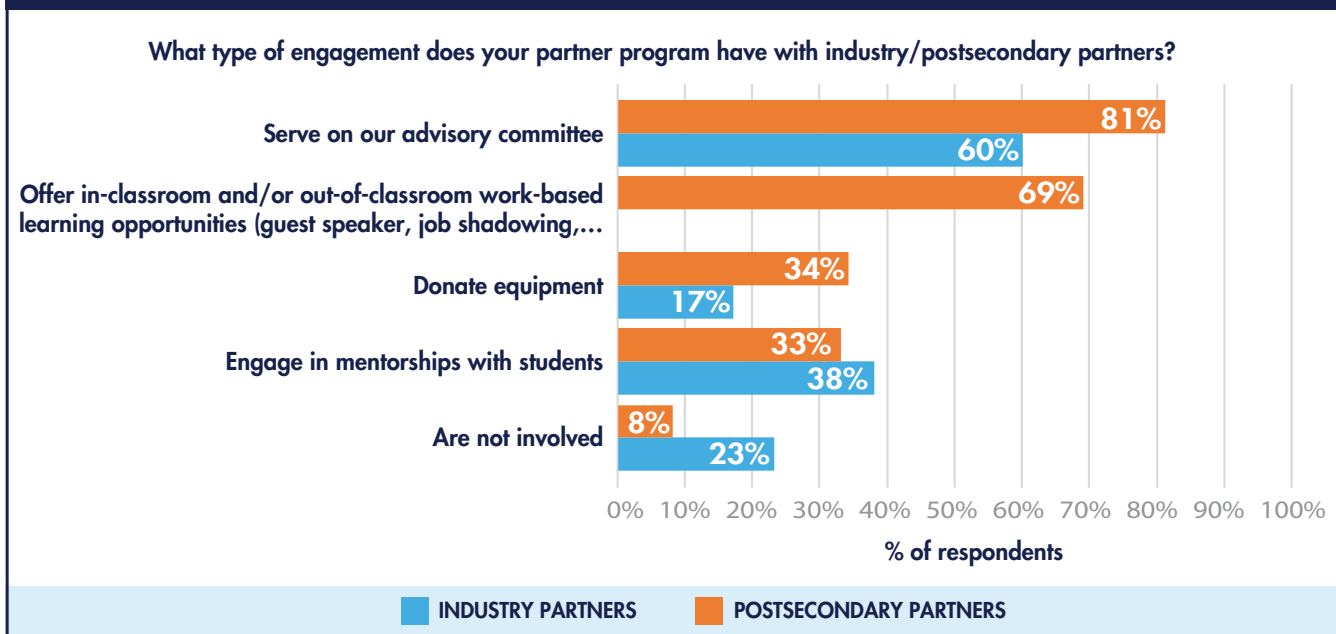
While CTE teacher respondents reported that core academic teachers (non-CTE teachers who teach academic subjects) in their school are engaged with developing, improving, or evaluating their program of study, they reported higher levels of engagement from students and counselors. In fact, as Figure 4 shows, nearly three-quarters (73%) of CTE teacher respondents reported that students engaged in these strategic planning activities, and 64% reported counselors did so. This compares to only 54% who said that core academic teachers engage in developing, improving, or evaluating their program of study.

FIGURE 4: CTE teacher respondents reported higher levels of engagement from students and counselors in the development, improvement, and evaluation of their program of study than from core academic teachers in their school or district.



Further, CTE teacher respondents reported higher levels of engagement in the planning and implementation of their program of study from industry partners than from postsecondary partners. As shown in Figure 5, over three-quarters of respondents reported that industry partners serve on their advisory committee (81%), compared to only 60% who said the same about postsecondary partners. Similarly, about one-quarter (23%) of CTE teacher respondents said that postsecondary partners were not involved, while only a small percentage (8%) said that industry partners were not involved.

FIGURE 5: CTE teacher respondents reported higher levels of engagement in the planning and implementation of their program of student from industry partners than from postsecondary partners.*



*Note that CTE teacher respondents were not asked about the extent to which postsecondary partners offer in-classroom and/or out-of-classroom work-based learning opportunities, which is why the responses for this item are only displayed for industry partners.

ABOUT THE TENNESSEE EDUCATOR SURVEY

The Tennessee Educator Survey is an annual survey administered by the Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA) in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE). The survey is administered annually and available to all teachers, administrators, and certified staff in Tennessee. The 2022 TES included questions that asked teachers to provide their perspectives on challenges and concerns about teaching through the pandemic, thoughts on school climate, and reflections on preparedness.



REFERENCES

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