

# 18% of DC Students in High School, Alternative, and Adult Programs Are Taking CTE Courses

The majority of high schools offer CTE programming focused on occupations with a median salary of \$100,000-125,000.

To ensure all District youth have access to strong college and career pathways that prepare them for life after high school, the District has invested over \$100M toward programming to reimagine high school. This brief focuses on access to and engagement in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, through which students engage in specialized coursework, college and career experiences, and increased skill-building on the path toward family-sustaining careers. Each CTE program of study is composed of multiple courses, all of which are aligned to a specific industry ranging from health sciences to architecture and

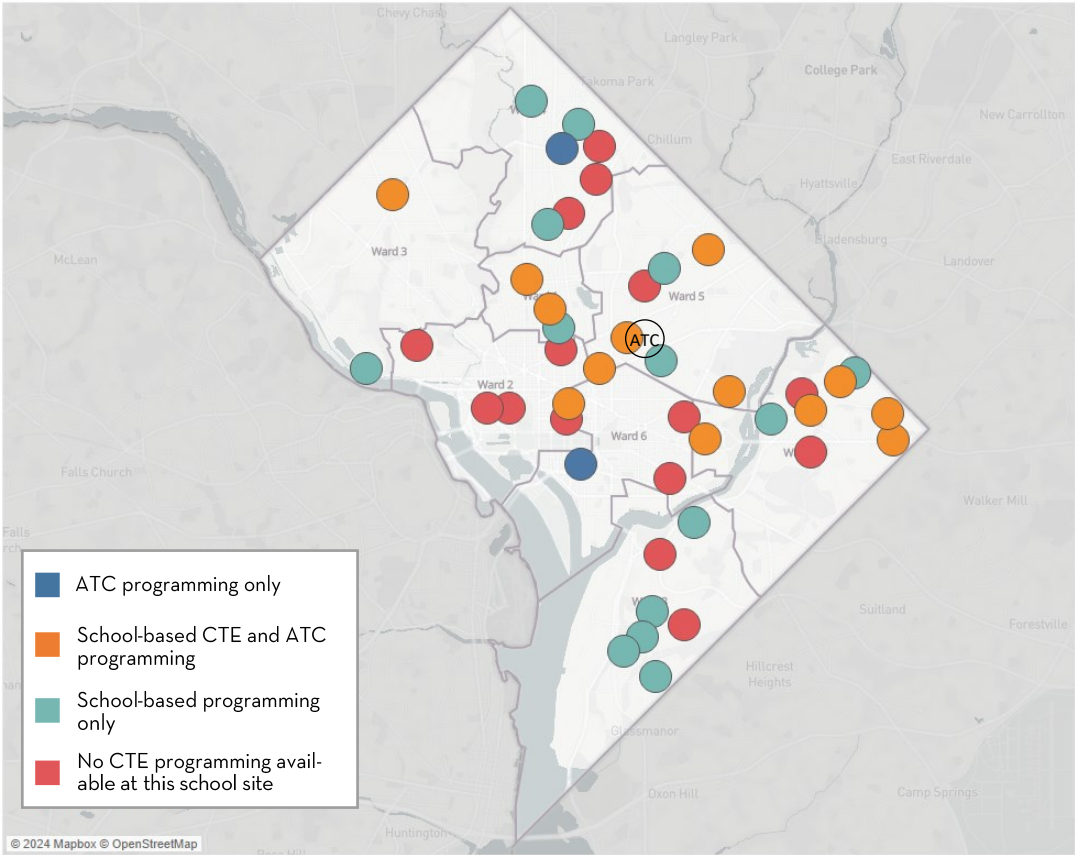
construction to information technology.

### What do we know about CTE program access?

Students can access CTE programs by attending any of the 27 schools in the District that offer school-based CTE courses, or by participating in the Advanced Technical Center (ATC). In total, 14 DC Public Schools (DCPS) high schools, 4 DCPS alternative schools, and 9 public charter school (PCS) high schools offer school-based CTE programming.

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**Figure 1. CTE Programming Available to DC Students Across Schools**



\*Note: Each dot represents an individual school site. Figure 1 highlights both school-based and ATC CTE programming. The hyperlinked Tableau dashboard provides an interactive depiction of school-based CTE programming only, by ward, career cluster, and CTE programs of study.

Source: OSSE SY22-23 CTE Enrollment Data, February 2024

Launched in School Year 2022-2023, the ATC serves as a new mechanism for students to access CTE programs that are not offered at their high school. The ATC is a District-wide hub through which students from multiple high schools can access cybersecurity and general nursing CTE courses. Figure 1 shows that 13 schools offer students access to CTE through both school-based programs and the ATC, and two schools exclusively offer access to CTE programming for their students through the ATC. Through the expansion of the ATC model to schools that do not currently offer CTE programs of study, Local Education Agencies (LEA) could expand course access aligned with student interests without having to build the necessary infrastructure to provide CTE programming in-house.

### What do we know about engagement in CTE programming?

As of School Year 2021-22, there are 4,445 students enrolled in CTE programs, which equates to approximately 18% of DCPS and PCS students in high school and adult and alternative schools taking at least one CTE course. At these schools, 3% (816) of students are considered CTE concentrators, meaning they take at least three CTE courses in the same program of study focused on one industry. Approximately 30% (3,759) of DCPS students in high

school and adult and alternative schools engage in CTE compared to 5.6% (686) of the same population of PCS students. Similarly, 6% (753) of DCPS students in high school, and adult and alternative schools are CTE concentrators compared to 0.5% (63) of PCS students.

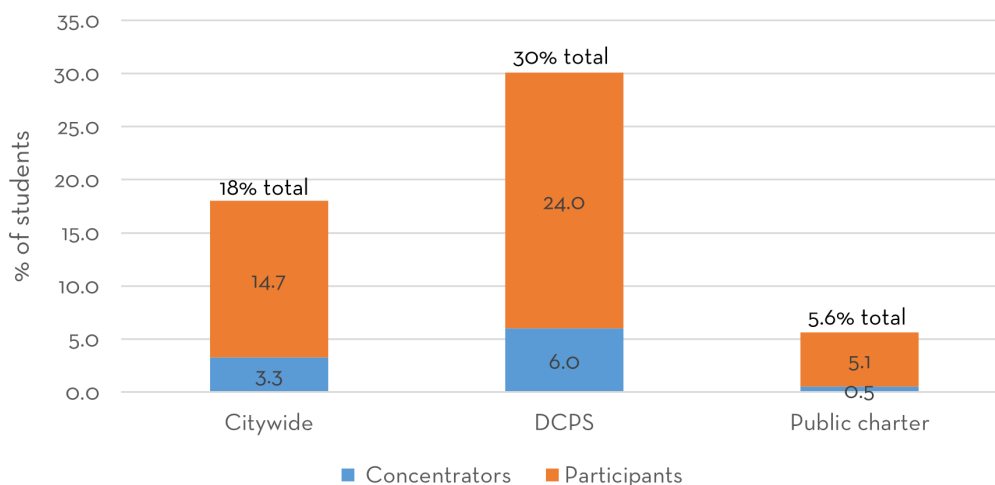
### How are CTE programs aligned to high-wage careers?

Each LEA has the discretion to choose programs based on student interest and alignment with school priorities, and program offerings vary across schools. The majority of schools that provide CTE programming offer courses associated with occupations that fall within a median salary range of \$100,000-\$125,000. To put this information into perspective, this is nearly double the living wage for DC residents without dependents, which is \$56,000 according to the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator](#).

The median salary range was developed by referring to the National Center for Education Statistics' [CIP-SOC crosswalk](#) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' [May 2022 median salary data](#). Median salaries for all CTE programs at each school combined were then determined by reviewing salary information for every occupation aligned to CTE programming available at all schools.

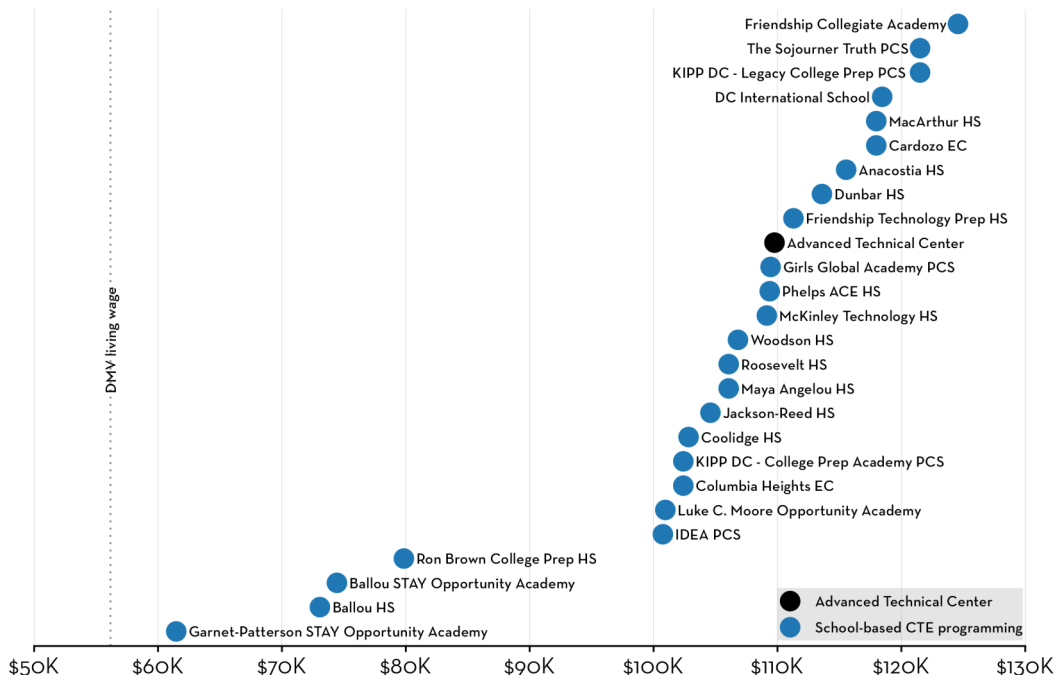
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**Figure 2. Percentage of Students Engaged in CTE Programming**



Sources: OSSE SY21-22 CTE Enrollment Data, December 2023; [Careertechdc.org](#)

**Figure 3. Median Salary Ranges for Occupations Associated with CTE Programming**



Notes: Bureau of Labor Statistics data does not account for military occupations due to data inaccessibility.; Eastern HS and River Terrace EC are not included due to missing or omitted data in the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics survey.

Sources: OSSE SY23-24 CTE Enrollment Data, February 2024; [Careertechdc.org](https://careertechdc.org); Amy K. Glassmeier, "Living Wage Calculator", Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2024, Accessed on 03-25-2024, <https://livingwage.mit.edu/metros/47900>; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "May 2022 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics", U.S. Department of Labor, 2023, Accessed on 2024-03-25, [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_47900.htm](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_47900.htm); National Center for Education

While median salary levels for occupations associated with CTE programs are above the living wage for all schools, there is a noticeable discrepancy in median salaries for four schools that offer CTE programs leading to a median salary range of \$60,000-\$80,000. Of the four schools that offer CTE programs leading to lower median salaries, three are in Ward 7 or Ward 8, two serve over-age or under-credited students, and one is a specialized high school serving young men and boys of color.

The lower median salary range for these school programs is driven by program offerings that are aligned to some lower-paying occupations below the living wage threshold, alignment to some entry-level occupations that do not require a post-secondary credential or Bachelor's degree, or limited scale of programs aligned to high-wage occupations in comparison to other schools. Please review the appendix for specific details on these program offerings. It is important to note that each program of study aligns to multiple occupations along a career pathway. For example, a student engaged in a Hospitality and Tourism CTE program may be employed as a concierge after high

school, then further their education to be eligible for a hotel manager role with a higher wage. As students develop post-high school plans, educators and school-based staff can share information about potential earnings to facilitate student and family decision-making about post-secondary options. Equipping residents furthest from opportunity with the understanding to make informed choices about education and career pathways is important for empowering families and upholding the District's commitment to equitable outcomes.

*The Office of Education Through Employment Pathways is charged with building the District's Education Through Employment Data System which will provide critical insights into pathways to economic mobility for DC residents, including employment outcomes for students engaged in specialized programming like CTE.*

**For more information, visit:**

[dme.dc.gov/etep](https://dme.dc.gov/etep)