

Date of Hearing: April 9, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
AB 821 (Gipson) – As Amended April 1, 2025

SUBJECT: Pupil instruction: high school graduation requirements: career technical education

SUMMARY: Eliminates the sunset on the use of a career technical education (CTE) course to fulfill a course requirement to graduate from high school. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Eliminates the sunset, currently July 1, 2027, on the use of a CTE course to fulfill a course requirement to graduate from high school.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the requirements students must meet to earn a diploma of graduation from high school, including:
 - a) Three courses in English;
 - b) Two courses in mathematics;
 - c) Two courses in science;
 - d) Three courses in social studies;
 - e) One course in visual or performing arts (VAPA), or world languages, or CTE;
 - f) Two courses in physical education;
 - g) Commencing with the class of students graduating in the 2029-30 academic year, and subject to and appropriation for its purposes, a one-semester course in ethnic studies; and
 - h) Commencing with the class of 2030–31, a course in personal finance. (Education Code (EC) 51225.3)
- 2) Makes the CTE course option inoperative on the earlier of the following two dates:
 - a) On July 1, immediately following the first fiscal year after the enactment of Chapter 621 of the Statutes of 2011 in which the number of CTE courses that, as determined by the California Department of Education (CDE), satisfy the world language requirement for admission to the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC) is at least twice the number of CTE courses that meet these admission requirements as of January 1, 2012. Repeals this requirement on the following January 1 unless a later enacted statute that becomes operative on or before that date deletes or extends the dates on which it becomes inoperative and is repealed. States the intent of the Legislature that new CTE courses that satisfy the world language requirement for admission to the CSU and the UC focus on world languages aligned with career preparation, emphasizing real-world application and technical content in related CTE courses.

- b) On July 1, 2027, and, as of January 1, 2028, is repealed. (EC 51225.3)
- 3) Authorizes the Career Technical Education Incentive Grant (CTEIG) program as a state education, economic, and workforce development initiative with the goal of providing students in kindergarten through 12th grade with the knowledge and skills necessary to transition to employment and postsecondary education.
 - 4) Authorizes the K-12 component of the Strong Workforce Program (SWP) to create, support, or expand high-quality CTE programs at the K-12 level that are aligned with the workforce development efforts occurring through the SWP, and authorizes, commencing with the 2018-19 fiscal year, and subject to an annual appropriation, \$150 million to be apportioned annually by the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) to local consortia. (EC 88827)
 - 5) Establishes the California Golden State Pathways Program (GSPP) to provide LEAs with the resources to promote pathways in high-wage, high-skill, high-growth areas, including technology, health care, education, and climate-related fields that, among other things, allow students to advance seamlessly from high school to college and career and provide the workforce needed for economic growth. (EC 53020)
 - 6) Federal law, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins), provides federal support for CTE programs and focuses on improving the academic and technical achievement of CTE students, strengthening the connections between secondary and postsecondary education and improving accountability.

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has been keyed a possible state mandated local program by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, "Career Technical Education (CTE) empowers high school students with the skills and knowledge they need to explore careers, increase employability, and achieve higher graduation rates. Under current law, such students have the option of taking a CTE course to fulfill an existing high school graduation requirement, but this is subject to sunset. By removing the sunset on this option for students, through AB 821, we ensure that future generations continue to benefit from these transformative opportunities, gaining not only technical expertise but also essential soft skills like critical thinking, communication, and ethical leadership—skills that are vital for success in today's workforce and beyond."

CTE graduation requirement option subject to sunset every five years. Current law allows students to fulfill a graduation requirement with a course in VAPA, world languages, or CTE. In 2010, when this option was established, there was some concern that this option would reduce enrollment in VAPA and world languages. Since then, this authorization has been extended twice, in 2016 and 2022, and each time the sunset has been extended no objections were raised. The authorization currently sunsets on July 1, 2027. ***The Committee may wish to consider that,*** after fifteen years, the CTE course option has become institutionalized in school districts and is unlikely to sunset in the future.

Defining Career Technical Education. CTE prepares students for the world of work by introducing them to workplace competencies, and makes academic content accessible to students by providing it in a hands-on context. Along the way, students develop career-relevant, real-world 21st Century skills.

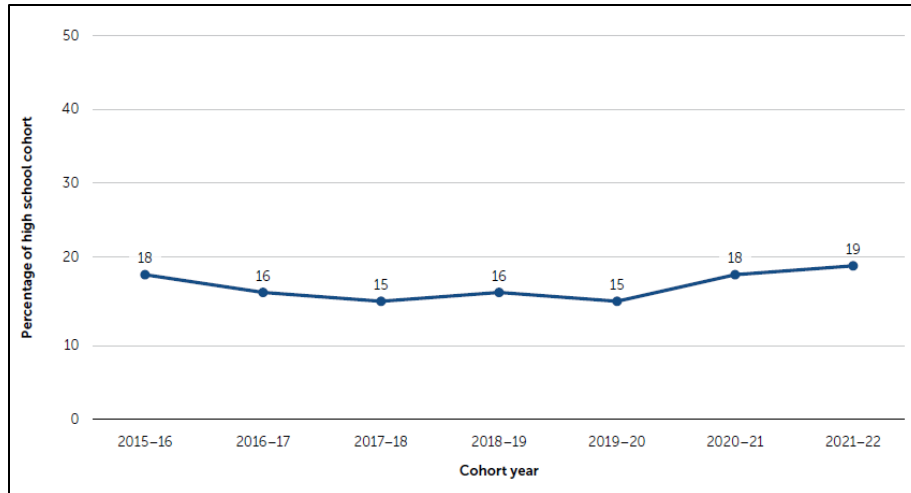
CTE is a program of study that involves a multiyear sequence of courses integrating core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge providing students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers. CTE programs in California are organized into 15 industry sectors, covering 58 pathways that identify the knowledge and skills students need. Partnerships are usually developed between high schools, businesses, and postsecondary institutions, providing pathways to employment and associate, bachelor's, and advanced degrees.

CTE courses and pathways may be offered in comprehensive high schools with CTE programs, as well as through regional CTE programs or centers operated by joint powers authorities (JPAs) or county offices of education (COEs). Some CTE programs are blended with academic programs in what is known as a "linked learning model." Community colleges and technical institutes also offer CTE at the postsecondary level.

Improved outcomes for CTE students. A wide body of research indicates that involvement in CTE coursework provides improved academic outcomes and other benefits to students, including the following:

- Students with greater exposure to CTE are more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in a two-year college, be employed, and earn higher wages;
- The average high school graduation rate for students concentrating in CTE programs is 93%, compared to an average national graduation rate of 80%;
- Students taking more CTE classes are just as likely to pursue a four-year degree as their peers;
- 91% of high school graduates who earned 2-3 CTE credits enrolled in college;
- CTE provides the greatest boost to students who need it most – boys and students from low-income families; and
- 80% of students taking a college preparatory academic curriculum with rigorous CTE met college and career readiness goals, compared to only 63% of students taking the same academic core who did not experience rigorous CTE.

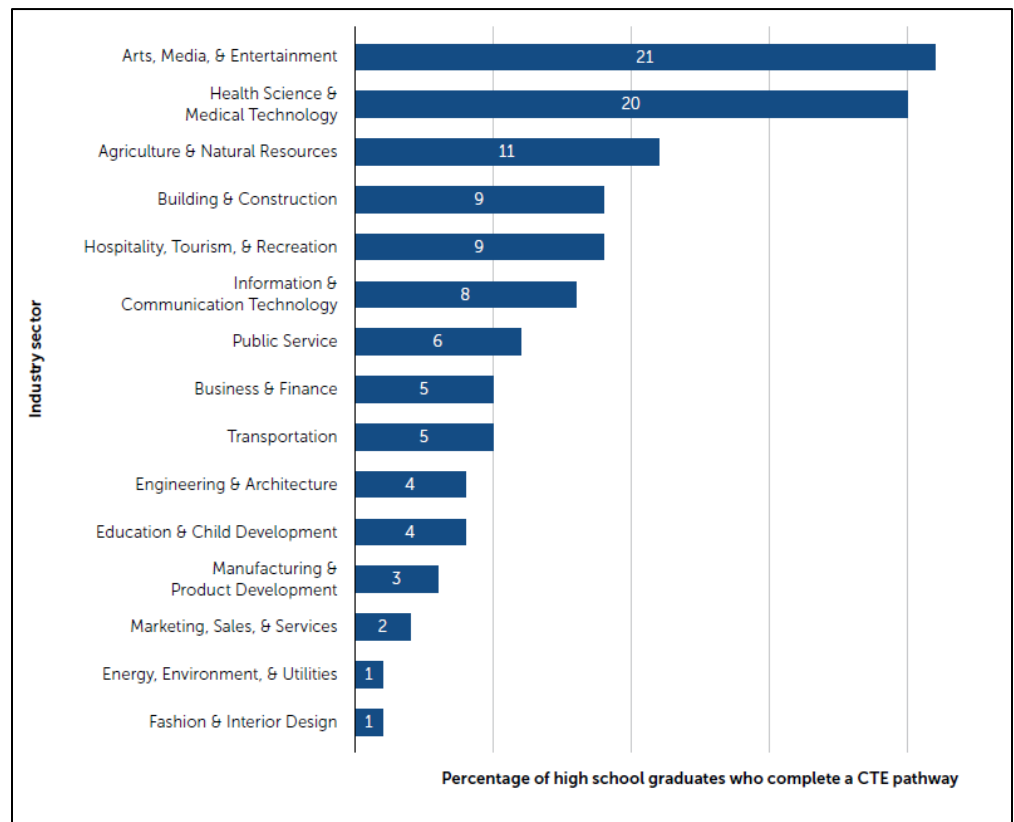
Participation in CTE. As noted above, CTE in California is organized around 15 industry sectors. Within each industry sector, there are a number of pathways—a sequence of two or three courses with a final capstone course—that a student may choose to complete. To complete a CTE pathway, a student must earn a grade of C– or better in the pathway's capstone course. According to PACE, as shown in the chart below, completion of CTE pathways remained relatively constant between 2015-16 and 2021-22.



According to PACE, CTE pathway completion varies slightly across racial/ethnic subgroups. Roughly 20% of Filipino, Latinx, White, and Asian American students completed a CTE pathway in high school in the 2021-22 school year. About 15% of Black students completed a pathway.

Across genders as well as socioeconomic status, CTE pathway completion rates are similar. Approximately 19% of female students and 20% of male students completed a pathway in the 2021-22 school year. Similarly, 19% of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and 20% of not socioeconomically disadvantaged students completed any CTE pathway.

Master plan for career education. In August 2023, Governor Newsom issued an Executive Order calling for a new Master Plan for Career Education to increase equitable access to living wage jobs by creating and strengthening education and training pathways specific to sectors, regions, and individuals' skills and experience. Initial input from the agencies focused on four primary concepts: creating stronger coordination mechanisms, building skills-based pathways, expanding work-based learning, and increasing access to public benefits and career pathways.



Additional input gained from numerous stakeholder input sessions held around the state identified numerous barriers to achieving the goal of universal access to high quality CTE opportunities within the TK-12 education system. The lack of sustained and coordinated funding for programs was identified as a key barrier. Participants noted that siloed funding streams,

“nonsustainable funding sources,” and “competitive/unpredictable funding” for career education posed challenges to long-term planning, collaboration, and sustained programming. Participants reported a need for long-term, “sustained, consistent funding” for college and career readiness programs, as opposed to relying on annual one-time grants or competitive funding.

Arguments in support. Project Lead the Way writes, “Students were first given a five-year authorization to use a CTE course to meet this graduation requirement, beginning with the 2012-13 school year. Since then, this authorization has been extended two additional times, to July 1, 2022 in 2016 and to July 1, 2027 in 2022. Acknowledging that this alternative gives students another choice in their education in order to help them stay engaged during high school, AB 821 would eliminate the need to continually extend this authorization by removing the sunset and, as a result, make the use of a CTE course to meet this requirement permanent.

Research shows that students who complete both an academic and a career technical education sequence of courses in high school have a higher likelihood of being enrolled in postsecondary education and being employed in professional, managerial, or skilled jobs. AB 821 affirms that student access to and completion of CTE courses are a priority for the state.”

Related legislation. SB 612 (Valladares) of the 2025-26 Session would delete the authorization to use a CTE course for graduation, and instead would, commencing with pupils graduating in the 2031–32 school year, require the completion of a separate, stand-alone one-semester course in CTE as a high school graduation requirement.

AB 185 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 571, Statutes of 2022, extended the sunset on the use of a CTE course to meet a graduation requirement to July 1, 2027.

SB 1123 (Leyva), Chapter 53, Statutes of 2016, extended the sunset on the use of a CTE course to meet a graduation requirement to July 1, 2022.

AB 1330 (Furutani), Chapter 621, Statutes of 2011, established the option for students to fulfill a high school graduation requirement by successfully completing a CTE course.

SB 253 (Wyland) of the 2009-2010 Session would have added the option for students to fulfill the VAPA high school graduation requirement by successfully completing a CTE course. SB 253 died on the Assembly Floor.

AB 2446 (Furutani) of the 2009-2010 Session would have added the option for students to fulfill the VAPA high school graduation requirement by successfully completing a CTE course. AB 2446 was vetoed by the Governor, who stated:

Improving and expanding Career Technical Education (CTE) opportunities has been among my highest priorities. While I am supportive of the author's intent to give CTE a prominent place in high school graduation priorities, the final version of this bill omitted my Administration's proposed amendments that were intended to limit the new costs to school districts. Therefore, I am concerned that this bill could be construed to impose higher costs without a fund source, which could also be interpreted as a state reimbursable mandate. Given that school budgets are very constrained due to the recession, adding new costs at this time is not advisable.

AB 554 (Furutani) of the 2009-2010 Session would have increased the number of courses required for high school graduation from 13 to 14 and offered students a choice between a VAPA course, foreign language, or CTE to fulfill the additional course requirement. AB 554 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 672 (Torlakson) of the 2007-2008 Session would have required high schools participating in the California Enhanced Instructional Time Program, as specified, to adopt a graduation policy requiring students to complete two CTE courses. This was held in the Assembly Education Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

Project Lead the Way

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Tanya Lieberman / ED. / (916) 319-2087