

DC's Compact ^{***}2043

A POLICY PAPER FROM COMPACT 2043

Advancing Pathways to Prosperity for DC Students

*Recommendations for Expanding the Impact of Career
and Technical Education and Advanced Technical
Centers in the District of Columbia*

September 2026

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Executive Summary

This policy paper, developed by the Compact 2043 coalition, provides context and recommendations for expanding the impact of high-value college and career preparation in the District of Columbia, with a focus on Career and Technical Education (CTE) and DC's unique Advanced Technical Centers (ATC). The goal is to ensure more DC students are engaged in school and prepared for success after graduation.

The paper describes the current landscape of CTE and ATCs, which offer priority CTE programs with dual (college and high school) credit to students from any participating public school at centralized hub locations. The paper discusses the significant growth (over 100%) in CTE participation since 2019 and the positive impact of CTE and ATCs on student outcomes in high school and beyond as a result of the career exposure, work experience, industry-recognized credentials, and, in the case of ATCs, college credits.

The paper puts forward recommendations and considerations for expanding and sustaining school-based CTE, which serves the vast majority of CTE students. It also makes recommendations for funding ATCs in a way that promotes sustainability and predictability and describes considerations and criteria for any future ATC expansion to meet compelling needs. The paper closes with an action plan for the next four years to expand high-quality CTE to reach nearly half of the total public high school population, or around 10,000 students, by School Year (SY) 29-30.

Key Recommendations:

- Increase local funding to support the planned expansion of the existing ATCs in Ward 5 and Ward 8
- Establish formula funding to sustain ATCs
- Establish formula funding to expand school-based CTE programs
- Establish a process at the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) for approving future ATC operators (e.g., LEAs) that meet specific requirements
- Establish an ATC focused on the skilled trades
- Explore additional ATC pathways in in-demand, high-wage fields

Pathways to college and careers starting in high school are a bright spot in DC's public education system and an area where investment and expansion can significantly improve students' engagement in school and future prosperity. We hope this paper and its recommendations will help current and future policymakers build on the District's positive momentum and deepen the impact of these pathway programs.

About Compact 2043

[Compact 2043](#), powered by a coalition of over 30 education, government, and nonprofit organizations, is DC's pathways blueprint and citywide commitment to preparing DC students for success in higher education and good jobs. Compact 2043 outlines goals and actions related to

secondary education, postsecondary education,¹ and careers that DC seeks to achieve by 2043 at the latest.

The Compact's goals include the following:

1. **DC students graduate high school prepared to enter college and careers.**
 - By 2043:
 - All graduating public school students in DC will complete at least one OSSE-approved pathway;²
 - DC's high school graduation rate will be at least 90%; and
 - 100% of public school graduates will have a postsecondary plan.³
2. **DC public school graduates earn postsecondary degrees and credentials that give access to the good jobs⁴ of today and tomorrow.**
 - By 2043, 80% of DC public school graduates will complete a postsecondary degree or credential of value⁵ within six years.
3. **DC's education and workforce system drives economic mobility and prosperity for residents and the local economy.**
 - By 2043, 80% of DC public school graduates in the workforce will earn a living wage within five years of graduation and 95% will do so within ten years.

The vast majority of good jobs in DC require postsecondary education – over 85% are projected to require this by 2031 – and the National Capital Region's good jobs largely require a bachelor's degree.⁶ Preparing students for success in postsecondary education is critical for creating pathways to prosperity and addressing the deep wage disparities between children born in DC and those who move to the District.⁷ This work is especially timely as DC's labor market is rapidly changing due to the downsizing of the federal government, the District's anchor employer, and the growing impact of artificial intelligence (AI). It is therefore particularly important to promote a range of college and career pathways for students.

The Compact 2043 coalition supports broad access for public school students to multiple, high-quality pathways, including CTE, dual enrollment,⁸ advanced coursework, and meaningful work

¹ Postsecondary education includes adult education schools and training providers, workforce training programs, and colleges and universities.

² These pathways are included in DC's new proposed graduation requirements, which are scheduled to be approved by fall 2026. They include endorsements for completion of programs of study, including Career and Technical Education, Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate, among others.

³ OSSE is developing guidance for postsecondary plans, required as part of the new DC graduation requirements.

⁴ A good job is defined through the MIT Living Wage calculator. In 2026 in DC, this means a job paying \$26.72/hour (\$55,577 annually) for a single adult with no children. For more information, visit <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>.

⁵ A credential of value is one that is aligned to employer needs in high-wage, in-demand fields.

⁶ For more information, visit: https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-State-Report.pdf, p. 46.

⁷ For more information, visit: <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/student-transition-college-career/>.

⁸ Per the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a dual- or concurrent-enrollment program is offered by a partnership between at least one institution of higher education and at least one local educational agency through which a secondary school student who has not graduated from high school is able to enroll in one or more postsecondary courses and earn postsecondary credit that:

- Is transferable to the institutions of higher education in the partnership

experience (e.g., high-quality internships)⁹ that set them up for success. The Compact specifically identifies goals of at least 60% of students participating in CTE and at least 50% of students participating in dual enrollment by 2043.¹⁰ We support using data, including through the course catalog system at OSSE¹¹ and the Education Through Employment Data System,¹² to track results and progress and adjust programs and policies accordingly. Expanding pathway opportunities for students supports two equally important aims: first, helping schools engage and prepare their students, and second, helping students find purpose and excitement in learning.

In 2026, the Compact 2043 coalition convened four working groups to identify policy recommendations in support of our shared goals in the following areas:

1. Advising (including postsecondary planning),
2. Career and Technical Education and Advanced Technical Centers,
3. Workforce Pell Grants and Strengthening Workforce Training, and
4. Apprenticeships.

The CTE and ATC Working Group convened to identify effective approaches to strengthen and expand impactful career training for students in public schools across the District. This paper, developed by the Working Group, describes the current state of college and career preparation in the District and includes recommendations for expanding high-value preparation through CTE and ATCs.

Advancing High-Value College and Career Preparation in the District: Building on Progress

The District of Columbia has made significant progress over the past decade in advancing college and career preparation for public school students. CTE, dual enrollment, and ATCs (which combine CTE and dual enrollment) give students early exposure and access to career fields and work-based learning, along with industry-recognized credentials and college credit — providing an academic and financial head start on their futures and a competitive edge in the job market. CTE and ATC programs are described in more detail below.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

DC has more than doubled its CTE enrollment since 2019, reaching over 7,000 students in SY 24-25.¹³ In addition to a 102% increase in secondary CTE participants (students who complete one CTE course), DC has experienced a 188% increase in CTE concentrators (students who complete

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- Applies toward completion of a degree or recognized educational credential as described in the Higher Education Act of 1965.

For more information, visit: <https://collegeinhighschool.org/resources/dual-enrollment-terms/>

⁹ See Appendix D for a Work-Based Learning Framework. High-quality internships are aligned to industry, connected to fields of study, paid, and for-credit as much as possible.

¹⁰ We seek to reach all students who are interested in these programs and recognize that there can be overlap among them.

¹¹ For more information on OSSE's course catalog, which creates a common classification system for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade courses, visit: <https://osse.dc.gov/blog/understanding-osse-state-course-catalog>.

¹² For more information, visit: <https://dme.dc.gov/etep>.

¹³ This number includes students who completed at least one CTE course.

at least three CTE courses in a program of study).¹⁴ Moreover, in SY 24-25, 99% of CTE concentrators graduated on time.

In terms of the CTE landscape, OSSE funds school-based CTE programming at 32 high schools, the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) Community College, the Department of Corrections (DOC), and the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS). Appendix A includes the full list of high school CTE programs. DC offers 41 CTE programs of study aligned to the 14 nationally recognized CTE Career Clusters, an increase from the two OSSE-approved industry-validated programs of study in 2019.¹⁵ All of DC's CTE programs of study provide opportunities for students to earn industry-recognized credentials. Notably, in addition to its CTE system, DC has a robust network of adult charter schools that offer basic education and work-ready credentials to around 6,000 young adult and adult students as part of DC's public education system, as well as three DC Public Schools (DCPS) Opportunity Academies, serving roughly 1,250 students.

While DC's CTE system has seen rapid growth, DC's annual federal Perkins¹⁶ allocation has not significantly increased for several years; therefore, the level of funding per CTE student has decreased. Similarly, DC's local funding for school-based CTE programming is minimal (less than \$400,000)¹⁷ and not allocated through formula funding — a national best practice.¹⁸ This funding limitation means that outside of the ATCs and OSSE's CTE internship programs, schools rely on Perkins funding or their per student allocations from the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) to support CTE programs. This level of funding can limit access, especially for high-cost programs.

Advanced Technical Centers (ATCs)

Starting in SY 22-23, DC established ATCs to expand citywide access to high-quality CTE and dual enrollment. ATCs offer dual (high school and college) credit CTE programs in high-wage, in-demand fields, currently healthcare and cybersecurity. These fields are difficult for an individual school to offer on its own, given the high cost of equipment, facilities, and instruction and/or limited access to qualified instructors. ATC students receive a high school transcript as well as a college transcript with credits that can transfer toward a degree, reducing the time and cost of college. Research shows dual enrollment increases students' college success rates.¹⁹

The programs of study at the current ATCs are two years in length and allow students to earn up to 26 tuition-free college credits from college partners UDC and Trinity Washington University, industry-recognized credentials (IRCs), four high school credits (which count toward graduation requirements), and paid internships in the field.

¹⁴ In addition, an increasing number (over 53% in SY 24-25) of CTE concentrators have participated in internships aligned to their field of study.

¹⁵ These are the career clusters as of August 2026: <https://careertech.org/what-we-do/initiatives/national-career-clusters-framework/>.

¹⁶ Perkins funding refers to funding from the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

¹⁷ This includes the CTE Certification Fund (~\$110,000) and the Career Academy Fund (~\$275,000).

¹⁸ Formula funding is considered best practice because it recognizes the per student costs from these programs, incentivizes enrollment and retention, and advances sustainability and predictability.

¹⁹ For studies on dual enrollment, visit <https://collegeinhighschool.org/what-we-do/evidence-of-success/>.

The higher education partners at the ATCs are critical in providing the tuition-free college programs of study and contributing to the overall program design and post-graduation pathways (e.g., through credit transfer and scholarships for students to continue their education).²⁰ Industry partners are also critical in program design and career preparation (e.g., through internships and graduate hiring). Key industry partners include Whitman-Walker Health, Children’s National, MedStar Health, and the DC Hospital Association.

The ATC in Ward 5 (established in SY 22-23), located at 1709 3rd Street NE, offers cybersecurity and health care pathways, and the ATC in Ward 8 (established in SY 25-26), located at 1201 Sycamore Drive SE, focuses on healthcare careers. Appendix B includes the specific courses and credentials offered at the ATCs.

The ATCs integrate students’ interests, partnerships, and resources to allow for educational opportunities that would not otherwise be available. ATCs are open to students from any participating public school across the DCPS and charter sector. In addition to promoting cross-sector collaboration, this approach supports neighborhood schools and small schools. Students do not need to unenroll from their home school to participate in an ATC, and schools can include CTE programs at the ATCs as part of their advertised offerings for students. The ATCs also fill CTE gaps – for example, the ATC in Ward 8 is the only health sciences CTE program in the Ward, even though health care is the fastest-growing sector in the District.

ATCs have demonstrated strong student demand and success. When first launched in SY 22-23, the Ward 5 ATC enrolled 96 students from eight participating public schools. Just three years later, in SY 25-26, OSSE opened a second ATC in Ward 8 and total ATC enrollment grew to 370 students from 25 high schools. Retention has increased from 59% in the first cohort (SY 22-23) to 85% in SY 24-25.

In addition to growing enrollment and retention each year, students earned over 4,600 college credits worth \$3M in tuition in the ATC’s first three years. The ATCs have a 71% concentrator rate. Moreover, 78% of ATC concentrators from the first ATC graduating cohort enrolled in postsecondary education within 12 months of graduation, well above the average for CTE and non-CTE peers alike. Over time, the District can follow ATC cohorts through postsecondary education and employment to better understand the longer-term impact of these programs, including graduates’ educational attainment, employment status, wages, and industries of employment.

ATCs continue to grow in popularity, with nearly 1,000 students expressing a desire to enroll in SY26-27. To encourage broad access for students, the ATCs do not have a minimum GPA threshold and only require that a student be on track to graduate;²¹ seats at participating schools are assigned through a lottery system.

²⁰ Trinity Washington University, for example, offers graduates of the ATC a \$15,000 annual scholarship to continue their education at Trinity.

²¹ A student is not on track to graduate if they need additional course credits (outside of a normal schedule) to graduate on time.

However, despite the growth of sites and seats, demand still outpaces capacity, and more than 450 students will be placed on an ATC waitlist in SY 26-27. This is an increase from the substantial waitlist in SY 25-26, as illustrated in Appendix C.

As a result of local and private funding totaling approximately \$40 million to expand instructional space and construct health care clinics on site at the ATCs, OSSE has capacity to grow ATC enrollment to 700 students in SY 27-28, 800 students in SY 28-29, and 900 students in SY 29-30, contingent on a commensurate increase in operating funding.

While school-based CTE represents the vast majority of CTE programming offered in the District, ATCs show considerable promise as a way to bring industry-aligned opportunities to an expanding student body that would be cost-prohibitive for individual LEAs and schools. Recognizing that ATCs provide high-value career programming and also carry a cost, the Compact 2043 CTE and ATC Working Group explored options for sustaining and growing ATCs alongside school-based CTE. These considerations and recommendations are below.

Expanding Impact of the ATCs and CTE

Scaling School-Based CTE

The majority of CTE is offered through school-based programs.²² To expand high-quality CTE opportunities for more students, DC should establish local funding for CTE to supplement federal Perkins funding, which is limited by Congressional appropriations. This funding could be tiered to incentivize program completion and/or support high-cost, high-value programs. To evaluate impact, the District can conduct regular programmatic reviews to evaluate the impact of CTE programs on students' outcomes during and after graduation,²³ as well as reviews of student enrollment patterns to identify gaps in access and direct resources accordingly.

To scale school-based CTE, we recommend a multi-faceted approach.

- **CTE Participant Weight:** To sustain and grow school-based CTE programs, DC could establish a CTE participant weight in the UPSFF to supplement federal Perkins funding.²⁴ This per student weight would be reserved for OSSE-approved programs. Funding would pay for additional costs of CTE programs, such as instructors, equipment, materials and supplies, work-based learning activities, and credential assessment fees. This would be a programmatic weight as opposed to a grade-level weight or supplemental weight based on student (e.g., at-risk) or school (e.g., residential) characteristics.
 - If a CTE program of study includes dual enrollment, that could generate a higher weight.
 - Programs could have to align to priority (e.g., in-demand, high-wage) fields and/or meet established performance outcomes to receive the weight. This would require

²² A list of CTE programs of study is available here: <https://careertechdc.org/>.

²³ Post-graduation outcomes related to postsecondary education and employment can be tracked through the Education Through Employment Data System.

²⁴ This weight could apply to students who complete the Level 1 course in a CTE sequence and are enrolled in the Level 2 course or higher.

OSSE to identify the list of eligible programs. Other states provide models to explore.²⁵

- **CTE Concentrator Weight:** To incentivize program retention and completion, DC could establish a CTE concentrator weight in the UPSFF for students reaching the third course in a program of study and beyond.²⁶ This tiered funding approach would encourage schools to help more students progress through and complete sequenced programs of study. This is beneficial for students, as students who reach concentrator status are more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college. In addition, this approach would recognize that higher-level CTE courses are more advanced and often have higher costs.²⁷

Note: In this model, while funding would be awarded based on the number of concentrators, funds could be used to support all students enrolled in the CTE program (at any course level); the key piece is that the incentive to increase retention would be built into the funding approach.

- **Internships:** Funding for internships (Advanced Internship Program for school-year internships, Career Ready Internship for summer internships), should be available to all CTE concentrators, including those at the ATCs, and should be maintained and scaled accordingly. The District could leverage Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP) funds to cover OSSE's summer CTE internships. If this approach were pursued, the differences in wages and program standards would have to be taken into account.²⁸

Note: while this paper focuses on CTE, we support expanding internships beyond CTE students.

- **CTE Grant for New Programs:** To strategically grow CTE, DC could establish a grant program to launch new CTE programs that offer pathways in high-wage, in-demand fields. This grant for one-time startup costs (e.g., to develop partnerships and invest in equipment) could prioritize programs that close access gaps by school, sub-group, and/or geography (e.g., by Ward). The recurring CTE weight would sustain the programs once they reach full enrollment.

Sustaining and Scaling ATCs

To date, the ATCs have been funded through a combination of local, federal, and philanthropic resources. In the proposed FY27 budget, Mayor Bowser included ATC funding in the UPSFF to cover the costs of the academic programming. This proposal recognized that ATCs offer programs of study that fulfill graduation requirements and carry per student costs (e.g., the cost of the tuition-free college courses and credentials). The weight would have applied to students spending part of their school day at the ATCs and would not have required cost sharing from the sending LEAs.

²⁵ For a multi-state scan, visit: <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-secondary-career-and-technical-education-2023/>. Some states, like North Carolina, Indiana, and Texas, tier CTE funding based on programs of study. References include: [Quick Guide_CTE_Funding.pdf](#), [CTE-Funding-Memo_SY-26-27_FINAL2.pdf](#), and [Career and Technology Education Allotment | Texas Education Agency](#).

²⁶ This weight could apply to students who complete the Level 3 course and are enrolled in a Level 4 course and beyond.

²⁷ The higher-level courses often include more expensive aspects of CTE, such as more intensive work-based learning, capstones, and dual credit courses.

²⁸ Wages are higher and program requirements and standards differ for CTE internships compared to MBSYEP, and students participating in CTE internships have specialized preparation from completing two or three CTE courses in the field whereas there are no such requirements for MBSYEP.

This proposal was not included in the final FY27 budget following a request for deeper study by the DC Council. We hope these recommendations help inform a future funding proposal to sustain the ATCs and allow for planned growth (to 900 students by SY 29-30).

Funding recommendations:

- Formula funding: Establish formula funding through the UPSFF to cover the recurring, per student operating costs of the ATCs to allow for predictability, sustainability, and planned growth. This formula weight would cover the costs of the academic programming (including tuition for the credit-bearing courses and credentials), staff, transportation,²⁹ and materials and supplies. Formula funding recognizes the per student costs from these programs, incentivizes enrollment and retention, and advances sustainability and predictability. The ATC weight, like the school-based CTE weight, would be a programmatic weight as opposed to a grade-level weight or supplemental weight based on student (e.g., at-risk) or school (e.g., residential) characteristics.
- Fixed costs: In addition to formula funding, ensure that fixed costs (e.g., facility maintenance, janitorial, and security services and leasing costs) are covered through appropriations at OSSE irrespective of annual enrollment fluctuations.
- Regular review: DC should review and reassess the ATC weight on a regular cadence to ensure it sufficiently covers costs for the college instruction and other programmatic components. This could be done through the UPSFF Working Group or separately through the DME or OSSE. The District should also conduct programmatic reviews to evaluate the impact of ATCs on students' education and career outcomes.³⁰
- Leverage local and philanthropic funding for startup costs: Establish local grants and/or pursue philanthropy to launch new ATCs, with startup funding tapering down as the program reaches full enrollment.

Criteria for ATC Expansion

ATC expansion makes sense in CTE pathways where there are compelling labor market needs and cost and access barriers for schools and students. The following are criteria we recommend for any additional expansion of the current ATCs or any new ATCs.

ATCs should:

- Offer CTE programs in key in-demand, high-wage industries,³¹ based on current, available jobs data (e.g., Lightcast, Talent Capital) and emerging areas of growth (based on industry input). Current growth sectors include but are not limited to health care, technology, and skilled trades.

²⁹ We recommend including transportation costs in the weight, as transportation is critical for student attendance and participation.

³⁰ Post-graduation outcomes related to postsecondary education and employment can be tracked through the Education Through Employment Data System. This data should be disaggregated.

³¹ In-demand and high-wage are defined in DC's CTE State Plan: <https://careertechdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/CTE-State-Plan-Final-7.9.24.pdf>. In-demand is defined as "those occupations in the District of Columbia metropolitan statistical area having more than the median number of total (growth plus replacement) annual openings over a five-year period" and high-wage is defined as "those occupations that have a 25th percentile wage equal to or greater than the most recent MIT Living Wage Index for one adult in the District of Columbia, and/or leads to a position that pays at least the median hourly or annual wage for the District of Columbia metropolitan statistical area."

- Have partnerships with at least one industry partner (to strengthen industry alignment and pathways into the profession) and with at least one institution of higher education (to support dual enrollment and credentials).
- Result in transferable credit, through dual credit or possibly articulated credit,³² and industry-recognized credentials.³³
- Increase access for students with limited CTE opportunities (e.g., students in schools with limited CTE programs or populations underrepresented in CTE participation).
- Provide programming that would be challenging for an individual school to offer due to the cost of equipment and/or instruction (e.g., dual enrollment) and that is not readily available through school-based CTE. This would be determined through an OSSE-designed process.
- Provide transportation to ensure broad access for students across schools and wards and simultaneously promote safe passage and strong attendance.
- Serve both sectors by offering seats to students from any participating public school across DCPS and charter LEAs.
- Offer programming for which there is unmet student demand.
- Offer paid and, as much as possible, for-credit internships in the field for participating students.
- Engage industry, higher education, and nonprofit partners as well as students and families in the design of the ATCs.

Possible Modifications to the Current ATC Model

If new ATCs are created, we recommend considering the following modifications to the current model, in addition to the criteria noted above, which would be necessary for any expansion.

- Operators:
 - Currently, both ATCs are operated by OSSE.
 - For future ATCs, DC could offer hubs at public schools (DCPS or charter) or institutions of higher education that are approved, rather than operated, by OSSE.
 - In this case, OSSE would have to develop a process and rubric for ATC approval and conduct regular reviews to ensure accountability and fidelity to established standards.
 - Moreover, definitional language for Advanced Technical Center in DC Code would have to be modified from “OSSE-operated” to “OSSE-approved” or similar language.³⁴

³² Articulated credit, where a college agrees to transfer high school credit to a college program of study, is an alternative to dual credit, where the courses and transcript come from the college. However, the District would benefit from more data on how articulated credits translate to colleges and universities and the students’ postsecondary outcomes before pursuing this approach for the ATCs.

³³ Industry recognized credentials should be aligned to employer hiring needs and stackable and portable as much as possible.

³⁴ Per DC Official Code § 38–2612.01(d)(1)), “Advanced Technical Center” means an OSSE-operated open-enrollment education center where students enrolled in DCPS or public charter high schools can participate in CTE programming while remaining enrolled in their high school.

- As part of the OSSE approval process for ATCs, we recommend establishing clear goals, guardrails, operating requirements, performance standards, and data collection policies to guide decision making.³⁵
- In a future state with formula funding for ATCs, if the OSSE-approved ATC operator is an LEA, we recommend that the ATC weight only apply to students from LEAs sending students to the ATC (“sending LEAs”).³⁶
- Credits and credentials:
 - Currently, all courses at the ATC are college courses offered for dual (high school and college) credit. Trinity Washington University and UDC are the college partners.
 - For future ATCs, DC could consider offering dual credit, articulated credit,³⁷ and/or high school credit pathways. This should depend on the pathway requirements, credentials offered, and industry needs. For example, there are in-demand, high-wage occupations that do not require a college degree. If an ATC includes articulated credits, evidence of actual credit transfer to colleges and universities will be important to ensure the pathway has a positive return on investment for students.
 - If articulated credits are offered at an ATC instead of dual credit, the District could consider differentiating the ATC weight to reflect program costs. Without college courses, credentials, and the associated tuition, the per-student weight would be lower.
 - *For future study: In addition to specialized CTE, there are programs of study (e.g., certain world languages) that face similar resource or instructor access challenges. OSSE could explore expanding access to these opportunities through a variety of approaches, including ATC pathways aligned to established career clusters, the OSSE Dual Enrollment Consortium,³⁸ or other vehicles for facilitation of cross-school program access (e.g., virtual course hub).*
- Eligible students:
 - Currently, ATCs only serve high school students who are on track to graduate. To expand the pool of eligible students, OSSE could encourage and LEAs could offer more credit recovery options (including in the summer, for rising 9th, 10th, and 11th graders), competency assessments, and other flexible scheduling options for original credit.³⁹

³⁵ The OSSE approval process could include performance standards for post-graduation outcomes as data becomes available, including postsecondary enrollment and completion, registered apprenticeship participation, employment, industry of employment, retention, and wage progression.

³⁶ In other words, the weight would only apply to students not otherwise enrolled in the LEA operating the ATC. The LEA operating the ATC would receive funding for a dual credit CTE course that enrolled students from its own school and sending schools but would not be funded to only provide a course to its own students.

³⁷ In the articulated credit model, the partner college agrees to accept the high school CTE program as credit toward a credential or degree program at the institution.

³⁸ The Consortium allows students from any participating LEA to take courses from any participating college or university at no cost to the student and removes access barriers that may particularly impact students from small LEAs. Approximately 500 students participate in the Consortium annually. For more information, visit <https://osse.dc.gov/page/osse-dual-enrollment-opportunities>.

³⁹ OSSE could also explore credit recovery options at the ATC.

- ATCs currently offer seats to each participating school in proportion to the school's population size. In future years, ATCs could prioritize certain schools, geographies, or populations based on access gaps (e.g., schools and wards with limited or no CTE programs in a given field, student subgroups with limited participation) and educational needs.
 - To guide any student prioritization policies, OSSE should review data on which students attend the ATC and which do not and recommend ways to increase access accordingly.
- *For future study: ATCs could explore expanding pathways to serve middle school students and/or adult learners (e.g., adult charter school students), depending on the program of study.*

Proposed Four-Year Action Plan

In the next four years, DC can achieve a bold goal to expand career pathways for high school students: nearly half of all high school students will be enrolled in high-quality CTE, and at least 65% of students participating in CTE will reach concentrator status, indicating substantial progress toward completion of a CTE program of study.

To achieve this bold goal, we recommend the following actions:

1. **Fund planned enrollment expansion at the ATCs in Ward 5 and Ward 8.** The ATCs have the capacity to meet planned enrollment targets of 900 total students by SY 29-30. This is a result of significant capital investments in classroom space co-located with community-serving industry partners (e.g., Whitman-Walker Health at the Ward 8 ATC and Children's National and MedStar Health at the Ward 5 ATC). Funding planned enrollment expansion at the ATCs will maximize the District's investment in a popular and proven citywide CTE program and prepare DC students for the high-demand fields of health care and cybersecurity. We recommend that ATC funding be allocated through a new programmatic weight in the UPSFF to support sustainability and predictability. We also recommend that program outcomes, including post-graduation education and career data,⁴⁰ be regularly reviewed to assess impact.
 - *Key decision makers: Executive (DME + OSSE) and Council*
 - *Timeline: FY28, FY29 and FY30 budgets*
 - *Cost considerations: OSSE anticipates the ATCs will cost \$9,920,369 in FY28 to serve around 700 students, \$11,150,730 in FY29 to serve around 800 students and \$12,365,565 in FY29 to serve around 900 students. We defer to the 2026 UPSFF Working Group on the level of funding that should be included in the formula and the amount set aside for fixed costs.*
2. **Establish a local funding stream for school-based CTE to supplement federal Perkins funding.** To reach more students, we recommend that the District sustainably expand school-based CTE through 1) at least one CTE weight in the UPSFF to support program growth across the city at DCPS and charter schools, and 2) a new grant to schools that seek to add priority programs and address access gaps. These actions, particularly the recurring

⁴⁰ Post-graduation outcomes related to postsecondary education and employment can be tracked through the Education Through Employment Data System.

local funding stream for school-based CTE, will be necessary to significantly expand the reach of CTE.

- *Key decision makers/lead agencies: Executive (DME + OSSE) and Council*
- *Timeline: FY28, FY29 and FY30 budgets*
- *Cost considerations: A grant program can be scaled up or down depending on available funding and intended impact. Ideally it would be funded up to the annual federal DC Perkins secondary allocation.⁴¹ We defer to the 2026 UPSFF Working Group on per student costs for CTE.*

3. **Open an ATC pathway focused on skilled trades through a partnership between OSSE and an LEA.** The skilled trades offer on-ramps to in-demand, high-wage jobs and include career pathways that do not require a college degree. Moreover, DC is seeing an increase in demand for skilled trades workers as a result of the RFK development and other construction projects. The skilled trades education and training programs also have space and equipment requirements that are difficult to replicate at multiple schools (e.g., HVAC and carpentry labs). LEAs currently offering skilled trades CTE programs include Phelps ACE High School and IDEA Public Charter School for electrical, HVAC/R, and carpentry pathways. These schools currently have available space and seats in these pathways. Moreover, DCPS has already launched a hub pilot for other DCPS high schools at Phelps that could be expanded to serve students across sectors and IDEA has expressed an interest in this concept. OSSE could establish a process for approving ATCs operated by LEAs and then partner with an LEA to establish a skilled trades ATC. This action will help prepare more DC students for in-demand roles in a growing sector of the economy.

- *Key decision makers/lead agencies: OSSE, with LEAs as partners*
- *Timeline: ATC approval process developed in SY 27-28; establishment of District-wide skilled trades ATC in SY 28-29*
- *Cost considerations: There will be a per student cost for students from sending LEAs, to include transportation and the cost of instruction and administration.*

4. **Explore additional ATC pathways in high-wage, in-demand fields.** We encourage OSSE to explore whether there is a need for additional ATC programs, either at a third ATC location or through a partnership with an existing LEA or IHE (e.g., Tech Hub at UDC's Congress Heights campus.⁴²) Given the rapidly changing labor market, any new programs should consider the impact of AI on the job market and the fields that will make DC students most competitive for in-demand, high-wage occupations in DC and the region.

- *Key decision makers/lead agencies: OSSE, DME*
- *Timeline: SY 27-28 and beyond*
- *Cost considerations: Any new ATC would have startup costs (e.g., facility and equipment investments, costs until full enrollment) as well as ongoing operating costs.*

5. **Maintain and expand CTE internship funding.** Internship funding is critical to maintain and expand so all CTE students who want internships in their fields can access them, as

⁴¹ For reference, the FY27 Perkins secondary allocation maximum was \$3,628,972.71.

⁴² The Tech Hub offers paid, on-the-job training in technology and is led and sponsored by Accenture and based at UDC's Congress Heights campus.

work experience is important for career preparation and increasingly necessary for securing full-time employment. In addition to an increase in local funding, DC could explore leveraging MBSYEP funds for CTE internships. This would involve sending MBSYEP funds from the Department of Employment Services (DOES) to OSSE and allowing OSSE to set internship standards and wages for CTE students.⁴³ Expanding internships will be critical for giving students the work experience that gives them career exposure and makes them work ready and competitive for good jobs.

- *Key decision makers/lead agencies: DME, Office of the City Administrator*
- *Timeline: FY28 and beyond*
- *Cost considerations: The per student wages of MBSYEP are lower than those of OSSE internships, so moving funding from SYEP to OSSE internships would reduce the overall number of youth served.*

For all current and future pathway programs, it is important that students, families, and advisors have information about opportunities as early as possible, at minimum starting in middle school. This allows them to identify good-fit pathway courses and programs of study for students that engage and prepare them for prosperous and fulfilling lives after graduation. Compact 2043 is producing an advising landscape scan in Fall 2026 to inform this work.

Conclusion

Structured career pathways with work-based learning experiences, industry-recognized credentials, and dual credit courses are increasingly important in the era of AI and a rapidly shifting job market, and in an economy where having postsecondary education and work experience are increasingly necessary for good jobs and prosperity. The District has demonstrated significant success in expanding access to high-value college and career preparation that promotes a smooth transition to postsecondary education and good jobs. With bold leadership and sustained attention and resources, DC can meet the growing demand and set more students on pathways to prosperity.

⁴³ DOES spent approximately \$28.5M in FY26 to serve around 15,000 students. OSSE spent around \$3M to serve over 900 students in its internship programs for CTE students. The wage rates are significantly different between the programs, with OSSE's rate being much higher at around \$17/hour.

Appendix

Appendix A: CTE Programs in DC as of SY 25-26⁴⁴

Ward	School	School Type	Programs
Ward 1	Cardozo EC	DCPS	Army JROTC Computer Maintenance Technician Computer Science Culinary Arts Cybersecurity (ATC) Engineering (Aerospace and Civil Engineering Architecture focus) Teacher Education and Training
	Columbia Heights EC	DCPS	Barbering Teacher Education and Training Early Childhood Education Computer Science Cosmetology Cybersecurity (ATC) Engineering (Digital Electronics focus) Finance General Nursing (ATC) Hospitality and Tourism
	Garnet-Patterson STAY High School	DCPS	Audio/Video Production Barbering Early Childhood Development Cosmetology HVACR
Ward 2	Girls Global Academy	Charter	Business Management Cybersecurity (ATC) Engineering General Nursing (ATC)
Ward	School	School Type	Programs
Ward 3	Jackson-Reed HS	DCPS	Army JROTC and Army JROTC Cyber Sports Marketing and Management Global Service and Diplomacy Audio/Video Production Biomedical Sciences

⁴⁴ This list is updated annually and posted on OSSE's website at <https://careertechdc.org/>.

			Computer Science Engineering (Aerospace and Digital Electronics focus) Finance General Nursing (ATC) Graphic Design and Illustration Hospitality and Tourism
	John R. Thompson Jr. High School (formerly MacArthur High School)	DCPS	Computer Maintenance Technician Computer Science Army JROTC Engineering (Aerospace focus) General Nursing (ATC)
Ward 4	Coolidge HS	DCPS	Army JROTC Audio Video Production Biomedical Sciences Automotive Technology
	District of Columbia International Public Charter School	Charter	Health Sciences: General Computer Maintenance Technician Engineering Health Science General Nursing (ATC)
	Paul Public Charter School: International High School	Charter	Computer Science Cybersecurity (ATC) General Nursing (ATC)
	Roosevelt HS	DCPS	Army JROTC Business Management Culinary Arts Hospitality and Tourism Global Service and Diplomacy
Ward	School	School Type	Programs
Ward 5	Dunbar HS	DCPS	Army JROTC Computer Maintenance Technician Cybersecurity (ATC) Engineering (Environmental Sustainability, Civil Engineering and Architecture focus) General Nursing (ATC) Computer Science Global Service and Diplomacy Audio/Video Production Marketing (Sports Marketing and Management)
	KIPP DC Public Charter School	Charter	Accounting Business Management Cybersecurity (ATC) Digital Media General Nursing (ATC)

	Luke C. Moore Opportunity Academy	DCPS	Finance Graphic Design & Illustration
	McKinley Tech HS	DCPS	Army JROTC Biotechnology Computer Science Cybersecurity (ATC) Engineering (Digital Electronics, CIM, and Aerospace focus) Graphic Design and Illustration Networking
	Phelps Architecture, Construction, and Engineering HS	DCPS	Architecture & Design Army JROTC Carpentry Electrical Technology Engineering (Civil Engineering and Architecture focus) HVACR Networking
	Sojourner Truth Public Charter School	Charter	Audio/Video Production Cybersecurity (ATC) General Nursing (ATC)
	Washington Leadership Academy Public Charter School	Charter	Cybersecurity (ATC) General Nursing (ATC)
Ward	School	School Type	Programs
Ward 6	Richard Wright PCS for Journalism and Media Arts	Charter	Cybersecurity (ATC) General Nursing (ATC)
Ward 7	Cesar Chavez PCS for Public Policy	Charter	Cyber Security (ATC)
	Eastern High School	DCPS	Biomedical Sciences (Emergency Medical Responder focus) Computer Maintenance Cyber Security (ATC) Army JORTC
	Friendship Collegiate Academy	Charter	Biomedical Science Computer Science Cybersecurity (ATC)

			Energy and Natural Resources General Nursing (ATC)
	H.D. Woodson HS	DCPS	Computer Science Engineering (Civil Engineering and Architecture focus) Finance General Nursing (ATC) Graphic Design & Illustration Teacher Education and Training
	IDEA PCS	Charter	Business Management Carpentry Child Care and Development Computer Science Cybersecurity (ATC) General Nursing (ATC)
	Maya Angelou PCS	Charter	Business Management Cybersecurity (ATC) General Nursing (ATC) Hospitality Services
	River Terrace Education Campus	DCPS	Hospitality and Tourism
	Ron Brown College Preparatory High School	DCPS	Army JROTC Audio/Video Production Computer Science Horticultural Science (Husbandry focus)
Ward	School	School Type	Programs
Ward 8	Anacostia HS	DCPS	Engineering (Civil Environmental and Architecture focus) Horticultural Sciences (Urban Sustainability focus) Public Leadership
	Ballou HS	DCPS	Audio/Video Production Automotive Technology (Automotive Services focus) Business Management Computer Maintenance Technician Culinary Arts Cybersecurity (ATC) General Nursing (ATC) Hospitality and Tourism

	Ballou STAY	DCPS	Barbering Childcare and Development Cosmetology Graphic Design & Illustration
	Friendship Technology Preparatory Academy	Charter	Engineering
	KIPP DC Legacy College Preparatory	Charter	Digital Media Cybersecurity (ATC) General Nursing (ATC)
	Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS	Charter	Cybersecurity (ATC) General Nursing (ATC)

Appendix B: ATC Program Offerings as of SY 25-26

Program	Courses	Dual Credit	Internship	Partnerships
Clinical Medical Assistance Pathway	Psychology, Medical Terminology, Pre-Anatomy & Physiology, Anatomy & Physiology I, Health Promotion Policy and Politics, CCMA I, CCMA II	You will earn transcribed dual credit from all ATC courses from Trinity Washington University and University of the District of Columbia (UDC).	Yes, junior and senior students will have the option to apply to two competitive internship opportunities; CRI (summer) and AIP (school year)	Trinity Washington University, UDC, Whitman Walker, Children's National, Medstar, FEMS, Local 36
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Pathway	Psychology, Medical Terminology, Pre-Anatomy & Physiology, Anatomy & Physiology I, Health Promotion Policy and Politics, EMT I, EMT II	You will earn transcribed dual credit from all ATC courses from Trinity Washington University and University of the District of Columbia (UDC).	Yes, junior and senior students will have the option to apply to two competitive internship opportunities; CRI and AIP	Trinity Washington University, UDC, Whitman Walker, Children's National, Medstar, FEMS, Local 36
Cybersecurity	Foundations of Cybersecurity Internetworking Technologies Digital Forensics Cybersecurity Capstone	You will earn transcribed dual credit from all ATC courses at UDC	Yes, the Cybersecurity Capstone will be a paid internship during the school year.	UDC

General Nursing	Principles of Health Science Medical Terminology Anatomy & Physiology Medical Microbiology	You will earn transcribed dual credit from all ATC courses at Trinity Washington University	Yes, you can participate in an internship during the summer	Trinity Washington University
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Note: A Dental Assistant pathway will launch in SY 26-27 at the Ward 5 ATC.

Appendix C: ATC Wait List for SY 25-26

Home School	Ward	Offers CTE?		Enrolled ⁴⁵	Waitlist ⁴⁶	Applied to ATC for SY 25-26 ⁴⁷
Cardozo Education Campus	1	X		11	<10	13
Columbia Heights Education Campus	1	X		22	14	26
Girls Global Academy PCS	2	X		10	<10	<10
Jackson-Reed High School	3	X		24	31	42
MacArthur High School	3	X		<10	42	47
Capital City Public Charter School	4			10	12	22
Paul PCS	4			19	11	18
Roosevelt High School	4	X		<10	29	33
Dunbar	5	X		27	16	33
McKinley Tech High School	5	X		15	<10	13
Phelps ACE High School	5	X		18	5	14
Sojourner Truth PCS	5	X		19	<10	13
Washington Leadership Academy PCS	5	X		12	<10	<10
Cesar Chavez PCS	7	X		15	33	45
Eastern High School	7	X		20	11	23

⁴⁵ Enroll means students who are selected from the enrollment lottery who complete the enrollment process and are enrolled in their ATC courses as of Oct 1 of the given school year. The reason there is not a clear alignment of the numbers is that OSSE does not finalize official enrollment until Oct 1, and students selected from the enrollment lottery might decide not to enroll. These students would not be considered waitlist students.

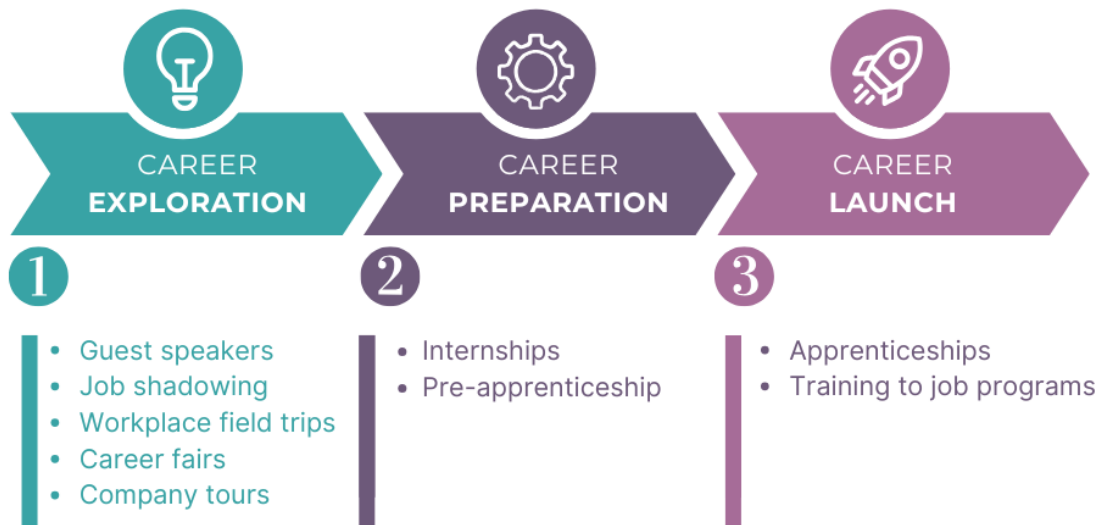
⁴⁶ Waitlist means any student who is not selected from the enrollment lottery.

⁴⁷ Applied means public high school students who complete an ATC interest form and/or are added to the ATC applicant list by school staff.

Friendship PCS – Collegiate	7	X		35	10	27
HD Woodson HS	7	X		11	38	46
IDEA PCS	7	X		14	35	45
Maya Angelou PCS	7	X		12	<10	14
Ron Brown High School	7	X		<10	18	25
Ballou High School	8	X		11	18	25
Friendship PCS - Tech Prep	8	X		12	<10	14
Kipp DC PCS - College Preparatory	8	X		12	12	19
KIPP Legacy	8	X		<10	<10	11
Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS	8	X		17	25	34

Total applicants: >600

Appendix D: Work-Based Learning Framework



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