

GROWING MORE OF OUR OWN

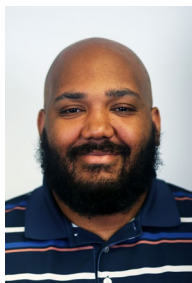


Teach Plus Pennsylvania Recommendations to Increase the Visibility, Utilization, and Effectiveness of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Career and Technical Education Program of Study in General Education



A Policy Memo for the Pennsylvania Department of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Pennsylvania is currently grappling with a significant teacher shortage crisis, characterized by a staggering decline of over 70% in new Instructional I certifications over the past decade, alongside a climbing teacher attrition rate that recently reached an all-time high of 7.7%. In the 2022-2023 school year alone, 9,587 teachers left the profession, while only 5,101 new teachers received certification. By sheer numbers, this loss of educators is unsustainable.

Moreover, Pennsylvania continues to face an acute shortage of teachers of color, with under 7% teachers of color compared to 38% students of color. The lack of representation of male teachers of color is particularly troubling; they comprise less than 2% of Pennsylvania's teacher workforce, with Black males representing under 1% of Pennsylvania public school teachers. These challenges are compounded by systemic disparities within the teaching profession. Prevailing societal norms tend to steer white women towards teaching careers from an early age, while students of color often encounter limited encouragement until later educational stages, perpetuating the underrepresentation of teachers of color.

However, amidst these challenges lies an opportunity for transformative policy intervention. Grow-your-own pathways for high school students are a promising strategy, tailored to local needs, to both address teacher shortages and diversify the educator workforce by enabling districts to cultivate a diverse pool of future educators reflective of their communities.

In 2022, the Pennsylvania General Assembly established a new career and technical education (CTE) program of study in general (K-12) education, and in 2023, the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Committee for Education Talent Recruitment finalized the program design. The 2023-24 school year was the first year in which Pennsylvania public school entities could apply for approval to offer this new CTE program of study in education, which has been designated by the department with the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code 13.0101. Currently, 13 school entities have applied for department approval.

As with all policy changes, strong and thoughtful implementation is critical. In order for the CTE program of study in education to achieve its intended outcome, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will need to take an intentional approach to increasing the visibility, utilization, and effectiveness of the program so that more aspiring educators have access to this pathway and exit from it with a strong foundation to continue pursuing teaching as a career. With this in mind, the Expanding and Diversifying the Teacher Workforce working group of the Teach Plus Pennsylvania Policy Fellowship has developed a set of recommendations for the department to guide their immediate implementation and expansion of the program in spring 2024 as well as into the future.

We are a group of educators from across Pennsylvania, and in preparing these recommendations, we researched effective CTE education programs in other states, interviewed staff from newly approved programs here in Pennsylvania, interviewed administrators and staff from educator preparation programs and K-12 school entities to identify potential barriers and opportunities, and examined best practices from successfully implemented programs in the commonwealth.

Based on our research, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Proactively market the program.
2. Provide context for and address misconceptions about CTE.
3. Provide related resources to make the CTE program of study in education more accessible.
4. Broaden articulation agreements to ensure students earn portable college credits.
5. Dedicate funding to support the costs of launching local CTE programs in education.

RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Proactively market the program

As we interviewed key stakeholders across Pennsylvania to ask them what it would take for them to apply for approval to launch a CTE program in education in their setting, we found that many educators are unaware of this new grow-your-own pathway for high school students. With the end of the window for school entities to apply for program approval for the 2024-25 school year rapidly closing, it will be necessary for PDE to take an aggressive and multifaceted approach to marketing the program to key stakeholders to raise awareness of the program and the application process.

We recommend that the Chief Talent Officer, staff from the Bureau of Career and Technical Education, and staff from the Communications division of the department (potentially with the help of an outside firm) collaborate to develop a comprehensive marketing plan to promote the program of study. Possible elements of the marketing plan are included below.

Webpage

While the department does have a [dedicated webpage for CIP 13.0101](#), it currently only contains a link to the task grid. The webpage does not contain user-friendly information for potential program sponsors or students about what the education program of study is, what value it offers, how school entities can apply to offer the program, or other introductory information. When we have encountered individuals who want to learn more about how to bring the program to their school, we have not had a link to share with them that would contain answers to these questions and more. We recommend developing a simple but attractive webpage that includes:

- + A description of the education program of study in accessible, jargon-free language.

- + The value proposition for both schools and students in offering the program. This section may also include student and staff testimonials from schools offering the program.
 - Sample value proposition message: “Teaching is foundational to our society's success. Pennsylvania's new CTE program in K-12 education is a grow-your-own pathway to help high school students from your community become your future teachers. Through this program, students will gain hands-on experience to spark interest in teaching while earning college credit to save money and time in completing their teaching degree.”
- + A concise description of the application process, including who can apply, what the steps are, what the timeline is, and where applicants can obtain additional support and resources (with appropriate links included).
- + A funding section about what sources of funding are available and how they can be accessed, including links to grants and other funding opportunities.
- + A curriculum section with information on curricular requirements, the program's task grid and assessment requirements, sample curricular materials, and additional external resources such as Educators Rising.
- + A list of school entities approved to offer the program.
- + A “Frequently Asked Questions” section clarifying misconceptions about the CTE program, the curricular requirements, and the next steps for students after the CTE program.
- + An “Additional Resources” section with resources such as one-pagers, recorded webinars, links to partner organizations, and contact information for the program of study lead staffer.

For an example of a compelling (though more student-facing) webpage, see [Delaware](#).

Webinars and Information Sessions

The department currently has a single webinar planned to market the education program of study for the 2024-25 school year. In order to ensure more stakeholders have opportunities to gain more information, additional webinars or information sessions should be scheduled, and these sessions should be marketed in many different ways beyond [PENN*LINK](#). Webinars should be offered at varying times, including late afternoon and evening times, in order to allow access for school staff who cannot attend during the school day.

In addition to department-sponsored sessions, the department should partner with key stakeholder groups to co-host information sessions for their members and share out additional resources. Below is a suggested list of key stakeholder groups that should be engaged as partners:

- + Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) - this group holds periodic virtual lunch-and-learns, which could be a good venue for presenting
- + Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools (PARSS)
- + Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium (PEDC)
- + Pennsylvania Principals Association (PPA)

- + Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)
- + American Federation of Teachers Pennsylvania (AFT-PA)
- + Pennsylvania Career and Technical Association (PACTA)
- + Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (PACTE)
- + Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units (PAIU)
- + Individual intermediate units could also convene their member districts for regional information sessions

Additionally, the department should identify opportunities throughout the year to present in-person at different conferences and other events to spread awareness. For example, many of the above groups host one or more annual conferences and events, and PDE-sponsored conferences such as the SAS conference are also opportunities to spread awareness.

Information sessions should offer similar content to what is suggested on the website, with an emphasis on the value of the program, a clear explanation of the application process and timeline, resources to support schools, and time for questions.

The department should develop a slide deck that can be used for these presentations; these slides could then also be shared with partner organizations to present to their members, and included on the program webpage.

Press and Earned Media

The department should develop a press strategy to generate statewide media coverage of this new program of study. This could include holding press conferences or events at current approved program sites, as Senator Hughes recently did at Science Leadership Academy at Beeber in Philadelphia, to highlight the program and this new approach to grow-your-own. Other tactics might include press releases, pitches to individual news outlets (print and television) for coverage, and working with key messengers to write op-eds and letters to the editor.

Additional Collateral

As part of its marketing plan, the department should also consider developing a communications toolkit that could be shared with partners, including but not limited to the organizations listed previously, to spread awareness about the new program of study and how to apply. This communications toolkit could include:

- + Sample social media graphics and captions
- + Blurbs of different lengths for inclusion in e-newsletters
- + Short videos about the program of study
- + Suggested talking points about the program of study
- + Student- and family-facing materials about the program of study

2. Provide context for and address misconceptions about CTE

When many people think of career and technical education (CTE), they associate it with vocational training for skilled trades such as carpentry, automotive technology, cosmetology, and welding. Because CTE programs of study are required to provide students with an industry-recognized credential upon graduation, which for many trades allows program completers to immediately enter the workforce, many educators view CTE as an alternative “track” or pathway for students who do not plan to pursue postsecondary education, not as a potential option for college-bound students.

While these are outdated misconceptions – many CTE programs offer college credit, and being a CTE student and being college-bound are not mutually exclusive – these misconceptions must be addressed in order to get more schools, particularly traditional high schools, to embrace the education program of study. When speaking with education stakeholders, we encountered confusion about how the teaching profession, which requires a bachelor’s degree for certification, could fit into their perception of what CTE is. It is true that the education program of study is relatively unique among CTE programs in that students graduating from this program won’t be able to earn a terminal credential by the end of high school; they’ll still need to attend college to obtain their bachelor’s degree and teaching certificate.

The education program of study is also unique in that many certified teachers can qualify to teach within this program, whereas most CTE programs of study are taught by teachers with expertise in non-education industries, who may be familiar with the vocabulary and requirements of CTE because they obtained CTE certification. In contrast, a typical secondary English or special education teacher, who could potentially be tapped to lead their high school’s education program of study, would likely be unfamiliar with CIP codes, articulation agreements, or the process for CTE program approval. Many secondary educators also associate CTE programs with Career and Technical Education Centers (CTCs), many of which serve multiple districts, and do not realize that traditional high schools can also host CTE programs.

In order to meet the department’s goals of expanding the education program of study broadly across Pennsylvania, including into traditional high schools, it will be important to provide public school administrators and teachers with additional context around CTE and address misconceptions about CTE being incompatible with the teaching profession. We also recommend that the department articulate to school districts the specific benefits of launching a CTE program in education, as opposed to other grow-your-own program designs for high school students with which they may be more familiar.

In order to make the CTE program of study in K-12 education accessible to educators without previous experience with CTE, the department should be intentional about defining key CTE vocabulary and terms, including but not limited to:

- + Career and technical education (CTE)
- + Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes
- + Occupational Advisory Committee (OAC)
- + Competency task list

- + Career and technical student organization (CTSO)
- + Articulation agreement
- + Students Occupationally and Academically Ready (SOAR) program

Additionally, because these terms may not be understood by non-CTE educators and may discourage key stakeholders from engaging in information sessions to learn more about the program of study in an accessible way, the department should be mindful about the use of jargon and acronyms such as those above in initial outreach and marketing materials.

Additionally, to support the expansion of the CTE program of study in K-12 education, the department should provide additional clarification and context around CTE in general, and address these specific points about the CIP 13.0101 program of study:

- + The education program of study (CIP 13.0101) can be offered by a CTC, but it also can be housed at a high school.
- + Whether hosted at a high school or at a CTC, the structure and design of the CTE program of study in education can vary. Students might spend up to half the day in the program learning skills applicable to teaching through both the study of theory and the experience of observing and assisting in other classrooms on-site or off-site. Through articulation agreements and dual enrollment opportunities, some of these courses may be for college credit.
- + Due to the unique nature of the education program of study, hosting the program on-site at a high school may offer particular benefits, such as reducing travel time, allowing students to still engage in college-prep and advanced academic courses and electives, and making it easier to observe and work with a broad range of grade levels and subject areas.
- + Specific benefits of running an approved CTE program in general education include:
 - A coherent program of study: The required content for the program of study is articulated by the department through the [competency task list](#). This task list was developed by education experts, including educator preparation program staff, to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to successfully enter an educator preparation program. By designing an instructional sequence based on this task list, schools will ensure their students are set up for success in college and later in the classroom.
 - College credit and financial savings: Students who complete the program of study and enter college as an education major will benefit from the dual-enrollment agreements that their districts form with local colleges and universities. These college credits will offer substantial cost-savings, thus reducing the financial barrier of a college education.
 - Industry-recognized credentials: While high school students will not graduate from the CTE program of study in education fully certified to teach, they will graduate with certain industry credentials that will benefit them as they continue their pathway into the field of education. Those credentials may include ALICE certification, CPR certification, mandated reporter certification, and required clearances. Additionally, while Pennsylvania does not require a certification for paraprofessionals, program completers would be well-qualified and competitive candidates for paraprofessional positions upon graduation, which may allow some to pursue their bachelor's degree and certification while earning a salary and potentially with financial support from their employer to pay for their remaining education costs.

In addition to providing the context and clarification above, the department should directly address the following misconceptions through the use of Frequently Asked Questions documents and in their other marketing materials:

- + **Myth #1:** Students who are college-bound cannot be enrolled in a CTE program.
 - Fact: Students who are college-bound can absolutely enroll in CTE programs. CTE programs develop articulation agreements with local universities and institutions of higher education so that CTE students can earn college credits that will be transferable to many postsecondary institutions, including PASSHE schools.
- + **Myth #2:** CTE programs can only be housed in CTCs.
 - Fact: Some districts are choosing to sponsor the program of study in their traditional high schools, where students can also access honors and advanced courses and an array of electives. Over half of currently approved programs are sponsored by districts, not CTCs.
- + **Myth #3:** Taking on the program and curriculum design for this program of study is overwhelming.
 - Fact: The department has created a competency task list that provides a framework of essential content to cover, while allowing flexibility for school entities to design a program that works in their context. There are also existing curricula, such as Educators Rising, which can be purchased to support teachers in implementing this program. The department will also continue to provide additional support and resources to schools as they develop their programs.
- + **Myth #4:** There is no funding available to support this CTE program.
 - Fact: Schools can access a variety of funding sources to support this program of study. These sources may include federal Perkins funds, state CTE funds, upcoming dual-enrollment and grow-your-own grant opportunities from the department, and specific grants to support schools in purchasing the Educators Rising curriculum. Over time, there may also be opportunities to access workforce development funds by connecting CTE programs to apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. For more details, see Recommendation #5.

3. Provide related resources to make the CTE program of study in education more accessible.

In addition to supporting educators without a background in CTE in navigating the requirements and vocabulary of CTE and addressing misconceptions specific to the education program of study, we recommend that the Pennsylvania Department of Education intentionally develop and share resources to support more school entities in starting and successfully completing the approval process. Now that there are over a dozen approved programs across Pennsylvania, the department should begin to develop a bank of sample and exemplar artifacts for different components of the program application. For example, prospective applicants would benefit from seeing sample course scope and sequences, sample articulation agreements, and other program design documents.

The General Education program of study (CIP 13.0101) does not have a required curriculum, but instead offers a flexible task grid that can be addressed in many ways. However, many schools may find the task of developing an aligned curriculum from scratch to be a daunting barrier to application. The Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) recently became the [official coordinator](#) for [Educators Rising](#) in Pennsylvania. Educators Rising is a national organization that has developed a highly regarded high school curriculum for future teachers, and the curriculum is well-aligned with the program of study, as it was consulted in the program's design. Educators Rising is also a career and technical student organization (CTSO), and through its network offers regional, statewide, and national conferences for high school students; linkages to educator preparation programs and programming for college students; and resources for teachers teaching the Educators Rising curriculum and leading grow-your-own programs.

The department should coordinate closely with PSEA to identify ways to share Educators Rising resources with potential program applicants. PSEA was recently awarded a grant to allow them to offer the Educators Rising curriculum for free to underserved districts, and the department should highlight this opportunity to prospective applicants. The department should also consider purchasing a statewide license to Educators Rising, as other states have done, so that it can offer the curriculum free of charge to any school entity that seeks approval.

As the department identifies other barriers to program application or approval, it should continue to develop additional resources to support schools as they consider and engage in the application process. These resources should also include support around dual enrollment and articulation agreements as well as guidance around funding for programs.

4. Broaden articulation agreements to ensure students earn portable college credit

In order to become an approved CTE program of study in general education, school entities must have a dual enrollment agreement with at least one college or university. So far, approved programs have developed agreements with local institutions of higher education, including both community colleges and four-year institutions.

However, there is no required number of college credits that students must earn through the program of study, and students' credits may not transfer to another institution if they choose to enroll in a different educator preparation program after high school graduation.

To maximize the value and portability of college credits earned through the education program of study, we recommend that the department utilize its relationships with Pennsylvania institutions of higher education generally, and educator preparation programs specifically, to support the development and broadening of articulation agreements for college credits related to the education program of study. As a long-term goal, the department should work to ensure that all PASSHE universities and public community colleges agree to grant a certain number of credits for completers of the general education program of study.

This recommendation will take time to fully implement because there are so many institutions of higher education across the commonwealth. However, the department has a unique position of influence as the approver of educator preparation program providers and the agency overseeing higher education for the entire state. The Bureau of Postsecondary Education should be engaged to support this work, which may also complement other efforts to improve articulation and credit transfer across institutions in teacher education pathways and more generally.

5. Dedicate funding to support the cost of launching local CTE programs in education

There are many existing funding sources that schools could access to support the launch and ongoing operation of a program of study in education, such as Perkins funds and state CTE dollars, but many potential applicants may be unfamiliar with these funding sources. It is important that the department includes in its marketing materials, including on the webpage and in information sessions, user-friendly information about existing funding, any requirements or restrictions for using it, and information on how to access it. In addition to opportunities to access public dollars, the department should also publicize other funding opportunities, such as the grant through PSEA to support districts in purchasing curricula that can be used in programs.

Beyond communicating about existing funding, however, the department should proactively identify dedicated funding streams to support the launch of new CTE programs of study in K-12 education. For example, if the department opens up new grant opportunities to support dual enrollment, CTE, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, or postsecondary pathways, it should designate a portion of those resources specifically for approved CIP 13.0101 programs of study and their partner institutions of higher education.

Additionally, Governor Shapiro's proposed [2024-2025 budget](#) allocates \$10 million to the Educator Talent Recruitment Account, presenting an opportunity to support CTE programs in education. The account, created by Article 15-K of Act 55 of 2022, allows the department to spend resources on evidence-based strategies to increase participation in the educator workforce. We recommend that, if allocated, a significant portion of the \$10 million be earmarked specifically to cover essential costs for approved programs of study and their higher education partners, including costs for dual enrollment, curriculum, and teacher professional development.

Finally, the department should continue to explore additional possibilities for increasing funding to support approved CTE education programs, including working with the Department of Labor & Industry to create linkages between the General Education CTE program of study and apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship programs that may allow programs to draw down workforce development dollars to support training/education costs and even compensation for high school students, as well as the subsidization of their continued education toward their teaching certificate.

Investing dedicated resources toward CTE programs in K-12 teaching is a prudent investment that offers immediate benefits. Districts currently spend up to [\\$27,000](#) per teacher vacancy, so investing in the CTE pathway into teaching will save districts money over time. By better preparing and developing future teachers starting at an earlier age, the department will also improve the stability and effectiveness of the teacher workforce and ultimately improve student learning and achievement.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, with several intentional and strategic adjustments to its current approach, the department can significantly increase the likelihood that the CTE program of study in general education becomes a critical element in solving Pennsylvania's teacher shortage crisis. While our recommendations may require the department to take a more hands-on approach to marketing and supporting the program of study than it has taken with other programs of study, such an approach is warranted due to the critical nature of the current shortage and the department's key role in building a strong and diverse educator workforce. By implementing the outlined recommendations, Pennsylvania can create affordable and high-quality pathways for thousands of high school students into the education profession and cultivate a diverse and sustainable educator workforce, thereby fostering educational equity and improving student outcomes statewide. Teach Plus Pennsylvania stands ready to assist the department in implementing these recommendations and ensuring students in every corner of the commonwealth have access to this promising new grow-your-own pathway into teaching.

ABOUT TEACH PLUS

Teach Plus is dedicated to the mission of empowering excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that advance equity, opportunity, and student success. Since 2009, Teach Plus has developed thousands of teacher leaders across the country to exercise their leadership in shaping education policy and improving teaching and learning, to create an education system driven by access and excellence for all. teachplus.org



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