



**Illinois
State Board of
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NEWS

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Illinois' Career and Technical Education plan among the first to receive federal approval

Plan raises the bar for CTE in Illinois and sets students up for success in post-pandemic economy

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois' plan for Career and Technical Education (CTE) is among the first in the nation to receive federal approval. The U.S. Department of Education signed off on the Illinois plan May 22 in its [first round of approvals](#), which included six states. The Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Community College Board jointly developed the plan in collaboration with educators, students, and businesses. The plan raises the bar for CTE in Illinois and sets up students for success in the post-pandemic economy.

[CTE](#) prepares students for high-skill, high-wage, in demand occupations -- from manufacturing, logistics, and natural resources to information technology, communications, and health sciences. Middle and high school CTE programs in Illinois serve more than 283,000 students while Illinois' community college CTE programs serve more than 131,000 students.

"Career and technical education programs are vital in preparing students to enter the workforce with the skills they need to succeed," said Governor JB Pritzker. "Illinois is among the first states to have our plan approved by the U.S. Department of Education, and we are incredibly proud to be recognized for our plan's focus on equity and inclusion. I look forward to continuing the important work of strengthening Illinois' CTE programs, and I thank all the educators, business leaders, and stakeholders for their valued input in our state plan."

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the importance of preparing students for in-demand employment. Illinois' plan establishes pathways from high school diploma to high-quality degree or credential, while ensuring students gain essential skills and experiences along the way. High school students in CTE programs graduated at a rate of 97 percent in 2018, compared to the 88 percent statewide average.

Illinois' plan provides financial incentives for programs to offer dual-credit opportunities and connect students directly with businesses in their area. Workforce connections help students develop employability skills and gain access to mentorship, internships, and apprenticeships. Illinois' new statewide definition for program quality requires engagement with local workforce leaders and deeper alignment with state standards in academic subjects, so students graduate ready for both college and careers.

Illinois' plan strengthens and reflects the state's commitment to equity for all students. The plan requires funded programs to meet benchmarks for size, scope, and recruitment. For the first time, Illinois now requires CTE programs to analyze disaggregated data on student participation and performance. Programs must identify gaps and create strategies to recruit and support special student populations, such as students who are parenting, military-connected, or in temporary housing.

In response to the high demand for teachers in Illinois, the plan also includes New Educator Preparation Pathways to jumpstart secondary students into careers in teaching.

The federal bipartisan Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, also known as Perkins V, was enacted on July 31, 2018. It calls upon each state to craft a plan to fulfill the promise of CTE as an engine for economic empowerment. Gov. Pritzker's fiscal year 2020 budget included the first increase in state CTE funding in five years.

"Our Perkins plan raises the bar for CTE in Illinois," said Illinois State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala. "We now have higher standards for program quality, equity, and access, as well as tools and strategies to help programs meet these higher standards. Our plan includes funding to incentivize deeper connections between students and employers. Strong Career and Technical Education will help Illinois rebuild our economy after COVID-19 and equip our students with the skills and experiences they need to succeed in a 21st-century workforce."

"The Illinois Perkins Plan reflects the diversity of our state and lifts up the voices of the thousands of Illinois students and employers," said Illinois Community College Board Executive Director Dr. Brian Durham. "This plan builds upon the exceptional responsiveness of community colleges while also challenging them to assess their programs in a way that ensures more equitable delivery and better, more seamless transitions for students from high school to college. As our state grapples with the economic downturn from the COVID-19 pandemic, CTE programs provide an important foundation for promoting education and workforce partnerships that enable people to enter the workforce with the technical skills needed for jobs offering a family-sustaining wage."

"Manufacturers are pleased with the federal approval of the state's Perkins Plan that will help ensure we have a qualified pipeline of workers," said Mark Denzler, president and CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association. "Illinois manufacturers currently employ nearly 600,000 workers, and the increased funding coming to Illinois will help the education system stay abreast of technological advancements and help elevate the pool of talent available to employers. The IMA and our Education Foundation are pleased to have contributed to this successful effort."

Read the full plan at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Perkins-Plan.pdf>. Learn more about CTE in Illinois at www.isbe.net/cte.