Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee Annual Report

Presentation to FCPS School Board

May 30, 2026

Table of Contents

Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee Annual Report 0
Table of Contents 1
Executive Summary 2
Key Recommendations 2
Summary of SY25-26 CTEAC Recommendations 3
Subcommittee on Pathways Report: 4
Subcommittee on Partnerships Report: 4
Subcommittee on By-laws Report: 6
Current and Proposed Committee Charge 6
Strategic Plan Alignment 6
Summary of Actions from SY24-25 Recommendations 6
Appendix A: SY25-26 Summary of Public Comment 8
Appendix B: SY25-26 Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee (CTEAC) Attendance Summary 9
Appendix C: SY25-26 Voting Record for Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee (CTEAC) 10
Appendix D: Additional Resources 12
What are Trends for Post-High School Graduates: College & Career Outcomes 12
College Enrollment Trends 12
Employment and Labor Market Outcomes 12
Career and Work Arrangements 12
Key Takeaways 13

Executive Summary

The Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee (CTEAC) respectfully submit the following recommendations for consideration by the Fairfax County School Board and FCPS administration.

CTE programs currently serve approximately 60,000 students and play a critical role in preparing learners for high-demand careers. In recent years, students, staff, and programs have demonstrated resilience amid public health challenges, fiscal constraints, and rapid technological change. Despite these pressures, CTE continues to deliver meaningful, career-connected learning experiences that shape students' futures. CTEAC members have seen this impact firsthand. As one example, the Committee Chair's son is now a successful café owner, due in large part to his two years in the Chantilly Academy Culinary program under Chef Doubleday. Experiences like this illustrate the lasting value of CTE and the importance of expanding access to these opportunities. Looking ahead, we encourage FCPS to deepen its commitment to CTE through innovative strategies, stronger partnerships, and earlier student engagement. With increased collaboration among school leaders, counselors, and community partners, FCPS can help more students identify and pursue meaningful career pathways, beginning as early as elementary and middle school through structured career exploration.

Key Recommendations

1. Expand Awareness of CTE Through Strategic and Creative Outreach - Increase student and family awareness by leveraging coordinated communications. Engage PTAs, school leaders, central communications, and School Board members to promote CTE pathways through consistent, high-impact messaging.

2. Address Staffing Gaps to Strengthen Partnerships - Enhance capacity for business and community engagement by addressing staffing limitations and implementing a coordinated outreach strategy to increase awareness of formalized partnerships. Expand and leverage partnerships with the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, the Chamber of Commerce, and Educate Fairfax to scale outreach, strengthen employer engagement, and increase access to CTE programming, including off-site learning and alignment with emerging workforce trends such as artificial intelligence.

3. Expand and Promote Apprenticeship Opportunities - Grow work-based learning opportunities by reducing barriers to employer participation. Pilot and expand initiatives such as "Apprentice-for-a-day" experiences, employer storytelling campaigns, and industry-led projects, while increasing apprenticeship opportunities for students within FCPS.

4. Update and Align CTEAC Bylaws - The CTEAC bylaws have been revised for the first time since 2014 to align with the updated FCPS Committee Handbook, ensuring compliance and strengthening committee governance.

CTEAC appreciates the opportunity to support FCPS in advancing high-quality, future-ready educational pathways for all students. We look forward to continuing collaboration in strengthening and expanding CTE across the division.

Respectfully submitted,
Irv Varkonyi, Chair, Marissa Appelbaum, Vice Chair, Paul Thieberger, Vice Chair

Summary of SY25-26 CTEAC Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Expand Awareness of CTE Through Strategic and Creative Outreach

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of communication platforms reaching students, families, and community stakeholders. Evaluate the need for a dedicated full-time communications coordinator to ensure consistent CTE messaging.
- Increase School Board member engagement in promoting CTE through newsletters, town halls, and district-level outreach.
- Partner with middle school PTAs to elevate awareness of CTE pathways, including hosting guest speakers and forming PTA subcommittees focused on career exploration.
- Strengthen existing outreach touchpoints, including increasing Career Investigation course enrollment and increasing focus on career pathway nights, curriculum fairs, academic advising, and school communications.

Recommendation 2: Address Staffing Gaps to Strengthen Community Engagement

- Assess staffing needs to support outreach to Fairfax County's 38,000-40,000 employers, using benchmarking, workload analysis, and cost-benefit approaches to optimize resource allocation.
- Develop and implement a coordinated outreach and communications strategy to increase awareness of formal partnership options and expand engagement across schools and industry partners.
- Establish and scale a clear pathway to convert existing informal, in-kind partnerships into sustained, multi-year agreements.
- Expand and leverage partnerships with organizations such as the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, industry associations, and Educate Fairfax to extend outreach capacity, funding, and employer engagement.
- Address program capacity constraints by expanding access to off-site instructional spaces and collaborating with industry partners to incorporate emerging workforce trends, including the impact of artificial intelligence, into career pathway development.

Recommendation 3: Expand and Promote Apprenticeship Opportunities

- Partner with industry to pilot and scale initiatives that increase employer participation, including "Apprentice-for-a-Day" immersion experiences, employer storytelling campaigns, and industry-led challenge projects
- Establish measurable goals for expanding apprenticeship opportunities across FCPS, Fairfax County Government, and key industries such as technology and health care.
- Align apprenticeship efforts with trade associations and industry councils to strengthen workforce pipelines.
- Evaluate and expand participation in Youth Registered Apprenticeship (YRA) programs, with clearly defined performance metrics.

Recommendation 4: Update and Align CTEAC Bylaws

- CTEAC bylaws were updated for the first time since 2014 to align with the FCPS Committee Handbook and reflect current governance practices.

Subcommittee on Pathways Report:

Recommendation 1: Expand Awareness of CTE Through Strategic and Creative Outreach

Rationale:

Students often have limited exposure to the breadth of career opportunities available through CTE programs. However, CTE fields such as cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, aviation, and biotechnology may feel abstract without direct engagement. Additionally, terms like "industry credential" and "work-based learning" may not resonate without clear, tangible examples.

Students are strongly influenced by peer experiences; without visible success stories, they may not perceive CTE options as viable pathways.

While FCPS offers multiple communication platforms, their effectiveness in reaching students, families, and stakeholders requires further evaluation. A coordinated communications strategy, including consideration of a dedicated communications role, would improve reach and impact.

School Board members and PTAs are critical partners in this effort. Board members can amplify messaging through community engagement, while PTAs can help connect families to CTE opportunities through programming and guest speakers.

Schools can further support awareness by increasing enrollment in the Career Investigations course, integrating career pathway videos in advisory lessons, encouraging participation in Career Pathway events, and increasing CTE information at curriculum fairs and during academic advising.

Subcommittee on Partnerships Report:

Recommendation 2: Address Staffing Gaps to Strengthen Community Engagement

Rationale:

Launched in February 2026, expanded partnership opportunities were designed to address barriers to establishing formalized in-kind partnerships at the school level. Increasing awareness of these options is essential to support schools in developing multi-year, mutually beneficial agreements that expand access to resources, real-world experiences, and student supports.

For 2026-2027, the FCPS partnership office and CTE should implement a coordinated approach that delivers clear, consistent messaging; aligns partners across the division; elevates awareness of opportunities and outcomes; and provides a defined pathway to convert existing informal partnerships into sustained, formal agreements.

Achieving this vision will require addressing current capacity constraints. Limited staffing restricts the division's ability to engage effectively with the county's large and diverse employer base, underscoring the need for a strategic assessment of staffing and outreach models. Expanding capacity will depend on a combination of staffing, stronger collaboration with partners such as the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and industry associations, and alternative resourcing approaches. Educate Fairfax also offers an opportunity to strengthen connections and secure funding to support equitable access to CTE programs.

Facility limitations further constrain program growth, particularly in high-demand regions, making partnerships for off-site instructional space an important strategy. Additionally, limited capacity may hinder proactive analysis of workforce trends, including the impact of artificial intelligence. Engaging industry partners will be critical to ensuring these insights inform curriculum updates and future career pathway development.

Recommendation: Expand and Promote Apprenticeship Opportunities

Rationale:

Apprenticeships provide students with structured, paid, work-based learning experiences that combine classroom instruction with real-world applications. These programs offer significant benefits: students gain industry credentials, work experience, and clear pathways into high-demand careers, while employers build a reliable talent pipeline.

Despite these benefits, employer participation at the high school level remains limited, with many organizations prioritizing post-secondary candidates.

To address this, FCPS should pursue targeted strategies to increase employer engagement, including pilot programs, awareness campaigns, and industry partnerships.

International models, such as Germany's apprenticeship system, offer valuable insights, though differences in structure and culture suggest a long-term, adapted approach for Fairfax County.

Setting measurable goals for apprenticeship expansion and aligning efforts with industry groups, Adult and Community Education programs, and Youth Registered Apprenticeships will be essential to scaling impact.

Industry	Examples of Opportunities
IT & Data Centers	AWS data center technician roles
Skilled Trades	Electrical, HVAC, plumbing, carpentry, industrial trades
Business & IT	ACE business/IT training linked to employer partnerships
Health & Medical	ACE health programs preparing for clinical pathways
Public Safety & Government	Fire, police, NCS, federal partners via youth employment programs

Subcommittee on By-laws Report:

Recommendation 4: Update CTEAC Bylaws

Rationale:
CTEAC Bylaws had not been updated since 2014. The recent revision ensures alignment with the FCPS Committee Handbook and reflects current governance standards and expectations.

Current and Proposed Committee Charge

The committee did not recommend a change in the CTEAC charge from the 2025-26 school year to the 2026-27 school year.

In collaboration with key stakeholders, ensure equitable awareness, access, and participation in all CTE programs. Ensure greater awareness of career-readiness options provided by CTE programs with emphasis on exposure to high demand fields, emerging workforce trends, and evolving leadership skills.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The CTEAC recommendations align with multiple goals of the FCPS Strategic Plan but directly support Goals 4 and 5. The strongest alignment is with Goal 5: Leading for Tomorrow's Innovation. The CTEAC plan emphasizes expanding apprenticeships, work-based learning, and industry partnerships, while aligning programs with high-demand careers and emerging fields such as artificial intelligence. It also focuses on strengthening career pipelines through deeper employer engagement.

Goal 4: Equitable Access & Opportunity is also a major focus of the report. The committee has prioritized expanding awareness of CTE programs and works to address barriers such as program access limitations, facility constraints, and uneven availability across schools. Additionally, the plan promotes earlier exposure to career pathways through expanded middle school opportunities.

Summary of Actions from SY24-25 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Increase middle school career exploration opportunities through the Career Investigations course offering.

As part of the fall 2025 course review process, the Career Investigations course was approved as a standard course offering for all FCPS middle schools. While each school must include the course in its list for course selection, actual course implementation will continue to depend on student interest, staffing, and facility availability. Initial pilot programs have yielded positive feedback, and increased enrollment is anticipated for the 2026-27 school year. The long-term goal is for the course to run at every middle school, ensuring that students gain exposure to career clusters, understand available academic pathways, and develop an informed academic and career plan for high school and beyond.

Recommendation 2: Meet student demand through reallocation of school-based resources.

Several specialized CTE courses offered at base high schools (automotive technology, JROTC, cosmetology, culinary arts, and early childhood careers) require unique facilities or resources that limit their availability across all schools. Currently, students whose base school does not offer these programs must rely on academy access, where seats are more competitive.

To improve access and equity, base schools offering these specialized programs should expand availability to students from neighboring schools. This practice has begun on a limited scale with transportation support and continue to grow annually. Sustained expansion will require a more centralized approach to staffing and resource allocation, which the current CTE/Academy staffing allocation cannot meet.

Recommendation 3: Provide equity in pay for CTE instructors by providing activity stipends for CTSO sponsors.

Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), including DECA, FBLA, and HOSA, are integral to CTE programs, providing students with leadership, competition, and career development opportunities. While these organizations now serve both co-curricular and extracurricular roles, their advisors dedicate significant time beyond the school day, including evenings, weekends, and summer commitments, without compensation.

Neighboring school divisions provide stipends for CTSO sponsorship; however, FCPS does not currently offer this support. Due to federal grant restrictions, the CTE office cannot fund these stipends. Although a request has been made to include CTSOs in the division's activity stipend schedule, no action has been taken. This lack of compensation is increasingly impacting teacher willingness to continue sponsoring these high-impact student opportunities.

Recommendation 4: Bring CTEAC expertise to Educate Fairfax by requesting the appointment of a CTEAC representative to their advisory board.

This year, the CTEAC chair was invited to participate in two subcommittee meetings, marking an initial step toward strong collaboration. Formalizing this partnership would enhance coordination and ensure that CTE priorities are consistently represented.

Appendix A: SY25-26 Summary of Public Comment

Month	Speaker	Topic
September 2025	N/A	No public comment
October 2025	N/A	No public comment
November 2025	N/A	No public comment
December 2025	N/A	No public comment
January 2026	N/A	No public comment
February 2026	N/A	No public comment
March 2026	N/A	No public comment
April 2026	N/A	No public comment
May 2026	N/A	No public comment

Appendix B: SY25-26 Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee (CTEAC) Attendance Summary

P= Present A= Absent N/A= Not applicable/meeting cancelled

Committee Member	Representing	Date Appointed	Sep 4	Oct 9	Nov 13	Jan 8	Feb 12	Mar 5	Apr 16	May 14
Naser Akhtar	PTA	8/12/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Marissa Appelbaum	Mason	7/17/2025	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Kristy Balbuena	Selection	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Matthew Bechtel	Selection	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sarah Blake	Selection	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Cindy Conley	Selection	2/12/2026	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	N	N
Kara Danner	Providence	7/17/2025	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Sally Driver	City of Fairfax	8/26/2025	N/A	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Scott Driver	City of Fairfax	8/26/2025	N/A	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
Todd Franklin	Selection	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Shawn Gregoire	Franconia	8/26/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ruhana Hafiz	Dranesville	8/26/2025	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y
Niki Haubner	Springfield	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
Elaine Ho	At-Large	2/12/2026	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N	Y
Virginia Judd	Selection	7/17/2025	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
Rich Kang	At-Large	8/26/2025	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Claire Kim	Student Rep	7/17/2025	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Mary Lewis	Selection	7/17/2025	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Joseph Parker	Selection	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Anitha Raj	Sully	7/17/2025	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y
Syed Rishad	Student Rep	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N
David Silversmith	Braddock	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Renee Small	Hunter Mill	7/17/2025	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
Shonna Smith	Selection	7/17/2025	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Paul Thieberger	Mt. Vernon	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Shivani Trivedi	Selection	7/17/2025	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Irvin Varkonyi	Selection	7/17/2025	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Belinda Williams	Selection	10/24/2025	N/A	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N/A	N/A
Wendy Williams	At-Large	7/17/2025	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Ashlee Young	Selection	12/17/2025	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

Appendix C: SY25-26 Voting Record for Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee

Member Name	District	Vote	Signature
Naser Akhtar	PTA	Y	DocuSigned by: Naser Akhtar 1DC47D21A7BE4A1...
Marissa Appelbaum	Mason	Y	Signed by: 43A7FE7C3106AF...
Kristy Balbuena	Selection	Y	Signed by: Kristy Balbuena E90B4139498244D...
Matthew Bechtel	Selection	Y	Signed by: Matthew Bechtel 63D663320EF9408...
Sarah Blake	Selection	Y	Signed by: Sarah Blake 0AA918C0F65848B...
Cindy Conley	Selection	Y	Signed by: Cindy Conley 99A2280DB8ED4EB...
Kara Danner	Providence	Y	Signed by: Kara Danner 2DAA946FB89F492...
Sally Driver	City of Fairfax	A	N/A
Scott Driver	City of Fairfax	A	N/A
Todd Franklin	Selection	Y	Signed by: Todd Franklin 639CB640D10D40E...
Shawn Gregoire	Franconia	Y	DocuSigned by: 6E76EDEC93D5462...
Ruhana Hafiz	Dranesville	Y	Signed by: 62EE9DC66FCB462...
Niki Haubner	Springfield	Y	Signed by: Niki Haubner 829C02E1F89D4EE...
Elaine Ho	At-Large	Y	DocuSigned by: Elaine Ho BF78F707FBC5465...
Virginia Judd	Selection	Y	DocuSigned by: Virginia Judd 2657E8107011424...
Rich Kang	At-Large	Y	DocuSigned by: 28691E2A6707449...
Claire Kim	Student Rep	Y	Signed by: Claire Kim 782B009802C94C7...
Mary Lewis	Selection	Y	Signed by: Mary Lewis DD5E3D58ED6E478...
Joseph Parker	Selection	Y	Signed by: Joseph E. Parker 30CB9DCC03CE8D6...
Anitha Raj	Sully	Y	DocuSigned by: 0BE3F99A542A449...
Syed Rishad	Student Rep	A	N/A
David Silversmith	Braddock	Y	DocuSigned by: DAVID SILVERSMITH 8459F3396B4F4E1...
Renee Small	Hunter Mill	A	N/A
Shonna Smith	Selection	A	N/A

Paul Thieberger	Mt. Vernon	Y	Signed by: Paul Thieberger 80BD09C35246404...
Shivani Trivedi	Selection	Y	Signed by: Shivani Trivedi A6AE072AC06640E...
Irvin Varkonyi	Selection	Y	Signed by: Irvin Varkonyi 5278BBAC61994F6...
Belinda Williams	Selection	N/A	N/A
Wendy Williams	At-Large	Y	DocuSigned by: Wendy Lindquist Williams 4076DC52EF4F461...
Ashlee Young	Selection	A	Signed by: Ashlee K Young 6A235D15413B49B...

Appendix D: Additional Resources

What are Trends for Post-High School Graduates: College & Career Outcomes

The value of CTE for FCPS lies in offering career options for FCPS students, upon graduation, together with completing their academic requirements for the state's academic diploma needed to gain college acceptance. A search on Copilot on 4/20/2026 summarized the following data.

Recent data show that the post-high school transition is shaped by shifting enrollment patterns, labor market conditions, and evolving career paths.

College Enrollment Trends

- In October 2024, **62.8%** of recent U.S. high school graduates (ages 16–24) were enrolled in college, little changed from 2023's 61.4% U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Men had a 55.4% enrollment rate, while women were at 69.5% U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Enrollment has been declining since the pandemic, reversing a long-term rise from the 1960s–2019 period when rates stayed between 66%–70% QualityInfo.
- Among recent high school dropouts, only 40% were working or seeking work, compared to 66.4% of those not enrolled in college U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Two-year college enrollment is rising among high-poverty school graduates, with persistence rates slightly down but first-year enrollment up Community College Daily.

Employment and Labor Market Outcomes

- For 20–29-year-olds with bachelor's degrees in 2024, **69.6% were employed**, similar to the prior year U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Across all U.S.-residing college graduates in 2023, **79% were employed**, with 84.5% working full time NSF - National Science Foundation.
- The Federal Reserve Bank of New York reports that in Q4 2025, recent college graduate unemployment rose to **5.7%,** and underemployment hit **42.5%**—its highest since 2020 FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of NEW YORK.
- Full-time work is more common in science, engineering, and related fields (77.7% full-time) than in non-S&E occupations (64.1%) NSF - National Science Foundation.

Career and Work Arrangements

- Many recent graduates enter "non-college" jobs that are skilled and well-paid, often transitioning to better roles after gaining experience FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of NEW YORK.
- Telework remains a notable feature, especially for those in tech, education, and professional services, reflecting pandemic-era changes NSF - National Science Foundation.

- Earnings for college graduates remain higher than for high school diploma holders, but wage growth has slowed in some sectors FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of NEW YORK.

Key Takeaways

- College enrollment is stable but lower than pre-pandemic highs, with more students entering two-year colleges, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Employment rates for recent graduates are holding, but underemployment is rising, signaling challenges in securing full-time, high-wage roles.
- Career paths are diversifying, with many graduates starting in skilled, non-college jobs before moving into higher-paying or specialized roles.
- Labor market conditions, especially in Q4 2025, suggest a tougher environment for entry-level graduates, with higher unemployment and underemployment rates.

These trends indicate that while many post-high school graduates are still enrolling in college, the labor market is becoming more competitive, and career trajectories are becoming more varied and experience driven.