

Connecting Career Pathways • Resources

Glossary of Career and Technical Education (CTE) Terms



Helping the next generation move Texas forward

What is CCP?

The Texas Department of Transportation Civil Rights Division (TxDOT CIV) has designed the Connecting Career Pathways (CCP) Program to introduce and integrate transportation infrastructure career awareness and exploration experiences in K-12 classrooms to connect existing curriculum and skill-building to pathways into the industry through innovative and interactive initiatives.

The Glossary of Career and Technical Education (CTE) Terms provides clear, standardized definitions of key terms and abbreviations used across education, workforce development, and industry sectors to reduce confusion. By offering concise explanations of commonly used language, the glossary helps users navigate CTE programs, understand career readiness concepts, and align with Texas workforce priorities.

If you have any questions about the information in this resource, please contact CCP@txdot.gov.



Why Does CCP Matter?

Texas faces a critical workforce challenge: 94% of construction firms report staffing shortages, which can delay projects, raise costs, and impact safety statewide. CCP addresses this by building early awareness and engagement with transportation careers, creating a strong talent pipeline for the future.



For more information email: CCP@txdot.gov

Visit us online at www.txdot.gov/about/programs/civil-rights/connecting-career-pathways.html

Table 1 - Glossary

Acronym or Term	Definition
Apprenticeship	Combines paid on-the-job training under the supervision of experienced journey workers with related classroom instruction
Career and Technical Education (CTE)	CTE programs offer a sequence of courses that provides students with coherent and rigorous content. CTE content is aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant technical knowledge and skills needed to prepare for further education and careers in current or emerging professions.
Career awareness	Introduces individuals to a range of occupations and industries, helping them understand job roles, required skills, and potential career paths and supports informed decisions about future education, training, and employment opportunities
Career cluster	Major groupings of career areas within a given field, which have similar skills as defined by industry area. In Texas, there are 14 career clusters that are linked to high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations.
Career exploration	Process of engaging individuals in activities that deepen their understanding of various occupations, industries, and career pathways. It includes hands-on experiences, site visits, career expos, and interactive learning that allow participants to investigate job roles, workplace environments, and skill requirements.
Career pathway	Structured sequence of education and training designed to prepare students for specific careers or career clusters, aligning with industry needs, and offering clear progression to higher education and advanced skills
Competition-based learning	Structured contests and challenges to help participants apply skills, solve problems, and demonstrate leadership. It promotes engagement through real-world scenarios and often includes opportunities for recognition and industry exposure. An example of this is a student's participation in a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO).
CTSO	Career and Technical Student Organizations: co-curricular groups that enhance CTE by providing students with leadership development, competitive experiences, and industry engagement. They support skill-building aligned with academic and workforce standards and foster pathways to credentials, employment, and lifelong learning.
Design challenges	Structured, hands-on learning experiences that engage participants in solving real-world problems through creative thinking, collaboration, and applied technical skills. They promote innovation and career readiness by simulating industry-relevant scenarios and encouraging exploration of professional pathways.

Glossary *(continued)*

Acronym or Term	Definition
Dual credit	Courses allowing students to earn both high school and college credit
Employability skills	Non-technical skills like communication and teamwork
ESC	Education Service Center: a term to describe the 20 regional Texas Education Agency (TEA) entities established to provide services to Texas school districts
Foundational CTE courses	Courses that introduce students to broad career fields and essential workplace skills. These courses often serve as entry points into programs of study, combining academic content with hands-on learning to support career exploration and readiness.
Hands-on learning	Involves active, experiential engagement where participants apply concepts through direct interaction with tools, materials, or environments. It supports skill development, career readiness, and real-world understanding by connecting learning to practical tasks and industry contexts.
High skill	A job or occupation that requires a degree, credential, or training beyond a high school diploma, as defined by the Texas Education Code
High wage	A job or occupation that has an annual median wage that exceeds \$47,499 (2025, statewide), as defined by Texas Workforce Commission
In-demand occupation	A job or occupation expected to have an employment change of at least 400 jobs statewide, as defined by Texas Workforce Commission
IBC	Industry Based Credential: certifications recognized by employers that validate an individual's skills and readiness for specific occupations. They align with workforce needs and are often integrated into CTE programs to support employability and career advancement.
Industry partner	A blanket term referring to federal, state and local agencies, private companies and associations in the transportation infrastructure industry
Internship	Experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting
ISD	Independent School District: a term typically used to describe a type of school district that operates independently from municipalities or counties. ISD is used as a common term to describe all school districts.

Glossary (continued)

Acronym or Term	Definition
Job shadowing	A form of career exploration where a student learns about a job by following a worker throughout the day like a shadow
LEA	Local Education Agency: a public school district, open enrollment charter school, or regional education service center, as defined by the Texas Education Agency. Note: Use School Systems instead of LEA in public-facing text.
LMI	Labor Market Information: includes all quantitative or qualitative data and analysis related to employment and the workforce, as defined by federal and state governments where the primary source is the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
OJT	On-the-Job Training: a form of training provided at the workplace, gaining firsthand experience performing tasks related to the role
Postsecondary	Education and training pursued after high school, including technical programs, community colleges, universities, and industry-based credential pathways. It supports career readiness by aligning learning with workforce needs and offering clear entry points into professional fields.
Professional learning community	An ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively to achieve better results for the students they serve
Programs of study	A recommended sequence of coursework for secondary and postsecondary education and career preparation based on a student's interest or career goal
Practicum	An advanced-level course, often in a specialized field of study, where a student has an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills learned in class to a work-based learning experience
School Systems	Traditional public school districts, open enrollment charter schools, or a combination of both, as defined by the Texas Education Agency. Note: Use School Systems instead of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in public-facing text.
Sequential coursework	A structured, progressive sequence of CTE courses that get more specialized and complex as students advance
SMEs	Subject Matter Experts: Individuals with deep knowledge in a specific field
STC	Summer Transportation Camp: a free camp for middle and high school students to explore the transportation industry and STEM fields, hosted at an institute of higher education through funds provided by TxDOT and other partners and sponsors

Glossary *(continued)*

Acronym or Term	Definition
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Often used in an educational context to describe an approach that combines these fields to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills
TEA	Texas Education Agency: the state agency responsible for overseeing public education in Texas, providing leadership, guidance, and support to school systems, and ensuring that all public-school students receive a quality education
Technical skills	Job-specific abilities required for occupational tasks
TEKS	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills: Texas state standards that define what students should know and be able to do at each grade level across all subject areas
THECB	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: a state agency that provides leadership and coordination for the Texas higher education system
Transferable skills	Skills applicable across multiple jobs or industries
Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative	A state level initiative that brings together the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to align education and workforce goals
TWC	Texas Workforce Commission: a state agency that provides workforce development services, including unemployment benefits and job training to employers and job seekers in Texas
USDOE	United States Department of Education: a cabinet-level agency responsible for overseeing education policy and administering funding for programs and individuals, including supporting state and local education systems
USDOL	United States Department of Labor: a cabinet-level federal agency responsible for enforcing labor laws, promoting worker welfare, and ensuring fair working conditions for all Americans
WBL	Work-Based Learning: an instructional method that links work experience with school-based instruction to promote critical thinking, foster social and psychological development, and enhance career and workplace-related knowledge