

# Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)

## *At a Glance:*

**Executive Director:** Dr. Ellen Solek

**Superintendent of Schools:** Dr. Justin Lowe

**Established -** 2022

**Statutory authority -** Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-95

**Central office –** 39 Woodland St., Hartford, CT

**Number of employees –** 2018

**Recurring operating expenses –** \$188,795,875

## **Organizational Structure**

The Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) is governed by a board that consists of eleven members: (1) Four executives of Connecticut-based employers who are nominated by the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission established pursuant to section 31-3h, and appointed by the Governor, (2) five members appointed by the State Board of Education, (3) the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, and (4) the Labor Commissioner. The Governor shall appoint the chairperson. The chairperson of the CTECS board shall serve as a nonvoting ex-officio member of the State Board of Education.

The Executive Director is the agency head responsible for the system's operation, administration and financial accountability. The Superintendent reports to the Executive Director and remains responsible for the operation and administration of the system's schools and all other educational matters.

The Executive Director and Superintendent oversee CTECS administration, Legal, Labor Relations, Affirmative Action, Personnel, Communications, Pupil Services, Fiscal, Curriculum and Instruction, and School Development and Accountability departments. Information Technology Services are provided by the Bureau of Information Technology Services, and Human Resources are provided by the Department of Administrative Services.

CTECS consists of 17 high schools, one technical education center, and two postgraduate schools for airframe mechanics and aircraft maintenance technology.

## **Mission**

We envision CTECS as the primary pipeline for Connecticut's skilled labor workforce. Through exemplary trade and academic programming, CTECS prepares trade-bound students to meet the skilled workforce needs in Connecticut.

## **Statutory Responsibility**

Under Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-95, CTECS is a public, state-wide system of technical education and career schools that offer full-time comprehensive secondary education, as well as part-time and evening, programs in vocational, technical, technological, and postsecondary education and training. The beneficiaries of CTECS are the approximately 11,000 technical high school students and their parents and guardians as well as the approximate 3,000 adult learners who attend part-time and evening apprenticeship and extension programs.

## **Public Service**

CTECS provides a unique and rigorous learning environment that: (1) ensures student academic success and trade/technology mastery; (2) prepares students for postsecondary education, including apprenticeships, and immediate productive employment; and (3) responds to employers' and industries' current and emerging global workforce needs and expectations through business/school partnerships.

CTECS consists of 17 high schools, one technical education center, and two postgraduate schools for aviation maintenance technicians. Out of the 169 Connecticut resident towns, 166 are represented within the CTECS student body.

CTECS operations are guided by four goals set forth in the Strategic Operating Plan. These goals areas encompass School Environment and Safety; Student Recruitment and Access; Trade and Academic Programming; and Talent Management. These goals along with several other benchmarks are used to measure the effectiveness of CTECS programming. Additional benchmarks include state-mandated assessments, work-based learning (WBL) participation and industry-recognized credentials earned.

WBL is offered as a way for students in grades 11 and 12 to gain real-world experience, work in teams, solve problems, and meet employers' expectations. Through partnerships with local companies, students work on real projects, gaining hands-on career development experience.

Unique to CTECS is the Student Workforce – a business run by students and faculty providing students with real projects for real customers here in Connecticut. A wide range of services are offered to the public at a fraction of the market price. The work helps prepare students for the transition from high school to the workforce.

Industry input is vital to providing quality and relevant Career and Technical Education programs that prepare students to enter the workforce. All trade areas hold program advisory committee meetings with local business and industry partners. Employers collaborate with educators to ensure CTECS curriculum, facilities, and credentials align with the latest industry trends and needs. Participation also allow employers to identify potential interns, pre-apprentices, or future employees who have been trained according to industry standards.

To provide the public with convenient access to information about CTECS programming and ease of communication, CTECS maintains websites for each of its 20 locations and central office. The websites

contains directory information, program information, news, policies and a contact form. Additionally, CTECS utilizes a school-to-home communication system to regularly update stakeholders. Social media (Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn) is also utilized as a communication tool.

## **Improvements/Achievements for fiscal year 2023-2024**

### **Work-Based Learning (WBL) Participation**

During the past academic year, 1,264 students actively participated in Work-Based Learning (WBL) programs. These programs provided students with hands-on experiences that bridge classroom learning with real-world applications, significantly enhancing their career readiness.

### **Partnerships with UCONN, DOT, and Carpenters Union**

CTECS strengthened its partnerships with the University of Connecticut (UCONN), the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Carpenters Union Local 326. These collaborations have expanded opportunities for students to engage in WBL experiences, gaining invaluable skills, industry insights and employment connections.

### **Seal of Biliteracy Achievements**

This year, 752 students earned the Seal of Biliteracy, demonstrating proficiency in two or more languages. Thirteen different languages were represented, reflecting the diverse linguistic capabilities of our students and preparing them for a global workforce.

### **Industry-Recognized Credentials**

CTECS students earned a total of 18,053 industry-recognized credentials, marking an 18% increase compared to the 2022-23 academic year. These credentials enhance their employability in various career fields.

### **Emissions Pilot Program**

Norwich Technical High School ran a successful pilot program aimed at tackling the shortage of emissions technicians in Connecticut. Through a unique partnership with Opus Inspection, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and CTECS, automotive students at Norwich Tech were trained and certified to become Certified Test Inspectors, offering a solution to the employment needs of dealerships and repair shops across the state while offering students a stepping stone into the automotive industry. Plans are underway to expand the initiative to 17 additional automotive programs within CTECS. Each year a total of over 220 students will graduate from CTECS' automotive programs.

### **Introduction of Electric Buses**

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded 25 zero-emission school buses to provide transportation services for CTECS. The Clean School Bus Program (CSB) aims to replace older, diesel-fueled school buses with zero-emission and clean buses to help Connecticut transition to zero-emission vehicles. CTECS electric buses will be utilized for athletic transport, student production activities off-campus, and health technology student clinical experiences.

### **Expansion of HVAC and Landscaping Program**

In response to regional industry needs, CTECS increased programming in HVAC (Stamford, CT) and Landscape Design (New Britain, CT). These expanded programs ensure students are prepared to meet the skilled-labor needs of local employers.

### **Integration of CT Wiz Immunization Registry**

The addition of the CT Wiz immunization registry to the Snap Electronic Health Record (EHR) platform increased the efficiency and accuracy of immunization record submissions from primary care offices and clinics to school nurses. This integration ensures timely and precise health record management.

### **Expansion of Nursing Staff**

To enhance the safety and well-being of students, staff, and visitors, CTECS hired additional head school nurses, head regional float nurses, and head substitute nurses. This expansion ensures that schools are adequately staffed with healthcare professionals.

### **Expansion of Special Education and Pupil Services**

An increase in Special Education instructors and Pupil Service staff has allowed us to enhance services for students.

### **Meal Services Achievements**

Over 1,800,000 meals were served to students this year. The implementation of new point-of-sale (POS) hardware and software systems streamlined reporting, tracking, and claiming of meals, improving the efficiency of our meal services and leading to the reimbursement of \$2 million, directly attributable to the new software's efficiencies. Several large pieces of aging cafeteria equipment were replaced, resulting in more energy-efficient and labor-saving practices.

### **Frontline Applitrack for Educator Recruitment**

CTECS piloted Frontline Applitrack for educator recruitment, hiring, and data tracking/analysis in alignment with Senate Bill 984. This system enhances our ability to attract and retain diverse and qualified educators.

### **Diversity Plan for Educator Workforce**

The CTECS District Plan to Increase the Racial, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity of the Educator Workforce was completed, submitted, and received conditional approval from the State Department of Education (SDE). This plan underscores our commitment to a diverse and inclusive educational environment.

### **Launch of Career Center**

A new Career Center was launched to provide students with comprehensive career guidance and resources. This center serves as a hub for career planning, job search assistance, and industry connections.

### **VOIP System Upgrade**

A Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) system was installed at all CTECS locations, replacing the outdated and unserviceable communication system. This upgrade enhances communication channels across all locations, mitigating risks and improving overall efficiency.

### **Pixellot/Play-on Sports Broadcasting**

The implementation of Pixellot/Play-on Sports broadcasting technology has had a direct impact on parents and students, allowing them to watch live streaming of sporting events. This improvement has enhanced program visibility and community engagement.

### **Student Hall/Pass System**

A student hall/pass system was introduced at all Title 1 locations, synchronizing with our Student Information System. This swipe-in, swipe-out tracking system enhances student safety by providing real-time location data.

### **GovQA for FOI Requests**

CTECS adopted GovQA to support management of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

### **Migration to Powerschool Presence**

The Current Adult Education CAENET student information system was migrated to the District Powerschool Presence, streamlining student information management and resulting in cost savings by eliminating the need for CAENET.

### **Virtual Reality Classroom Pilot**

A successful pilot of a Virtual Reality classroom model was conducted at Windham Technical High School. This initiative provides students with immersive learning experiences, enhancing engagement and understanding. The facility is designed to support students in academic and trade classes, and provide career preparation.

### **Cloud Migration**

The district completed the migration of its on-premise hardware footprint to the cloud. This move eliminates the need for hardware replacement and results in operational efficiencies across all locations.

### **1:1 Device Expansion for Adult Learners**

The 1:1 device program was expanded to include adult learners, increasing access to technology and educational resources for all students.

### **District WAN Configuration**

The District Wide Area Network (WAN) was reconfigured to meet new technical needs, such as supporting Esports. Bandwidth was doubled at every school, significantly increasing student access to digital resources.

## **Information Reported as Required by State Statute**

The Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) is committed to a policy of affirmative action/equal opportunity for all qualified persons and equal access to Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups. The CTECS does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of age, ancestry, color, civil air patrol status, criminal record (in state employment and licensing), gender identity or expression, genetic information, intellectual disability, learning disability, marital status, mental disability (past or present), national origin, physical disability (including blindness), race, religious creed, retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, sex (pregnancy or sexual harassment), sexual orientation, status as a victim of domestic violence, veteran status or workplace hazards to reproductive systems, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes.

The Affirmative Action Office, under the direction of the Executive Director, is responsible for ensuring the agency's compliance with a wide variety of federal and state laws and department policies relative to affirmative action and equal opportunity employment. This includes the investigation and resolution of discrimination complaints.

During the reporting period, the Department hired 257 employees: 75 White males, 107 White females, 18 Black males, 16 Black females, 10 Hispanic males, 20 Hispanic females, 3 AAIANHNPI females, 1 AAIANHNPI male, 1 (2 or more races) male and 6 (2 or more races) females. There were 54 goal candidates hired: 7 White males, 21 White females, 7 Black males, 4 Black females, 3 Hispanic males, 10 Hispanic females, 1 (2 or more races) male and 1 (2 or more races) female.