

The background of the slide is a composite image. The top left shows a line of yellow school buses, with the number '32' visible on the front of one. The bottom left shows a classroom with blue walls, decorated with colorful balloons and framed pictures. There are several small white tables and chairs arranged in the room.

Investing in Futures: Career Exploration in Kentucky's Middle Schools

Connecting Classrooms to Careers



Kentucky Department of
EDUCATION

KENTUCKY CTE
EMPOWERED
Today's Career and Technical Education

Today's Topics

- Provide supports for Middle School Counselors, Administration and Teaching Staff
- Importance of Early Career Exploration
- Provide Standards Aligned Resources

“Why should students in middle school be worried about their career?”

Kentucky's Commitment to Career Readiness

KENTUCKY ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR CAREER STUDIES

Kentucky Academic Standards



Kentucky Department of
E D U C A T I O N

Career Studies and Financial Literacy

June 2025



Kentucky Department of
E D U C A T I O N

Building Purpose Through Exploration

- Early Career Exploration Builds Confidence
- Informed Decision Making
- Boosts Engagement and Motivation
- Encourages Opportunity
- Time for Skill Building

Why Waiting Isn't an Option

- Prime developmental window
- Alignment with High School Planning
- Alignment to Post-Secondary Options and/or the workforce
- Reduce rates Opportunity Youth and Underemployment
- Engagement and dropout prevention

ILPs: Turning Exploration into Action

- Provide MS and HS advising and guidance to support each student's individual learning plan
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the individual learning plan process
- MS and HS collaborate to provide students and parents advising on the connection between education and career opportunities, including postsecondary financial planning
- Maintain each student's individual learning plan, make it readily available to students and parents, and ensure annual review and approval by students, parents, and school officials
- Beginning in eighth grade, the plan shall identify learning goals, required courses, electives, and extracurricular opportunities aligned to the student's academic, career, and postsecondary goals. Schools shall use plan data to guide course offerings.
- Each student's individual learning plan shall be established within the first ninety (90) days of sixth grade and focus on career exploration and related postsecondary education and training needs. (Cohort 2023-24)

Following the Data

- Third party research study was conducted by Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO)
- Share early statewide evidence on how middle school CTE career exploration relates to high school CTE participation and outcomes
- Highlight implications for pathway alignment, student persistence, and future program improvement
- Data-driven evidence supporting ROI

The Evidence is Clear

- Middle school CTE participation is associated with stronger high school CTE engagement
- Students with middle school CTE exposure were more likely to enroll in high school CTE: 80.3% compared with 77.0%
- They were also more likely to become CTE concentrators: 58.3% compared with 54.6%
- At statewide scale, these differences represent meaningful additional student persistence in the CTE pipeline

The Biggest Student Benefits

- High school CTE enrollment increased by 3.3 percentage points among students with middle school CTE exposure
- CTE concentrator attainment increased by 3.8 percentage points
- Early EOP pass rates were higher: 17.7% compared with 14.5%
- Early voluntary EOP attempts were also higher: 26.4% compared with 22.7%

Signs of Career Readiness

- Industry Certification rates were slightly higher for middle school CTE students: 24.8% compared with 23.6%
- Work-Based Learning participation was nearly twice as high, though still low overall: 0.9% compared with 0.5%
- Dual credit CTE was lower for middle school CTE students: 1.4% compared with 2.1%
- The dual credit result may reflect a different readiness pathway rather than a negative outcome
- Important caveat: Full assessment results are not yet available; most students haven't reached the required testing point yet. Complete findings expected in 2025-26

Pathways Students Can Explore Today

- Agriculture
- Business & Marketing
- Computer Science
- Engineering
- Family & Consumer Sciences
- Healthcare
- Law & Public Safety

Approved Middle School CTE Programs

Supporting Schools Through Funding

[2026-2027 Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) State Supplemental CTE Funds](#)

[2026-2027 Application for Middle School CTE Funding Waiver](#)

Innovation in Kentucky Schools

Five middle schools were awarded \$5000 each in Mini-Grants

- Money used for field trips to business and industry
- Paxton Patterson Career Labs
- Career View Headsets
- Xello Software

Empowering Students Through Real-World Learning

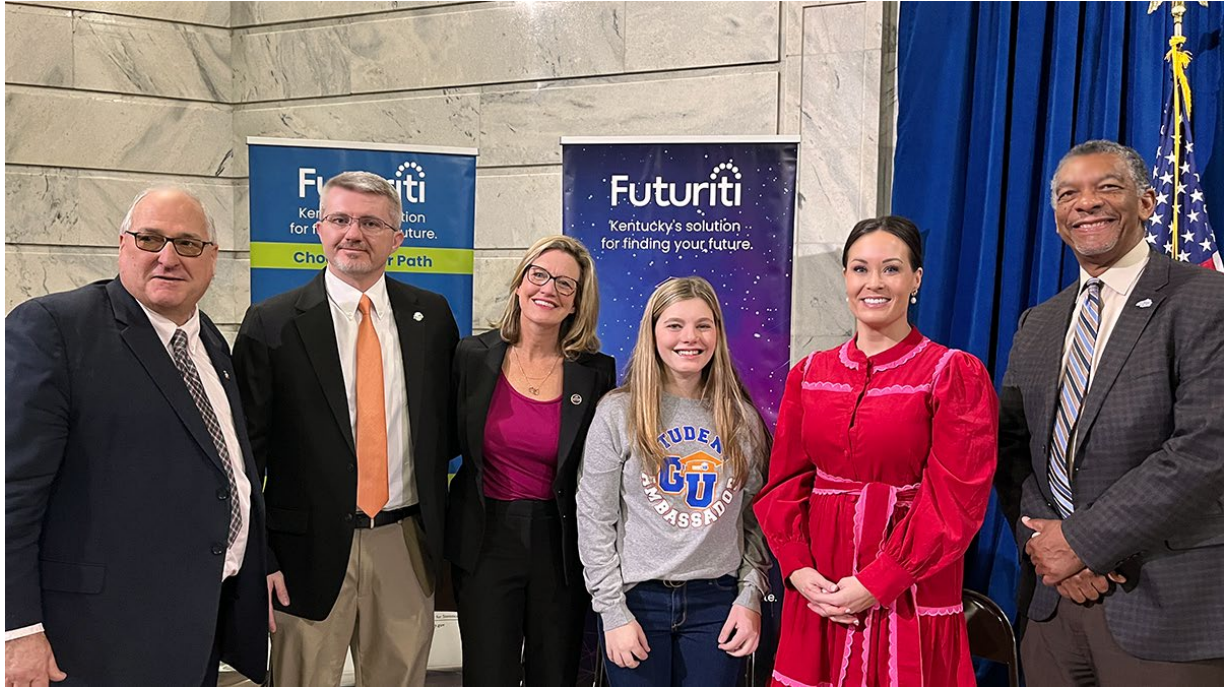
The Empowerment Collaborative Initiative

- Multi-state education partnership dedicated to transforming how schools engage student, particularly in rural and Appalachian communities.
- Six schools in Eastern Kentucky are participating, along with schools in West Virginia and Pennsylvania.



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Career Exploration Tools



- [CTE Basics](#)
- [MS Planning and Implementation Toolkit](#)
- [Kentucky CTE Program Areas](#) (Poster)
- [Career Exploration FAQ](#)
- [Futuriti](#)

Questions?