

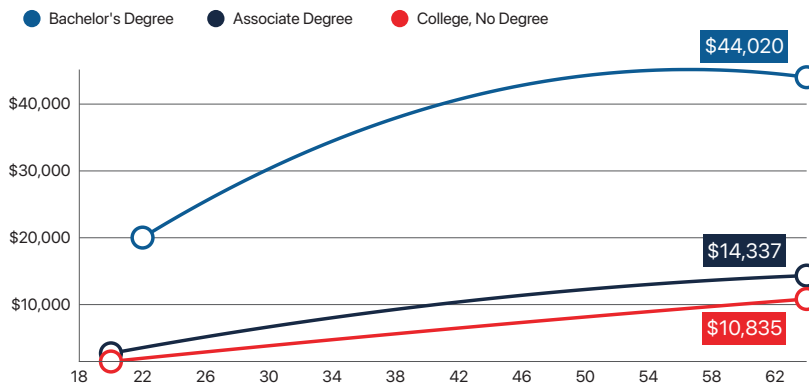
High School Models That Lead To Jobs

JUNE 2023

EDUCATION PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE in equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to be prepared for a career that enables economic independence. Whether through classroom learning in K-12 or programs of study in postsecondary education, it's clear that a student's preparation for work while in school has a significant impact on their earnings over the course of a lifetime. Tennessee has taken important steps over the years to strengthen student outcomes in K-12 and higher education, and now we must ensure the skills and knowledge students receive in our education system set them up for success when they enter the workplace.

Both the state's K-12 and higher education systems provide students with opportunities to earn these postsecondary credentials, with high schools offering students the option to earn an industry credential, and Tennessee's Colleges of Applied Technology, community colleges, and universities offering traditional degree programs. Yet, often these opportunities do not go far enough in equipping students with workforce-demanded credentials early and in partnership between K-12, postsecondary, and industry sectors. Data show the majority of jobs in Tennessee require some type of postsecondary certificate or degree, yet less than half of Tennesseans have one.¹ In light of these urgent workforce needs, programs and high school models should be more informed by specific industry needs, include high-quality credentialing opportunities, and incorporate education-industry partnerships.

Estimates of additional earnings with a college education in the U.S., relative to high school-educated workers, by age (2022\$)



The income gap between workers with and without college widens over the course of a career.

Source: Authors' calculations using the March 2022 CPS, limited to age 18-64 high school graduates working full time, not enrolled in college, and without graduate degrees.

Full report: Carruthers, Bruce, Kessler, & Endersby. (2023). Tennessee's Post-Pandemic Workforce: Implications for the Value of Going to College

1. Carnevale, Anthony, Artem Gulish, Jeff Strohl. Educational Adequacy in the Twenty-First Century. The Century Foundation. (May 2018); Reyna, Ryan. "High School Isn't Enough." U.S News & World Report. (April 2017); Churchill, Aaron. "High school diplomas aren't enough." Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Ohio Gadfly Daily. (June 2020).

INNOVATIVE HIGH SCHOOL MODELS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES EARLY.

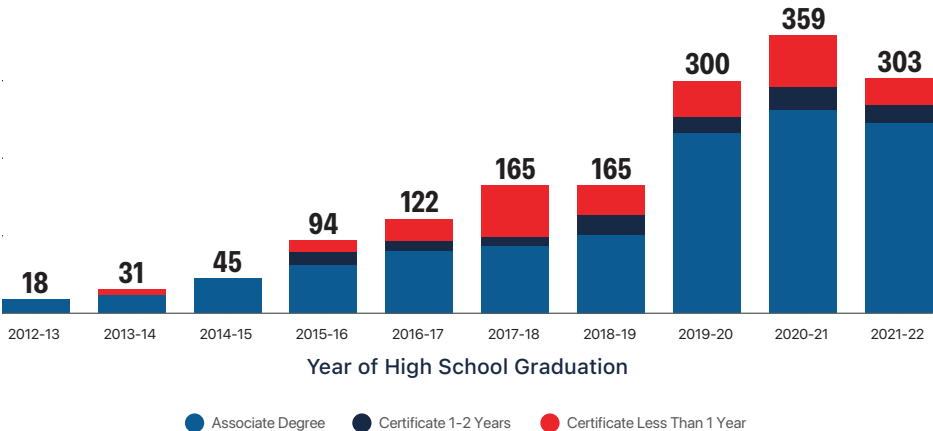
One way to reimagine traditional education models to make sure more students are more prepared for work is through **innovative high school models**. These models expose students to college and career training early and culminate in a postsecondary credential of value alongside a high school diploma. Importantly, these school models integrate education and workforce preparation so that students are ready to pursue additional postsecondary education or enter the workforce immediately following high school graduation.

Across the country, innovative high school models are preparing students for both postsecondary education and the workforce. Some best practice models include:

- The **Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College** is a public charter school dedicated to the nursing/health care profession, a major need in Rhode Island. This partnership between the University of Rhode Island, the Community College of Rhode Island, and the Nurses Middle College provides targeted industry-led training to high school students in nursing.
- **Tech Valley High School** is located at a State University of New York campus in Albany, New York. The school has a primarily project-based curriculum that includes a two-week career exploration program and 20-plus touch points with business leaders during the academic year. It also includes a legislatively created Business Alliance that advises on curriculum development and other programmatic components.
- **Massachusetts Early College Promise** is an early college model that provides high school students with comprehensive college and career preparation in high school. The school also provides a fifth year of high school to enable students to earn a full associate degree or 60 transferable credits toward a bachelor’s degree at no cost to the student.
- **Chattanooga’s Construction Career Center in Hamilton County Schools** provides 11th- and 12th-grade students with coursework that leads them to earn at least five certifications in construction. Students attend their primary school in the morning or afternoon and are transported to the center for the other half of the school day.

In Tennessee, however, too few students have access to this sort of pathway. **In 2022, just 300 out of more than 60,000 Tennessee high school graduates earned a postsecondary credential through dual enrollment (DE)**, which is one early postsecondary opportunity that can provide students with the option to earn a workforce-demanded credential alongside a high school diploma. Moving forward, it is important for the state to expand access to this innovative pathway so that more students in high school receive the job preparation necessary to succeed in a career while shortening their pathway to a postsecondary degree or credential and ultimately to a career.

Number of students earning a degree or credential through dual enrollment at a Tennessee community college over time (TBR, 2023)



How many credentials have DE students completed while in high school?

TENNESSEE SHOULD STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND ACCESS TO WORKFORCE-INFORMED HIGH SCHOOL MODELS FOR STUDENTS.

Students deserve early access to the high-quality in-demand credentials needed to succeed in our state's workforce. State leaders should consider the following actions to expand and strengthen innovative workforce-aligned high school models to accomplish this goal:

- **Develop a definition for credentials of value.** Tennessee should reexamine and redesign high school programs of study — such as Dual Enrollment and CTE programming — to better align them with workforce needs and accelerate a student's path into work. To determine that programs meet workforce needs, the state should leverage longitudinal data coupled with cross-sector partnership to determine which credentials are of the highest value for Tennessee's high-wage, in-demand jobs. This definition is the first step to expanding access to high school models that lead to jobs for students.
- **Create a grant fund to support start-up models.** The state should create an innovation fund to support new models that provide students the opportunity to earn high-quality, in-demand credentials while in high school. This would allow local industries to develop models that best fit their industry needs and context, whether through charter school models, industry partnerships, or middle college pathways that enable students to earn a workforce-aligned credential alongside a high school diploma.
- **Create a designation process to elevate high school models that provide postsecondary credentials to students.** To recognize and reward high school models that provide students access to workforce-aligned postsecondary credentials in high school, the state should create a designation process for these schools that includes state funding. The designation should include a written agreement with at least one higher education partner, rigorous coursework that leads to a two-year degree or 60 transferable credits, college counseling and support services, college preparation, and accountability and evaluation.
- **Increase access by removing financial barriers for students.** Tennessee's existing Middle College Scholarship only applies to students completing a program in partnership with one of 11 community colleges. The state should expand the definition of "middle college" to be more inclusive of middle college models that provide high-quality credentials to students in Tennessee alongside a high school diploma. This will allow students who wish to complete in-demand industry certificates and credentials at technical colleges as well as four-year colleges and universities to access financial aid to participate in these innovative high school models.

