

# CTE Board of Trustees & RIDE

## *Substantially Similar CTE Programs for SY 25-26*

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## Background

Rhode Island's career and technical education (CTE) laws (16-45-6.1) were amended, effective July 9, 2021. These amendments clarified that students have a right to enroll in state-approved CTE programs outside their district:

*"All students retain the right to enroll in a state approved career and technical education program approved by the CTE board of trustees in communities outside their community of residence" RIGL 16-45-6.1(d)(1)*

This right applies if there is not a "substantially similar" program in-district:

*"Students may request access to state CTE board-approved career preparation programs outside their school district if their home district does not provide a substantially similar state-approved CTE program." RIGL 16-45-6.1(e)*

The substantially similar list will be published by the RIDE and the CTE Board of Trustees (CTEBOT) annually on January 15 for the following school year. **This document outlines the criteria that RIDE and the CTE Board will use to generate the substantially similar program list.**

*"Effective January 15, 2022, and every year thereafter, the CTE board of trustees and the department of elementary and secondary education shall publish a detailed list of substantially similar CTE programs for the upcoming school year. The list will be used to support students and their families in accessing CTE board of trustees approved career and technical education programs. There will be a thirty-day (30) period for schools and districts to appeal the substantially similar designation to the board of education." RIGL 16-45-6.1(d)*

(Note: a longer excerpt of the legislative language is on page 5 of this document, and the full statutory text can be found [here](#).)

## Criteria for Determinations of “Substantially Similar” Programs

RIDE and the CTE Board will apply the following criteria to determine whether programs are substantially similar.

The criteria text in bold below is copied directly from the legislation. Criteria 1-5 are required. If any one of those criteria is different between two programs, then those programs are not substantially similar.

Same? Y/N	Criteria
	<b>1. Program type*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approved under the same Industry Standard.</li> </ul>
	<b>2. Information on the occupation that the student will be prepared for*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepares students for the same specific occupation(s) within the approved Industry Standard.</li> </ul>
	<b>3. The credentials the student will earn*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide students with the same credentials (or set of credentials) under the Industry Standard.</li> <li>Use an external, nationally validated curriculum as defined by the CTE Industry Standards (e.g., Project Lead the Way or equivalent).</li> </ul>
	<b>4. The type of work-based learning that the student will be provided access to*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same combination of types of work-based learning experiences (internships, apprenticeships, service learning, industry projects, or school-based enterprises). <i>Note: these types of work-based learning are set by the Governor’s Workforce Board’s guidance.</i></li> <li>Access to the same industry-level facilities and equipment.</li> <li><i>Other factors beyond the above will not be considered. This includes: the number of hours beyond 80, the specific employer, scheduling details, etc.</i></li> </ul>
	<b>5. The ability to access advanced course experiences*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allowed to access relevant coursework that offers college credit.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>6. Such additional factors as the CTE Board of Trustees deem to be relevant, including postsecondary attainment, industry partnerships and advisory boards, and program quality.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CTE Board will seek guidance from RIDE on optional additional factors to include. For example, the “program quality” criterion could reference whether both programs are below a certain threshold on the <a href="#">CTE Performance Metrics</a>.</li> </ul>
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\*=Required

Note: CTE inter-district enrollment is for CTE program enrollment only. Non-CTE reasons (e.g., participating on a sports team) are not eligible for the CTE inter-district enrollment policy.

For reference, the CTE Industry Standards template, which drive many of the criteria above, is below:

Rhode Island CTE Program Industry-Specific Standards	
Career Field	<b>1</b> Career Cluster
CIP Code	<b>1</b> GWB Priority Sector
<b>Academic Content</b>	
<i>*Note: Include <b>additional</b> academic requirements here, if applicable</i>	
ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies/Science must meet all state and local graduation <a href="#">requirements</a> . <b>5</b>	
<b>CTE Content Requirements</b>	
<b>1</b> CTE Course Sequence (including required curriculum, if applicable)	
<b>3</b> Culminating CTE Credential(s) <i>*Note: Include each credential bundle option on a separate line, if applicable</i>	1.
<b>4</b> Work-based Learning <i>*Note: Include <b>specific</b> WBL activities, if applicable</i>	Student must complete 80 hours in any of the following activities: Internship, Apprenticeship, Service-learning project, Industry Project, or School-based Enterprise.
Recommended (not required) CTE Curriculum, Credentials, Courses, Partnerships, and/or Career & Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs)	
<b>Skills &amp; Knowledge for Entry Level:</b>	
<b>2</b> Occupations within this Standard:	
Salary Information:	<a href="#">RI DLT Employment &amp; Wages by Industry</a>
Projected Job Outlook:	<a href="#">RI DLT Occupational Projections</a>
Related Teacher Certification	Educators teaching in these programs must meet RIDE teacher certification requirements. Please see the RIDE website <a href="http://www.ride.ri.gov">www.ride.ri.gov</a> for more information.

## Appeals

Schools and districts may appeal substantially similar determinations to RIDE and the Council on Elementary and Secondary determination within 30 calendar days of the publication of the list of “substantially similar” CTE Programs. (*RIGL 16-45-6.1(d)(3)*).

For the 2026-27 school year, appeals by schools and districts are due by 5pm on Monday, February 9, 2026 for consideration by the Council.

Appeals may be sent by letter, fax, or email to:

RIDE Legal Office  
Substantially Similar CTE Programs  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Email: [Legal@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Legal@ride.ri.gov)  
Subject: Substantially Similar  
Fax: (401) 222-4691

If a student requests access to a State CTE Board-approved career preparation program outside the student’s home district and there is disagreement as to whether the home district and the outside district offer “substantially similar” CTE programs, the CTE Board (rather than the Council) is authorized to resolve such disagreements between the student and the home district. See R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-45-6.1(e).

In this case, appeals may be emailed to:

CTE Board of Trustees  
c/o RIDE Legal Office  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Email: [Legal@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Legal@ride.ri.gov)  
Subject: Substantially Similar  
Fax: (401) 222-4691

## Legislative Language

RI General Laws 16-45-6.1 were modified July 19, 2021. The sections relevant to inter-district enrollment read as follows:

*(d)(1) To sustain and advance the economic development of our communities, all students retain the right to enroll in a state approved career and technical education program approved by the CTE board of trustees in communities outside their community of residence. This right does not apply to locally developed CTE programs, locally approved CTE programs, pathway programs, or other programs that are not approved by the CTE board of trustees. Students shall have a right to request enrollment and to enroll in a CTE board of trustees' approved program outside of their community of residence when a substantially similar or same ("substantially similar") CTE board of trustees approved program is not offered within their community of residence.*

*(2) In determining whether two programs are substantially similar, the CTE board of trustees shall consider the following factors:*

*(i) Program type;*

*(ii) Information on the occupation that the student will be prepared for;*

*(iii) The credentials the student will earn;*

*(iv) The type of work-based learning that the student will be provided access to;*

*(v) The ability to access advanced course experiences; and*

*(vi) Such additional factors as the CTE board of trustees deem to be relevant, including postsecondary attainment, industry partnerships and advisory boards, and program quality.*

*(3) Effective January 15, 2022, and every year thereafter, the CTE board of trustees and the department of elementary and secondary education shall publish a detailed list of substantially similar CTE programs for the upcoming school year. The list will be used to support students and their families in accessing CTE board of trustees approved career and technical education programs. There will be a thirty-day (30) period for schools and districts to appeal the substantially similar designation to the board of education.*

*(4) Students enrolled in, accepted to, or attending a state CTE board-approved program (the "program of choice") prior to January 1, 2022, which program is outside of their home district but is considered to be substantially similar to a program in their home district, shall be allowed to remain enrolled in that program of choice as set forth in subsection (j) of this section.*

*(e) Students may request access to state CTE board-approved career preparation programs outside their school district if their home district does not provide a substantially similar state-approved CTE program. If a discrepancy exists as to whether two (2) state-approved programs are substantially similar, the state CTE board shall use state CTE board program quality criteria set forth in subsection (d) of this section to determine if the two (2) state CTE board-approved programs are substantially similar programs. The decision of the CTE board shall be final.*

*(f)(1) A student's request to enroll in an out of district state CTE board-approved career and technical program shall not be denied, provided that:*

*(i) A substantially similar program is not available in the student's home district;*

*(ii) The student meets any other criteria required of all students for admission to the out of district program and the center; and*

*(iii) When there is more than one recognized CTE program in a transportation region, the student is applying to the center that is geographically the closest program to the student's residence.*

*(g)(1) Students requesting access to state CTE board-approved career preparation programs outside their established school transportation region may enroll in such programs that are not substantially similar to a program in their home district. In such event, with respect to transportation costs, the resident's local education agency shall only be responsible for paying the resident district's average per pupil expenditure for student transportation for all students in the district. The receiving district shall pay any remaining balance due for transportation costs associated with the particular student.*

*(2) The sending district shall pay the average of the per-pupil expenditure of the receiving district and sending district when paying out-of-district tuitions for students in CTE programs.*

*(3) When two or more substantially similar programs are available within a student's transportation district, that student may enroll in the program that is not geographically closest only if the receiving district agrees to pay all the transportation costs to and from the receiving district.*

*[...]*

*(j) Students enrolled in, accepted to, or attending a state CTE board-approved program of choice outside of the students' home district as of January 1, 2022, shall be exempt from the substantially similar provisions of this section and may continue to matriculate in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) in their program of choice so that students and parents who made educational decisions prior to January 1, 2022, shall retain the rights that were in place when they made those decisions. If a*

*substantially similar state-approved program is established in a student's home district after the student has enrolled in a program of choice, the student may continue to matriculate in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) in the student's program of choice provided the student remains enrolled in the program. The sending district may request, and shall be provided by the district with the chosen CTE program, information on the students' progress in programs, including attendance and grades. The provisions of this subsection shall also apply and extend to other siblings in the family who apply to attend the same program of choice.*

[...]

*(l) The limitations related to enrollment in CTE programs contained within this chapter shall not apply to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center or the William M. Davies, Jr. Career and Technical High School. All eligible students, from any and all Rhode Island cities and towns, have the right to pursue enrollment and enroll in, subject to applicable enrollment procedures, the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center or the William M. Davies, Jr. Career and Technical High School's programs.*

Text of the full legislation is available here: <http://webserver.rilegislature.gov/Statutes/TITLE16/16-45/16-45-6.1.htm>

## Explanation—2026-2027 Substantially Similar List

For a CTE program to be identified as substantially similar to another CTE program, RIDE applied criteria outlined by the legislation and further defined by the CTEBOT. For programs existing prior to the 2026-2027 school year, the sub-committee maintains the previously determined similarities. For all programs starting in the 2026-2027 School Year, the same criteria and methods were applied to each new program.

To determine substantial similarity, RIDE used the data and information provided by LEAs in the CTE Program Inventory when applying these criteria. *Therefore, the programs listed below each hold the same elements as at least one other program.*

*Specifically, same-colored programs:*

1. Are each approved by the same CTE Industry Standard
2. Prepare students for the same occupations as identified and driven by the standard
3. Provide students with the same credentials or use an equivalent externally and nationally validated curriculum as defined by the CTE Industry Standards



4. Offer the same combination of types of work-based learning experiences (i.e., Internships, Industry Projects, Service Learning, School-based Enterprise, and Apprenticeships)
5. Allow students to access the same relevant coursework that offers college credit
6. *To be determined by the CTE Board of Trustees as established by the legislation*

## 2026-2027 Substantially Similar List

*\*Denotes a new program added to the list for the 2026-2027 School Year*

Program Information			
<i>Career Cluster</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>LEA / School</i>	<i>Program Name</i>
Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources	Bioscience	Pawtucket / Shea	Biomedical Science
Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources	Bioscience	Scituate / Scituate HS	Biomedical Science
Architecture & Construction	Pre-Apprentice Electrical	East Providence / EPACTC	Electrical Technology
Architecture & Construction	Pre-Apprentice Electrical	Providence / PCTA	Electrical Technology
Architecture & Construction	Residential Construction	Burrillville / Burrillville HS	Construction Technology
Architecture & Construction	Residential Construction	Westerly / Westerly HS	Construction
Architecture & Construction	Residential Construction	Newport / NACTC	Residential Carpentry
Architecture & Construction	Residential Construction	Providence / PCTA	Carpentry & Home Building
Education	Education, K-12 Education, Teacher Assistant	Cranston / Cranston West	Educational Pathway
Education	Education K-12 Education, Teacher Assistant	Cranston / Cranston East	Educational Pathway
Finance	Business/Commerce; General	Cranston / Cranston West	Entrepreneur-ship
Finance	Business/Commerce; General	Cranston / Cranston East	Entrepreneur-ship
Health Science	Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)	South Kingstown / SKHS	Allied Health
Health Science	Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)	West Warwick / WWSHS	Emergency Medical Technician
Hospitality & Tourism	ACF Culinary Arts	Warwick / WACTC	Culinary & Baking Arts
Hospitality & Tourism	ACF Culinary Arts	Westerly / Westerly HS	Culinary Arts

Program Information			
<i>Career Cluster</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>LEA / School</i>	<i>Program Name</i>
*Hospitality & Tourism	ACF Culinary Arts	Providence / PCTA	Culinary Arts
*Hospitality & Tourism	ACF Culinary Arts	Chariho / Chariho Area CTC	Culinary Arts
*Hospitality & Tourism	ACF Culinary Arts	Central Falls / Central Falls HS	Food Entrepreneurship
Hospitality & Tourism	ProStart Culinary Artist	Cranston / CACTC	Culinary Arts
Hospitality & Tourism	ProStart Culinary Artis	East Providence / EPACTC	Culinary Arts
Hospitality & Tourism	ProStart Culinary Artis	Newport / NACTC	ProStart Culinary Arts Academy
*Hospitality & Tourism	ProStart Culinary Artis	North Kingstown / North Kingstown HS	Academy of Culinary Arts
Information Technology	Software Developer	Cumberland/ Cumberland HS	IT/Computer Science
*Information Technology	Software Developer	Johnston / Johnston HS	Computer Science Academy
Information Technology	Software Developer	Scituate / Scituate HS	Academy of Computer Science
Information Technology	Software Developer	Warwick / Toll Gate HS	Computer Science/Data Analytics
Information Technology	Software Developer	Providence / Mt. Pleasant	CTE Computer Science
Information Technology	Software Developer	Providence / JSEC	CTE Computer Science
Information Technology	Software Developer	Cumberland / Cumberland HS	Information Technology
Information Technology	Graphic Comms Tech: Print Manufacturing Production	Coventry / Regional CTC at Coventry HS	Advertising, Marketing & Design
Information Technology	Graphic Comms Tech: Print Manufacturing Production	Cranston / CACTC	Graphic Communications

Program Information			
<i>Career Cluster</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>LEA / School</i>	<i>Program Name</i>
Information Technology	Information Technology Specialist	Central Falls/ CFSHS	Computer Science / IT
*Information Technology	Information Technology Specialist	Narragansett / Narragansett HS	Information Technology Specialist
Information Technology	Information Technology Specialist	North Providence / NPHS	Computer Science
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	Military	Cranston / CHSE	JROTC-Army
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	Military	Providence / Hope HS	JROTC-Army
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	Law Enforcement & Corrections Officer	Coventry / Regional CTC at Coventry HS	Criminal Justice
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	Law Enforcement & Corrections Officer	Central Falls/ CFSHS	Law and Advocacy Pathway
STEM	General Pre-Engineering / Design	Bristol-Warren/ Mt. Hope HS	Engineering PLTW
STEM	General Pre-Engineering / Design	East Providence / EPACTC	Pre-Engineering
STEM	General Pre-Engineering / Design	Portsmouth/ Portsmouth HS	Academy of Engineering Design
STEM	General Pre-Engineering / Design	Providence / PCTA	STEM / Pre-Engineering
STEM	General Pre-Engineering / Design	Providence / Mt. Pleasant	STEM / Pre-Engineering
STEM	General Pre-Engineering / Design	Tiverton / Tiverton HS	Engineering Academy
*STEM	General Pre-Engineering / Design	Woonsocket / WACTC	PLTW - Engineering
Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics	Automotive Service Advisor	East Providence / EPACTC	Automotive Technology
Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics	Automotive Service Advisor	Newport / NACTC	Automotive Technology
Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics	Automotive Service Advisor	Warwick / WACTC	Automotive Technology
Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics	Automotive Service Technician	Chariho / Chariho Area CTC	Automotive Technology
Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics	Automotive Service Technician	Providence / PCTA	Automotive Program

\*New programs added to this list for the 2026-27 School Year