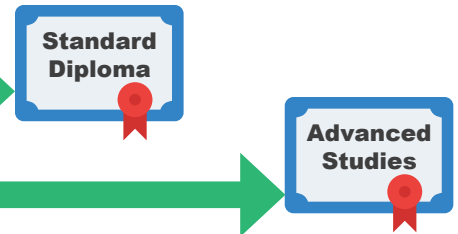


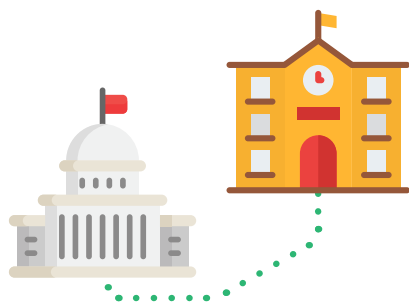
Virginia High School Graduates' Career and Technical Education Credentials: Top Credentials Over Time and Across Student Groups



In Virginia, all high school students can earn either a **Standard diploma** or an **Advanced Studies diploma**. The minimum requirements of the Advanced Studies diploma align with college entrance requirements; the minimum requirements for the Standard diploma do not.



Less than half of students who earn Standard diplomas go to college. Therefore it is critical to prepare students who earn Standard diplomas for careers and additional postsecondary training. Standard diploma earners are disproportionately students who have been historically underserved, such as students who are Black or Hispanic, and those who are economically disadvantaged, English learners, and/or students with disabilities. Strengthening college and career preparation for Standard diploma earners can help improve outcomes for these students.

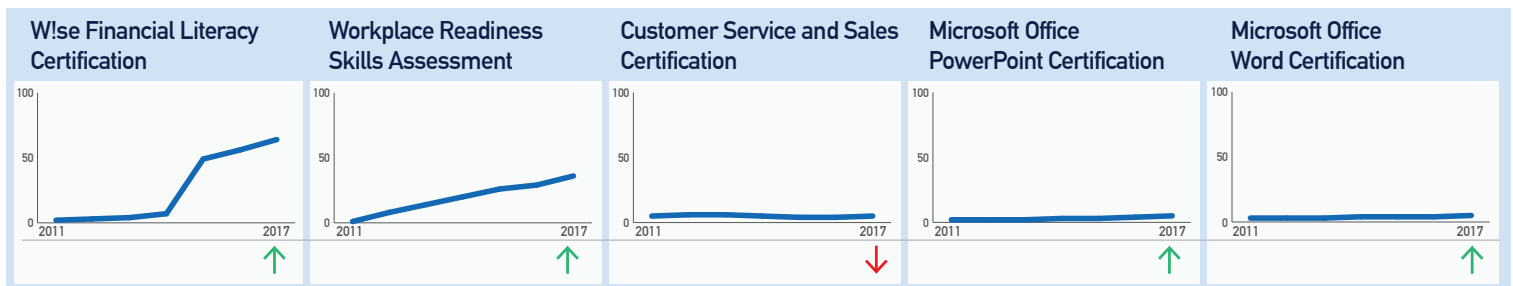


Starting with students who entered grade 9 in the 2013/14 school year, Virginia began requiring students graduating with the Standard diploma to earn a career and technical education (CTE) credential¹ to encourage them to pursue opportunities that enhance their college and career readiness.

Understanding that this policy is only as valuable as the credentials students earn, Virginia partnered with REL AP to understand which credentials students earned from 2011 to 2017. [Read the full study.](#)

What did we learn about credential earning rates?

The number and percentage of graduates earning CTE credentials increased from 2011–2017. The largest increase took place before the policy requirement began, between 2014 and 2015. Although the five most commonly earned CTE credentials in Virginia remained the same from 2011 to 2017, the percentage of students earning the Workplace Readiness Skills and W!se Financial Literacy Certification credentials increased by more than 30-fold while the percentage of students earning the other credentials remained relatively stable.



Which credentials did students earn?

Six of the top ten credentials Standard diploma graduates earned in 2017 were broad credentials that covered skills relevant to a wide range of jobs, as opposed to narrow credentials for a specific occupation or industry. Empirical evidence suggests that broad career readiness credentials may hold little value in the labor market.²

Broad Credentials



Wise Financial Literacy Certification



Workplace Readiness Skills Assessment



Microsoft Office Word Certification



Microsoft Office PowerPoint Certification



College and Work Readiness Assessment (Industry)



National Career Readiness Certificate (Industry)

Narrow Credentials



Customer Service and Sales Certification Assessment



Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery



Cosmetology Licensure Examination



ServSafe Manager Certification

Students need to earn CTE credentials that employers value and that align with workforce needs. Having information about the labor market value of credentials can also help students make more informed decisions about which credentials to pursue.

How can educators support students in earning CTE credentials that prepare them for their next step in life?

Partner with local and regional employers to understand what credentials employers value, and align opportunities for students to meet those workforce needs.

Examine the association between the CTE credentials students earn in high school and their college and career outcomes, such as college completion, employment status, and wages. Use this information to inform program updates and changes to improve student outcomes after high school.

Help students to understand the value and role of various credential options in achieving their postsecondary goals, and support students' success in earning these credentials.



Endnotes

- 1 A CTE credential certifies that a student has mastered specific CTE content. In Virginia, students can earn a CTE credential by passing a qualifying assessment. VDOE uses a broad definition of CTE credentials which includes industry credentials, state licensure examinations, national occupational competency assessments, and the Virginia Workplace Readiness Skills assessment. Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). (2020). *Career and technical education*. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/career_technical/index.shtml
- 2 ExcelinED & Burning Glass Technologies. (2019). *Credentials matter report 1: A national landscape of high school student credential attainment compared to workforce demand*. <https://www.excelined.org/credentials-matter/>