



CTE Connects

Developing Educators for a Workforce-Ready Illinois



Planning for the First 30 Days

Welcome to CTE Connects! We're glad you're here. Whether you are beginning your first year of teaching or returning for another year with experience to build on, you are stepping into meaningful work that prepares students for high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand careers.

Your first month – whether it's your very first or part of a new year – may feel exciting, overwhelming, and everything in between, and that's completely normal. This packet is designed to support you as you build or refine your confidence, strengthen routines, and continue shaping your CTE classroom experience. The reflections and activities included will also serve as a foundation for an initial conversation with your mentor, creating a shared starting point and helping to identify priorities for growth.

As you begin or continue your journey this upcoming school year, remember that you are not expected to implement everything perfectly, whether in your first 30 days or beyond. Start the school year with what feels manageable and build from there, adjusting as you learn more about your students and your context. Strong CTE classrooms develop over time and are designed to be flexible, responsive, and continuously evolving environments.

Purpose

The First 30 Days Packet is designed to help you:

- ✓ Build a strong foundation for instruction, classroom culture, and relationships
 - ✓ Focus on high-impact priorities without feeling overwhelmed
 - ✓ Reflect on your practice and identify areas for growth
 - ✓ Access resources to support your teaching and program development
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How to Use This Packet

Use this packet to guide your planning and reflection before the start of the school year. Complete it prior to your first one-on-one meeting with your mentor so it can serve as a foundation for meaningful discussion, feedback, and goalsetting.

Remember: The first 30 days are about learning, experimenting, and building momentum, not perfection. Focus on small wins, ask questions, and give yourself time to grow. With CTE Connects, you are part of a community committed to supporting your success, and you don't have to navigate it alone.

What You'll Find Inside

..... CTE Background and Resources (Page 4)

Provides an overview of CTE and curated resources to support your understanding of programs, expectations, and instructional practices

..... Planning for Classroom Setup and Culture (Page 12)

Guides you in creating a safe, organized, and inclusive classroom environment that supports hands-on learning and student engagement

..... Guidance for Lesson Planning and Initial Instruction (Page 25)

Supports you in designing meaningful early lessons that introduce content, establish routines, and set clear expectations

..... Developing a CTE Syllabus (Page 37)

Helps you create a clear, student-centered syllabus that communicates course expectations, grading practices, and available supports

..... First 30 Days Planning (Page 41)

Assists you in mapping out your first month of instruction with intentional goals, activities, and priorities aligned to student needs

CTE Background and Resources

Career and Technical Education (CTE) prepares students for both college and careers by integrating academic knowledge, technical skills, and real-world application. CTE helps students develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to succeed in high-skill, high-demand careers while continuing their education.

Illinois CTE System Overview

CTE in Illinois is managed through a structured hierarchy consisting of federal, state, regional, and local stakeholders who collectively support, implement, and enhance CTE programs across the state.

Federal Level

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V Funding)

- Federal legislation providing critical funding and guidelines for state and local CTE programs
- Administered through the U.S. Department of Education, supporting program development, implementation, and improvement

State Level

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

- Oversees statewide CTE programs through its dedicated CTE Department
- Provides guidance, policies, and principal consultants to support effective CTE program implementation

Regional Level

Education for Employment (EFE) Systems (56 Systems)

- Regional consortia coordinating and managing CTE programs across multiple districts
- EFE Board of Control:
 - Composed of school district and CTE administrators
 - Provides oversight and accountability for the regional EFE Systems.
 - Employs and supervises EFE System directors, ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations, monitoring program performance, and supporting strategic planning
 - EFE System Director: Allocates and oversees CTE funding, offers technical assistance and professional development, and aligns programs with regional labor market needs



Local Level

Area Career Center (ACC) Directors (27 Centers)

- Manage dedicated campuses providing extensive CTE course offerings
- Facilitate specialized training opportunities and serve multiple school districts within their regions

School Districts

- Offer and directly manage CTE programs within high school campuses
- Represent a significant portion of statewide CTE programs, with substantial student enrollment and diverse course offerings

Through this collaborative framework, Illinois ensures comprehensive, relevant, and effective CTE programs, preparing students for career success and lifelong learning.

Core Components of CTE

Effective CTE programs are built on core components that emphasize rigor, relationships, and relevance.

- **Rigor** (Classroom and Lab Learning)
 - Instruction should be academically and technically challenging, combining hands-on experiences with strong content knowledge and skill development in a safe, well-equipped environment. CTE classrooms should reflect real-world expectations and industry standards.
- **Relationships** (Student Leadership and Engagement)
 - High-quality CTE programs prioritize student connection and leadership through opportunities like Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs). These experiences help students build collaboration, communication, and leadership skills while strengthening classroom culture.
- **Relevance** (Work-Based Learning)
 - Learning should connect directly to careers through experiences such as job shadowing, internships, or industry projects. This ensures students understand how their learning applies beyond the classroom.

Figure 1. The three components needed for a CTE program.

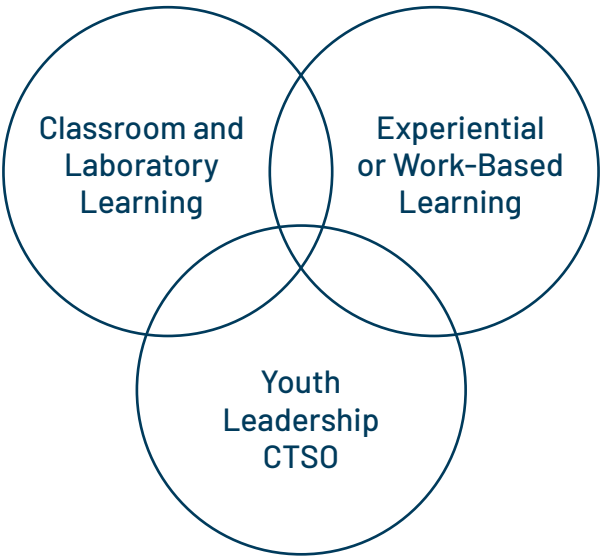
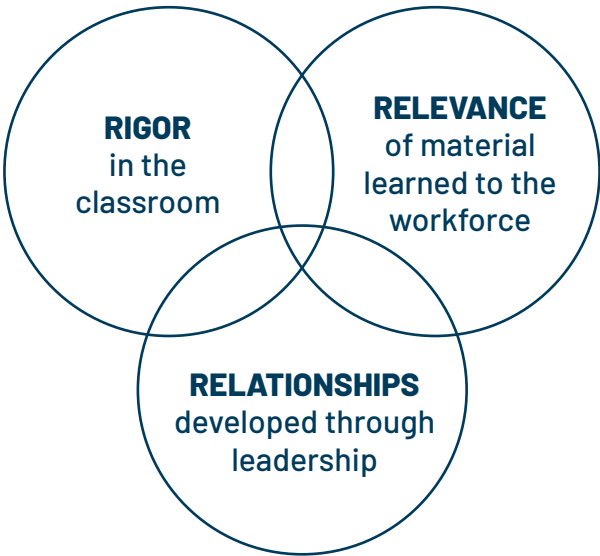


Figure 2. The 3Rs of CTE as related to the respective CTE components.



Key CTE Resources

Explore these key CTE resources to support your planning, instruction, and program development.

ISBE Career & Technical Education

Use this page as your starting point for understanding CTE in Illinois. It includes statewide guidance, program updates, and initiatives that will help you align your work with ISBE expectations and access ongoing support. If you aren't signed up already, be sure to sign up for the ISBE CTE Newsletter.



ISBE Career & Technical Education webpage



CTE Connects

CTE Connects

Use this page to access the latest information and resources related CTE Connects.

CTE Career Clusters

This resource supports understanding how CTE programs are organized into career clusters and pathways. It will help you see how your course fits into a larger sequence and how students progress toward careers.



CTE Career Clusters



Resource: [Michigan Department of Education: CTE Teacher Technical Toolkit](#)

CTE Programs of Study

The following resources outline how CTE courses align with pathways and programs of study. They provide explanations for course sequencing, expectations, and how your class contributes to student progression and credential attainment.

- [ISBE Programs of Study](#)
- [CTE Program Structure](#)

Industry-Recognized Credentials Running List

This ISBE resource outlines industry-recognized credentials relevant to your program and helps you connect these opportunities to student learning and career-ready outcomes.

CTE Licensure Resources

These resources explain the requirements and options for licensure as a CTE teacher. They are especially helpful in navigating any additional credentials or endorsements you may need.

- [ISBE CTE Licensing and Endorsements](#)
- [ISBE Career and Technical Educator Licensure](#)
- [Pathways to Licensure](#)

Work-Based Learning

These resources highlight the purpose and structure of work-based learning experiences and provide practical tools to connect instruction to authentic, real-world career experiences.

- [ISBE Work-Based Learning](#)
- [Illinois Work-Based Learning Innovation Network](#)

Career and Technical Student Organizations

This page explains how CTSOs support student leadership, engagement, and skill development beyond the classroom and can help you integrate student voice into your program.

Content-Specific Professional Organizations List

Explore content by pathway to learn about professional organizations within your CTE content area. These groups offer industry updates, instructional resources, networking opportunities, and professional learning tailored to your field.



ISBE Programs
of Study



CTE Program
Structure



Industry-
Recognized
Credentials List



ISBE CTE
Licensing and
Endorsements



ISBE Career and
Technical Educator
Licensure



Pathways
to Licensure



ISBE Work-Based
Learning



Illinois Work-Based
Learning Innovation
Networks



Career and Technical
Student Organizations



Content-Specific
Professional
Organizations List

Statewide Conferences and PD Opportunities

- The [Illinois Association for Career and Technical Education](#) (IACTE) offers professional development, networking, and conference opportunities. This is a key resource for staying connected to the broader CTE community and continuing to grow your practice.
- The [Illinois Digital Educators Alliance](#) aims to inspire, connect, and provide the educational community with opportunities that transform teaching and learning through innovation. They host [IDEAcon](#), an annual multi-day conference.
- The [Illinois Learning Technology Center](#) gathers education and technology innovators annually at the [Illinois Education and Technology Conference](#) to learn, collaborate, and connect.
- The [Illinois Business Education Association](#) (IBEA) is a professional organization for business, marketing, and computer education teachers throughout the state. They host an annual fall conference.
- The [Illinois Association of Family and Consumer Sciences](#) is focused on furthering education and science in family and consumer sciences. They host an annual conference.
- The [Illinois CPA Society](#) (ICPAS) is the community for accounting and finance professionals. [ICPAS hosts a variety of events](#) throughout the year and an annual summit.
- [College Changes Everything](#) is a conference hosted annually in the summer by the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#). Through conversations, storytelling, best practices, and calls to action, the College Changes Everything Conference offers a space for learning, advocacy, and action.
- The Illinois Education and Career Success Network's mission is to support Illinois communities to increase meaningful and equitable postsecondary attainment so that Illinoisans realize education, economic, and social success. The [Success Network hosts events](#) throughout the year including virtual webinars, policy meetings, and an annual conference.



Illinois Association
for Career and
Technical Education



Illinois Digital
Educators Alliance



IDEAcon



Illinois Learning
Technology Center



Illinois Education
and Technology
Conference



Illinois Business
Education Association



Illinois Association
of Family and
Consumer Sciences



Illinois CPA
Society



ICPAS events



College Changes
Everything



Illinois Student
Assistance
Commission



Success Network
events

Regional CTE Partners

These regional partners are part of your larger local CTE network and are essential for building relationships, accessing support, and understanding how CTE operates in your specific region.

EFE System directors serve as a bridge between K-12 school districts, community colleges, and local industry partners. Refer to a [map of EFE System Boundaries](#) to find your region and the EFE Directory on the [CTE home page](#) under directories for contact information for your EFE System Director.

- Key responsibilities include:
 - Administering state and federal CTE funding (e.g., Perkins grant)
 - Support the development of regional CTE curriculum and programs for career-focused coursework
 - Identify and report qualifying CTE courses in the [Illinois State Course System](#) to secure funding and ensure compliance
- Consider reaching out directly to your EFE contact or visiting their website (if available) to explore updates and supports specific to your region. Building this connection early will support understanding of how your program may fit in the broader CTE system and ensure support throughout the year.

Area Career Centers are specialized facilities focused on delivering secondary-level CTE programs. In areas where schools cannot offer a wide range of CTE pathways, students typically travel to these centers to access broader opportunities. View the [ACC Directory](#) for contact information.

Community colleges partner closely with high schools to offer dual credit CTE courses, allowing students to earn high school and college credit while gaining industry skills. These partnerships help transition from high school to postsecondary education and career, strengthening connections between classroom learning and future opportunities. View a [list of Illinois community colleges](#).



Map of EFE
System
Boundaries



EFE
Directory



Illinois State
Course System



ACC
Directory



List of Illinois
community
colleges

Education and Organizational Terms and Acronyms

CTE and education systems include many terms and acronyms. This resource helps clarify them so you can better understand and engage in conversations and documentation.

The [Illinois Career Pathways Dictionary](#) includes definitions of many commonly used terms such as [early college credit](#) and [team-based challenges](#).



Illinois Career
Pathways
Dictionary



Early college
credit



Team-based
challenges

Education and Organizational Acronyms

ACC - Area Career Center

ACTE - Association for Career and Technical Education

AFNR - Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources

AVDC - Area Vocational Directors Council

BPA - Business Professionals of America

CBE - Competency-based Education

CCPE - College and Career Pathway Endorsement

CDE - Career Development Experience

CIP - Classification of instructional programs

CTE - Career and Technical Education

CTSO - Career and Technical Student Organization

DECA - Distributive Education Clubs of America (Now known as just DECA)

EFE - Education for Employment

FCCLA - Family, Career and Community Leaders of America

FBLA - Future Business Leaders of America

FFA - Future Farmers of America (Now known as just FFA)

HOSA - Health Occupations Students of America

IACTE - Illinois Association for Career and Technical Education

IAVAT - Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers

IBEA - Illinois Business Education Association

IBHE - Illinois Board of Higher Education

ICCB - Illinois Community College Board

ICTA - Illinois Career and Technical Administrators

ICTESSPA - Illinois Career and Technical Education Student Support Personnel Association

IEP - Individualized Education Program

IFACSTA - Illinois Family and Consumer Sciences Teachers Association

IHOA - Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association

ILWBLD - Illinois Work-Based Learning Division

INRS - Illinois New and Related Services

ISAC - Illinois Student Assistance Commission

ISBE - Illinois State Board of Education

I-WIN - Illinois Work-Based Learning Innovation Network

LEA - Local Education Agency

METT – Manufacturing, Engineering, Technology, and Trades

OCTAE – Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

P20 – Preschool through Age 20 (education continuum)

PBIS – Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

PBL – Project-based learning

PD – Professional Development

RTI – Response to Intervention

SDLC – System Directors Leadership Council

SkillsUSA – SkillsUSA (previously known as VICA, Vocational Industrial Clubs of America)

SIP – School Improvement Plan

SLO – Student Learning Objective

TEAI – Technology Education Association of Illinois

TSA – Technology Student Association

WBL – Work-Based Learning

PBIS – Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

PBL – Project-based learning

PD – Professional Development

RTI – Response to Intervention

SDLC – System Directors Leadership Council

SkillsUSA – SkillsUSA (previously known as VICA, Vocational Industrial Clubs of America)

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WBL – Work-Based Learning

Planning for Classroom Setup and Culture

Physical Setup for CTE Environments

Designing your classroom or lab space is important in CTE where safety and hands-on learning are central. These resources highlight how to organize tools, equipment, and safety zones while creating accessible layouts that support a wide range of learners and promote efficient movement and instruction.

Classroom Setup

Instruction Zone

The instruction zone is where whole-group teaching, demonstrations, and discussions take place. This area should be highly visible and organized to support clear communication, instruction, and student engagement.



As you plan your classroom setup, consider connecting with your mentor for additional support. They can offer insights, examples, and feedback on layout decisions based on their classroom experience.

Features:

- Whiteboard and/or projector or display
- Thoughtful student seating arrangement
 - Resource: [Desk layouts](#)
 - Space for displaying student work and key visuals



Desk layouts

Tips:

- Keep this area consistent so students know where to focus during instruction
- Use student work displays to reinforce expectations and celebrate progress
- Consider flexible seating options, when possible, to support different learning needs

Lab and Shop Zone

The lab or shop zone is an important space for CTE learning. This space may be integrated into your classroom or exist as a separate area, but it should be clear, organized, and structured for safety and efficiency.

Features:

- Tools and equipment
- Clearly identified work zones
- Safety language, signage, and expectations

Tips:

- Use physical task boards to outline daily tasks, roles, and expectations
- Incorporate demonstration mirrors or recorded demos so all students can clearly see procedures
- Utilize “[Ask 3 Before Me](#)” to build student independence and problem-solving
- Establish clear systems for tool checkout, use, and return



“Ask 3 Before Me”



Resource: [Streamlining CTE Lab Routines and Systems](#)



Resource: [Minnesota Department of Education Safety Guidance for CTE](#)

A note on equipment: Establishing clear systems for tools and materials is an important part of CTE safety. Labeling and inventorying equipment at the start of the year helps you and students know where items belong, reduces lost or misplaced tools, and reinforces accountability for shared resources.

To build familiarity in ownership, consider starting the year with a checklist or scavenger hunt that guides students through locating key classroom and lab supplies. This helps students learn the space quickly and supports daily routines around organization and safety from the start of the year.



Resource: [ACTE: Safety Practices in CTE](#)



Resource: [ITEEA Safety Resources and Student Safety Tests](#)

Lab Safety Rules to Establish

- **Proper Attire:** Students should understand how clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE) impact safety. This includes wearing closed-toe shoes, securing loose clothing or hair, and using appropriate safety gear such as goggles or gloves when required.
- **Lab Behavior:** Clear behavior expectations help prevent unsafe situations. Students must follow directions, avoid horseplay, and remain focused and respectful in a shared lab space where distractions can lead to injury.
- **Safe Tool and Equipment Use:** Students should only use equipment after proper training and with teacher approval. Emphasize correct tool usage, safe handling, and the importance of reporting damaged or unsafe equipment in a timely manner.
- **Lab Cleaning Protocols:** Cleaning and organization are important safety practices. Student should be responsible for maintaining a clean workspace, properly storing tools, and following procedures for disposing of materials at the end of each activity.
- **Emergency Procedures:** Students must know what to do in case of an emergency, including how to report accidents, locate safety equipment (e.g., fire extinguishers, eyewash station), and follow evacuation procedures. Clear knowledge of emergency steps is critical for minimizing risk and ensuring quick response.



Resource: [Signed safety agreement template](#)

Career Readiness/Student Zone

This zone helps connect classroom learning to future pathways and provides space for reflection, collaboration, and student ownership.

Features:

- Job postings and industry information
- Certification pathways and resources
- Resume-building tools
- Comfortable seating or collaboration space

Tips:

- Update materials regularly with relevant career and workforce information
- Create a space where students can explore next steps in a low-pressure way
- Use this area for small group work, goal setting, or informal check-ins
- A comfortable seating option can support community-building, break time, and student belonging

Understanding IEPs and 504 Plans: Supporting All Learners

Reviewing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans is an important step in preparing to support your students. These documents provide essential information about learning needs, accommodations, and support, helping to create an inclusive, accessible environment for students' success.



CTE environments often allow students to engage and succeed in ways they may not in core academic classes, making you a key advocate and partner in recognizing and developing their strengths.

Read Through IEPs and 504 Plans Early

- Take time at the beginning of the year to carefully review each student plan to understand the required accommodations and support before instruction begins
- As you review, pay close attention to the student transition plan, which highlights strengths, interests, and preferences that can help guide career exploration and pathway alignment
- If a student has a Behavior Intervention Plan, thoroughly review it to understand specific behavior supports, strategies, and expectations

Connect With Your Special Education Team

- Build open lines of communication with case managers for special education staff. They are valuable partners who can help clarify accommodations and provide strategies specific to classroom and content areas.

Create an Organized System

- Develop a binder or digital document to keep key information easy to access. Having a clear system helps you stay consistent and prepared throughout the year. Suggested content:
 - **One-page student summary.** Creating a quick-reference summary for each student can help implementation of supports during instruction and lab activities
 - Student name and grade level
 - Case managers contact information
 - Class/course
 - Testing accommodations
 - Key notes or reminders for instruction and lab environments
 - **Helpful documentation tools.** Staying organized and documenting support enhances implementation and communication
 - Accommodations documentation log
 - Document when and how accommodations are provided to ensure consistency

- Parent communication log
 - Keep notes of communication with families to support transparency and follow-ups
- IEP meeting notes
 - Record key takeaways, updates, and action steps from meetings
- Editable tracker template
 - Use a customizable tool to organize student information and support. Example: [IEP/504 Tracking Template](#)



IEP/504
Tracking
Template

Establishing Routines

Clear routines help create structure and consistency, especially in CTE classroom environments. These resources support you in establishing expectations for how students enter, work, collaborate, use equipment safely, and transition throughout the class to help maximize instruction time and maintain a safe learning space.

Procedures and Processes

- **Seating charts** help you intentionally structure your classroom or lab environment to support learning, safety, and classroom management. They allow you to strategically group students, manage behavior, and ensure visibility and access to tools and instruction.
 - Resources:
 - [Free Printable Seating Chart Templates](#)
 - [Editable Seating Chart Templates \(Canva\)](#)
- A **Discipline action plan** is essential for creating a safe, structured, and productive classroom environment. Effective discipline is not just about addressing misbehavior; it is about teaching expectations, reinforcing positive behaviors, and applying consistent, logical consequences so students understand how to be successful. Establishing predictability helps reduce disruptions and allows you and students to focus on learning.
 - Key tips for building a discipline plan:
 - **Set clear, simple expectations**
 - Establish 3-5 core expectations that focus on safety, respect, and responsibility. Clearly teach and model what these look like in your classroom and lab setting.
 - **Make expectations visible and consistent**
 - Post expectations and review them regularly. In CTE environments, this may also include safety-specific expectations for tool use, movement, and collaboration.



Free Printable
Seating Chart
Template



Editable
Seating Chart
Template (Canva)

- **Define logical consequences**

- Ensure that consequences are clearly outlined and directly connected to student behavior (i.e., misuse of equipment results in loss of tool access until reteaching occurs)

- **Follow through consistently**

- Apply expectations and consequences fairly and predictably. Consistency helps build trust and reinforces that expectations apply to everyone.

- **Focus on teaching, not punishing**

- Discipline should guide students toward better choices, not just correct behavior. Use redirection, reflection, and reteaching as part of your approach.

- **Incorporate positive reinforcement**

- Recognize and reinforce positive behaviors to build a strong classroom culture and prevent issues before they arise.

- **Resources:**

- [Sample Discipline Action Plan](#)
- [Classroom Management Strategies Article](#)
- [Additional Guidance on Expectations and Consequences](#)

- **Entry procedures** set the tone for the entire class period. In CTE, this often includes students checking instructions, gathering materials, and preparing workspaces safely and efficiently. **Exit procedures** ensure that tools are returned, workspaces are cleaned, and students reflect on learning before leaving. This is important for safety and accountability at the end of each period.

- Resources:

- [60 Must-Teach Classroom Procedures](#) (includes arrival routines)
- [End-of-Class Routine Checklist](#)
- [CTE Classroom Strategies](#)

- **Group work norms:** CTE classrooms often rely on collaboration and team-based projects. Clearly defined group norms help students work effectively, communicate professionally, and take ownership of shared responsibilities.



Sample Discipline
Action Plan



Classroom
Management
Strategies Article



Additional Guidance
on Expectations
and Consequences



60 Must-Teach
Classroom
Procedures



End-of-Class
Routine
Checklist



CTE Classroom
Strategies

- Resources:
 - [Cornell Center for Teaching Innovation Community Agreements](#)
 - [NextGen Learning](#)
 - [Ideas for Random Group Division](#)
- **Organization routines** (materials, tools, workflow) help minimize downtime and maintain a safe and efficient learning environment. In CTE settings, this includes tool storage, workspace, cleanup, and material management.
 - Resources:
 - [Classroom Organization Checklist](#)
 - [Classroom Fun Timers](#)
- **Emergency procedures:** Familiarizing yourself and your classroom with emergency procedures is key for maintaining a safe classroom environment. Being proactive about safety is critical.
 - Review school emergency procedures. Take time to read through your school's handbook and teach emergency procedures to students so they know how to respond in different situations (e.g., fire drills, lockdowns, evacuations, class-specific hazards)
 - Keep updated class rosters accessible. Maintain current class rosters in your emergency folder or go-bag so you can quickly account for all students during drills or real emergencies.
- **Procedures for absent and makeup work:** Clear procedures for missing work and assignment submission help maintain consistency, accountability, and fairness in your classroom.
 - **Communicate expectations early:** Establish a clear policy for how and when students should complete missed work. This may include timelines (i.e., number of days to make up work) and expectations for written and hands-on assignments.



Cornell Center for
Teaching Innovation
Community
Agreements



NextGen
Learning



Ideas for
Random Group
Division



Classroom
Organization Checklist



Classroom
Fun Timers

- **Provide access to materials:** Make sure students know where to find missing content (e.g., shared folder, classroom board, or task board) so they can stay on track.
- **Plan for hands-on makeup opportunities:** Missed lab time may require alternative assignments or scheduled make-up sessions. Be intentional about how students can complete skills missed.
- **Encourage student responsibility:** Build routines where students check in after an absence and take ownership of completing missed work rather than relying solely on teacher reminders.
- **Emergency sub plans:** Unexpected absences happen and having a clear, organized sub plan ensures learning continues and your classroom remains safe and structured. A well-prepared substitute folder helps reduce stress for both you and your sub teacher while maintaining routines and expectations for students.
 - **Create a sub binder or digital folder** that is easy to access. This should be updated regularly so it is ready to use at any time.



Resource: [The Essential Substitute Teacher Folder](#)

- **Essential components to include:**
 - **Welcome letter and key information:** Provide a brief overview to help the substitute quickly understand your classroom
 - ◇ Contact information (email if appropriate)
 - ◇ Daily schedule and bell times
 - ◇ Office and administration contacts
 - **Attendance procedures:** Clearly outline how attendance should be taken and submitted
 - ◇ Where to find attendance rosters
 - ◇ How to report absences or issues
 - ◇ Any specific school procedures to follow
 - **Classroom policies:** Include clear expectations to maintain consistency
 - ◇ Restroom policies
 - ◇ Cellphone policy
 - ◇ Classroom behavior expectations
 - ◇ Any safety-specific rules

- **Seating charts and student helpers:** Provide tools to help the substitute manage the classroom effectively
 - ◇ Updated seating charts for each class period
 - ◇ List of student helpers, if any (e.g., attendance runner, materials manager)
 - ◇ Notes on any students with specific needs (as appropriate and allowed)
- **Emergency information:** Ensure substitutes are prepared to respond appropriately in urgent situations
 - ◇ Emergency procedures (fire drills, lockdowns, etc.)
 - ◇ Location of emergency exits and safety equipment
 - ◇ Key contacts for immediate support
- **Bank of emergency assignments:** Include ready-to-use activities that students can complete independently without new instruction.
- Examples:
 - ◇ Research a career pathway related to the course
 - ◇ Create a career profile (job description, skills, education, salary)
 - ◇ Read an industry article and complete a short reflection

Building Relationships and Belonging

Building strong relationships is the foundation of an effective CTE classroom. When students feel known, respected, and supported, they are more likely to participate, take risks, and persist. Building trust through consistent routines and clear expectations creates a positive, inclusive classroom culture where collaboration can thrive. By understanding students' interests and goals, teachers can make learning more relevant, and even small, intentional actions can meaningfully strengthen connections and support equity.



Use resources to gain strategies to help connect with students, build trust, and create an inclusive environment where all students feel valued and ready to engage.



Resource: [8 Strategies to Increase Student Engagement from a CTE Teacher](#) offers practice strategies and examples for connecting with students in CTE contexts



Resource: [Empowering Equity: Inclusive CTE Strategies](#) highlights ways to build relationships while promoting equity and inclusion



Resource: [23 Ways to Build and Sustain Classroom Relationships](#) provides ready-to-use, actionable ideas you can apply immediately

First Day Activities

Choose activities that are easy and effective in the first few days. This supports a welcoming first impression and is your opportunity to start building classroom culture.

Engaging station activities: Using stations is a great way to introduce key information while keeping students active and engaged.

- Station ideas:
 - Syllabus overview and classroom rules – create questions for main topics in syllabus
 - One-word goal setting or reflection activity
 - Student interest survey
 - Classroom scavenger hunt (materials, zones, safety areas)
 - Name place card creation
 - Create a class playlist

- Class slideshow (“all about me” slides)
- Paper chain activity: Students write/draw things that interest them or tell a little about them on paper strips. They read through and find connections to link their strips. You can then display this as classroom decoration.
- Purposefully move around the classroom. This is a strategy for assessing, asking questions for deeper understanding on student thinking, and an opportunity to point out innovative thinking.

Co-creating student norms

- **Clarify norms together:** Work with students to define what each norm looks like in practice so there is shared understanding and clear expectations
- **Engage students in discussion:** Facilitate opportunities for students to contribute ideas and come to agreement on the norms as a group, building ownership
- **Make norms visible:** Post the finalized norms list in your classroom or on digital platforms for easy reference throughout the year
- **Revisit and revise:** Treat norms as a “working document” that can be reflected on and adjusted to support the classroom
- **Resources:** These articles offer research-based strategies and practical ideas for student-centered instruction, engagement, and inclusive teaching practices that can be applied in your classroom.



Resource: [Establishing Classroom Norms to Enhance Students' Collective Efficacy](#)



Resource: [Co-Creating Classroom Norms for an Inclusive School Climate](#)

Centering Inclusion

Key takeaways from the [ISBE Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards](#) include:

- Self-awareness matters
 - Effective educators reflect on their own identities, experiences, and potential biases and understand how these influence their teaching and interactions with students
- Students' identities are assets
 - CTE classrooms should build on students' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and prior knowledge using these as strengths to support learning and engagement
- Relationships are central to learning
 - Strong relationships with students, families, and communities are essential. Getting to know students beyond the classroom can help create more meaningful and supportive learning experiences.
- Students are active contributors
 - Students should be positioned as co-creators of learning, with opportunities to share their perspectives, take on leadership roles, and advocate for themselves and others.
- Equity is an ongoing responsibility
 - Educators recognize that systems and structures can create inequities and actively work to create inclusive, supportive environments where all students can succeed.
- Representation and inclusion matter
 - Classrooms should reflect diverse identities and perspectives in both content and classroom culture so all students feel seen, valued, and included.



ISBE Culturally
Responsive
Teaching and
Leading Standards

Communication With Parents and Guardians

Open and consistent communication with parents and guardians is important to building your classroom. Keeping families informed creates a strong support system for students, reinforces expectations, and builds trust between school and home. In CTE programs especially, communication also helps families understand the hands-on, career focused experiences students are participating in.

Set Clear Communication Expectations

- Consider sharing:
 - Preferred contact methods (email, school platform, etc.)
 - Types of updates families can expect (grades, behavior, projects, etc.)
- Providing clarity up front helps avoid confusion and ensures families know how to stay connected

Introduction Letter

- Sending a welcome or introduction letter at the start of the year is a great way to build rapport
- Consider including:
 - A brief introduction of yourself and your background
 - Overview of the CTE program/course
 - Key classroom expectations
 - Communication methods and contact information



Resource: [Example Parent Communication](#)

Provide Regular Updates

- Consistent updates help families stay informed and engaged in what students are learning
- Ideas for updates:
 - Sharing upcoming projects, assessments, or events
 - Highlighting classroom activities or student accomplishments
 - Providing reminders about materials, safety expectations, or deadlines

Use a Classroom Newsletter

A classroom newsletter is a way to keep families connected and can serve as a meaningful student activity. Consider how students can play an active role in the development of the newsletter.

- Newsletter ideas
 - Project updates or showcases
 - Career pathways highlights
 - Industry news or trends
 - Upcoming events or important dates

Guidance for Lesson Planning and Initial Instruction

Priority areas:

- Plan shorter, more flexible lessons rather than overloading a single period
- Build predictable structures (bell ringers, transitions, exit tickets)
- Learn about students' interests, goals, and prior experiences
- Design lessons where all students can experience success quickly
- Use informal assessments to understand academic and technical starting points



Focus is not on “covering everything.” It’s on establishing a classroom culture, building routines, and ensuring all students can access instruction.

Planning with Choice and Multiple Ways to Show Learning

Students enter CTE classrooms with diverse strengths, needs, and ways of expressing understanding. Instruction should be intentionally designed to offer multiple pathways for engagement, representation, and expression. This approach increases engagement across diverse learners, reduces barriers for students with varying academic or language needs, and helps build student ownership and confidence early in the course.

Practical Strategies

Offer multiple response options:

- Written responses (journal, paragraph, short answer)
- Verbal responses (discussion, presentation, peer explanation)
- Visual responses (diagram, infographic, sketch)
- Hands-on demonstrations (build, simulate, model)

Incorporate student choice:

- Let students choose how they demonstrate learning
- Provide real-world scenarios tied to student interests (e.g., automotive, healthcare, entrepreneurship)
- Use “pick one of three” options for assignments
 - Example: To show understanding, students can:
 - Write a summary
 - Record a one-minute explanation video
 - Create a labeled diagram of the concept

A helpful starting point is to incorporate choice into one lesson per week.



Resource: [Choice boards templates](#)

Anticipating Varied Academic and Technical Backgrounds

CTE classrooms typically include a wide range of learners, such as students with strong hands-on skills who may be continuing to develop their reading or writing abilities, those with strong academic skills but limited technical experience, and English learners as well as students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Differentiation is essential in the first month of teaching as effective instruction adapts the content (what is taught), the process (how it is learned), and the product (how students demonstrate their learning). Differentiation does not mean creating separate lessons but providing structured variation within the same lesson.

Resources:

- CAST [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#)([UDL introduction video](#))
- [Differentiation in Action: Practical Strategies to Reach Every Learner](#)
- [9 Differentiation Strategies](#)

ISBE Resources:

- [ISBE CTE Pathways](#): To support educators, ISBE provides a collection of lesson plans, curriculum frameworks, and instructional resources on this site to assist teachers in implementing and strengthening CTE programs, enhancing student engagement, and connecting classroom instruction to meaningful career pathways.
- [ISBE Standards and Instructions](#): The Standards and Instruction Department is committed to supporting Illinois schools and educators by providing guidance, resources, and professional learning to support student achievement and equitable learning outcomes.



Universal Design
for Learning



Universal Design
introduction video



Differentiation in
Action: Practical
Strategies to Reach
every Learner



9 Differentiation
Strategies



ISBE CTE
Pathways



ISBE Standards
and Instructions

Differentiation Strategies in Action

Strategy	Description	Example	Resources
Tiered Assignments	Tiered assignments allow students to engage with the same topic at varying levels of complexity, such as identifying or defining key concepts at a foundational level, applying skills through structured tasks at an intermediate level, or analyzing, designing, or troubleshooting at a more advanced level.	Topic: Workplace Safety - Level 1 (Foundational): Identify and define five common workplace hazards - Level 2 (Intermediate): Analyze a workplace scenario and explain which hazards are present and why - Level 3 (Advanced): Design a safety plan for a mock workplace including prevention strategies	Article A Streamlined Strategy for Differentiating Instruction Video Differentiating Instruction
Choice Boards	Choice boards provide students with a range of project options, such as creating a prototype, designing a poster or infographic, conducting a brief research task, or completing a hands-on demonstration.	Topic: Career Exploration <i>Students choose one:</i> - Create a career infographic - Record a mock interview video - Write a day-in-the-life narrative - Build a presentation or slide deck - Design a career pathway map	Article Using Choice Boards to Boost Student Engagement



Article: A Streamlined Strategy for Differentiating Instruction



Video: Differentiating Instruction



Article: Using Choice Boards to Boost Student Engagement

Strategy	Description	Example	Resources
Scaffolding & Supports	Scaffolding and supports help make learning more accessible by providing structures such as guided notes or fill-in templates, step-by-step checklists, modeled instruction, small group instruction based on needs or mixed abilities, and one-on-one conferencing.	"I Do → We Do → You Do" Example: - Teacher demonstrates wiring a simple circuit - Class completes one together - Students build independently	Video 5 Scaffolding Strategies to Bolster Student Learning
Flexible Grouping	Flexible grouping allows teachers to rotate students through different learning structures, including independent work, partner collaboration, and small group instruction, to support varied learning needs and promote engagement.	Skill-Based Workshop Stations Students rotate through stations focused on different skills <i>Example stations</i> - Teacher-led instruction - Hands-on practice - Independent application or extension Interest-Based Grouping Students group based on career interest: - Nursing - Sports Medicine - Medical Lab Group task: Each group analyzes a case study relevant to their field and presents how professionals would respond.	Article Using Student Reflections to Inform Your Small Groups



Video: 5 Scaffolding Strategies to Bolster Student Learnings



Article: Using Student Reflections to Inform Your Small Groups

Ongoing Assessment and Adjustment

Bell Ringer

A bell ringer can be used as a quick, low-stakes pre-assessment at the start of class to gauge students' prior knowledge, skills, and experiences related to an upcoming lesson or unit. These short activities last typically three to five minutes and help teachers understand where students are starting so they can adjust instruction accordingly. These should be informational for the teacher and not graded.

Examples of bell ringer pre-assessments:

- A three-question warm-up focused on key concepts
- A quick demonstration or scenario where students predict an outcome or identify what they notice
- A simple skill check (e.g., identifying tools/materials, reading a diagram, or analyzing a short case)

Quick Checks for Understanding

Quick checks for understanding are brief, informal strategies used during instruction to quickly gauge student comprehension and adjust instruction in the moment.

Examples of quick checks:

- Thumbs up/down/sideways: Quick, nonverbal check for students to use hand signals to indicate their level of confidence or comprehension
- Polling tools: Use tools like Mentimeter, Kahoot, or Google Forms. For a low-tech option, have students hold up a number one to five to indicate their answer
- Whiteboard responses: Students write a quick answer on a mini whiteboard and hold it up

Exit Tickets

Exit tickets are brief reflections completed at the end of class that allow students to summarize their learning and demonstrate their understanding in a quick, low-stakes way. Typically taking two to five minutes, exit tickets help teachers gather immediate feedback on what students learned, what questions remain, and where additional support may be needed.

Examples of exit ticket prompts:

- "One thing I learned..."
- "One question I still have..."

Instruction should be responsive to what students demonstrate through these early assessments by reteaching concepts when needed, adjusting pacing, grouping students strategically, and providing targeted supports. Above all, early assessment should be viewed as a tool for understanding students' needs and starting points – not for grading or evaluation.



Assessment should be frequent, low-stakes, and informative, not high-pressure.

Student Feedback

Student feedback is an important strategy for creating a responsive, engaging, and student-centered classroom. Gathering regular input helps you better understand how students are experiencing instruction, pacing, lab activities, and classroom routines. It also gives students a voice in their learning, which can increase motivation, ownership, and engagement. When used consistently, feedback helps you make small, meaningful adjustments that improve the classroom environment.

Why student feedback matters

- Helps identify what is working well and what needs adjustment
- Improves student engagement and participation
- Builds trust and open communication between teachers and students
- Supports an inclusive and responsive learning environment

Student feedback surveys

- Short surveys are an effective way to gather structured feedback on your teaching and classroom environment
 - You might ask questions such as:
 - What helps you learn best in this class?
 - What part feels most challenging?
 - How can I better support your learning?
 - What do you enjoy most about lab/shop activities?



Resource: [Classroom Feedback Surveys](#)

- Tips for using feedback effectively:
 - Keep it simple and consistent. Frequent, short feedback can be more effective than occasional long surveys
 - Ask specific questions. Focus on areas like instruction, lab activities, or group work
 - Be open. Approach feedback as an opportunity to improve rather than criticism
 - Close the loop. Let students know what you heard and what changes you are making.
 - Start small. You don't need to change everything. Identify one or two adjustments that may have the biggest impact.

Creating Workforce Connections Early

CTE instruction is most impactful when students can immediately see how their learning connects to real-world careers and industry applications. Making these connections early helps students understand the relevance of what they are learning, increases engagement, and builds motivation. Even small, informal connections can meaningfully shape how students view the course and their potential career pathways.

First 30-Day Ideas	
Invite a guest speaker	Invite industry professionals, program alumni, or local employers. These speakers can share the pathway they took to their career, personal experiences, and how they use what students are currently learning in their work. Tip: Incorporate an interactive activity and minimize lengthy presentations
Career spotlight mini-lessons	These can be brief five- to 10-minute segments that highlight relevant careers and help students explore how course content is used in different industries. During these mini-lessons, teachers can introduce specific roles, discuss the skills and tools required, and outline possible education or training pathways, helping students better understand career options and see the purpose behind what they are learning.
Integrate hands-on, real-world tasks	This can include using problem-solving scenarios, team-based challenges, or case studies that mirror authentic workplace situations. These types of activities encourage critical thinking, decision-making, and application of skills while helping students understand how concepts are used beyond the classroom.

With these instructional strategies in mind, lesson planning becomes a tool for intentionally structuring learning experiences that are engaging, accessible, and aligned to real-world application.



Team-based challenges

Lesson and Unit Planning

As you begin planning your lessons, try using a simple, consistent structure that you can rely on and refine over time. Having a clear framework will not only support your instruction but also create a sense of predictability and clarity for your students.

Starting With the Big Picture: Unit Planning and Scope

A unit plan is a structured outline that organizes a sequence of lessons around a central topic, set of standards, or learning goals over a defined period of time. It maps out what students will learn, how they will learn it, and how their understanding will be assessed, ensuring instruction is purposeful, connected, and aligned to desired outcomes.

Before diving into a detailed, day-to-day lesson plan, think about the larger picture of how each lesson fits into a full unit. Creating a unit plan and thoughtful pacing guide helps ensure lessons are aligned, manageable, and intentionally sequenced to support student learning and skill progression.

Reasons to Start With Unit Planning

- Helps you identify key standards, skills, and outcomes for the unit
- Ensure lessons build logically from introduction to practice and application
- Supports planning for projects, assessments, and lab time
- Prevents rushing or falling behind by mapping out your time in advance

Components to Consider

- Unit goals and learning objectives
- Major projects or performance tasks
- Assessments (formative and summative)
- Required materials, tools, or lab time
- Timeline and pacing across days/weeks

Once your unit and pacing are established, you can begin creating more granular lesson plans that align to your larger goals. This approach helps ensure that each lesson has a clear purpose and contributes to overall student outcomes.



Resource: [Unit and lesson plan](#)



Resource: [Example planner](#)

Sample Unit Plan

Course: Introduction to Health Sciences

Unit Title: Patient Care Fundamentals

Duration: 3 weeks

Unit Overview

In this unit, students will learn foundational patient care skills, including vital signs, communication, and safety procedures. Students will apply their learning through hands-on practice and simulated healthcare scenarios.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate proper handwashing and infection control procedures
- Measure and record basic vital signs (temperature, pulse, respiration)
- Communicate effectively with patients using professional language
- Apply patient safety principles in simulated healthcare settings

Key Lessons/Learning Activities

- Week 1: Introduction to healthcare roles, safety procedures, and infection control
- Week 2: Vital signs instruction and hands-on practice (lab activities)
- Week 3: Patient communication skills and role-play scenarios

Assessments

- Formative: Skill checklists, exit tickets, observation during labs
- Summative: Practical skills assessment (taking vital signs), written quiz, patient care scenario evaluation

Materials and Resources

- PPE supplies (gloves, masks)
- Thermometers, stopwatches, practice equipment
- Instructional videos and teacher demonstrations
- Scenario cards for role-play

Differentiation and Supports

- Visual guides and step-by-step checklists for procedures
- Partner and small-group practice opportunities
- Extended time or modified tasks as needed

Real-World Application

Students connect learning to healthcare careers by practicing real-world skills used by nurses, medical assistants, and other professionals.

Components of a Lesson Plan

A lesson plan is a detailed guide for a single class period or instructional session that outlines the objectives, activities, materials, and assessments for that day. It helps ensure the lesson is organized, purposeful, and aligned to learning goals while providing a clear sequence for engaging students and checking their understanding.

Objective

A clear, student-friendly statement of what students will know or be able to do by the end of the lesson, often written as an “I can...” statement to guide focus and learning.

- Resources:
 - [AAMC Writing Learning Objectives](#)
 - [NIU Writing Goals and Objectives](#)

Warmup/Bell Ringer

A short activity at the beginning of class (five to 10 minutes) designed to engage students right away, establish a routine, and prepare them for the lesson.

Activate Prior Knowledge

A strategy used during the opening of the lesson to connect new content to what students already know, helping them build understanding more effectively.

Direct Instruction and Modeling

The portion of the lesson where new content or skills are introduced through clear explanation and demonstration, often showing students exactly what successful work looks like.

Practice With Teacher Support

Guided practice where students begin applying new skills with support, feedback, and prompting from the teacher to build confidence and understanding.

Differentiated or Choice-Based Task

An opportunity for students to engage in independent and/or group practice through activities that offer varying levels of support, complexity, or choice in how they demonstrate learning.

Checks for Understanding

Ongoing, informal strategies used throughout the lesson (e.g., questioning, polling, discussion) to quickly assess student comprehension and adjust instruction as needed.



AAMC Writing
Learning Objectives



NIU Writing Goals
and Objectives

Exit Ticket

A brief activity at the end of the lesson that allows students to reflect on their learning and demonstrate understanding, while providing the teacher with insight to guide next steps.



Resource: [Basic lesson planning template](#)

Example Lesson Plan: Graphic Design

Objective

"I can identify key design principles and apply them to improve a visual design."

Warmup/Bell Ringer (5-7 minutes)

- Students view two versions of a flyer (one well-designed, one poorly designed) and respond: "Which design is more effective? Why?"
- Students write a brief response or discuss with a partner

Activate Prior Knowledge

Teacher asks:

- "What makes something look 'professional' or 'appealing'?"
- "Where do you see graphic design in everyday life?"
- "What catches your attention in ads or social media posts?"

Direct Instruction and Modeling (10 minutes)

Teacher:

- Introduces the basic design principles
- Shows examples of each in real-world designs (ads, logos, social media posts)
- Models improving a poorly designed layout: "Watch how adjusting alignment and spacing makes this easier to read."

Practice With Teacher Support (10 minutes)

- Students work in pairs to analyze a sample design and identify which design principles are used (or missing)
- Teacher circulates to:
 - Ask guiding questions
 - Clarify misunderstandings
 - Provide feedback

Differentiated or Choice-Based Task (15 minutes)

- Students choose how to demonstrate their understanding:
 - Option 1: Revise a poorly designed flyer by applying design principles
 - Option 2: Create a simple original design (poster, social media post, or layout) using at least two principles

Checks for Understanding (Throughout Lesson)

- Thumbs up/down: “Does this design use alignment effectively?”
- Poll or verbal: “Which principle is being used here?”
- Show-and-tell: Students hold up drafts for quick feedback
- Turn-and-talk: “What would you improve in this design?”

Exit Ticket (3-5 minutes)

Students respond to either or both:

- “Name one design principle and explain how it improves a design.”
- “What is one change you made to improve your design and why?”

By focusing on clear structures, consistent routines, and responsive teaching, educators can create an environment where all students feel supported, engaged, and capable of success. Integrating choice, differentiation, ongoing assessment, and real-world connections helps ensure that instruction is both accessible and meaningful. As these practices are gradually refined, they will not only strengthen daily instruction but also build student confidence, independence, and readiness for future learning and career pathways.



Effective lesson planning and initial instruction in the first 30 days set the foundation for the entire course.

Developing a CTE Syllabus

A well-designed CTE syllabus serves as both an instructional roadmap and a communication tool. In the first 30 days, the goal is not to create a lengthy or overly complex document, but to establish clarity, transparency, and relevance for students. A strong syllabus helps students understand what they will learn, why it matters, and how they will be successful in the course.

A CTE course syllabus allows you to have outlined curriculum that can be shared with other teachers, and employers, and be used to build and develop your programs. You can use your syllabus to:

- Receive feedback from advisory committees
- Align your program for dual credit purposes
- Identify academic skills and partnership opportunities with core content teachers [Graduation Requirement Substitution Policy CTE courses can count for graduation requirements](#)

It is also important to review school- or district-specific expectations when developing the syllabus, particularly for courses that offer early college credit, as these may require specific language, policies, or alignment with partner institutions.

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Resources:

- [ISBE CTE Pathways](#): To support educators, ISBE provides a collection of lesson plans, curriculum frameworks, and instructional resources on this site to assist teachers in implementing and strengthening CTE programs, enhancing student engagement, and connecting classroom instruction to meaningful career pathways.

Additional Resources:

- [Indiana CTE Workshop Materials](#): These resources were collected to help new and newer CTE teachers make the transition from industry to secondary education.
- [Syllabus template](#)
- [Additional syllabus templates](#)



Graduation
Requirement
Substitution Policy



ISBE CTE
Pathways



Indiana CTE
Workshop Materials



Syllabus
template



Additional
syllabus templates

What the Syllabus Should Include

Course Overview and Purpose

The syllabus should begin with a clear, student-friendly description of the course, including what will be taught and why it is important. This section helps students understand the relevance of the course and how it connects to real-world applications. Include:

- Key topics or units
- Skills students will develop (technical, core academic, and essential)
 - Resources:
 - [Advance CTE standards](#)
 - [Illinois Technical and Essential Employability Skills](#)
 - Real-world relevance of the course
 - Your course handbook (If updating, be sure to align the state course description) [ISBE CTE Course Catalog](#)



Advance CTE standards



Illinois Technical and Essential Employability Skills



ISBE CTE Course Catalog



Programs of Study

Program or Pathway Alignment

CTE courses are often part of a broader [program of study](#) or career pathway. This section of the syllabus helps students see how the course fits into a larger sequence of learning and potential career opportunities. Include:

- Program or pathway name (e.g., Health Sciences, Business, Manufacturing)
- How this course connects to future courses or certifications (including any certifications earned in the class)
- Possible career pathways

Instructional Approach

CTE instruction is distinct in its emphasis on applied learning. Clearly state how students will learn throughout the course. Include:

- Hands-on learning experiences
- Project-based or problem-based activities
- Industry-aligned tasks or simulations
- Collaborative learning opportunities

This helps students understand that learning will go beyond lectures and includes active participation.

Classroom Norms and Expectations

Establishing clear expectations early helps create a positive and productive learning environment. Include:

- Participation expectations
- Collaboration and teamwork norms
- Respect and communication expectations
- Procedures for materials, equipment, and transitions
- Classroom policies (e.g., late work, cellphone, etc.)



Assessment and Grading Practices

Students benefit from understanding how their learning will be evaluated and what success looks like. Include:

- Types of assessments (e.g., projects, demonstrations, quizzes, participation)
- Balance between academic and technical skill assessment
- Grading categories or weights (if applicable)
- Emphasis on skill development and growth

- Consider framing expectations as shared commitments to build ownership
- Reinforce that assessment includes demonstration of skills, not just written work
- Emphasize that safety is a shared responsibility and a professional expectation

Safety Expectations

Safety is a critical component of all CTE programs and should be explicitly addressed in the syllabus. Include:

- General safety rules
- Equipment/tool use expectations
- Required safety procedures
- Consequences for unsafe behavior

Supports for Students

This section helps create an inclusive and supportive learning environment by communicating available resources. Include:

- Access to materials or accommodations
- Encouragement to seek help
- School-based support services (as appropriate)

This reinforces that all students can succeed with the right support.

Communication Methods

Clear communication structures help students and families stay informed and engaged. Include:

- How information will be shared (e.g., learning platform, email, announcements)
- Expected response times
- Office hours or help sessions (if applicable)
- Best ways for students to ask questions outside of class time

Resources

Provide students with access to materials that will support their learning throughout the course. Include:

- Required materials or supplies
 - Your textbook and/or online curriculum (units and objectives). Grants can pay for online textbooks/curriculum but not physical textbooks.
- Digital tools or platforms
- Industry-related resources (e.g., websites, tools, references)
- Optional enrichment resources

When a syllabus is designed with clarity, accessibility, and real-world connection in mind, the syllabus becomes a powerful tool for building student confidence, establishing expectations, and supporting success. As instruction begins, the syllabus should serve as a living reference point that reinforces routines, expectations, and the purpose behind learning.

After developing your syllabus, next steps include gathering feedback from advisory committees, exploring and aligning dual credit opportunities, and identifying ways to connect your course with other subject areas.



A CTE syllabus is more than a course outline. It sets the tone for the learning experience and helps students understand the value and relevance of the course from day one.

CTE Syllabus Template (editable)

Utilize the [template](#) to create your own CTE syllabus.



CTE Syllabus
Template (editable)

First 30 Days Planning

Now that you've explored key CTE background information and resources to strengthen your understanding of programs, expectations, and instructional practices; planned for a safe, organized, and inclusive classroom environment; and developed your approach to lesson planning, initial instruction, and a clear, student-centered syllabus, it's time to bring everything together and map out your first 30 days.

First 30 Days At a Glance

Your first 30 days as a CTE teacher should focus on building relationships, lab safety certification, establishing strict safety expectations, and connecting with local industry partners. Establishing strong routines and safety habits early sets the foundation for student success and helps prevent challenges later in the year.



Resource: [The First 30 Days: Building Student Connections That Last All Year](#)

Week 1: Classroom Culture and Student Orientation

Focus: Routines, expectations, and relationships

- ✓ Begin student safety certification process with clear expectations for mastery
- ✓ Establish "workplace-style" norms (e.g., team meetings, roles, procedures, cleanup systems)
- ✓ Practice daily routines (e.g., entry, tool use, transitions, exit procedures)
- ✓ Get to know your students through interest inventories or career goal-setting activities
- ✓ Begin building a classroom culture rooted in safety, respect, and collaboration

Suggested Tools and Resources:

- [Advance CTE Cluster Interest Survey](#)
- [CareerOneStop Assessment](#)
- [ISBE CTE Career Exploration Toolkit](#)
- [Utah CTE Activities](#)



Advance CTE
Cluster Interest
Survey



CareerOneStop
Assessment



ISBE CTE Career
Exploration Toolkit



Utah CTE Activities

Week 2: Compliance and Safety Foundation

Focus: Safety, structure, and readiness

- ✓ Learn and implement school and lab safety protocols (OSHA/state expectations)
- ✓ Conduct a full inventory of tools, equipment, and materials
- ✓ Identify safety concerns or maintenance needs
- ✓ Draft your lab safety plan and student safety contracts
- ✓ Introduce classroom/lab layout, safety zones, and emergency procedures

Week 3: Curriculum Setup and Baseline Skills

Focus: Instruction and student skill development

- ✓ Launch your first instructional unit or module
- ✓ Introduce key industry vocabulary and foundational content
- ✓ Begin light, structured hands-on activities (as appropriate to safety readiness)
- ✓ Implement student roles (e.g., tool manager, safety lead, cleanup team, etc.)
- ✓ Assess baseline technical and academic skills to inform instruction

Week 4: Stakeholder Engagement

Focus: Communication and long-term planning

- ✓ Begin identifying and connecting with local industry partners and advisory committee members
- ✓ Reach out to families to introduce your program and expectations
- ✓ Finalize and securely document safety contracts and certifications
- ✓ Reflect on routines, instruction, and student progress and make adjustments
- ✓ Begin planning for work-based learning or industry-connected experiences

Planning for Day One

The first day of school is a great opportunity to set the tone for your classroom community, and thoughtful planning ensures that students feel ready to engage. Rather than focusing on only content, effective day one plans incorporate building relationships, clearly teaching and practicing routines, and establishing expectations in ways that are interactive and meaningful. A well-structured day includes a clear beginning, middle, and end, balances community-building with introductory academic experiences, and creates space for student voice and reflection. When students actively participate in learning routines and understanding expectations from the start, they are more likely to feel confident, connected, and prepared for success throughout the year.

Resources:

- [First Day Planner Template](#)
- [ICEV Curriculum Pacing Guides](#)
- [First Day Checklist](#)
- [AI Platform for Schools and Districts](#)
- [Free customizable Google Slides or PowerPoint templates for Games](#)
- Ice breakers and activities
 - [13 First-Day-of-School Icebreakers](#)
 - [50 Effective Icebreakers](#)
- Student “About Me” templates
 - [Free “About Me” printable templates](#)



First Day
Planner Template



ICEV Curriculum
Pacing Guides



First Day
Checklist



AI Platform for
Schools and
Districts



Free customizable
templates for games



13 First-Day-of-School
Icebreakers



50 Effective
Icebreakers



Free “About Me”
Printable Templates

Your Turn: Plan Your First 30 Days

[First 30 Days Plan Worksheet – Fill out form](#)

Use the space below to map out your own plan. Focus on what feels manageable and most important for your content area, students, and classroom environment.

Consider these questions before you begin:

- What are the most important routines I want students to master in the first 30 days?
- What safety expectations must be fully understood before advancing instruction?
- How will I make learning feel relevant to students' future careers?
- What support do I need from my mentor or school community?

Week 1: Classroom Culture and Student Orientation

Week 2: Compliance and Safety Foundation



First 30 Days Plan
Worksheet

Week 3: Curriculum Setup and Baseline Skills

Week 4: Stakeholder Engagement

..... Reflection and Next Steps

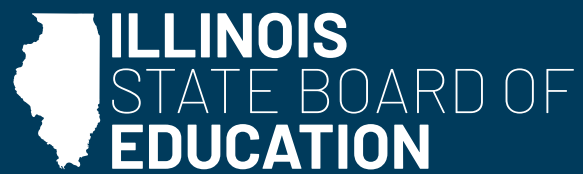
Before your first one-on-one meeting with your mentor, you should begin completing your First 30 Days Plan. This worksheet is designed to help you identify your early priorities, think through what support you may need, and come prepared for a focused conversation. During your first meeting, you and your mentor will review your plan together and use it as a starting point for reflection, feedback, and next steps.

Remember, your first 30 days are about building routines, developing relationships, and growing your confidence. Use this plan as a flexible guide to identify what matters most and where you may need support, and revisit it as you continue to learn and adjust in your classroom.

As you complete your first 30 days, remember that effective classrooms are not built in a single week or even a single month; they are developed over time. The systems, routines, and relationships you are putting in place now are the foundation for the learning environment you will continue to strengthen and refine throughout the year.

CTE teaching is collaborative work; you are part of a broader community of educators, mentors, and partners who are here to support you. Lean into your mentorship, connect with peers, and seek out support and resources when you need them. Growth in the role happens through shared learning, reflection, and ongoing dialogue with others who understand the work.

We hope you approach this journey with care and that over time you will see these small, intentional steps lead to meaningful impact for both you and your students.



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