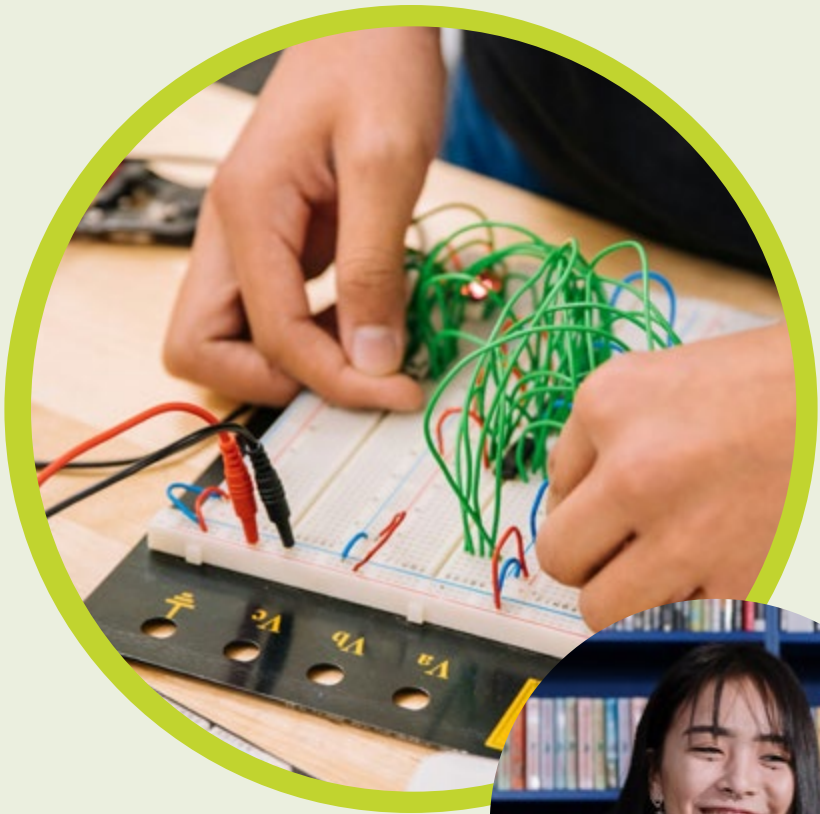




5 CTE Trends to Follow in 2026

Experience
+ Positive.





Did you know?

The global soft skills training market is expected to double and reach \$53 billion by 2028.

Innovate your CTE program with these trends

CTE programs that follow industry trends better prepare students for the workforce. Discover what CTE trends matter in 2025 – and consider how you might integrate them into your own program – so you can feel confident your students are equipped with in-demand skills for career success.

In this guide, you'll learn about the:

1. Adoption of flexible classroom furniture
2. Emphasis on AI technology
3. Prioritization of soft skill development
4. Implementation of stackable credentials
5. Focus on sustainable furniture and room designs

Plus, you'll get expert answers to schools' FAQs about CTE learning spaces, furniture, and room designs that improve hands-on learning.

Call or email us to talk to a CTE learning space expert today.

1

Widespread adoption of flexible CTE furniture

Modern CTE learning spaces are about education in motion. Educators are increasingly using flexible furniture that allows them to transform a traditional classroom into a hands-on training space at a moment's notice. Think [active stools](#), collaborative [tables on wheels](#), and [soft seating](#).

We can help outfit a flexible learning space for a variety of career pathways, including:

- Building and repair
- Healthcare and education
- Food services and hospitality
- IT and cybersecurity
- Training spaces and demonstration areas
- Cosmetology, beauty, and barber



2

Emphasis on AI and learning technologies

Leaders in CTE embrace artificial intelligence and learning technologies to enhance CTE programs in a big way. From teaching methods and curriculum design to better student engagement and workforce preparation, CTE programs across the country are tapping into the many advantages of AI technologies. AI can enhance your CTE program by offering:

Personalized learning

AI platforms allow students to work at their own pace, get targeted support, and focus on improvements.

Curriculum customization

AI can analyze industry trends and data for schools to identify emerging skills needed for the in-demand careers of tomorrow.

Skill assessment

Schools are using AI-driven assessment tools to learn more about student preferences, interests and skills, making it more impactful to recommend career pathways.

3

Prioritization of soft skills

Hiring managers across CTE industries are looking for top talent with applicable soft skills. It's no surprise that CTE programs are increasingly embracing opportunities to incorporate soft skill development into their curriculum. Schools today are prioritizing opportunities for students to visit job sites, participate in job shadowing, or engage in real-world experiences to promote in-demand skills like creative and critical thinking, empathy, and communication.

4

Stackable credentials to support students

High schools and colleges that support industry-recognized credentials is another emerging industry trend. Stackable and portable credentials that students can earn incrementally and take with them to college, trade school, or the workforce are highly valuable. Stackable credentials accelerate credit attainment and, in many cases, lead to an increase in degree completion. Credentials earned in the classroom translate to in-demand qualifications for employers – setting students up for lifelong success.

CTE Stats

73% of districts offer CTE courses for which students can earn both high school and postsecondary credit.

61% offer CTE courses so students can earn additional high school credits in math, science, English/language arts, or social studies.



5

Sustainable practices in CTE programs

Successful CTE programs build a talent pipeline for “green jobs” in various industries, from transportation and technology to recycling and waste management. Increasingly, we see CTE programs prioritize environmental stewardship, eco-friendly design and construction, renewable energy solutions and other sustainability-related fields. Many traditional fields in CTE, such as buildings and architecture, are adapting curricula to address climate change, for example.

Our experts can meet your programs’ green initiatives with BIFMA, UL, and GREENGUARD certified products. Start exploring these eco-friendly options as part of your CTE initiatives!

The BIFMA logo consists of the letters "BIFMA" in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

CTE Learning Space FAQs

How can I design a CTE space that promotes hands-on learning?

A CTE space designed for hands-on learning needs furniture that's not only flexible and adaptable but durable and able to withstand heavy-duty projects. Think mobile workbenches and shop tables or collaborative activity tables. Dedicated storage areas for tools and equipment are a must-have, as well as power and connectivity to support the use of any technologies. And consider safety: students must have plenty of space to move around and work. A learning space designed for safety protects both students and teachers from accidents, injuries, and potential hazards during hands-on activities.

What should I consider before I update my learning space?

Before you make any significant updates to your space, consider the following:

Flexibility – Determine what flexible furnishings you can integrate into your space.

Safety – Work with NIOSH safety guidelines and checklists to inform your updates.

Equipment needs – Plan for equipment upgrades that support future CTE programs.

Industry partnerships – Work with industry partners to help facilitate CTE updates.

How do I know if my CTE classroom furniture is sustainable?

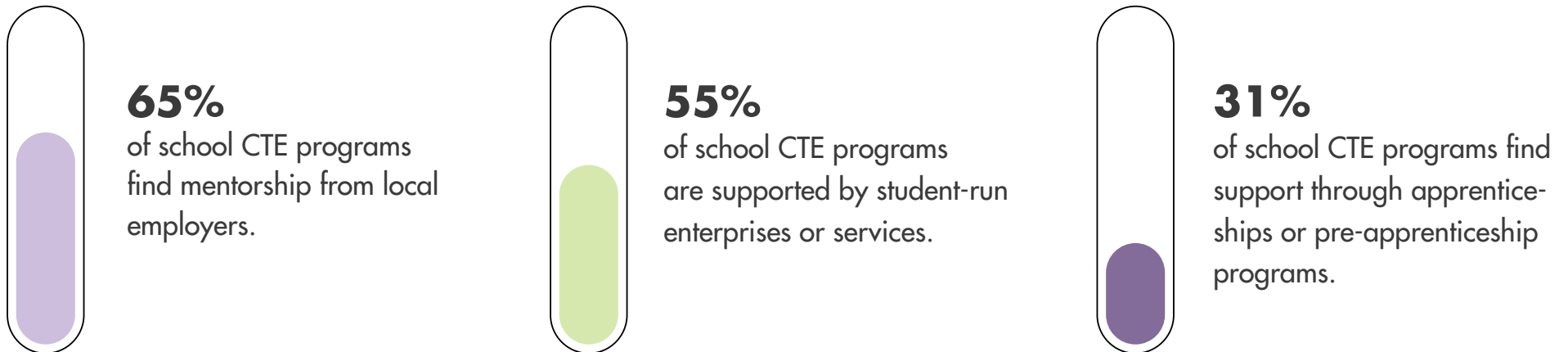
Look for furniture marked with the following third-party durability and sustainability certifications:

- GREENGUARD
- GREENGUARD Gold
- BIFMA
- UL

GREENGUARD and GREENGUARD Gold certified products meet stringent standards for low chemical emissions. BIFMA-certified products have been rigorously tested for stability, strength and durability. A UL certification means a product has been certified to meet scientific safety and quality standards.

Where can my school find CTE program support?

Many of today's CTE schools collaborate with industry partners, companies, and institutions for program support. Partnerships might include apprenticeships, internships, or mentorship programs that offer students the real-world learning experiences essential for career development and a smooth transition into the workforce.



New to CTE programs or want to explore CTE learning space improvements?

School Outfitters can help.

Call or email us to talk to a CTE learning space expert today.

1-800-260-2776

sales@schooloutfitters.com

www.SchoolOutfitters.com



About School Outfitters

School Outfitters is on a mission to help students, teachers, and administrators Experience Positive wherever learning takes place. The company's belief in people—that everyone deserves a chance to be themselves, to be seen, heard, and to realize their potential—translates into a relentless quest to do better and be better. As a result, School Outfitters' innovation in creating flexible learning spaces has won the repeat business of 97% of America's top 1,000 school districts.

Founded in 1998 and voted as a Cincinnati Top Workplace for 12 consecutive years, School Outfitters is 100% employee owned and operated. The company offers a broad range of flexible furnishings, collaborative arrangements, and technology integrations, delivered through more than 150 product lines, including exclusive distribution of Learniture, Norwood, Sprogs, and Egghead. To join the more than 30,000 customers who have chosen School Outfitters to Experience Positive, visit www.schooloutfitters.com.

