

2025-2026 Region 21 Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment

Summary and Findings

This is a summary of findings of the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) for Region 21/CEPD 36. The report is based on School Year 2023-2024 Core Performance Indicator data. The assessment evaluates the performance of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs against Perkins V Core Performance Indicators and identifies strategic activities for improvement.

Here is a summary of the common themes and challenges identified across the region's CTE programs:

Common Challenges and Barriers

- **Student Readiness and Socioeconomic Factors:** A recurring barrier across almost all metrics is poor academic performance and the need for remediation prior to entering CTE programs. Students also face significant socio-economic barriers, including poverty, trauma, and a lack of academic resources. Social-emotional learning challenges and student apathy are also frequently cited.
- **Attendance and Transportation:** Maintaining consistent attendance is a major obstacle, heavily compounded by rural transportation issues. Being "rural and poor" makes it difficult for students to travel to programs, Work-Based Learning (WBL) sites, or secure jobs.
- **Systemic and Scheduling Roadblocks:** Program delivery models are often hindered by complex district schedules and a lack of understanding from non-CTE staff. Students sometimes drop in and out of programs based on Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) needs, which can structurally prevent them from completing their CTE path. Furthermore, there is often an unwillingness from Local Education Agency (LEA) administration to grant MMC credit flexibility.
- **Teacher Recruitment and Retention:** The region struggles with a lack of qualified instructors, which has led to waiting lists for popular programs like Agriculture, Auto Tech, and Welding. Teachers are exiting the profession due to salary discrepancies (industry jobs pay more), heavy workloads, burnout, additional coursework requirements, and struggles with classroom management.
- **Postsecondary and Industry Disconnects:** Coordinating with postsecondary (PS) institutions is difficult. Common barriers include colleges not valuing CTE programs, eliminating connections to CTE courses, and creating difficult processes for students to earn concurrent or dual-enrollment college credit. Additionally, credentialing and employment for minors are restricted by age requirements, lack of driver's licenses, and difficulties obtaining required work documentation.

Common Themes and Proposed Solutions

- **Targeted Academic and Attendance Support:** To bridge performance gaps, a major theme is the implementation of direct student support. The region plans to utilize CTE Academic Consultants and paraprofessionals to provide one-on-one and small group tutoring in reading, math, and science. Additionally, the region proposes hiring an Attendance Coordinator to explicitly evaluate barriers, troubleshoot transportation issues, and work directly with parents.
- **Labor Market Alignment and Soft Skills:** Employer demand is driving an expansion in advanced manufacturing, AI, EV technologies, and traditional skilled trades (e.g., welding, construction, mechatronics). Advisory committees heavily emphasize that alongside technical training, students need strong "soft skills" such as problem-solving, tenacity, time management, and adaptability to automation.
- **Focus on Equity and Special Populations (SPOPS):** The assessment shows a strong focus on supporting underrepresented and vulnerable groups. Proposed activities include partnering with external organizations (like the Burma Center and VOCES) to provide targeted English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction.
- **Differentiated Professional Development:** To improve program quality and teacher retention, the region plans to provide annual industry-related training to help instructors and paraprofessionals improve their technical skills and increase student credentialing opportunities by state determined targets. The region also notes the need to differentiate support, providing classroom management and lesson planning training for alternatively certified (ACA) teachers, and advanced curriculum support for traditionally certified teachers.