

Spotlighting Effective Strategies Influencing Michigan’s Top 10 Strategic Education Plan

*Goal 5 – Increase the percentage of all students who graduate from high school
Goal 6 – Increase the percentage of adults with a post-secondary credential*

ISD Spotlight: Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency/Career Connect Campus (CCC)

Strategy: Innovations in Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Districts Served: Climax-Scotts Community Schools, Comstock Public Schools, Galesburg-Agusta Community Schools, Gull Lake Community Schools, Kalamazoo Public Schools, Parchment School District, Portage Public Schools, Schoolcraft Community Schools, Vicksburg Community Schools

Quick Facts

Grades Included in CTE Programs	Districts Served	Number of Students Enrolled	Graduation Rate for Students	Student Placement Rate	Number of CTE Programs	Number of Articulated Programs	Aggregated Attendance Rate
9-12	9 Public Districts, 4 Public School Academies & 4 Private Schools	1152	97.3%	96.5%	10 Career Pathways with 22 CTE Programs + Work-Based Learning Options	Multiple Agreements with Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Northwestern Michigan College and Western Michigan University	TBD*

*New Campus Opened 25-26 School Year

Career Connect Campus (CCC) Overview

The Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency (KRESA) Career Connect Campus (CCC) is a centrally located, state-of-the-art hybrid learning facility serving students from nine public school districts across Kalamazoo County. As the hub of KRESA’s countywide Career Connect system, the CCC advances career exploration, skill development, and postsecondary readiness through hands-on, industry-aligned learning, including CTE programs, work-based learning, career coaching, summer offerings, and early middle college pathways. The campus offers 22 CTE programs, each reflecting intentional, data-driven decisions aligned to current employer needs. Longstanding anchors such as Automotive Technology, Welding, Culinary Arts, and Construction are complemented by emerging programs including Mechatronics: Robotics and Automation, Supply Chain,

Medical Laboratory Sciences, and Veterinary Science. Across all programs, the KRESA Career Connect system provides students with industry-recognized credentials, dual enrollment options, and paid learning opportunities that prepare them for high-demand careers and long-term success.

A New Era for CTE in Kalamazoo County

Before 2025, CTE in Kalamazoo County operated through a decentralized system spread across 15 sites, where transportation challenges and uneven access made the model increasingly unsustainable. Efforts to improve CTE began with a candid review of employment data, leading to the “1-2-7” campaign: of every ten jobs, one requires a master’s degree, two require a bachelor’s degree, and seven require a skilled trade or two-year credential. The county’s CTE offerings were not aligned with these workforce realities. In November 2019, voters approved a millage to support a centralized CTE campus, followed by extensive labor market research and community outreach that guided decisions about program offerings and their connection to high-demand local careers. In October 2021, an anonymous donor contributed land and a \$100 million grant to build a world-class CTE center. After a collaborative design process involving students, educators, industry partners, and community leaders, construction moved forward, and the CCC opened in 2025, marking a new era for CTE in Kalamazoo County.

What started as a hard look at data evolved into a transformation that is already reshaping opportunities for students. Since opening, countywide CTE enrollment has increased by 25 percent compared to the previous year. Students are embracing the collaborative learning spaces, and educators, many hired a year in advance, have been supported with targeted professional development in curriculum, assessment, and instructional practice. Each program features industry-aligned tools and cutting-edge technology, giving students access to authentic learning environments that mirror today’s workforce expectations. Sarah Mansberger, Executive Director of Career Connect Secondary Programs, underscores the importance of visibility and access, often saying, “If you can’t see it, you can’t be it.” That belief has shaped the programs offered at the CCC and continues to guide curriculum design and student experiences.

Program Spotlight: Supply Chain

The commitment to aligning programs with workforce demand is especially evident in some of the CCC’s newest offerings. One of the most forward-thinking additions to the CCC lineup is the Supply Chain Program. While supply chain management is well established in industry, offering it at the high school level represents a bold step. Students study how raw materials move through production systems to become finished goods delivered to consumers. The introductory course explores global supply networks, warehousing, sourcing strategies, and contingency planning.

Behind the program's design and structure are educators translating vision into daily practice. Developing the Supply Chain program has been energizing for Instructor Alison Macias and Teaching Assistant Daniel Juarez, both of whom are new to teaching. Alison transitioned from accounting to supply chain roles at Boeing and Abbott Labs, where mentoring teams inspired her to move into education. She champions project-based learning, designing experiences that mirror professional practice. One recent project had students manage a full procurement process, blending research, presentations, inventory management, ticketing systems, and forklift simulators. Daniel emphasizes the program's inclusive approach, supporting students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and differentiating instruction to ensure success. Alison believes CTE gives students a critical head start: "Young people are entering a fast-paced work environment, and sometimes there isn't time to learn new skills on the job. CTE lets them build and refine these skills before they enter the field." Through early, authentic experiences, the CCC's Supply Chain program gives students a meaningful advantage.

Student Spotlight:

Owen, a senior at Kalamazoo Central High School, enrolled in the Supply Chain Program after discovering a passion for business in his home school courses and wanting to explore it more deeply. Encouraged by his teachers and CCC staff, he took a chance on a business-focused CTE pathway and is glad he did. His class follows a purposeful rhythm: direct instruction, collaborative projects, and assessments during the first half of each session, followed by applied warehouse operations in the second. Students use a forklift simulator, manage work orders through the FMX system, conduct inventories, operate pallet jacks, and deliver materials throughout the CCC. The student-run warehouse mirrors professional logistics systems, and Owen finds it far more meaningful than learning about supply chains through textbooks alone. "I'm learning more here than in any other business class. It's been practical, and it's been positive," he shared. The experience has strengthened his confidence and clarified his plans. Owen hopes to attend Western Michigan University to pursue a degree in Supply Chain Management, and through the program he has already built connections with WMU faculty, something he considers invaluable. He encourages other students to explore the pathway: "Before this, I had no idea what I wanted to do. Now I know what's possible, and I have direction." With a clear plan and renewed momentum, Owen is well on his way.



Figure 1. Owen, a senior at Kalamazoo Central High School