

# Do high-poverty and low-poverty high schools promote industry certifications the same way?

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## Background

Industry-recognized certifications are increasingly important credentials for graduates to bring to the job market. College students typically earn these credentials, but Florida introduced an innovative program to increase the number and variety of certifications earned by high school students. Florida's Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act creates opportunities for high school students to earn industry certifications.

In 2018, Florida's list of CAPE certifications included

- 236 industry certifications, such as National Center for Construction Education & Research Electrical, Certified Nursing Assistant, and Microsoft Certified Professional
- 12 career areas, including Architecture and Construction, Health Sciences, and Information Technology

Approved CAPE certifications must be attainable by secondary school students, must be associated with key Florida industries, and require 150 course hours. Offering courses for each certification requires teachers who have the certifications themselves and appropriate technology or equipment.

## Data

- 2018 survey of Florida traditional and vocational high schools
  - (1 survey per school—career and technical education [CTE] lead or principal)
- Florida Department of Education's Education Data Warehouse
  - Student, teacher, and course data
- National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data

## Method

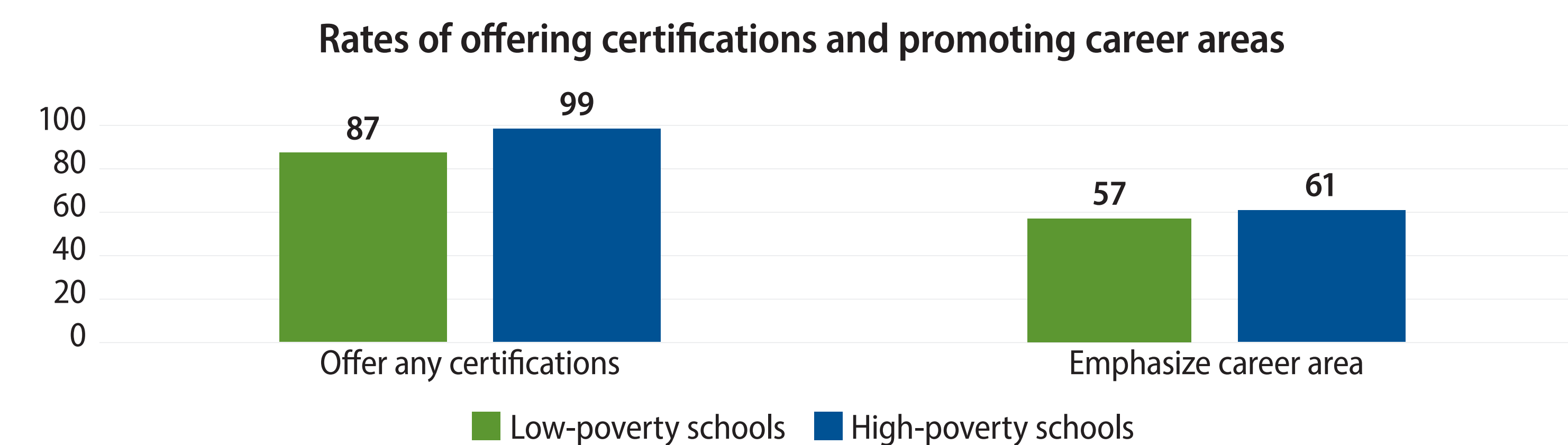
- Use Common Core of Data to identify high-poverty and low-poverty schools.
  - High poverty = more than 75% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (58 schools)
  - Low poverty = 0 to 25% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (83 schools)
- Use Florida Education Data Warehouse to calculate the percentage of CTE teachers and courses at each school.
- Weight survey results to account for nonresponse.
- Compare high-poverty schools with low-poverty schools in terms of
  - rates of offering any industry certifications;
  - whether they emphasize particular career areas;
  - reasons for emphasizing a career area, such as preparation for college and careers; and
  - resources to offer certifications, in terms of the percentage of CTE teachers and courses.

## Results

### Offering Certifications – survey data

First, we examine whether schools offer certifications and whether they emphasize particular career areas:

- Does your school offer industry certifications to its students?
- If so, does your school emphasize certain certification career areas?



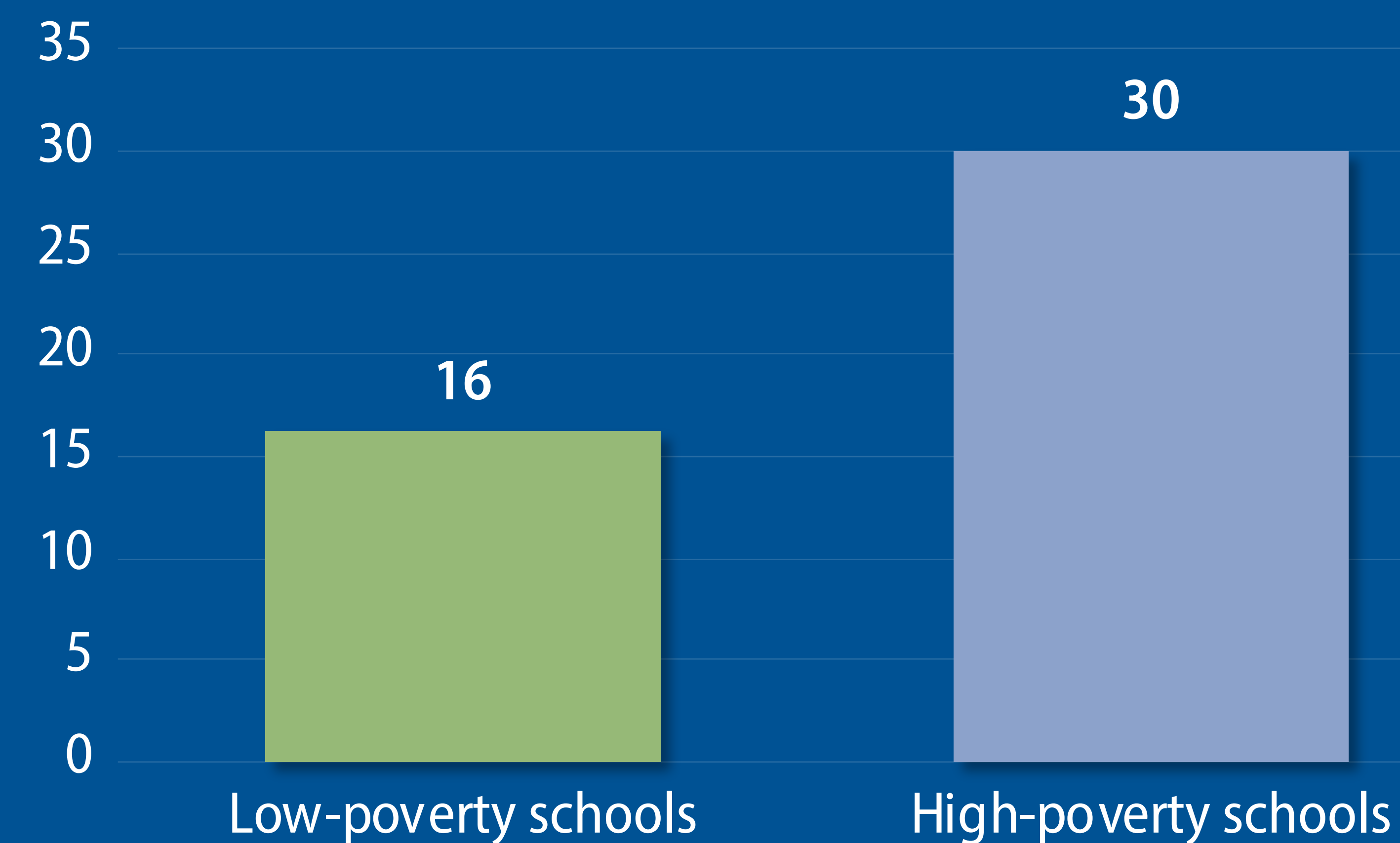
Note: All survey respondents answered the question about offering certifications ( $N = 399$ ). Only those who offer certifications responded to the question about promoting career areas ( $N = 323$ ).  $p$  value for difference in offering certifications  $< .05$ .

Source: RTI 2018 survey of Florida high schools



# High-poverty high schools promote industry certifications **more actively** than low-poverty high schools do, **despite the resources that certifications require.**

## Percentage of students earning certifications



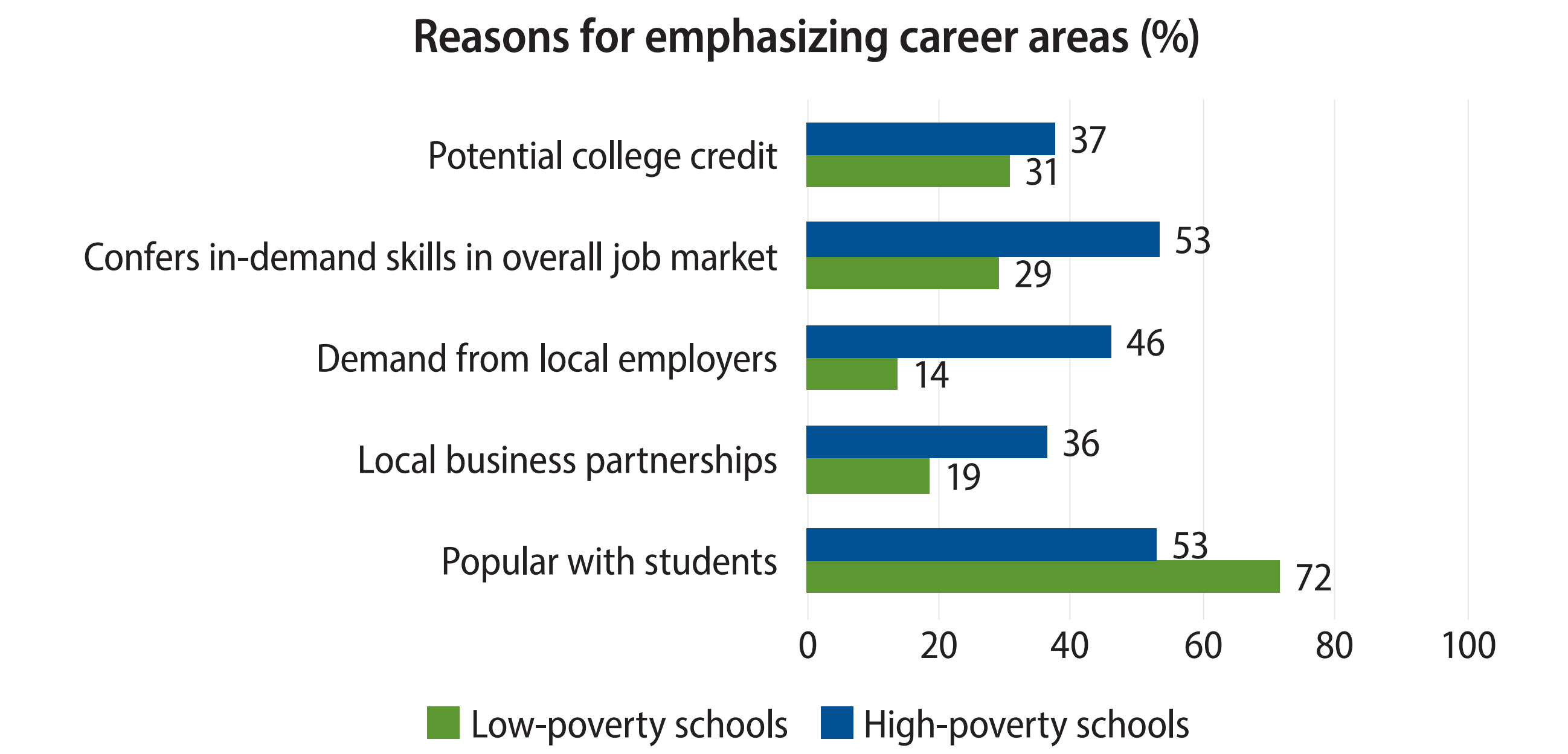
Note:  $p$  value associated with difference  $< .05$   
Source: Florida Education Data Warehouse ( $N = 524$ )

www.flcertificationstudy.org

## Results (cont.)

Next, for schools that chose to emphasize certain career areas, we asked

- Why does the school emphasize these exam areas? (Check all that apply.)



Note: Respondents could select more than one reason; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100.

$p$  value associated with difference in demand from local employers  $< .05$

Source: RTI 2018 survey of Florida high schools ( $N = 256$ )

### Resources for Certifications – administrative data

Teaching courses that prepare students to earn industry certifications requires having qualified teachers and facilities and equipment. We expect that schools with higher percentages of CTE teachers and courses will be better prepared to offer certifications.

	Percentage of CTE teachers and CTE courses in Florida high schools, by school poverty	
	% of teachers	% of courses
Low-poverty schools	10	13
High-poverty schools	13	19

Source: Florida Education Data Warehouse ( $N = 524$ )

## Conclusion

Even though offering certifications requires having qualified staff, equipment, and other resources, high-poverty schools promote them more actively than low-poverty schools do.

- High-poverty schools offer certifications more often.
- High-poverty schools promote career areas in light of future-focused reasons—college and jobs—more frequently.
- Certification rates are higher in high-poverty schools.

Although we cannot directly identify which courses are associated with each certification, high-poverty schools have a higher percentage of CTE courses and teachers. They may be better positioned to offer industry certifications.

Staff at high-poverty schools may think that fewer of their students will go to a 4-year college and therefore may emphasize other kinds of credentials, staff at low-poverty schools may assume that more of their students will go to a 4-year college and may not emphasize other credentials.

Future work will examine

- the relationship of certification earning to the local job market, and
- postsecondary outcomes for certification earners compared with non-earners.

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### More Information

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