

Costs Associated with Administering the CAPE Act: School and District Perspectives

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ABOUT THE ISSUE BRIEF

This issue brief is part of a body of work on the implementation and outcomes of Florida’s Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act. *“The role of industry-recognized credentials in high school completion and postsecondary enrollment in Florida”* (Florida Industry Certification Study) is examining the ways districts and schools in Florida support high school students in earning industry certifications and the benefits and challenges of these programs. The experiences of Florida’s districts and schools can inform policymakers and educators in Florida and nationally who are considering similar policies.

The Florida Industry Certification Study is being conducted by RTI International with funding from the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences under Grant No. R305A170222. The views represented here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.

Visit www.flcertificationstudy.org to learn more about the study and to explore findings on topics such as school strategies for promoting industry certifications, teacher supports in this program, perceived costs of the program, and challenges to the program.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Introduction

In Florida, students can earn industry certifications in high school through programs supported by the state’s Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act. Industry certifications are credentials, developed by industry vendors, that measure a person’s job-specific skills in fields such as Architecture & Construction, Health Science, Hospitality & Tourism, and Information Technology. Students who earn such certifications demonstrate industry-relevant proficiency, with documentation of skills in addition to their diploma. Under Florida’s statewide articulation agreements, some certifications provide the opportunity to earn college credit.¹

In 2018, as part of a [study on implementation of Florida’s CAPE Act](#), we conducted a web-based survey of high schools and districts, seeking responses from each school and district. The [survey](#) asked respondents to answer questions about how their school or district administered the industry certification program, the available resources and supports, promotional activities specific to the program, and other associated policies and program costs. When [describing challenges](#) associated with administering the certification program, some school and district officials reported program costs as an obstacle.

This issue brief focuses on district and school costs related to administering the certification program. It explores three questions:

1. What percentage of schools and districts report start-up costs, ongoing costs, or both to administer the certification program?
2. What types of specific costs do schools and districts report?
3. Do the types of costs vary by school characteristics, including locale, poverty level, and past school certification rate?



The CAPE Act allocates funds to districts based on the number of students who earned industry certifications in the previous academic year.² Funding is disbursed as part of the standard allocations to districts, with the stipulation that the district must allocate 80 percent of the funds provided for each industry certification to the program that generated it.³ Therefore, districts with high numbers of students earning certifications get more funds to reinvest in the program.

Results

1. What percentage of schools and districts report start-up costs, ongoing costs, or both to administer the certification program?

Although state funds cover the basic operation of the CAPE program, administering CAPE requires some resources from schools and districts. Among schools that offer certifications, 43 percent report having both start-up and ongoing costs, and about three-quarters of districts (78 percent) report having both start-up and ongoing costs (Figure 1). ***For many schools and most districts, operating the certification program requires start-up and ongoing costs.*** More districts may report costs because the CAPE program is formally administered at the district level. However, some schools do supplement district resources and may provide resources to cover costs not provided by their districts.

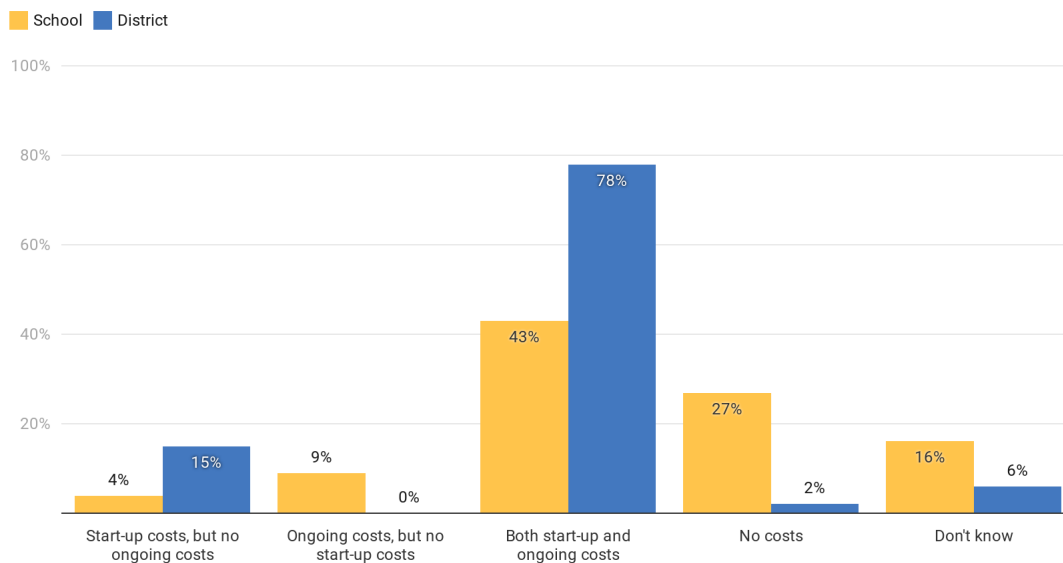
Fewer schools and districts reported costs as either a one-time start-up investment or only ongoing costs. Less than 5 percent of schools reported having only start-up costs, and about 9 percent reported having only ongoing costs. Just 15 percent of districts reported having only start-up costs, and none reported having only ongoing costs. This finding indicates that both start-up and ongoing costs are required to administer the program.

Fewer schools and districts reported costs as either one-time start-up investment or only ongoing costs, indicating that both start-up and ongoing costs are required to administer the program.

A few schools and districts did not report having any costs associated with this program or they could not state whether they did have costs. More than one-quarter of schools (27 percent) reported not having any costs, and 16 percent did not know whether there were costs associated with operating the program. Of districts, only 2 percent reported no costs, and 6 percent were not sure about costs.

These results suggest that ***districts have more responsibility than schools do for initiating and sustaining the program financially.*** However, as data do not include information about the dollar amounts that schools or districts contributed to the program, we cannot tell whether districts or schools contributed a greater amount to the program.

Figure 1. Percentage of responding schools and districts reporting start-up and ongoing costs to implement the certification program



2. What types of specific costs do schools and districts report?

The survey asked about the following six types of costs and whether schools and districts experienced them as start-up costs and/or ongoing costs:

- Recruitment and hiring of additional teachers
- Professional development for teachers
- Costs to encourage student enrollment in courses leading to certifications
- Technology, equipment, or facilities for offering additional courses
- Transportation to exam sites
- Other costs

On average, schools and districts that reported having any start-up costs identified two to three types of start-up costs. Similarly, schools and districts that reported having any ongoing costs identified an average of two to three types of ongoing costs.

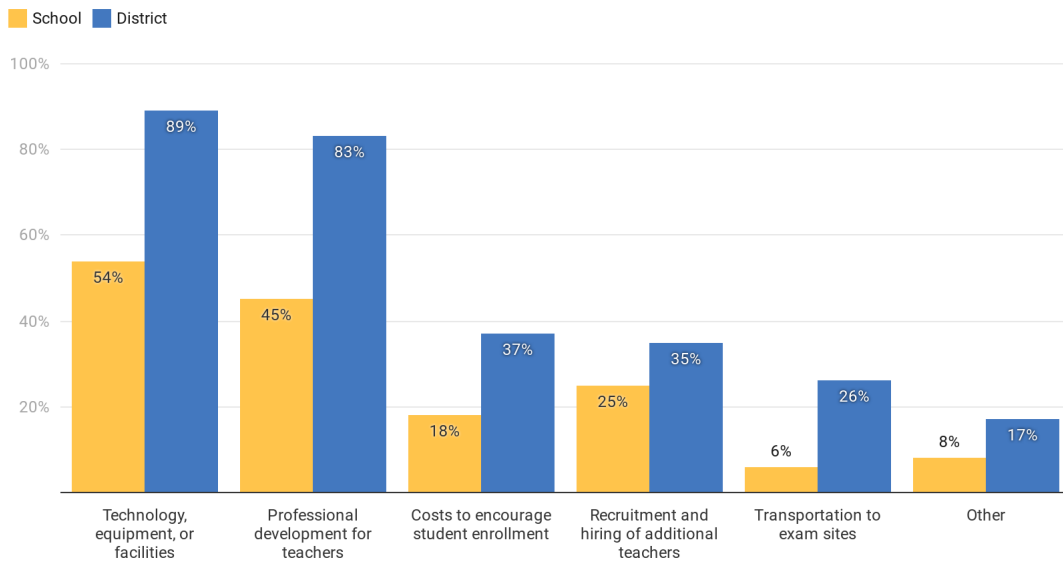
Technology, equipment, or other facilities were the most frequently reported costs by schools. Fifty-four percent of schools reported this as a start-up or ongoing cost (Figure 2). Professional development for teachers was the second most cited cost (45 percent).

Similarly, *among districts, the highest two reported costs were technology, equipment, or facilities (89 percent of districts) and professional development for teachers (83 percent)*. Although both schools and districts reported these two types of costs as their biggest expenditures, the differences between the percentage of districts and schools reporting suggest that districts have the primary responsibility for costs associated with technology, equipment, or facilities and professional development.

Only 6 percent of schools cited transportation costs, but about one-quarter of all districts (26 percent) reported transportation costs. The difference may occur if districts coordinate exam-taking at offsite facilities for all schools within the district. About 8 percent of schools reported “other” costs, and nearly all schools specified that these costs were related to administering the certification exams. Seventeen percent of districts also reported “other” costs, which were evenly split between curriculum costs and certification exam costs.

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Figure 2. Percentage of schools and districts overall reporting specific types of start-up and ongoing costs

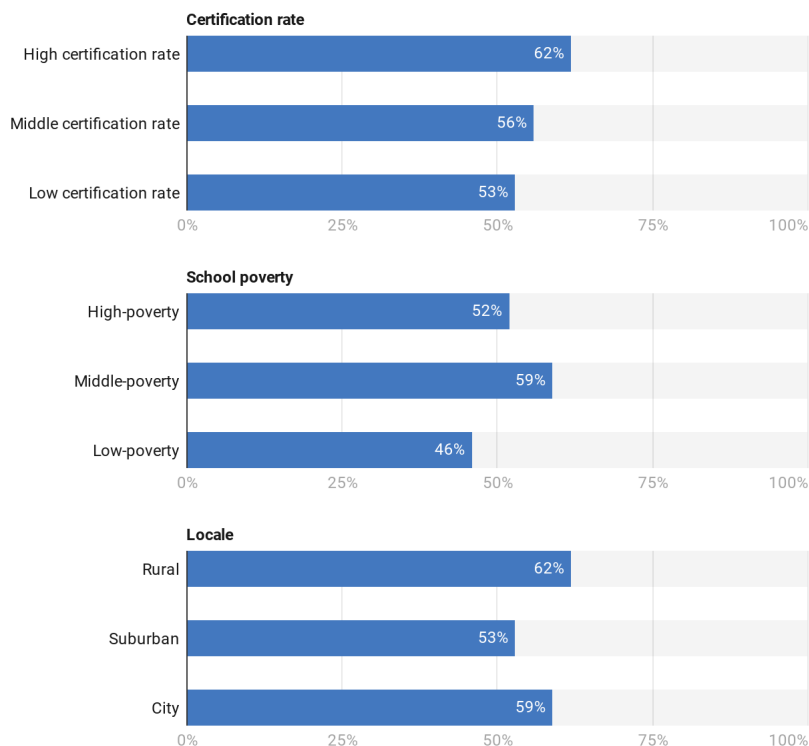


3. Do the types of costs vary by school characteristics?

School reports of having any start-up or ongoing costs differed only modestly by school locale, poverty level, and certification rate. Lower poverty schools reported costs less often than middle-poverty schools (46 percent versus 59 percent), and suburban schools reported costs less often than rural schools (53 percent versus 62 percent). Schools with low certification rates reported costs less often than those with high certification rates (53 percent versus 62 percent) (Figure 3). ***These results may indicate that low-poverty schools and suburban schools already have the resources to administer the program at hand or may have support from their districts to offer certifications.*** Additionally, differences in costs may reflect school or district decisions to make different kinds of investments in CAPE. The schools with low certification rates may have lower costs because they are not offering as many certifications.

With respect to the specific cost types reported, ***schools differed only by locale in providing exam transportation to students*** (data not shown). Schools in rural areas more often reported transportation costs than city schools did (15 percent versus 5 percent). This finding could indicate that schools in rural settings do not have the resources to provide exams onsite at their schools and need to provide transportation to students, or it could be that schools provide transportation because exam locations are farther and less accessible for students living in more remote rural areas.

Figure 3. Percentage of schools reporting any start-up or ongoing costs, by school characteristic



Conclusion

Schools and districts reported incurring both start-up and ongoing costs to administer the CAPE program. In general, districts appeared to have more financial responsibility than schools had, with higher percentages of districts than schools reporting both start-up and ongoing costs and higher percentages of schools than districts reporting no costs at all. ***Both schools and districts most frequently reported costs related to technology, equipment, and facilities and professional development for teachers, suggesting that districts and schools require initial and ongoing investments in both physical and human resources to effectively administer the program.***

Multiple factors likely influenced the costs schools and districts report. Differences in costs may reflect the levels of investment in the CAPE program. ***Schools with high certification rates in the past more often reported start-up and/or ongoing costs than those with low certification rates in the past.*** Schools and districts reporting costs may have chosen to expand their offerings compared with schools and districts that do not report program costs. Schools that report fewer costs may keep costs down by limiting the kinds of certifications that students can earn. Alternatively, differences in costs may reflect differences in initial resources. Some schools and districts may already have qualified teachers and necessary technology. Schools that need to obtain these resources before offering certain certifications will have more costs than schools with access to greater initial resources.

Understanding the kinds of costs schools and districts face and the reasons for having these implementation costs can help policymakers effectively target funding. Plans to address start-up and ongoing costs can help practitioners adopt program implementation strategies that provide the most students with the most opportunities to earn certifications across a wide range of certification areas.

End Notes

Overall Notes

Results reported in this issue brief include school survey data collected through the [Florida Industry Certification Study](#) and are based on the schools that offer certifications.

Definitions

Poverty level: percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

- High-poverty - More than 75% (83 schools)
- Middle-poverty - 26-75% (383 schools)
- Low-poverty - Less than or equal to 25% (58 schools)

Locale:

- City (136 schools)
- Suburb (258 schools)
- Rural (130 schools)

Past certification rate: percentage of 9th graders in academic year 2013-14 who earned certifications by academic year 2016-17. This is the year before the survey when they should have been in 12th grade.

- Low certification rate - Less than 10% (152 schools)
- Middle certification rate - 10-25% (241 schools)
- High certification rate - More than 25% (131 schools)

References

¹ <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-technical-edu-agreements/industry-certification.stml>

² <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7507/urlt/Fefpdist.pdf>

³ <https://www.flsenate.gov/laws/statutes/2018/1011.62>