

# Career and technical education program enrollment expands in Cy-Fair

## FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Students in Cy-Fair ISD have options when it comes to furthering their education for little to no cost. These are some of the options CFISD students have when deciding their potential career paths.



**HEALTH SCIENCE**

The health science program offers four options: health care diagnosis, therapeutic, nursing science and health informatics.

**POTENTIAL CAREERS AND SALARY:**

- Medical assistant: \$30,000
- Diagnostic medical sonographer: \$70,000
- Pharmacist: \$121,000
- Physician and surgeon: \$213,000
- Registered nurse: \$67,000
- Nurse practitioner: \$108,000
- Informatics nurse specialist: \$88,000
- Nurse anesthetist: \$155,000
- Medical/health service manager: \$58,000

**ANIMAL SCIENCE**

Students can learn the principles of agriculture, small-animal management, veterinary medical studies, livestock production and advanced animal science.

**POTENTIAL CAREERS AND SALARY:**

- Certified veterinary assistant: \$15 an hour
- Animal breeder: \$39,135
- Animal scientist: \$57,533
- Zoologist: \$67,309
- Veterinarian: \$93,496

**AUTOMOTIVE TECHNICIAN**

Students can learn the basics and get hands-on experience in the field.

**POTENTIAL CAREERS AND SALARY:**

- Automotive service technician/mechanic: \$39,000

More Cy-Fair-area students are realizing a four-year university route may not be the path for them, as alternative certifications have grown in popularity.

Career and technical education, or CTE, programming is becoming increasingly popular because individuals can earn a comparable salary to someone with a bachelor’s degree, according to Lisa Bogany, strategic project manager at Workforce Solutions.

Additionally, students can earn CTE certifications and begin careers quicker than a traditional four-year degree, said Connor O’Sullivan, executive director of continuing education at Lone Star College System. The

continuing education program saw a 13.5% increase in student enrollment from 2019-20 to 2020-21, O'Sullivan said. He attributed the increase to individuals looking to find new pathways or help support their families through the pandemic.

"Something like this really drives people to seek that new opportunity," he said.

Meanwhile, more than 30,000 students are enrolled in CTE courses each year in Cy-Fair ISD, according to Chief Academic Officer Linda Macias. CFISD CTE offerings are geared toward all students, whether their next steps include going straight into the workforce or heading to a four-year university, she said.

With more than 30 programs offered, students prepare for certification exams using industry-standard software and equipment for little or no cost through the district's CTE courses, which save students hundreds or even thousands of dollars depending on their desired certifications, district officials said.

"Regardless of a student's plans beyond high school, every student will have a career," Macias said. "It is our [duty] to ensure every student in CFISD has the potential to leave high school with a jumpstart on what comes next." Even if an interested student already has a degree or a full-time job, individuals can pursue these certifications to pick up new skills in hopes of getting promoted, O'Sullivan said. LSC's average student is in their mid-30s.

Another popular program at LSC-CyFair is learning software such as Autodesk or Solidworks, which are software and computer programs

students can use in their industries. Businesses that may have lost employees during the pandemic can look to these programs to get more employees certified and retain better-skilled workers, O'Sullivan said.

"When they look to hire somebody, they save on training costs. They don't have to retrain them to do what they want to do, and overall I think it's going to attract more businesses to Cy-Fair the better the workforce is," he said.

## **Community benefits**

Businesses in Cy-Fair, such as Elite Auto Experts on FM 529, have benefited from CTE program graduates. Owner Moufid Rabieh said he looks at local students earning certifications to identify future employees.

"I noticed some people, honestly, the ones that have even the two years [of education] ... that are above and beyond the people that have four years," Rabieh said.

After being affected by the pandemic for months, he said his business is experiencing a worker shortage. Rabieh said he would like to see more students pursuing these career paths and more investment in them from the community.

Joann Vo, a 2021 Jersey Village High School graduate, completed her nursing aide certification through LSC-CyFair in December. She said learning through a pandemic was challenging, but she learned how to help patients with basic tasks.

This semester, Vo will be bringing those skills with her as she attends The University of Texas at San Antonio to pursue her nursing career. Vo said she

believes more students should take the opportunity to get certified before entering college because it helps put them ahead of their peers.

"I want to be a nurse, so I basically know the ... basics of everything," she said. "So I feel confident going into what I'm going into."

## **Financing education**

CTE programs are offered at little or no cost to CFISD students, according to Macias.

Students interested in earning their cosmetology operator's license, for example, pay \$300 over four years of cosmetology courses in CFISD versus the average \$14,000 cost of cosmetology programs in Texas.

Further cost savings come in the form of state reimbursements to students who earn certain certifications, Macias said. CFISD students received \$41,819 this summer in reimbursements from the state.