

DISTRICT PROFILE

Carter County, Tennessee

5,100 Students

91% Graduation Rate

287:1 Student to Counselor Ratio

I really liked it because it served all our students – K-12 and after. We're very passionate about knowing what our students want to do when they graduate high school.

– [Betsy Oliver](#)

CTE Director, Carter County Schools

A Game-Changing Educational Opportunity

On the southeastern edge of Tennessee, [Carter County Schools](#) (CCS) strives to provide a high-quality educational experience for all students. CCS has a core mission that combines several critical factors to provide a successful learning space for students. One of the school district's key initiatives is to increase equitable career technical education (CTE) and early postsecondary opportunities for all high school students.

To that extent, Carter County Schools has been a Kuder® partner in various capacities since 2003. Previously, CCS used Kuder systems through a statewide contract with Tennessee. Since then, Carter County Schools has adapted its needs with Kuder over the years as curriculum and goals have pivoted. When the pandemic hit and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) stimulus passed in Congress, Carter County Schools took advantage of the additional funds by expanding their postsecondary planning program to include additional Kuder products.

The Selection Process

Carter County Schools counselors and CTE staff were influential in the decision-making process for the district's college and career readiness system. Initially, this group of leaders considered three different career planning systems as part of their Request for Proposal (RFP) process. School counselors at CCS provided feedback about each system and gave their recommendations to Carter County Schools Superintendent, Dr. Tracy McAbee.

When tasked with identifying the factors that separated Kuder from competitors, Carter County Schools CTE Director Betsy Oliver mentioned the length and strength of the partnership, compiled data from previous Kuder system use, and Kuder's focus on the entire landscape of its users.



THE KUDER SOLUTION

Carter County Schools built upon their preexisting partnership with Kuder when examining the needs of their students. CTE requires that decisions be made using workforce data, but CCS also makes informed decisions based on skills confidence assessment results. They recently implemented two new courses based on what current students were interested in under the proven theory that when students are engaged and enthusiastic about what they are learning then the outcomes will be of greater significance to their careers. The comprehensive solutions Kuder offers perfectly fit the district's need for an all-encompassing educational and career guidance system that is age-appropriate at every grade level.

kudernavigator®

Carter County Schools has provided [Kuder Navigator®](#) and its extensive suite of college and career readiness tools for almost two decades to all middle and high school students within the district. It delivers a combination of education planning, career exploration, and workforce readiness resources directly to the district's students in grades 6 through 12 within a single, easy-to-use platform.

College Access Tools

Carter County Schools purchased three additional Kuder products in 2021 by obligating ESSER funds received through the state of Tennessee to enhance the district's CTE curriculum. One such solution was Kuder's **College Access Tools**, an extension of Navigator that offers resources and activities designed to help guide students and their families through critical aspects of exploring, preparing, and planning for college and university education.

Pathways Link

In March of 2022, Carter County Schools began its implementation of **Pathways Link**. When added to Navigator, Pathways Link connects students to local CTE or specialized programs of study by aligning their measured career interests with the district's course offerings. CCS has found Pathways Link to be incredibly effective at enrolling students in relevant and engaging CTE courses.

kudergalaxy®

New to the district in 2021, [Kuder Galaxy®](#) introduced Carter County's elementary school students (Pre-K through fifth grade) to career awareness and exploration, an increasingly important initiative for the district as they focus on lifelong learning. According to CTE Director Betsy Oliver, Galaxy is popular because of its simplicity. Counselors and parents find it easy to use as it doesn't require in-depth training and its accessibility in multiple classrooms at multiple times allows for in-class teaching as well as at-home play.

ESSER Funding for CTE Advancements

These program improvements were made possible by Carter County's smart decision to use federal resources provided through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy, public health, state, and local governments received a federal stimulus bill (ESSER) to offer extra financial support to districts and schools across the country.

ESSER and its supplemental funding sources are meant to provide districts with a broad approach to reducing learning loss caused by the pandemic, increasing administrative capacity, and prioritizing social and emotional wellness among students, educator, and families.

Carter County Schools staff made an amendment to the ESSER funding, and their school board approved a proposal that stated \$40,000 of ESSER II funding be used on CTE improvements. The ESSER funding was helpful in securing a three-year contract with Kuder.

The ESSER funds were able to fill a gap within the district's CTE curriculum by upgrading its existing Kuder software to include valuable add-ons that augment the district's pursuit of lifelong learning. The addition of Galaxy to the elementary population has opened a new level of education and career trajectory for even the youngest minds. Primary students at CCS can fulfill their curiosity and gain insights on future career endeavors, letting them and their parents pave a path for the future. This prep work is critical as the district prioritizes specialized programs of study.

"I think the first and foremost thing is now we have a plan. We're not just moving from guided standards and suggestions, but we now have a program with Kuder—which is a plan—that helps our teachers and our counselors. From the counselor perspective, they were having to use multiple resources, and it took so much time to get everything into one place that they needed to help students."

- Betsy Oliver
CTE Director, Carter County Schools



OUTCOMES

- Over **7,000 logins** since 2003 implementation
- Over **1,230 Career Assessments** completed during 2021/2022 school year
- Almost **3,350 Navigator** logins during 2021/2022 school year

Numerous staff members at Carter County Schools have noted remarkable success since expanding their online college and career planning system. The district's prior use of Navigator had consistently yielded positive results that only continue to multiply as the solution now offers additional features and enhancements.

The transition from middle school to high school can be tricky. It's especially challenging with Carter County's intensive program study, which includes special classes based on students' future education and career plans. Oftentimes students have a semblance of what they want to pursue based on limited knowledge and their environment. Navigator has allowed incoming freshmen to discover a wider and more personalized range of options that chart their academic journey with more favorable outcomes. At the junior and senior levels, the district has been impressed with the College Access Tools test preparation and practice tools for ACT test taking and Advanced Placement (AP) test prep.

The most notable result of implementing a customized Kuder Career Planning System is the time and money saved by the district and its students. Carter County emphasized the friendly nature of Kuder's Customer Success team and how quickly they reply to questions, and the comprehensive training offered virtually as well as in-person.

As for the system itself, Kuder's inclusivity and one-stop-shop setup allows for a centralized solution that envelops the myriad of education and career prerequisites students encounter. From career assessments, to resume building, to career options, and college selection, the district's compact solution holds an abundance of material that students and parents can access to make informed decisions. This ease-of-use and intrinsic dedication to superior customer service was important to the district since more time could be dedicated to conducting the CTE plan rather than focused on learning and using multiple systems.

This litany of reasons highlights why Carter County and other districts who were previously statewide clients of Kuder continue partnerships long after their required state commitment has ended.

"I'd recommend Kuder because my supervisors and counselors tell me it's a robust platform that's easily accessible for counselors and teachers. It's easy to navigate for parents who are involved and want to be more knowledgeable about what's offered to their students. If you want a package that has all these elements in it and it's in a platform that's easily accessible by everyone, then go for it."

- Dr. Tracy McAbee
Superintendent, Carter County Schools