Demand for career-technical education in Kansas is prompting officials to consider changing the requirements to allow private-sector professionals to teach in the public schools.

The Associated Press reported on Monday that state education officials are proposing new regulations that would give districts the ability to grant teaching licenses to people with industry certification or career experience in a variety of technical fields, including plumbing or welding.

The teachers would be used primarily on a part-time basis to help provide expertise in the classroom that students could otherwise get on a job site, if there were enough employers available to host students to learn a trade, said Scott Myers, director for teacher licensure and accreditation for the Kansas State Department of Education, in a phone interview.

Allowing a "technical permit certificate" would help certain districts that are finding it hard to fill CTE teaching positions. "The numbers don't match up. There has been a push around CTE in the last few years," at the same time there has been a lack of funding to pay for new CTE teachers, said Myers.

The move to change the regulations in Kansas goes back several years and has involved input from many stakeholders, said Myers. After having legal services review the proposal, the next step is to take it to the state board of education for review. It would then go through other reviews, including public hearings, before the board would take a final vote later this year. Myers said, so far, there has been no opposition to the proposal: "It is seen as a positive option."

"Private-sector professionals have such a wealth of institutional and applied knowledge that they do naturally make a tremendous talent pool for CTE instructors, especially as the demand for CTE teachers continues to grow," said Evan Williamson, a spokesperson for the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, based in Silver Spring, Md.

The teaching profession in general, and CTE in particular, is facing a teacher shortage, according to a recent paper by the consortium. It noted that the shortage of CTE teachers undermines schools' abilities to prepare students to succeed in the workforce, as fast-growing careers in CTE fields such as healthcare and trade and industrial occupations expand. The consortium recommends that states should allow flexibility in their alternative certification program to allow individuals experienced in industry to become CTE teachers.

Results of a new survey of 850 CTE educators nationwide released Wednesday found interest and enrollment in CTE is on the rise, yet 73 percent of survey respondents reported flat or declining budgets in the last five years. A white paper discussing the findings of the survey about opportunities and challenges in CTE is on the website of the Education Development Center in Waltham, Mass.