

By Alisha Hyslop

Implementing Perkins

THIS IS THE FIRST IN A YEARLONG SERIES THAT WILL MORE CLOSELY EXAMINE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PERKINS IN THE STATES.



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It is hard to believe it has been more than two years since the “new” Perkins Act was signed into law. It really can't be considered new anymore! States, school districts and secondary and postsecondary institutions have spent a great deal of time and energy over the past two years working to implement the requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006.

The implementation process officially began on August 12, 2006, when the Act was signed into law by President Bush as Public Law 109-270. Almost immediately, states began planning for the transition to new requirements and for the development of new state plans. All states submitted transition plans describing how they would begin to move toward full implementation of the law in the spring of 2007, enacting limited provisions over the course of the 2007-2008 school year.

In the meantime, after guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, states began putting together full five-year plans detailing all of the changes they would make in response to new requirements for accountability and programs of study, and how they would use new innovations in the law. States submitted these plans in April, and plans from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam were approved by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Grant awards were made on July 1, allowing the real work of implementation to begin at the ground level.

Sharon Miller, from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, expressed her

thoughts on the approval of all the state plans, “We appreciated the considerable thought and effort put forth by the states, the District, and the territories to develop quality, thorough and innovative plans to implement the Perkins IV legislation, particularly the new provision for ‘programs of study.’ Our goal for the upcoming program year is to help states implement their new plans.”

ACTE identified several key Perkins themes after the passage of the 2006 Act, including accountability for results and program improvement at all levels, increased coordination within the CTE system, stronger academic and technical integration, and connections between secondary and postsecondary education. These themes have continued to be evident as the entire CTE community has worked together to improve the quality of programs through the 2006 Perkins Act implementation. As part of a yearlong series, we hope to provide you with an overview of how these issues, and many others, are playing out in classrooms across the country!

Accountability

While accountability was already a strong component of the 1998 Perkins Act, the 2006 Act went even further toward ensuring strong CTE student performance. A new section on local accountability requires that local programs set specific targets on each performance indicator and be responsible for meeting these targets.

Sanctions for local programs and states have also become more specific. If local programs or states fail to meet at least 90



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percent of an agreed upon target, they will have to develop and implement an improvement plan and could eventually face sanctions if improvement is not made or targets are continually missed. The new local requirements and sanction specificity will require each program to think much more strategically about the use of Perkins funds, and to focus activities on efforts that help to meet performance targets.

Several changes were also made to the specific performance indicators that states and local programs will have to report on under the 2006 Perkins Act. At the secondary level, academic attainment will now have to be measured by the academic assessments a state has approved under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Graduation rates will also have to be reported as defined in NCLB.

At both the secondary and postsecondary levels, the technical proficiency measure becomes much more rigorous. It should include student achievement on technical assessments that are aligned with industry-recognized standards when possible. The development of the new accountability system was likely the most challenging part of the state plan for most states.

The U.S. Department of Education did release suggested definitions for students and measures as non-regulatory guidance, but states still had to determine whether or not this guidance was useful in their specific circumstances. Issues that had to be addressed by each state included:

- Whether or not to use the student definitions proposed by the Department in non-regulatory guidance.
- How the state would work with locals to set the new local performance levels.
- How to align data collection with NCLB in a manner that accurately reflected the performance of CTE students.
- How the state would measure student attainment of technical skills in a valid and reliable way.
- How to set performance goals for each of the new measures. In many cases, due to changes in definitions, adequate baseline data was not available or was difficult to obtain.

States took a number of approaches to address these issues. Related to technical

skill attainment, there was already a vast difference in practice across the country. For example, Utah had already developed statewide technical assessments at the end of most courses. Other states, such as Wyoming, are just beginning to look at developing a series of state assessments. Tennessee has proposed an electronic student competency system to measure technical skill attainment, with scoring rubrics, enhanced professional development in use of the system, and a new monitoring process to ensure reliability.

Some states are concentrating on aligning programs to industry assessments. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Career and Technical Education has been able to align nearly all program areas with a third-party national assessment. One key issue for all states is how and when test results from industry certifications and licenses might be made available for reporting purposes.

Another new area that had to be addressed was the negotiation of performance levels with local programs. In Florida, the default performance level on each indicator was the state level for the first year of implementation. After one year of data is available, local programs can

negotiate their targets up to 10 percent below the state performance level. Eligible recipients achieving or exceeding any of the target levels will have their level increased by .5 percent above the state level for the following year to ensure continuous improvement.

Other states, such as Iowa, are taking a similar approach. Iowa will provide each local program with the most recent data available on each performance measure, and will use this baseline data to reach agreement on an appropriate performance target. If a level other than the state target is used, the local program must show how they will make progress toward meeting the state's negotiated performance level for that indicator and their supporting rationale.

Coordination within the CTE Community

While the new law maintains the Tech Prep program as a separate title within the law with its own federal funding stream, there are several changes made to Tech Prep and throughout the law to increase coordination between the different programs within CTE. States will have the flexibility to combine either all, or a portion, of their Tech Prep grant with



A New Consortium Structure in Minnesota

Two of the key themes within the 2006 Perkins Act are increased coordination within the CTE community and stronger connections between secondary and postsecondary education. The state of Minnesota took these themes to heart in a big way when it began planning for the future of CTE, even before the new law was passed. As part of its five-year state Perkins plan, Minnesota has created an innovative new local consortium structure to increase coordination and seamlessly implement programs of study.

Beginning this school year, each new

consortium, which must include at least one two-year college and one secondary school district, will develop and submit a single local plan to jointly administer programs and support services for all secondary and postsecondary CTE students in its area. School districts and postsecondary institutions must be part of a consortium to be eligible for Perkins funding, and each consortium will have to implement at least one program of study. While grant funds will still be distributed separately to secondary and postsecondary entities (and separate accountability systems are maintained), funds will be pooled and expended for the common good of the entire consortium.

This new idea emerged from an early brainstorming session with state leaders who wanted to capitalize on relationships built during the implementation of the 1998 Perkins Act, both through Tech Prep, and through a Minnesota state requirement that each local Perkins secondary and postsecondary recipient separately allocate and use 10 percent of its funds for collaborative projects. The predominance of the programs of study requirements and the changes made in Tech Prep in the 2006 law, allowing the state to combine those funds into the Basic State Grant, led leaders to the consortium idea as the most efficient way to move the system forward.



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funds received under the Basic State Grant. If a state does not choose to combine Tech Prep funds with funds under the Basic State Grant, there are new accountability requirements that will be applied to Tech Prep consortia.

As with accountability, states have taken many different approaches to the new Tech Prep flexibility. Many states that chose to merge funds, such as Vermont and Kansas, are doing so with the intent of expanding the best practices from Tech Prep to all CTE students. Other states are developing a similar structure with merged funds. Georgia has merged its Tech Prep funding into the Basic State Grant program, but is replicating some of the coordination functions through a new structure. New Georgia Education and Career Partnerships will be created. (This will include membership from secondary and postsecondary education as well as from business/industry and other community-based organizations.) Each of the 37 partnerships will provide leadership for enhancing coordination for effective curriculum and instruction linkages between secondary and postsecondary education. The Education and Career Partnerships will be carried out through required and permissive uses of Perkins Act funding.

As a result, 26 new CTE consortia have been formed as local grant recipients, creating a much more cohesive system of regional collaboration.

"In the beginning an awful lot of people thought this wouldn't work, but now the reaction is that it is 'pretty cool,'" said Dan Smith, Minnesota Department of Education adult and career technical education supervisor. "People have rallied behind this as a unified state effort." Listening sessions around the state with key stakeholders helped to smooth the introduction of the new structure and promote cohesiveness.

To be successful with this type of model, both secondary and postsecondary offices

have to work very closely together and present a united front. Through regularly scheduled monthly meetings, subgroup discussions, and the total involvement of both secondary and postsecondary leadership, staff of the Department of Education and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Chancellor's Office have been able to become true partners.

One challenge has been to inspire this level of coordination at the local level and get grant recipients out of the mindset of "What do I do with my pot of money?" and into a more general discussion about how funds can best be used to promote student transitions. To help the new consortiums'

Some states decided not to merge funds at all, but rather to focus on improving and expanding current Tech Prep programs. Ohio is renewing its commitment to Tech Prep and is instituting a new "Tech Prep Guarantee." All secondary CTE programs will eventually become Tech Prep programs and all students will be enrolled in an advanced curriculum. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, all new programs must meet Tech Prep requirements, and over the five years of the Perkins plan, all other programs must transition to Tech Prep. Tech Prep programs will continue to have open admission to all students, but will require high expectations for students' academic and technical achievement. Students will have to meet certain standards to receive the Tech Prep designation. Tech Prep consortia will be responsible for the number of students that achieve this designation and are able to complete programs and degrees.

Academic and Technical Integration

Academic and technical integration is another theme that has existed in prior Perkins laws, but continues to be expanded upon. With additional links to NCLB, the 2006 Perkins Act goes much further toward integrating the academic and CTE ac-

plan using a shared-purpose mindset, Minnesota identified five goals in its local application. Each consortium must describe how they will work toward these goals while meeting the requirements of the Perkins law. The goals are:

- Building and sustaining the new local consortium.
- Building a career pathway/programs of study structure for high school and adult students.
- Providing access to support services for the underserved and special populations in CTE programs so that these students have access to the same set of program-



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countability systems at the secondary level. One of the biggest concerns expressed in the hearings leading up to Perkins reauthorization was that academic integration was often not occurring with as much frequency as may be possible, and that there was often a divide between academic and CTE teachers when working toward this goal. To address this, the new law puts a specific emphasis on professional development that

addresses the integration of academic and technical skills, and that involves academic and CTE teachers working together whenever possible.

A number of states have planned activities to address these issues. In South Carolina, training to assist CTE and academic teachers to effectively integrate instruction will be expanded and become a major focus for professional development offered to

local school districts. A contextual teaching and learning teacher-training course is being developed for math teachers that will assist teachers with using occupational applications of math, hands-on activities, and integration of math and CTE.

Professional development sessions that include both CTE and math/science teachers will also be conducted that focus on understanding and successfully teaching

A New Consortium Structure in Minnesota *Cont.*

matic expectations that all other students are afforded.

- Effectively using employer, community and education partnerships to support CTE.
- Examining and expanding collaborative practices under the new consortium structure to ensure a continuum of services from multiple entry points to multiple exit points.
- While the new consortium structure is a work in progress, large scale success is already being seen. There is a very strong push within the Minnesota Department of Education to help high school students get an early start on

postsecondary education, and now CTE is a key element in secondary-to-postsecondary transitions within the state. Smith says, "The biggest success has been elevating the status of CTE in all of the other high school initiatives within the state. CTE is now a part of the Center for Postsecondary Success within the Department of Education, and there is a new premise that we are not moving forward unless reform initiatives include CTE."

- State leaders praise locals that have taken on the new challenge and are looking to create successful long-term plans. Pradeep Kotamraju, system direc-

tor of Perkins administration, Office of the Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, said, "Before this effort, CTE was precariously situated in many places around the state. People now look at the new Perkins consortium structure in Minnesota as a way to simultaneously strengthen secondary and postsecondary CTE engagement, achievement and transition. We are also being looked at as a partnership model across agencies, and this new model has opened many doors outside the traditional CTE world. We are no longer secondary and postsecondary, we are just 'CTE'." **T**



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academic and CTE standards, including algebra and science inquiry. Participants will receive training and a notebook of activities to engage students in connecting math and science with real-world scenarios. The South Carolina Department of Education is also developing a math and science academic standards support guide that includes career connections for the state academic standards.

Other states are looking at new approaches to delivering academic content. Kentucky is working with Kentucky Educational Television to develop a hybrid academic/CTE course in which the academic content is delivered by a master academic teacher via a video-recorded lesson. The CTE teacher would be trained in academic content and would be required to assist students, coaching and facilitating their acquisition of the academic content.

Numerous states are taking part in the Math-in-CTE project, facilitated by the National Research Center for CTE. In 2007-2008, Iowa used a portion of its Perkins funds to support implementation of Math-in-CTE. This project provides professional development for CTE and math teachers to help them identify math content that is embedded in CTE courses, and to create lesson plans for teaching

the academic content in the CTE course. Plans are also under way at the National Research Center for follow-up projects on science and literacy.

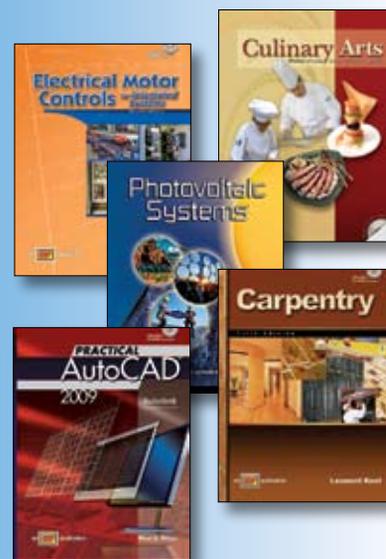
Connections Between Secondary and Postsecondary Education

Connections between secondary and postsecondary education are again addressed through the Tech Prep program, but they are also emphasized in a new Basic State Grant requirement. The 2006 Perkins Act required the development and implementation of programs of study. These programs of study must:

- Incorporate secondary and postsecondary education elements.
- Include academic and career and technical content in a coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses.
- Lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or bachelor's degree.

States must develop the programs of study in consultation with local programs, and each local recipient receiving funds under the Act will be required to offer the relevant courses of at least one program of

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study. Programs of study are very similar to, and build on, positive initiatives already under way in CTE programs around the country, including Tech Prep, career pathways, career academies, and career clusters. In many states, the foundational elements of programs of study may already be in place, but this new requirement provides an opportunity for true innovation and reform within CTE.

Many states began working on new programs of study during the transition year. Colorado, using the term 'plans of study' to avoid confusion with other state programs, developed a framework and process for secondary and postsecondary CTE providers to identify and implement the programs in 2007. In early 2008, the state issued a set of 81 model plans of study—adapted from the models developed by the National Career Clusters project and the College and Career Transitions Initiative.

These model plans of study were designed with state-level input from business and industry and education content experts, but will also allow for appropriate local adaptation and customization. The locally developed plans of study, based on the new model templates, will be an integral part of the state-level CTE program approval and renewal process which takes place every five years. As an established program applies for renewal, part of the review process will include a documented plan of study within the program.

Minnesota has taken the large step of creating a brand new local consortium structure to increase coordination between secondary and postsecondary CTE and to implement programs of study seamlessly. Each new consortium, which must include at least one two-year college and one secondary school district, will develop and submit a single local plan beginning in the 2008-2009 school year. School districts and postsecondary institutions must be part of a consortium to be eligible for funding, and each consortium will have to implement at least one program of study.

While grant funds will still be distributed separately to secondary and postsecondary entities, funds will be pooled and expended for the common good as described in the plan.

The Best is Yet to Come

The challenges of state plan development are for the most part behind us, but there is much more to come for CTE in the next year. Programs of study will be developed and expanded, more states will begin offering technical assessments, and CTE students will continue to benefit from a rigorous and relevant 21st century education.

The Department of Education will also continue to support the implementation of the 2006 Perkins Act. Miller previewed upcoming activities.

“OVAE will host our 14th annual Data Quality Institute (DQI) in fall 2008. We

will competitively award grants to six states to develop rigorous programs of study through statewide articulation agreements. We will work with the National Research Center for CTE to conduct studies on, and explore promising practices for, implementing programs of study. We will continue to offer customized technical assistance to states on Perkins accountability issues in our ongoing effort to develop more valid, reliable and comparable data on the outcomes for CTE students.”

Miller continued, “Our office will continue to work toward achieving the Administration’s commitment to leaving no student behind, including the secondary, postsecondary and adult learners who participate in CTE each year. Our students and our nation are counting on us.” ■

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