

OVAE Customized Technical Assistance to States

Recommendations to Improve the Quality of Perkins IV Accountability Requirements in Michigan



Prepared under contract to
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education

MPR Associates, Inc.
2150 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 800
Berkeley, CA 94704

Contact

Laura Rasmussen
lrasmussen@mprinc.com
202-478-1027 x106

Jim Schoelkopf
jschoelkopf@mprinc.com
503-963-3759

September 2010



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Background

In September 2009, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), U.S. Department of Education, invited state directors of career and technical education (CTE) to submit requests for individualized technical assistance to support the development and refinement of their Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) accountability systems. In addition to technical assistance support for Perkins accountability systems, OVAE expanded the scope of technical assistance to include: (1) helping states assess data on outcomes for students who pursue a program of study; and (2) exploring the potential for a performance-based funding (PBF) system. In response, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) requested support in:

- A. *Identifying strategies to accurately match technical assessment scores to other student data required for Perkins reporting.* Such a process could include procedures to implement prior to assessing students or after assessment is complete. Michigan seeks recommendations that will work within their unique context of operating under a state law barring use of Social Security Numbers, and that will work with diverse sources of assessment results including private assessment providers, state agencies not utilizing the unique identification number (UID), and professional or other organizations that may also offer assessments that could be used for Perkins reporting.
- B. *Exploring the potential for a performance-based CTE funding system in Michigan* that would assure a stable funding mechanism that addresses region size and wealth, high-quality programming, student access and achievement, and continual improvement both in program and individual student performance.

Following consultation with Patty Cantu, State CTE Director, Michigan Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education (MDE/OCTE); Terri Giannola, Research Consultant, MDE; and Jill Kroll, Education Research Consultant, MDE; MPR researchers agreed the state would benefit from assistance with investigating ways to improve the state's collection and reporting of technical skill attainment and exploring the utility and role of performance-based CTE funding in Michigan.

Jim Schoelkopf and Laura Rasmussen, Senior Research Associates with MPR Associates, Inc., provided consultation services to MDE staff on their technical assistance request. Mr. Schoelkopf provided the technical assistance for the identification of strategies to accurately match assessment scores to other student data required for Perkins reporting. Jay Pfeiffer, MPR Longitudinal Data Systems Program Director, participated on the April 29, 2010 conference call with Michigan state CTE staff to address matching assessment scores with student data. Both Ms. Rasmussen and Mr. Schoelkopf conducted the on-site July 30, 2010 technical assistance workshop exploring a performance-based CTE funding system for Michigan.

Technical assistance with Michigan CTE staff took place via telephone conference calls, emails, and a July 30, 2010 on-site workshop in Lansing, Michigan. During the conference calls, MPR facilitated a discussion with state CTE staff responsible for Perkins IV accountability and funding management. The July 30, 2010 workshop was attended by Michigan CTE state staff as well as selected local and regional CTE providers.

Technical Assistance

State staff representatives agreed to a two-part technical assistance approach that included:

- A. *Identifying strategies to accurately match technical assessment scores to other student data required for Perkins reporting.* MPR will work with Michigan state staff to identify procedures to match assessment scores to student data that aligns with the unique position Michigan state staff are in of having to operate under a state law barring use of Social Security Numbers. MPR will consult with Michigan to identify ways to link diverse sources of assessment results, including private assessment providers, state agencies not utilizing the UIC, and professional or other organizations that may also offer assessments that could be used for Perkins reporting.
- B. *Exploring the potential for a performance-based CTE funding system in Michigan.* MPR will work with Michigan to identify the steps needed to implement a performance-based funding system for Perkins and state CTE funds. MPR will meet with state and local staff, via webinar or an in-person meeting, to familiarize them with the elements of a performance-based funding system. Researchers will work with state and local staff to map out a process the state could use to design and implement a performance-based funding system that is tailored to Michigan's needs and priorities. MPR will conduct the technical assistance activities described above via email, webinars, teleconference calls, and up to one on-site visit. As a concluding activity, MPR researchers will produce a summary report documenting the recommendations that result from the technical assistance project.

Conference Calls:

- January 13, 2010—TA orientation
- February 22, 2010—PBF
- April 29, 2010—CTE data matching

PBF Webinar:

- April 5, 2010—PBF

On-Site Workshop:

- July 30, 2010—PBF

Michigan State Contacts:

- Patty Cantu, MI Dept. of Education
- Terri Giannola, MI Dept. of Education
- Jill Kroll, MI Dept. of Education
- Tom Howell, MI Dept. of Education

MPR Staff:

- Jim Schoelkopf, Sr. Research Associate
- Laura Rasmussen, Sr. Research Associate
- Jay Pfeiffer, Program Director

Actions

A. Identifying Strategies to Accurately Match Technical Assessment Scores to Other Student Data Required for Perkins Reporting.

Jill Kroll offered background on Michigan's desire to implement a CTE data collection and reporting system that has data matching as the preferred approach. A driver for the data matching approach is to minimize the administrative burden at the teacher, school, or district level for the collection and reporting of technical skill attainment data.

Implementation of the preferred approach has been challenging as it pertains to the collection and reporting of secondary technical skill attainment data. MDE's matching capability with third-party licensure or certification examination data is hampered by Michigan's restriction in the use of student SSNs, which are often used as identifiers for data matching with licensing agencies. In the absence of a SSN as an identifier, MDE/OCTE is seeking other matching process options.

MDE staff described Michigan's implementation of a unique student identification number (UID) as part of the state's K–20 data system development. The utility of the UID would extend beyond K–12 and travel with the student into Michigan higher education. The UID will work within the educational system, but does not appear to have the same utility outside of education with occupational licensing or workforce agencies.

MDE/OCTE staff shared the discussions between the Michigan Secretary of State's office responsible for administering the automotive technician license examination and MDE/OCTE on access to student examination results for reporting technical skill attainment. The current examination process uses a testing process that requires submission of student data that can be the basis for data matching. The Secretary of State's office creates only one site code so the ability to match the data with a particular school site is diminished. Jill K. is working with the Secretary of State's licensure staff to pursue adding a site code unique to each school participating in the licensure examination. It appears there is a lack of resources to implement any changes to the examination registration forms that would result in having a stronger dataset for more positive data matching.

It was noted by MDE staff that state policy circumstances have created fractured state occupational licensing processes. Occupational licensing in Michigan is shared among numerous state agencies. Processes for the administration of state licensing examinations vary among the responsible state agencies. MDE/OCTE staff questioned whether OCTE should rely on state licensure examinations as measurement of technical skill attainment as data sharing and matching agreements will be needed with each agency administering a licensure examination.

Jill K. and Jim S. reflected on related Next Step Work Group (NSWG) discussions regarding technical skill assessment. With state flexibility for the implementation of secondary technical skill assessment, the reliance Michigan has placed on industry-recognized licenses or certificates could be relaxed. An alternative approach could be collaboration between secondary and postsecondary CTE providers to establish recognition and value of secondary technical skill attainment for postsecondary CTE transition and placement. Secondary/postsecondary collaboration on the establishment of mutually-acceptable secondary technical skill assessments could provide a college and career readiness bridge for students transitioning between secondary and postsecondary CTE levels. At the same time, the state could leverage this collaboration for the potential development of a statewide library of secondary technical skill assessments. Postsecondary CTE providers could implement student incentives such as dual credit or advanced postsecondary placement for the attainment of a certain level of technical skill proficiency.

Another strategy for the collection of technical skill attainment results would be to bring the assessment of technical skill attainment to the secondary classroom level. Rather than relying on third-party assessment providers such as commercial test vendors or state licensing agencies, create industry-recognized, valid and reliable technical skill measurements that are administered at the classroom level. This strategy does not assume the use of teacher-only developed assessments. Instead, this strategy would rely on the use of measurement instruments created in collaboration with industry representatives, postsecondary CTE representatives as well as secondary CTE faculty, or measurement instruments selected from a state-approved inventory of valid and reliable technical skill assessments.

Jim S. shared examples of classroom-based assessments developed by the American Welding Society (AWS) and the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF). Both organizations are known for their professional certifications: the American Welding Society (AWS) and the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). However, each organization has communicated their professional certification examinations (professional-level certification requiring a level of on-the-job experience before qualifying for the certification examination) are not appropriate for the assessment of technical skill attainment.

To address the desire of welding and automotive education and training providers to have instruction and assessment aligned with industry-recognized standards, each organization has created an assessment system targeted specifically for education and training programs. Resources from the two organizations were shared with MDE/OCTE staff with links to the AWS School Excelling through National Skill Standards Education (SENSE)¹ and the

¹ American Welding Society (AWS), School Excelling through National Skill Standards Education (SENSE); <http://www.aws.org/education/sense/>

NATEF National Automotive Student Skills Standards Assessment (NA3SA).² A web search revealed a number of Michigan secondary and postsecondary institutions are participating with SENSE.³ These schools may provide a willing cohort to participate in a pilot project to create a protocol for access and matching of SENSE student data as a measurement of technical skill attainment.

B. Exploring the Potential for a Performance-Based CTE Funding System in Michigan.

MDE/OCTE staff first expressed a desire to investigate possible adjustments to the current formula used for distribution of the approximately \$27million in state categorical CTE enhancement funds for secondary CTE programs. CTE enhancement funds are distributed to regional centers, which in turn allocate funds to service providers within the region, including comprehensive high schools and area technical centers. Future allocations through a potential PBF formula will need to consider a regional distribution approach and include CTE student performance elements. There is a strong preference to consider CTE student performance elements based on currently collected data so there will be no need to collect additional data beyond what is already available.

Although the state categorical funds are considered “enhancement,” they are important to local CTE program sustainability. With an anticipated 10 percent reduction in the state CTE enhancement funds, state staff feel now is the appropriate time to consider a new formula that reflects the state’s current funding climate and incorporates performance elements. The current formula distribution has been in place for approximately 40 years. Although the funding formula has been adjusted and updated, the collective result has been one of complexity and confusion surrounding the allocation details. MDE/OCTE staff would like to pursue a funding formula that is equitable among recipients, transparent, and easy to explain.

Discussions with MDE/OCTE staff addressed the current CTE funding stresses in Michigan and highlighted the need for an approach to moving forward with PBF by identifying a funding stream that will have a reduced impact on program sustainability. In addition to the CTE enhancement funds, MDE/OCTE is considering the Perkins reserve fund or Perkins carryover funds as possible PBF sources.

² National Automotive Student Skills Standards Assessment (NA3SA);
<http://www.na3sa.com/index.html>

³ SENSE Welding Programs in Michigan;
http://www.aws.org/w/sense/search_results?state=MI&browse=1&sense=1&category=

The state feels that the timing for exploring PBF for some CTE funding is advantageous given other MDE efforts that would support a performance-based approach. Examples of some state-level initiatives that align with PBF efforts include:

- Michigan’s development of a teacher evaluation system based on student achievement.
- The state’s focus on ensuring that students are college and career ready, which could be incorporated as a performance measure in the PBF formula.

Following a webinar on April 5, 2010, to review key PBF terms and concepts and discuss the context for PBF in Michigan, MDE/OCTE hosted a PBF workshop in Lansing on July 30, 2010. The workshop participants included OCTE staff, local and regional CTE providers, and MPR researchers. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce a process for developing a PBF formula that Michigan can adopt if it decides to move forward with PBF. Discussions were organized around the steps in this process for participants to understand the key decisions and actions that Michigan will need to consider before developing and implementing PBF. The outcomes of the meeting discussions provided feedback from stakeholders to inform Michigan’s next steps in developing a PBF formula.

Specifically, the workshop focused on:

- Context for Performance-Based Funding in Michigan—MDE/OCTE administrators provided context by describing the state’s current thinking around PBF and related state policies and programs in support of PBF and sharing their expected outcomes of the meeting.
- Michigan’s Technical Assistance Project and Plan—MPR researchers reviewed elements of the PBF technical assistance project and provided an overview of key terms and concepts related to PBF. During this discussion, participants highlighted their support for a formula that is simple, flexible, and timely, and also suggested that PBF awards be designed so that they align with both state goals and local interests.
- Steps in Building a PBF System—MPR researchers facilitated an interactive exploration of each of the steps involved in developing a PBF system.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for addressing the technical assistance needs requested by Michigan:

- Given Michigan’s restriction on the use of secondary students’ SSNs for data matching purposes, other matching approaches need to be considered to access Perkins accountability data for technical skill attainment. MPR researchers suggest MDE/OCTE accountability staff contact the

Florida Department of Education to discuss alternative dataset options used in data matching processes. Specific Florida staff suggested for contact are:

- Jeff Sellers, jeff.sellers@fldoe.org
 - Andre Smith, andre.smith@fldoe.org
 - Trina Condo, trina.condo@fldoe.org
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- Recognizing that data matching is the preferred approach for collecting technical skill attainment data, it is recommended MDE/OCTE consider additional assessment options that do not rely on the use of student SSNs for access to student performance data. With OVAE's flexibility in the measurement approach for technical skill attainment as long as the approach is valid and reliable, MDE/OCTE may choose to consider measurement approaches beyond national and state certification and licensing examinations to include other valid and reliable, industry-based, classroom administered assessments such as AWS School Excelling through National Skill Standards Education and the National Automotive Student Skills Standards Assessment.
 - MDE/OCTE has begun a solid process for engaging their local CTE stakeholders in conversations investigating the utility of a performance-based CTE funding mechanism in Michigan. It is recommended that stakeholder involvement continue to solidify a base of support should MDE/OCTE elect to pursue PBF. It is suggested that consideration be given to the involvement of postsecondary CTE stakeholders in PBF discussions. With CTE program movement toward programs of study, the collaboration between secondary and postsecondary educational levels in future funding processes could be beneficial.
 - Develop an action plan for the development and possible implementation timeline for PBF. A companion stakeholder communication plan should be considered that includes the processes and appropriate decision points contained in the action plan. The development of a PBF approach should include the identification and selection of formula factors that support MDE/OCTE's vision and priorities.
 - MDE/OCTE should consider implementing PBF incrementally and consider the value of using gain and harm limits.