

OVAE Customized Technical Assistance to States

Recommendations to Improve the Quality of Secondary Perkins IV Academic Data in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont



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

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

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Background

In October 2008, 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 improve the quality of their Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) accountability systems. In response, the New Hampshire Department of Education requested support in developing strategies for improving the reading/language arts (1S1) and mathematics (1S2) performance indicators. Five of the 25 secondary CTE centers in New Hampshire implemented improvement plans during 2008–2009 because they did not meet the 90-percent-of-goal threshold for one or both of these indicators in the 2007–2008 academic year. Using 2007–2008 data as a rough guide of what may happen during 2008–2009, New Hampshire expects to have 21 of the 25 centers, or 84 percent, not meet either of the performance goals.

Following consultation with Steve Bos, Educational Consultant, Adult Learning and Rehabilitation, and a follow-up review of progress the state has already made in this area, New Hampshire staff and MPR researchers agreed the state would benefit from assistance with identifying ways to improve the state's performance on 1S1 and 1S2 performance indicators. During the follow-up review of New Hampshire 1S1 and 1S2 measurement definitions and the use of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) data to measure performance, Steve Bos indicated the technical assistance focus was of mutual interest and shared by the states of Vermont and Rhode Island. MPR staff consulted with the OVAE staff and received authority to offer technical assistance to the three states as a multi-state collaborative of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The states agreed to partner in the development of strategies designed to help local secondary CTE schools meet Perkins accountability for academic attainment.

Jim Schoelkopf, Senior Research Associate at MPR Associates, Inc., provided consultation services to the multi-state collaborative. Dialogue with the states took place via telephone conference calls, emails, a meeting during the National Association of State Directors for Career and Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) meeting in April 2009, and an on-site April meeting in New Hampshire focused on reviewing the states' Perkins IV secondary academic attainment measures, alignment with NECAP, and methods for improvement. Key representatives from each state for the technical assistance activities included Steve Bos and Lisa Danley, New Hampshire; Vanessa Cooley, Rhode Island; and John Fischer, Vermont.

During the conference calls, MPR facilitated a discussion with state administrative staff responsible for Perkins IV accountability and improvement of CTE performance. This paper presents MPR's recommendations for secondary student concentrator definitions and academic performance measures, in light of federal non-regulatory guidance, to enhance the

quality of Perkins IV secondary academic accountability data in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Technical Assistance

State staff representatives agreed to a three-prong technical assistance approach which included:

- A review of state-level data from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont to analyze the alignment of CTE concentrator performance with high school NECAP performance in the academic areas of reading/language arts and mathematics.
- A series of conference calls to discuss the analysis of CTE concentrator performance with each state's NECAP performance.
- An on-site implementation workshop for participants to jointly develop plans for improving and sustaining local-level academic attainment by CTE concentrators.

Challenges

Timing of NECAP assessments

Each of the states rely on an area center delivery model for CTE with the exception of Rhode Island, which also offers CTE in their comprehensive high schools. Within the three New England states, students often do not access CTE opportunities at the area centers until their junior year, or 11th grade, of high school. The NECAP statewide assessment is conducted in the fall of a student's junior year. The timing of the NECAP assessment leaves little opportunity for CTE instruction to have a positive impact on academic attainment. These New England states have shown CTE leadership and commitment toward increasing the academic attainment of CTE students. However, the part-time CTE area center delivery model and the timing of the NECAP academic assessment produces a challenge for state CTE leaders to increase understanding of CTE program expectations, promote joint development of instructional strategies, and foster broad-based commitment among sending-school administrators to the application of rigorous academic attainment within CTE programs.

Question of CTE administrative responsibility for academic student performance

Most of the area centers are administratively affiliated with a "host" school district and receive students from a number of sending school districts. The physical and administrative separation creates a divide between the academic and CTE instructional staff that restricts opportunities for collaboration and joint professional development in the area of improving

student academic attainment. The CTE centers question their responsibility for being held accountable for student academic performance where they have little perceived influence.

Comparability of CTE concentrator definition and 1S1/1S2 performance definitions among the states

As the multi-state collaborative strives to join forces in building regional and state CTE capacity, there is a demonstrated desire to move toward more commonality so they can jointly plan and implement regional professional development and CTE improvement strategies for mutual benefit.

Perception of CTE

Where a delivery separation exists, the separation between academic instruction and CTE instruction has led to a set of perceptions by administrators and counselors. State staff shared a perception expressed by some area center administrators suggesting that sending schools tend to refer students thought to be non-college bound to area CTE centers in greater numbers than students thought to be college bound.

Recommended Actions to Address Challenges

Formalize a CTE Consortium of New England states. There is existing evidence of a strong commitment to collaborate among four, and possibly five, New England states. This has been demonstrated by the collaborative approach to technical skill assessments among Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. There is also evidence that Massachusetts and Connecticut are interested in participating in a New England consortium. Consortium collaboration is also evident through the participation of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont in the OVAE-sponsored Technical Assistance to States project. Member states of a CTE Consortium of New England states may want to investigate the desirability of formalizing a Consortium arrangement through a written memorandum of understanding that outlines partnership benefits and responsibilities.

The combined capacity of the New England states can strengthen the regional credibility for CTE by communicating the added value CTE brings to secondary and postsecondary education. CTE can be identified regionally as a critical secondary education element for New England students. As CTE credibility is enhanced, attention can be focused on the role of academic attainment within CTE programs of study. With similar, or comparable, accountability data among the New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont collaborative, the states could leverage a regional strategy for region-wide program improvement based on student performance data.

To assist with this regional approach, OVAE is asked to consider the assignment of a single Regional Accountability Specialist (RAS) for New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont to support and foster the regional approach of this multi-state collaborative.

Increase the visibility of academic content within CTE coursework and communicate the strength of application and context within academic coursework. Bridging the physical separation of academic and CTE instruction between the sending high school and the area CTE center is a challenge, but one that can be minimized through communication and collaboration. One strategy would be to assess the reading level of CTE textbook materials as a way to communicate the reading skill required by students to be successful in their CTE pursuits. A tool such as the Lexile Framework for Reading [[Lexile Framework Website](#)] can assist with the identification of the required reading level students should be at in order to be successful in comprehending CTE textbook material. Another promising strategy is the Math-in-CTE initiative sponsored by the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education [[NRCCTE](#)]. Joint professional development among CTE instructors and related academic instructors, as demonstrated in the Math-in-CTE approach, can increase mutual understanding and collaboration between colleagues.

A commitment to Consortium professional development with a focus on specific career cluster areas can be used to bring academic and CTE colleagues together. The professional development structure should provide sufficient team time for academic and CTE instructors to become familiar with each other's educational contribution. As the states collaborate on the design and implementation of Programs of Study, they should utilize/take advantage of the Career Pathway Plan of Study to communicate the appropriate level of academic coursework that is recommended for a specific Program of Study. States should also make the Career Pathway Plan of Study available to guidance counselors, students, and parents to elevate the level of understanding for appropriate academic content within a CTE Program of Study. The New Hampshire Career Pathway Plan of Study is an example of showing the academic coursework recommendations. [[New Hampshire Career Pathways](#)]

State CTE leadership needs to identify and implement strategies to build and reinforce administrative bridges between the area centers and the sending high schools that focus on the shared ownership for increasing student academic *and* CTE attainment. Continuous improvement is the goal of both No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Perkins. As each state implements the local NCLB continuous improvement plan, they should integrate, to the degree possible, an analysis of CTE student performance data as another data source for local consideration. The challenge for the New England states will be the ability to show any causal relationship between a student's CTE engagement and their academic performance because of NECAP assessments occurring prior to a student reaching CTE concentrator status. However, other NCLB indicators such as high school graduation may suggest an impact from the analysis of CTE data.

Movement toward more comparable CTE student accountability definitions and academic performance measures will contribute to a New England regional CTE “story.” There is momentum among the states of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont to share a common accountability framework as evidenced by the development and implementation of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). To the degree possible by accommodating state CTE data capacity, NECAP momentum can be extended to the Perkins accountability measures of 1S1 (reading/language arts) and 1S2 (mathematics).

Each of the three states has specific issues to address in order to have Perkins 1S1 and 1S2 data as comparable between states as they may desire. Specific issues include:

- Determining the number of levels of NECAP scores being used for Perkins reporting. The NECAP has four levels of reporting: Level 4—Proficient with Distinction; Level 3—Proficient; Level 2—Partially Proficient; Level 1—Substantially Below Proficient. Rhode Island and Vermont report 1S1 and 1S2 student performance based on NECAP Levels 3 and 4. It appears New Hampshire reports on NECAP Levels 2, 3, and 4. It would strengthen the multi-state collaborative CTE data for 1S1 and 1S2 if there was a consistency in the NECAP levels being used to calculate CTE concentrator performance.
- Further investigation is recommended to determine which scores are being used to calculate the NECAP results for reading/language arts. NECAP includes assessments for both reading and writing. For NCLB reporting, Rhode Island uses a combined score from the reading and writing assessment to calculate a student’s score for NCLB and Perkins 1S1 reporting; Vermont uses only the NECAP reading score for NCLB and Perkins 1S1 reporting; and the New Hampshire CTE staff are unclear as to which NECAP scores are used for their state’s NCLB and Perkins 1S1 reporting. With these variations, it would be very difficult to achieve comparable analysis and communication regarding CTE student performance.
- For Perkins 1S1 and 1S2 reporting purposes, align the NECAP scores with a graduation cohort.
- Continue to determine if the performance definitions for 1S1 and 1S2 are being operationalized for data collection and calculation as intended. If discrepancies become apparent, adjust as necessary. If data becomes a cornerstone for telling the CTE story, data quality is critical.

OVAE Technical Assistance to States—NH, RI, VT: May 2009

New Hampshire	Rhode Island	Vermont
Perkins Secondary Concentrator Definition		
<p>A secondary student who has completed greater than 50 percent of the required sequence of instruction in his/her career and technical program and is enrolled in the second half of the program as of October 1st or March 1st.</p>	<p>A secondary student who has completed at least two (2) or more courses in a single CTE program area (e.g. health care or business services) where a program sequence represents three or more courses, or one (1) course in a single CTE program area, but only in those program areas where two course sequences at the secondary level are recognized by the State and/or its local eligible recipients.</p>	<p>A secondary student enrolled in a state approved technical education program who has completed 350 hours of the program instruction or who has completed half of the program's required skill assessments.</p>
1S1 Academic Attainment—Reading/Language Arts		
<p>Numerator: Number of CTE senior concentrators who have met the acceptable performance range of basic or better on the Statewide high school reading/language arts assessment administered by the State under Section 1111(b)(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act based on the scores that were included in the State's computation of adequate yearly progress (AYP) and who, in the reporting year, left secondary education.</p>	<p>Numerator: Number of CTE concentrators who have met the proficient or advanced level on the Statewide high school reading/language arts assessment administered by the State under Section 1111(b)(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act based on the scores that were included in the State's computation of adequate yearly progress (AYP) and who, in the reporting year, left secondary education.</p>	<p>Numerator: Number of CTE concentrators who have met the proficient or advanced level on the Statewide high school reading/language arts assessment administered by the State under Section 1111(b)(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act based on the scores that were included in the State's computation of adequate yearly progress (AYP) and left secondary education during this reporting year.</p>
<p>Denominator: Number of CTE senior concentrators who took the ESEA assessment in reading/language arts who scores were included in the State's computation of AYP and who, in the reporting year, left secondary education.</p>	<p>Denominator: Number of CTE concentrators who took the ESEA assessment in reading/language arts who scores were included in the State's computation of AYP and who, in the reporting year, left secondary education.</p>	<p>Denominator: Number of CTE concentrators who took the ESEA assessment in reading/language arts who scores were included in the State's computation of AYP and left secondary education during this reporting year.</p>
1S2 Academic Attainment—Mathematics		
<p>Same as 1S1 except for mathematics.</p>	<p>Same as 1S1 except for mathematics.</p>	<p>Same as 1S1 except for mathematics.</p>