

ARKANSAS 2007-08 CAR NARRATIVE

Implementation of State Leadership Activities

a. Required Uses of Funds

1. Assessment of career and technical education programs funded under Perkins IV

At both the secondary and postsecondary levels, the local recipients must provide an annual accountability report prior to receiving funding for the next year. The accountability report specifies what the local recipient accomplished with the Perkins funds during the previous year. The Departments' staff members review the accountability reports as part of the annual approval process.

At the secondary level, a team of Department staff makes an on-site visit to each local program on a rotating cycle – approximately 20% of the districts are visited each year. The team reviews the instructional plan and curriculum, classroom and laboratory equipment, instructional materials, and documentation regarding advisory councils and CTE student organization activities. The team makes recommendations and provides technical assistance as needed. In addition to the on-site monitoring, every program is reviewed every year to ensure that the schools are offering the courses that comprise state-approved programs of study.

Secondary CTE teachers are asked to be active members of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teams for special education students who are enrolled in their programs. This involvement is also reviewed during the technical assistance visits.

Another method of assessment at the secondary level is the review of the results from the Career and Technical Student Competency Testing Program each year. The results on the assessment program are a reasonable indication of how closely the teacher followed the frameworks for the course (what students should know and be able to do).

The Department of Workforce Education continues to publish a District Status Report (basically a school report card for CTE programs). The report has been very well received and caused a great number of administrators and teachers to view their programs more objectively. Among the indicators in the status report were several of the core performance indicators for Perkins: academic attainment, CTE skill attainment, graduation, and placement.

Assessment of CTE programs at the postsecondary level is carried out in several ways. State level staff conducts a comprehensive annual site visit to every campus where Perkins funds are expended. Additional site visits are scheduled based upon size of local grant or other factors warranting extra attention. The site visit includes a review of programmatic elements such as activity objectives and methods used to assess the impact of the activity, review of equipment purchases and discussion of program elements with staff involved with Perkins funded activities. The performance review includes analysis of previous year's results from which state level staff provides technical assistance and guidance for development of future programs as needed. Additionally, staff has expanded monitoring of basic grant activities throughout the year

in the areas of programs, data collection, and financial accountability and meets as requested with local Perkins implementation teams.

Additional assessments of all CTE programs were reviewed in 2008 in partnership with the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative. The review includes the number of hours required for each award, consistency across all institutions, degree requirements as stated in the catalog and online, ease in finding degree requirements, and a determination that program content offered is consistent with program requirements approved by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Existing career pathways were also mapped for all certificate and degree programs at all two-year colleges. Results from both studies are being assimilated and findings used to develop long-term strategies for both programs.

An Existing Program Review Committee has been established to develop process and procedures for regular review of existing academic programs offered by all public postsecondary institutions. The purpose of the review is to identify certificate and degree programs not meeting minimum standards of quality or viability and establish schedules for either resolving these concerns or removing the programs for the AHECB approved program inventory.

In 2007 the Arkansas Department of Higher Education deployed the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS), an online resource service that provides comparable course information to facilitate student transfer of general education courses within Arkansas public colleges and universities. Courses within ACTS are guaranteed to transfer for full credit to any Arkansas public institution. ADHE is broadening ACTS to include CTE courses and eight courses within the Business degree program have been reviewed by faculty teams for inclusion beginning in 2009. A plan for adding additional CTE courses is in place and will be completed throughout the course of Perkins IV.

2. Developing, improving, or expanding the use of technology in career and technical education

Teacher inservice on current and emerging technologies that are specific to each occupational area was offered during the summer. Department staff planned and promoted the inservice opportunities to all CTE and technical education teachers. These opportunities included such topics as Speech Recognition Teacher Methods and Training, NCCER Construction Instructor Craft Certification, Alternate Fuels/Hybrid Vehicles, and Advanced Autodesk Inventor to name a few.

Postsecondary professional development activities were provided at the campus level to teach instructors the effective use of technology, how to integrate it into classroom activities, and online delivery strategies. Professional development in the area of online course development, evaluation, student preparation, assignments and testing strategies, and enhanced instructional methods was provided for faculty statewide. Additionally, basic grant funds were used to purchase state of the art equipment to increase the number of courses delivered via distance learning, to provide distance delivery infrastructure, to purchase equipment for use by students in the classroom to provide an expanded range of learning experiences. 101 new awards were approved including new technology based courses in areas such as aviation and advanced manufacturing and in emerging industries such as petroleum.

3. Offering professional development programs, including providing comprehensive professional development (including initial teacher preparation) for career and technical education teachers, faculty, administrators, and career guidance and academic counselors at the secondary and postsecondary level.

A major thrust each summer for the Department staff is providing inservice training opportunities for all CTE and technical education teachers. Much of the inservice is occupational specific that assists the teachers in learning the new technology associated with their teaching specialty. However, the Department co-sponsors the annual conference of the Arkansas Association of Career & Technical Education teachers that includes sessions on effective teaching techniques and promising practices.

New teachers are provided with inservice training on using the CTE program frameworks (what students should know and be able to do). The frameworks incorporate the national standards, and the student competency testing program is directly tied to these frameworks. As new standards are published from the various national projects, the frameworks are updated, along with the competency tests, and teachers are provided with inservice training.

Through state funds available to the Department, 15 regional career and technical education coordinators are employed in the educational cooperatives in the state. One of the functions of these coordinators is to coordinate and provide regional inservice opportunities for CTE and technical teachers. The coordinators assist teachers and administrators with strategies and modifications for special needs students, basic computer training, the development and improvement of CTE programs, etc. In addition, most of them administer a Perkins consortium for secondary school districts. The coordinators work closely with Department staff on statewide initiatives and projects.

At the postsecondary level, Perkins is collaborating with the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative and the Achieving the Dream initiative to create a statewide professional development system for colleges and universities. A steering committee has been established and research concerning best practices and current offerings completed. Focus groups at four institutions have been completed to gather additional data for use in designing the statewide system. Preliminary plans include a statewide conference on retention during Spring 2009 with follow-up regional conferences and development of an online portal to facilitate professional development.

Also in partnership with the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, professional development leading to Career Pathways Leadership Certification was provided for approximately 50 faculty and student support staff at all community colleges in the state.

The Department of Higher Education provided professional development workshops related to programs of study which are in addition to ongoing professional development provided by colleges and universities.

4. Providing support for career and technical education programs that improve the academic and career and technical skills of students through the integration of academics with career and technical education

One of the primary vehicles for improving the academic and CTE technical skills of all CTE students through integration of academic and CTE education are the frameworks for each CTE program – what students should know and be able to do. These frameworks include the technical skills needed as well as the academic and workplace skills. The frameworks are the basis of the state CTE assessment program – CTE Student Competency Testing Program. The Department provides for continuous updating and evaluation of the frameworks and testing program.

One major initiative in integration during the year was promoting the use of the MAX teaching strategies in CTE programs across the state. Several CTE state staff members attended an in-depth training session on the MAX strategies and then presented regional workshops for teachers and administrators. The department used some Perkins leadership funds as well as state funds to implement this initiative. After school representatives attended the regional workshops, several districts became interested in the training available and continued implementation school-wide with local funds. In addition, DWE provided state grants to districts needing assistance with funding.

The department continues to provide many resources and funds to assist Career Academy development in Arkansas. Arkansas has increased its number from academies over the past few years. Two schools in the state received National Model Status that is conferred by the National Career Academy Coalition. The DWE Deputy Director for CTE, John Davidson, was presented with the Coalition's Sisyphus Award at the fall conference in 2008. This is one of the organization's most prestigious awards and this is only the third time it has been presented to a person.

Arkansas' *High Schools That Work* members continue to grow in number. This initiative is still the number one school improvement model used by schools that have been identified as in academic distress by the Arkansas Department of Education as well as being used by high performing districts. DWE continues to provide implementation grants to new sites to tour model sites, hire consultants, teacher in-service, etc. During 2007-08 DWE provided improved services and activities for sites that included mini-grants for program improvement activities and a data in-service for schools to better use results from the NAEP assessments in program planning/improvement. There are currently 28 sites in the state as well as 8 secondary career centers that are Technology That Work sites.

The state is also a member of other national curriculum and standards groups that help provide current, relevant curriculum and other educational products. This includes VTECS (Vocational-Technical Education Consortium of States) and MAVCC (Mid-America Vocational Curriculum Consortium).

We believe that the increase in the number of CTE concentrators who are proficient in literacy and math over the past few years is evidence that the state's efforts are working for academic attainment. The literacy attainment for CTE concentrators is up more than 6% and math attainment is up by more than 15% since 2005-06.

At the postsecondary level, academic and CTE attainment was addressed through professional development for faculty statewide, with a focus on the type and level of student services to be provided that enhance student achievement results. Additionally,

institutions used basic grant funds to purchase equipment and supplies necessary for applied learning instruction that increases technical skills attainment. This is in addition to ongoing assessment and evaluation of programs at the campus level.

5. Providing preparation for non-traditional fields in current and emerging professional, and other activities that expose students, including special populations, to high skill, high wage occupations, except that one-day or short-term workshops or conferences are not allowable.

As a kickoff for an initiative in promoting the manufacturing career cluster within the state, particularly as an alternative path for females, DWE hosted a two-day conference entitled "Manufacturing: A New Vision – Women Mentors Can Change the Future." The conference was very well attended by teams from the school districts that included guidance counselors, administrators, and career orientation teachers. The involvement of the career orientation teachers is crucial in changing the mindset of students at an early age – 8th grade – to encourage young teens to begin to consider a male-dominated field as a possible career option.

Information presented at the manufacturing conference as well as resources described in Section 8 below have helped to support the state's emphasis on developing new programs of study in high skill, high wage, and high demand pathways. The secondary reserve fund was set aside for the development of these new pathways during the 2006-07 and 2007-08 fiscal years. Each proposal for funding included a discussion of how the needs of nontraditional students would be met and how the new program would be marketed to parents, guidance counselors, administrators, etc to ensure full participation of nontraditional students.

Financial support was provided from Perkins leadership funds for two publications that help address guidance and counseling with regard to nontraditional training. Targeted for 8th grade students, the *American Careers* magazine includes lesson plans for teachers and nontraditional career information. An Arkansas statewide magazine entitled *Next* focuses on nontraditional careers and is targeted to 11th and 12th grade students.

The Department is a member of NAPE (National Alliance for Partners in Equity, Inc.) and draws on their resources as needed.

At the postsecondary level, the resource library (hard copy and online) has been expanded with new best practices and innovative methods focused on nontraditional students. State staff also collaborated with the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, a program that encourages nontraditional enrollment and completion, particularly females attempting to earn higher wages. Preliminary planning for development of a statewide strategy addressing nontraditional students was begun and will be finalized in 2007-08.

6. Supporting partnerships among local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, adult education providers, and, as appropriate, other entities, such as employers, labor organizations, intermediaries, parents, and local partnerships, to enable students to achieve State academic standards, and career and technical skills, or complete career and technical programs of study.

Partnerships with many business/industry groups were continued. The groups included Oracle, the Arkansas Hospitality Association, the National Hospitality Business Alliance, Arkansas Automotive Dealers Association, Centers for Quality Teaching & Learning, CISCO, the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, and the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges.

As mentioned below in the discussion of serving special population students, the Verizon Foundation will become a partner in Arkansas in support of the Jobs for Arkansas' Graduates program in the coming year. In addition, DWE and the Department of Education (general K-12) are cooperating on a JAG pilot program that will result in the opening of 25 programs in Alternative Learning facilities during 2009.

In another initiative, DWE is working with Apple and the University of Central Arkansas to host a statewide seminar on IMac computers and the integration into instruction of Desktop Publishing and Multimedia.

Perkins staff members participate in regular coordination meetings between representatives of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, and the Arkansas Department of Economic Development in an effort to align Perkins activities with the economic and educational goals of the state.

7. Serving individuals in state institutions.

The Arkansas Career Technical Institute (ACTI) of the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services department was granted a total of \$103,190 to improve their career and technical education programs. ACTI is a residential state facility that provides training and services to persons with disabilities. Students at ACTI have been referred to the facility by field counselors and are provided with all of the support services needed to help them succeed in their training program. ACTI is focusing the improvements in their CTE programs on national certifications and teacher professional development.

8. Providing support for programs for special populations that lead to high skill, high wage and high demand occupations.

Jobs for Arkansas' Graduates (JAG-AR) is a program that is designed to assist eleventh and twelfth grade CTE students with academic, personal, and environmental barriers that are known to hinder a student's success. JAG-AR is affiliated with the national Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program. JAG emphasizes the creation of linkages with the business community for the purpose of student job placements and to contribute to the program's ability to meet the needs of business and industry. JAG-AR continues to surpass the performance goals set by national JAG and JAG-AR specialists continue to receive national recognition for their efforts. During the upcoming 2008-09 year, the Verizon Foundation will donate \$250,000 for the implementation of new JAG programs in Arkansas.

JAG-AR addresses the largest CTE special population category in particular – the economically disadvantaged. In Arkansas, there are more than two and almost three times the number of economically disadvantaged CTE concentrators and completers compared to the next largest group which is Individuals with Disabilities. Students in the JAG-AR program are assisted with finding a job either while in high school or within six months of graduation. Since graduation from high school is one of the primary goals

of the program, some students do not work while in high school but rather focus their attention on staying in school and succeeding in their academic and technical courses. In the 2007-08 school year, 35 public school districts offered JAG programs that served 1,327 students.

Development of a course to assist ninth and tenth grade career and technical students with special needs began in 2001. The intent of the STRIVE (Students and Teachers Responsibility Integrating Vocational Education) Course is to assist students with the academics that are needed to be successful in their selected career focus area. Like JAG, CTE students with academic, personal and environmental barriers are eligible to participate in the STRIVE course. Many of students who participated scored below the 25th percentile on the NCLB assessments. Approximately 850 students across the state participated in STRIVE in 19 schools.

The Department has placed a priority on providing state start-up funds for new JAG-AR and STRIVE programs. All requests for new programs are funded first before other programs are considered. In several local Workforce Investment Board areas, WIA funds are used to provide tutoring and other support services for the students enrolled.

Although JAG and STRIVE focus on economically disadvantaged students, the other special population categories also benefit from the programs. In addition, CTE teachers work with the special education teachers to help those students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to be successful in CTE programs.

Because the single largest special population category is economically disadvantaged, addressing issues of poverty has become a focus of postsecondary Perkins activities. ADHE has chosen the Bridges Out of Poverty model as a means to address issues that often challenge economically disadvantaged students in their efforts to attain a credential and prepare for targeted occupations. ADHE staff members have been certified to teach this model and frequently offer workshops and professional development to faculty and student support staff at colleges and universities. Perkins is currently in the process of developing action steps and recommendations for implementation of this model throughout all functional areas of postsecondary institutions.

A postsecondary Perkins staff person has been designated to coordinate with the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, a program designed to increase participation and completion of special populations including the economic disadvantaged, single parents, displaced homemakers, and others. Areas of collaboration include development of a first-year experience and accountability measures. CPI has been expanded to include 25 postsecondary campuses (from the original 11) which serve 89% of Perkins concentrators. This initiative has a significant impact on special populations including nontraditional students.

Professional development has been offered which was the catalyst for increased activities at the local level in this area and the partnership with CPI allows Perkins funds to be leveraged for maximum benefit.

9. Offering technical assistance for eligible recipients.

DWE offers a workshop for all Perkins coordinators and administrators each spring. In the spring of 2008, Michael Brustein presented a special session on financial management of federal funds. Other topics presented by staff were accountability, completion of the local application, and reporting. The second day of the workshop was a series of several presentations by various local practitioners who are doing outstanding projects that the department wanted to highlight and recommend for all districts.

During the 2007-08 year, the DWE staff worked to revise the format of the technical assistance visits that are done on a cyclical basis. The revised format includes a structured discussion by the team leader with the district administration and local Perkins coordinator to determine the progress being made in implementing the current year projects as well as to verify the outcomes reported in previous years. While the department has implemented a risk-based monitoring plan, this cyclical technical assistance will supplement and support the results of that plan.

At the postsecondary level, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education provided several activities to assist local recipients with development of programs of study. Activities included workshops, professional development for local coordinators and chief academic officers of recipient institutions. During site visits state staff reviewed progress toward development of a program of study and secondary/postsecondary linkages that were in place.

State staff informed local coordinators and chief academic officers of the program of study requirements through several Perkins Alert communications. In addition, presidents and chancellors were informed at various meetings.

To supplement these activities, a consultant assisted Perkins state staff in identifying progress of local postsecondary recipients and in providing the technical assistance needed to assure that local recipients are in compliance with documented programs of study. The consultant provided on-site, telephone and email assistance to Perkins coordinators and other individuals at each institution. The consultant reviewed and collected documentation for the required program of study including the extent of alignment of coursework with secondary schools, the presence of concurrent credit opportunities, and existing articulation agreements. The consultant also assisted the Perkins coordinators in completing the required documentation for the identified program of study for inclusion in the local Five-Year Plan.

Perkins staff conducted training for new coordinators and newly appointed chief academic officers. Additionally, two technical assistance workshops were provided for local coordinators with a strong focus on programs of study, Perkins IV accountability requirements, and fiscal responsibility. The Perkins Coordinator Handbook was revised to incorporate Perkins IV requirements and the online Perkins Portal has been expanded with additional resources and technical assistance.

10. Permissible Activities

Several of our state CTE staff members hold national leadership positions in both student organizations as well as teacher associations: Marion Fletcher, National FFA Treasurer; Bruce Lazarus, National FFA Board Member; Suellen Ward, Past President of the National FACS Teachers Association; Jim Brock, National DECA Board of

Directors; and Dick Burchett, President of the National Association for Skilled and Technical Sciences.

Our CTSO membership in Arkansas continues to be strong under the leadership of our state advisors and staff. The 2007-08 membership of our organizations is as follows:

DECA – 1,756
FBLA – 13,947
FCCLA – 10,639
FFA – 11,295
HOSA – 1,375
PBL - 840
SkillsUSA – 5,953

DWE has been active in promoting and implementing the Career Readiness Certificate program in the state. The program uses the KeyTrain curriculum and is being piloted in 19 schools for the 2008-09 school year. This is an initiative supported by our Governor, the Economic Development agency, and the Workforce Services agency as well as DWE to improve the employability of our citizens.

b. Progress in Developing and Implementing Technical Skill Assessments

Secondary – The assessments are based on the state-developed, industry-validated curriculum frameworks. We have used these assessments for several years and are continuing to expand the number of courses that are tested. Our plan is to have assessments for each of the core required courses for all of our programs of study. As outlined in our five-year state plan, we anticipate that by the end of the 2011-12 school year, we will have assessments for 100% of the core courses in place. For the 2007-08 school year, 32% of the core courses were assessed. (Note: The assessments that are already in place allow us to have a technical skill assessment score on about 75% of our concentrators.)

Postsecondary – At the time the Arkansas State Plan was written, ADHE stated its intention to use WorkKeys as the method of measuring technical skill attainment because there are no existing end of course or end of program assessments for statewide use. The preference for WorkKeys was based on use of WorkKeys and KeyTrain in other workforce training initiatives and on pilot studies conducted to determine the feasibility of KeyTrain and WorkKeys as alternatives to or as a supplement for developmental education. Findings from these efforts have led to a reassessment of the choice of WorkKeys. As a result, workgroups from colleges are discussing alternatives before a final plan is implemented. There is interest in the National Test Item Bank and Clearinghouse for Technical Skill Assessment but development of a statewide assessment system will also be reviewed. GPA will continue to be used no later than program year 2011-2012

c. Implementation of State Program Improvement Plans

Arkansas met the targets for the three required performance indicators that were negotiated as part of our One-Year Transition Plan for 2007-08 and does not have an improvement plan in place at this time.

In preparation for the inclusion of all performance indicators next year, the state has continued to collect data from the local recipients that will facilitate the focus of state-developed technical assistance and professional development on the indicators.

The gaps in performance by various sub-groups – such as males and minorities on the literacy indicators and black students on the math indicator – will be further analyzed during the spring as plans are developed for the 2009-10 funds.

d. Implementation of Local Program Improvement Plans

Secondary - Data on the three required performance indicators for the 2007-08 year is being disaggregated to the local recipient level. These data will be compared to the targets negotiated for each local recipient during the spring of 2007. This process of comparison will take place during January – March 2009 so that the local recipients can be notified of shortcomings in their performance and will be prepared to address those needs with strategies in the 2009-10 Perkins application which is due during May/June of 2009. Because the state performance was several percentage points above the targets on each of the indicators and because the state performance overall in NCLB has been improving, we expect that only a few of the districts will be required to file an improvement plan.

Postsecondary – Since none of the performance indicators were negotiated with the local recipients for the 2007-08 year, the 2009-10 year will be the first year for review of local performance.