

NSWG – Technical Skills Assessment Subgroup

Meeting Minutes

January 26, 2009 2:00 pm Central

Present: Gabriela Borcoman (TX), Helen Bootsma (AZ), Barbara Border (AZ), Rhonda Burke (MI), Sharon Enright (OH), John Fisher (VT), Tony Korwin (NM), Amy McCaskill (SC), Reba Poulson (LA), Lynn Wilson – Dean for Tom Thompson (OR), Fidelis Ubadigbo (IA), Jill Kroll (MI), Pradeep Kotamraju (NRCCTE); guest: Stephen Hoag (CT)

Next meeting: TBD

I. Discussion re: technical skills definition

The members of the group discussed Gabriela's proposal to expand the definition of technical skills so that it will be more specific in what it contains. The members of the group analyzed the merits of a new definition and came to the conclusion that as most states are using the definition of technical skills as stated in the Perkins IV law we should keep it as is:

Sect.113(b): Student attainment of challenging career and technical skill proficiencies, including student achievement on technical assessments, that are aligned with industry-recognized standards, if available and appropriate.

S. Hoag discussed the work done in Connecticut at the secondary level. He talked about competencies identified for each occupation; they are measurable and recognized by the industry. There are core competencies that can be measured and they are the same, either for business, finances, or agriculture. Those competencies are available through the national or state organizations.

Barbara Border talked about the continuum from cluster to pathway to specific occupation in some cases or just from cluster to pathways in others.

John Fisher talked about the work in Vermont. They selected eight areas that they will assess for next December. For secondary level, VT identified seven minimum standards that include technical and academic skills. The plan is to develop a statewide assessment that will be used by every program in the CIP code. The postsecondary was not discussed yet.

Amy M. talked about challenges South Carolina has with collecting data, having to set it up two years in advance.

In general, members of the group expressed frustration with changes in policies that allow them to collect data, adopt state/ national competencies, and the high cost of testing. A huge problem is receiving the data back from different entities in such a way that can be used for Perkins reporting.

The secondary level is more likely to have a better handle on assessment than postsecondary. Secondary education sector seems to use state-wide assessments or industry assessments. Many of postsecondary have previously used program completion or GPA and are struggling with the concept of using assessment to measure technical skills. The discussion about including soft skills may confuse the matter, so we should stick to technical skills.

II. Emerging issues for discussion

- Usage of state or nationally recognized competencies
- Usage of state or national tests
- Relationship between skills attainment, skills assessment and program of study
- Assessment methodology

III. Next steps

- The discussion will take place separately for secondary and postsecondary levels
- The next discussions will focus on the methodology used for assessment: who is included, duplications, timelines,

IV. Next conference call

End of February. Gabriela will send a scheduler to the group.