Next Steps Work Group—Technical Skill Assessments Subgroup
Conference Call
February 27, 2009

DRAFT Notes (and more…)

Host: Sharon Enright, Ohio Department of Education (filling in for Gabriela Borcoman, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)

February 27 Conference Call Participants:

Karen Bachelor (TX), Sec	N	John Fischer (VT), Sec	Y	Reba Poulson (LA), PS	N
Helen Bootsma (AZ), Sec	Y	John Haigh, USDOE, OVAE	Y	Jim Schoelkopf (MPR, Guest)	Y
Barbara Border (AZ), Sec	N	Tony Korwin (NM), Sec & PS	Y	Vangie Stice-Isreal (TX), Sec	Y
Gabriela Borcoman (TX), PS	N	Jill Kroll (MI), Sec	Y	Tom Thompson (OR), Sec & PS	Y
Dennis Budkowski (OH), PS	N	Pradeep Kotamraju (NRCCTE, Guest)	Y	Fidelis Ubadigbo (IA), Sec & PS	Y
Rhonda Burke (MI), PS	N	Amy McCaskill (SC), Sec	Y	Chuck Wiseley (CA), PS	N
Sharon Enright (OH), Sec	Y	Carol Pang (HI), PS	N	Kathy Wilkins (MT), PS	Y

Charge to NSWG Technical Skill Assessment Subgroup by OVAE:

Look at both secondary and postsecondary technical skills assessments

1. Review what has been developed to date on the subject.
2. Make a recommendation(s) to the larger NSWG for their review and consent.
3. Summarize recommendations, issues and solutions from the NSWG to OVAE.

Desired timeline for recommendations to OVAE:

Prior to Year 3/Year 4 negotiations (begin March 2009)

Discussion Items	Action Required

What are *Technical Skills*? (need definition)
• Definition of *technical skill* in the Perkins IV law viewed by many as not sufficient.
  ○ Sec. 3. Definitions (Perkins IV law) – Does not contain a definition of *technical skills*.
  ○ Sec. 113(b)(2) – Core indicator language for Secondary and Postsecondary is: *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.*
• States define technical skills in State Plans; many refer to language in the Perkins law; some put forth a state definition.
• Many states point to the CTE-program industry-validated standards/competencies as technical skills, and identify or develop aligned assessments.
• Questions not resolved:
  ○ Do occupationally-specific skills qualify as technical skills? Viewed by some as too narrow.
  ○ Do '21st century skills' (e.g., life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, information, media, and technology skills) qualify as technical skills?
  ○ At secondary level, academic standards often embedded in technical standards documents; do academic standards qualify as technical skills?
• Related – What constitutes 'Technical Skill Attainment?' – Most exams, including Certification/Licensure exams, are proxies. Many are written exams (measuring knowledge) only and have no performance assessment piece.	

Inventories of State and Industry-Recognized Technical Skill Assessments • There seem to be some different initiatives to create inventories of state and industry-developed (third-party) technical assessments.	

○ Technical Skills Assessment Inventory (Don Hilber, lead developer, 2007) is published on PCRN Web site (http://cte.ed.gov/). This is a good resource that could be further developed. ○ National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) (ACTE is disseminator for NRCCTE) – Pradeep Kotamraju is leading an initiative • Many states are already aware of available third-party assessments, and have even developed their own inventories of such assessments. Many do not want to spend time responding to questions/requests for information for the creation of national lists. • Many states would like access to a regularly-maintained inventory of third-party assessments that identifies the standards on which an assessment is based, what is the intended population to use the assessment (e.g., high school students, college students, incumbent workers), alignment with career clusters/pathways and CIP codes, validity and reliability information, costs, how assessor will provide individual assessment results with schools, and more. This type of inventory would require ongoing updating with third-party assessors.	Send existing state inventories to Pradeep (pradeep.kotamraju@nrccte.org)
State and Industry-Recognized Technical Skill Assessments – Secondary and Postsecondary Issues • Very few assessments are a good fit for secondary; most assessments were developed for the adult population with postsecondary education or training and some work experience. • Virginia has implemented an industry assessment approach to measuring technical skill attainment with the secondary population; very low passage rates. • National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) is an example of a third-party assessor that has developed secondary-level assessments and provides schools with individual student assessment results. • What constitutes 'passing' if a student takes more than one assessment? For example, National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) certification consists of several separate assessments (suspension and steering, brakes, electrical/electronic systems, engine performance, engine repair, automatic transmission/transaxle, manual drive train and axles, heating and air conditioning). If a student passes one of the assessments, does this constitute passing for TSA purposes? • Costs of third-party assessments can be quite high. Local Perkins grant would not be enough to pay for assessments for all students. • Very few third-party assessors share individual student results with schools or state agencies. ○ Some third-party assessors provide aggregate-level assessment results for colleges; this is not sufficient, as there are no individual student assessment results; some students assessed at the institution are not students at the institution, which can 'contaminate' results. • Many CTE programs (e.g., business programs) have no third-party assessments; and there are a growing number of new/emerging CTE programs (e.g., 'green' programs) that have no third-party assessments. How could students in these programs be assessed? • Technical Skill Attainment is much more than student performance results on a single assessment – it can a composite of student performance results on multiple assessments, using multiple measurement methodologies. As assessments and measurement methodologies are in a constant state of change (as they should be, to reflect continual changes in business/industry), it is unrealistic to expect annual continued improvement in performance results.	
State and Industry-Recognized Technical Skill Assessments – Unique Postsecondary Issues (?) • State higher education agencies have little or no power or authority to require the use of third-party assessments.	

○ Colleges are asserting the right to assess student learning in the way they see fit. • Endorsed and established assessment methods/tools of colleges include classroom assessment techniques, licensure and registry exams, apprenticeship tests, capstone course projects and exams, clinical practice, rubric assessment, portfolio assessment, end-of-program assessment, interdisciplinary projects, formal presentations, certification exams, and perhaps more. Many of these assessments that are institutionally rather than externally derived have been developed in collaboration with state, regional and sometimes national employers and various trade, industry and professional associations. ○ It is not feasible to capture all these different types of assessments in state data systems. Therefore, 'proxy' data, such as GPA, course passing, certificate/degree granting, should be used.	
Possible Solutions – Secondary • State-developed assessments (individual states). • State consortia-developed assessments, such as the consortia led by Arizona/V-TECS; state technical content standards must align (7 other states currently at the table). • Secondary and postsecondary partners jointly develop state assessments, with goal of awarding of postsecondary credit for students who successfully pass assessments (dual credit). Ohio and Vermont are beginning to use this approach. • Identify other appropriate and feasible measurement methodology (e.g., Career-Technical Student Organization skill and career development events). • Combination of state-developed assessments, third party-developed assessments and other assessment methodology. • Until state agency data system can collect student assessment results, use 'proxy' data such as CTE program completion, high school graduation.	
Possible Solutions – Postsecondary • Use third-party assessments when appropriate, feasible, and when state agency can obtain assessment results. • Combination of multiple types of assessments when state agency can obtain assessment results. • Use 'proxy' data such as GPA, course passage, certificates/degrees conferred.	
OVAE Involvement/Support and Draft Recommendations • OVAE should sponsor a summit with third-party assessors, in conjunction with the next face-to-face DQI, to determine how schools and/or state agencies can obtain individual student assessment results. • Since incorporation of third-party assessments to measure technical skill attainment appears to be a long-term goal, and this approach will never work for all CTE programs, support technical skill attainment measurement approaches that use 'proxy' data. • When negotiating state performance levels for technical skill attainment, agree to accept lower/same/higher proposed levels from states when rationale supports the state proposed level.	