

Channel Enterprises LLC

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Observations/Suggestions

(This report is not intended to be final or complete but provides observations and suggestions based on visits, research, analysis, conversations, meetings, etc. As more data is gathered, additions and changes will be revealed in future reports.

OBSERVATIONS:

The most glaring observation of Montana education is the extreme lack of accountability required of school districts, especially with career technical education. The primary reason is the extreme level of local control. Most states have local control but local education agencies (school districts) still have to comply with accountability measures required of federal and state) funding. This situation has resulted in career technical education programs being significantly below standards of similar programs in other states. There is no evidence that any programs are nationally certified (for example: automotive – ASE, information technology – CISCO, culinary arts – ACF, construction – NCCER, and etc). There is NO concrete evidence that CTE students have the opportunity to earn Industry Recognized Credentials (IRCs) as part of the process of career pathways. No evidence exists that “College and Career Ready” has value in Montana unlike many states with CTE being an integral part in successful student outcomes. True CHANGE for the better in serving students and the state can occur with a systemic approach that includes the following components. The following may be used as solutions for education improvement efforts in Montana.

DOL Report

The Montana Postsecondary Workforce Report presented at the SWIB Meeting in October revealed some very interesting disconnects in providing students in Montana career pathways that would lead them to career opportunities that the workforce demands. The report is postsecondary in nature but absolutely shows what happens to students after they leave high school. This report absolutely indicates that education at all levels do NOT use LMI data to align their curriculum to the needs of the Montana workforce and critically impedes efforts to economic development in the state! It is a clear case of not providing ALL students a solid career planning/exploration experience followed by a personalized career pathway. (The full report with my commentary may be provided upon request)

A few points made in the report that are significant:

62% of high-demand occupations are undersupplied.

Examples are:

Education: preschool and kindergarten teachers

Healthcare: nursing assistants, medical and dental assistants

Construction: electricians, plumber, carpenters

Transportation: automotive service technicians, truck drivers

Oversupplied:

General studies graduates (BS) “significantly oversupplied”

“Bachelor’s degree earners report \$4000 less median income than an associate degree earner one year after graduation.”

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“Certificate of Technical Studies has the highest rate of continuing education followed by Certificate of Applied Science and associate degrees.” This is a signal that career pathways work for high school students and indicates that “success brings more success”.

A clear case for having a system in place that consist of career exploration, career coaching, career pathways is evident by the next piece of data of the report: “General studies was the most common program and had the lowest workforce outcomes among short term degrees, about 80% were employed in low wage jobs one year after graduation.”

“Nursing assistants are the most in-demand nursing occupation in the state”, a significant opportunity for secondary Health Programs to offer students this extremely important career pathway.

Please refer to Figure 2.4 “High Demand occupations requiring less than a Four-Year Degree” on page 50 of the report. This chart should be a focal point for OPI in serving secondary students in the various career pathways represented by the occupations listed.

Only 15% of the job openings through 2030 require a bachelor’s degree!!! (pg52)

The data in this report clearly indicates that no real system exists in Montana and the mindset appears to be that “everyone needs a 4-year degree” to be successful!!! **This report should be a wake-up call for all stakeholders, especially state government and the legislature!**

The significance of this report indicates that OPI can make a huge impact on economic and workforce development in Montana by providing a system with career pathways for ALL students! There is no evidence available that any efforts have been made to align secondary and postsecondary education to meet the needs of the workforce using LMI data in Montana. Most states that are highly competitive in economic and workforce development have made big strides in aligning educational structures (career pathways) to better serve students in providing them successful career opportunities for their future. LMI data at the regional level should be the goal to achieve proper alignment but state data is the minimum in order to create the educational system that maximizes funding (personal and government) efforts and economic success. Montana needs to break down the silos and create a system of “partnerships” that maximizes all federal funding source related to education, economic/workforce development to include Perkins and WIOA funding.

Requiring the following pieces (associated with funding requirements) will be a major game changer for Montana but most importantly, serving ALL students!

CAREER COACH

Implement a “career coaching” system that may be based on the Alabama model to assist any student in choosing a career pathway that best serves them (middle school through university). Career coaches will provide students assistance and training on how to best access all components of their chosen career pathway to help them have a successful future and explain the possible course options of their school career. Career coaching can truly be a major game changer for ALL students and provide the connection to business and industry to improve Montana economic and workforce development efforts. (Please see job description from Alabama for specific duties). Designing a system based on a regional structure

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should be considered for the rural/frontier schools, possible implementation using technology (virtual) as a major structural piece in serving those students. Consider the Alabama model for other districts. A major goal for students is creating a documented plan within their career pathway.

Establish a specific number of career coaches that can be funded as part of the initial grant opportunity (state and federal funds) to be offered in 2023/2024 school year. Once that is determined, a budget for salary, benefits and travel can be established per career coach position. The long-term plan should include a structured expansion of program with the state funding the program.

CAREER EXPLORATION

Career exploration/ interest/inventories starting with middle grades (or earlier, elementary) through adults (AE students specifically); use a tool that provides a structure to truly assist students in choosing a successful career pathway for their future, provides access/results to the students during/beyond their education journey. Suggest implementing a statewide system such as Kuder, Career Cruising or similar systems and REQUIRE those entities that access federal funds for their programs to implement and be accountable for the students they serve. Braid funding to cover costs, Perkins, WIOA, state, etc. Keep in mind that this part of career pathways is a critical piece called out in Perkins and WIOA.

WORLDS of WORK

Expand annual Worlds of Work (WOW) like the Great Falls event held Fall of 2022 across all regions of Montana to expose students to the “real world” of career opportunities they can experience. WOW events are a great way to bring ALL stakeholders (education, local government, business/industry and others) together to serve students first but the state economy permanently! It provides a perfect venue to help solidify career pathways for students. It also brings together government, B/I, community leaders, and others to become an active partner supporting the various regions of the state and the state as a whole. State grant funds may be offered to offset the costs (primarily student transportation and facilities).

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS CURRICULUM

Offer a statewide curriculum on employability skills (soft skills) as a requirement from middle grades through high school for ALL students. At the bare minimum, this must be a requirement for ALL Work Based Learning students! Creating and learning the behaviors that business/industry (b/i) expect can only be achieved through a curriculum that is student centered/led, teacher/career coach facilitated, project based, with online real-world situations, individual and group projects with a personal portfolio developed as part of the learning. The curriculum suggested was built by industry and is age appropriate from middle grades, 9th/10th graders, 11th/12th graders and adults over age 20 (AE and college students as well). Pre and post assessments are included at each level and include credentialing. Employers could use the assessment piece as part of their onboarding process for new employees and the training program should they so choose. The “Career Essentials” suite is the suggested curriculum. www.careeressentials.org Adult education should have a component of their career path programs that include employability skills as well. Braided funding should be considered as a solution using Perkins, WIOA, state and other funding. Either fund directly (recommended) for selected recipients or provide a grant opportunity.

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RURAL/FRONTIER VIRTUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Analyze those CTE programs that can be delivered virtually so that students in rural/frontier areas can be offered CTE programs that will accommodate their chosen pathway and allow them to earn IRCs. School partnerships and/or regional consortia **must** be determined and implemented so ALL students are afforded the same opportunity as those in metropolitan areas. This might be based on the current regional structure or a derivative that makes sense in serving students. Serious consideration might be made using the Montana Digital Academy as well. Many CTE programs in Business Ed, select Industrial Technology/STEM, Health, AG and FACS can be offered virtually and possibly include WBL as an essential element. Once again, use LMI data and workforce needs to determine the programs that would provide students the best opportunity in their chosen career pathway. An easy and excellent use of federal funds (ESSR) and other funding sources (state & federal) would be to expand Smart classrooms across the state especially in the rural/frontier areas of the state. This will allow ALL students opportunities to follow their chosen career pathway!

Work Based Learning

Work based learning has become a more important part of a student's career pathway. It raises the level of learning and provides a strong direction for their future career. It should become an expected component of a CTE career pathway but can serve ALL students in their chosen pathway.

The Montana WBL Learning Manual is an excellent reference document to implement or expand WBL opportunities for ALL students. Caution must be exercised to ensure that ALL students gain employability and technical skills through WBL to assist them in being successful in their chosen careers. It is imperative that the learning embrace the 9 components listed on page 6 of the Montana WBL Manual. Documented proof of learned skills/competencies is a critical piece of the program and every effort should be made to ensure that true work-based learning occurs and does not become a "work release" program! If no task/competency list exists for a given WBL experience (similar to a structured apprenticeship/internship program), consider using detailed components of industry standards for specific jobs, job descriptions/expectations from employers; provide a sample metrics for each component for the employer. Very **specific** goals and timelines should be documented as part of the process. Suggest certain expectations/behaviors be learned/exhibited as part of the student experience. Ensure the Work Based Learning program has strong written expectations of ALL stakeholders. Alabama has overcome many obstacles and issues of high school based WBL such as age restrictions, workers compensation, etc. in an effort support b/I and students. Your workforce partners are critical in the success of any WBL program. Look at the information on WBL with ACTE, Advance CTE, and states such as Alabama, Iowa, North Carolina, and others.

SIMULATED WORKPLACE

Implementation of a solid "Simulated Workplace" in all CTE programs is another excellent structure to support student learning. Teacher training and change in mindset are key components of making this system work but the rewards are amazing! Please review the efforts of West Virginia and Alabama in implementing this program. Simulated Workplace done correctly strengthens CTE programs, assists students in learning real world employability skills that complement their CTE training and being super successful in their chosen career pathway. Guidelines have been furnished from Alabama and recommendation for West Virginia as well.

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Schools with CTE programs should seriously consider implementing a “Simulated Workplace” for all programs so ALL CTE students have a WBL experience. Please refer to the West Virginia model [Simulated Workplace - West Virginia Department of Education \(wvde.us\)](#) or Alabama model [Retired-Alabama-Simulated-Workplace-Manual.pdf \(alabamaachievers.org\)](#) Business/Industry will be extremely supportive in this effort!

CTE Teacher Training:

In reviewing various documents, websites, etc., I could find no data on retention of new teachers. Traditionally, if new teachers will stay if they are able to successfully complete the first 3-5 years on the job. It is imperative that they receive the tools and support to help them be successful and stay in the profession otherwise, the students suffer the consequences. Training focused to provide new teachers the tools to get started and grow will provide a solid foundation for retention while improving student success. Training and mentorship programs may be structured like offerings by NCCER, ASE, and state programs in Alabama, North Carolina, and others.

- CTE/AE Teachers
 - Create a new teacher/instructor training program for those programs that hire professionals from the field that are not traditionally trained educators; primarily industrial technology, health and select Ag/FACS/business education and possibly select AE teachers.
 - Initial training should be offered BEFORE school starts each school year with a strong focus on the basics of student learning, communication, classroom administration and management, teaching strategies and evaluation techniques. More in-depth training sessions can/should be delivered in additional sessions throughout the first year and at other PD sessions such as MACTE. This is an excellent opportunity for OPI CTE Specialist to connect and establish relationships with new teachers and assist with retention efforts. A great model exists with the NCCER Teacher Certification Training Program. It is a 24-hour course that is structured for training construction professionals from the field to become classroom/lab instructors so they can quickly make a positive impact from day one. I have witnessed the impact this program makes on teaching and learning.
 - Training listed above must be requirement of the licensure process!
 - Perkins funds are a perfect choice to support this activity.

- CTE Teacher Mentorship Program
 - This program would be a critical piece of the new teacher program and should be managed by OPI specialist.
 - Structure a program that puts a positive, experienced teacher as a mentor with a new teacher.
 - Scheduled and unscheduled calls and online meetings are critical.
 - Visits of both programs are an important piece so the new teacher can ‘see’ what a good program looks like and the experienced teacher can visit to provide feedback on the new teacher’s program.
 - Alabama has one of the best models for mentoring.

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- This is an excellent use of Perkins funds to cover costs of travel, substitute teachers, and etc. State and other funding may be used to support this important program.

Include a CTSO teacher training program as part of the New Teacher Training, consider the Iowa model below:

IOWA CTSO support: The CTSO Advisor Academy is an Iowa Department of Education supported initiative to provide training, resources and support for emerging CTSO programs. The program has 12 total video modules and is available entirely on demand, with videos released throughout the year.

Modules include:

- [Introduction to CTSOs](#)
- [Introduction to Iowa's CTSOs](#) (reference only)
- Managing Perkins Dollars & Student Activity Funds with Your CTSO
- Membership Recruitment and Engagement
- Managing Chapter Meetings
- Integrating into the Classroom
- Electing and Supporting Chapter Officers
- Developing a Chapter Program of Work
- Crafting Community Service Projects
- Succeeding at Competitive Events
- Attending Conferences and Events
- Fundraising and Financial Leadership Activities

Most modules are accompanied by a resource document that highlights key points and guides advisors in future learning. Training could be joint venture of OPI staff and CTSO state directors.

OPI staff views teacher training as a vital role of OPI and is key to building relationships and providing needed support for teacher success.

Student Credentialing

- Staff interviews, Perkins plan, and website reviews revealed no evidence of students having the opportunity to earn industry recognized credentials (IRCs). This is a surprising revelation since IRCs have become the driving force in accountability of programs (to include Perkins) and to provide business and industry (B/I) in all sectors potential employees that have the skills they want and need to be career ready. IRCs are also a key element for economic development in many locales and states. These credentials provide a student evidence of their success in the skills attainment that B/I are seeking and is a strong indicator of program success. Stackable IRCs also promote the idea of "success build more success" as students earn additional credentials! IT employers have become far more interested in the credentials that a student has earned than a college degree indicating strong support for such an effort.
- CTE and AE/IET programs that embrace program certification, i.e.; (ASE, NIMS, CISCO, NCCER, others), significantly raise the bar to ensure that programs are meeting national business and industry standards which provide students a stronger path for career success. CTE programs that want to offer credentials by organizations mentioned above require program certification before students may earn IRCs.
- IRCs are for ALL students and may begin as soon as middle grades! Work with your workforce partners (DOL, SWIB, business and industry associations, major employers, community colleges,

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apprenticeship programs, chambers of commerce, and others to develop an industry credential program that serves ALL students in secondary, postsecondary and adult education.

- Multiple states offer students the opportunity to earn IRCs. Please review the programs in the following states: Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and many others.
- Students that continue their career pathway may continue to earn IRCs at postsecondary institutions, apprenticeships programs, short-term training programs and B/I training strengthening their value to employers.
- Explore various funding solutions so no student may be excluded from earning credentials. Advance CTE has white papers/reports that may assist in this effort. Leverage funding from the federal level (Perkins reserve, WIOA, ESSR), state (Advanced Opportunity Act, others, possible new request), and private organizations (chambers, associations, etc) to support student success.

CTSOs

The definition of Career and Technical Student Organization according to Perkins 5 is as follows: “(A) The term ‘career and technical student organization’ means an organization for individuals enrolled in a career and technical education program that engages in career and technical education activities as an integral part of the instructional program”. The key term in this statement is “integral”! CTSOs are NOT extracurricular or clubs! The data/student membership does not support that CTSOs are integral for CTE programs. Ag has a funding stream from the state (HB 86?) so all AG programs can have all students as members but after reviewing the data it appears many programs do not have any membership. There also appears to be inequity in funding membership so ALL students in CTE programs can have their membership funded. Only Ag has this provision and funding source from the state! All students deserve to have the opportunity to embrace all that CTSOs offer. CTE provides the opportunity for students to learn skills for their chosen career but CTSOs can change their lives! No evidence exists of why teachers are not including CTSOs as part of their program so further investigation needs to occur. Is the issue training for teachers, no accountability required, funding membership, “not my job” mentality, etc? One can only assume that students in the programs without CTSO exposure are NOT getting the employability and leadership skills training that is an essential piece of CTE.

Program certification generally requires CTSO involvement/membership adding to accountability. Some states require CTE programs to affiliate and have membership in associated CTSOs, i.e., Alabama and Iowa require both.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS:

Digital Academy

(Will be meeting with contacts at Digital Academy next week during my visit)

The Digital Academy is a huge opportunity to expand course offerings to ALL students in Montana. From academics, DE/DC, all areas of CTE especially those programs that are technology based (examples: several business ed classes, many STEM classes, select health occupation classes, and select industrial technology classes) can certainly be included in the academy offering. Possibly survey CTE programs to see how classes/lab activities were accomplished during the pandemic and to the quality of the student

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application. This opportunity would be significant for those students in rural/frontier areas of the state. Employability skills classes may be offered but can't be a passive program since many employability skills are behaviors. Suggest Career Essentials (careeressentials.org) be considered.

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