

Perkins V Plan Background: Connecting to a Larger Narrative

Perkins V planning has given New York the chance to continue the conversations about serving the needs of all students that were begun during the development of the State's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. The work done to define measures of success for the State's ESSA plan marked a shift in thinking about setting meaningful educational goals for all learners. The broader view taken to define a well-rounded education has created natural points of contact and synergy to unite academic, technical, and social/emotional learning. The acquisition of competencies in these three areas is central to the purpose of Perkins V legislation and is found in its first sentence:

The purpose of this Act is to develop more fully the academic knowledge and technical and employability skills of secondary education students and postsecondary education students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs and programs of study. (Perkins V, SEC. 2. [20 U.S.C. 2301])

The ESSA plan development shifted the conversation from achievement in narrow academic areas to providing all students equitable access to a well-rounded education. Other NYSED initiatives are natural partners in identifying the school experiences that should be available on the path to high school graduation. For example, the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Initiative contributes to the ESSA plan's broader priorities to improve academic achievement, improve school climate, and increase educational equity by supporting students and teachers at a number of levels. Teachers create the context where instruction conveys academic content as well as cognitive strategies—building the habits of thinking and acting that students need to become independent learners.

ESSA and SEL stress the importance of creating interventions based on needs, which are revealed through ongoing analysis of data and self-assessment. This is an important reference point for Perkins V planning. As in prior authorizations, Perkins V plans must set forth ways that states intend to comply with the provisions of the law, but the plan also creates a basic map of the work ahead. Much of the work revolves around self-assessment and collaboration.

Career and technical education (CTE) programs can start with the simple question, "which changes in CTE delivery will improve student growth and outcomes?" Perkins V responds by asking, "what are the findings of your needs assessment?" Perkins V continues the theme of program improvement found in Perkins IV, but much has changed. Perkins V introduces procedural changes that set the stage for Perkins grants to fund needs-based interventions.

Asking which changes should be made at the State level led to the decision to use Perkins funds only for NYSED-approved programs. Approved programs are the State's benchmark for quality. Perkins funding and approved programs, first joined in Perkins IV when New York defined "program of study" as an NYSED-approved program, now become the platform for change. Required needs-based interventions, self-assessment, and program-level public performance reports signaled the need to evaluate how well data collection practices for Perkins IV could fulfill Perkins V requirements. The new focus on data-driven decisions at the *program level* provided the answer. The CTE and Information Reporting Services offices

worked with data managers in the field to revise CTE data definitions and business rules to accomplish two goals: to reduce the CTE data reporting burden on districts and to collect data only on students in defined CTE programs of study (a.k.a., NYSED-approved programs). We accomplished these goals by June 2019 by setting rules for the collection of students enrolled in NYSED-approved programs. The response from the field has been extremely positive.

Yet another change comes in the form of a new Perkins measure of program quality. In consultation with the field, participation in work-based learning was selected as the indicator that would contribute to program quality for the largest number of students. Work-based learning experiences are a required component of approved programs. Perkins V gives the CTE community the chance to work together to develop more consistency statewide. Perkins V affords us the chance to decide on a framework of core content to be taught in work-based learning classes. Additionally, work-experience and site supervisors would benefit from standard training modules that can be created with work-based learning coordinators.

Over the years, the best career and technical education programs in the State have fulfilled the dual role of giving students skills they can use immediately in an entry-level position and those they will need throughout their careers regardless of occupation. Some of us have called this focus “college and career readiness.” Readiness for college and a career is no longer enough. According to a recent study by the McKinsey Global Institute,¹ “major transitions lie ahead that could match or even exceed the scale of historical shifts out of agriculture and manufacturing.” The study’s model suggests that by 2030, millions of workers will need to switch occupational categories, and all workers will need to adapt to disruptions and displacements caused by technology. Therefore, our CTE programs must help students be life ready and future ready. Our students will need to be ready *for* change and ready *to* change.

Work-based learning can provide the types of experiences that encourage students to create mental models that accommodate shifts in methods and perspectives. Experiential learning can begin a virtuous cycle of learning to identify personal accomplishment in new situations which, in turn, builds confidence to attempt other novel challenges. Work-based learning experiences give students the chance for self-reflection in not only how well an activity went, but also in how to define the measures for success or needed improvements. When students practice the habit of deliberate self-assessment, they practice a life-ready skill that cuts across the boundaries of specific occupations.

It is true that high-quality CTE programs must be developed with the input of many stakeholder groups. Collaboration between educators and employers provides the opportunity to share relevant technical requirements and workplace practices. This specificity addresses the immediate requirements needed for an entry-level position after high school, but the future will be filled with disruptions in the nature of work, so we must prepare students to cope with disruptive forces.

¹ JOBS LOST, JOBS GAINED: WORKFORCE TRANSITIONS IN A TIME OF AUTOMATION. McKinsey Global Institute, accessed at <https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/future-of-organizations-and-work/what-the-future-of-work-will-mean-for-jobs-skills-and-wages>, 3/6/18

Work-based learning is an excellent way for students to engage in thinking about how they learn and adapt. The common practice of having students keep a journal of their work-based learning experiences can become a framework for metacognitive activities that help students assess their understanding of new concepts and performance in novel situations.

Taken in isolation, selecting a performance measure, requiring a new application process, or changing definitions are bland procedural changes. Taken in the context of the work we will take up after the Perkins V plan is completed, they become the gears and pullies needed to forward the State's priorities to:

- increase access to high quality CTE programs;
- support at-risk students, including students with disabilities and ELLs, enrolled in CTE programs;
- improve career development for all students; and
- build regional collaboration amongst secondary and postsecondary education and business/industry grounded in labor market needs, including the development of regional articulation agreements.