

Presentation to

Joint Commission on Administrative Rules (JCAR)
General Assembly Building
Senate Room A

Tuesday, January 11, 2011
10 a.m.

Chaired by: Senator Frank Wagner

Presented by:

Lan W. Neugent, Assistant Superintendent for
Technology, Career and Adult Education
Virginia Department of Education

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Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth

Background

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs today must reflect the modern workplace. High-quality CTE programs incorporate rigorous academic standards and technical competencies, as well as critical workplace skills such as problem solving, communication, and teamwork, to prepare students for success in further education and careers.

Because the 13 Workplace Readiness Skills (WRS) were initially researched, adopted, and implemented in CTE curriculum in 1999, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) saw the need to revisit them. Much new research was available to review and analyze. Based on this literature review, we found that our skills were indeed lacking in areas that have garnered much attention over the past ten years, including skills pertaining to

diversity awareness,

- health and safety,
- creativity and resourcefulness (includes innovation which was a dominant theme in the research),
- customer service, and
- technology-oriented skills.

Employers across the Commonwealth reinforced the research findings.

Development and implementation of the Workplace Readiness Skills assessment is as follows:

Accomplished

- Researched and validated WRS – This was conducted by the Career and Technical Education Consortium of States (CTECS) and the University of Virginia (UVA). Researchers surveyed 300 business and industry representatives in Virginia.
- Convened a committee made up of business, industry, education, and guidance personnel to either link existing items to standards or develop items where they

do not exist.

- Introduced the new WRS to the state CTE Advisory Committee and CTE administrators across the state.
- Integrated WRS tasks into each CTE course framework.
- Developed researched-based instructional resources to complement all WRS tasks for teachers.
- Released the new essential competency lists, containing the new WRS, into all CTE courses.
- Created a blueprint for the assessment and developed a 100 item test bank for use in the initial pilot.
- Selected a cross section of schools to pilot test the assessment and field test the E-SESS online delivery system.

To Be Accomplished

- Coordinate and conduct the pilot test with the pilot site test administrators, analyze the results, and provide feedback to improve the assessment and the delivery system.
- Notify school divisions of the registration process through their test site administrators.
- Deliver the assessment to those who sign up during a window beginning April 1, 2011, through the end of June 2011.
- Administer and evaluate the assessment process for continuous improvement.

Benefits for classroom teachers and students

The Workplace Readiness Skills are

- listed as the first 21 tasks in every CTE course as well as on the student competency record;
- marked “essential” and must be taught and rated;
- formatted the same as course-specific tasks (each workplace readiness skill has a task definition and related Standards of Learning);

- linked by each task number to a variety of research-based instructional resources that have been coordinated from many sources;
- valued as an external assessment for a new industry credential that will complement more than 300 external industry certifications, licenses, and occupational competency examinations; and
- demonstrated student competencies on course specific “hard skills” and a credential that would represent a knowledge of “soft skills” which may be shown on the student’s resume.

Next Steps

- January, 2011, the Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth credential will be recommended to the Board of Education.
- If approved, it will be first available for administration during the second semester of the 2010-2011 school year.
- It will be eligible as a credential of choice for any CTE course. It does not have to be combined with another test like the current WRS test version (NOCTI 7790).
- It will be eligible for student-selected verified credit, Career and Technical Education Seal, Perkins IV accountability (technical skills assessment), Virginia School Report Card, and state reimbursement (using the state school division allocation for Board approved credentials).
- While some school divisions have elected to administer a WRS test to all CTE program completers, the Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth assessment is not a required test for Virginia CTE students.

Special Provisions

Because the original WRS test (NOCTI 7790) was in place for implementation at the beginning of school-year 2010-2011, school divisions may continue its administration either as:

- A “stand-alone” test (not eligible for reimbursement or student-selected verified credit). This test is not reported using the Single Sign-on for WebSystems (SSWS).
- A “combined” credential with a digital literacy examination (which is eligible for student-selected verified credit) for the 2010-2011 school year.

In summary, the new Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth are:

- well researched
- up-to-date
- reflective of Virginia employer needs
- incorporated into all CTE courses
- supported with many teaching resources
- eligible for a new industry-valued credential.

Attachments:

- A. Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth – Needs Identified by Virginia Employers
- B. Critical Workplace Skills for Virginia’s Economic Vitality