

# Legislative Task Force on Career Education Opportunities

## Final Report: January 22, 2015

Sen. Ann Rivers

Shepherd Siegel, WA-ACTE; Project Lead The Way, Inc.

Eleni Papadakis, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

**2013 Proviso:** *Identify strategies that support career readiness opportunities for all secondary students. TF to consider state laws, policies, graduation req's, and state funding.*

### Task Force Members

- Co-Chairs: Sen Ann Rivers and Rep. Monica Stonier
- Senators: Rosemary McAuliffe and Mark Mullet
- Representatives: Drew Hansen; Brad Hawkins; Dick Muri; Chad Magendanz; Chris Reykdal
- Ramona Hattendorf, Governor's Appointee
- Kathleen Lopp, OSPI
- Eleni Papadakis, WTECB
- Shepherd Siegel, WA-ACTE
- Isabel Munoz-Colon, SBE
- Gene Sharratt, WSAC

# 1) Assuring Options for Students.

- There is a need for **policies that maintain high expectations for students to be college and career ready, but also allow for flexibility** for programs around the state that are focused on the "career" side of readiness. **All forms of educational attainment should be honored and valued**, whether an apprenticeship, certificate program, technical degree, or baccalaureate or other college degree.
- Tomorrow's workers are today's students, and they **all must have the opportunity to pursue quality career pathways through real world, hands-on experiences**. There must be particular attention invested to assure pathway options for vulnerable student populations, including special education students and ELLs. The state's high school dropout rate should be decreased. There is concern about universal, equitable **access to quality CTE** course offerings, particularly those that also meet graduation requirements.
- Students need to have sufficient opportunity to pursue courses and topics of interest to them through experiences both inside and outside the traditional classroom. Policymakers should promote block schedules and other ways to structure student learning to provide **more elective opportunities**, and should promote improved access to CTE courses at high schools and skill centers. There is evidence that schools with more elective opportunities are more engaging to students. Student engagement is key to dropout prevention.
- **STEM education** must continue to be emphasized in Washington to meet the workforce needs of the future. Students should be able to access **an articulated system for STEM education connected with career and technical education**, beginning as early as elementary school and continuing to graduation.
- One way to monitor this is to **track elective fulfillment rates**. There is no customer satisfaction index for high schools, but the act of tracking whether or not students are able to enroll in subjects that interest them would increase awareness of whether there are sufficient electives for students to follow their chosen career pathway.

## 2) Increase Student/Parent Awareness of High School Graduation Requirements.

- Students and their parents must understand the high school graduation requirements before the student's senior year. The requirements are flexible, but require careful planning to meet. High schools and middle schools should ***provide students and parents with information*** about the graduation requirements, including CTE equivalencies, ***early and often***. Particular care must be made to ***increase awareness of such policies among vulnerable populations***, including ELL students, homeless students, and populations with high rates of remediation in community and technical colleges and universities.

### 3) Increased Counseling.

- A consistent message is that the ***current ratio of counselors to students is not satisfactory***. Career counselors in particular are a specialized resource of which parents and students should be made more aware. A career guidance system cannot be successful without the infrastructure to support counseling. One recommendation would be to ***increase the Basic Education funding formula to improve the counselor/student ratio***. A specific numeric target could be considered, along with similar recommendations from the Quality Education Council.
- Another recommendation is to recognize that the ***counseling function is done by the entire community of a school***. There should be a performance metric to assess how well the school as a whole is performing the counseling function. High school graduation rates and college entrance rates are part of that metric, but there also needs to be a metric for meaningful student engagement in a career pathway. The school community includes the families of the school's students: schools should explore ***professional development to increase capacity for family engagement in the school and in the career counseling process***. The state could explore increasing funding for family engagement coordinators beyond K-5, or adopt statewide standards for engaging families, coupled with mechanisms to measure achievement of those standards.
- All educators, including counselors, need ***professional development*** opportunities in order to understand and then develop and implement a multiple pathways approach to career education and guidance for students. A web portal or other system of shared resources could be developed for the high school system to allow educators to easily circulate ideas and materials. ***Specific approaches to career education for ELL, special education students, and other vulnerable populations*** should be created to provide additional support through the critical transition into college or a career.

# 4) Incorporating Common Core Standards & Assessments.

- First, the state should consider how state assessments may be used by districts to demonstrate student competencies in core areas and how that could relate to graduation requirement credits in those areas. This is particularly true for the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments of English Language Arts and Mathematics, which are expected to be set at a "college and career ready" level. This would provide more flexibility for students, as long as there is an assurance that students have an ***opportunity for a meaningful senior year***, particularly those who do not meet the standard on the assessments.
- Second, if the SBAC assessments are truly an indicator of college readiness, they must be ***accepted as a threshold for remediation requirements in college level placements***.
- Finally, there must be ***support and resources to assure that the Common Core standards are embedded in CTE courses***. Industry professionals are content experts, but are not necessarily steeped in the pedagogy of how to incorporate, for example, Algebra into a Construction Trades course. Professional development and support from OSPI are needed.

# 5) Improvements to the High School & Beyond Plan (HSBP).

- It is worth considering ***new standards for the HSBP***, including making sure the plan is refreshed annually and is supplemented with a curriculum on career education. Refinements to the HSBP need to be made with clear direction to local districts, and should be an interactive, multi-year approach to career and college readiness planning, not merely a "checklist" that students dismiss after completing it. Districts should have a clear idea of what a quality partnership looks like between the school and the student creating the plan. Students and families need more specific information about course selection requirements as they relate to the career pathways outlined in a student's HSBP. There is too much inconsistency now and no good way to assess how well the HSBP is working; the Legislature should take action to clarify expectations for the HSBP process. There is concern about equity in meaningful and timely engagement in the HSBP. Furthermore, there needs to be a ***formal touch-point in middle school*** when preliminary exploration can occur before the HSBP is developed.

## 6) Statewide Policies for CTE.

- The Task Force had extensive discussions about course equivalency that should not be forgotten. Assuring that students have ***equitable access to equivalency crediting*** for CTE courses is important. The Legislature should continue focusing on course equivalencies, in hopes of making it easier for educators to offer more innovative, hands-on learning. The Legislature should explore whether students enrolled in a sequence of classes at skill centers need an ***exemption from proposed graduation requirements***, or whether the issues and concerns of skill center students can be addressed through course equivalencies.
- Similarly, there is a need to initiate some ***statewide articulation agreements*** between secondary and postsecondary education. Continued reliance on faculty-to-faculty arrangements results in too much inconsistency.

# 7) Increase Work-Integrated Learning Opportunities.

- The Legislature should fund programs such as Career Readiness for a Working Washington and programs that have demonstrated improved student-success outcomes, and bring together communities and schools to create work-integrated learning opportunities. Programs demonstrating success should be expanded statewide to ***encourage businesses to participate in job shadowing, mentorships, and other programs*** that provide students work-integrated learning opportunities, and to ***facilitate partnerships between schools and local community groups, workforce groups, and families***. The state should support ***career coordinators to liaison between school districts and workforce groups*** to foster opportunities in work-integrated learning, including internships, and to support the work of career guidance counseling in the school.
- Finally, the Legislature should consider ***implementing work-integrated learning programs as part of the definition of basic education***.