WASHINGTON STATE
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
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WORK READINESS CREDENTIAL PROJECT UPDATE

High Skills, High Wages Strategy 1.3.5
Enhance "Employability Skills" Training in Workforce Development Programs

Washington State, the District of Columbia, and the states of Florida, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island are making progress towards launching the Work Readiness Credential (credential). Along with the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Governors Association, the Institute for Educational Leadership, the National Retail Federation, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the above states comprise the Policy Oversight Council, guiding the credential's development and validation.

Scheduled to "go live" in early summer 2006, the credential will measure non-technical "work-ready" skills that are needed by many employers across industries. New jobseekers and entry-level workers who earn the credential will be able to show employers that they have demonstrated the ability to apply situational judgment, reading, math, and communication skills in a work-related context. Education and training providers will be able to understand their students' achievement of the skills measured and create or match curricula and assessments that will prepare students for work. This will be especially helpful for people with little or no work experience or education credentials.

Since the July 2005 Board presentation, Phase 3 (field testing of the credential) has been in process across the nation. Washington has completed three field tests and has one more scheduled for February 3, 2006. Analysis of the nationwide field tests will occur in late February. The assessment will be refined and completed by June 2006.

This tab includes the marketing piece introducing the credential developed by state partners for use across the nation, the PowerPoint to be presented at the Board meeting, an implementation timeline, a Resolution on the certification system design, and articles published since the July 2005 Board meeting.

Board Action Required: For discussion only, action will be taken at the March Board meeting on an implementation plan.

WORK READINESS CREDENTIAL – PROJECT UPDATE

What is the Work Readiness Credential?

Businesses across industries have common workplace expectations for foundational or "work-ready" skills. It can be a challenge to hire and retain entry-level workers who can think critically, cooperate with others, apply math principles, and make sound judgments. These skills can affect a company's productivity, sales, and the quality of products and services. They can be just as important to an employer as technical training.

> The credential measures these employer-desired skills:
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> 1. Speaks so others can understand
> 2. Listens actively
> 3. Reads with understanding
> 4. Observes critically
> 5. Cooperates with others
> 6. Resolves conflict and negotiates
> 7. Uses math to solve problems
> 8. Solves problems and makes decisions
> 9. Takes responsibility for learning
> 10. Uses information and communications technology

In this case, "work-ready" means a person comes to the job ready to perform tasks, learn and apply technical skills, and over time show reliability, problem solving skills, and appropriate behaviors. These are skills every worker must learn and demonstrate at some point in his or her career, and usually in an entry-level position.

Business input has guided the development of an assessment-based certification called the **Work Readiness Credential (credential)**. When complete, the credential will affirm an entry-level job seeker or employee has communication, interpersonal, decision-making and lifelong learning skills, and understands how to apply those skills on-the-job.

The Equipped For the Future Adult Basic Education (EFF) standards were cross-walked with employer-identified needs to determine the top ten skills an entry-level job seeker or worker should possess. Nine of these skills are measured by the credential. The skills are "grouped" into four assessments that will be delivered in modules online:

> The **reading with comprehension** and **applied math** tests measure how a person applies his or her basic academic skills in order to communicate on-the-job, or accurately solve a problem. These test questions are multiple choice, with one correct answer.
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> The **oral assessment** and **situational judgment** tests measure how effectively a person uses his or her foundational skills in order to successfully complete a job-related task. These test questions are real-work scenarios, such as dealing with a difficult co-worker. The situational judgment test asks test takers to evaluate multiple choice questions and identify the most and least effective options. The oral language test asks test takers to listen to a prompt and respond in a way that indicates they understood the question.

The goal of this credential is to fulfill a long-standing employer request made to the workforce development system: refer job seekers who are ready for entry-level work. The credential will help close the "work-ready" skills gap. It will be a valued and valid predictor of a job applicant's success on-the-job, and will help WorkSource case managers refer candidates to business clients.

Adult Basic Skills educators, K-12, apprenticeships, and technical training providers can use EFF standards and the credential to help learners determine areas of success or improvement as they prepare to enter the workforce.