

HR477 Career Pathway Endorsements Advisory Committee

Summary of Key Ideas from the Meeting on 10/22/15

The primary charge of this committee is to deliver recommendations for the implementation of a system for awarding career pathway endorsements on high school diplomas, with related policies and supports

At the meeting held on October 22, 2015 the committee met to discuss strategies that would help get to this goal. The discussion was organized around three groups:

Group 1: Defining career competencies in high priority sectors

Group 2: Professional learning expectations

Group 3. Consistent state models and scaling: balance between state models and regional flexibility

Each group was given a series of questions as reflected in the document below. The answers have been synthesized from the responses collected in the Google Document and in table conversations.

Group 1. Defining career competencies in high priority sectors:

What are the critical issues for engaging the business community in defining career competencies?

- Utilize and/or expand business and industry advisory committees used at area career centers and high schools, as well as bringing in professional organizations into the conversation.
- Communities can learn from others' experiences through partnerships with Chambers of Commerce, IMA, Trade Unions, Contractors, etc.
 - For example, Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce surveys local businesses to learn what skills they need.
- Need to address minimum age of 18 years or older requirement for students to have access to certain manufacturing industries and equipment.
- Need to determine what the role is of industry-based certifications in determining career competencies.

What should be expected in terms of alignment to community college programs and attainment of dual credit?

- The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) should be clarified and explained to secondary partners so that students understand the college credit that they have earned is easily transferred to more than 100 colleges and universities within Illinois.
 - However a common issue that needs to be considered is that many high school students who have the opportunity and choose to take dual credit course in high school will choose to go to a 4-year college after graduation
 - Illinois community colleges should line up articulation agreements with other public and private colleges so that those students can get credit at those institutions as well.
- Consistent guidelines/parameters/entry requirements need to be developed and utilized for better student access statewide. In addition, this applies to dual credit instructors.

- Different levels of degrees/certifications need to be marketed to students/parents/guidance counselors, so that students know of different opportunities. Too often, college means trying to obtain a four-year degree, where many jobs now and projected in the future will not need/require a four year degree
- All community college have the same instructor credential requirements in the same courses so early college opportunities are available across the state.

What role should industry-based certifications play in determining career competencies?

- Industry certifications are highly valued and assist in employment or internship placement for individuals, especially in the IT field.
- Different industry standards should be incorporated where appropriate at each grade level, but schools should be careful about requiring certain certifications.

What other issues does this committee need to address in the area of defining career competencies?

- Internships are currently an issue in the courts; as a result some schools are no longer providing insurance coverage and some companies are no longer offering unpaid internships. This may be an issue that the state could assist with.
- The committee could aid in determining what kind of flexibility, overlap, and creativity will students have within the Career Pathways initiative.
 - There is a consensus that the state should allow for a certain level of flexibility and creativity for local and regional programs, implementing state driven funding procedures may get in the way of successful programming.

Group 2. Professional learning expectations:

What professional learning activities should be explored for inclusion in a career pathway endorsement model?

- Professional learning activities should involve both teachers and students; it is critical that teachers and counselors have access to summer work programs within local industry and business to develop better “real-world” lessons and become better equipped to advise students.
- For students, work-based learning activities should include corporate site visits, job shadows, project-based learning, internships, and competitions.
- There should also be an emphasis on using online/virtual opportunities, particularly for job shadows. Experiences for students do not have to just be in-person, business mentors should work with students on a regular basis including online. There are already many mentorship models that can serve as guides: Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and the Research & Development Learning Exchange Mentor Matching Engine.
 - Based on existing models potential criteria for professional learning activities could include: external professional learning experiences, district or FFA sanctioned activities, project-based learning, reflection on their experiences and how it relates to their career goals and plan, or students could keep track of their progress and experiences by creating a portfolio of projects completed. In order to make this successful students need to be introduced to different careers in

elementary and middle school. Introducing potential careers in high school does not give them enough time to develop a plan and explore all options.

- There are a few barriers in terms of scaling professional learning activities to create standardized credentials. Some programs can vary in each part of the state, for example agriculture, the committee should work to determine if credentials from one district should carry more weight than another.
 - It may also be different to standardize course content between districts or even schools, especially considering requirements for teachers are problematic.

How can the State establish a consistent model for assessing “foundational professional” skills?

- The state should review some “best practices” and models that other institutions have adopted. Work keys and Promise program at Harper can serve as guides.
 - In Harper College’s promise program, the evaluation of foundational professional skills includes: high school attendance, grades, rigor, college/career readiness, persistence, community service, feedback from external authentic experience (employer), reflection on the internship experience and all experiences, student self-assessment, and completion of internship.
 - Most importantly after a model is developed communities need to ensure that businesses know and recognize the standards as well. There should also be a discussion on how industry standards and student portfolios could be incorporated into the evaluation process. If internships are going to be a component for assessing foundational skills, several logistical pieces need to be worked out including: determining what kind of support to provide to employers in order to coach them on providing substantive feedback to students, after school time to visit work sites, funding/resource to support schools with these programs, as well as others.
 - Community School model could serve as a best-practice, providing wrap around services and a coordination of resources.

What other issues does the committee need to address in the area of professional learning expectations?

- The committee should attempt to address in the area of professional learning expectations the regional differences across the state; this may include internship opportunities and resource disparities.
 - Communities and students are very mobile, thus we must be able to offer experiences that our region may not “specialize” in.
- Finally the committee should work to distinguish age appropriate standards and special needs requirements.

Group 3. Consistent state models and scaling: balance between state models and regional flexibility

What processes should be used at the state and regional levels to define or adapt career competencies and professional learning expectations?

- Resource limitations: regional economic development entities along with local chambers of commerce and business groups should serve as conduits to bring local businesses, community colleges, and high schools together.

- The state needs to develop characteristics for different endorsement areas, which is not necessarily industry sectors. These areas need to be uniform across the state, but with a certain level of flexibility within each district. If the state too rigidly categorizes industries and skills this reduces their ability to react to shifts within industry and business.
- Rather than focus on categorizing skills and industries schools should focus on existing industry certifications because they are more likely to be relevant. By giving flexibility to local schools this will allow them to creatively react to industry trends within their community or region.
- Need to be very cognizant of which certificates have value: how will competencies be captured? Can the state focus on more clearly defined industries first (such as manufacturing and healthcare)? Start with that and learn from that. Or can the state provide general certificates?
- What will make this valuable is that it won't be easy to water down but that won't be too onerous for schools to adopt.
- What supports?
 - Structure: a) What are the endorsement areas, b) What are defined competencies
 - Models: a) Provide models for career clusters, b) Provide models (that are complete, such as Project Lead the Way)
 - Some sort of funding formula that supports this approach
- There is a resource issue: not every school has the infrastructure to support the all the clusters
- But what is the process: What role could the ROE play? In order to create a Regionally Developed Model: are we tied to the 72 programs of study→ representative of each cluster.

What other issues does the committee need to address in the area of consistent state models and scaling?

- A major obstacle in creating a state model that can be implemented across Illinois districts is the resource disparity between districts, especially the ability to hire well-qualified educators.
- Staffing issues are a problem statewide with CTE because education is not a highly sought after field and schools lose some of the best candidates to businesses. Some common concerns for scaling Career Pathway endorsements to the state level are ensuring that the standards are age appropriate, staying relevant with local, state, and national employment trends, and engaging the local businesses.