



Council for Education Policy,
Research and Improvement

Career and Professional Education: Preparing Florida's Students for the Knowledge Economy

**DISCUSSION DRAFT
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DRAFT

The Vision

The Council for Education Policy, Research and Improvement has developed the following vision for transforming Florida's pre-K-20 education system:

All students will graduate from high school fully capable of choosing, entering and being successful in either the workforce, further career education, or postsecondary degree programs

Achievement of this vision requires the creation of an academic environment that provides the tools for the successful transition of students into college and careers.

The Challenges

A significant percentage of Florida's working age population exit the K-12 system without adequate preparation to enter a career or continue into postsecondary education:

- ❑ For every ten ninth-graders, three do not earn a high school diploma.
- ❑ Of the seven ninth-graders who do graduate, four immediately pursue a college or university education.
- ❑ The remaining six out of every ten ninth-graders exit without a high school diploma or a college/university opportunity.

One of the most critical barriers to creating and enhancing the economic development potential of Florida is the deficiency in basic skills among the state's population. **Fundamental skills in reading, writing, and mathematics are a necessary condition for a skilled worker.** Students who do not graduate with these basic skills will face difficulties in finding a job with a living wage and with further education and training. By assuring that our youth and adult populations have adequate reading, writing, and mathematics skills, we will create the foundation for the acquisition of the education and training required for specific occupations.

However before that foundation can be laid, serious challenges continue to exist in Florida's educational environment. Namely, issues of readiness, lack of meaningful career guidance, and school size hinder the ability of Florida's students to reach their highest potential.

Readiness: Deficiencies in Fundamental Skills

While the state has made great strides in improving the reading, mathematics and writing skills of its K-12 population, there remains considerable room for improvement. Florida must continue to improve the reading, writing, and other academic skills of its K-12 population by maintaining and strengthening reforms that have led to recent gains in performance.

On the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), student performance has improved but additional efforts are necessary for the achievement of high standards for all students, particularly for students in later grades with the need for acceleration in reading and mathematics. While

average student scores have increased, in some cases substantially, a large percentage of Florida's third and eighth graders are not performing at grade level on the state assessment:

- ❑ In 2004 FCAT, 34 percent of third graders scored below grade level on reading, compared to 43 percent in 2001.
- ❑ In the 2004 mathematics FCAT, 36 percent of third graders scored below grade level, compared to 48 percent in 2001.

The gains at the upper grades have been less impressive. In the 2004 reading exam, 55 percent of eighth graders scored below grade level, which was down from 57 percent in 2001. The results for eighth graders in mathematics have been flat with 44 percent below grade level in 2004 compared to 45 percent in 2001.

Of particular concern to the Council is the relative lack of improvement seen in the performance of high school students on the tenth grade FCAT assessment. In 2004, 37 percent of tenth graders scored below grade level which was an improvement over the 41 percent in 2001. However, there has been a decline in the performance of tenth graders in the reading assessment. In 2001, 62 percent were below grade level, but in 2004, 66 percent performed below grade level.

Despite improvements in the K-12 school population, many Floridians still require assistance in the acquisition of functional literacy and workplace literacy skills. A large segment of Florida's adult population experience literacy and basic skills deficiencies, with about 20 percent of Florida residents age 25 and older without a high school diploma. It is important to serve the adult and youth populations who have not obtained the necessary skills in elementary and secondary schools. These include immigrants from other countries, migrants from other states, high school dropouts and those who exited the K-12 system with remedial needs. Adult general education programs in Florida currently serve more than 350,000 adults. Many of these adults without basic skills are recent dropouts from the K-12 student population:

- ❑ More than 25,000 9-12th grade students drop out of high school each year, most of whom will never return for a high school or postsecondary credential.
- ❑ Based on data on the 1990-91 high school dropouts, 68 percent of those dropouts had achieved no educational credential ten years later and less than ten percent had any postsecondary credential (Florida Education Training and Placement Information Program, 2002).

For students who exit K-12 without a diploma, their future wage earning potential is limited. Ten years following high school graduation, the average full-time wages of Florida public high school graduates exceed those of high school dropouts by 44 percent. In addition, high school dropouts are three times more likely to be incarcerated than high school graduates and six times as likely to be under community supervision (FETPIP, 2001).

Readiness for Postsecondary Education

Many of Florida graduates do not master the college preparatory curriculum prior to graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education. They are often ill-prepared for postsecondary education, as evidenced by the high percentage of students requiring remediation in college. While 93 percent of

state university first-time-in-college students (FTICs) are “ready” in reading, writing and mathematics, only 37 percent of community college FTICs are ready in all three areas. Currently, only about half of Florida’s high school graduates take the preparatory curriculum—a curriculum that assures readiness—for admission to a Florida state university.

The research clearly shows that students who have taken an academic college preparatory curriculum are much more likely to enroll in and to succeed in postsecondary education. Recent analysis by CEPRI on the postsecondary success of a high school graduating class demonstrates this finding. In *Postsecondary Progression of 1993-94 Florida Public High School Graduates: 2002 Update*, CEPRI reported that the seven year bachelor’s degree graduation rate for students who had taken a college preparatory curriculum was significantly higher (49 percent) than for those student who had not (19 percent). And the skills and competencies gained through a college preparatory curriculum are becoming essential for all students, not just those who are on a fast track to a bachelor’s degree.

The American Diploma Project, a joint project of the The Education Trust, Achieve, Inc., and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, recently released a report, *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts*, intended to guide states in developing a plan to reconnect the expectations of students and employers with the curriculum that is necessary for successful careers. As noted in the report, “Re-establishing the value of the diploma will require the creation of an inextricable link between high school exit expectations and the intellectual challenges that graduates invariably will face in credit-bearing college courses or in high-performance, high-growth jobs.”

Lack of Meaningful Career Guidance

While aspirations for postsecondary education are high, many students are not prepared to enter postsecondary education based on the curricular choices that they have made in high school. Nationally, the percentage of seniors who plan to attend a four year college has increased from 34 percent to more than 50 percent from 1972 to 1992. However, many do not have realistic expectations of what it takes to be successful in college and are not aware of all of their options.

Meaningful career and academic advice is probably not available to students in ways that make a difference. Based on data available for the 2001-02 school year, the statewide high school counselor to student ratio is 364 to 1. The ratios at some high schools were as high as 500 or 600 to 1. It is impossible for counselors to provide adequate advice to such large numbers of students.

School Size

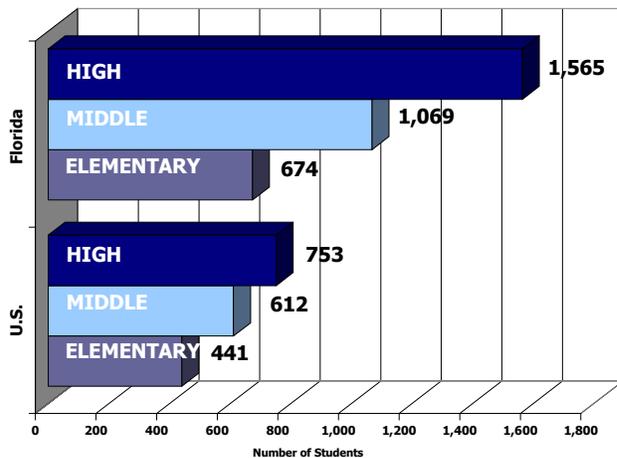
It is imperative that the educational atmosphere promotes rather than hinders the successful transition of students from school to careers. An important structural issue that affects student achievement is the size of the learning community—school size.

Nationally, the “small schools” movement has been influenced by the participation of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in providing funding for small high schools. The Gates Foundation cites some of the following research when presenting its case for smaller high schools:

- ❑ Higher average achievement and higher pass rates in core cores
- ❑ Lower dropout rates and more students going to college

- ❑ Greater effects of school size for low-income and minority students
- ❑ More positive student attitudes toward school
- ❑ Fewer student behavioral problems and higher attendance rates

Some of the benefits of small schools cited by the Foundation include more personalized learning, higher achievement, more engaged communities of learning, equity and professional growth for teacher.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Overview of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools and Districts: School Year 2001-02*.

Currently, Florida leads the nation in average school size across all levels: elementary, middle, and high. Florida high schools are over twice the size of the national average of 753 students. In 2003-04, ninety-six percent of ninth through twelfth graders attended a high school with a student enrollment exceeding the national average. Astoundingly, eighty-five percent of students attended a high school with 1,500 or more students.

The Florida Legislature had implemented a statutory revision to limit the size of new educational facilities, allowing for school-within-a-school models to accommodate existing schools with populations that exceeded the new capacity limits. The 2003 Legislature repealed this statute due in large part to the reality of implementing the 2002 voter-approved constitutional amendment to reduce class size.

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Overcoming the Challenges

To overcome the challenges outlined above and meet the vision CEPRI has set forth, a new approach to high school education should be pursued. As noted in a recent publication of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *Closing the Graduation Gap: Toward High Schools That Prepare All Students for College, Work, and Citizenship*.

Successful schools combine rigor — high expectations and a meaningful course of study — with relationships — powerful, sustained involvement with caring adults who mentor, advise, and support students throughout their high school careers.

Florida must focus its efforts on creating a learning environment for high school students centered on the following elements:

- ❑ A small learning community
- ❑ High standards for all students – “All Means All”
- ❑ A rigorous and relevant curriculum
- ❑ Effective and extensive career guidance and counseling

The elements listed above are necessary components of an effective system of secondary education. The Council has identified these keys through investigation of national and international examples of high school reform. One such system is that of the Denmark. Denmark is notable for the high quality of its technical training and for the flexibility of its system. High school education in Denmark offers pathways between technical and academic education and training at all levels, responding rapidly to the needs of business. As *Learning from Denmark*, a study of high school education in Denmark conducted by the Public School Forum and the North Carolina Center for International Understanding, notes, this nation's approach to high school education has been highly recognized for the following:

- ❑ Offering high school students a wide array of individual choices as to programs and focus
- ❑ Providing early guidance on which path would be best suited to individual needs and ambitions
- ❑ Operating a system flexible enough to accommodate changes in educational direction
- ❑ Achieving a very high success ratio in terms of young people successfully completing their high school education

Over the past 25 years, Denmark has recognized that their citizenry is the key national resource and has purposefully invested in the high quality education and training critical to the nation's economical success. With their youth seen as a valuable economic resource, the Danes have been willing to make great investments in their education and training system.

The demographic and structural differences between Denmark and Florida preclude a complete adoption of the Denmark system of high school education in the state. The Council does not advocate such a replication. However, the Council strongly endorses the value of benchmarking with other systems, both domestically and internationally, to uncover the key components necessary for high achievement. Once identified, these universal components can be shaped to meet the unique needs of Florida. The following proposal for high school reform based on the creation of Career and Professional (CAP) Academies, high standards for all students, and effective and extensive career guidance presents Florida with a blueprint, grounded in proven successes abroad, to assist students in reaching their maximum potential.

Career and Professional Academies



POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1

Every high school in Florida should develop a research-based Career and Professional (CAP) Academy with the following features: 1) small learning community, 2) strong academics in a career context (with standards-based career-technical coursework), and 3) partnerships with the local business community.

What are Career and Professional (CAP) Academies?

CAP Academies are **research, standards-based career academies**. The CAP Academy is a school-within-a school model characterized by:

- (1) a small learning community;
- (2) a college-prep curriculum with a career theme; and
- (3) partnerships with employers, the community, and higher education.

Students move through the system as a group and receive career-based instruction. Each CAP academy is organized around an occupational area like health professions, travel and tourism, finance, information technology, or construction. This model creates a structure in which the student learning is linked with potential career outcomes, but provides the base knowledge to ensure the success of its students in any number of fields. The CAP Academy differs from traditional academic and vocational education by **preparing students for both college and career**. Students who are interested in dental hygiene careers may work along side students who are planning to become physicians. The career theme is woven throughout the curriculum with the high standards necessary for admission to a university, providing students a rigorous and relevant education.

Why the CAP Academy Model?

The positive results associated with career academies, structured in the research-based CAP Academy mold, have been researched thoroughly in recent years. Studies have found that students in similar career academies perform better in high school and are more likely to continue into post secondary education, compared to similar students in the same schools. After assessing the most extensive, longitudinal study yet on academies by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, William Rasberry, of the Washington Post, succinctly wrote, "The magic, apparently, is in the combination of linking academics to job prospects and the intensive involvement of adults."

Several independent studies of the National Academy Foundation's (NAF) Academy of Finance and Academy of Travel and Tourism were conducted by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) in the early 1990s. These independent studies were commissioned by NAF board member companies interested in seeing the impact of the program. Among the conclusions of these studies were the following:

- ❑ Women and minorities were introduced to career options that were not previously available to them and gained clear perceptions of the professional career paths within each industry.
- ❑ Over 90% of academy students were going onto higher education (well above the national average).
- ❑ Students, even after they graduated from high school and went into college, rated their Academy internship highly and considered it helpful in their career decisions.
- ❑ Substantial numbers of Academy of Finance seniors had career and/or college plans related to finance.
- ❑ 50 percent of Academy of Finance graduates and 40 percent of Academy of Travel and Tourism graduates were working in their respective Academy career fields after graduation.

Several studies in California have found that academy students perform better than students in the same high schools who have similar demographic characteristics and ninth-grade records of grades, absenteeism, and disciplinary problems. Annual data collected from state-funded academies in California continue to show improvement after students entered an academy and while they are in academies.

How do the CAP academies bridge the gap between high school and careers?

Developing CAP Academies in every high school provides the bridge from school to careers that is currently lacking. Incentives for the development of CAP Academies should serve as the catalyst for reform. A research-based CAP Academy will prepare the next generation of students to enter postsecondary education without the need for remediation and provide them with the opportunity for meaningful exploration of careers. But these programs must be designed in the most effective manner. A CAP Academy should not be “window dressing” reform, but a real reform effort in which structure, curriculum, and student expectations are transformed into a true integration of academic and career education. According to the Career Academy Support Network (CASN), the primary clearinghouse of career academy resources, the key characteristics require the following structure:

THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF A CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL (CAP) ACADEMY		
SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITY	STRONG ACADEMICS IN A CAREER CONTEXT	PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academy-only classes for 2-4 years • Self-selected cross-disciplinary team of teacher-facilitators, with a lead teacher/coordinator • Voluntary enrollment, cross-section of students • Size limited to maintain personalization (no larger than 250 students) • A family-like atmosphere with a motivating, supportive, disciplined instructional tone • Core academic academy classes must be in a block, back-to-back schedule • Administrator and counselor support • Other course and activities outside of academy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several academic courses per year that meet high school graduation and college requirements • Students will take at least several technical college courses on a college campus before they graduate • One or more courses per year in a broadly defined career field that lets students explore a full range of career options • Contextual, applied, integrated curriculum • Common teacher planning time to allow curricular integration • Project-based learning that bring together skills across academic and career classes, possibly a school based enterprise • College and career planning, articulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering committee to govern academy • Locally selected career field with a cadre of employer partners • Parental involvement in students’ decision to enroll, and in various program activities • Business representatives who provide role models, show students career options and paths • Field trips/job shadowing to illustrate work environments • Mentor, employee volunteers that serve as career-related “big brothers and sisters” • Workplace experiences (paid or unpaid internships, community service) in the last year or two • Postsecondary institution articulation, concurrent enrollment

While not specifically advocated by the CASN, it is advisable that academy students should consider an option to take several technical college courses on a college campus before they graduate, in the summer, on weekends, or during their senior year.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR RECOMMENDATION 1

- The Florida Department of Education and the State Workforce Board should work in cooperation to create a high level office to oversee the development of Career and Professional (CAP) Academies. This office should be responsible for the coordination of state planning grant awards to high school for the development of a research-based CAP Academy design. In partnership with local business, the high school should design a rigorous academic curriculum with a career-based focus. The local business community should be responsible for the career-based elements of the program (internships, job shadowing, business lectures and steering committees or boards made up of business partners).
- The Florida Legislature should adopt statutory language that defines a Career and Professional (CAP) Academy and provides for a process for certification of career academies that meet the criteria.
- Planning grants in the amount of \$15,000 should be provided through an RFP competitive process for high schools to develop a research-based CAP Academy. High schools that currently have a career academy would be eligible to apply and re-design their model to meet the rigorous standards of the research-based CAP Academy model.
- Acceleration pipelines for students in the middle grades should be developed to encourage and prepare them for participation in a CAP Academy. Opportunities should be available for students, who participate in pipeline activities organized as “summer bridge” or weekend programs, to have first choice in CAP Academies. An example of a program would be a partnership between a school district and NASA for a summer science/math preparation program.

High Standards for All Students – “All Means All”



POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2

Every student in a Florida high school should graduate with college preparatory curriculum and an area of concentration (i.e., humanities, math/science, career/technical). Each concentration should have the same high academic foundation in reading, mathematics, and writing.

At all stages of development, age appropriate curriculum with an emphasis on career introduction, exploration and planning should be adopted in the public schools. No student should be allowed to leave school without being exposed to the opportunities available to ensure their future success in life and without developing a plan on the education and training required to achieve that success. Students must be made aware of career opportunities early enough to develop a plan by the start of high school. They should have a plan for education and work prior to putting on their caps and gowns on graduation day. And the schools that graduate these students must be evaluated on more than basic reading and writing skills – the career readiness of their students is essential.

Fundamental reform requires higher standards, better support for students, and a restructuring of curriculum. **The standards for students should be the same regardless of whether a student is on a college-bound or work-bound path.** In the old paradigm, students were guided in their curricular choices by assumptions about their level of ability. The new paradigm assumes that all students have the ability to meet higher standards and their efforts will determine their success.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR RECOMMENDATION 2

- The Florida Department of Education should establish new standards for a high school diploma based on the following outcomes:
 - a) Middle grades mathematics curriculum designed to have students mastering Algebra 1 in the 8th grade.
 - b) Phase out all general mathematics courses offered to high school students
 - c) Pursue policies that vertically align the curriculum of students in the middle grades with the high school that will be serving those students, similar to pre-AP vertical alignment efforts of the College Board.
- Funding and resources should be provided to support teacher professional development in instructional practices that will support high student achievement, integration of academic and technical curricula, and use of “applied academics” that is rigorous but contextual and leads to improved student motivation and conceptual understanding.
- In partnership with postsecondary educational institutions (particularly community colleges), high schools should identify opportunities for students to include career/technical coursework in their program of study.



POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3

Schools and school districts should be responsible for establishing intensive acceleration programs to get students to grade-level reading, writing, and mathematics benchmarks in 5th, 8th, and 12th grade, modeling best practices nationally and internationally.

In order for this new approach to high school education to be a success, **a strong foundation in elementary and middle school education is a necessity.** The K-12 system, particularly the early grades, has the primary role in improving student achievement. The development of a skilled, educated workforce in Florida must be built on the foundation of a strong K-12 system that provides the basic skills necessary for higher education training and employment. The failure to achieve basic skills early in elementary school leads to problems with learning and achievement later in school. Research has shown that children who are not proficient readers by the end of the 3rd grade have difficulties throughout the course of their schooling, perform poorly in other subjects, and may never graduate.

The first steps to improving are already underway through recent reforms in Florida. Among the most critical are the funding for literacy skills being provided through the federal *Reading First* grant

and state resources provided through *Just Read, Florida!*. The Department of Education received \$50.6 million from the federal government for *Reading First* for 2003-04. The Department of Education awarded 26 Reading Coaches Model Grants in 2003, totaling \$13.4 million. The Governor proposed and the Legislature passed the Middle Schools Reform Act, to increase the rigor of academic instruction in grades six through eight. Almost \$17 million in funding for reading coaches in the lowest performing programs was provided for the 2004-05 fiscal year.

Though the state has seen great advances in student achievement, aggressive strategies to accelerate student learning and improve basic skills must still be pursued by the state. Industrialized countries that have undertaken large scale education reform provide a vision for how to achieve high standards for all students. In countries that have gotten students to high standards, the following characteristics are an important part of the reform:

- ❑ Core teachers stay with students for two or more years,
- ❑ Common planning time is allowed for all core teachers,
- ❑ Tutoring is provided on a daily or weekly basis by the same teachers,
- ❑ Longer school calendars for students (190 – 210 days) are mandated with similar hours per day.

It is critical to avoid involving students in “more of the same” pedagogy that allowed them to fall behind in the first place. The state must continue to emphasize the use of research-based teaching practices and pedagogies that have been shown to improve student learning and skill acquisition in a particular discipline.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR RECOMMENDATION 3

- Elementary schools should consider adopting teacher assignments that emphasize “looping”, which allows a teacher to remain with the same single-grade class for two or more years.
- Elementary and secondary schools with after-school and weekend tutoring programs should utilize the same teachers who are providing the core instruction for the students, to ensure continuity with the classroom instruction.
- Elementary and secondary schools should implement “summer bridge” programs for acceleration of students in reading, writing and mathematics skills, for those who are not meeting or who are marginally meeting the standards.
- The Legislature should continue to support policies that leverage private resources like those provided through the Partnership to Advanced School Success program and the School District Matching Grants program.
- School districts should administer college placement tests no later than the 11th grade to evaluate student readiness for postsecondary education. This will ensure that students planning to attend a community college or university can engage in coursework that will increase the likelihood that they ready to be successful in postsecondary education by the time of graduation.

- Teachers should be provided with professional development opportunities to help them learn to implement research-based “best practice” teaching strategies in normal and intensive acceleration educational environments.
- School administrators should be provided with professional development opportunities to help them learn to lead and manage change within their school organizations.

Effective and extensive career guidance and counseling



POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4

Every student in Florida should be made aware of career options by the start of high school and provided with extensive guidance in order to plan their coursework in accordance with their career aspirations.

Re-branding and marketing requires a better awareness of careers on the part of parents and students, provided through a state-sponsored, school-to-career preparation advertising campaign. Every middle and high school in Florida must be educating its students about potential career paths as they progress through their academic careers. While the current tools are valuable, more time and resources are needed to get students on the right track. The appropriate guidance and counseling must be offered early enough to make a difference in their long-term planning and goals.

A key element to any reform effort on curriculum and structure requires attention to Florida’s current system of career planning and advising. Currently the state offers CHOICES and eCHOICES, a program designed to provide the framework for the career planning process. Access to this program is provided to all public schools in the state. In addition, Florida provides Career Resource Network seminars and other support to school districts to enhance their career advising system.

The following strategies are intended to produce better career planning decisions for students:

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR RECOMMENDATION 4

- The Department of Education should identify best practices for an advising system that ensures all students have access to quality time with an academic advisor. Explore the teacher-advisor model in which each teacher advises and monitors the progress of a small number of students.
- School districts should mandate the development of an education and training plan related to career interests for late middle school and high school students, to be updated along the progression towards graduation.
- School districts should utilize peer mentoring programs that rely on high achieving school peers and young adults to provide support for secondary students planning their education and careers.

- The Department of Education, in partnership with the business community, should develop an intensive marketing campaign to attract high school students into postsecondary education programs leading to careers that are of critical need to the State. This campaign should also involve the active marketing of the “partnership academies” that demonstrate the integration of academic and career education.

Recovering High School Dropouts: An Alternative Route



POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5

High school dropouts and at-risk high schools students should be served through innovative school district and community college programs that emphasize the acquisition of skills in an environment that combines intensive contextual reading and mathematics programs with specific job training skills.

In addition to providing a model that works for students currently enrolled in the K-12 system, there remains the issue of outreach to those who have recently dropped out of the system. Innovative ideas in other industrialized nations have focused on recruiting these dropouts back into an educational environment. The programs focus on the development of specific job skills while providing accelerated instruction in basic skills. In the early 1980s, Denmark’s Ministry of Education embarked on an innovative program to address youth unemployment. With the youth population that lacks a formal education as their targets, Denmark developed production schools which sought to organize a learning environment in which the students acquire both a practical and general education. The program is not preparatory in nature but students may engage in simultaneous enrollment in a traditional basic skills program.

The content of the education programs is based on “learning by doing” with instruction provided in permanent workshops where program participants design and produce real goods and services for society. The primary objective is to sell the products that are manufactured. Income from the products/services sold is used to partially support the school. Examples of production school workshops or subject areas include tourism, textiles, construction/landscaping, carpentry, electronics, among others. Some key characteristics of the program include the lack of fixed, pre-arranged education sequences and continuous admittance and discharge from the program. Ultimately, students are removed from an environment in which they “failed” (i.e., the traditional public school system) and routed to a program that provides an applied environment for skills acquisition.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR RECOMMENDATION 5

- The Florida Department of Education should partner with the State Workforce Board to design a program for recent high school dropouts, modeled after the Danish production schools, to provide skills training and a work environment as well as appropriate basic skills acceleration.
- School districts and community college should be encourage to develop partnerships to serve at-risk high school students and recent dropouts in programs that accelerate reading and mathematics achievement while providing skilled workforce training.

The Outcomes: A Better Educated and Highly Skilled Workforce

Providing a high quality high school education with academic rigor and career relevance is Florida's best opportunity to increase the economic well-being of its citizens and the economic development of the State. Following the path outlined above will allow Florida to realize the following long-term outcomes:

- ❑ More students graduating from high school with high levels of academic and career skills.
- ❑ More graduates continuing their education and training in postsecondary institutions, both career-technical and academic programs.
- ❑ More high skill, high wage "knowledge workers" to attract greater economic development to the State.

To ensure that these reforms are implemented and the desired outcomes are reached, it is imperative that evaluation of high schools is expanded to include performance outcomes that are critical indicators of the state's success in preparing students for the workplace.



POLICY RECOMMENDATION 6

High schools should be evaluated and rewarded for improvement on measures relating to the successful transition of students from high school into career and postsecondary education through the use of outcomes like graduation from high school and continuation rate into a district, college or university education program.

The most important catalyst for change is a high-stakes accountability process that provides incentives to high schools for improvement in the transition of their students to careers or postsecondary education. Currently, the application of school grades based on the FCAT has created a culture of accountability that has produced significant improvements in student achievement. Unless high schools are held accountable for completion and postsecondary continuation outcomes, their primary focus will remain on assuring students meet the minimum standards on the 10th grade FCAT examinations. The minimum FCAT required for graduation does not align with the competencies necessary to enter a postsecondary institution without the need for remediation.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR RECOMMENDATION 6

- The Department of Education should include multiple measures of performance for use in accountability. Measures such as attendance, the lowering of dropout rates, and the percentage of students passing end of course exams may be added to the FCAT scores currently used.
- The Department of Education should create a career/workforce outcomes feedback report on the postsecondary progression and success of high school students to provide a baseline

analysis for which high schools may be evaluated on their success in getting their students ready for college.

- School districts should develop a set of applied learning standards that lead into more powerful exploration of careers, integrated into high academic standards.

The Transition to College and Careers

A skilled workforce is a primary determinant of the state's ability to respond to the demands of the economy of the 21st century for a knowledge-based workforce. Career and technical education programs are essential in meeting this demand given that **over 60 percent of the projected job growth in Florida through 2010 will be in occupations requiring postsecondary education and training, but not a bachelor's degree.** Additionally, nine of the top ten fastest growing jobs in Florida over this period will require an associate's degree or a postsecondary vocational certificate. Despite these figures, state support for career and technical education has declined dramatically in the past few years. Florida must recognize that career, technical and adult education is critical to the current and future economic development of the state of Florida; therefore a higher priority must be placed on it in the budget process in order for Florida to successfully compete in the global marketplace with a highly skilled workforce.



POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7

All career and technical education programs should ensure that their program completers exit with skills and credentials endorsed by local and/or state industry sectors.

The training offered must be relevant in today's economy and look toward the jobs of the future. Peter Drucker has spoken of how the "next society will be a knowledge society." Education and training efforts must focus on development of programs to fulfill these needs. Creating more high-wage jobs in Florida requires that employers know that there will be skilled workers to fill those jobs.

No one benefits more from an excellent workforce development system than Florida's business community. As the employers of the workers produced by the state's education and training providers, the presence of business and industry leaders in workforce education planning is essential. Still, business involvement will likely be most successful on a regional level. Local stakeholders have vested interests in producing a qualified workforce for local employers. The communication among these education and business leaders is vital to the success of local efforts to coordinate education and training with the skills required by employers.

Public sector vocational-technical centers, community colleges and universities provide most education and training in Florida. The state has made great strides in recent years in focusing the efforts of these institutions in high-wage, high-skill areas. With organizations like the Workforce Estimating Conference, the path to success in this objective has already been laid out.

Local training providers must request business input and local employers must respond to the call for help. Training requirements for education programs must be in line with current work skills

requirements. Workforce training efforts and cooperative arrangements, like those provided through pre-apprenticeship programs, charter technical centers and collegiate high schools, are excellent ways to achieve a better-trained workforce.

Without adequate funding, the State will not have the skilled workforce necessary to be competitive in the global marketplace. In recent years, the current funding structure has not provided adequate support for the development of programs that recruit and train high school students and graduates in high demand fields.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR RECOMMENDATION 7

- School districts and chambers of commerce should promote the development of educational partnerships in which high school students graduate with a two year career-technical credential that has been endorsed by local business and industry through programs like charter-technical and collegiate high schools.
- The Legislature should provide funding and incentives for technical centers and community colleges to offer postsecondary career-technical coursework for high school students in partnership programs.



POLICY RECOMMENDATION 8

Community colleges should develop, within their local service areas, a strategic plan for career and technical training in partnership with area career-technical centers and local industry sectors.

The workforce development system in Florida is decentralized and fragmented with dozens of agencies involved in various components of the system. The populations served through this system are varied, from at-risk youth to unemployed or displaced workers to current workers.

Currently, school districts and community colleges both provide postsecondary career, technical, and adult education programs. Forty-eight of Florida's 67 school districts provide postsecondary adult vocational certificate (PSAV) programs, while 57 school districts provide adult general education. All 28 community colleges offer associate in science (AS) degrees, 25 of the 28 community colleges offer PSAVs, and 18 provide adult general education programs.

Among postsecondary career, technical, and adult education students, more are enrolled in school district programs than community college programs. In 2000-01, about sixty percent of all postsecondary enrollments in this area (557,752 students) were found in school district programs. The bulk of school district enrollments are found in adult education, where eighty-eight percent of adult education students were in school district programs in 2000-01. Community college enrollments are mainly in A.S. degree and continuing workforce education programs.

The dual system of delivery for career, technical, and adult education has raised several issues over time, focusing mainly on duplication and access. The system should require that local educational institutions work together in producing a credentialed workforce rather than competing for students

to enroll in their programs. Duplication of services within a local service area should not be encouraged, but adequate access to training programs is essential, especially for Florida's most disadvantaged citizens.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR RECOMMENDATION 8

- In cooperation with local workforce development boards, area chambers of commerce, community colleges, school districts, and area technical centers should conduct a “needs assessment” analysis to determine which training programs are critical to the economic development of their region. These needs assessments should form the basis for a strategic plan for workforce education for the region. These strategic plans should address, at a minimum, the following elements:
 - ❑ Articulation agreements between postsecondary vocational and college programs to assure the “seamless” transition of students.
 - ❑ Plans for avoiding duplication of high-cost facilities and equipment, either by avoiding program overlap or by sharing resources
 - ❑ The development of “career ladders,” with support from local employers, which take students from high school through higher levels of postsecondary training.
- The local strategic plan should ensure adequate access to education and training programs by examining the feasibility of the following:
 - a. Multiple site offerings to reach the most disadvantaged populations,
 - b. Flexible scheduling through weekend and night courses for the working population,
 - c. Short-term, accelerated training options, and
 - d. Distance learning, where appropriate.
- To ensure access to training for disadvantaged populations, the Legislature should provide adequate financial aid for enrollment in career and technical education programs and part-time students.
- Districts that develop and implement strategic plans that are effective based upon outcomes established by the accountability process should be eligible for incentive funding.

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