

The Academic Year in Review: Perkins IV Report

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Federal funding for Perkins IV is a major source of revenue for career/technical education programs in Montana, at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. Equally important, if not more important, Perkins IV provides an incentive and a focus to the collaborations between secondary and postsecondary sectors in Montana, as well as the various state-level agencies/boards and community-based organizations dedicated to connecting Montanans seeking family-sustaining work with business/industry needs.

Reports to various groups over the past year have advanced the goals of Perkins IV. Here are the highlights of Perkins IV activities in Academic Year 2008-2009.

Regrouping

- With changes in Perkins leadership teams at both the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE), team-building has been a major priority in both sectors.
- 360-degree reviews with the field on Big Sky Pathways and Perkins occurred in Fall 2008 and adjustments were made to improve communications and identify high-priority tasks and responsibilities.
- OCHE and OPI engaged in a process to set strategic and relational priorities.

Making New Connections

- The OCHE/OPI leadership team has collaborated with the Department of Labor to incorporate Big Sky Pathways into the Montana Career Information System (MCIS). Key assets:
 - K-12 school districts will be able to customize pathway templates with their individual course offerings.
 - Our two-year programs' offerings will pre-populate with "tech prep," dual-credit, and early college opportunities indicated. Next goal is to incorporate 4-year offerings as well, ensuring that Perkins IV doesn't encourage "tracking." Pathways are for all students, not just career/technical education (CTE) students.
 - This collaboration leverages the career exploration and labor market information already in MCIS with the work K-12 and higher education have already done on pathway templates.
 - Our vision is that students can make an informed choice on which pathway to enter and have a portable individual education plan based on their chosen pathway.

Articulating

- Healthcare providers and healthcare teachers in the secondary and two-year college sectors have collaborated to provide a series of teaching guidelines called "essential learning expectations." These guidelines have been used in

the development of pathways in therapeutic services (i.e. nursing, physicians, CNAs, etc.) A potential articulation has been identified between two introductory secondary high school healthcare courses and an introduction to nursing prerequisite required in our post-secondary nursing programs. It is hoped this will be a statewide articulation agreement.

- Faculty representing over 40 healthcare and construction programs have begun the process of identifying equivalent/non-equivalent courses and common course-numbering.

Reaching Out

- OPI has been doing regional trainings on how to implement high school-to-college pathways.
- OCHE regularly attends meetings of the Montana Association of Career/Technical Educators (MACTE) and has presented workshops/sessions at MACTE's annual conference, the Montana School Counselor Association, and the State Workforce Investment Board
- Dr. Brad Eldredge, who directs our Workforce Development division, has been appointed to the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and regularly participates in its efforts.
- K-College committee has expressed an interest in OCHE and OPI's collaboration with DLI's MCIS program, so we will be updating them.

Coming Up

- Montana is one of 8 states selected for a monitoring visit by representatives of the United States Department of Education. Originally slated for June 22-26, the visit has been delayed. It will occur sometime in FY 2010.
- OCHE has received stimulus funding to collaborate with OPI in the development of 5 pathway programs that will allow students to graduate high school and obtain an associate's degree in 5 years. We are just beginning work on this project.
- We have received applications for our "special population" grants and will be awarding them in the near future.