



The Florida Senate

Interim Project Report 2008-119

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Committee on Education Pre-K - 12

CONSOLIDATION OF LEADERSHIP FOR EFFECTIVE CAREER EDUCATION

SUMMARY

In order to grow and sustain a diverse and viable state economy, Florida's businesses and the education community must address critical workforce needs in sectors that will broaden Florida's economic base. It is imperative, therefore, that businesses and educators work interdependently to transform the development and delivery of state-of-the-art, industry-relevant curriculum and instruction in high school career academies.

Findings contained in research studies and responding legislation have resulted in substantial changes in both the education and business communities and their relationship to one another. School districts are responding to the need to provide educational experiences that are relevant to students' interests and to provide meaningful world-of-work experiences. Conversely, businesses are recognizing and responding to the need to be actively engaged in providing the support and professional skills necessary to effectively train potential future employees.

The 2007 Legislature passed a comprehensive reform package aimed at bridging the gap between education and industry.¹ In order for the provisions of the bill to be effectively implemented and to attain the envisioned benefits, methods of communication, funding streams, policy decisions, response time, and fundamental thought processes between educators and the business world must continue to change. In particular, Florida's response to narrowing the gap between educational instruction and the workforce would accelerate if a proven entity is given jurisdiction to oversee its implementation.

The Employ Florida Banner Center for Career Academies has established itself as an effective leadership organization, with first-hand experience and

proven results in developing, implementing, and refining all aspects of secondary career and professional academies outlined in the legislation, and has provided valuable guidance and technical assistance to Florida school districts and the business community statewide. Accordingly, rather than establishing a new or additional level of administration, the Legislature may wish to consider consolidating leadership for career education into the Banner Center for Career Academies, an operational workforce-education partnership with proven effectiveness. This would expedite the alignment of workforce and postsecondary education with K-12 instruction and more effectively prepare our students for the future world of work.

BACKGROUND

Multiple studies have been conducted in recent years to address the disconnect between secondary curriculum and instruction and the needs of the global workforce. Most reports indicate that secondary education holds minimal relevance for students who are not college bound.²

At least 30 percent of all ninth grade students in Florida drop out of school without earning a diploma and of the 70 percent that do graduate, only 40 percent pursue any form of postsecondary education. An additional number of students complete high-quality industry-certified programs. However, a high percentage of Florida's high school students leave without the skills or training essential to high-skill, high-wage employment. These statistics, combined with the fact that over 80 percent of the growth in Florida's workforce will require education beyond the high school diploma, but not a bachelor's degree,³

¹ Chapter 2007-216, L.O.F.

² See Senate Interim Report 2006-115 -

http://www.flsenate.gov/data/Publications/2006/Senate/reports/interim_reports/pdf/2006-116ed.pdf

³ <http://www.cepri.state.fl.us/pdf/Career%20Education%20>

demand that secondary students engage in a curriculum that is more aligned and relevant to requisite workforce skills. Policy makers are consistently urged to establish and strengthen dialogue and partnerships between education and business communities in order to meet the needs of Florida's workforce and to actively engage the large percentage of high school students who are simply disengaged or not college-bound.⁴

Additionally, the workforce itself is constantly changing. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills reports that students, unlike their parents and grandparents, will hold multiple jobs within their lifetimes.⁵ Accordingly, the most important catalyst for change will require incentives for high schools to improve the transition of their students to both careers and postsecondary education.⁶

The 2004 Legislature established the Career Education Task Force to review existing studies, assess implemented strategies to bridge dialogue between the education arena and the business community, and to offer additional recommendations to strengthen these relationships.⁷ The resulting recommendations of the Task Force restated recommendations previously outlined in other proposals.⁸ The most important of these included:

1. Focus on skills necessary to compete in the 21st century global economy;
2. Establish and develop consensus relationships among business/industry/workforce boards, and the education community;
3. Integrate 21st century skills into core curriculum; and
4. Continue reform of secondary schools.

Initial findings of a report scheduled to be published shortly by the Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability indicate that career academy students are absent less, are more likely to score at grade level in reading and math, and more likely to graduate from high school.⁹

[Draft%20FINAL.pdf](#)

⁴ The Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement (CEPRI) report maintains that 50 percent of current 9th graders are not prepared for college-level work or the workforce.

⁵ An average of 10.2 jobs per U.S. Dept. of Labor (2004) – See www.weac.org/News/2006-07/march07/kenkay.htm

⁶ <http://www.cepri.state.fl.us/pdf/Career%20Education%20Draft%20FINAL.pdf> – Recommendations 5 & 7

⁷ Chapter 2004-357, L.O.F.

⁸ See Senate Interim Report 2006-115.

⁹ OPPAGA Report 07-40

Career and Professional Academies – Chapter 2007-216, L.O.F.

The 2007 Florida Legislature passed comprehensive secondary career education reforms, which require targeted activities and stringent accountability by school districts, the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI), the Florida Department of Education (DOE), state businesses and industry, local workforce boards, and postsecondary institutions.¹⁰ Key components of the legislation include:

- 1) Development of a strategic five-year plan by local school districts and business and industry based on identified workforce needs;
- 2) Rigorous and relevant secondary curriculum aligned to workforce needs;
- 3) Award of highest available levels of industry certification for participating students;
- 4) Ongoing programmatic and student assessment and evaluation and continuous data analysis to drive improvements; and
- 5) Retroactive weighted funding to school districts following the award of industry certification to students.

METHODOLOGY

Staff conducted interviews with school district personnel currently involved at different stages of career academy implementation to discuss the quality of implementation and any existing impediments to the success of local career academies. Staff also attended the Second Annual Workforce Summit held in May, 2007, in partnership with the Okaloosa CHOICE replication projects, and the first meeting of the Employ Florida Banner Center for Career Academies Advisory Council (Banner Center).

A Joint Implementation Team for ch. 2007-216, L.O.F., was established in June to include representatives from the DOE and AWI. Staff was engaged in all conference calls, meetings, and written communications to date. Additionally, the Banner Center Advisory Council hosted the Joint Implementation Team at its September 6, 2007, meeting and staff was present to gather information, make inquiries, and assess implementation strategies to date.

¹⁰ Chapter 2007-216, L.O.F.

FINDINGS

The Necessity for a Clear Vision and Consistent Implementation of Chapter 2007-216, L.O.F.

The primary goal of ch. 2007-216, L.O.F., is twofold: to enhance and sustain a healthy workforce economy and to successfully engage students in rigorous academic study that is meaningful and relevant to the world of work. In order for this legislation to be successful, firm adherence to the vision of the legislation must be established and agreed upon by educators, policymakers, and business and industry. The vision for career and professional high school academies is founded on rigorous academics, a commitment to the highest level of available industry certifications, a responsiveness by the education community to new and cutting-edge courses that link academics to the global economy, and the provision of cohesive articulation between rigorous high school coursework and that of postsecondary institutions. Because the funding structure to support career academies as outlined in the legislation is a clear departure from historical funding practices for career education, it is important for the bonus FTE funding¹¹ to be carefully reviewed, targeted effectively, and allocated by the school districts to sustain and enhance secondary career academies. The bonus FTE funding is incentive-based and could be substantial. Therefore, it must be based on meaningful results and significant outcomes that meet the objectives of the legislation.¹²

OPPAGA STUDIES

The Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) has released two successive reports to date on high school career academies (with an additional report pending) that reflect the status of career education and career academies within Florida schools.¹³ The OPPAGA studies were based primarily on the self-reporting of school districts and the activities in place within their respective career academies. It is evident from the published reports that several models and various interpretations of career academies currently exist throughout the state. This may be due in part to the lack of clear definitions for

career academies. Many career academies in operation prior to ch. 2007-216, L.O.F., were developed and based upon career-related themes with little or no relation to labor market needs and trends and without provisions for students to earn highly-valued industry certifications. OPPAGA reports that school administrators most frequently determine the selection of career academy themes, with local workforce boards having minimal input. Consequently, many existing high school academies may not be optimally aligned to Florida's workforce needs or the skills necessary for students to compete in a global economy. A recent needs assessment report published by the Haas Center for Business Research at the University of West Florida maintains that most school districts develop and operate their academies on a somewhat ad hoc basis, often resulting in minimal alignment to actual workforce needs and less than plausible employability options for students.¹⁴

IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVES

The following is an overview of various efforts currently in place by different agencies to support and enhance career and professional education within the secondary arena:

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INITIATIVES

The Legislature has appropriated funds for three consecutive years to support the Succeed, Florida Career Paths initiative to finance the establishment and continuation of career academies at the high school level.¹⁵ Additional funds from the 2006 A++ initiative were directed to support establishment of additional career academies throughout the state. The Department of Education has administered grant funding and provides technical assistance to school districts.¹⁶ The Department also provides a list of current career academies by theme on its website, most of which were operational prior to passage of the new legislation. This list, however, is based on district self reporting and many of the academies listed would not meet the eligibility threshold for the bonus FTE funding as currently provided for in ch. 2007-216, L.O.F., due primarily to a lack of alignment to local workforce needs specified by key labor market indicators and

¹¹ School districts receive an additional bonus weight of 0.3 FTE (approximately \$1,200) for students who successfully complete the academy and receive industry certifications approved by AWI.

¹² Other funding weights are based on historical program costs and are not rewards for meeting performance objectives.

¹³ OPPAGA Reports 06-55 and 06-56

¹⁴ http://bannersecondary.com/needs_assess/needs_report_final_82007.pdf

¹⁵ FY 2005-06 = \$5.3 million; FY 2006-07 = \$5.75 million (The DOE redirected an additional \$2 million in A++ funding to support Succeed academies in FY 2006-07); FY 2007-08 = 5.5 million.

¹⁶ Chapter 2007-72, L.O.F. – Line Item 123A

issuance of industry certifications to program completers.

WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

In 2005, the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) and Workforce Florida Inc., (WFI), selected Okaloosa County's CHOICE Institutes as a Florida replication model and awarded funding to four regional workforce boards¹⁷ and their six local school districts to replicate CHOICE in their regions. Since that time, WFI has allocated increased funding each year to support CHOICE replication. Okaloosa CHOICE now serves in a technical assistance and quality assurance capacity to 25 Florida school districts, 19 of which are funded through AWI, WFI, and other funding streams linked directly to business and industry initiatives.¹⁸ Funding provided through the CHOICE replication projects assures that districts and schools work directly with their regional workforce boards to ensure partnerships with business and to align academies to current and projected workforce needs and trends, a specific requirement of ch. 2007-216, L.O.F.

Employ Florida Banner Centers of Excellence

Workforce Florida, Inc., has awarded over \$8.8 million to establish 12 Employ Florida Banner Centers of Excellence, leading programs in high demand and emerging industry programs that focus on creating and providing up-to-date training for personnel in businesses that are critical to sustaining and growing a diverse Florida economy.¹⁹ All 12 Banner Centers, with the exception of the Secondary Banner Center for Career Academies, are based at Florida universities or community colleges and engage multiple educational institutions, businesses, workforce, and economic development partners to provide a focal point for industry-specific skills training.²⁰ They also serve in a clearinghouse capacity for companies needing training and, most importantly to Florida's secondary career academies, they are tasked to create relevant and rigorous new curricula and to ensure that educational

coursework and training offered in Florida schools are aligned to rigorous industry standards. This curriculum development supports essential skills in high demand occupations such as:

- Aviation and Aerospace (Florida Community College at Jacksonville and Brevard Community College);²¹
- Biotechnology (University of Florida);²²
- Construction Technology (Santa Fe Community College in partnership with Lake City Community College and Tallahassee Community College);²³
- Energy (Lake Sumter Community College and Indian River Community College);²⁴
- Financial Services (Miami Dade Community College);²⁵
- Health Sciences (Valencia Community College);²⁶
- Homeland Security (Indian River Community College);²⁷
- Logistics and Distribution (University of North Florida, Lake City Community College, and Okaloosa-Walton Community College);²⁸
- Manufacturing (Hillsborough Community College);²⁹
- Information Technology (Seminole Community College); and
- Alternative Energy (University of Central Florida).

Florida industries currently co-developing state-of-the-art curriculum with the Banner Centers include businesses such as Lockheed Martin, NASA, Regeneration Technologies, Scripps Florida, Gulf Power, Florida Homebuilders Association, Progress Energy, Wachovia Securities, Florida Hospital

¹⁷<http://www.workforceflorida.com/wages/wfi/boards/index.htm>

¹⁸ A total of \$3 million was awarded to the following school districts: Santa Rosa, Bay, Franklin, Marion, Charlotte, St. John's, Polk, Manatee, St. Lucie, Leon, Levy, Duval, Pinellas, Sarasota, Pasco, and Highlands – See <http://haas.uwf.edu/article.asp?articleID=270> – p. 71

¹⁹ http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center.htm - Note: Newly awarded Banner Centers for Alternative Energy and Information Technology are not yet included on website.

²⁰http://www.workforceflorida.com/wages/wfi/banner_center.htm

²¹http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center_aviation.htm

²²http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center_biotech.htm

²³http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center_construction.htm

²⁴http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center_energy.htm

²⁵http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center_financial.htm

²⁶http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center_health.htm

²⁷http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center_security.htm

²⁸http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center_logistics.htm

²⁹http://www.workforceflorida.com/banner_center_manufacturing.htm

Association, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Target, Florida Trucking Association, Lord and Lasker, National Center for Simulation, and the Digital Media Alliance.

JOINT INITIATIVES

Joint Implementation Team for Ch. 2007-216, L.O.F.

At the call of the Director of AWI and the Commissioner of Education, a Joint Implementation Team was established to serve in an oversight capacity to ensure effective implementation of the legislation. To date, five meetings of the joint team have been held, including a joint meeting with the Banner Center for Career Academies Advisory Council.³⁰ The DOE, together with AWI, has supplied updates on implementation efforts. At the onset of activities, five subcommittees were established in an effort to expedite services and to provide support to school districts in implementation of the legislation. Each subcommittee is comprised of AWI, WFI, DOE, Banner Center for Career Academies, school district, and business and industry personnel.³¹ Individual meetings of subcommittees continue to date and regional workshops are scheduled to begin in late October to support statewide strategic planning and quality implementation of career and professional academies. The following provides an overview of subcommittee accomplishments to date:

■ Newly Proposed Career Academy Courses

The subcommittee for the review of newly proposed courses is positioned to provide direction for cutting-edge career academy courses proposed and submitted by schools, districts, and individual career academies. Courses will be reviewed, contingent upon alignment to state curriculum standards, for inclusion as core courses for graduation purposes and, when appropriate, for acceptance as dual enrollment college credit. The subcommittee has partnered with Florida State University's Center for Research in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math³² to provide an electronic system for the submission of new courses and to assure sufficient rigor and alignment to state adopted curriculum standards. The legislation called for this component to be completely operational by

September 1, 2007, in order to support new and existing career and professional academies and to meet the needs of high demand Florida industries.

■ Career-Integrated Coursework and Articulation to Postsecondary Coursework

Chapter 2007-216, L.O.F., requires a curriculum review committee to assess, as appropriate, new courses to determine if a course warrants further review for dual enrollment and college credit purposes. The Articulation Coordinating Council is an established entity within the DOE whose primary focus is the review and assessment of course articulation among postsecondary institutions. The Joint Implementation Team determined that this existing council would be used as a platform for course articulation issues specified in the legislation. Consequently, it will be imperative that the work of the curriculum review and articulation subcommittees continuously intersect so that rigorous secondary courses within career academies are given every consideration for articulation to postsecondary credit. As a result of ch. 2007-216, L.O.F., and subsequent recommendations from district curriculum leadership, the DOE has recently transferred oversight of the Course Code Directory to the Articulation Coordinating Council in an effort to streamline the process for review of existing and newly proposed courses.

■ Strategic Planning

Chapter 2007-216, L.O.F., did not specify oversight for and verification of the school district strategic five-year plans, which are foundational to the success of career and professional academies and to assure alignment to Florida's workforce needs and trends. It is anticipated that the Strategic Planning subcommittee will offer recommendations as to how the district strategic five-year plans required in statute will be validated for authenticity and accountability. As stated in their contract, the Banner Center for Career Academies is scheduled to deliver to AWI and WFI a strategic statewide implementation plan by the end of October, 2007.

■ Highest Level Industry Certification

The industry certification component of Ch. 2007-216, L.O.F., requires that industry certifications awarded to secondary students are highly valued within the workforce sectors and are the most rigorous available. The stringent threshold for industry certifications established in the legislation is a clear departure from previously accepted certification definitions. Therefore, it is essential that the high

³⁰ Each Employ Florida Banner Center has an Advisory Council comprised of representatives from education and economic and workforce development.

³¹ Subcommittees include New Curriculum/Course Review; Data Collection and Evaluation; Strategic Planning; Industry Certification; and Articulation.

³² <http://www.lsi.fsu.edu/page118.aspx>

standards for the certification credential be clearly articulated from the onset and maintained in the future.

The goal of this subcommittee is to screen industry certifications in order to establish a rigorous threshold for the bonus FTE funding. The subcommittee has focused its work thus far on certifications in high demand occupations currently included on Florida's Targeted Occupation List³³ and has established criteria for the review and selection of certifications based on the highest available industry standards. The initial list of eligible certifications will be provided to the Board of Directors for WFI at their October meeting.

■ Data Collection and Evaluation

Chapter 2007-216, L.O.F., requires collection of data and evaluation of secondary career academies in order to establish and provide necessary student achievement information, primarily as it is aligned to high demand workforce needs, and to ensure accountability and quality control for secondary career academies. Effective data collection and analysis will allow for continuous assessment of student achievement, alignment to workforce needs and emerging workforce trends, and to assure a sound return on educational investments.

DOE staff who serve on the subcommittee are currently developing data elements to capture and collect information from school districts necessary to evaluate career academies and to calculate the FTE bonus. The subcommittee has reviewed the data collection and evaluation procedures jointly developed by the Okaloosa CHOICE Institutes and the Haas Center for Business Research at UWF and will use these as a framework. The work and success of this subcommittee will depend in large part on the published list of industry certifications approved by AWI and eligible for the bonus FTE funding, clear and cohesive definitions for different types of career academies, streamlined procedures for submission and approval of new courses, and determination of eligibility of those courses for dual enrollment credit.

Employ Florida's Banner Center of Excellence for Secondary Career Academies

While 11 of the 12 Employ Florida Banner Centers are located at Florida postsecondary institutions, AWI and WFI have awarded a \$1 million grant to the Okaloosa County School District CHOICE Institutes³⁴ to create a statewide resource for school districts as they develop

and establish or redesign career and professional academies in their high schools. The Banner Center for Career Academies has a slightly different though complementary mission to that of the other Banner Centers. Led by the Banner Center for Career Academies Advisory Council,³⁵ the Banner Center provides technical support to school districts currently developing new secondary career academies or those redesigning existing programs. The Advisory Council's membership is strategically composed of model academy instructors with industry credentials, directors and deans of the postsecondary Banner Centers, school district superintendents, staff from the U.S. Department of Labor WIRED Initiative,³⁶ school board members, representatives of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Florida business owners and chief executive officers, and regional workforce development boards.³⁷ The Banner Center for Career Academies' mission is based upon contracted deliverables with AWI and WFI and includes a commitment to:

- Linking the curricula of postsecondary industry Banner Centers to secondary schools throughout the State of Florida;
- Imbedding industry-specific standards and professional training into secondary career academy curricula;
- Developing a secondary school career academy model that integrates components of the Okaloosa CHOICE Institute Model with other successful career academies into a workable and sustainable secondary academy; and
- Merging the mission of the Secondary Career Banner Center and the vision of ch. 2007-216, L.O.F.³⁸

Other deliverables outlined in the Banner Center for Career Academies implementation plan include developing standards and accountability measures for high school career education programs throughout the state and reviewing, distributing, and articulating workforce-related secondary curriculum developed by the other strategic Banner Centers. This newly developed curriculum will include skills in high demand workforce sectors such as unmanned aerial vehicle development (UAV), aerospace physiology,

³⁵ http://bannersecondary.com/advisory_council/members.html

³⁶ http://www.doleta.gov/wired/regions/1g_Floridas_Great_Northwest.cfm

³⁷ <http://www.workforceflorida.com/boards/index.htm>

³⁸ http://bannersecondary.com/implementation_plan/pdf/implementation_plan.pdf

³³ <http://www.labormarketinfo.com/wec/tol.htm>

³⁴ <http://www.choiceinstitutes.com/>

biomanufacturing technology, agritechnology, construction technology, alternative energy and power generation, banking and insurance securities, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), health information management technology, transportation and border security systems, logistics and distribution simulation, and custom insulation molding technologies.

Additionally, the Banner Center for Career Academies is contracted to deliver a Career Academy Model Compliance Review, a tool to provide for the review, oversight, and accountability of school district strategic five-year plans and effective implementation of career academies specified in the legislation. The Banner Center has also been tasked by the Joint Implementation Team to provide for the initial submission of newly proposed rigorous academy courses and to provide expertise in the screening of industry certifications proposed by AWI.

The Banner Center for Career Academies, as an umbrella for the Okaloosa CHOICE Institutes, has successfully implemented every core component of the new legislation and continues to provide superior leadership to business and industry and the education community throughout the state, often on a pro bono basis.³⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Legislature may wish to consider the following recommendations to provide effective oversight and robust leadership for statewide secondary career and professional education:

1) Appoint the Florida Banner Center for Career Academies as the advisory and oversight board for the implementation of Chapter 2007-216, L.O.F., and the expansion of career education throughout the state.

This would support the long-held recommendation for the establishment of a statewide joint office of workforce and education.⁴⁰ The Banner Center for Career Academies has successfully established itself as a model of teamwork, technical assistance, and valuable support to Florida's effort to bridge business and industry to the education community.

The Banner Center's proven success also demonstrates its expertise to provide for verification and vetting of five-year strategic plans and to assure targeted investment in educational endeavors aligned to workforce and based on significant business and K-20 educational partnerships.

The Florida Banner Center for Career Academies current Advisory Council exemplifies a broad representation and prominent blend of business, research, and educational leadership and could easily transition to and assume this responsibility without establishing additional layers of bureaucracy.

2) Codify the establishment of the Employ Florida Banner Centers of Excellence in statute.

Including the Banner Centers in law would establish clear expectations and accountability measures between each of the Banner Centers and their respective business counterparts. This would also establish and ensure sustained linkages among all Banner Centers and provide for timely transmittal of information to Florida secondary schools through the Banner Center for Career Academies.

³⁹ Florida Trend, August 2007; St. Petersburg Times, October 16, 2006; Northwest Florida Daily News, September 27, 2007; St. Petersburg Times, July 10, 2007

⁴⁰ <http://www.cepri.state.fl.us/pdf/Career%20Education%20Draft%20FINAL.pdf> – Page 12