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ABSTRACT

In 1993, Washington's state legislature created the Commission on Student Learning to identify essential academic learning requirements related to four goals. One of those goals was to understand the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect career and educational opportunities. As in other states, the development of industry skill standards in Washington has proceeded on a separate track from the creation of academic standards. In 1995, Washington's governor adopted a work plan that gave the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges responsibility for developing skill standards. To date, the board has facilitated the development of skill standards in the information technology sector and initiated standard-setting projects in 15 industry areas. Efforts to develop career development standards for Washington have proceeded with consideration for national efforts (including the work done by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) and efforts in other states. Washington's Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board has identified a total of 33 components in the following categories as the career development standards preferred by employers in high-performance workplaces: career preparation; personal responsibility; technology; interpersonal; information; systems; and resources. (MN)

Career Development Standards

What are they?

Adopted by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

October 28, 1997

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INTRODUCTION

Under RCW 28C.18.060(17), the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) makes recommendations to the State Board of Education and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) on essential core competencies in K-12 education. As reform of K-12 education has proceeded in this state, WTECB has monitored the creation of the essential academic learning requirements (EALRS) and assessments and is preparing for the upcoming discussions related to the accountability system and new, performance-based graduation requirements.

In working with other partners in the business of education reform, it has become increasingly clear that there is no common understanding of what skills and knowledge are necessary to prepare students for the high performance work world. This paper provides a content definition of "career development" standards that can inform curriculum development and policymaking on upcoming education reform issues, including the development of an accountability system and the establishment of performance-based graduation and college admission requirements.

BACKGROUND

Washington State has a unique constitutional provision (Article 9, Sec. 1) that requires the state, as its paramount duty, to fully fund an ample education for all children. The state Supreme Court has created a substantive legal test of this duty that "goes beyond mere reading, writing, and arithmetic." This includes the duty "to equip our children for their role as . . . potential competitors in today's market . . . . [it] would be hollow indeed if the possessor of the right could not compete adequately...in the labor market . . . ." (See Seattle School District v. State (1978), 90 Wn. 2d 476, at 517.)

In 1993, the state Legislature passed the Performance-Based Education Act, which defines the educational system intended to meet this obligation in the future as student learning goals, an assessment system, and an accountability system. The four state learning goals are:

GOAL 1: Read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and *responsibly in a variety of ways and settings*;

GOAL 2: Know and *apply* the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; and health and fitness;

GOAL 3: Think analytically, logically, and creatively and *to integrate experience and knowledge* to form reasoned judgments and solve problems; and

GOAL 4: *Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect career and educational opportunities.* (emphasis added)

The legislation also created the Commission on Student Learning (CSL) to identify Essential Academic Learning Requirements related to each of the learning goals. However, it directed CSL, to the extent possible, to integrate the work-related goal with the knowledge and skill areas contained in the other goals. Also included in the Performance-Based Education Act is a provision that requires schools to "provide students with the opportunity to pursue career and educational objectives through educational pathways" that integrate academic and vocational learning. RCW 28A.630.885

As in other states, the development of industry skill standards in Washington State has proceeded on a separate track from the creation of academic standards. The School-to-Work Transition Task Force, formed by the Governor in 1995, adopted a work plan, which gives responsibility for the development of skill standards in Washington State to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). To date, they have facilitated the development of skill standards in the information technology sector and have initiated standard-setting projects in 15 industry areas, including the allied dental fields, food processing, and cosmetology.

WHAT ARE STANDARDS?

It is generally accepted that standards should convey expectations of *what individuals should know and be able to do*. Standards that do so are called **content standards** and typically include developmentally appropriate subcomponents called **benchmarks**. Benchmarks define what students at a particular grade level or stage in their education would normally know and be able to do. Content standards are also usually accompanied by **performance standards**, which identify levels of achievement or competency at each benchmark. Standards have been developed both in education and in industry. **Academic standards** describe skills and knowledge associated with academic disciplines. **Skill standards** (or *industry or occupational* skill standards) describe a common set of academic and technical skills and knowledge needed in workplaces associated with a job or group of jobs or an economic sector (*industrial or occupational cluster*s). There is much standard-setting work that is currently focused on applying academic standards to workplace settings and/or aligning academic and industry standards. **"Career development"** or **"workplace readiness" standards** are the focal point of these attempts at application and articulation. They can be defined as describing generic skills and qualities that workers must have in order to learn and adapt to the demands of any job or career field. **Career pathways** or **industry/occupational clusters** are a method for organizing curricula to integrate academic and skill standards at the high school level. They are used as a means to organize information about education and work requirements within particular career clusters, focus on career exploration activities, and develop a coherent and coordinated program of study at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

NATIONAL EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH CAREER DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The standards movement in relation to the world of work has gained widespread acceptance throughout the country due to the common interests inherent in communicating requirements of the workplace, promoting high performance work practices, and improving the quality and accountability of education and training programs. A standards system is perceived as benefiting students, educators, workers, employers, and consumers in the following ways:

students:	clearer standards for success in school and clearer goals/direction for future careers
educators:	more consistent, focused and higher level guidelines to improve curriculum and instruction
workers:	"portable" certificates to facilitate mobility, higher wages, job security, and advancement
employers:	more efficient and uniform criteria to recruit, screen and place personnel
consumers:	the creation of an accountability infrastructure to judge the performance of schools

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) reported in June of 1991 that all students needed to develop a new set of competencies and foundation skills if they were to enjoy a productive, full, and satisfying life. They identified a three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities and five competencies that lie at the heart of current job performance.*The listing reported by SCANS is the taxonomy related to career development standards most widely used in education today and includes the following*:

Foundation

1. Basic Skills:	reading; writing; math; listening; speaking
2. Thinking Skills:	creative thinking; decision-making; problem-solving; seeing things in the mind's eye; knowing how to learn; reasoning
3. Personal Qualities:	responsibility; self-esteem; sociability; self-management; integrity/honesty

Competencies

1. Resources:	identifies, organizes, plans and allocates resources
2. Interpersonal:	works with others
3. Information:	acquires and uses information
4. Systems:	understands complex interrelationships
5. Technology:	works with a variety of technologies

Several other taxonomies of career development standards have been developed nationally, including "skills employers want," by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), "workplace readiness" standards by the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO), "worker requirements" in the Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network (O*NET); "workplace skills" by the Vocational-Technical Consortium of States (V-TECS), the "Work Keys" system of workplace skills by American College of Testing (ACT), "life skill" standards by the Mid-Central Regional Educational Laboratory (MCREL), and "applied learning" standards by the New Standards project. Also, the National Occupational Information Coordinating Council (NOICC) has created "career guidelines" that identify competencies and indicators for self-knowledge and career planning. The content of the major national efforts (ASTD, SCANS, CCSSO, and O*NET) is remarkably similar. They all address a broad range of skills and knowledge that are generic to what students need to know and be able to do in any occupation or career. The SCANS taxonomy and content is the most comprehensive—it includes the content in the other taxonomies and it provides more content detail, particularly in the areas of personal qualities, understanding of systems, and resource management. The only major area that the SCANS taxonomy does not address is career preparation (individualized planning and exploration of career options).

STATE-LEVEL EFFORTS

Over a dozen states have now adopted state-level taxonomies and content standards expressly related to career development. The breadth (number of content areas covered) and depth (benchmarking) of the content varies, but most all states have addressed the general content areas of career preparation activities, the SCANS foundations (personal qualities, thinking skills), and the SCANS competencies (technology, interpersonal, information, systems, resources) to some degree. States vary in how they organize these content areas. While most all have a general content area entitled "workplace readiness" or "career development," many have adopted an additional category or categories for listing parts of the content areas. A few states have organized some or all of their standards by traditional vocational areas, in a category which integrates them with other life skills, or within the framework of technology.

WASHINGTON STATE EFFORTS

In the implementation of the education reform legislation in Washington State, CSL followed the statutory directive to integrate Goal 4 into the other state learning goals to the maximum extent possible. Early this year, a committee established by the Governor's School-to-Work Transition (STWT) Task Force reviewed the EALRS for work-related content and reported their findings to the CSL. In this report prepared by the Education Development Center (EDC), it was found that there was no consensus among CSL subject advisory committees on how to define Goals 3 and 4 and that, therefore, each committee was left to their own interpretation of what was to be learned and applied to meet these goals. The review found that Goals 3 and 4 were variously included as separate EALRS, separate components within EALRS, and benchmarks or examples within a component, but the extent to which they were included varied considerably from one content area to another. The report also found that the process of integration was hindered by the lack of a set of common core competencies that students need to be successful in the workplace. In addition to the Task Force review, CSL established a committee to review and edit the EALRs for clarity of language, accessibility, and inclusion of Goal 3 and 4 elements.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The general consensus nationally and among states that have specifically addressed career development standards is that such standards should include, in addition to core academic competencies: thinking skills; career preparation activities; personal qualities; and SCANS competencies. Three other content areas (safety, balancing work with the family, and operating effectively within an organization) were included by the majority of the states.

The identification of career pathway core knowledge and skills as an integral part of K–12 standards substantially assists in the articulation of secondary and postsecondary education. The identification of specific technical knowledge and skills within each pathway aids student progression to gainful employment, career advancement, and success in postsecondary programs.

CONTENT DEFINITION

The identification of a set of career development standards can inform the work on upcoming issues related to the creation of a performance-based education system in this state. A career development definition contributes to the discussion of performance-based graduation requirements established by the State Board of Education, the creation of the K–12 accountability system, and the establishment of performance-based college admission requirements. The definition can also provide content for curriculum frameworks that facilitate a smooth and efficient transition of students from their high school education directly to work or to postsecondary education or training. Such preparatory work by students could be recognized as a career development "endorsement" on the high school transcript as envisioned by CSL's Ad Hoc Advisory Committee.

To assist students in acquiring the generic knowledge and skills to sustain employment in a high-wage, high-skill economy, the first step is to identify the substantive scope of skills and knowledge needed. While the general skill and knowledge areas identified on page 6 are critical to successful employment in a high performance economy, details of each component (such as benchmarks and proficiency levels) remain to be determined.

These content areas include the full range of skills and knowledge cumulatively addressed by the states that have dealt with career development skills and knowledge.The academic disciplines set forth in the EALRS and thinking skills (Goal 3) are not included here because they are fully addressed in the current EALRS. The content area of career preparation includes some activities required of students rather than skills and knowledge that students should be able to know and do. *It should be noted that the research relating to the personal responsibility content area suggests that these are not skills and knowledge that schools teach; they are behaviors that are typically learned at home and in groups and reinforced at school.* Also, RCW 28A.150.211 makes it clear that values and character traits are essential, but they are not to be assessed or be statewide standards for graduation. Further, local communities have the responsibility for determining how they are learned.

WTECB identifies the following components as the career development standards preferred by employers in a high performance workplace.

Career Preparation
- ► Career awareness/relating personal interests to careers
- ► Planning and setting career goals
- ► Career exploration
- ► Awareness of workplace habits
- ► Work-based learning experiences
- ► Job search and job retention skills

Personal Responsibility
- ► Personal striving (effort, initiative, perseverance)
- ► Sociability (civility, empathy, adaptability) integrity/honesty
- ► Self-management (self-control, goal oriented)
- ► Autonomy (self-knowledge, positive)
- ► Balance of work and family

Technology
- ► Selects appropriate procedures or tools
- ► Applies technology to task
- ► Maintains technology

Interpersonal
- ► Participates as member of a team
- ► Teaches others
- ► Serves clients/customers
- ► Exercises leadership
- ► Operates effectively within an organization
- ► Negotiates
- ► Works with cultural diversity

Information
- ► Acquires and evaluates information
- ► Organizes and maintains information
- ► Interprets and communicates properly
- ► Uses computers to process information

Systems
- ► Understands systems
- ► Monitors and corrects system performance
- ► Designs and improves systems
- ► Safety

Resources
- ► Time
- ► Money
- ► Materials and facilities
- ► Human resources

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