

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HB 769 provided a unique opportunity to evaluate the importance of career and professional education in Florida by convening a Task Force to study the current status of workforce related programs and make recommendations as to opportunities to enhance that segment of Florida’s education system.

The Task Force determined that greater focus on, and support of, career and professional education represents one of the most significant opportunities to make Florida’s education system more effective because it:

- deals with meeting the currently underserved needs of a majority of students in high school;
- provides graduates with the skills to fill over 60% of future jobs in Florida—which will require good technical and professional training, but not a bachelor’s degree; and
- provides relevant and rigorous programs for those students in lower grades now performing at higher levels due to the positive impact of Florida’s A+ program.

Historically, Workforce Education has a “2nd class status” in Florida’s education system which has impacted the view of students and parents and the level of funding provided for it. The historic view of such programs needs to be changed to reflect the critical importance of career education to Florida’s students and its economy in today’s world.

Consistent with Governor Bush’s emphasis on student achievement, a skilled workforce, and economic development, combined with middle and high school reforms, the Career Education Study Task Force asserts that *all* students are able to benefit from career and professional education, which includes:

- implementation of best practices to inform students of, and attract them to, high demand and high need career areas;
- provision of career counseling; and
- delivery of academic and career education programs that will provide students the skill sets necessary to prepare appropriately for career and postsecondary education opportunities that enable them to support Florida’s economy.

The recommendations of the Task Force are summarized on the next two pages—and represent proposals to significantly enhance the focus on, and support for, career and professional education in Florida. These recommendations reflect the following three guiding principles defined by the Task Force:

- All students should graduate from high school fully capable of entering and being successful in the workplace, further career and professional education, and/or post-secondary degree programs.
- Career and professional education should be included as a core educational expectation for all students within Florida’s education system.
- The business and industry community is willing and able to partner with the educational community to strengthen career and professional education.

Recommendations of the Task Force addressed perceived limitations of the current career and professional education system, including state policies and funding practices, delivery of instruction methods, public awareness of education and career options, portability of education, and adequate assessment of effective programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Every Florida middle and high school should provide an instructional delivery system which draws on best practices/models and incorporates, along with rigorous academic standards and industry relevancy career academies, institutes, and industry certifications. The characteristics of this redefined instructional delivery system will include:
 - small learning communities, i.e., schools within a school;
 - a standards-based, college-prep curriculum with a career theme that will equip students to move into a job, further training and/or into postsecondary education;
 - partnerships with employers, economic development agencies, the community, and higher education; and
 - the combined curriculum must meet quality standards for national recognition and acceptance.

2. Funding options within existing resources should be utilized to initiate and sustain career academies. Additional resources to be considered include:
 - restoration of FTE weighting for grades 6-12;
 - tax credits for businesses;
 - grant programs through Workforce Education resources;
 - scholarship programs sponsored by DOE and/or the private sector; and
 - DOE and/or private sector R&D grants.

In addition, students, parents, teachers, and counselors should be made aware of the flexibility of Bright Futures scholarships to apply to Career and Professional Education.

Cross-agency partnerships and leveraging of limited funds for similar youth initiatives with the same objective should be encouraged. Example: DOE, WFI, DOC, DJJ, and DCF (foster youth).

3. Recognize and reward educators whose versatility in teaching methods (e.g. use of applied technologies) produces high performing students. Teaching methods should include teaching tools that move to “Touch Tech” from “Chalk and Talk” to provide greater ability to:
 - capitalize on multiple styles of learning;
 - promote learning by doing through application and adaptation;
 - maximize relevance of the subject matter; and
 - enhance student’s capacity to excel.
4. Beginning in middle school and continuing through high school graduation and postsecondary education, career path options should be outlined for each student to facilitate his or her ability to easily and seamlessly combine academic and career classes throughout the educational experience. Templates provided by the National 16 Career Clusters should be employed to match demand occupations. Portability among educational institutions is critical as the foundation for a life-long career ladder that accommodates improvement in career and educational opportunities. Seamless articulation must be made available to fit student needs while maintaining quality standards.

Common course numbering, articulation agreements and transfer of credits are tools which could help accomplish these goals.

5. Career Guidance and Counseling should be stressed in middle school and continue through high school. Existing guidance structures should be enhanced through the use of technology, the involvement of the regional Workforce Boards, the implementation of creative career counseling strategies, and partnerships with the business and industry community, utilizing tools and equipment actually used in the business setting (i.e., internships, externships, apprenticeships and on-the-job-training opportunities).
6. Marketing campaigns should be designed and implemented to communicate the importance of Career and Professional Education to both students and the state’s economy. Funding could involve partnerships with Enterprise Florida, private employers, trade associations, regional Workforce Boards, specialty professions who play an important role in Florida’s economy. The target audience includes students, parents, the educational community and the business community.
7. Measurement is vital to ensure a focus by high schools in preparing students for both the workplace and further education. Performance should be recognized through an accountability system that includes rewards and sanctions related to completion and success in providing the types of programs which meet student needs.