FutureForce Nebraska℠

Forum Synthesis

December 13—14, 2006

Hosted by FutureForce Nebraska
Sponsored by
Nebraska Department of Labor and Nebraska Department of Education

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The Forum was designed, facilitated, and documented by InnovationLabs

www.innovationlabs.com

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The photos presented throughout this document were taken during the workshop.

Introduction

On December 13-14, 2006, 110 people representing a broad group of stakeholders concerned about the future of the economic and educational health of Nebraska gathered in Lincoln for the first FutureForce Forum.

Participants included individuals representing state and local workforce development, the Department of Labor, Department of Economic Development, Department of Education, K-12 educators, postsecondary education, as well as representatives from a cross-section of Nebraska employers. Efforts were made to ensure a balance of representatives from the invited partners and geographic representation from across the state.

The first day of the Forum gave all participants an opportunity to understand the key trends and issues facing each of these groups. Nebraska is confronted with the potential of a significant workforce shortage over the next 20 years and the health and welfare of the state could be jeopardized if changes aren't made to address the issue. Each of the stakeholders has a variety of challenges that a situation like this imposes. During the first day of the Forum participants developed a vision for what is needed for Nebraska to continue to be successful. Uncovering a number of solutions to these challenges reinforced that a significant portion of opportunities reside in working together and collaborating to make the economic viability of the state everyone's responsibility.

Using the results of day one, the second day of the Forum focused specifically on Nebraska's education system. The overarching questions driving the conversation were, "How does the education system need to change?" and "How can the education system use the Federal Perkins Career and Technical Education Grant to support the vision and solutions discovered on day one?"

Our sincere thanks to all of the participants, whose creativity and hard work are documented in this report!

For more information please contact:

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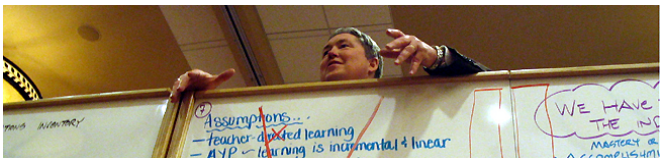

For more information you may also view these websites:

http://www.futureforcenebraska.org/

http://www.innovationlabs.com/futureforce/index.html

Forum Participants

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Gregg	Christensen	Career Education Specialist	Nebraska Department of Education
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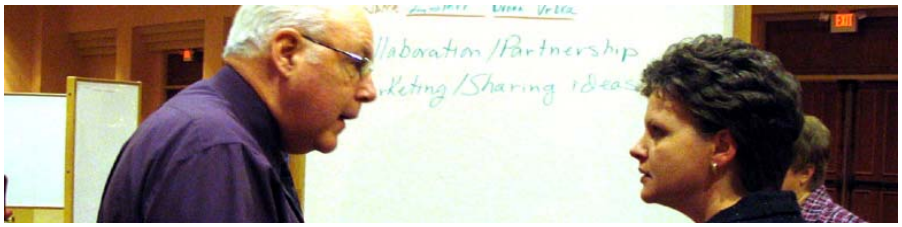
Richard	Katt	Administrator	Nebraska Department of Education
Anthony	Koyzis	Dean	Wayne State College
Jody	Krueger	Transition Specialist	ESU #9



Forum Participants

Kim	Larson	Reading/Writing Director- NDE	Nebraska Department of Education
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Tom	Whalen	Principal	SilverStone Group
Heather	Whaley	Manager	Mutual of Omaha
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Day 1

FUTUREFORCE
NEBRASKA℠
Prepare today for a dynamic future.

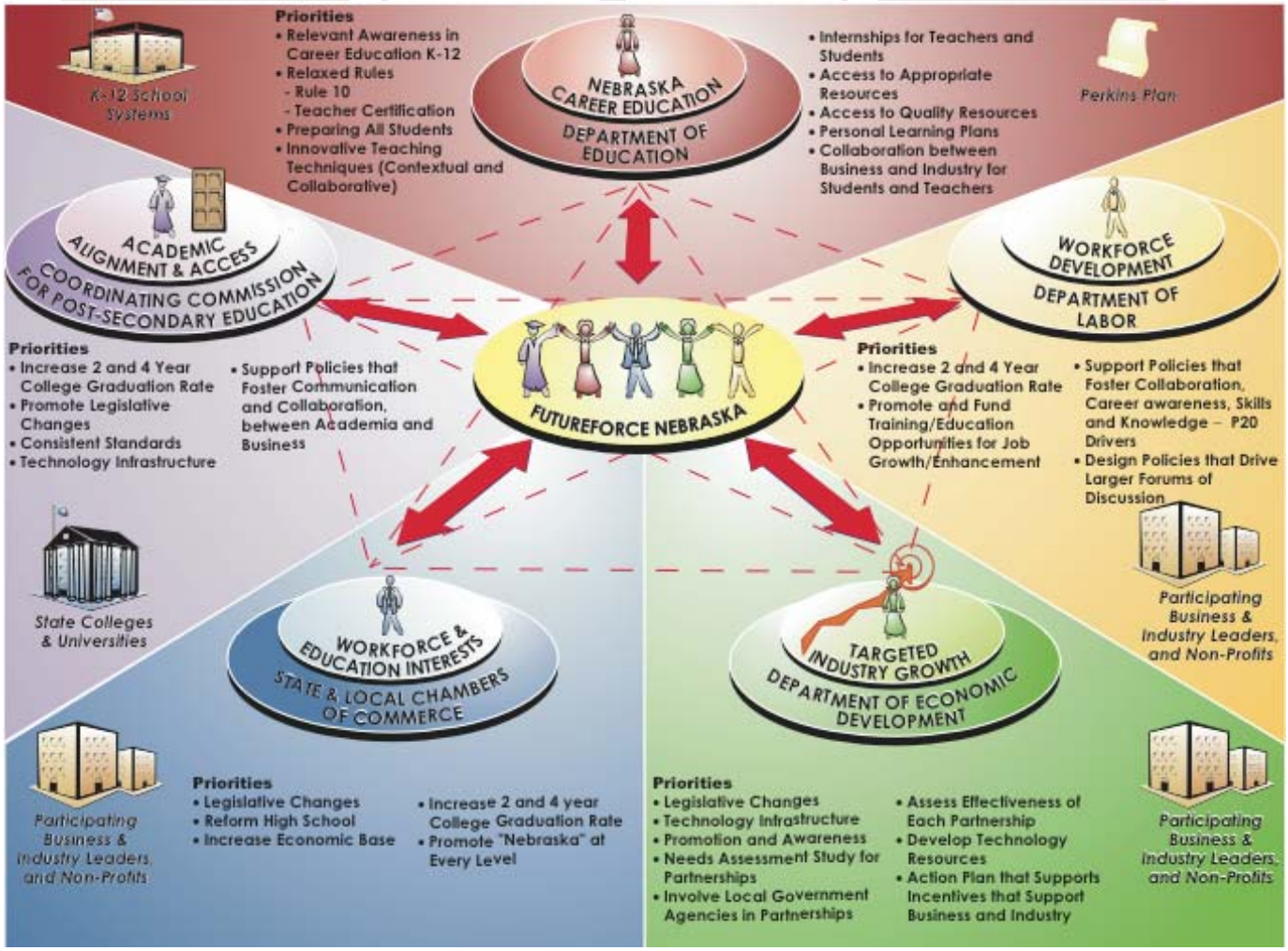
Comments from FutureForce Nebraska Executive Director, Seth Derner:

"When I was growing up, my parents told me that I need to get a good education and find better opportunities than what I could find in my home state. I thought to myself, 'Why do we have to leave to find good opportunities?' I want to find something here. That is the purpose of FutureForce. We want our communities to thrive and we want to create careers that are exciting and rewarding so our young people want to stay. We want to make sure they have the kinds of opportunities that will continue to grow the industries that will make Nebraska and our communities thrive."

• • •

FutureForce Nebraska is a collaboration of key partners. Those of us charged with educating Nebraska's youth and hiring the right people for jobs here know that we can work together to ensure our workforce is prepared to meet the needs of our state's growth industries. When this happens, business in Nebraska thrives and we are better able to attract and retain committed, fulfilled citizens.

The purpose of the FutureForce Nebraska Forum was to bring together great minds to craft a vision of the future of Nebraska. Based on this vision, a collaborative plan is being created to synergize our work, rather than people and agencies working independently.



This diagram shows how the alignment of five key stakeholder groups supports the development of our state. FutureForce plays a key role in organizing and coordinating initiatives across the state.

FutureForce Nebraska sm

FUTUREFORCE
NEBRASKA SM
Prepare today for a dynamic future.

FutureForce Nebraska is working to develop career pathways that help students realize dynamic opportunities for themselves right here in Nebraska.

The career pathways being developed by FutureForce Nebraska are aligned to Nebraska's targeted industries according to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. As these industries expand or locate in Nebraska, we want to have a qualified workforce ready for those jobs. FutureForce Nebraska is also looking at pathways that have a projected high need for workers over the next 5-10 years. Again, keeping a qualified workforce available for Nebraska's current employers will help sustain economic viability for the future of our state.

The Nebraska Career Education Model (shown on the next page) shows how we are helping learners understand paths to career fulfillment with career fields and clusters.

These career pathways will provide concrete steps needed to achieve career goals, including academic and technical education, skill development, experience and development of workplace readiness skills. Staff at the Nebraska Department of Education are working to transition career technical education (vocational education) to this new model and to help all students achieve academic standards.

The pathways show various levels at which one can enter a career based on their education and work experience. By providing information for career awareness and planning the pathways allow for smooth transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions in preparation for a successful career.

These career pathways will provide concrete steps needed to achieve career goals, including academic and technical education, skill development, and experience.

The Nebraska career development process for learners include:

Grades K thru 6 – Career awareness activities to heighten understanding of what's available and to generate interest.

Grades 7 & 8 – Career exploration activities to provide hands-on exposure to career options and exposure to 21st century career readiness skills, such as responsibility, problem-solving, critical thinking, etc.

Grades 9 & 10 – Career planning while developing academic and technical knowledge and skill and continuing to develop 21st century career readiness skills.

Grades 11 & 12 – Career preparation, academic and technical knowledge and skill development with a focus on postsecondary and career readiness.

Postsecondary education – Knowledge and skills for academic attainment and continued career readiness.

Career Management – Training for professional growth or new career opportunities for adults seeking a career change or upgrading their skills.

Parent Education – Informational brochures and sessions on career opportunities and pathways, including the academic and financial realities of career preparation shared throughout a child's elementary, secondary, and postsecondary experience.

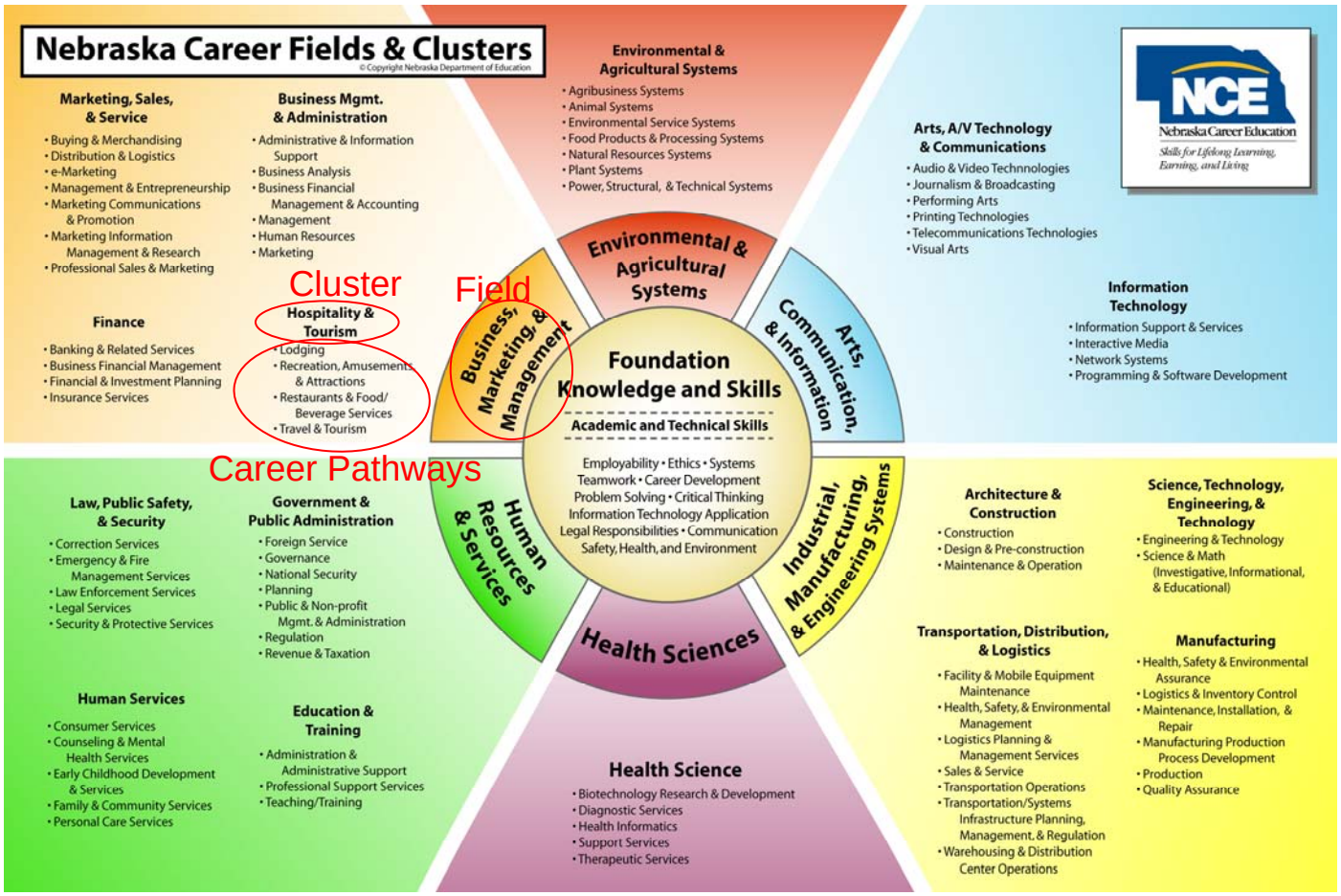
FutureForce Nebraska sm

FutureForce Nebraska gives adults concrete information on how to seek and prepare for careers with dynamic futures: career opportunities and selection, career preparation and readiness, and training for advancement or transition to new careers. *FutureForce Nebraska is in motion.*

The following list identifies current FutureForce Nebraska career pathway projects:

- Biotechnology/BioSciences
- Construction
- Entrepreneurship
- Finance
- Health Science
- Manufacturing
- Transportation, Distribution, Warehousing, and Logistics

To be kept apprised of FutureForce Nebraska projects, see **www.FutureForceNebraska.org.**



The Career Fields and Clusters Model was developed by Nebraska Career Education to show students, parents, educators, and employers how educational choices relate to career opportunities. Developed originally in 2004, it is now being used throughout the USA and in other nations as well.

Trade Shows

The following are excerpts from the Trade Shows that participants attended to share common information about the conditions facing Nebraska as well as the goals for workforce development, economic development and education. Dean Folkers and Seth Derner presented on *Nebraska CareerConnections* and *FutureForce Nebraska.*

FurtureForce Nebraska[sm] is a networked organization of people who want to have conversations about bettering workforce and education around economic development. There are two areas of focus: 1. Help people find their interests so that we can create a career path in that direction. 2. Create awareness of careers available in Nebraska. These are structured around seven pathways such as entrepreneurship and biomedical/technology. New pathways may be developed as we move forward.

Last year, Nebraska Career Education received grant dollars to create nebraskacareerconnections.org.

We are training schools on how to use this and in January we will be working with job seekers to utilize this tool through collaboration with Nebraska Workforce Development. This is a free service and we want to get it to the masses. We have videos and lots of information that walk people through the steps of the process. There is so much that you can do here. For example, you can drill down to the details of the career pathways. We not only tell you the degrees, but many of the typical class titles that you will need to complete at a college to move into that career. Then we connect you with actual local colleges and universities so that you can learn more about their offerings.

We have assessments within our system to help you find direction. We also include tools that others have developed. This toolbox helps you to measure your skills and map them to your interests.

You can also use this tool as a personal online resume. We track all of your assessments and your progress along your career path. We are integrating with secondary and postsecondary education so that you can update your progress and course completions.

Trade Shows – Workforce Development

Joan Modrell
Nebraska Workforce Development

Welcome to the Workforce Development Tradeshow! Let me share with you a few fast facts:

- 3% unemployment state
- As of 2nd quarter 2006, our vacancy rate is 3.7%.
- As of Monday, we were paying about 10,000 claims on unemployment insurance. About half of those are attached workers, which are short term employment
- We have 45,000 employers in the state of Nebraska. There are 992,000 available workers with 962,000 of those currently working.

The workforce development system is governed by four boards

- The Statewide Workforce Development Board
- Tri-County Board
- The Lincoln Board
- One board representing the remaining counties in the state

Our Career Center has two customers: the employer and the job seeker. Today the Labor Exchange is the main focus of our services. We served 84,000 unemployed residents last year. Of the people we serve 68% got jobs and 80% or those were retained after six months. We also focus on serving our veterans and are proud of the progress with that group.

We have an internet service that allows you to add jobs, or search for them 24/7. We have 4,970 active jobs in our online database and more than 25,000 user accounts that are using the electronic labor exchange. We want you to use our labor exchange. As an employer, we can connect you with others. We can perform assessments for you like background checks. We have a career center and provide on-site services. Need customized training? We can provide that for you too.

Job seekers get a lot of benefit out of our electronic labor exchange as well. We can help find great matches for your skills and if you need to develop additional skills, we offer training opportunities. Learning and training are a big part of what we do. We can help you offset your training costs and further develop your employees so that you do not need to replace them, just retool them.

We offer safety programs and labor related information for English as a Second Language (ESL) and hazardous materials. Workforce has programs that can help you offset some of your insurance premiums.

We are starting to use a new technology called "spidering" to go out to our local employers and search for job opportunities and incorporate those into our listing. I would estimate that today we have only about 30% of the total job listing, and that is probably a generous number. We are going to see a significant increase in that when we integrate this new approach. We are on the cusp of some really great things.

Trade Shows – Economic Development

Caleb Pollard
Nebraska Workforce Development

I'm going to give you a very quick overview and an idea of what we're working on. I'm very new and come from a perspective that you may not expect.

I'm very passionate about Nebraska. Our challenge is migration out of the state. The workforce is going down considerably. It's time we start addressing the situation now. You can see that people are aging.

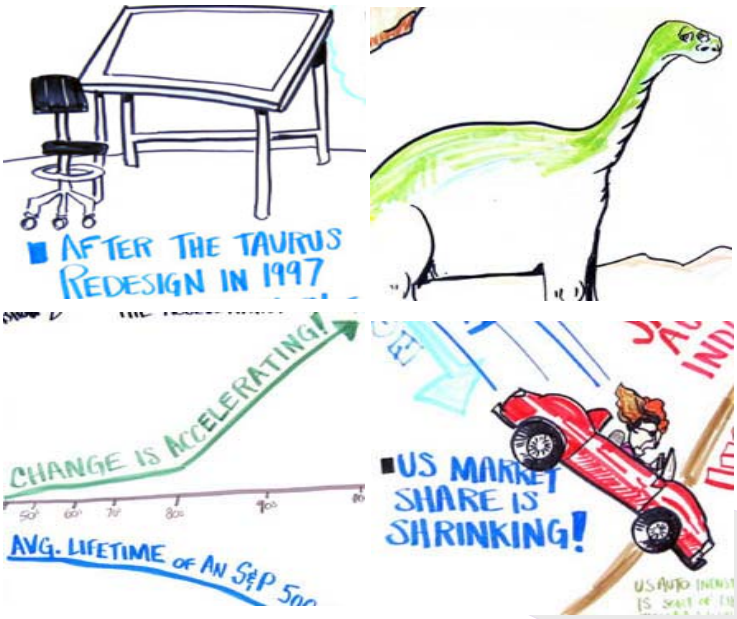
How we've designed our solution is a marketing campaign. We want to provide a variety of entrepreneurial opportunities. I'm also working with people who are researching telecommuting. This will also relieve traffic congestion. We're going to be looking at a marketing campaign. What drives people today? Money or lifestyle? I think of the choices, there is more emphasis on lifestyle and that's going to drive our marketing efforts. With housing, sometimes there are needs for a large workforce in places where there is not much housing. We're looking to solve that.

I'm going to be focusing on Nebraskans who want to stay and Nebraskans who want to come back. We need to help people be aware that there are fantastic opportunities here and this is a fantastic place to live.

In order to understand the opportunities of the future, we have to ask some hard questions. Is it possible with the current structure to offer the things people want to move here? Study results show that there is a lot of interest in venture capital and that's something we should go after.

We're 48th in the nation for economic development. What about young people interested in starting businesses? What you'll see is a shifting around the alignment in our department. This is a small piece of the pie. We need to emphasize the focus on Nebraskans. We need to have a people advantage. We need to grow the opportunities.

Trade Shows – Global Economic Change



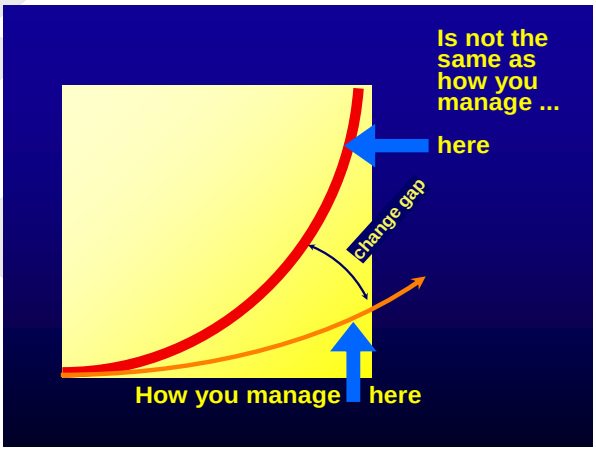
Langdon Morris
Innovation Labs, LLC

I'm one of the partners with InnovationLabs and have written a book on Permanent Innovation.

I want to talk about change on a global basis. I'm going to be using an example of the auto industry. Ford and GM have reached the peak and they're looking down and wondering what they can do. Japanese companies are already operating with a new model. Have you heard of the Jobs Bank? These companies have people who show up to work to a building and sit for 8 hours with nothing to do. These companies have chosen to go over a cliff instead of collaborating.

You probably know that Toyota will surpass GM in the number of cars that they manufacture by 2008. Remember that the Taurus was the best selling car in 1996? Then they redesigned it. They killed the car. They achieved the opposite of what they wanted, which shows how poorly they understood the needs of their customers. It's all about learning and knowing how to make innovative change. Now I'd like to shift to making change on a global basis.

You'll see a similar curve in a variety of statistics: Moore's Law, the slope of carbon emissions, GDP, and others. You'll see a logarithmic slope.



That's the nature of reality. You can see the flatter line which is our learning curve at a regular pace. The difference between the sharp slope and the learning curve is what I call it the change gap.

That's what we're doing here. How can we bridge this gap to be successful? A specific example of this is the S&P 500. In a few years only 125 of those companies will still exist. The rest will either die, merge, be acquired, whatever.

This is called creative destruction. If you don't adapt to it, you don't survive. This is our challenge. Everything changes. And inevitably things will die.

It would be interesting to see the trends of Nebraska mapped out against those curves. This is our technology curve and this is the education of the kids. We need to build these partnerships in order to close this gap. There are currently more students enrolled in corporate universities than in regular 4-year academic schools.

We absolutely need partnerships. Education struggles to keep up with the technology and equipment base. We need partners. We need to overcome the outside factors that prevent us to meet this curve, whether it's parents or world languages or other barriers such as union agreements, expectations, and habits. We have to question our basic assumptions, such as a 9-month system. Relevancy will cure that. We need to open our minds to know ideas.

Economic and Demographic Data

Ernie Goss
Creighton University

We economists once thought that if you went below 6% unemployment rates, you'd have excessive inflation. Our economy has changed. Nebraska has the opportunity to take advantage this change. The number of farms is half as what there were 10 years ago. The farms today though are larger. Nebraska has unique challenges and unique opportunities. How do we as educators, labor market folks and the rest help take this situation and turn it into an advantage for Nebraska? We need to have a barrier-free Nebraska.

I hear complaints about the brain-drain but then I hear people say they want to obstruct immigrants. This doesn't work in Nebraska's favor. Young people want to leave everywhere, not just Nebraska, but also Georgia and New York. But we want to convince those who want to leave another state to come to Nebraska.

Renewable energy, such as wind power and ethanol, might be an industry. Ethanol is not good for livestock production in Nebraska, but good for the energy industry. In the long term, there are some solid reasons that Nebraska could be a leader in this industry. It seems that we'll far outstrip the natural resources. We need to address the fact that supply will outstrip our demand at the present rate. Right now we have 12 ethanol plants in Nebraska. It's pushing up the price of corn. In the long run, we need to think about not being corn based. There are other methodologies for ethanol production. There is a farm that wants to move to Boyd County to take advantage of the gluten to feed the cattle. They're running into obstacles because Boyd County doesn't want them to move there.

The Wall Street Journal had an interesting article on the apparel industry. It seems that we're talking through both sides of our mouths. The trade barrier created the inferior goods. I can see this situation in pharmaceuticals, but I can't judge the quality, so in that industry I'd like to see more controls. The people who create barriers to import aren't doing it because of the quality but to protect New York jobs. China has a car that sells for $5,000. There are probably some quality issues, but it removes the barriers from more people owning cars.

How do we address brain drain? I think students who are 22 years old can't be appealed to—you could have them in Las Vegas and they'll still say that the night life isn't what they want it to be. I think you need to have different approaches to get a brain gain. We need to promote alternative energy, telecommunications and other emerging industries in Nebraska.

Is it the job that brings people here?
Yes. If you have great jobs, they will come.

Vision

The group's vision was developed through a collaborative activity in which the participants created the tables of contents for special 2011 editions of each of the 7 magazines shown below and on the following pages.

The story titles are indicative of the work that needs to be done to bring Nebraska's economy into the 21st century and the universally positive views showed both the vision and the spirit that the participants brought to the workshop.

Workforce Today

An Example for Us All

How Nebraska has taken a radically successful approach to learning in order to meet the workforce needs of tomorrow

Table of Contents

- Biz Speakers Bureaus Bridge Relevancy Gap in K-12 Education
- Nebraska Educators Work Directly With Private Business Accrediting Organization
- Internships Bring Business & Education Together
- Business Mentors Lead the Way
- Dual Career Credit Programs - High Schools & Community Colleges w/o the Red Tape & Separate Agreements
- Emphasis on Life & Work Issues
- Micro-Venture Program Builds Young Entrepreneurs
- Mission: Learning, Earning, & Living - It's a "Package Deal" to Progress
- Governor Gives Free Laptops to Underemployed Women; Special Training Secures Them Better Jobs
- Find Out What They Love to Do and Help Them Pursue an Education
- One Stop Provides Cell Phones to Job Seekers
- Immigration Works for Nebraska

TIME

The Nebraska Miracle!

How Nebraska turned an economic disaster into the New Model for the Heartland

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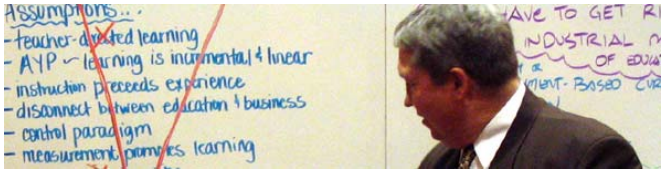
- Reinventing the Rural Entrepreneur
- Nebraska Small Businesses Boom: Marketing Globally Over New Broadband Capacity
- East Meets and Works With West
- Using Technology to Provide New Business to Rural Nebraska
- Technology Rocks! Nebraska's Rags to Riches Story
- Generation "Gap" Eliminated
- Is Big Always Better? Small Business Flourishes in Nebraska
- Work Where you Want - Live Where You Want (Enjoy the Good Life)
- Former Nebraskans Return to Start New Careers
- Technology Reaches the Hinterlands



Vision

Economic Development Weekly

Make Room for Big Ideas!

If you think ethanol is revolutionary, wait until you see what Nebraska is doing with education and economic development!

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- Nebraska Lands Ford Hybrid Plant Thanks to Biz-Ed Partnership
- Bio-Diesel
- Accent Modification
- Small Businesses Spur Rural Economic Development
- Entrepreneur Class is Core Curriculum
- The Community College Connection: Flexibility, Responsiveness, Economic Leveraging
- Never Say Never – Take Chances, Plan Well
- Nebraska Leverages World-Class Education System into Economic Driver
- Keeping the "Brains" in Nebraska through Economic Development
- RAIL System – In-State; In-City
- Micro-Venture Fund Grooms Hipster Entrepreneurs
- Entrepreneurship for Teens in Business
- Consolidation & Clustering Work for Nebraska

Education Nation

Nebraska Earns an A+

Nebraska changes the dynamics of how students, teachers, parents and employers work together

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- Continuous Education & Re-education Become the Focal Point for Nebraska
- Web-based Education – Anywhere, Anytime!
- Erase the Lines: Transparency between K-12, postsecondary + Career for Success
- High School Students Get a Head Start – Earn College Credits, Receive Work-based Learning Experiences in a Career Path
- Companies "Adopt" Elementaries and High Schools; Provide Equipment to Facilitate More Training
- No Communication Barriers, Good Ethical and Work Habits for All
- Peter Kiewit Institute Involves Industry + Parents + Teachers in Education
- Libraries Bring Campuses & Communities Together
- High School Similar to College Internship Requirements
- "No More One Size Fits All" – Disengaged Youth who Previously Left School Without a Diploma have a Path Leading to Success

Vision

The National Journal of Partnering

Nebraska's Key for Success
Nebraska uses partnerships as the foundation for effective change

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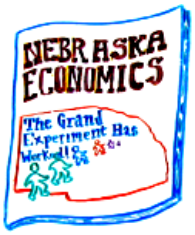
- Dream-It, Do-It Campaign a BIG Success
- Workforce Investment Board Joins Partnership
- Consensus Building Makes All the Difference
- Community Agencies PLAN Collaborative
- Retained Rural Workforce Fully Funds Philanthropic Needs of Non-profits Which Generate Additional Workers to Fill Jobs Open in the Community
- Regional Group Markets SE Nebraska to National & Global Site Selectors
- Chamber Business – Education Partnership
- Schools Making the Connection with Business
- Collaborations: More is More
- 'Governing by Network' Model realized in Nebraska
- Community Colleges Providing Business Basics for Immigrants
- Pooling Resources for All: WIA, Perkins, Others Used for Economic Development & Work Readiness



Nebraska Economics

The Grand Experiment has Worked!
Changing Focus: Nebraska is heralded for overturning the nations most significant workforce exodus

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- Rural workforce Utilized Due to Collaboration and Use of Technology
- Entrepreneurship
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- Collaboration Leads to Education, Training to Supply the State with Qualified Workforce
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Vision

Innovate!

Innovation at Work and School

Innovating to success in the schools and businesses of America's heartland

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- iPods: Lesson Plans on the Web
- Video Gaming as Education & Career Training Tool
- Real Time: Education & Work – Any Time, Any Where
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- Internships for Teachers & Students
- Students Learn Content Through Relevant Problem-Based Curriculum
- Technology Bridges the Gap Between Students and Careers
- High School Classrooms in the Business Setting
- Emphasis on Work-Life Issues and Balance
- Actions = Consequences = Results

Vision Summary

The common themes that run through these articles give strong indications of the themes and topics that must be developed throughout the state in the coming years in order to meet the social, economic, and educational challenges of our times.

Highlights include:

- Close partnerships between educators and employers to bring the real world of work into the educational process through internships, mentoring, apprenticeships, resource sharing, and strong communication.
- A resurgence of entrepreneurism throughout the state to bring business opportunities to rural communities, supported by educational initiatives at all levels coupled with state-wide economic development initiatives.
- A strong technology backbone throughout the state to provide high speed broadband linkages to the cities, towns, and rural areas.
- Support for new immigrants so that they feel welcome and are readily able to join the productive workforce.

Together, all of these themes and concepts constitute a strong vision for the future of our state! It is the mission of FutureForce to make this vision a reality.

Manifesto

We, the participants in this workshop, in an attempt to create a more perfect state, support the creation of social, cultural, and economic opportunity for all residents of Nebraska by embracing our strengths and bridging our divides through creative and collaborative problem-solving and strategic alignment of resources. We will create statewide solutions and apply them locally, promote positive community communication and exchange throughout the state, and align our activities to support these goals!

The Conditions

The workforce in Nebraska is graying and will continue to shrink unless we step forward and change how we think about education, business, the global economy, our communities, and the linkages between them.

The world of learning is flat; what happens everywhere in the world affects us.

School is not a building, it is a process. 21st century learning is different than in the past.

Learning is a lifetime activity; it never stops.

All students and all of our partners are working towards creating viable 21st century careers.

Our Commitment

To support the future of Nebraska we must ensure that we use our resources wisely to provide a fully prepared, highly qualified workforce for our state.

We will prepare all students for learning, earning, and living.

We will enable all students to prepare self-directed career plans.

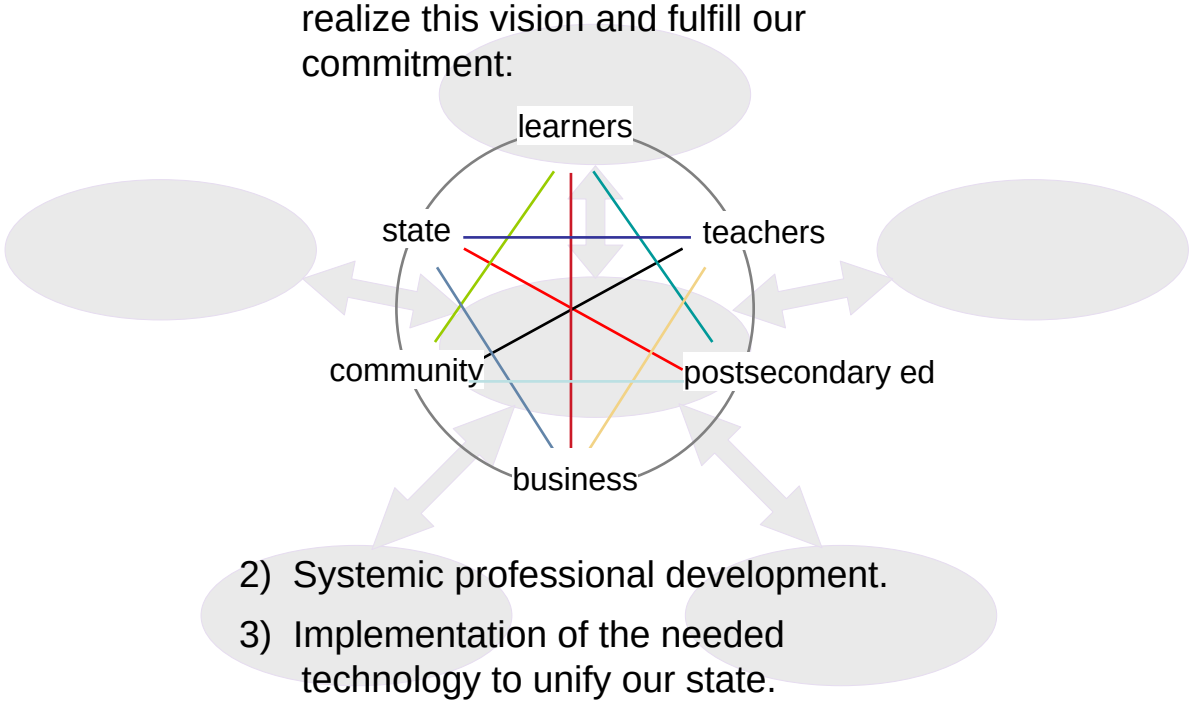
We will bridge the divide between urban and rural communities.

We will support employers by enabling our students to become the thoughtful, creative, ethical workers they need.

The Means

We will achieve this through many means, including:

1) The creation of a system that links all stakeholders in effective partnerships to realize this vision and fulfill our commitment:



2) Systemic professional development.

3) Implementation of the needed technology to unify our state.

6-Year Plan

Key Goals:

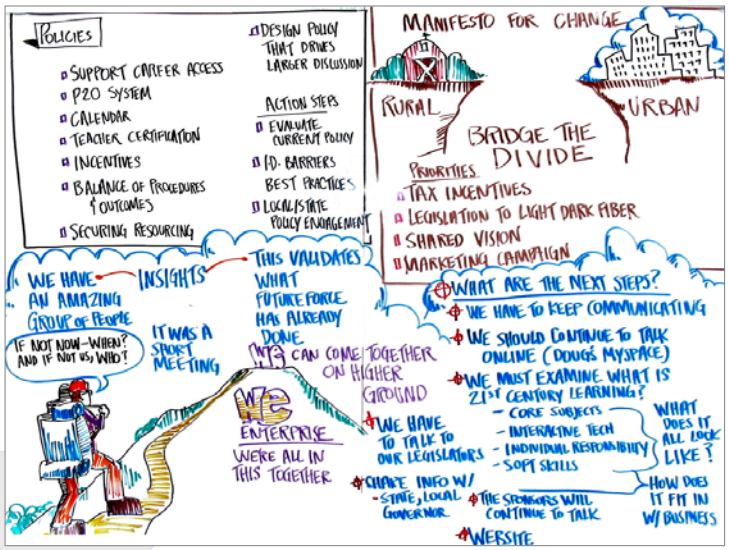
Replace Restrictive Legislation with Enabling Legislation.

Bridge Gaps Between Education, Business, & Economic Development.

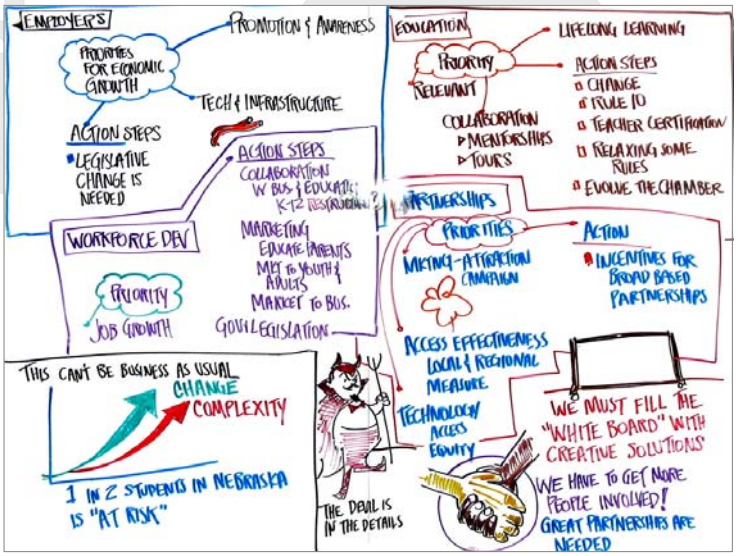
The Nebraska Career Education Model is shared with higher education and business/industry. Job openings are shown by cluster.

The Departments of Labor and Economic Development support this approach.

People throughout the state understand and support this initiative.



These synthesis graphics were created in real time during the workshop by Christopher Fuller, InnovationLabs.



6-Year Plan

In creating a six year plan during which the goal is to fulfill the Commitment as stated in the Manifesto it is clear that the work must be approached as a system and that the implementation plan therefore begins with the complete design of the system following with completion of each of the elements.

Key Goals: Replace Restrictive Legislation with Enabling Legislation, and Bridge Gaps Between Education, Business, & Economic Development

	Year 1	Year 2
General Themes	**Design of this System**	
Business & Industry	Identify opportunities to support student and career awareness	Identify opportunities to support student and career awareness Provide training
Economic Develop-ment		Use grant resources to make this system stronger
Labor/ Workforce Development		Incumbent Working Training Program with matching funds from business
K-12 Education	Use system for curriculum, guidance Personal Learning Plans for Students	Personal Learning Plans for Students Re-think graduation requirements
Postsecondary Education	Begin to apply internships model; Employer Training Placement	Internships; Employer Training Placement
Legislative	Identify & remove restrictive laws that prevent students from experiencing the workplace; Allow non-profits more freedom to support biz-education partnerships	Priority: Funding & continuing the removal of barriers

CONSTANT, EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

6-Year Plan

	Year 3	Year 4
General Themes	**Full-Scale Implementation of this System**	**Full-Scale Implementation of this System**
Business & Industry	**Identify opportunities to support student and career awareness** **Provide training**	**Identify opportunities to support student and career awareness**
Economic Develop-ment		
Labor/ Workforce Development		
K-12 Education	Personal Learning Plans for Students	Use system for curriculum, guidance Personal Learning Plans for Students
Postsecondary Education	Internships; Employer Training Placement	Internships; Employer Training Placement
Legislative		

It's all functioning as a system - Providing & Receiving

Major system enhancements

CONSTANT, EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

6-Year Plan

Barriers to Overcome:

- Separation between business/industry, educators, and communities
- Contradictions in the certificates process between secondary and postsecondary
- Non-competitive issues between business/industry and education that inhibit career training

	Year 5	Year 6
General Themes	**Full-Scale Implementation of this System**	**Full-Scale Implementation of this System**
Business & Industry	Identify opportunities to support student and career awareness Provide training	
Economic Develop-ment	Use grant resources to make this system stronger	
Labor/ Workforce Development		
K-12 Education	Personal Learning Plans for Students	
Postsecondary Education	Internships; Employer Training Placement	
Legislative	Priority: Funding & removal of barriers	

Partnerships that adapt to changes as they occur

Everyone in One System for recruiting, retention, & continued training.

CONSTANT, EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Next Steps

The FutureForce Executive Board will review the contents of this document and develop a strategic action plan. This plan will guide our work for the next several years as we continue our partnership. The six-year plan developed at the Forum will provide the foundation for our future work. We look forward to sharing the final plan with each of you when complete.

We sincerely appreciate the contributions of everyone that participated in this important Forum. Combining the wisdom and experience of many amazing minds produced a series of great thoughts as we move forward to create the future of our state.

Proprieties for Developing our Workforce

The two teams that came together to work on this topic each took a little different route.
Our recommendations are:

1. Focus on job growth of highly skilled workers to raise the standards.
2. Secure the Governor's and legislative support in order to really make the changes we want.
3. Create a strategy to educate the parents about the opportunities here in Nebraska in each of our communities.
4. Develop a campaign to market and promote the current success of Nebraska businesses to students and parents.
5. Build collaboration between business and industry as well as looking at whether or not we need to restructure our education system.

Proprieties for Education

We tried to do some prioritization and I don't think we finished. We looked at collaboration between business and industry for students and teachers.
Our recommendations are:

1. Expose all students to the diversity of postsecondary educational opportunities.
2. Develop a passion for lifelong learning in all students and adults.
3. Explore how to change a few things like the school year, limitations of the school building and teacher certification.
4. We can't put students into manufacturing situations until they're 18, but maybe we can change some of that legislation.
5. We did talk a fair amount about collaboration. Is it industry going to education or vice-a-versa? How can we make it more of a partnership?

Next Steps

Proprieties for Developing Partnerships

All our suggestions are anonymous. We came up with four priorities:

1. Conduct a needs assessment that will drive the reason for partnerships.
2. Assess effectiveness of partnerships so we can focus on the ones that are working and those that are not.
3. We talked about technology and the priority of developing technology resources.
4. Develop an action plan that supports incentives that support business and industry.

Priorities for Partnerships with Employers

We focused on the priorities of employers to support economic growth in the state. We did brainstorming on action steps that moved us toward our vision. There was a lot of discussion around change, the need for collaboration and how to make change happen. Our recommendations are:

1. Encourage collaboration to help make the necessary changes to address the issues and opportunities.
2. Fully develop our state's technology infrastructure.
3. Develop a campaign or program about promoting Nebraska to parents and students. We need to build awareness about what we already have and what needs to go on.

Priorities for Creating Policy

We want to do some creative things. Right now the policies are focused on procedures and we want to find a way to balance it on things that are focused on outcomes.

1. Create policies that are supportive of collaboration, career awareness, skills and knowledge, things that drive the P20 system.
2. Acquire adequate resources to do what we need.
3. Design policies that drive larger forums of discussion in creating policies as decisions are made or implemented.
4. Start by honestly assessing the impact of current policies.
5. Identify the barriers and design policy alternatives.
6. Get buy-in and drive the understanding for the need for change.

Priorities for the Manifesto for Change

We combined our lists, including aging workforce and technology gaps. We have a new word, which is **coopetition.** Our recommendations are:

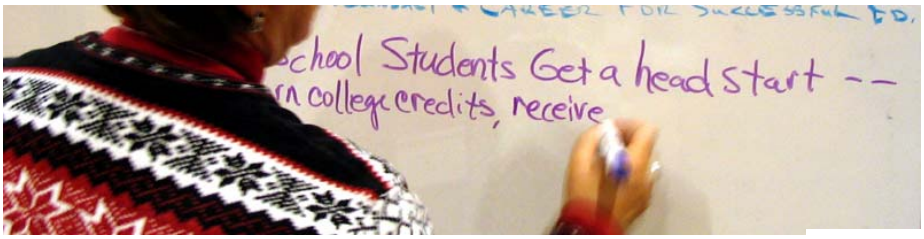
1. Create opportunities that are a win-win for all parts of the state.
2. Create incentives that increase our workforce. This kind of fits into a legislative issue.
3. Create a marketing campaign to address what has come up in every round of work today; we created a manifesto that will go out to everyone.

Carl D. Perkins Focused Session

The Nebraska Department of Education is in the process of developing a new state plan through the application for Federal funds under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. The Perkins Act will provide dollars for the improvement of career and technical education for the next six years. In an effort to focus these dollars for maximum impact, day two of the Forum was devoted to identifying best practices for the use of the Perkins funds. Building on the inputs of the previous day, the groups looked at focus areas that addressed the requirements of the new legislation.

On Day 2 of the workshop, groups spent time discussing each focus area and how to use the Perkins funds for maximum effectiveness. The overarching goal remained school improvement and increasing student achievement.

1. **Secondary & Postsecondary Articulation**
2. **Accountability**
3. **Academic & Technical Rigor**
4. **Program of Study**
5. **Target Funding and Innovation**
6. **Professional Development**
7. **Innovations**



Perkins Grant Focus Areas

Focus Area 1: Secondary & Postsecondary Articulation

We do not have a common language concerning secondary/postsecondary transition. We have different names for the same things. We need to define concurrent credit, dual credit, and articulation in a way that everybody understands. How are we going to move beyond this? What we're proposing has been done in other states and now it's time to do it in Nebraska.

Concurrent Enrollment

What if students are able to earn credits for high school and for college at the same time? Does it matter if it is academic or technical? Why should students have to pay for dual credit? Shouldn't they be recognized for achieving those skills?

Paired Instruction

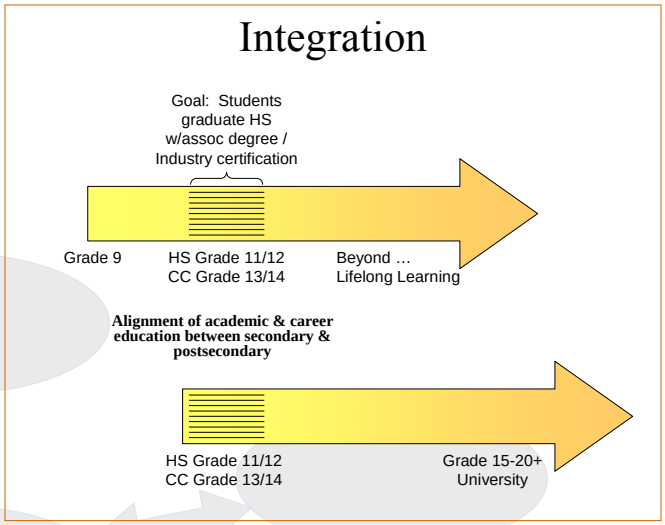
Secondary and postsecondary teachers can team teach to save students time and money and give them better opportunities. Expanding distance education on-line course offerings from postsecondary to secondary is possible and essential.

Funding

One of our greatest challenges is money. Who gets the money for the seat time? For the dual credit? For state aid? If we can eliminate the conflicts/concerns over money in this scenario we could have a much easier time creating meaningful and real transition for students.

Policy

Some of our policy barriers are just assumptions. We need to have data that clearly identifies what barriers exist rather than just making assumptions. We need to come to consensus and keep in mind what is best for the students and the development of our state.



Our model (above) shows the core courses and the grey areas. Students could take the same curriculum and by the time they finish high school, could also complete an associate degree or an industry certification. Students could move to a postsecondary institution by grade 11 and continue their education forward if chosen.

How are we going to get it done? We need to determine the consequences and incentives. We need a legislative mandate that all parties play fully, fairly, and finally. We need professional development and student involvement. We need to get the word out, do marketing, so that parents and students understand and are enthusiastic about this. Also, we need to measure student achievement on competency instead of seat time and attendance.

We also need to explore how this new blended secondary/postsecondary approach affects extracurricular activities.

Perkins Grant Focus Areas

Focus Area 1: Secondary & Postsecondary Articulation

Recommendations

1. Create a common definition of terms used in secondary/postsecondary transition.

2. Explore industry certifications available to high school students and how Nebraska schools may provide instruction to prepare students for these certifications.

3. Explore how a student might obtain an associates degree and high school diploma simultaneously.

4. Create a statewide system for secondary/postsecondary transition that is not constrained by certain institutions/schools and does not limit opportunities for students. The new Perkins Act must provide resources to explore the creation of this new statewide system.

5. Conduct a study of the economic barriers that currently prohibit effective secondary/postsecondary transition. Identify the barriers and propose solutions that serve the student and the state.

6. Conduct a study of the policy barriers that inhibit the development and implementation of effective secondary and postsecondary transition and proposed solutions to these barriers.

7. Create a focused task force representing all partners as well as the Governor's Office, Unicameral and state agencies such as Department of Labor and Department of Economic Development to provide oversight of the studies (proposed in #5 and #6) and create recommendations for needed changes in policy and funding.

Focus Area 2: Accountability

The most significant idea from our group regarding accountability is that we could reduce the burden though a statewide consortium. Each LEA would contribute a portion of their funds to this overarching group. We would then deal with things that affect each of them and attempt to provide and coordinate the common resources that all the schools need.

We would also try to coordinate between the STARS and IPEDS to create a common data capability. We also want to have consistent assessments especially in the area of technical skill attainment.

The Perkins regulations on accountability are unclear. Part of our frustration and struggle is related to how much time and effort we spend on a system to collect data, but we don't know how locals are using the data for school improvement.

We're looking to have an accountability summit at some point to help resolve these issues.

We also looked at using satisfaction surveys as a way to measure progress. Several people asked if there are other or better measures that we want to add, but we don't want to add additional data collection burdens. If we can benchmark and measure what we do, we'll be more successful.

Our current STARS assessment system is based up the premise that those who are closest to the student should determine whether the student is meeting the standards. It seems that we could expand on that premise and have some flexibility with Perkins as well.

One of the things we're struggling with is the requirement for technical skills assessment which should really be the bread and butter assessment of career and technical education. An effort to create consistency of aligning industry standards makes the most sense to use. But everyone will be at different levels, so how do we orient ourselves to that?

Comment: If we're going to say that all teachers are career educators, then it would simplify things if we could have all students be on a career track.

Focus Area 2: Accountability

Recommendations

1. Create a statewide consortium of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to work together to improve our statewide data system. If all LEAs contributed a portion of their Perkins allocation to the consortium more could be accomplished than individual schools would be able to do in isolation.

2. Continue to look for ways to collaborate with existing data structures such as STARS and IPEDS. Continuing to work with the Department of Labor and Postsecondary Coordinating Commission will help strengthen the quality of our data.

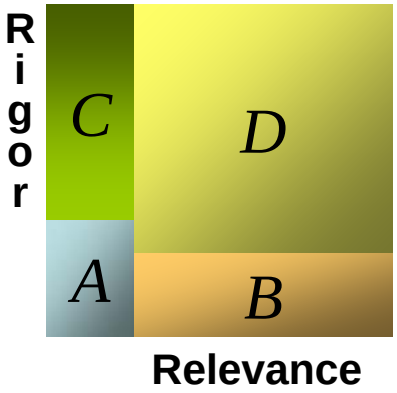
3. Conduct an accountability summit to ensure schools are all on the same page and conducting training in how to use data for improvement and increased student achievement.

4. Consider creating a standard, statewide measurement for technical skill attainment to provide an accurate picture of student achievement.

5. Create a mechanism to share data results with the Governor, Legislature, and state agencies (e.g. Department of Labor and Economic Development). The efforts and results should be coordinated with statewide workforce and economic development efforts.

6. Create a meaningful plan to focus local and statewide efforts on the needs of special populations to help them achieve their education and career goals. This includes rethinking the use of nontraditional funds to make a greater statewide impact.

Focus Area 3: Academic & Technical Rigor



All curriculum content has to be taught with rigor and relevance. Dr. Daggett's rigor and relevance chart showing the ABCD quadrants shows that rigor and relevance has a larger quadrant (D).

The Perkins Grant program needs to embrace contextual learning that supports 21st century skills. We identified critical thinking as a key part of the process. To make that happen we are suggesting an advisory council that includes representatives from all subject matter areas and ensure a common language.

We need to start making connections for the students, to include postsecondary participants on these councils, and have our administrators use the in-service time to develop curriculum instead of expecting teachers to develop it in isolation.

These councils should require a high degree of interdisciplinary activity. We need to align curriculum that leads to certification, a diploma, or degree. We need to use some kind of assessment, like CALS or TAB. Work Keys could be used there too. Students should indicate their preferences and demonstrate skills early enough so that interventions could be offered where needed.

We would have to address some legal issues for student certification for some professional areas including SkillsUSA or Pharmacy Aide, as well as safety certifications.

We would want cluster councils. There are various certifying agencies, but we'd like to have a state-wide council so we don't have to go through each different ones. We'd like the council to develop virtual walk-throughs to businesses so that they could see operations live, not just a video tape. We could also have the students make the virtual walk-throughs or maybe do something with SecondLife as avatars.

We have the students do presentations so that we identify what kinds of skills the students gain by doing these things. Right now we don't do that very well. We went through an example of how home schooled students could get a degree by choosing what courses they want to do. We also looked at organizations such as 4-H, Boys Scouts, and Girl Scouts and asked whether or not they can get the information they need through these organizations to support learning.

Focus Area 3: Academic & Technical Rigor

Recommendations

1. Review all career education curriculum areas to assess academic and technical rigor. This must be done on a local level with a tool or guidance developed by the state to help schools really evaluate the rigor of curriculum.

2. Continue to explore how schools teach and assess the soft skills or workplace readiness skills. CALS is a good start, but more help with interventions for students to give guidance on the development of these skills is necessary.

3. Explore the availability of industry certifications for career education students and how those might align to postsecondary certificates and degrees.

4. Create a statewide advisory council to coordinate NCE with sub-councils for each of the career fields/cluster areas. These councils will assist with defining rigor of curriculum, meaningful assessments, and extended learning experiences for students. The councils need to equally represent secondary, postsecondary, and employers in the career field/cluster area as well as representatives from all subject matter areas. This process addresses the issue of integration of academic and career education. FutureForce Nebraska could serve as the mechanism for these councils to exist and provide input. Involve the Department of Labor and Economic Development to make certain Nebraska's workforce needs are addressed.

5. Identify models and best practices to share on a statewide basis. These might include meaningful senior projects, extended learning, career academies, etc.

6. Create a true partnership with academic education to break down the artificial walls and help students develop a meaningful plan of study that prepares them with academic and technical knowledge and skill in the context of their chosen career field.

Focus Area 4: Programs of Study

We started with the definition of a program of study as we currently understand it. We understand that schools will be able to adopt state models or develop their own programs of study. This gives schools a chance to create programs of study to meet their student and community needs. Using the NCE model shows a possible alignment of curriculum for the programs of study.

We looked at the requirements of a program of study that are outlined in the language of the Perkins Act. Schools will need to identify supporting academic courses, such as those which have a direct tie to that particular program of study. If someone puts together a manufacturing course, you could include geometry and trigonometry because that ties together. Schools will also have to look at how their courses connect to the postsecondary level. Students could take courses at postsecondary colleges to enhance or complete their program of study.

We need to include value-added experiences that can also contribute and be a part of these programs of study. These could include extended learning opportunities, career student organizations, senior projects, etc.

A concern is around assessment of learning and knowledge/skill development throughout and at the end of the program of study. We need some kind of assessment that helps determine the level the student is at when transitioning from secondary to postsecondary education.

Recommendations

1. A final definition from the USDE and NDE on what program of study requirements are and how to implement and report is essential.

2. Develop a plan and tools to help schools use programs of study in counseling of students. The new personal learning plan seems to be a natural fit to help implement programs of study.

3. Bring secondary and postsecondary educators together to determine how programs of study bridge between secondary and postsecondary programs. Make the transition as seamless as possible and create opportunities for students to advance according to skill and ability—not just seat time.

4. Collaborate with the Departments of Labor and Economic Development to make certain programs of study are relevant for Nebraska jobs. FutureForce Nebraska may be a natural partner in this effort.

5. NDE should capture and disseminate best practices for inclusion in programs of study that enhance the students' experiences. Examples of great extended learning experiences should be shared and virtual experiences created to provide meaningful opportunities for all students.

Focus Area 5: Target Funding and Innovation

We looked at what the Perkins Grant system funds now, such as equipment and career exploration. Postsecondary also funds salaries. The money has been used appropriately, but probably doesn't stimulate as much innovation as it could to improve career education.

We started over with a blank slate and by thinking innovatively came up with this plan:

- We felt there is need to emphasize leadership development. FutureForce could provide the leadership for the use of funds that could lead to innovations in every career field. This is a huge task to coordinate and it may need to have a separate board.
- We need to explore options for developing criteria for the distribution of funding. There may not be many options under the Law, but we need to explore any possibilities that could exist to designate funding for innovation.
- If we're going to cut or limit funding in one area, we need to identify alternative sources. We also need to communicate best practices.

Recommendations

1. Do not to create state limits on use of funds. Rather, encourage locals to use funds for program improvement and innovation. Use leadership rather than punitive measures to help locals understand how they can use the money innovatively to lead to program successes.
2. Capture best practices and promote state models of excellence for others to emulate as they look for ways to improve career education.
3. Adhere to the requirements of the Law in the use of funds. We may need to be creative in using Perkins funds to create opportunities for special populations to benefit from career education programs.
4. Innovative programs should focus on connecting secondary and postsecondary education and eliminating barriers for students. Innovative programs need to identify any policy issues or stumbling blocks that prevent great ideas from becoming reality.
5. FutureForce may be a natural body to help in creating and promoting innovative programs that meet our state's workforce and economic development needs. We cannot continue to offer the same old programs with the same old curriculum if we are to prepare students for the 21st century workplace. We need a push from business/industry and the employer world to help us know how to focus our energies and change our programs. FutureForce could lead that effort.
6. Career education must be at the table during discussions of rethinking the high school and improving education. We need to continue to work to break down the barriers between the academic core and the other curricular areas.

Focus Area 6: Professional Development

We started looking at outcomes and focused on 21st century skills. We need partners including business/industry and employers actively working together with educators from all levels. Teachers will start facilitating more experiential types of learning. We also talked about teachers having professional growth plans like the students' personal learning plans.

We want everyone to have a common mission and everybody agree that this is the right thing to do. We think the components of the NCE model are very important and we need to help people understand why and how it's all connected together.

We need to build a case, and use the InnovationLabs collaborative workshop model to develop curriculum and a methodology to teach through experiential learning. We would restructure the NCE conference to focus on career clusters and pathways rather than the traditional disciplines and open the conference for all teachers. We can't continue to sit in our discipline groups and not talk to each other.

We want to have train-the-trainer cadres that can help schools adapt their curriculum and implement the NCE model.

We also talked about accountability. Teachers need to be held accountable for making the changes.

In these conversations, we created a plan. One of the first things is to create that buy-in, and we could do this in a collaborative setting. We can use the people in this room to do that. Many of us has been through this process enough that we can do this ourselves.

We want to utilize current business professional development trainings and even though we're not at the table now, maybe we could partner with them to improve the skills of educators.

We thought having a training account to provide funds so that teachers can tap into and have conversations with their administrators before and after, to talk about what they're doing, would be a good idea.

We should have a statewide Perkins professional development consortium and a multi-year plan for access to quality professional development and funds for a statewide focus.

Focus Area 6: Professional Development

Recommendations

1. Use the 21st century skills as a starting point to evaluate curriculum and teaching making certain Nebraska schools provide relevant education for students. Agree on common definitions for 21st century skills and how and how these are taught and assessed.

2. All teachers, including career education teachers, should have professional growth plans. All teachers, but in particular career education teachers, should partner with employers and business/industry to gain experiences they can share in the classroom and make their instruction more relevant.

3. Establish a common mission for professional development on a statewide basis. The idea of developing a statewide consortium that everyone contributes Perkins funds to could be used to create and deliver a planned, multi-year professional development program that would pay big dividends for improving student learning and provide the needed statewide focus.

4. Develop a strategy for creating a commitment of all teachers to the idea that students need to prepare for postsecondary education and a career. We need to understand that postsecondary education is not an option anymore and that it can mean OJT, workshops, 2- or 4- year education. All teachers need to understand how to make their curricula relevant for students so they see the value in their future career plans.

5. Create materials and programs to help all teachers understand the NCE model and the need for breaking out of the traditional discipline silos to provide relevant experiences and 21st century knowledge and skills for all students. This should be done through a coordinated statewide professional development program.

6. Partner with business and industry to take advantage of their training materials and opportunities to strengthen our instructional programs. FutureForce Nebraska could be the vehicle to bring educators together with business and industry to share in professional development – it's a win for everyone.

7. Explore the idea of a professional development account for all teachers (secondary and postsecondary) that could be used to upgrade their skills and improve student achievement.

8. Create a focused statewide professional development plan to address the needs of our changing students and the needs of business and industry partners. The plan should be developed jointly with business and industry to meet the workforce and economic development needs of our state. Focus must be given to provide teachers with strategies to help special populations achieve their education and career goals.

9. Restructure the NCE Conference to break out of the traditional discipline days that trap teaches in isolation. Restructure around clusters/pathways and involve more non-CTE teachers in NCE as well as more postsecondary instructors.

Focus Area 7: Innovation

The purpose of this theme area is to help us all to think outside the box while keeping in mind that we really need to reinvent the box that education is inside. Sometimes thinking creatively is not very secure and sometimes we have to create a certain level of competence and confidence before we can break open the wall and enter the arena.

We looked at the s-curve and jumping off into the pool. The pool is pretty empty right now.

We need to create many prototypes, not just one. We need personal learning plans because each student is different. So we need to do that with our prototypes as well. We need to build around the strengths of the adults in our system. We need to blur the lines between business, industry, and education. We need to understand the process of facilitation but not necessarily the content.

We need to create the ability to build buy-in. We may not know what business and industry want today, but we can find out. We need to build flexible learning systems that are responsive to the kinds of needs of our kids and our community. We need a different funding system and not based on seat time. We need to blur the lines between consumers and producers.

We need to experiment with joint determination. We need to take ideas from you and the students and the parents so that we can get a higher level of buy-in. We need to facilitate learning.

We came into this workshop as learners and produced things. These should be requirements in our school system. Everyone can benefit from this.

We need systems that work together over distance. We need to not be afraid to go outside our system to make this work and grow. We need to create prototypes that will give us the confidence to go outside our current system.

Focus Area 7: Innovation

Recommendations

1. Continue to create opportunities for dialogue about effective practice and focus on meeting the needs of all students through innovation.

2. Rapidly deploy a statewide system of on-line and distance learning options to expand offerings and experiences for all Nebraska students.

3. Continue dialogue with business and industry and partner with workforce and economic development to meet the changing demographics and needs of our state.

4. FutureForce Nebraska and other groups need to help us collaborate and blur the lines between education and business/industry in Nebraska.

5. Maximize the use of Perkins funds and other discretionary funds to help promote innovation in Nebraska education.

6. Focus on preparing our students for the 21st century—not the 20th century—meaning a need to look different, teach different, and connect with students in new and different ways. Look beyond the four walls of a building and recognize that education is not the sole and exclusive right of a building, it exists throughout our environment. Harness new ways to prepare our students for the 21st century.

7. Try new approaches and models in education. Support from NDE and a need to educate our communities and boards on why a change is necessary is essential.

Next Steps

The recommendations of this document will be reviewed by the Nebraska Department of Education, Career Education staff as they progress with the development of the State Plan for the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act funds. It has provided a great framework for our ongoing discussions about maximizing the use of the Perkins dollars for the improvement of education, student achievement and the economic viability of Nebraska.

This is not the end – just the beginning…

Appendix/Background

The Perkins Grant

Federal Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

SEC. 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Act is to develop more fully the academic, vocational, and technical skills of secondary students and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in vocational and technical education programs, by –

(1) Building on the efforts of States and localities to develop challenging academic standards;

(2) Promoting the development of services and activities that integrate academic, vocational, and technical instruction, and that link secondary and postsecondary education for participating vocational and technical education students;

(3) Increasing State and local flexibility in providing services and activities designed to develop, implement, and improve vocational and technical education, including tech-prep education; and

(4) Disseminating national research, and providing professional development and technical assistance, that will improve vocational and technical education programs, services, and activities.

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During the next 6-Years, Nebraska will receive $45 million in Perkins Grant funding from the Federal government. When we began planning how we might approach this, we pulled together committees, but soon it started looking like it's always looked.

Eventually we realized that the correct positioning for our use of this money is in addressing the widespread concern that America is losing its competitive edge. This focus on competitiveness has given us a mandate and challenge in how we use these funds.

While $45 million over 6-Years is great, it's not quite enough to do all we want to do. Perkins funding represents about 7% of what is spent on technical education in Nebraska.

Historically, Perkins money has been used to fund equipment and new technology, and the mindset of the use of the funds is still the way we get "new stuff."

While providing relevant equipment is important, we need to think differently about how we foster innovation in Nebraska career and technical education. We want to leverage Perkins differently- to make necessary changes in curriculum and instruction. Perkins could be the incentive dollars to help initiate meaningful changes to the improve the quality of education and increase student achievement.

We need to focus on what is good for student and adult learners and what is good for the state. One of the major themes in the new Perkins is strengthening the collaboration and making the transition from secondary to the postsecondary education. We are not just talking about technical courses but the whole transition process. We could use Perkins to create new statewide systems to improve the transition between secondary and postsecondary education.

The new Perkins legislation calls for the concept of "programs of study." They are sometimes called majors at the postsecondary level, but at the secondary level we've never fully implemented programs of study. This will be a big change that we have to plan for carefully.

We also need to look at the area of professional development. We need a sustained program of professional development and not just an hour or half day here or there. We could focus on creating a state-wide professional development plan that aligns with other professional development efforts in the state.

Another topic that all of us are passionate about is accountability. Diploma and graduation rates are part of this process. On the secondary and postsecondary level technical skill attainment is a measure that we need to carefully consider. This really needs to be some type of state or industry-based certification or documentation of skills attained.

The new Perkins legislation ties accountability to sanctions. The sanctions are not only at the state level but also at the local level. We need to implement the concept of sanctions to be used for school improvement rather than being punitive in nature. We need to reduce the burden, simplify the process, and flip it around to use data to drive continuous improvement.

The last area that is exciting is about innovation. We need to be able to assess ourselves and show how we can use the Perkins funds as an incentive to not do business as usual but to improve the quality of curriculum, instruction, and student achievement. We need to make a leap to a new level of innovation.

Our bottom-line mission is to create an individual who can thrive in the 21st century as a life-long learner.

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