



Industry and Education Standards: Different Paths to Common Goals?

SkillsUSA Policy Forum

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Forum Expert Panelists:

Moderator Betsy Brand, *Director of the American Youth Policy Forum*

Jack Bitzenburg, *Director of Career & Technical Education, Kansas City Missouri School District*

Phil Brady, *President of the National Automobile Dealers' Association*

Greg Chambers, *Corporate EHS Manager for Oberg Industries*

Gay Gilbert, *Administrator of Office of Workforce Investment, U.S. Department of Labor*

Tim Horst, *President of Becon Construction, a subsidiary of Bechtel*

Rich Katt, *Administrator of Career & Technical Education, Nebraska Department of Education*

SkillsUSA Representatives:

Adrian Perry, *2006-07 High School Vice President*

Tim Lawrence, *Executive Director, SkillsUSA*



ADRIAN PERRY, SKILLSUSA NATIONAL STUDENT OFFICER:

Not only do I want to greet all of our business partners, but I want to thank you for all of your support and sacrifices you've made in believing in our organization. I hope you have all taken a good look at where your investments are going, because not only are you planting a seed in our lives, but you are planting a seed in our future generations. The time you have taken out of your busy lives, we as students pray and hope we can give back to you for what you have graciously given us. Why? Because you have given us hope, freedom, life, dreams, knowledge and confidence in knowing that we don't have to walk this road alone, because we as students are working hard to bring back skills in America, so we thank for you your contributions and for what you have given us and for all the skills years and more to come.

Now before we get started I would like to introduce a very special person in this room. Without this man, this organization would not be what it is today. Like all of us, he has started from the bottom and has made it to the top. His dedication to youth, education and to SkillsUSA can be seen in any interaction with the organization.

He was a former student member and welding instructor, a state director and he is now the Executive Director of SkillsUSA. He continually strives for excellence and doesn't demerit his success, but perfects it. His character has engaged positive insight in our hands and minds. It is my pleasure and honor to introduce your SkillsUSA Executive Director, Mr. Timothy Lawrence.

TIM LAWRENCE, SKILLSUSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Thank you, Adrian. Industry and education standards, different paths to common goals. We're so thrilled to have the Kansas City Community with us and business, government and labor partners nationally to participate in this discussion today. We're thrilled with the panel that's sitting here, some of the top experts in this nation for all sectors. This event that surrounds this forum is the largest SkillsUSA events in our history. We have around 14,500 people in Kansas City. Students are here competing in 87 skill and leadership events. It covers 16 football fields of floor space, and the Kansas City

Convention facilities are perfect for what we're doing here. This is our 14th year in Kansas City, longer than we've ever stayed in one city with this event. The sleeping nights with students, teachers and partners in this city make this the largest convention in Kansas City this year. We're proud to be here. So thanks to all of you who are going to participate in this discussion.

If you haven't gotten around this Convention Center, particularly up on Level 3 in the exhibit hall, as soon as this forum is over please go upstairs and watch the students compete. You've got to see what these students are doing. If you want to see education at its best, as one of our business partners told me last year, no one can describe what these students are doing. There's no way to describe their behavior, their poise and their professionalism. He said, "I see something that just in one word I can describe it as 'goodness.' There's such a goodness in these young people. He said, I'm bringing my wife and family back next year." That's this year now, to see this event and he did. So when the forum is over please take time to at least take 30 minutes, go up the escalator to the 3rd floor.

There's competition all over this Circle of Champions in the city, from the Exhibit Hall through these levels of the Convention Center and Municipal Auditorium. Actually, over in American Royal is a great construction trades event with about 200 students in it. There are more than a thousand business partners here, great American corporations and associates that support us, so make sure particularly those people from Kansas City that you take a look into what's happening in your city, and we'd love your reaction on what you see. I think you're going to be very surprised, thrilled, motivated and inspired by our students.

It's my pleasure to introduce our moderator. Betsy Brand has served as Director of the American Youth Policy Forum since 2004 after joining the organization as Co-Director in 1998. As Director, Betsy oversees the project and staff of AYPF and specializes in high school reform, career preparation and college access and success. Her education policy career started when she served as the legislative assistant for the House Committee on Education and Labor from 1977 to 1983. She subsequently served with Senator Dan Quayle as a



professional staff member on the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee and was appointed assistant secretary for vocational and adult education at the United States Department of Education under President George H.W. Bush.

A leader in her field, Betsy currently chairs the Center for Occupational Research and Development, the National Child Labor Committee Board of Directors and the National High School Alliance Steering Committee. It is my pleasure and honor to introduce a great friend of career and technical education and a great friend of SkillsUSA, Ms. Betsy Brand.

BETSY BRAND: Thank you, Tim, and thank you Adrian, also, for your kind introduction and great words about the conference.

This is my second time at the SkillsUSA conference, actually the first time it was known as VICA. It was quite a number of years ago, but it is just as exciting the second time around as the first time and seeing the students compete really is a remarkable experience. I'm so pleased that you have more VIPs this year than ever before, because it's up to all of us in our regular jobs to take what we've seen here back to our own communities to our own constituents and share that so that more and more people can learn about SkillsUSA.

I want to tell you a little bit about the forum and how it will work this afternoon. I'm going to take a few minutes just to briefly set it up. First, I will take a few moments to introduce the six panelists that we have on the stage with us. Then I'm going to pose each of them a question that hopefully is broad enough and general enough that they can take it where they want and make sure that they cover the information that they might want to cover about the standards and assessments.

We'll have a second round of questions, but I'd also like to make sure that we have some time to take some of your questions because this is a complicated field. It's a very important field and you've got a lot of experts up here that I think can shed a lot of light on what to do with the issue of technical standards.

So let me just start off by saying that it's a real pleasure to work with this entire panel. I have known several of them for many, many years, and we will have a good conversation.

Career and technical education has always served two masters. One has been to help the academic world ensure that students have the right core skills in English, reading and math with occupational and technical classes that they take reinforcing and supplementing what they learn and supplement and add to it.

At the same time, career and technical education is also trying to meet the needs of business and industry by training and preparing skilled employees. Most of education doesn't have this dual nature or dichotomy going on, but career & Technical Education does have to deal with it and it can be a concern at times.

The traditional education world is interested in standards as they relate to academics, and certainly we've seen that with the No Child Left Behind Act and the focus of states over the last few years on building up standards in the core academic areas. Sometimes this focus includes a heavy emphasis on preparation for college to the exclusion of careers, but very much a strong emphasis on academics has pervaded the national policy conversation over the last several years and certainly at the state policy levels. The No Child Left Behind Act academic standards are driving a lot of what's happening in schools, and in some ways career and tech ed has been left out of some of the policy conversations. Until recently, until the last year or so, I haven't seen a lot of evidence of career and tech ed really rising up to some of the policy conversations, but I think that's really beginning to change for a couple of reasons. I think one is that people are understanding that young people need to find the relevance in what they are studying, and career and technical education provides that relevance. It helps connect the academic subjects to the real world, and students can understand how the academic skills they are learning can be applied and used in context in the real work place.

More and more, we're hearing how bored students are. The Gates Foundation recently commissioned a major study called the Silent Epidemic, which chronicles just truly how bored and disengaged young people are from their learning, spurred a response to make education more relevant, so career and technical education is really being viewed now as a strategy to do that.

At the same time, we need to make sure that our students are prepared not only for post-



secondary education, but for the changing world of work, and you certainly see that on the floor today.

The impact of technology in the 15 years since I've been at this conference and now is really mind boggling. What used to be done by hand is being done by computers and other technology, and it's completely changed the way the world works and the way the workplace is structured so that our students need to have a much better handle on technology and have technological competencies in order to be successful. That's what employers want.

Employers want young people and entry level workers who have core basic skills, but also have occupational technical skills and probably most important, have employability skills. I think that's certainly where SkillsUSA and the other career and technical education organizations shine in creating those employability skills.

But the challenge then for career and tech ed, and for policy makers, is to think about how to marry these two demands, the demands of traditional education and the demands of employers in terms of how to develop this full range of skills that we want in young people.

How do we measure it effectively, because right now I don't think we're really measuring it very well. We're doing an okay job measuring academics, and some states are doing better than others in terms of measuring academics, but we're still at the beginning stages of really understanding how to measure other skills well.

We're doing okay in measuring very specific industry standards in certain industries and for certain careers, but they are not necessarily integrated with the academics, and they are not necessarily integrated in a more holistic assessment system. These are policy challenges that I think both national level leaders and state level leaders are really beginning to think about as we move down the standards-based assessment road to a more comprehensive systematic, well thought-out system of standards and assessments.

We know it's important to assess students – that is not going away. Accountability is here to stay, and we need to find ways to measure what students know and can do, but we need to do it in a way that encourages them, that builds on the skills and competencies that they have that allow them to demonstrate what they have, not in a kind of “Got

you” way. These are challenges that all of us are dealing with.

I think one interesting item that I heard about from Tim and his staff is that SkillsUSA conducted some research on CTE recently, asking both career and technical education directors and state administrators in 32 different states about their ideas on assessments and how they viewed the world of assessments both for career and technical education and education in general.

I think some of these findings are interesting and may help set up our conversation a little bit. I think it gives us a better understanding of what people in the field are thinking about.

According to the survey that SkillsUSA conducted, all of the teachers and administrators that were surveyed said first and foremost assessments have to be aligned with industry standards, and they have to be valued by industry. If they are just standards for standard's sake and they are not linked to the real world demands, they are meaningless. Getting true industry input that's real time and that truly represents the careers as they are today is critical.

Second, instructors and administrators said that the teachers have to be the key player in selecting which assessments to use, but there's also a key role for state directors to play. So at the classroom level the teacher, who is the closest to the student, should make the determination of the assessments. But there also needs to be a framework developed by the state that gives coherence to the system.

The third point is that about half of the students who are enrolled in career and technical education do take some kind of industry-based assessment, and two-thirds of them pass the test, so that's pretty good. Half of them aren't taking assessments, and there are many occupational areas that are unserved or underserved by existing assessments, so we may need to do some development work in certain areas.

The fourth point and last point is that instructors and administrators would prefer, and probably most of the people in this room would agree, that there should be more hands-on testing, more frequent updating of tests and real-world performance assessments to reflect industry standards. I know from the work we do that performance-based assessments are relatively new, and there is not much of a knowledge base about



them. We're really just starting to figure out how to make performance-based assessments work for large scale systems and it's a huge challenge.

So today we want to talk about a number of things. They will include what the current education and industry standards are that exist for work force development. We'll talk a little bit about the work force needs of businesses and how they can be reflected through the assessments. The role of training for business; what some of the policy requirements are around assessments; and what policy leaders should be thinking about in terms of designing assessment systems that incorporate all these different aspects. And then how do we validate these assessments and how do we ensure that they are being used effectively by employers.

I'm going to now introduce the panelists one by one, and then I will start throwing out questions. I think the questions will elicit a lot of ideas from very different perspectives, because we have some really interesting perspectives on our panel today.

Rich Katt is the State Director of career and technical education in the state of Nebraska. He is also the incoming president for the National Association of Career and Technical Education Directors Consortia, a Washington D.C.-based organization that represents all the state directors. He has more than 30 years of experience as a secondary education instructor, and he's now responsible for administering the funds from the Carl Perkins Act to provide leadership and assistance to career and technical education throughout Nebraska's secondary schools and community colleges. He's also involved with coordinating education activities with the Nebraska Work Force Development and the Economic Development Departments.

Phil Brady is the president of the National Automobile Dealers Association. He was appointed to that position in 2001. He directs a staff of almost 500 employees who carry out the activities of the association in both government and industry relations, education and dealership operations, public affairs and dealer retirement and insurance programs. Prior to joining NADA, Phil served five years as the vice president and general counsel of the American Automobile Manufacturers Association, which is the former trade association for Chrysler, Ford and GM. He

also served in the White House during the first Bush and Reagan administrations.

Gay Gilbert is an administrator for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration in the office of Work Force Investment. She's been there since June 2004. In that role, Gay provides federal oversight and leadership for America's work force investment systems, including employment and training programs under the Work Force Investment Act. She also oversees the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative and community-based job training grants. A key focus for her office is in promoting increased collaboration with business and industry, education and a wide array of strategic partners in the context of regional committees.

Tim Horst is the president of Becon Construction Company, the merit shop construction subsidiary of Bechtel Corporation. In addition to his duties at Becon, Tim is also on loan to the Business Round Table as the program manager for the Gulf Coast Work Force Development Initiative. Tim joined Bechtel in 1972 and has worked on projects in the nuclear power, fossil power, telecommunications, industrial and government sectors. He's also registered as a professional civil engineer in the state of California.

Greg Chambers is the corporate EHS manager at Oberg Industries and responsible for overseeing apprenticeship, safety, environmental and health programs in the corporation. He's a journeyman precision toolmaker, a certified hazardous materials manager and a first responder. I want to be with you in an emergency. Greg is president of the National Institute of Metal Working Skills and also vice president of the American Apprenticeship Round Table. He's worked at Oberg Industry for more than 20 years and has also worked at Alcoa, DuPont and General Foods during his career.

And our final panelist, **Jack Bitzenberg**, is the director of career and technical education for the Kansas City, Missouri school district. Thank you for hosting us here in Kansas City. That school district is an urban school district that serves more than 27,000 students. And prior to his tenure with the school district, Jack was employed with the metropolitan community colleges for 19 years as dean, associate vice chancellor and president of the Business and Technology College. Before moving



to the Kansas City area in 1985, Jack worked as a classroom teacher and principal. He also worked for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for eight years and served as the director of marketing education and the Missouri state tech advisor.

Rich, career and technical education obviously plays a huge role in fulfilling the need for a skilled work force. You're a representative of the state directors, and all of your peers in the 50 states and the territories are looking at how to ensure that career and technical education is meeting the demands of industry.

Tell us a little bit about what you and your fellow state directors are thinking about with regard to assessments, both the academic assessments that your states are working with and some of the technical and occupational assessments.

RICH KATT: Okay. I'll start off with the academic side first. Perkins IV did change how we are going to be dealing with measuring the academic assessment as regards to the performance measures required in the Perkins IV. It's now aligned with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. In some ways, we were moving that direction in my state already because it just makes sense. We don't need two separate measures.

So I think from that perspective, from the strictly measurement perspective, it's going to work well for us to take a look at our CTE concentrators and see how they perform on that academic attainment performance measure through NCLB.

The technical skill side, that's another story. That's been one that we've struggled with, and I think that's the focus of most of the conversation this afternoon, because there is no national standard system similar to what was created under NCLB, so we are looking for something in that range.

There are a couple things I think we want to keep in mind as we're going. The state directors are going to be meeting and talking a great deal about how we collaborate, how we connect on something that resembles a national system without being so restrictive that it backs national curriculum. It's a tough one to deal with because we want to make sure that whatever the assessment is, that it meets the rigor the industry wants to make certain that when that student has a certificate or credential, that it's meaningful to the industry but it also has to

align to the curriculum. We have a reliability issue of making sure that the curriculum is in place and it meets the education perspective, but make certain that in that process we're reinforcing those academic skills so that our students do perform well on the NCLB measurement.

But yet how we develop that in a way that we can all buy into? What we really don't need are 50 independent systems of technical skill assessments, so the state directors organization is starting to pull together a task force to take a look at how we're going to address this under Perkins IV. How we're going to work together.

Probably the most significant thing that's going to happen is a very significant partnership with business and industry in terms of making sure that whatever the credential is that it really does demonstrate technical skill attainment for those students that is meaningful, not only just to meet the measurement of Perkins, that's important, but it's far more important that it really does. I think we're at a point in time for education that I'd like to see move across the entire assessment world. It cannot be just about what we know. That's important, but that is not the end of the question. The rest of it is what can you do with what you know.

So as we start to build this technical assessment, it's a combination of both. It's a combination of what it is the student knows, their knowledge base, but it's also how do they apply it, what's the skill set, what can they do with what they know to be successful citizens, so we are still looking for answers. We're young, we're early in Perkins IV in the development of this but I can guarantee you the state directors are very open as an organization to working on a national level to develop a system that is meaningful, that benefits both the students and the industries that we serve.

BETSY BRAND: Thank you very much, Rich.

Phil, your industry certainly has been a real leader in creating standards and assessments through the Automotive Service Excellence program. You just heard Rich say that we don't need 50 different state standards, so what has ASE meant to your industry? Could other industries replicate that?

PHIL BRADY: I appreciate it, Betsy.



I want to say at the outset having heard the expertise of everybody sitting on this panel, I appreciate very much the opportunity to be here.

ASE has been very, very important to our industry. National standards for the schools have been very, very important to the industry because there is an ever-increasing complexity in the automobile industry that's the obvious result of the ever increasing complexity of cars, so much that you truly need to have very well-trained automotive technicians coming into the industry to satisfy customers. And the competitiveness in our industry, the automobile industry, is such that you better have a satisfied customer, or you're not going to be able to keep your doors open.

We conducted a study just several months ago, and the results were just released in April. The Harris Interactive Study was a third-party study on job opportunities in the automobile industry, and they came out with a study saying that at any time there are almost 110,000 jobs in the automobile industry, which means virtually every automobile dealer in this country has a "Help Wanted" sign out. That works out to almost five positions per dealership, if you will.

The majority of those, 45,000, are in sales, but the next largest number is in service, some 36,000 jobs. Those jobs are very important jobs, and you have to be very well trained to be able to enter into those positions. The compensation in those positions runs from \$30,000 to \$100,000 a year, which I think would surprise many people, but again, when you think of the complexity of automobiles these days and realize you need to have a very well-trained work force coming into the industry. It's very impressive today seeing what's going on upstairs with the competition, and it was very inspiring, frankly, to see the great young people who are competing in the automotive sector.

I was told that there were some 32,000 students throughout the country who were competing within their states for the hundred folks that are upstairs, and it was again something that made you feel good about the future.

But the message, I guess, here in terms of what I can contribute to this is one of the points that you made, Betsy. What does the work force need? The automobile industry and the work force needs are great, and particularly in the technological and automotive technician areas, and they are very, very

good jobs. We're doing everything we can, particularly through initiatives that we've been involved in, one of the hats I'm wearing as I'm sitting here is called AYES, Auto Youth Education Systems.

This year I'm the chairman of the organization. The president of the organization is here, Larry Cummings, who I think many of you know. Under Larry's leadership, we've been very careful to ensure that the standards are being applied at all times and that testing is being applied at all times so that we truly have very competent automotive technicians that are graduating from our program.

I think there are quite a number of AYES students who are in the 100 folks upstairs here involved in the competition and lots of other competitions. It's a very important area, and I appreciate the opportunity.

BETSY BRAND: Thank you, Phil.

Okay, shifting to the federal level, we turn to Gay Gilbert.

Obviously, the Department of Labor is interested in ensuring that we have a highly-skilled work force, and in making sure that we can measure those skills.

Gay, can you tell us a little bit about what the department is doing with regard to developing assessments.

GAY GILBERT: Thanks, Betsy.

Before I do that, I guess I'd like to share a brief slant on sort of some of the philosophy that's driving my thinking, and I think others inside the Department of Labor right now.

First of all, I think that we believe that education, both at the post secondary level and K through 12, is really about preparing students for work as well as for life-long learning. The fact that we're going to have to be a continuous education pathway and the work piece needs to be embedded in our education processes for all students.

Also, I would say that in order to get to those academic standards that we're trying to do much better at and to really raise the bar on, we need to do a whole lot more contextual learning and what a great opportunity to expose kids to career and potential to start building those careers.

The other thing that I think we're pretty convinced about right now is that we need to start



offering kids the opportunity to build their careers earlier in their educational process, and we need to compress the educational structure in ways that increases the ability for kids to get the credentials and be able to move into work sooner. So all those things are shaping how we think. If we believe that it's all about work and we know that industry must drive the occupational skill requirements once we get to work, how do we get there?

Clearly, we need a whole lot more attention, I think, from many industries much like the ASE model, much like the NIMS model you'll hear about shortly. Really strong engagement is needed from business and industry across the nation defining the skills and competencies needed in the workplace that need to be refreshed continuously. Innovation and technology changes what the skill needs are in those industries, so it has to be kind of a continual thing. This needs to be something that industry really truly embraces. Nobody else can really do that.

We in Department of Labor struggle with what the federal role is in helping with that, and I think we've come to the conclusion that we at a minimum are conveners of industry to help them get to those at least baseline competencies across an industry that will help shape assessment tools and the kind of testing that will occur to help people get the credentials they need to move into work successfully. That's where we're spending a lot of our time today, is really on convening industry to do that. We've begun advanced manufacturing. We're in financial services, energy, kind of walking down the list of high-demand industries to do that. We also are trying to help not only our work force system, but I think also this really spreads into the education system to understand assessment tools broadly, and assessment tools can bring everything from aptitude and ability tests all the way to the most rigorous competency-based industry and occupation kind of assessments.

How do we blend those tools and use those tools most effectively as students progress? We're not experts, and we need to collaborate with all of you to make that happen.

BETSY BRAND: Thank you.

Back to an industry person, Tim.

The construction industry is facing a shortage of skilled workers, so as you're thinking about filling

some of the shortages, what kinds of training programs are effective in attracting and bringing skilled employees into the construction industry? What's the role of industry standards in those training programs?

TIM HORST: Thank you very much.

Well, first of all, let me place my response to you in the context of my background and company that I work for. Becon Construction is a large industrial contractor that specializes in power stations, refineries and other industrial types of construction. I wear a double hat in that I'm currently also on loan part time in the Business Round Table out of Washington D.C., heading up an initiative called Gulf Coast Work Force Development. We're trying to recruit and train 20,000 new entrants to the construction industry along the Gulf Coast to aid in the recovery of the 2005 season, so in both those applications we're very much interested in establishing uniformity of training processes and standards to assess those individuals who enter into the trades.

I mentioned that the construction industry is facing a critical shortage of resources, and that's absolutely true. Currently, there are 7 million people in this country who are actively engaged in the construction industry, and we need to recruit, train and employ many new people each year just to stay even to compensate for retirements, for growth in the industry and for people who decide to move on to other occupations. So there is a high volume of transition.

In my particular business, we would move into a location to build a power station, having never worked there before, and we need to very quickly recruit and quickly train a work force that will be able to execute the work. Having a uniform standard to do that is very critical. We have to be signatory to the National Training Service Agreement with the National Center for Construction Education Research out of Gainesville, Florida, which had the full sweep of construction training standards and assessments that we can use to gauge the competency of the individuals that we hire. Without those kinds of standards, we would be pretty much set adrift, so utilizing those standards allows us to very quickly recruit and utilize training materials train folks to employ them to work.



As far as the NTSA, one thing we do is contribute cash to the programs. Fifteen cents for every craft hour worked is placed into a training fund, of which we use 13 cents for internal training, and 2 cents goes to National Center to maintain standards. So not only are we giving it verbal support, we also give it financial support.

BETSY BRAND: Thank you very.

Greg, how do you see apprenticeship programs fitting into the development of statewide assessments or industry-wide assessments? What's your experience on that.

GREG CHAMBERS: Well, thanks for inviting me on the panel. As I look out I see a lot of familiar faces. You're right. Apprenticeships are key, for a few brief reasons.

What we have to understand about apprenticeship is that you have to have an academic standard, and a performance standard, so not only do you have to know something, but you have to do something. Literally, the apprenticeship programs almost align directly with the state standards that we have in place. In fact, we're working right now to implement more standards on the performance transfer side, because you can set a performance standard but there is nothing there to support that, performance standard being implemented throughout the organization. We're looking at getting this more on the state level because there is a need for speed and people.

If you pull your cell phones out, how many of you would like to have that same cell phone for the next 10, 15 years. In the current industry, advanced manufacturing, that's kind of what we directed our efforts toward – long-term, long-running materials or products. Well, life cycles these days, are three years, so literally the standards have to be reviewed. You can't take any more time than three years, because you have a whole new generation of products out there, and it's a moving target, so you must have speed of implementation as well as performance standards if you really want to be effective.

So apprenticeship covers both angles, knowledge and performance, and literally that's what we're driving toward, so it's an integral part of the state standard.

BETSY BRAND: Thanks.

Jack, from a school district perspective, you may have one of the more challenging jobs in the room, dealing with an urban school district and all the difficulties that we know they face.

As we've talked about policy and the ideal types of assessments, what do your teachers think about assessment systems? What would be most useful for you to help all students succeed? What are your thoughts on how school districts could benefit by linking academic and industry assessments?

JACK BITZENBERG: I think the most beneficial thing that could help me, my teachers and in effect our students, is to have clearly defined standards, both academic and industry standards. When I heard Rich mention 50 different instruments or 50 different standards or 50 different ways of doing this, and that they were going to work closely with industry, that's what we really have to do.

A quality statement that I've never forgotten was that if my output is your input then you are my customer, so if business and industry are our customers in terms of the students we train, to go to work for them, then we better be listening. But we need to listen, hopefully to a single voice or at least a confined, combined voice.

One of the things, too, that I think is really important – and I will use an example for an unnamed school district because of standardized testing – and that is No Child Left Behind kind of achievement test requirements for districts to achieve accreditation. As we began or saw this district working desperately toward the test date, the students were pulled from career and technical education classes to take test preparation classes. That seems to me to be counter-productive. And something that I think we as educators, we as industry leaders, we as government influencers, need to keep in mind, that sometimes you get so caught up in teaching for the test that you, in fact, forget what it was there for.

So, I guess I come back to my simple answer that I started with and then got to rambling. Standards should be easy to understand and developed with a single voice so we know where we're going. We know what our target is, that's what we need.



BETSY BRAND: Good advice. Many of you may be familiar with the Achieve, Inc., American Diploma Project which is an effort to pull together states in the development of their academic standards. I am not sure whether Nebraska is part of that effort or not, but there are about 27 states that participate in this activity, and the goal is not to develop national standards, but to do what Rich was talking about – pull together enough states to come up with a consensus, enough of a consensus around what a standard should be. It's moving very slowly. You can imagine pulling 27 states together, not even 50, but 27 is a real challenge. I don't know whether they will make it, but they seem to at least have agreed that it's an important goal. How they are going to get there is the next step.

So I'd like to pose a question, this is to everybody on the panel, because we've got a representative from the federal government, we have state official, we have a district official, we have representatives from business and labor and apprenticeship. Who should take the lead in creating this assessment system? What level should do it?

Who makes the most sense to step up to the plate and say how it's going to happen or what it's going to look like? Or should we just allow it to bubble up a thousand flowers perspective that is existing right now? There's this example of Achieve, Inc., which is a nonprofit organization managing 27 states. That's a different kind of model, but I'm curious about the different perspectives that we have on the panel. Who should take the lead in developing a standard and assessment system that includes both the academic and the occupational skills? I would like to hear from everybody, so whoever wants to jump in first is fine.

JACK BITZENBERG: Thank you, I think just as we've heard from some of our panelists that represent different industries as members of organizations within those industries and from the career and technical education perspective, we need to listen very closely to what they have to say.

As federal regulation is crafted and our states are then given that legislation to implement, it would seem to me that those two stakeholders definitely need to be talking. There are associations of state directors and there are industry

associations. The standards can be interpreted and worked on then by the state departments of education which administer the instructional programs at the local level, and career and technical education is included in the departments of education, which are also responsible for the academic preparation. It only seems natural to me that industry working closely with our departments of education, then it filters down to the instructional programs at the local level. Then you don't have 50 different things.

GAY GILBERT: I think this is a tough question. It's messy if we're talking about changing structurally how we think about education and its relevance to work and how we move people into jobs with the right skills.

My sense is that it's not all about the assessments. I think that we want to be positioned so that when our students, whether they are leaving high school or maybe they have been in a dual enrollment with the community college and are ready to go to work, that they have the capacity to take the industry standard assessment and pass it. You want them to be positioned for that. Is that going to be the measure in the end of our high schools or other institutions achieving their mission, or was that the right outcome?

One thing I think we need to begin thinking about is tracking a little bit more, particularly for our high schools, is what are the outcomes from high school. Are we moving our students onto education pathways, or to the extent that they are moving into an industry, are they becoming employed and being retained in jobs in the skills that they trained for? So it might be not just about assessment tools. It might be more how do we measure our outcomes over time as well.

BETSY BRAND: And who should take the lead?

GAY GILBERT: And who should take the lead? I guess my sense about the lead is that this has got to be something of a collaborative effort.

We have the government level, and I think education and labor share some policy responsibility as well as probably some investment responsibility in that regard. I do think to make that real, we have to have business and industry as partners. We have to have educators at all levels as



partners, so it has to be a collaborative effort that's kind of horizontally/vertically connected.

It's going to be messy, but we need somebody who is going to play convener. I think that our industry partners can help us drive the need to do this. They have political capital to spend to sort of force, the conversations that we need to have. You don't want government solely leading the charge. That does not work very well, but we need to all be at the table together.

BETSY BRAND: Mr. Chambers?

GREG CHAMBERS: I think that you have to realize we're already linked. The linkage is already there. If the businesses don't operate, there's no tax base to give to the government, and this supports the educational community, so literally we are already linked.

When it comes to assessments, we break that linkage for some reason. Standards break that linkage.

Industry has to start off with the standards. They have to set the goals, set performance requirements and expectations, because literally that's what we go to school for: to get a job. Whether it's college or high school, we go to school to get a job, so industry has to set the goals.

Now, the methodology and process of reaching those goals, industry doesn't have the expertise. That's where education comes in. You have the expertise and knowledge transfer, and how to get that knowledge transferred quickly, but industry sets up the goals.

When I say goals, I don't mean just one goal. I mean a lot of general steps we have to make for educators because things are changing. Things are changing overnight. We can set up a program, and before it's promulgated and reaches the educators, we could change the outcomes.

That's how fast things are changing, so literally we have to set things up with milestones to give to education to give to the educators, so that they can then build a system to transfer the knowledge and performance skills quickly within that confine.

One thing missing in a lot of assessments and standards is time. Unfortunately, that's the one thing we don't have is time.

PHIL BRADY: I can only speak for the automobile industry, but it's obviously a national industry. As we speak here, there's actually a debate going on right now in the House of Representatives about emission standards, and whether or not states can have different emission standards from the national standards, so it's a very current debate.

On the auto and technician side that I referenced before, ASE is a national credentialing organization and very important. We've been doing it since 1972. I think that has to be that way in my specific industry, and it has worked very well, but it does require constant input to make sure it is current, as others have mentioned here. I don't know if you say three years – it's almost faster than three years – that you have to be reevaluating whether those standards and the testing is exactly appropriate for the ever-increasing complexity of cars for the technicians who are certified.

TIM HORST: From my perspective, I agree with Greg. Assessments in and of themselves reveal nothing unless they are integrated into an educational delivery system as part of a whole.

In terms of who should take the lead in implementing that process, clearly it needs to be a public/private partnership.

I think those of us on the industry side have a clear understanding of what it is we're looking for, what kind of employees we'd like to bring into our industry, what kind of skills they should have. We also possess something that are our experts to help in developing the training guide and assessment tools.

On the educational side, there's an understanding of the process of how to deliver those kinds of educational products, how to administer the assessments and how to maintain the credential. Working together, I think we can move forward.

Clearly on an industry by industry basis, I think the industry itself is going to be the beneficiary of the trained work force. It needs to step forward and form a coalition, form a team to start developing some standards, and then reach out to the academic world to help build on those.

BETSY BRAND: Rich?



RICH KATT: I think we've heard it's a collaborative effort. Three years ago in Nebraska, we brought together a nongovernmental organization called Future Force Nebraska, representatives of the economic development, work force development, K-12, all two- and four- year private colleges and universities and employers, to take a look at our targeted industries and our economic growth. That model works.

You get the right people around the table to talk. Those industries have identified and targeted industries – manufacturing is one of those – they've taken a look at standards, talked about assessments, brought it down to the curricular level so it deals with that. We have various pathways going on, but the collaborative leadership needs to be at the top, and you make it happen as was talked about on the panel.

BETSY BRAND: I thought there might be some common approach there. That's okay.

So we'd like to open it up to the audience for questions. There's a microphone at the front of the room. We'll take a couple minutes with questions, so think about your questions. I have another question actually to pose to the panel, and then hopefully you'll generate some of your own.

I think one of the challenges that I see from policy is that there's so much emphasis on academic standards right now with the focus on No Child Left Behind, and the emphasis on getting young people into college. There's very much a cultural kind of preconception that everybody is going to college and that it's a four-year college, so parents want their kids to go to four-year college. So all of the policies are being driven by this college for all kind of philosophy. That is really narrowing a lot of decisions about curriculum and instruction and assessments. They are very much focused on academics right now.

It's clear when you look out on the floor here that there are thousands and thousands of students that are benefiting by getting these industry certifications, not just through SkillsUSA, but through many of the other avenues out there. I don't know that the public conversation is embracing that separate world. In my mind, oftentimes I think policy makers see them as very separate worlds, so I'm curious to ask the panel in your own world, whether it's government, industry

or education, how have you been able to bridge these worlds? Have you come up with some effective arguments or conversations about how to change public awareness and have the public be more supportive of the value of industry certifications and skills?

RICH KATT: The best strategy that we've used is to put the employer behind the microphone and to let the industry speak about what they want, what skill sets they need, what knowledge base they need in their employees. And have that conversation. We've had several statewide forums with key educators along with the employers, and when you get the conversation started, I know we've not changed policy – national federal policy or even state policy – but we have a conversation started that feels very different than it even felt two years ago about what students need to be successful. We're coupling that with a new emphasis on career guidance, kind of a lost art in some situations. School counseling has become much more reactionary to whatever the current crisis is.

We're now building a K-12 or K-life counseling career guidance program, where we give information to parents. Again, when you connect parents to employers, start to get students involved in understanding what the manufacturing really is all about and break down some of the stereotypes, that health care is not just doctors and nurses. There are five pathways, there are all these jobs. When you start that conversation, it does change people's minds but you have to start early, and you also have to get to the parents because the mindset is out there that everybody needs a four-year college degree to have any degree of success in life. We know that's not true. We just need to counter that with some very effective spokespeople and the most effective we found were industry people.

GAY GILBERT: Seems to me that we need to change minds on a couple levels here. Technically, I think with our parents, but if we think that we're going to require post secondary education, then all of us are going to have life-long learning as we move forward because skills will change over time.

Quite frankly, we're all going to go to college at some point in time. I think this is where community colleges play a rather pivotal role, quite frankly. Enter dual enrollment programs, and I



know with many industries – construction being a really good example – with the image of construction being not a post-secondary kind of thing, in fact it really is today. The skills in construction are raising the same way as in advanced manufacturing and others. There are ways to attach college credentials to very occupational skills development in those kinds of industries, and quite frankly, because they are high tech, we need to think of them that way. I think there are ways we can start to persuade the public a little bit, that this is not one or the other. It's really a different kind of way to look at education generally and how you get into the world of work.

We also need to do a lot of educating about careers and opportunities. I'd love to go to the floor today and really see in action the excitement of the kids who are doing these really technical levels that they use. We need to show that to more of the world and embed that career opportunity piece at a lower level in our middle schools. This is going to be a way to help that.

BETSY BRAND: Mr. Brady?

PHIL BRADY: I guess I would just pick up on a comment that was made. The biggest challenge we see in the auto technician field is the changing perception of parents and school counselors. That's something we take as a serious responsibility. The reality before us is that these are very skilled workers as you see the young people upstairs in their work, there's more computer power in every one of your cars than the first Apollo moon shot. Cars are truly rolling computers, and they require great discipline, great skill, great ability. That's a message we need to get out there any way we can, but it's challenging to do so.

So I encourage all of you, I know we're doing it through our publication and trying to do it through the AYS automotive initiative that I mentioned earlier, but it's a tough something we're going to have to do.

Just a more general comment, in observing all the other positions upstairs and competitions going on, I was looking over what's actually being done. It struck me people need to recognize these are not outsourceable jobs. These are jobs for things that are in our own place of business and work. They won't go offshore.

I guess the third and last comment I want to make is that one way of changing perceptions is to bring the policy makers here. I'm an example. This is my first visit, and I leave a true believer and will certainly be a supporter going forward. I can see value in the Perkins and other folks to actually see what's happening here.

GREG CHAMBERS: I guess my comments, as I said before, we're already connected. What we have to do is find those common grounds more than anything else. Right now, if you stand on your campus and pretty much do the things you do inside your institution and we stay in our buildings and do the things we do, it's just like a marriage. We're headed for divorce, and times I think we're separated already, but the fact of the matter is we need to work and find common ground.

For instance, we have a project that was in Pennsylvania called Battlebots, with industry and academia working together to make projects for kids, but what we found out was when you drill down, even the kids were separated. You know, you had academic, college-bound kids that the career and technical education kids called nerds.

Then you had the academic kids looking at the career and technical education kids as if they are dumb and they can't think their way out of a paper bag.

Through this project, this Battlebots project, common ground was reached so now they have to do a project together. The nerds found out that, "Hum, you know what, these career and technical education guys, they aren't that dumb."

Career and technical education kids found out the nerds weren't that strange. Industry looked at academia and said, "You know what, what you're doing now is really good," and academia looked at industry and said, "You know what, you aren't just a bunch of money grubbing carpet baggers," but we have to find common ground. We have to do something together, not just come to meetings, not just go to conference and seminars. We have to find some things for us to work together, and that's when you're going to start tearing down walls, and that's when you're going to start building synergy and energy and things are going to happen. Until then nothing will happen.



TIM HORST: In the construction industry, we see a repeated trend that we see over and over and over again, young people in their late 20s who finally discover construction. They drift through high school, either drop out or graduate. They then drift about trying this, trying that and not until they are 27, 28, 29 they actually discover construction and then start their introductory training to move to full journeyman status, so it's taken them a long time to get there.

To address that issue, one of the things we're trying to do in the industry as businesses is outreach to the high schools and outreach to the middle schools to talk about construction and the kinds of challenges and opportunities that are there.

I would like to acknowledge the U.S. Department of Labor. It has been very effective in talking to high school age folks about careers in construction. It's written at their level. It's exciting. It builds a lot of interest. We find it to be a very effective tool.

BETSY BRAND: Any questions from the audience?

Would you identify yourself, please, by name and organization?

MS. JONES: Sheila Jones, with the Economic Opportunity Foundation in Kansas City, Kansas.

This question is because it's banging on every side of us, north, side, east and west is expanding as far as in this case development on each end. Work Force Investment Boards are our collaborative. They are usually a cross section of the community, and they are definitely involved in developing the work force.

How can those Work Force Investment Boards that are usually involved in a large collaboration. How can they be involved? How can they be involved in starting the conversation or be involved in the conversation? If anybody can think of any cutting-edge source, a publication, a website or something which already has engaged in that conversation, is there any source that you can give that would be instrumental for them to do that?

We as job developers in the community are always faced with the very same thing. We try to develop the work force, young people and adults to meet the employers' needs. A lot of the employers and young people are saying they are not ready.

They are not discouraged, they are not ready. We have a large area developing at Village West. We get large amount of people to go out to the interview but they are saying the work force is not ready. That's why I'm here today and I have one question for Tim Horst as well.

BETSY BRAND: Let's first get through the initial question and see.

Gay or Rich, from the state level?

RICH KATT: We do a lot of partnering with the Work Force Investment Board in Nebraska. They are serving as a pseudo Perkins Advisory Board for us, and we've been working together. They co-founded or co-sponsored for us our Future Force Forum, which was where we brought the industry folks together. We've been working to build that relationship simply because they are a phenomenal cross section of employers who have a vested interest in economic growth in the state, so we've just opened the lines of communication. We go to their meetings. We report all the time what we're doing on career and technical education, Perkins and so forth. The communication opening, that's all, it evolved in about the last three years but they have really become agreeing to us, and we're looking forward to how we work together to accomplish both of our requirements in Perkins and in WIA.

GAY GILBERT: We have been preaching, I guess, for probably the last five years at least that the Work Force Investment System really is pretty well positioned because of the cross section on Work Force Investment Boards to be sort of the catalyst or convenor for bringing together business, industry and education in our work force. To really develop work force solutions, clearly understand competencies in our industry, translate that into assessment tools, and figure out how we play that out on the ground are all work force exclusions, many of which have to be solved locally in many ways.

I think work force boards have a really huge role to play, and we are strongly encouraging that strategic partnership in a collaboration we talked about are necessary for all these kinds of problems.



MR. BABISH: Al Babish and I've worked with Jack at the Career and Technical Center for 21 years.

I think all you're talking about systemic types of things and there's a little bit of all those things but when you talk about assessment – ACT (American College Testing) has a program called WorkKeys – and WorkKeys is applied academics, applied math, and reading. They did a study and found that the scores go from three to seven. If they score fives for reading and math they could get 85 percent of the jobs in the United States of America. It also corresponds with the fact that if they scored five across the board they would also score the 50 percentile on the ACT, so there are things that exist out there.

ACT did a study and found that the academics the students are getting aren't even preparing them for college. We need students to learn how to learn and be problem solvers. I believe SkillsUSA is the basic venue or modality for teaching kids experiential. There's a difference between academic and experiential.

I would say that career and technical education is more like gifted education than regular education is like gifted education. The reason I say that is if you go into any gifted classroom, it's individual learning, so the modality is different. That's why we have problems with the assessment, because the assessments are testing two different things. You don't need students that know a lot about the facts.

Would you like to know what the content validity for any particular state academic test would have with ASE testing program or even how it crosswalks? We don't know these things. These are things we need to know first before we start talking about these other kinds of things but there

is an instrument and I don't work for ACT or WorkKeys. We can see that the students are students who are scoring better than the national norm on work force kinds of academics, which also parallels to the other kinds of academics.

BETSY BRAND: That's a great suggestion. I'm afraid we're out of time, and I know SkillsUSA likes to stay on time, so I think I'm going to have to call this panel to a close.

I want to thank all of our presenters. Give them a warm hand. Thank you very much for attending today's forum.

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