



Building a Competent Workforce through Creative Learning Solutions

August 14, 2006

To my friends and colleagues,

The letter “C” is the first letter in the term Career and Technical Education, and it is also the first letter in the word “celebration”. The Career and Technical Education (CTE) community’s recent accomplishment – passage of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act – is cause for celebration! The resounding bipartisan support for continuation of the act as voiced by both the House (399-1) and Senate (99-0) is even more reason to celebrate. And this occurred in a time of intense competition for federal dollars and during an administration that had targeted the program for zero funding! I know that those kinds of victories don’t come without persistent lobbying of representatives around the country and significant relationships with business partners. I know this because not too long ago I served as legislative chair for the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education, your professional association. It comes as no surprise that the new Perkins Act focuses on accountability. CTE does amazing things throughout this nation for students, for employers, and for our economy and we need objective numbers that substantiate that.

The National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) can help your state successfully implement this newest version of Perkins. For example, Section 113 (Accountability), [b.2.A] identifies indicators for secondary CTE students. It emphasizes that measures are *valid and reliable* and include at a minimum *challenging academic standards and attainment of skill proficiencies, including achievement on technical assessments that are aligned with industry recognized standards*. NOCTI’s standardized assessments are based on nationally validated, workplace-based standards and include written (cognitive) and performance (psychomotor) components. In some cases our assessments are meshed with industry association certification programs. Our assessments may also be customized to reflect differences within your state. Many states have found our assessments essential for helping to fill *high skill, high wage, and high demand occupations*.

Similarly, Section 113 (Accountability), [b.2.B] identifies indicators for post-secondary CTE students. It also emphasizes that measures are *valid and reliable* and include at a minimum *challenging career and technical skill proficiencies, including student achievement on technical assessments that are aligned with industry recognized standards*. We have extensive experience in maintaining quality data banks and in keeping separate post-secondary and secondary databases so that there is no confusion regarding the norms of these two populations. We provide the same services as those described for secondary test takers.

Section 113 also addresses local performance and we believe that when trying to address consistent measures it makes sense to contract with a single agency that can address the needs of the state as well as accommodate the requirements of local institutions. With four decades of experience in designing, developing, and delivering occupational competency assessments, NOCTI actively assists career-technical educators in identifying and assessing the occupational skills required, while keeping pace with an ever-changing global economy.

Our large assessment battery is continually updated using a structured job and task analysis process. In addition, NOCTI is the delivery partner for a number of industry-based assessments and this could help students in your state to access additional assessments from the same web portal.

Section 113 also contains reporting requirements and the need for states and locals to disaggregate data. NOCTI's score reporting capacity is robust. Our reports can be a powerful tool for administrators, coordinators, and instructors who are interested in program improvement (the title of this act). Basic score reporting provides results for each student, with comparisons at the local, state, and national level. We also offer both specialized and customized reports that provide more detailed information. Pre/post-assessment comparison reports, task link reports, comparison to cut-score reports, and demographic analysis reports, are all examples of reports that states have requested in the past.

Section 122 (state plan), [c.1.A] focuses on alignment of secondary to post-secondary courses. NOCTI has been used successfully in states as the vehicle for determining competency of a test taker and subsequent awarding of post-secondary credit. This avoids program duplication, student frustration and saves tax payer dollars. Even if there is no formal Tech Prep arrangement between two institutions, secondary students may use their NOCTI score report to validate skill and content mastery when transitioning to a post-secondary institution or directly into the workforce. The data provided on the report can assure post secondary instructors that the student is prepared for the next level of education.

In addition, Section 122 (state plan), [c.1.K/L] focuses on academic content and rigorous academic standards. Analyses of NOCTI assessments reveal numerous items that match state and national standards in all academic levels of math, science, and language arts. The analysis of a representative NOCTI assessment shows that on a written test, 64% of the items match one or more national language arts standards, 24% match national math standards and 4% match national science standards. Regarding our performance test, 71% of the jobs contain alignment to one or more national language arts standards matches, 86% of the jobs contain alignment to the national math standards matches, and 14% of the jobs contain alignment to the national science standards. Both written and performance tests include items that range from knowledge through synthesis, using Bloom's Taxonomy terminology, and on our performance test, 72% of the jobs are at the synthesis level. All of NOCTI's Job Ready technical assessments have been aligned to the national standards for Math, Science and Language Arts. Supplemental reports are available which provide an additional analysis of the test data by academic standard. These reports can help to target academic areas for additional instruction. We have the capability of aligning your state's academic standards to our assessment as well.

We know that it is critical that a state maintains a pipeline of qualified technicians to maintain its infrastructure and improve its standard of living, but it is also important that the teachers who deliver the technical instruction to those technicians are qualified as well. Section 122, [c.2] focuses on professional development and teacher certification. NOCTI's foundation was built on the premise of providing quality technical teacher certification. We continue to offer this service through a network of nationally approved Area Test Centers. NOCTI's Experienced Worker assessments can be used as the option for technical teacher certification.

Section 124 (state leadership activities) includes multiple possibilities for NOCTI to interface with state and/or local plans. Under required uses of funds, NOCTI can assist in these areas:

- 1) *developing, improving, or expanding the use of technology* (electronic data bases, portals, branded state assessment sites are all possibilities)
- 2) providing *professional development programs* (data-driven decision making)
- 3) assisting with *effective integration of challenging academics*
- 4) assessing *effective teaching skills*
- 5) *effective use of scientifically- based data*
- 6) *improving student achievement*
- 7) *supporting partnerships* (higher education, associations, and/or employers)

Under permissible uses of funds, NOCTI can assist in these areas:

- 1) generating *initiatives to facilitate the transition of sub-baccalaureate into baccalaureate programs*
- 2) *improving or developing new CTE courses or initiatives*
- 3) developing mechanisms for *awarding incentive grants*
- 4) *supporting entrepreneurship programs*
- 5) providing *valid and reliable assessment development*
- 6) *enhancing data systems*

NOCTI is a consortium governed; non-profit organization that has served the CTE community for over 40 years. Our staff is as passionate about serving the needs of CTE as I am. We really are all about "*Building a competent workforce through creative learning solutions.*"

As you develop your state plans, please contact us. We can provide you with solutions to many of your CTE needs under the new Perkins legislation, but more importantly, solutions for the good of your students and our economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John C. Foster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

Dr. John Foster
NOCTI President and CEO