Texas Workforce Investment Council

Policy News Highlights

Policy News Highlights is a quarterly review of selected reports relevant to the policy and research functions of the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council). Federal and state agency websites, in addition to numerous public policy and educational databases, are scanned monthly for relevant and emerging issues. Reports are catalogued and stored electronically in the Council's Information Repository (IR).

The IR is divided into 12 topic areas that correspond to priority issues supporting the Council's current strategic plan. They are: adult education, apprenticeship, career and college readiness, career and technical education, clusters and sector strategies, competitiveness, data, disabilities, dropout prevention, green initiatives, supply-demand, and training. Not every topic area is addressed each quarter.

Policy News Highlights is organized as an annotated bibliography with short summaries of recent articles grouped according to their topic area.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship Expansion in England: Lessons for the United States, Center for American Progress, June 2014
The apprenticeship system in England has realized significant expansion in recent years since lawmakers made work-based training a primary workforce development strategy. According to this report, the percentage of women apprentices is higher than men, whereas men dominate U.S. programs. The employment options are also more diverse, with programs offered in business and administration and law. In the U.S., skilled trades remain the focus. Key features of the program include: a business-to-business ambassador network to engage new employers, a detailed toolkit and support hotline for new programs, and an apprenticeship vacancy matching tool. Financial incentives include training funds, grants for small employers, and an apprentice minimum wage. The report includes lessons for the U.S. that increase employment outcomes for workers and improve business productivity for employers.
http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ayres-UKapprenticeship-brief2.pdf

Career and College Readiness

Dual Enrollment: A Strategy to Improve College-Going and College Completion Among Rural Students, Education Commission of the States, June 2014
Dual enrollment programs have been proven to increase the likelihood that students complete high school and attend college, but students from rural areas remain underserved. This article addresses challenges that rural school districts face in providing dual enrollment and discusses strategies that states have utilized in order to improve program offerings for students residing in these areas. Offering

financial options that cover the cost of coursework and certification is one approach to increase the number of certified high school instructors required for these programs. Other strategies include expanding student access through online or blended courses, providing instruction at locations other than high schools or colleges, and covering program costs for students enrolled in a state program. www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/12/61/11261.pdf

Joint Letter on Informing Career Decisions from the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Employment and Training Administration, June 2014
This joint letter encourages partnership across federal agencies and the private sector to strengthen career pathways and to prepare students to earn certifications, advance through higher levels of education, transition into the workforce, and continue to improve wages over time. It recognizes that the emphasis in high schools has been on planning for college and that a majority of schools must take a team approach to provide career guidance. It examines complementary services provided by the workforce system and offers lists of studies, tools, resources, and examples of partnerships that work to improve the information and guidance provided to students and parents that informs their decision making about the education and training that they need to achieve their goals.
http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEN/TEN_33-13_Acc.pdf

Towards the National Assessment of Educational Progress as an Indicator of Academic Preparedness for College and Job Training, National Assessment Governing Board, May 2014
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reviews multiple studies from the twelfth grade administration of NAEP in 2009 and finds that proficiency exams given to high school seniors can serve as indicators for academic preparedness in postsecondary education. This report reviews the board's process and rationale behind applying the twelfth grade NAEP as an indicator of preparedness. Preliminary findings suggest that the exam provides a visible assessment of high school curricula and learning, and may also highlight specific strengths and deficiencies.
www.nagb.org/content/nagb/assets/documents/what-we-do/preparedness-research/NAGB-indicator-of-preparedness-report.pdf

Veterans Administration (VA) Education Benefits: VA Should Strengthen Its Efforts to Help Veterans Make Informed Education Choices, Government Accountability Office, May 2014
This report examines the effectiveness of veteran support services that guide veterans through postsecondary education and training options so that they acquire skills that lead to employment before exhausting their education benefits. It presents how selected institutions recruit veterans, how veterans search schools and perceive recruitment methods, and how the Veterans Administration (VA) helps veterans make informed decisions and recognize inappropriate recruiting practices. Findings suggest that independent and objective information would help veterans make more effective educational decisions. Recommendations include that the VA improve outreach and accessibility of its educational consulting services.
www.gao.gov/assets/670/663152.pdf

The Secret Behind College Completion: Girls, Boys, and the Power of Eighth Grade Grades, Third Way, April 2014
Part of a series that engages thought leaders and new research to explore trends in academia, this piece considers the potential reasons why many undergraduate students are unable to graduate from college. The recent phenomenon of female students outperforming their male counterparts in academic achievement during the critical middle school years prompted a focus on this point in academic learning. The research indicates that success in college can be traced back to educational achievements in the

eighth grade. It also concludes that college completion is strongly predicated on behavioral patterns acquired during the early life of a child. Findings suggest that children who maintain a certain level of educational engagement throughout high school will be more likely to graduate from college.
http://content.thirdway.org/publications/813/NEXT_-_The_Secret_Behind_College_Completion.pdf

Promoting College and Career Success: Portfolio Assessment for Student Veterans, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, March 2014
Many veterans have acquired valuable skills through military training programs and experience. Recognition of this prior learning experience in the form of college credit supports persistence and significantly eases the transition from military service into the civilian labor force. While several tools for assessing veterans' prior learning already exist, this report suggests that portfolio assessment provides a more comprehensive review of relevant work or military experience accrued. Portfolio assessment is an especially useful prior-learning assessment method for veterans, because credit recommendations and standardized exams do not adequately capture the full extent of a veteran's learning outside of the traditional classroom.
www.cael.org/pdfs/2014_CAEL_Vet-_Portfolio_Profiles

Considerations for Collaborations to Support College and Career Readiness: A Facilitator's Guide, American Institutes for Research, December 2013
For several years, states have been developing preschool to graduate school and workforce partnerships to more effectively align secondary and postsecondary education and training systems in support of college and career readiness. This guide is designed to foster more effective collaboration between complex systems because such efforts often lack clear, attainable, and measurable goals. It provides a series of guiding questions that allow users to frame their unique collaboration effort around research that has been demonstrated to support student transitions between secondary and postsecondary education into careers and skills training. It includes an appendix for deeper exploration of key considerations and examples of successful evidence-based state collaborations.
www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/CCRS%20Collaboration%20Alignment%20Brief_final.pdf

Predictors of Postsecondary Success, American Institutes for Research, November 2013
Emphasis on postsecondary readiness and success is leading schools, districts, and states to seek help in determining whether students are on a path to postsecondary success. This brief summarizes education research that identifies student skills, behaviors, and other characteristics that predict future academic and workplace success. The research focuses on measures drawn from readily available data from schools, districts, and states. With deeper insight into individual student needs at multiple points throughout preparatory education, policy makers and education practitioners can evaluate system improvement efforts and focus support on particular grades, schools, or subgroups of students.
www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/CCRS%20Center_Predictors%20of%20Postsecondary%20Success_final_0.pdf

Meeting Students Where They Are: Profiles of Students in Competency-Based Degree Programs, Center for American Progress and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, November 2013
To demonstrate the need for more flexible models of higher education, this report profiles a variety of students who either went to college immediately after high school, returned to postsecondary education after a period in the workforce, or returned for retraining in a single course. The report highlights the educational progress made by individuals based on measures of skill mastery rather than the credit hours earned. It provides insight into how students are responding to competency-based learning formats and how they have the potential to help students from diverse entry points succeed in higher education. Accordingly, the report offers policy recommendations based on successful trials of

competency-based learning programs as alternatives to traditional postsecondary educational measures and findings that address financial aid, quality standards, and clearly defined competencies.
http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CAEL-student-report-corrected.pdf

Career and Technical Education

Understanding Participation in Secondary Career and Technical Education in the 21st Century: Implications for Policy and Practice, National Research Center for CTE, May 2014
Although CTE has historically targeted low-income and special populations, this study reveals high levels of participation among higher income students and those who have parents with higher levels of educational achievement. This study examines participation in the CTE credit-taking experience of all public high school students based on changes in the academic requirements that all students need to meet in order to graduate. Findings reveal a high rate of high-intensity CTE participation among students who were also enrolled in advanced mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in advanced science classes. The analyses show that classifying students as either academic or vocational concentrators does not reflect the current requirements and suggest that this method provides a more effective means of understanding the credit-taking experience of high school students. Currently, about 17 percent of all high school students complete high-intensity CTE in addition to their academic requirements.
http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/high_school_journal/v097/97.3.aliaga.pdf

Advancing Career and Technical Education in State and Local Career Pathways Systems: Model for the Provision of Technical Assistance, Jobs for the Future, March 2014
This study outlines the parallel development of career pathways for adult learners and programs of study for secondary students. It compares these two systemic change strategies and highlights elements that complement, overlap, or duplicate each other, and to propose a model that advances an integrated career pathways system. Such a system would require alignment across education, training, employment, and support services, as well as collaboration among systems of secondary and postsecondary career and technical education (CTE), adult education, and workforce training. The study lays out strategies for building cross-system partnerships, coordinating efforts to engage employers throughout the process, redesigning programs to achieve system goals, and pursuing needed funding.
http://cte.ed.gov/docs/Advancing_CTE_Model_031214.docx

State Policies Impacting CTE: 2013 Year in Review, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium and Association for Career and Technical Education, March 2014
Many state legislators are looking to CTE to engage learners at multiple educational levels to resolve reported skills gaps and shortages; all but three states had legislative or regulatory action that addressed some element of CTE in 2013. Designed to inform CTE policy, this report provides both an overview and a state-by-state review of policy changes. Trends observed include identifying new funding; changing the governance structure; establishing new graduation requirements; expanding access to dual enrollment; and creating organizations to increase participation, ease transitions between secondary and postsecondary, and meet statewide goals related to workforce development.
www.acteonline.org/.../ACTE-NASDCTEc_State_Policy_Review_ 2013.pdf

CTE Is Your STEM Strategy, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, December 2013
Given its focus on integrated—academic and applied—learning and career exploration and preparation, this report recommends CTE as a significant complement to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) strategy. It explores the strong connection and overlap between CTE and STEM

education. Focusing on the elements of a CTE program of study that make it an effective tool for delivering STEM education, the report covers how STEM is naturally embedded across the 16 career clusters. The report also provides examples from other states exploring areas where CTE and STEM programs can learn from and strengthen one another.
www.careertech.org/legislation/briefs-papers.html

Clusters and Sector Strategies

Addressing Houston's Middle-Skills Jobs Challenges, Greater Houston Partnership Regional Workforce Development Task Force, April 2014
Industry growth in Houston has spurred growing concern about shortages between the region's workforce supply and industry demand, particularly for its middle-skill occupations. This regional assessment of the high-demand occupations that support Houston's primary economic drivers includes key strategies for a comprehensive, industry-led, regional approach to address a gap in supply and demand, referenced here as a *skills gap*. The strategic action plan primarily focuses on four areas: workers' awareness of middle-skill job opportunities; employability training to improve the quality of applicants; coordination of stakeholders to inform a more effective system; and development of a data system to support decision making. Strategies to implement the action plan include sector councils, a public awareness campaign, common assessment tools and training curriculum, employer engagement, demand-side and supply-side data systems, and education and training provider networks.
www.houston.org/UpSkillHouston/

Competitiveness

Students on the Move: How States Are Responding to Increasing Mobility Among Postsecondary Students, Education Commission on the States, May 2014
Increasing mobility between institutions among modern postsecondary students and pressure to meet college completion goals have encouraged states to improve college credit transfer policies. Studies demonstrate that the amount of credits transferred have a significant impact on college completion. This study on postsecondary transfer and articulation reviews policies in 50 states finding that states are implementing common, statewide policies to enhance consistency of credit transfer across institutions and systems. National trends include common course numbering, credit by assessment, guaranteed transfer of associate degrees, and a core of transferable lower-division courses that meet public institution requirements. The study also documents trends that do not span state systems, offers examples of innovative approaches, and provides a searchable transfer and articulation database.
www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/12/29/11229.pdf

Call for a National Conversation on Creating a Competency-Based Credentialing Ecosystem, Workforce Data Quality Campaign, April 2014
Created by representatives of education and workforce organizations, this report examines the deficiencies associated with the current national credentialing system. It describes this system as a complex, fragmented collective of more than 4,000 personnel certification organizations across the U.S., of which fewer than 10 percent are accredited or reviewed by a third party. This system is intended to serve a diverse and evolving mix of stakeholders, including: students, job-seekers, employers, institutions, and others. However, given the increasing need for portable credentials, the current credentialing system is viewed as lacking credibility, transparency, and portability, and has inconsistencies that create confusion about the quality and market value of the credentials themselves.

The proposed solution retains decentralization and flexibility, but recommends a competency-driven credentialing system with consistent definitions and language, shared quality assurance mechanisms, and shared public-private data infrastructure.
www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/files/Developing-a-Competency-Based-Credentialing-Ecosystem.pdf

Data

Workforce Results Matter: The Critical Role of Employment Outcome Data in Improving Transparency of Postsecondary Education and Training, Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success at the Center for Law and Social Policy, Inc., April 2014
Student and parents view postsecondary education as a way to ensure stable employment and higher earnings. Because the decision to pursue postsecondary education has become both more important and riskier than in the past, this brief focuses on the need for better information about post-graduation outcomes of postsecondary education and training. This report suggests the types of employment measures and data needed to determine outcomes such as post-graduation employment rates and earnings levels. It also recommends the importance of presenting outcomes by the program of study within the institution, for sub-groups of students, and in context of the regional labor market. Three examples provide insight on the progress of states in reporting informative workforce results for a variety of education and training programs.
www.workforcedqc.org/sites/default/files/images/WDQC%20Credentials%20Paper%20April%202014.pdf

Credential Data Pioneers: Forging New Partnerships to Measure Certifications and Licenses, Workforce Data Quality Campaign, April 2014
Highlighting states that have taken steps to establish data-sharing agreements with certification bodies and licensing agencies, this paper considers the importance of both non-degree credentials to the labor force and state efforts to track attainment. It reviews the types of non-degree credentials, how they are administered and awarded, and the challenges associated with collecting and using data on them. According to a recent U.S. Census Bureau report, workers with these credentials experience higher median earnings than those without. Other recent research suggests growing interest among employers in hiring for credentials beyond the traditionally recruited bachelor's and associate's degree professionals. Texas is identified as one of 21 states involved in a national coalition seeking to develop methods to access certification data and analyze attainment of non-degree credentials among community college students, especially those in non-credit occupational programs.
www.workforcedqc.org/sites/default/files/images/WDQC%20Credentials%20Paper%20April%202014.pdf

Online College Labor Market: Where the Jobs Are, Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, April 2014
Employers now utilize online job boards and employer websites extensively to fill job openings. This report suggests that this shift extends employer recruitment beyond local labor markets and offers a new tool to connect college graduates with jobs. The report examines online postings by educational attainment, occupation, and industry. It outlines the strengths and weaknesses of the online job market noting that online job ads are not representative of job openings in the sub-baccalaureate domain. Findings suggest that 80 to 90 percent of online job openings are for graduates with bachelor's degrees, estimated at two million per quarter. The most in-demand occupations for college graduates are white-collar professional and STEM occupations, which account for 1.1 million of the job openings posted online.
http://cew.georgetown.edu/onlinejobmarket

Recent National Community College Enrollment and Award Completion Data, American Association of Community Colleges, January 2014
Examining a trend toward decreased enrollment in community colleges nationwide, this report takes a comparative look at data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at the U.S. Department of Education and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for deeper insight into local changes. NSC data are considered less comprehensive but more current than the NCES data. Both sources indicate a three percent decline in enrollment between fall 2011 and fall 2012, a trend that continued in 2013. The study reveals more pronounced decreases for students over the age of 24, and for women in particular. NSC rates provide much more positive success rates. Here, the data provide a six-year completion rate for all students that is almost double the NCES graduation rate for first time students completing college in three years. The NSC graduation rate for full-time students almost triples the official NCES result.
www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Reports/Documents/Enrollment_AwardData.pdf

Supply Demand

How Many More Skilled Workers Do We Need? Using Supply and Demand Reports for State Workforce Planning, National Skills Coalition, June 2014
To help policy makers address concerns about shortages of workers with appropriate skills to meet the needs of industry, this paper provides a method that states can use to measure gaps between the workforce supply and employment demand. It focuses on the demand of middle-skill jobs and the number of newly trained workers. Borrowing from examples of a few states that provide this type of information, the report offers steps to produce supply and demand reports focused on identifying insufficiencies among education and training programs.
www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/how-many-more-skilled-workers.pdf

Middle-Skill Spotlight: An Analysis of Four In-Demand Sectors with a Community College Focus, EMSI, March 2014
Community colleges serve at the front line when it comes to addressing the local and regional training needs of employers, often developing short-term or accelerated training programs. Their effectiveness relies on accurate information about the labor market: what industries are most important to the regional economy and what worker skills drive productivity for the employers. This report focuses on the middle-skill occupations that many community and technical college programs are supplying with skilled workers. It provides data on the highest paying middle-skill occupations and in-demand sectors for middle-skill workforce needs. It also profiles four high-growth occupational sectors in high-growth metropolitan areas. Texas demonstrates growth in all of the sectors presented.
www.economicmodeling.com/wp-content/uploads/ccreport-2014_web1.pdf