

Professional Technical Education Philosophy

The primary focus on education today centers on the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. The intention of this act is for a "restructured educational system . . . to achieve the state's goals of the best educated citizens in the nation by the year 2000 and a work force equal to any in the world by the year 2010." (Oregon Educational Act, 1991). Implementation of a Professional Technical Education program is one of the specific goals of this landmark and controversial act. The instructional goals and practices of a Tech Prep program will include: (Conley)

- Emphasis on contextual learning to bring relevance to classroom and worksite experiences.
- Implementation of curriculum that integrates academic, vocational and technical instruction.
- Inclusion of career-related learning opportunities.

Tech Prep programs will depend on partnerships and commitments at the local, regional, and state levels (Yap). It is vital that beyond cooperation between high schools and community colleges, additional partners are necessary for proper implementation and widespread acceptance. By providing leadership and training programs that are aligned with Oregon standards, outside agencies (government and private) can have a pivotal role in the increase of student achievement. Pursuing new models will expand the capacity of Tech Prep programs to meet the needs of all professional technical education students (Yap).

In order for Professional Technical Education to succeed and survive, it is important to increase student, staff, parent and industry awareness of programs available. Cooperative efforts between these groups will ultimately pay dividends with technically proficient students and workers. Furthermore, funding becomes increasingly important as changes are made to curriculum and ways of thinking about education, specifically technical education. Support and ongoing training is necessary for current educators to align the way they teach to match the goals of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. This is becoming increasingly difficult as Oregon continues to cut already strained funding. This funding crisis accentuates the importance of private industry to step up and become partners with education to help schools realize the 21st Century goals of the State (Yap).

Given the current state of educational funding, educators must find creative and innovative ways to improve student achievement. They must be willing to go the extra mile to train themselves to have the ability to provide technical education aligned with state standards. As a middle school educator, I have a unique opportunity to teach technology skills at an earlier age than normally taught. My goal is to provide technical education that is relevant to their own life experiences, integrated with academic subjects and inclusive of career related skills. This will allow students to be better prepared to achieve the standards set forth by the State of Oregon.

References

Conley, David. "Reactions from the field to state restructuring legislation." Educational Administration Quarterly November 1995 : 27. Academic Search Elite. EBSCO Host. April 18, 2002 <<http://ehostvgw1.epnet.com/ehost1.asp?>>

Yap, Kim. "A Statewide Evaluation of Professional Technical Education in Oregon. Final Report." March 1, 1993 : 217. ERIC. EBSCO Host. April 9, 2002 <<http://ehostvgw1.epnet.com/ehost1.asp?>>

"Oregon Schools for the 21st Century: Oregon Report Card 1993-94. An Annual Report to the State Legislature on Oregon's Public Schools." January 1, 1994 : 65. ERIC. EBSCO Host. April 9, 2002 <<http://ehostvgw1.epnet.com/ehost1.asp?>>

Owens, Thomas. "Seattle Tech Prep Demonstration Project. Final Evaluation Report." December 30, 1994 : 35. ERIC. EBSCO Host. April 11, 2002 <<http://ehostvgw1.epnet.com/ehost1.asp?>>

Yap, Kim. "The Other Side of School Reform: Integrating Professional Technical Education." April 1, 1995 : 12. ERIC. EBSCO Host. April 9, 2002 <<http://ehostvgw1.epnet.com/ehost1.asp?>>

Oregon State Plan For Vocational and Technical Education. Oregon Department of Education. April 14, 2002
<http://www.ode.state.or.us/opte/GrantAps/Perkins2001/OregonStatePlan.pdf>.

H.B. 3565: Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century (1993). In Oregon Laws Relating to Public Schools and Community Colleges, pp. 43-80. Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education.