

SAN LUIS VALLEY CONSORTIUM

BACKGROUND

The San Luis Valley Perkins Consortium includes 11 school districts working in partnership to maximize outcomes from their Perkins investments. The Consortium crafted their Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Perkins Local Plan so that all partners benefit through several collaborative strategies. Three core goals stand out in the San Luis Valley Consortium Perkins Local Plan. The first is to enhance and supplement curricula by using curriculum enhancement tools such as “Bring Your “A” Game.” The second is using tailored industry-based assessment preparations resulting in subject based certifications students and graduates can fund and use on their resume or college applications. The third is professional development for instructors and a concerted effort to share best learned practices with other consortium members through their Perkins Learning Community.

KEY INNOVATION(s)

Local Plan Collaboration and Coordination

Strategies and innovation that are in place in the Consortium include train the trainer; open channels of communication between the member districts; cross pollination of ideas; reallocation of funds to meet district’s needs; and the establishment of professional learning communities. All of these strategies have a thematic element of cooperation and collaboration amongst and between participating districts. The San Luis Valley Consortium represents a large geographic area and a diversity of CTE offerings across school districts which create challenges in sharing information and best practices. To overcome these challenges, the consortium members agree to meet at regular intervals throughout the year in what is called the Perkins Learning Community (PLC).

The focus of the PLC is to share practices and information that will impact the CTE classroom environment. Participants bring to the meetings tips and tricks, tools and technology, and pedagogies that represent learning from various conferences, professional development activities, and classroom experiences. Presentations can be formal or informal. Discussion and questions are encouraged and there is no hesitation to ask about the implementation and outcomes of the strategies being presented.

The January 20, 2016 meeting was held in Alamosa, a somewhat central location, and covered topics including an update from the InnEd Conference, use of Google classroom, the use of Precision Exams, and other useful tools for the CTE classroom. Other professional development opportunities are discussed, as are opportunities for students to participate in college visits, and seminars across the consortium’s member districts.

This consortium wide strategy for sharing information, opportunities and best practice in a social and informal setting creates a culture of collaboration across multiple schools districts. It also encourages the efficiencies through the offset of costs of attending conferences. Without collaboration, each district may send a representative to the multitude of

professional development conferences. By sharing information through a structured approach of the PLC, monies can be used judiciously and access is provided to more opportunities.

A consortium wide Action Step included in this year's Perkins Local Plan is the implementation and use of Precision exams. These exams are designed to measure learning outcomes in specific CTE areas of study. Although some of the exams do not fit perfectly into the CTE curriculum taught at the participating consortium school districts, the pilot year provides an opportunity to determine their usefulness and applicability to each districts' programs. Requirements to use the exams in a pretest, mid-year, and posttest capacity will provide excellent data about the CTE program and establish some metrics about the students learning in the CTE area. So far the Sangre De Cristo School District has seen midyear improvements in seven standards for the students in the Accounting program. The use of the Precision exams can also act as a consistent metric of student progress across the entire San Luis Valley Consortium.

Another curricular action step in the San Luis Valley Consortium Perkins Local Plan is the use of "Bring Your "A" Game to Work." This supplemental curriculum is designed to infuse CTE programs with an ethics learning outcome. The "A Game" curriculum can be implemented in a manner that is flexible and meets the needs of the program. Some CTE programs are using the "A Game" as a thread throughout the program and others are using the full module. The outcome of the "A Game" curriculum is a certificate for the students who participated. The four levels are Novice, Apprentice, Scholar, and Guru. The goal is to move students from the Novice level to the Guru level by the end of the CTE program.

KEY FACTORS TO IMPLEMENTATION

North Conejos School District's Centauri High School (CHS) is home to seven Career and Technical Education programs all of which use Perkins funding to enhance the student experience. With a goal of career preparation and articulation to Community and Junior Colleges, the CTE programs at CHS are fortunate to have strong industry advisory committees and highly qualified instructors with substantial industry experience.

For CHS CTE programs, advisory boards are the link to the community. The industry representatives are engaged and assist in demonstrating value of the program to the district and the workforce. The advisory committee members bring ideas and needs to the instructors and in turn the instructors share these ideas with all Consortium members at regular meetings. Students' career preparation is taken seriously. The area's industries rely on the CTE programs in the high school to train students to work after high school. Skilled graduates are essential to linking the community to the high school. If a skill set is lacking from the graduates, the CTE faculty and director hears about it and adjust curriculum accordingly.

Brad Huffaker of North Conejos School District "loves being a CTE Director," but there are challenges in meeting the needs of the community. Equipment funding is difficult due to the limited funds being shared across the consortium and the regulatory and compliance aspects of Perkins. Another difficulty shared across the Consortium is finding qualified teachers with

the appropriate credential. The Perkins plan attempts to help with the latter issue through professional development dollars and sharing of best practices at regional meetings.

CHS's CTE programs in Business, Agriculture, Emergency Medical Technician/Med Prep, Family and Consumer Sciences, Construction, Welding, and Automotive serve the district's 1000 students. CHS has implemented the "Bring Your "A" Game" curricular enhancements into the Business, Family and Consumer Sciences, Construction, Automotive, and Welding programs. The FCCLA program had initial outcomes of 69% receiving the certificate in the fall semester, the first term the curriculum was implemented.

Overcoming Challenges

Challenges do exist for the administration and distribution of Perkins funds within the San Luis Valley Consortium. With the multiple districts that make up the consortium, it is essential that monies are spread around in a manner that is fair. It can be difficult to ensure that each district is benefiting and that those benefits are accessible to all participants and programs. Overcoming the individual district mindset, a lack of knowledge about Perkins regulations, and the time it takes to comply with funding is also a challenge.

Action Plan strategies mentioned above have been put in place to help mitigate these challenges and give all participating districts the opportunity to gain from the Perkins local plan. In addition, the Perkins local plan is developed with an advisory board. This group of administrators is responsible for generating ideas for the local plan. The board members are also asked to disseminate ideas of the board to the key administrators and faculty in the school districts. One representative of the board will assist Carol Sessums, San Luis Valley Perkins Consortium Coordinator, with writing the local plan.

RESULTS

The commitment of the teachers and administrators to the CTE programs in the San Luis Valley Consortium is evident. CTE success is desired as evidenced at individual district level where programs are created and curriculum is adjusted to meet the local industry needs, and at the consortium level where communication and sharing is used to elevate teaching and learning strategies. The San Luis Valley covers a large geographic area with multiple school districts. The collaboration put in place by the consortium and the Perkins Advisory Board establishes a culture that values information sharing and dialog that enhances efficiencies and most importantly increases student learning outcomes in the CTE programs.