

The Mountain BOCES Consortium

Background

The Perkins **Mountain BOCES Consortium** is a consortium that was formed by the school districts based in Eagle, Fairplay, Leadville, Parachute and Rifle, with Colorado Mountain College as their fiscal agent, in order to receive Perkins funds and equitably distribute them among the districts. Over the years, the consortium has striven to overcome the challenges posed by its districts being geographically separated from each other and a lack of resources due to the small numbers of enrolled students. For example, one counselor or CTE instructor for an entire school. They are centrally located in a mountainous, high-altitude, area of the state that, in addition to containing several ski resorts, has a population that has agricultural and low-income segments to it. Their student demographics are: 50% Latino and 46% Free and Reduced Lunch eligible.

In FY 2010, Mountain BOCES directed their Perkins funds toward: teacher, counselor and administrator training on career pathways and academic crosswalks; the *Math-in-CTE* teaching paradigm; promethean boards; computers; auto lifts; and other technology resources for their consortium school districts.

Key Innovation(s)

Since Mountain BOCES Consortium works closely with Colorado Mountain College, articulation is available in most of their CTE programs. Articulation with other community colleges is in place if classes are not comparable with CMC (e.g., agriculture).

To leverage their partnership with Colorado Mountain College, some of the consortium's upper level classes are taught at CMC campuses. Further, CMC's *Entrepreneurial Operations* course articulates with the *Get-aHead for Business* curriculum offered in three of the consortium's school districts.

All counselors, teachers, and administrators associated with Mountain BOCES are learning about career pathways, the statewide *College in Colorado* resources and academic crosswalks.

Staff at Leadville's Lake County High School are being trained on how to execute the **Math-in-CTE** hands-on teaching paradigm, – which innovatively helps student grasp mathematical concepts by implementing them in the real world (e.g., teach students to calculate the pitch of a roof to understand slope of a line in geometry or trigonometry). Spreading the Math-in-CTE paradigm across the consortium will also be a significant way it supports the acquisition of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) skills.

To effectively coordinate their visioning, progress and Perkins funding, Mountain BOCES consortium hired a consultant who is well-versed in state wide politics and what is happening at the State and National levels. By doing so, they have found an individual who can direct their pursuits toward state and federal requirements quickly and clearly.

According to those who conducted the site visit for this report, a successful Mountain BOCES-like consor-

tium could be replicated in other parts of the state, if: (a) it consisted of a group of people with a spirit of sharing and mutual support that are able to join forces for mutual benefit, (b) it is facilitated by an individual who gets questions answered, coordinates their meetings, and monitors/benchmarks their progress, and (c) they worked to arrive at a shared vision for their area.

Key Factors to Implementation

As stated earlier, a key factor to the effective implementation of the Mountain BOCES Consortium Perkins-funded endeavors is that they contract with a consultant to manage their Perkins funding, guide their visioning process and closely monitor and benchmark their progress on stated goals.

School principals and board members support the consortium’s training initiatives and ensure that time is set aside for required training.

Members of the consortium focus on the vision for the region, rather than exclusively on their immediate needs. They consider the needs of local business and industry, as well as where they would like to see the consortium go in the future. There are many restaurants and ski-resort-related businesses in this area. Their efforts to develop Career Pathways have led to counselors being heavily involved with CTE and Perkins implementation. There is a spirit of cooperation among the members of the BOCES Consortium that is admirable. When one needs something, the others are willing to cut back a little to make it happen. Also, they allow individual members to try out a new idea, while the rest stand back and observe and learn from the experience.

RESULTS

With Perkins-funded state-of-the-art equipment to learn on, students are now more ready for the workplace and/or postsecondary education when they leave school.

The career pathways that the consortium has used funding to develop, are showing students the road to their chosen career, including postsecondary options.

The *Math-in-CTE* teaching paradigm is giving those who struggle with learning in the traditional math curriculum the opportunity to learn it in an applied, hands-on way. So far, it has been assessed to be working well and academic teachers are beginning to see the benefit of it as a teaching approach.

Perkins-supported Mountain BOCES Consortium CTE-trained students have benefited local businesses (e.g., Gallegos Construction has benefited by hiring trained Mountain BOCES Consortium graduates that are bilingual.)

Johnson and Wales recruits graduates of the consortium’s ProStart culinary program. More than 100 high

school students participate in the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) student leadership organization.

Mountain BOCES Consortium prides itself with keeping kids engaged who might otherwise drop out. Specifically, they help kids find a niche and students begin to engage in their education by participating in CTE related activities. The consortium also believes that its students who are trained on state-of-the-art equipment enter the workforce better prepared to make an immediate contribution.

A Business teacher participating in the consortium had this to say about the success of it:

“I’m glad to support the consortium. In many ways it is an excellent model on how relatively diverse groups can function effectively. It is a great group of folks. I think it is important to tell you how much I believe [the Mountain BOCES Consortium’s operations/Perkins funding] consultant’s management of the Perkins Grant as it relates to our consortium has contributed well to our group. If we are an exemplar consortium of how the Perkins Grant process should be effectively undertaken, [the consultant] deserves much of the credit for getting us to that point. I appreciate the work [the consultant] has done for us.”