

# The Southwest Consortium

## Background

The Southwest Consortium consists of the Montezuma Cortez RE-1 (Fiscal Agent), Dolores County RE No. 2, Montezuma-Dolores RE-4A, and Montezuma Mancos RE-6 School Districts. The Consortium is using Perkins funds to modernize CTE programs which allow seamless postsecondary and workplace transitions for students, develop expanded partnerships with community business members, and allow teachers, counselors and administrators to access the most current information through attendance at conferences, specifically the national Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) Conference.

Consortium members meet often and share resources, information and implementation plans.

The following implementation concepts were noted upon visitation to the Montezuma Cortez district in which 740 students are enrolled at the high school.

## Key Innovations(s)

Key innovations Perkins funding has partially facilitated for the Consortium include:

- For two years, a ***Career Pathways*** class has been implemented utilizing all teaching staff for all grade levels. This is a daily 35-minute period where students use ***College in Colorado*** to take interest inventories, research careers/colleges and create their own Plan of Study (ICAP). The ***Career Pathways*** teacher stays with their cohort of students from 9th grade through 12th grade. A curriculum has been developed per grade level with certain competencies required for all students. Further, flexibility of other competencies is permitted so teachers can choose options. This is all assisted by ***Power School***, a new student information system, where students can get current grading information per class and keep track of credits as they plan for high school classes.
- During lunch, the ***Postsecondary Options Core Counselor*** and the ***Agriculture CTE Teacher*** provide text messaged questions to students pertaining to careers, skills required in careers and colleges. (Students must sign up with parental permission to receive messages.) Students can also participate in employer-sponsored contests related to career options. On a daily basis, five students who answer the questions correctly receive beverage coupons provided by the local Sonic Restaurant and winners are announced via the intercom and on the school website.
- ***Career Prep*** is a **workplace experience** offered to 15 teachers monthly in which businesses open their doors for tours and become speakers at an evening dinner. Teachers take information gained directly back to their respective ***Career Pathways*** and other classes. This has been organized in coordination with the local chamber of commerce. A minibus is provided for transportation. Credit is offered through CSU. Examples of businesses that participate are the Cortez Journal, Guy Drew Vineyard, Crow Canyon Archeology, Muscanell Millworks and Bill Barrett Corporation Gas & Oil.

- Seniors do **community service** projects with local businesses and non-profits during CSAP testing time instead of being released from school. Community partners sign off on hours of service so that students can receive high school class-time credit. Students volunteer in nursing homes, preschools and have even built new trails at the **Phil's World** motorbike track.
- Every Wednesday, six members of the business community are guest speakers in **Career Pathways** classes. Speakers can present to all of the Career Pathways junior class or individual pathway classes. If a student has a selected career pathway which matches with a business speaker, they can “float” into the presentation. A form is completed by students prior to the presentation, so that the speaker can address student questions. The form has students’ identify the related career pathway as they learn about the upcoming speaker’s job title.
- Nine **Plans of Study** are featured on the school website with plans to post high school courses so that students can download into their individual Plan of Study (ICAP).

## Key Factors to Implementation

The following factors have aided the consortium in implementing model CTE programs:

- Three years ago, Student Council testimony to the Superintendent and Board of Education fostered district decisions to emphasize career goals and postsecondary education opportunities. Continued total administrative support and school-wide faculty collaboration has been, and will continue to be, a key to implementation.
- A district **Leadership Team** facilitated by the CTE Director and composed of teachers, students, a principal, a librarian, a school secretary, and the head of counseling meets weekly for 45 minutes after school to move forward on implementation and future direction.
- Two **Core Counselors** at the middle and high schools are partially funded through the Perkins grant and are able to do additional work with students on **College in Colorado**, postsecondary option planning, as well as, scholarship applications and facilitate career information during **Career Pathways** classes.
- Business and community representatives are willing to provide information on jobs, careers and skills needed in the workplace by presenting at schools, providing tours for educators and expanding internship opportunities for students.

## RESULTS

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The following are instances of evidence of the progress the Consortium has achieved via its CTE initiatives:

- *College in Colorado* interest inventory results and passwords are created in middle school and follow students to the high school level. (High School Counselors are also able to access these student profiles.)
- The *Career Pathways* curriculum is being presented to middle school teachers and being revised for 9th grade teachers. The curriculum was developed per grade level with required and flexible components. All students create resumes and learn job interview techniques.
- Testimonies by students have validated the use of College in Colorado and indicate an increased interest in students obtaining career and postsecondary options information. Seniors are able to tutor underclassmen during *Career Pathways* time and develop portfolios. One student said that he was better prepared for choosing postsecondary training/college majors by doing internships with local businesses. More importantly, he has persisted with his chosen business and finance pathway because of this. Another student said she has been able to gain summer employment through her school internship. All students interviewed from the 9th to 12th grade knew their respective career pathway. If the pathway changed, they noted it was due to gaining more information and experiences.
- There is not only increased participation by students applying for scholarships and completing college applications, but these activities are happening at earlier grades in high school.
- Business community members are requesting more participation of students doing community service and, in return, are devoting more time to school presentations and internships.