



## Alaska Workforce Investment Board Newsletter

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### Important Dates

**February 5th - 6th, 2010**  
Twentieth Annual CTE Conference in Anchorage  
**February 22nd - 23rd, 2010**  
AWIB in Juneau  
**February 24th, 2010**  
AGIA Steering Committee Meeting in Juneau  
**April 28th, 2010**  
Apprenticeship Conference in Anchorage  
**April 29th - May 1, 2010**  
ACTE Region V Conference in Anchorage

Dear Reader,

This is an exciting time for Career and Technical Education in Alaska. Labor Commissioner Click Bishop and Education Commissioner Larry LeDoux joined efforts to develop an Alaska Career and Technical Education plan. And at the recent national Association for Career and Technical Education Convention and Career Tech Expo, U.S. Secretary of Labor Jane Oates and U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education Brenda Dann-Messier called for new cooperation between the U.S. departments of labor and education to work as a team in preparing youth and adults for employment.

The [Alaska Workforce Investment Board \(AWIB\)](#) has developed this newsletter to connect schools, industry and stakeholders with AWIB and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. In this issue we have an update on AWIB, career pathways, apprenticeship and Alaska Career Ready.

We are publishing every other month and featuring opportunities, programs and insider information about state of Alaska initiatives aimed at helping youth and adults find meaningful employment and postsecondary training. Also, this newsletter will have articles from the Department of Education and Early Development.

Let me know if you have ideas for future articles.



Sincerely,

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## AWIB Update

Greg Cashen, Executive Director



The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) meeting was held at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks on Oct. 26-27. The agenda included an update on the development of a healthcare workforce development plan, statewide CTE plan, Alaska Tech Prep, the AGIA Strategic Training Plan and registered apprenticeship. The board received briefings from the Employment Security Division, the Division of Business Partnerships, Research and Analysis, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, AVTEC, the workforce development budget and legislative issues. Jim Lynch was re-elected as AWIB chair and Michelle Zenger elected as AWIB vice chair.

The AGIA Steering Committee will meet May 3-4 and Oct. 25-26, with the location of the meetings to be determined by the Executive Committee at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Jeff Selvey, AWIB CTE Coordinator, and Helen Mehrkens, CTE Administrator for the Department of Education and Early Development, have been working to implement statewide CTE strategies, including development of a comprehensive, integrated CTE system for Alaska that aligns training institutions and coordinates program delivery. To accomplish this goal, the commissioners of Labor and Workforce Development and Education and Early Development have asked all workforce development and CTE organizations to coordinate through the AWIB to implement statewide CTE initiatives for Alaska. The commissioners have designated Selvey and Mehrkens to lead the development and implementation of a CTE Plan on behalf of both departments and report their progress through the AWIB.

The AGIA Steering Committee met on Oct. 28 at the Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center. The meeting included presentations from Labor Commissioner Click Bishop regarding Training for the Gas Pipeline, an update from Denali on its gas pipeline project efforts, and an update on the AGIA implementation schedule and action to date for the four strategies contained in the AGIA Training Strategic Plan. The next AGIA Steering Committee is tentatively Feb. 24 in Juneau.

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## Career and Technical Education at the Department of Education and Early Development

Helen Mehrkens, CTE Administrator



### What's in a Word, i.e. Career... Cluster? Pathway? Ladder? Program of Study? Plan?

A consensus is building among Alaska policy-makers that our workforce development system should support the transition of students through our education and training systems in an open, transparent and efficient manner. As more people are brought into the discussion, it may be helpful to clarify some of the current Career and Technical Education (CTE) terminology. For example, "career pathways" is a term that is appealingly descriptive, however for some it is a generic term and for others it indicates a specific level of program planning. The following terms are in current use in the education arena.

**Career Cluster** - This term is used nationally as an organizer of knowledge and skills needed by a broad industry or related industries. It is promoted by the CTE community and used by the U.S. Department of Education for reporting programs associated with federal Perkins Act grants. There

are 16 career clusters identified at the national level ([www.careerclusters.org](http://www.careerclusters.org)). The University of Alaska has identified 14 career clusters. [www.alaska.edu/swacad/wp/careerclusters/index.htm](http://www.alaska.edu/swacad/wp/careerclusters/index.htm)

**Career Pathway** - This term is used nationally to identify a sub-set within career clusters, i.e. as an organizer of knowledge and skills statements shared by closely related professions. For example, Health Sciences contain Therapeutic Services, Diagnostic Services and Health Informatics pathways within its career cluster. Clusters contain 2 to 9 career pathways.

**Program of Study** - A Program of Study identifies a sequence of instruction that is available to students during and after high school that provide the academic and skill competencies and credentials to qualify for employment in a career pathway. The process of developing a CTE Program of Study - or CTEPS - helps secondary and postsecondary educators and counselors identify the local academic and technical courses and experiences that most closely align their career goals.

<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/forms/CTE/05-08-049.doc>

**Career Ladder** - This is a new project of the Alaska Department of Labor's Research & Analysis Section to identify occupations that are the most likely to lead to advancement to, or from, a particular occupation based on "real world" analysis of occupation-to-occupation movements of Alaska workers over the period 2001 through 2006. <http://labor.alaska.gov/research/careerladder/>

**Personal Career Learning Plan** - This is an individual learner's plan of courses and related experiences that will enable him or her to achieve personally chosen career goals. Known by a variety of titles, this plan typically contains a student's self-assessment of interests and abilities, evidence of skills and experience, and the courses required for the student to reach his or her career goal. At the secondary level, this plan should be reviewed and revised regularly as students mature and consider new experiences. It is intended to help make sense of educational requirements and help answer the perennial question "Why do I have to learn this?".

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## Developing Workers with Registered Apprenticeship

Gerry Andrews, Apprenticeship Coordinator

A few years ago there was a marketing campaign for the BASF chemical company that went like this, "We don't make a lot of the products you buy. We make a lot of the products you buy better." When it comes to workforce development, apprenticeship fits this slogan - it makes the system better. Historically craftsmen and professionals handed down their knowledge and skills through apprenticeship. Today's registered apprenticeship combines on-the-job learning and related instruction, with a progressive pay scale so that participants truly earn while they learn. Apprenticeship allows employers to establish the standards of proficiency they need while developing a local and loyal workforce.



With more than 900 apprenticeable occupations - from accounting and welding and supporting industries as diverse as health care and information technology - apprenticeship is not only for construction any more, and with recent commitments in the state of Alaska it's part of a connected system.

Today Alaska has about 80 apprenticeable occupations, 2,400 apprentices and 300 sponsors (employers and employer associations - both independent and union). This year, more than 750 apprentices became journey level workers.

Apprenticeship is emerging as an important component of Alaska's connected workforce development and educational system. Through this connected system, an individual can follow pathways from high school through Tech Prep courses to a registered apprenticeship or enroll at the university or in other post secondary education. With registered apprenticeship as component of the system, apprentices can earn up to 38 credits with the University of Alaska. Moreover, with more than 80 percent of our high school graduates not prepared to go directly to university, apprenticeship is a viable next step that opens a door to further education and training.

Let me sketch a connected educational and workforce development system for Alaska. Our educators have worked hard on developing Career Pathways, a tool to plan and organize a student's experience around industries. Another supportive and related component of the system is Career and Technical Education Programs of Study. These "roadmaps" create the vision for parents, students and counselors so that they can connect the elements of the system and make a smooth transition from school to a career. Today most school district and university campus employ this structure. Call them for more information.

Many employers have identified that most employees will need some education or training after high school. It had been identified that for most this will be less than two years of education. For those high school graduates who are not ready to go directly to university, there is an alternative. Apprenticeship can be that appropriate next step without closing the door on their education.

Like most opportunities, apprenticeship comes with a price, employment, this is the where employer, can affect change. By participating in apprenticeship, an employer becomes part of a connected educational/workforce development system and they can do something about the uncertainty that many youth feel about graduating from high school or university.

Because apprentices learn while they earn, they are better sooner. When they complete their apprenticeship, in about the same time as an academic degree, they are truly journey level workers. With this apprenticeship is talent development strategy to address the skilled worker shortage and to develop future managers while being a component of a connected system.

Think apprenticeship. Help grow our own and develop Alaska's best natural resource, its people.

### **Related Information**

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
[www.labor.alaska.gov](http://www.labor.alaska.gov)

Alaska Apprenticeship Programs  
[www.jobs.alaska.gov/apprentice](http://www.jobs.alaska.gov/apprentice)

Alaska Workforce Information  
[www.laborstats.alaska.gov](http://www.laborstats.alaska.gov)

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### **Alaska Career Ready Update: Alaska Students Go Platinum!** **Marcia Olson, Education Specialist**

Alaska students go Platinum! Three Alaska high school juniors have recently earned the highest level of National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) that ACT awards - the Platinum Level. These students have demonstrated their high level of workplace foundational skills by scoring at least a Level 6 on three WorkKeys® assessments.



The Alaska Career Ready assessments for grades 6, 8, and 11 will be required beginning with the 2010-2011 school year. All 6<sup>th</sup> graders and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be required to take three informal placement tests that are part of the WIN Career Readiness online courseware. All 11<sup>th</sup> graders will be required to take three standardized WorkKeys® tests (Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information).

Since the inception of the Alaska Career Ready program in 2007, approximately 17 school districts have administered WorkKeys® assessments. Through October 2009, over 2,000 students have taken at least one WorkKeys® test, and over 1,200 have earned their NCRC: 322 Bronze, 728 Silver, 201 Gold, and 3 Platinum. Congratulations to these students who have earned their certificates!

There are currently four employers or programs in Alaska that now either require or recognize the NCRC or some combination of WorkKeys® tests:

- British Petroleum (technician positions - 4 WorkKeys® tests required)
- State of Alaska (Accounting Clerk and Office Assistant I positions - offer NCRC as an option for meeting minimum qualifications in lieu of diploma, GED, and experience)
- Operating Engineers Apprenticeship Program (Level 4 on all three tests required to proceed to interview stage)
- Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) Apprenticeship Program (Level 4 WorkKeys® math is one option for applicants to demonstrate having met the math requirement.)

For more information about the Alaska Career Ready program, please visit our website at <http://www.careerready.alaska.gov/>

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