

CAREER ACADEMY CONVERSATION

California's Educating for Careers Conference
Sheraton Hotel, Sacramento
Monday, March 11, 2013

This Conversation was held in association with the Educating for Careers conference in Sacramento, CA. Twenty-two people attended, representing 15 organizations. The agenda focused on California's AB790-Linked Learning initiative, national policy, work-based learning, and standards and assessment. It was a one-hour meeting, half the length of most such Conversations, to accommodate the AB-790 initiative session that followed.

◆ AB-790/ LINKED LEARNING INITIATIVE

Because this meeting was held in California and included mostly California representatives, it focused largely on matters here. The California legislature passed a bill this past session, AB-790, which instituted a competition for 20 slots as Linked Learning districts, or consortiums of districts. Even though no funds were provided for this, when the California Department of Education (CDE) conducted the competition for these 20 slots last fall, 89 districts applied, either individually or jointly with other districts. The 20 selectees included a total of 55 districts and eight county offices of education with a combined total of 444 high schools and 600,000 students.

Darrell Parsons, leader of this initiative in CDE, provided a brief report. This included a handout with details on the program basics, requirements, available technical assistance, other incentives, and hoped-for goals. 2012-13 is a planning year, with implementation scheduled for the fall of 2013. Each selectee is now developing these plans. A session following the Conversation brought together these selectees, which introduced them to each other and to the available support providers and gave them an opportunity to sketch their plans to the group.

In related discussion Jerry Winthrop, Lead Consultant for the California Partnership Academies (CPAs), discussed funding-related developments in the California legislature. It is hoped that Proposition 39, passed in November, which requires out-of-state businesses doing business in California to pay taxes here, will raise funds which can be used for education, including support for 66 new Green Academies, bringing the total in this field to 100. It is also hoped that SB-1070, which was also passed in the last session, will provide funding for the 150 existing CPAs previously funded under SB-70 (1070's predecessor) for another year. It is also hoped that some of the SB-1070 funding will go to support the AB-790 Linked Learning initiative. These decisions will ultimately rest with the California legislature.

◆ NATIONAL POLICY

At the November meeting in Nashville a new task force was established on national policy as it relates to career academies. This in effect replaced the task force on national recognition and support. The members of the new task force represent many of the organizations that attend the Conversation and/or have knowledge of developments at the federal level (i.e., ACTE, AEE, AYPF, CCASN, CE CA, Ford/PAS, MDRC, NAF, NASDCTE, NCAC).

Charlie Dayton of CCASN shared a two-page brief developed jointly by CCASN and MDRC, with input from several other task force members, entitled "How Federal Support Could Advance Career Academies". This provides a definition of Career Academies, summarizes their evidence of effectiveness, cost, ways federal support could help advance them, and sketches some of the available support providers.

The discussion that followed touched on the ideal size for academies. Brad Stam of ConnectEd CA questioned the size indicated in the briefing paper ("they typically serve 150-200 students..."), and as other Linked Learning initiative representatives have argued, expressed the feeling that they will serve

more students and become more effective in a district-wide approach if they are larger. Jerry Winthrop and others in CDE have expressed the fear that they will lose their ability to provide improved personalization if they become too large.

Other discussion topics included the Hewlett Foundation’s “deeper learning” initiative, “connected learning”, and the common core standards. This led to a plea from District Superintendent Marianne Cartan of Nevada Union that it was nearly impossible for teachers in the field to keep abreast of all these terms, which in turn led to the suggestion that a brief paper explaining each would be a useful contribution. Included in such a list might be the common core state standards, Twenty-First Century Learning, deeper learning, connected learning, linked learning, career academies, CPAs, NAF Academies, STEM Academies, career pathways, themed smaller learning communities, and themed small schools. Charlie asked Brad if he’d be willing to take a crack at such a piece, essentially a glossary of terms, to which he graciously acceded. Erin Fender offered to help, as did Jerry Winthrop.

◆ **WORKPLACE LEARNING**

Beth Kay, NAF’s Western Regional Director, gave a brief overview of recent work related to work-based learning (WBL). NAF has been a leader in this arena because of its national presence and broad access to employers and industry representatives. Beth explained that such attempts have been focused on how to systematize, codify, and ensure that WBL is offered to students widely in a multi-layered approach that can go to scale. NAF (and associates working with them) have defined four aspects of WBL: 1) pathway, and related quality measures; 2) district, and related technical assistance; 3) community engagement, often assisted by intermediaries; and 4) statewide, including convenings, such as via the Linked Learning Alliance and Unite L.A.

Roman Stearns and Dave Yanofsky of Connect Ed CA explained that many pieces of such a system are already in place. For example, MDRC developed many useful tools as part of its ECHO project to better support WBL in academies in 16 high schools, and that these materials will be available in the fall on CE’s Studios website. Related to this will be both a WBL toolkit and formative assessment guidelines and tools. The latter are about to be piloted, and will include career awareness, exploration, and internships.

◆ **ACADEMY STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT**

Brad Stam provided a brief report on progress at the Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC) related to its Data Dashboard. Indicator categories will include engagement, persistence, achievement, and attainment, including WBL participation and assessment. The Dashboard will use a drag and drop system that will allow users to slice and dice data in whatever way desired. There will be accountability measures for pathways and districts as well as students. Student measures will include participation in pathways, attendance, suspensions, and a-g course completions. The system will be integrated with CalPASS, a broad student assessment system being implemented in California, and the National Student Clearinghouse.

NEXT CONVERSATIONS

- July 10-12, NAF Conference, Orlando, FL
- October 25, NCAC Conference, Phoenix, AZ