

Arkansas Department of Career Education

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**HELPING EMPLOYERS BUILD A
COMPETITIVE
WORK** *force*



Arkansas Department
ACE
of Career Education

MIKE BEEBE
Governor

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The Career and Technical Education Division (CTE), a division of the Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE), provides leadership and supports continuous improvement in career and technical education in Arkansas’s public schools through promotion of academic rigor, industry relevance, and transition to postsecondary.

Arkansas’s CTE program is organized around the nationally recognized 16 Career Clusters[®], which offer a full spectrum of career options for each area. Arkansas’s Programs of Study correspond to the Career Clusters and provide pathways for students to acquire the skills for entry-level employment in a high-skill, high-wage job and/or for postsecondary education and training. Programs of Study align not only with Career Clusters but also with national college- and career-readiness standards. The curriculum integrates academic and technical content, as well as employability skills training.

Addressing Employer Needs

Quick Response, Customized Curriculum

Secondary career centers located on two-year campuses have in place the infrastructure to respond quickly and effectively to changing local workforce demands. Career centers can work with local employers to design curriculum tailored to the needs of an individual employer or a high-demand employment sector in a specific region of the state.

- Curriculum can be designed in partnership with a specific business or industry to teach high school students work competencies for entry-level jobs available to them upon graduation. The curriculum can include student internships at that industry.
- Curriculum can also be designed in partnership with employers within the regional labor market to meet their workforce needs in through programs that prepare high school students for an array of jobs within an employment sector.

Better-Prepared Employees Through Apprenticeships, Internships, Work-based Learning

Adult apprenticeships align training to industry needs while preparing adults for family-sustaining employment. They are the model for demand-driven industry training and provide employers a fully trained, competent workforce. Additionally, recruitment costs are lower; worker retention is higher; and employee motivation is greater.

Through internships and other work-based experiences, high school students acquire industry-specific knowledge and career readiness skills. Additionally, employers can use internships to pre-screen prospective employees before committing to them for permanent positions

Career Information Customized for Employment Sectors and/or Regions

Career coaches work with high school students to assist them in making good career choices. To assist employers, career coaches can actively partner with employers to provide students information regarding career options with specific employers within the region. Career coaches can also partner with employers to sponsor career cluster camps that introduce students to the types of careers available within a specific employment sector in the region.

Nationally Recognized Industry Certifications Integrated into Curriculum

CTE provides students the opportunity to earn nationally recognized certifications by completing a program that meets the industry-created standards and successfully passing the certification exam. Industry certifications provide business and industry with the assurance that CTE completers have the skills required to fill their openings. In addition to ensuring that completers have the necessary skills, certifications provide employers a tool for screening and assessing job applicants.

- The ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™ (CRC) offers employers objective standardized proof that an individual possesses the workplace skills needed to be successful. Many Arkansas high schools are implementing the KeyTrain curriculum upon which the CRC is based so that high school students can graduate with CRC certification.
- Arkansas offers the Microsoft IT Academy program to every high school in the state, adult education centers, and workforce centers. Certifications through the Academy include Microsoft Office Specialist, Microsoft Technology Associate or Microsoft Certified Professional—all of which certify a job applicant's level of competence.
- Other industry-based certifications students can earn include American Welding Society, Child Development Associate, Certified Nursing Assistant, National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation/Automotive Service Excellence, ServSafe, National Center for Construction Education and Research—to name a few.

Building the Pipeline to Address Shortage of STEM Workers

- The shortage for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) workers is being addressed through efforts to create a pipeline of high-school students ready for college-level STEM courses. ACE is part of the Governor's STEM Works Initiative and has designated \$500,000 of start-up grant funding for

Project Lead The Way (pre-engineering) and Medical Bioscience programs of study in 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15.

- Additionally, a secondary career center located on a community college campus is piloting an initiative that would incorporate Project Lead the Way into the advanced manufacturing program curriculum to provide students the option for a STEM track. The STEM option would help high school students become better prepared for STEM majors in college.

Alignment of College and Career Readiness Standards to Employer Needs

Arkansas's College and Career Readiness Program created by Act 743 of 2011 established standards that are closely aligned with skills required for direct entry into the workforce or into postsecondary coursework. Mastery of the standards gives students the foundation to adapt to changes in the workforce.

Concurrent Credit for a Better-Prepared Workforce

Sixteen secondary career centers are located on postsecondary campuses provide concurrent credit to enable students to earn college credit while still in high school so that they avoid repeating coursework when they enroll in college. Concurrent credit shortens the time to degree completion. In addition, students who participate in concurrent-credit courses but decide to enter the workforce directly after high school have had the benefit of college-level technical classes and thus are better prepared for entry-level jobs.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about What Career and Technical Education Can Do for Employers

1. What is being done to improve work ethic?

The Importance of good work ethics is integrated into all CTE classes. Additionally, internship programs, Jobs for Arkansas's Graduates (JAG) and college- and career-readiness programs place a strong focus on ensuring that students understand the importance of qualities such as attendance, punctuality, dependability, initiative, attitude, cooperation, respect, character, appearance, productivity and teamwork. Career and technical student organizations also provide members opportunities to practice good work skills.

2. How are soft skills being reinforced like problem solving, critical thinking, cultural literacy, listening, communication and how to learn?

Through real-world assignments, including those that require students to work in teams, CTE courses require students to use soft skills as well as technical and academic skills. The Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) program is being implemented in high schools to meet the requirement for digital learning for all students as mandated by Act 1280. The program includes learning activities that

teach the soft skills included in the Career Ready 101 curriculum provided by ACT.

3. What is the state doing to get students interested in manufacturing, machine tool, industrial maintenance and construction trades?

There are several successful examples of efforts to interest students in these areas. The architecture and construction trades programs of study successfully incorporate a real-world, hands-on project to complement classroom learning. Students build a house, a project that not only teaches skills in construction but also skills in marketing a product. Another example is a very promising pilot internship program custom-designed for a specific employer. In this project, students complete a paid internship that prepares them for entry-level jobs in that organization.

4. How can we get students to understand the environment of the workplace and employer expectations?

The Arkansas Works College and Career Planning System has a “Connect 2 Business” component that allows employers to register in the system free of charge to offer job shadowing experiences, industry tours, classroom resource speakers, and externships for instructors. Connect 2 Business is an excellent platform for employers to promote their industry and encourage students from middle school up to develop education and training plans for real jobs in the local area. There are many other examples of opportunities for employers to become involved in helping students to understand the workplace and employer expectations. For example, career academies combine academic and technical curricula around a career focus and provide work-based learning opportunities through employer partnerships. Keystone and career orientation classes that provide opportunities for job shadowing, mentoring, guest speakers, field trips to business and industry sites. . We are eager to work with local employers to create internship programs and other work-based learning opportunities that offer employers the opportunity to communicate their expectations to students. Workplace environment and expectations are addressed as part of the classroom curriculum in all CTE program areas.

5. How can we teach students to think for themselves and solve problems?

We have had good success with project-based learning programs of study like Project Lead the Way and Innovations in Science and Technology that provide real-world scenarios and community-based learning projects with employer-driven training partnerships. We believe that this type of dynamic partnership with employers to provide shared training, shared equipment, and shared facilities will provide students with experiences that are current and relevant to employer needs.

6. What is being done in schools today to teach employability skills like filling out applications and interviewing?

These skills are taught in Career Orientation, which all students have to take, and are also integrated into CTE classes. Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) provide hands-on experiences for students to develop these skills and compete in competitions that are judged by industry professionals and trained educators who provide constructive feedback to the students. Courses like College and Career Readiness should be a required course for all students to prepare for employment with practice for interviewing, completing applications and resumes. These same skills are developed in the CTSOs and are judged by industry professionals and trained educators with positive feedback to students.

7. How can we get students to understand how to apply the knowledge they get from their classes in school?

Project-based learning, which provides students the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex challenge, is an excellent way to teach students to apply classroom learning to real-world situations. EAST® (Environmental and Spatial Technology) is a project-based model focusing on student-driven community-service projects accomplished through teamwork and cutting-edge technology. EAST, along with Project Lead the Way, which introduces students to engineering-related careers, are models of project-based learning that have been very successful in helping students connect the classroom and the workplace.

8. How can we teach students the value of good customer service?

Customer service is integrated into entrepreneurship programs offered in the marketing career cluster, as well as in the consumer-service programs of study in family and consumer sciences cluster. The DECA chapters at several high schools operate school-based stores, which give students practical experience in customer service.

9. How can we fill the demand for jobs in engineering and engineering technology?

We are promoting STEM curriculum, which prepares students for careers in engineering and related jobs. The Department of Career Education participates in STEM Works, an initiative of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet designed to encourage more students to take STEM classes. As part of STEM Works, the department funds Project Lead the Way, a pre-engineering program for middle- and high-school students. Arkansas Works coaches also promote STEM studies to high school students in the school districts they serve. Since career coaches serve economically and educationally challenged districts, this promotion is critical to the goal of expanding the diversity, as well as the capacity, of

the STEM workforce pipeline. At the middle-school level, classes like career orientation introduce students to STEM careers and provide encouragement to girls, who frequently do not consider STEM careers. Additionally, STEM skills are frequently demonstrated in project-based classes like robotics in order to interest students in further exploration of STEM careers.

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Arkansas's adult education system, administered by the Adult Education Division of the Arkansas Department of Education, includes a range of instructional programs that help adults get the basic skills they need to be productive workers, family members, and citizens.

The major program areas are Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESL). These programs emphasize basic skills such as reading, writing, math, and English language competency. Adult education classes prepare adults who lack a high school diploma with academic skills instruction so that they can take the test.

In addition to providing adults academic instruction so that they can earn their GED[®] credential, the Adult Education Division also has a program specifically targeted to meet workforce demands, the *Workforce for the Alliance of Growth in the Economy* (WAGE[™]) and can provide basic skills classes at an employer's worksite.

Addressing Employer Needs

Basic Workplace Skills Needed by Employers

Local adult education WAGE[™] programs partner with employers to teach unemployed or underemployed adults basic educational skills, workplace skills, and job-specific training for entry-level jobs. WAGE[™] can also work with an employer to provide classes for existing workers to upgrade their basic skills to meet changing job demands or to provide them a basic-skills foundation to support further technical training.

WAGE[™] instruction includes 112 basic skills competencies based on the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) that have been identified as essential workplace skills by the employers in Arkansas and the nation.

WAGE[™] offers six state issued certificates: Bank Teller, Clerical, Customer Service I & II, Employability, and Industrial. The number of adults earning a WAGE[™] certificate has increased by 62 percent since 2008.

Customized Workplace Classes for Existing Workers

Adult education offers employers programs that address specific employer needs, such as adult basic skills, GED preparation, and English literacy for employees whose native language is not English. Classes are tailored to the individual employer's workforce needs and are usually offered at the employer's worksite on a flexible schedule. These classes are for employees only and are closed to the general public.

Career Readiness Skills Measured by GED®

The GED® diploma is designed so that only 60 percent of high school seniors can pass GED®, test, which measures adult literacy and math skills as well as critical thinking skills. Hiring a GED® graduate assures the employer that the employee is in the top 60 percent of high school graduates in the skill areas that matter most.

Nearly 4 million middle-skill jobs are unfilled today because there aren't enough people with the right skills and education. The newly released 2014 GED® test is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education, which identifies the critical skills and knowledge for those middle-skill jobs. Individuals who earn a GED® diploma in 2014 and later have demonstrated that in addition to being in the upper 60 percent of high school graduates, they also have the career-readiness skills to succeed in middle-level jobs.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about What Adult Education Can Do for Employers

1. What is WAGE™?

WAGE™ stands for Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy. WAGE™ is a job-readiness program that provides academic and basic skills instruction to unemployed and underemployed Arkansans. An individual who completes the program earns a state-issued certificate in one or more of six areas: Industrial, Clerical, Banking, Customer Service, or Employability.

2. How can WAGE™ serve your organization?

A WAGE™ program can be tailored to fit the needs of your organization. We will conduct a literacy task analysis on your positions and use the data to design an individualized program for your organization. Statistics indicate that WAGE™ is successful in addressing employer needs by providing workers who have received basic employability skills instruction and instruction in a specific job area.

3. What are the costs to employers to participate in WAGE?

No cost to employers!

4. How can you help us develop a pool of possible employees with basic academic education?

5. How can you help us develop a pool of current employees with basic academic education who can be promoted?

We will work with you to design academic skills classes for your employees and will provide those classes at your worksite and at a time convenient for you. We will conduct a literacy task analysis and create customized classes especially for your employees in areas such as reading, writing, mathematics, or English as a Second Language (ESL) taught within the context of your workplace.

6. How can you help us increase employee satisfaction with job, with product, with customers?

Many job-related materials and tasks require a comprehension level in the range of a 12.9 grade level in what is commonly referred to as the “3 Rs”—reading, writing, and mathematics. At this competency level, employees should be able to read most materials with comprehension, write effectively and communicate successfully with a variety of individuals, and apply mathematical concepts to job tasks. When employees function successfully at this level, their satisfaction with their jobs, the product, and customers increases.

7. What is the cost to me for the service?

No cost to employers!

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Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), a division of the Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE) is charged with mission of providing opportunities for Arkansans with disabilities to lead productive and independent lives. To accomplish this mission, ARS offers individuals with disabilities a wide range of services designed to provide them with the skills, resources, and attitudes needed to get the job, keep the job, and develop a lifetime career.

ARS works with employers to help them in the hiring and accommodation of workers with disabilities, who prove themselves time and time again to be innovative, dedicated, and dependable workers.

Access to Talent Pool of Individuals with Disabilities

Employers in Arkansas will soon be able to use the Talent Acquisition Portal® (TAP) to search for qualified job applicants with disabilities. TAP is a new online system that includes both a national talent pool of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) candidates looking for employment and a job posting system for businesses looking to hire individuals with disabilities. ARS will participate in TAP and will help Arkansas employers use this new recruitment tool.

TAP offers business the opportunity to post jobs, search candidate resumes based on skill sets and geographic availability, capture job metrics, generate compliance reports, interview candidates, have online job fairs, and have their jobs seen by individuals with disabilities across the country.

Helping Employees Return to Work or Remain at Work

The Retaining a Valued Employee (RAVE) program was created to support to employers in assisting an employee who experiences a disability due to an injury or illness in remaining at work or returning to work as soon as it is safe and medically feasible. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has recognized RAVE as an emerging practice. RAVE services are available to employers at no cost.

RAVE specialists assist employers by identifying accommodations that work. By working hand-in-hand with the employer and employee, new or different ways of successfully performing work tasks can be identified either by adjusting how specific tasks are performed or introducing the use of different technologies or equipment to assist in task performance.

Meeting Industry Standards in Training Programs

The Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) has made major strides in ensuring training programs meet and exceed the standards required by business and industry in Arkansas and the nation.

- Industry Certifications/Licensure: In 2008, ACTI began restructuring all training programs to align with national certification or state licensure requirements. Employers across the nation recognize the certifications and give preference in the hiring process. To date, 11 of ACTI's 13 program are now fully aligned with national accreditation and state licensure requirements, and the remaining programs are awaiting final approval for certificate.
- Career Readiness Certificate: ACTI is the first comprehensive rehabilitation center to serve as a proctor site for ACT's Career Readiness Certificate (CRC). The CRC is a portable credential that demonstrates achievement and a certain level of workplace employability skills in Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information, and Reading for Information.
- OSHA Certifications: Other job-readiness certifications offered by ACTI are OSHA certifications for general industry and for construction. These certifications will help make ACTI students more employable in these industries. The OSHA training has allowed automotive technology students to be placed in internships at local automobile dealerships.
- Internship Program: ACTI has developed a number of partnerships to provide ACTI students with working internships that offer them real work opportunities to reinforce their classroom learning and help them to enhance their interpersonal skills and workplace attitudes. To date, more than 56 students have participated in paid and unpaid internships with area employers. The National Parks Services and Oaklawn Park Racing and Gaming are two of ACTI's larger internship partners, along with smaller organizations such as the Eleanor Klugh Jackson House, ATV Guru, Iron World Design, Abilities Unlimited Office and Thrift Store, Peters Pain, and Thee Brother's Keeper.
- Council on Occupational Education (COE): ACTI is in the final stages of the process to achieve center-wide national accreditation by the Council on Occupational Education (COE), which is recognized as a symbol of excellence by business and industry. The onsite visit by the COE accrediting team was conducted this spring, and the final accreditation decision will be announced in February.
- Establishment of Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs): CTSOs give students the opportunity to put into action the technical knowledge and skills they learn in the classroom and provide them opportunities to develop soft skills such as communication, leadership and team-building skills. Additionally, many employers participate as partners in CTSO activities such as the SkillsUSA

competitions, and these employers have the opportunity to see potential employees in action.

Project Search[®]

ARS is a partner in the Pulaski County Project Search[®] program, which is a one-year business-led internship program that helps young people with disabilities transition from high school to the workplace.

ARS provides financial support, applied directly to vocational education and career development. The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) serves as the host business for the program, providing entry-level work experiences that match each intern's skills.

Project SEARCH[®] is an international one-year internship program for individuals with developmental disabilities who desire sustainable, competitive employment. Its proven training and employment model is used in more than 150 licensed programs spanning 42 states, four countries, and multiple industries.

ACE Expos

In 2011 the Arkansas Department of Career Education (which includes Rehabilitation Services, Adult Education, and Career and Technical Education divisions) began taking the agency's "show on the road" – literally – by hosting one-day "ACE EXPOs" in cities across the state.

Designed to compliment and connect local residents with rehabilitation field offices, adult education centers and related institutions in the targeted communities, the events are set up in tradeshow fashion at an event center with booths staffed by agency personnel. Experts from each service and program engage visitors, answer questions, and connect citizens to services that can benefit their health, rehabilitation, employability and education. Partner agencies such as the Department of Workforce Services, Services for the Blind, local colleges, and other organizations are invited to participate.

The EXPOs include a job fair where rehabilitation clients, students and the public have access to local employers who are ready to hire. Another important feature is a "reality fair" for high school students featuring mini-workshops on budgeting, interviewing, dressing for success and understanding postsecondary education options.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about What Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Can Do for Employers

1. What are some reasons to hire people with disabilities?

Employees with disabilities have proven to be dependable, dedicated, hardworking, productive employees. Because they have had to find creative ways to perform tasks that others take for granted, they possess excellent problem-solving skills. People with disabilities possess valuable problem-solving skills because they are experts in finding creative ways to perform tasks others may take for granted. Individuals with disabilities represent one of the largest minorities, so hiring employees with disabilities reflects your customer base and sends the message that your organization is inclusive of all people. Additionally, employees with disabilities can open up a new and rapidly expanding customer base—the population of individuals with disabilities—because they can relate to this customer base, as well as view products and services from the perspective of accessibility.

2. Are there any tax incentives for hiring people with disabilities?

Yes. Information about these tax incentives can be found on the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN), also offers a fact sheet outlining these tax incentives. We can also provide general information on tax incentives and direct you to resources for further information.

3. What is a "reasonable accommodation?"

A reasonable accommodation is any modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions.

4. What are some examples of reasonable accommodations?

Examples of reasonable accommodation include making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and usable by an individual with a disability, restructuring a job, modifying work schedules, acquiring or modifying equipment, or providing qualified readers or interpreters.

5. Are accommodations expensive?

It is a misperception that accommodations are expensive and complicated. According to a survey by the U.S. Department of Labor, two-thirds of accommodations cost less than \$500, with nearly a quarter costing nothing at all. Yet, more than half of the employers surveyed said that each accommodation benefited their organization an average of \$5,000.

6. I have an employee with a temporary disability incurred as the result of an accident. How can I help this employee?

It is in everyone's best interest to help the employee return to work in some capacity as soon as he or she is able. A return-to-work strategy can improve productivity and morale, save employers time and money, and protect employers from loss of talent. Our Retaining a Valued Employee (RAVE) program provides support to both the employer and employee in the accommodation process. RAVE specialists help with developing new or different ways to perform work tasks or by recommending equipment or technology to help the employee return to his or her former job duties.

7. How can a vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor help me as an employer?

VR counselors will work with you to identify qualified people with disabilities who are ready for employment and to support both you and the employee through technical assistance such as advice on accommodations, if needed. Our counselors can also provide information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

**For More Information, Contact
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