

stories of
Innovation & Results



McREL links technical and academic knowledge in Job Corps standards

The Challenge

Job Corps is the nation's largest federally funded job training and education program for economically disadvantaged youth. Job Corps' objective is to continue placing skilled workers in the workplace immediately upon graduation from high school. To do this, they needed a way for technical and academic instructors to break out of their "silos" and work together toward a common goal.

Strategic Solution

McREL provided a new way of looking at standards by finding "topics" within them from which career and academic educators could find common ground. As a sub-contractor to Coffey Consulting, McREL analyzed and evaluated Job Corps' standards documents to identify academic knowledge and skills in the areas of English, mathematics, science, and critical thinking. Tailoring the work to our client's needs, McREL experts focused on three outcomes: (1) identify the academic underpinnings of the technical tasks, (2) surface commonalities among professions, and (3) determine pre-requisites that students must meet to enter their respective professions.

Results

By successfully linking academic and technical standards, Job Corps Centers nationwide, which serve about 62,000 young adults annually, are better able to prepare their students for the workplace, advanced training programs, or higher education. Since beginning work, McREL has analyzed five industries; 55 specific training areas; 7,600 skills or tasks; 88 academic standards; and 643 applied academic standards.

Next Steps

Job Corps will have a tool to bridge technical tasks and academic standards and achieve the systemic change needed to ensure their students are ready for future success. McREL's standards experts will provide a database containing findings from an examination of 11 industries, such as hospitality, IT, finance and business, and renewable energy and resources. In addition, Job Corps instructors will have access to 110 newly created lesson plans on topics ranked by teacher focus groups as the "top ten."

Developing curricular pathways to success

A crucial key to student success is ensuring that every student encounters challenging curricula that prepares him or her for life success. For two decades, McREL has been a recognized leader in helping education organizations review, improve, and implement standards as well as develop and adopt curricula that provide all students with pathways to success.

Analyzing and revising standards

Our analysts help states review and revise their standards for all subject areas and levels, from pre-kindergarten through college entry. We ensure that standards are clear, specific, and represent best research, so that curriculum, instruction, and assessment can be organized around them.

Aligning standards with assessments

In addition, we provide objective guidance on assessment programs, helping our clients navigate complex psychometric issues to determine the extent to which their testing programs align with their standards.

Conducting curriculum audits

We also conduct curriculum audits, helping districts identify strengths and weaknesses in their enacted curriculum, including areas where the existing curriculum fails to align with standards, sequence effectively through grade levels, or support student mastery of key knowledge and skills.

Creating a guaranteed and viable curriculum

Through intensive professional development and technical assistance, we help schools and districts offer a “guaranteed and viable curriculum”—one that identifies essential content for all students, sequences it in a way that gives students ample opportunity to learn it, and ensures teachers address the content in their classrooms.

Helping translate standards into classroom curricula

We help schools and districts “unpack” the learning expectations embedded in standards and benchmarks, so they can develop curricula—and teachers can write lesson plans—that help students master the standards. We also develop instructional materials, including exemplar activities, lesson plans, and classroom assessment items to help teachers create standards-based classrooms.

For more information on our standards audits or analysis, or any of our customized services, e-mail info@mcrel.org, or contact McREL at 800.781.0156.

