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PROJECT SUMMARY

STUDY OVERVIEW

Expanding comprehensive credit-based transition programs that blend secondary and postsecondary education is now at the top of the agenda of many educators and policy-makers who are working to improve the nation's high schools. These programs support the transition process through a variety of components, including dual enrollment opportunities that allow high school students to take college courses in academic and technical subjects and earn college credit prior to graduation.

Funded by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) at the U.S. Department of Education, the *Bridging the Divide: Blending Secondary and Postsecondary Curricula into a Coherent Course of Study* project is being conducted by SRI International in partnership with Jobs for the Future. The study builds on a previous OVAE project—*Accelerating Student Success Initiative*—and focuses on the state and local policies that facilitate or hinder the implementation of comprehensive and enhanced comprehensive credit-based transition programs. These types of transition programs provide intensive exposure to the academic and social demands of college and usually constitute a significant part of a student's high school experience.

Findings from the *Bridging the Divide* project will highlight why comprehensive credit-based transition programs are not widely implemented. In addition, the final report will outline policy changes that might facilitate the development of these programs as part of state and district high school reform initiatives.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the policy and regulatory environments that govern the development and sustainability of comprehensive credit-based transition programs in selected states and districts.
- To examine the impact of state, district, and postsecondary institutional policies and regulations on the implementation, structure, and management of programs.
- To identify promising policy options for states and localities to consider as they address educational attainment and transition issues through the expansion

of comprehensive credit-based transition programs.

METHODS

This 20-month study uses document reviews, focus groups, and interviews to gather information. The investigation begins by conducting a policy review to identify the multiple state policies that govern comprehensive credit-based transition programs. Policies examined include dual credit, teacher certification, and high school graduation, among others. The next phase includes site visits to collect information on how state policies guide program operations at the district level and how state and district policies impact local program development.

Bridging the Divide



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

Work will proceed in three phases:

Phase I: Site Selection

As part of the site selection process, selection criteria, informed by policy and literature reviews, will be developed. Specific criteria will guide all levels of the selection process including state, district, and program selection. To understand variation among states, the selected states will represent a range of policy environments, from those with coordinated K-16 systems to those with less coordinated systems. To understand variation among programs, programs will be selected based on their level of intensity and program focus—academic or career/technical.

Phase II: Data Collection

In addition to the policy reviews, the project team will conduct multi-day field visits to three states. Within each state, information will also be collected from two districts and four programs within each district. Case study data collection will consist of interviews and focus groups with state policymakers, district administrators, and secondary and postsecondary program directors.

Phase III: Data Analysis

The data analysis will trace the effects of state and district policies on partnership arrangements between the secondary and postsecondary institutions that comprise the credit-based transition program. Cross-state comparisons will examine the prevalence of specific implementation issues and how these implementation challenges impact program development and expansion.

PRODUCTS

- 1) **One-Page Briefs** will describe the set of policies that govern credit-based transition programs for each state selected for in-depth study.
- 2) **Individual State Profiles** will build upon the briefs by presenting a fuller description of the policy environment guiding program development. The profiles will also summarize how state and local policies impact the development of credit-based transition programs.
- 3) The **Final Report**—targeting a general policy audience—will focus on the identification of a range of policy options that can be implemented by policymakers to facilitate and promote the expansion of comprehensive credit-based transition programs. The report will also outline multiple solutions to resolve particular policy impediments and, whenever feasible, outline the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

For further information on this project, visit the Office of Vocational and Adult Education Web site at: www.ed.gov/OVAE or contact Ivonne Jaime, Program Manager, at ivonne.jaime@ed.gov.