



Highlights of [GAO-09-683](#), a report to congressional requesters

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

States Have Broad Flexibility in Implementing Perkins IV

Why GAO Did This Study

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) supports career and technical education (CTE) in high schools and postsecondary institutions, such as community colleges. Perkins IV established student performance measures at the secondary and postsecondary levels for state agencies, such as state educational agencies, and local recipients, such as school districts, eligible to receive funds. GAO examined (1) how states have implemented the Perkins IV performance measures and what, if any, challenges they have faced in implementing the measures; (2) to what extent the Department of Education (Education) has ensured that states are implementing the new performance measures and supported states in their efforts; and (3) what Education knows about the effectiveness of CTE programs. To collect national-level data, GAO surveyed state CTE directors in the 50 states and District of Columbia between January and April 2009, and received responses from all states and the District of Columbia. To view survey results, click on <http://redesign-www.gao.gov/special.pubs/gao-09-737sp/index.html>. We provided a draft copy of this report to Education for comment. We received technical comments, which we incorporated into the draft where appropriate.

What GAO Recommends

This report contains no recommendations.

View [GAO-09-683](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact George A Scott at (202) 512-7215 or scottg@ga.gov.

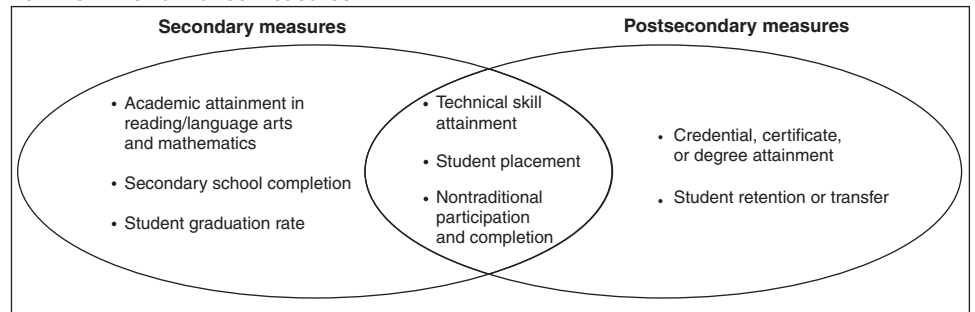
What GAO Found

States are implementing some of the Perkins IV performance measures using different approaches and report that the greatest challenge is collecting data on technical skill attainment and student placement. Flexibility in Perkins IV and Education's guidance permits differences in how states implement the measures. According to our surveys, 34 states at the secondary level and 29 at the postsecondary level intend to adopt Education's recommended use of assessments—such as those for industry certifications—to measure technical skills. States reported that they face the most challenge collecting data on the technical skill attainment and student placement measures because of cost and concerns with their ability to access complete and accurate data.

Education ensures states are implementing the Perkins IV accountability requirements through on-site monitoring and off-site document reviews, and supports states through technical assistance and guidance. Monitoring findings were most often related to states failing to submit complete or reliable data, and Education uses its findings to guide the technical assistance it provides to states. States reported that Education's assistance has helped them implement the performance measures, but that more assistance with technical skill attainment would be helpful. Education is aware of states' need for additional assistance and has taken actions to address this, including facilitating a state-led committee looking at technical assessment approaches.

State performance measures are the primary source of data available to Education for determining the effectiveness of CTE programs, and Education relies on student outcomes reported through these measures to gauge the success of states' programs. Because only 2 of 11 measures (secondary and postsecondary have 3 measures in common) have been implemented and reported on thus far, Education has little information to date on program outcomes. In addition, Perkins IV does not require states to report to Education the findings of their program evaluations. In our surveys of state CTE directors, nearly half of states responded that they have conducted or sponsored a study to examine the effectiveness of their CTE programs. We reviewed 7 of these studies and found that only 4 were outcome evaluations.

Perkins IV Performance Measures



Source: GAO analysis of Education program guidance and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006.