

# Expressions!

OF OKLAHOMA VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

## Strategic plan will be completed by May

Customers of the Oklahoma vocational-technical system are providing some good ideas and great input for a new system-wide strategic plan, says State Vo-Tech Director Dr. Ann Benson.

Development of the new strategic plan began last October and is scheduled for completion by May 1, Benson said. It will then be shared with the Governor and members of the Oklahoma Legislature.

“We’re listening very closely to those we serve,” Benson said, “especially to the business and industry community — because they hire our graduates.”

Sarah Mussett, coordinator of the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education’s Strategic Planning and Policy Research division, and Alice Rushmore, planning specialist, are coordinating development of the plan.

“Right now, we are in the information gathering stage,” Mussett said. “We have an independent research firm conducting a telephone survey of about 300 businesses and industries statewide, and we are hosting a variety of discussion groups around the state. In mid-January, we met with about 30 selected business and industry executives

and economic development officials, and we hosted the well-attended Roundtable on the Future of Secondary Vocational Education last November.”

Mussett said in addition to

gathering views on the future role of vocational education, these forums are a great way to build strategic partnerships.

“An important part of the process is all the wonderful discussion with partners,” she said. “It puts us in contact with the people we serve and those who benefit from the vocational system.”

Apart from nurturing partnerships with business and industry, she said it was also essential to continue to strengthen existing partnerships with vo-tech’s counterparts in the secondary and higher education systems and with parents, students, administrators and other state agencies.

She said the next step in the process would be analyzing the data and then drafting the plan.

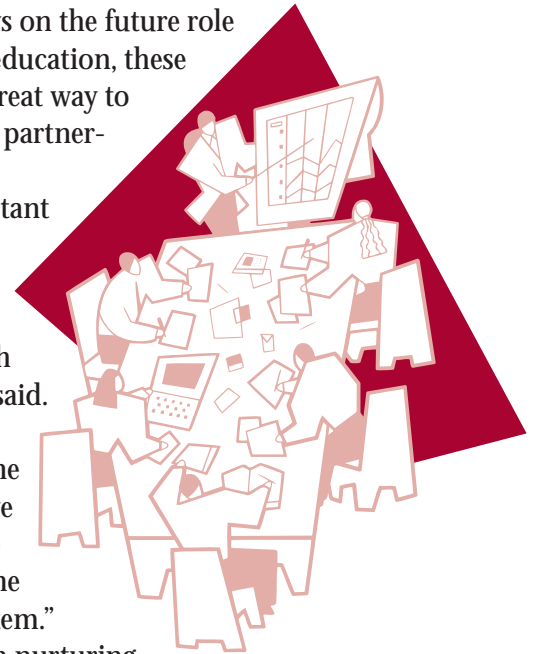
Mussett said new performance measures are being included in the revised plan so that the vo-tech system can better gauge its success.

“By measuring our successes, we can report to the citizens of Oklahoma that we are good stewards of their tax dollars,” she said.

The new strategic plan will update the agency’s existing plan, which was created in 1994.

Mussett said the strategic plan will incorporate the system’s goals and objectives for the next three years.

“We will revisit the plan every year to consider progress and make appropriate modifications,” she said.



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## Educators, business leaders discuss future of secondary vocational-technical education

More than 250 Oklahoma educators, policy makers and business leaders recently shared their ideas on improving vocational education during a roundtable discussion on the future of Oklahoma secondary vocational-technical education held in Oklahoma City.

Dr. Ann Benson, state vo-tech director, said the aim of the roundtable was to begin the planning process for taking secondary vocational education into the next century.

Trish McNeil, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, was one of two keynote speakers. The other was David Wood, chief operating officer of the Charles Machine Works, Perry.

In her address, McNeil discussed some of the challenges vocational education will face in the 21st century.

"The skills that the worker of the 21st century will need are both vocational and academic," she said. "The distinction between the college-bound and the non-college-bound will become blurred."

Woods echoed McNeil's comments, noting that

many of his firm's 1,500 employees were trained by Oklahoma's vo-tech system — either in high school or as adults.

Other speakers at the conference included Lisa Milsap, a former agricultural education student at

Lexington High School and an Oklahoma State University graduate, and Paul Johnson, a graduate of Red River Technology Center, Duncan.

Both Milsap and Johnson attribute their current professional success to vocational education. Milsap, a sales representative for the ProVet Corporation, said her agricultural education background is a great asset when she makes her daily sales calls to veterinarians.

Johnson, who has a learning disability, said in high school he was labeled as a student who could not succeed. Vocational-technical education was the only thing that saved him from dropping out, he said. He is now a highly paid technician for Carrier Heating and Air Conditioning in Oklahoma City and is continuing his education.

After a lunch break, conference participants broke into work groups and later came forward with their recommendations for developing a new strategic plan for Oklahoma's vo-tech system.



McNeil

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# Carrier technician says vo-tech saved him from dropping out of high school

In the fifth grade, Paul Johnson was given a fish tank. By the sixth grade, he had wired it through the telephone line so that he could call home using a code he had installed and automatically feed the fish.

Johnson, a Duncan High School graduate, now works for Carrier Heating and Air Conditioning in Oklahoma City . . . a job made possible by a combination of his ingenuity and skills learned through the Red River Technology Center air conditioning program. He plans on becoming an engineer and a motivational speaker to help build self-esteem in children.

For Johnson, success did not come easy because of his learning disability in reading.

“There’s a big difference between having a learning disability and being lazy,” Johnson said. “You have to have at least an average IQ to be called learning disabled. And there are means to compensate for this ‘hidden disability.’ I know. I use them.”

That “learning disabled” label, however, almost prohibited Johnson from getting into the air conditioning and electricity class even though he had a tremendous interest and natural ability.



“I was told by someone that I would never succeed in life because I couldn’t read,” Johnson said.

“This disability is not an excuse to get out of things. And, people who have disabilities usually have strengths in other places.”

Johnson’s strengths are memory and numbers.

“I’d just watch the teacher and memorize everything said. After a test, I could erase what I didn’t need anymore,” he said.

Red River’s vocational air conditioning teacher, Mike Darnell, took a chance on Johnson.

Darnell helped Johnson compensate for his disability in the classroom. All his studies were on CD ROM or voice-activated with the computer. Johnson was assigned a reader for tests.

Johnson thrived in the class. He was an honor student and a state and national competition winner with the vocational student organization, Vocational and Industrial Clubs of America (VICA), which is now known as SkillsUSA-VICA.

Today, this young man finds he has to prove himself daily because of his youth.

“There are eight techs in the Oklahoma City office,” Johnson said. “I may be the youngest they’ve ever hired. But, you don’t end up staying with Carrier by accident. They (Carrier) are recognized as one of the best air conditioning firms in the world.”

Working for Carrier supports Johnson’s dream of further education toward mechanical or electrical engineering. But helping kids with disabilities or problems with self-esteem is another dream Johnson wishes to fulfill.



*Paul Johnson, shown servicing an electrical panel at Oklahoma State University’s chill water plant, is a 1995 graduate of Duncan High School and the Red River Technology Center air conditioning program. Johnson is one of the youngest service technicians ever hired by Carrier Heating and Air Conditioning in Oklahoma City.*

## Classes help state vo-tech staff improve grammar

As the agency that oversees a world-renowned vocational system, the Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education has customers from around the globe. Dr. Ann Benson, state vo-tech director, said many times their first contact with the department is a telephone call.

"It is important that their first impression is a good one," she said.

That is why she has urged all state vo-tech staff to enroll in the agency's quarterly grammar review course. About 55 agency staff members recently participated in a grammar review class that was also broadcast to six education sites.

Sites participating in the broadcast included Kiamichi Technology Center's Poteau and McAlester campuses; Tulsa Community College; Southwestern Oklahoma State University at Weatherford; Southeastern Oklahoma State University at Durant; Caddo-Kiowa Technology Center's Ft. Cobb campus; and the state vo-tech's studio and Occupational Conference Room.

Denise Kennemer, staff development specialist, said about 120 state vo-tech staff members have gone through the grammar review class.

Benson said the classes to help staff members improve their grammar are part of her overall campaign to improve the image of the Oklahoma vo-tech system.

"It is important for state vo-tech employees to use good grammar when verbally communicating with customers," she said.

Kennemer said the grammar review class was divided into two sessions. The first session, taught by Dr. Zane Quible of Oklahoma State University Business Extension, focused on verbal grammar rules. The second part of the class taught students about barriers that keep people from speaking effectively. The instructor was Dr. Mary Mandeville of Mandeville Associates, a Stillwater-based communications training and consulting firm.



Oklahoma Department of Vo-Tech staffer Suzanne Perry (foreground) participates in a grammar review class that was broadcast to Kiamichi Technology Center's Poteau and McAlester campuses; Tulsa Community College; Southwestern Oklahoma State University at Weatherford; Southeastern Oklahoma State University at Durant; and Caddo Kiowa Technology Center's Ft. Cobb campus.

## Francis Tuttle superintendent elected to AYES board

Francis Tuttle Superintendent Dr. Kay Martin has been elected to the Automotive Youth Education System's (AYES) board of directors. She was elected to the board during the AYES's annual meeting in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

Martin replaced Dr. Roy Peters, former state vo-tech director, who became a charter member of the board in 1996.

Martin, a grassroots member of the AYES national advisory board over the past four years, will serve a two-year term on the board of directors. She



Martin

describes her role on the board as overseeing the mission and purpose of the national AYES initiative, which was piloted at Francis Tuttle in 1995.

Since then, AYES has set the national standard for effective partnerships between the educational system and industry. The program trains automotive students in communication, math and science skills and provides internship opportunities at 150

dealerships in about 26 states. The AYES internships also create opportunities for students to pursue an associate degree in automotive service technology.

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## Management Development Group program helps state businesses prosper

Large industries are finding the challenge of change to be more profitable after answering the two key questions: Why? How?

The statewide Management Development Group (MDG) program, sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, began in 1985 to help business and industry strategically facilitate that change.

The MDG program is one of the client-based services offered through the Business and Industry Training Services division of Oklahoma's system of technology centers.

The program is designed to help businesses grow and prosper, according to Dr. Sheryl Hale, the MDG program state coordinator.

MDG programs are located at Autry Technology Center, Enid; Moore Norman Technology Center; Meridian Technology Center, Stillwater, and Tulsa Technology Center, Lemley campus.

Some of these technology centers meet monthly with CEOs and human resource professionals to discuss common issues. The coordinator then works independently with the business clients to customize strategic plans and identify needed training.

Services provided through the MDG program include consulting for organizational development change initiatives, performance improvement, building community leadership alliances, and management development opportunities.

"Our number one goal is to provide services to help organizations achieve their business goals," said Hale. "By providing consulting services, we help large organizations achieve their business goals by improving their organization's effectiveness and implementing continuous improvement."

MDG consultants work with organizations to identify organizational development needs and to implement solutions to meet those business needs.

"Services provided by MDG coordinators are customized for each business in order to increase human performance and organizational productivity," Hale said.

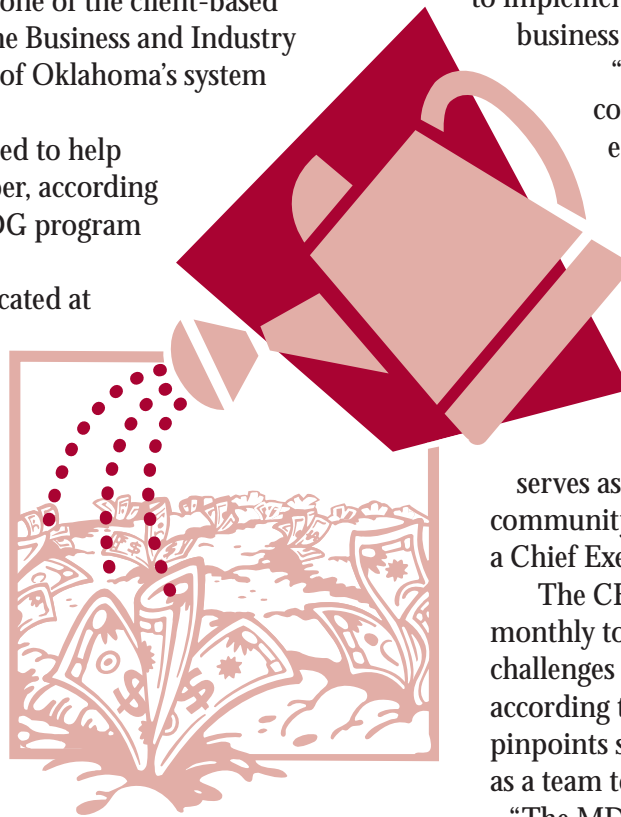
Autry Tech's MDG program is coordinated by Teri Holle, director of Business and Industry Services. There, the program

serves as a catalyst for establishing community leadership alliances through a Chief Executive Officer network.

The CEOs of eight companies meet monthly to discuss the latest trends and challenges facing their organizations, according to Holle. This group often pinpoints similar problems and functions as a team to find viable solutions.

"The MDG program helps companies combine resources to develop a program that will meet even the smallest need," Holle said. "That's what makes the program so successful. The executives and general managers understand that education is a business and recognize the importance of continuing education and training at their business sites."

— By Amanda Vardeman



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## *Nineteen High Schools That Work grants awarded*

Nineteen Oklahoma schools have been awarded grants to become part of the High Schools That Work (HSTW) initiative according to state votech officials.

The new schools bring the number of Oklahoma High Schools That Work sites to 42, said Dr. Belinda McCharen, assistant state director at the Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education.

The new HSTW sites are Anadarko, Atoka, Boise City, Broken Bow, Cache, Claremore, Davenport, Fairland, Hydro, the Southwest Technology Consortium (which includes Blair, Duke, Eldorado, Granite, Navajo and Olustee schools and Southwest Technology Center, Altus), Millwood, Moore-Westmoore, Norman High and Norman-North High, Putnam City-West, Stringtown, Stroud, Tecumseh, and Daniel Webster High School, Tulsa.

The High Schools That Work initiative was launched in 1987 by the Southern Regional Education Board to improve the way high school students prepare for work and further education. More than 800 sites in 22 states are currently involved in the

HSTW initiative.

McCharen said the goals of HSTW are to raise students' mathematics, science, communication, problem-solving and technical achievement and to blend college preparatory studies with quality vocational studies.

"The HSTW initiative hopes to raise expectations for all students so that they are better prepared for the 'real world' or college," she said.

According to McCharen, funding will be used for professional development. Educators will also look at strengthening school curriculum to meet High Schools That Work's goals.

The HSTW initiative has 10 key practices for accelerating student achievement. Those practices include increasing access to vocational studies; increasing access to academic studies; a well prepared program of study; work-based learning; teachers working together; actively engaging students; a well designed system for guidance and advisement involving each student and parent/guardian; extra help for students and use of assessment data to improve schools.

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