

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT NEWSLINE.....

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a publication from the Economic and Workforce Development Division. It is intended to periodically provide information to community colleges on various workforce development activities within the state. This issue features information about the North Carolina Career Readiness Certification Initiative (CRC). Please feel free to suggest topics of interest for future NEWSLINE Publications.

FEATURED ARTICLE:

Update on the North Carolina Career Readiness Certification Initiative

Congratulations to all the CRC sites ---- we have issued over 12,000 credentials in North Carolina, making us the 6th in the nation for CRC's issued. Kudos to all of you for your efforts and accomplishments in this process!!!! Please remember as you make CRC presentations and develop local marketing materials, that you should always refer to the Career Readiness Certificate as an integrative initiative. The CRC is not a stand-alone program. Be sure to always include your partners in your local sponsored CRC activities and keep them informed of your progress. The partners are crucial to the success of this initiative. In addition, let's be proud of our North Carolina Career Readiness Certificate. It is certainly a plus to have the National CRC connection, but don't forget that we have our own North Carolina certificate also!

NEWS FROM ACT

ACT has announced some significant changes to the WorkKeys distribution channel network that you need to be aware of. Because you are already established as a Value-Added Reseller (VAR) through the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) contract with ACT, the changes being announced do not apply directly to you. This information is being shared to make you aware of the changes to the general VAR program. NCCCS will still have a state-wide agreement for the colleges.

This has been a year of exciting and significant changes within ACT's Workforce Development Division. ACT recognizes your contribution to the Value Added Reseller network as an essential element of the WorkKeys system, and thanks you for your work and dedication. ACT continues to invest substantial energy, resources, and expense into expanding the power of the system, helping you achieve success, and furthering our collective missions and goals. Some recent achievements include:

- ❖ Implementation and development of the WorkKeys Internet version. This great enhancement to the WorkKeys system continues to progress.
- ❖ Introduction of the Personal Skills assessments to compliment the foundational skills titles. The WorkKeys product family has grown and become a truly comprehensive suite.
- ❖ Announcement of the National Career Readiness System, powered by WorkKeys.

This continued rapid growth and development of the WorkKeys system makes the distribution channel more important than ever. The impact of these key initiatives on the channel prompted ACT to carefully review current practices and to examine ways in which the current Value-Added Reseller program could be enhanced. Their primary objectives are to improve the service provided to address the wide-ranging needs of customers, and to grow the WorkKeys distribution network with specific focus on increasing employer use and adoption. These objectives work together to further establish WorkKeys as the basis for a national work readiness metric that serves to strengthen the link between individual preparation and workforce success. The review also sought to clarify and define the different roles for participation within the distribution network and improve the quality of support ACT provides to participants. To achieve these goals, ACT will restructure the WorkKeys distribution network, empowering a VAR to choose a path of participation that best aligns with their organization's objectives and strengths. The new structure features the following participation option which is best for North Carolina:

Option 1- *WorkKeys Solutions Providers (WSP) Program:*

This new category will replace the "Value-Added Reseller" program. It includes a more comprehensive set of performance incentives and expectations, as well as providing expanded support and greater membership benefits. ACT will continue to license our WSPs to resell assessments to employers and other third parties that pay for individuals' assessments, as well as tests used for educational and government funded purposes, as applicable.

A WorkKeys Solutions Provider must be committed to actively marketing and delivering the WorkKeys system to the employer community in order to serve their needs. Features relating to license fees, new performance incentives and standards, product access, and support distinguish the new WSP program from the current VAR program. North Carolina will still have a state-wide agreement for the colleges.

NORTH CAROLINA NEWS CONCERNING WORKKEYS SOLUTION PROVIDER (WSP)

Over 2 years ago, the NCCCS office entered into a contract, or licensure agreement with ACT for all colleges to be considered Value-Added Resellers (VARs) under ACT for the WorkKeys System. That original agreement will expire August 1, 2008. Listed below are the steps being taken by NCCCS to renew the agreement with ACT based on the new WSPs.

- ❖ Currently we are working on an agreement with ACT for each college to be a WorkKeys Solutions Provider (new name for Value Added-Reseller VAR). Under this agreement, you will be able to provide the WorkKeys assessments, use Express Score for scoring the assessments and have access to the Internet-based version of the WorkKeys System. The Internet-based version of the WorkKeys assessments will take the place of the CD Roms (currently used for Computer-Based Testing).
- ❖ Within the next few months, each college will be sent an agreement that mirrors the NCCCS system office agreement with ACT. Each college will need to sign the agreement and return it to NCCCS in order to continue to provide the WorkKeys Assessment System. Once

returned to NCCCS, a list of providers and contacts will be sent to ACT.

- ❖ North Carolina and ACT are partnering together to issue 1 credential for both the State CRC and the National CRC. *What does this mean to you?* It means that every time a credential is issued in NC, the person will receive a National credential in the same document. The credential will be designed slightly differently to reflect this change. The credential will include the National Credential number, but will still be a North Carolina Credential in that it will be signed by the Governor. The front side is basically the same; the back side will reflect the National Credential format instead of the North Carolina format. We are still working on how exactly we will accomplish this, but it appears that ACT will send us a spread sheet with all the North Carolinians that have been assessed. *(More information to follow)*

- ❖ Should you receive a bill from ACT to be a WSP, please do not pay that bill. Payment will be made for all colleges from the NCCCS.

EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT

Attached to this correspondence is an employer release form. We are requesting that when you work with a particular employer; please obtain their approval to use their name and company logo on our Career Readiness Certification web site at www.crcnc.org. As we begin to increase marketing efforts, we really want to be able to showcase the business involvement. Later this year, early next year, we are hoping to have a Statewide CRC Employer Council and CRC/WorkKeys Business Champions. *(More information to follow)*

➤ **CRC EMPLOYER SUPPORT-GREAT NEWS!!!**

Traditionally at the Maxton plant of Campbell Soup Company, an individual would not even be considered for a position unless they had two years of work experience. After seeing success with the Career Readiness Certificate, the decision was made last week to waive the two year experience requirement if an applicant comes to Campbell with a Career Readiness Certificate in hand! We are seeing more employers across the state that are willing to view the Career

Readiness Certificate as value-added and will give preference (such as a promise to proceed to the next step in the hiring process) to those who apply with a CRC already earned. As you talk with your employers, remember that they do not have to profile jobs in order to recognize the CRC.

➤ **EMPLOYER CRC ADVERTISING.....More Great News**

We have had some great advertising. Kimberly Clark in Hendersonville and Curtiss Wright Controls in Shelby have both placed ads in their local papers listing the CRC as Preferred Hiring. Burt's Bees in Durham has listed a job on their website requesting WorkKeys scores. Kudos to those sites!

We also have our first TV commercial, sponsored by Centralina Workforce Development Board and South Piedmont CC. Kudos again to that excellent partnership! Please visit the web site at: <http://www.centralinaworks.com/Website/Podcasts.asp> for a first hand look at the commercial.

There has been a lot of discussion concerning how an employer can advertise for Career Readiness Certificates and WorkKeys Scores. Two things to remember:

- If an employer has completed the profiling process for the jobs they are advertising, they can state that the actual scores established through the profile, or a specific level of CRC based on the established scores are required. This is the only time scores or CRC levels can be advertised as required.
- An employer can always advertise Career Readiness Certificate preferred, just as they do with a High School Diploma or other industry certifications.

CRC SITE REPORTING

As our CRC Sites become increasingly active and integrate the CRC into many programs, we need to be more aware of CRC activity across the state. To capture this information and share best practices among all of our CRC Sites, we will be instituting a Quarterly Reporting Process beginning in May, 2008. *(More information to follow)*

WORKKEYS INTERNET BASED TESTING VERSION

A CRC site must complete a training and registration process in order to offer Internet Based Testing. Since this version is truly portable and can be used at any location, you only need to register your main site. **Do not list any "Child" sites.** Follow the instructions below for registration:

1. Internet Based Testing Site Registration

Registration can be completed by going to the following website and filling out the form. There is no additional cost to offer this version. www.act.org/workkeys/forms/internetversion.html. Please send an e-mail to gobelp@nccommunitycolleges.edu when you have completed the registration process.

2. **You must attend a distance-learning training session.** The sessions are set-up on a weekly basis. Go to www.act.org/workkeys/webcast for the dates and to register for an Internet-based Version training session.

3. **Training:** is conducted using a conference call number. All those in a training session will need access to a computer with the internet. Please make sure you have tested the required websites in order to fully participate and not hold up the training for the rest of the group.

4. **Manuals:** From the WorkKeys website, you can print the WorkKeys Internet Version Test Administration and User Guide as well as a quick reference. Please print and have available for reference.

5. **Technical Specifications:** Go to the following website to be sure that your site meets the technical specifications to administer Internet Based Testing.

<http://www.act.org/workkeys/forms/techspecs.html>

WORKKEYS OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE DATABASE-A VERY USEFUL TOOL

Occupational profiles have many uses, not only for workforce development with individuals, but also for program development and training only purposes with employers. An employer should never use the Occupational Profiles for the High-Stakes decisions such as selection or promotion.

➤ **Career Counseling For the Individual**

The WorkKeys Occupational Database provides a Career Counseling tool that allows the counselor to identify jobs for which the individual already qualifies, or to recommend skill levels that are required for a job the individual is interested in. This can provide a clear training path for someone who has a specific job in mind.

➤ **Program Development**

The Occupational Database can be used to set entrance requirements or content for a specific training program.

➤ **Employers**

The Occupational Profiles can be used when an employer chooses to use the WorkKeys System only for training purposes. The incumbent workforce can be offered skills upgrade training (which will usually result in increased productivity for the company) based upon the Occupational Profile and the opportunity to earn a Career Readiness Certificate.

NEW ACT MARKETING MATERIALS POLICY

ACT has changed their Marketing Materials Ordering policy. Each site will receive a certain amount of free literature every year on the contract renewal date and will then have to purchase any additional materials. While we are in the process of negotiating a new contract agreement, ACT has agreed to give each Community College an initial no-cost order of \$150 if you have not already ordered free materials since January. This order must be placed by 4/15 and must be sent directly to mary.lewis@act.org. If the order goes to regular customer service, you will be charged for the materials.

GRANT-PAID ASSESSMENTS

All NCCCS grant-paid ("free") assessments have been allocated at this point. Please do not send any additional requests until further notice.

- ✧ For information on the Career Readiness Certification (CRC) contact:
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