MAJOR MILESTONES OF CAREER & TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION IN OKLAHOMA
A Discussion Guide
Use this Discussion Guide in conjunction with the publication

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Acknowledgments:

This Discussion Guide resulted from the work of the following individuals:

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The 2020 graphic design was created by the Creative Services staff; Marissa Villones, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

Although the compliance with the Vocational Act of 1917 by the state legislature is frequently called the beginning of vocational education in Oklahoma, there had been determined efforts before that time to initiate a state-wide program. Indeed, Section 7, Article 13 of the Constitution of the state of Oklahoma demanded that “the legislature shall provide for the teaching of the elements of Agriculture, Horticulture, Stock Feeding and Domestic Science in the Common Schools of the State.” In compliance with this provision the legislature provided that after July 1, 1909, all teachers wishing to receive certificates in the state should pass an examination qualifying them to instruct “the elements of Agriculture and allied branches mentioned” in the Constitution. Also, the various normal schools and other institutions of higher learning in the state were urged to offer training in the needed areas.

—Carl Tyson,
The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma, State Department of Vocational and Technical Education, circa 1975
1917-1930s

Everything changed when President Wilson signed that law, on February 23, 1917... Everywhere, not just in Oklahoma, the entire ecology of American vocational training changed, not slowly but immediately, not subtly but entirely. Only the fit survived—more accurately, the survivors were those that managed to fit themselves to the new environment. Oklahoma took the money. Every other state did, too, but not as swiftly and not as eagerly.

--From Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma.

1917

PASSAGE OF THE SMITH-HUGHES ACT

Having earlier received the recommendations of the Commission on Aid to Vocational Education (chaired by Charles A. Prosser), Congress passed, and President Woodrow Wilson signed, the Smith-Hughes Act. Wilson said that vocational and industrial education was of vital importance to the whole country “for the critical years of economic development ahead of us.”

Within weeks of passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, the Oklahoma legislature officially agreed to accept its terms and promised to “meet all conditions necessary” to receive federal funding for its participation in the program. A federally approved plan was required by law, and Oklahoma’s plan was formally accepted in August. The purpose of vocational education as defined in the Smith-Hughes Act centered on promoting vocational education in general and agriculture and the trades and industries specifically. It also provided for the preparation of teachers of vocational subjects, appropriated money, and regulated its expenditures.

The earliest federal definition from the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 defined vocational education as the “preparation for employment in positions requiring less than a baccalaureate degree.”

1928

FORMATION OF FFA

Representatives of several states’ student organizations met together at the American Royal Livestock Show in Kansas City, where they launched the Future Farmers of America—FFA. Oklahoma was accepted as an early member.

1929

CREATION OF THE DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION WITHIN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

One section of a state statute enacted in 1929 dissolved the old vocational education board and assigned its functions to a new agency—the State Board of Education. In addition to its duties overseeing every form of schooling except higher education, the new board was also designated Oklahoma’s official State Board for Vocational Education for governance under the Smith-Hughes Act. Vocational education was also assigned to its own division within the new department.

1929

OKLAHOMA OFFERING ONE OF THE NATION’S FIRST PROGRAMS IN DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION

Tulsa Public Schools offered one of the nation’s first programs in what became known as distributive education. Called Retail Selling, Tulsa’s program placed high school students with local retailers and complemented their work experience with classroom studies.

1929, 1935

PASSAGE OF FEDERAL LEGISLATION INCREASING FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The George-Reed Act of 1929 extended and amended the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. In addition to increasing the...
federal support for all of vocational education, the new Act gave home economics the status of an independent division (it had been included in the trades and industries division) and assured home economics a fairer share of future federal funding.

Of all the branches of vocational education in Oklahoma, home economics received the biggest boost from the George-Reed Act of 1929 because that act allowed the states to spend larger percentages of the allotted funds for that area. In spite of the difficulties created by the Depression home economics began the new decade with unprecedented growth. In 1930 there were less than sixty home economics programs in Oklahoma which were aided by federal matching funds, and there were less than 10,000 students, both adults and school girls, enrolled in classes. With the addition of the funds from the legislation, the number of schools offering home economics more than doubled in 1931 with more than 150 districts holding classes.

—Carl Tyson, The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma, State Department of Vocational and Technical Education, circa 1975

In 1935, the George-Ellzey Act replaced the George-Reed Act. It brought the total federal supplement for vocational agriculture and home economics to $3 million each. The law also made available—for the first time—federal funds to train teachers, and to supplement teachers’ salaries for distributive education.

One of the primary results of the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma was the depletion of the ranks of vocational agriculture teachers. When the federal government created the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Soil Conservation Service a great demand arose for persons schooled in techniques of modern farming and soil saving. Fortunately for the state many of the new positions could be filled with the vocational agriculture teachers of Oklahoma, but unfortunately for vocational agriculture this left many positions empty in the schools. However, stepped-up teacher training and pragmatic arrangements such as allowing teachers time off to handle government jobs overcame this problem.

—Carl Tyson, The History of Vocational and Technical Education in Oklahoma, State Department of Vocational and Technical Education, circa 1975

In 1929, Henry Garland Bennett assumed the presidency of Oklahoma A. & M. College in Stillwater. Not long after, in 1931, James Barney Perky became the state supervisor for vocational agriculture. Because Oklahoma A. & M. had long dominated the state’s vocational training, Perky visited Stillwater to find and hire A. & M. graduates.

Both Bennett and Perky had been born out of state. As president of Southeastern State Teachers College in Durant, Bennett had given the school a national reputation for its summer teachers’ institutes. Once he arrived in Stillwater, Bennett became a natural ally of J.B. Perky. They shared similar interests. In addition, the college was the vocational system’s major supplier, while the system was the major employer of the college’s graduates. Oklahoma A. & M. received every penny of teacher training monies (except a small portion spent at Langston) and nearly every agriculture teacher was an A. & M. graduate. Representatives of both the college and the vocational system were all across the state, often in the same communities and often providing complementary services, usually for the same people.
As author Danney Goble writes, “Put Henry Bennett in the A. & M. presidency and one had the makings of real political power. Henry Bennett had that power, and J.B. Perky knew it. The first was willing to share it with the right kind of man. The second was the right kind of man, and he was ready for his share.”

1933
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS DIVISIONS RELOCATE TO STILLWATER
Since 1917, the vocational system’s departments operated out of the state capitol in Oklahoma City, as did every state agency. In 1933, after Henry G. Bennett was on the job at Oklahoma A. & M. College, J.B. Perky, state supervisor of vocational agriculture, and Kate North, state supervisor of home economics, moved their administrative offices to the A&M campus. (Later, in 1958, all state vocational offices relocated to a remodeled 1930s-era building owned by Oklahoma State University located at West Sixth Avenue and Walnut Street in Stillwater, the site of the agency’s current facilities.)

1937
ORGANIZATION OF THE FUTURE HOMEMAKERS OF OKLAHOMA
Oklahoma’s home economics students and their teachers organized the Future Homemakers of Oklahoma in 1937. (They became members of the Future Homemakers of America—FHA—in 1944.)

Discussion Guide
Refer to Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma.

1. How much money did the Smith-Hughes Act provide to vocational education nationally each year by 1926?
2. Why is the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 important to career and technology education?
3. How was Oklahoma’s State Board of Vocational Education originally organized?
4. What were the original qualifications to teach vocational agriculture, home economics, and trades and industries? How did those qualifications reflect the times?
5. What kind of financial commitment did the Smith-Hughes Act require a school district to make to vocational education?
6. The federal funds for home economics came out of each state’s share of funds for what field/area? What was the maximum amount of those funds that each state could spend on home economics?
7. How did the Smith-Hughes appropriations to train vocational teachers affect vocational teacher training?
8. How did “separate but equal” apply to teacher training in Oklahoma and to funding for teacher training? What does Goble mean when he says, “Separate but equal was a lie”? How did teacher salaries contribute to the appeal of vocational schooling?
9. To what new state agency were the functions of the vocational education board assigned in 1929?
10. According to Goble: “America’s decade of the twenties had been a decade of change so swift and so profound that it amounted to a national transformation. No state offered a better example than did Oklahoma.” What kinds of changes took place in Oklahoma?
J.B. PERKY ASKED TO HELP PLAN TRAINING OF NATION’S DEFENSE WORKERS

After the sudden and shocking fall of France to Nazi armies, U.S. Commissioner of Education John Studebaker assembled a small panel consisting of the nation’s most esteemed vocational educators and asked that they plan to train 1.25 million defense workers in the next 12 months. J.B. Perky was one of the few summoned, and the recommendations that he and the rest offered became federal policy in precisely 23 days, when the Vocational Training for War Workers Program was created and assigned to each state’s Division of Trades and Industries. J.B. Perky thereupon became both Oklahoma’s director for war production training and state.

The war changed everything it touched, and it touched everything there was.

--From Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma.

The schools were mobilized for the war effort not only to provide the necessary orientation for the future members of the Armed Forces but also to furnish vocational training to meet the growing demand for manpower in industry and agriculture. Under the direction of the U.S. Office of Education a program to meet the emergency defense training needs had been launched in June, 1940. The program was extended and intensified after Pearl Harbor, when it was adapted to meet war production training needs. Vocational schools were called upon to train not only high school students but also workers who were dislocated from nondefense industries and needed retraining to fit them for service in war-production industries. Classes were held at all hours of the day for all types of men and women. So far as high school students were concerned, the demand for admission to courses in vocational training was greater than the schools could accommodate. There was, in fact, a pronounced shift of interest from academic studies to vocational training.

--From I.L. Kandel, The Impact of the War Upon American Education, 1948

1940—The U.S. Congress enacts the first peacetime conscription draft; Franklin Roosevelt becomes the first person to be elected to a third term as president

1941—Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, United States enters the Second World War

1941—Ted Williams ends the season with a batting average over 0.400, the last player to accomplish that feat

1942—Franklin Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, confining some 110,000 Japanese-Americans on the west coast to relocation camps for three years; U.S. Marines land on Guadalcanal; U.S. and Great Britain invade North Africa

1943—The Jefferson Memorial is dedicated in Washington, DC, on the 200th anniversary of Thomas Jefferson’s birth; Richard James invents the Slinky
The Big Timeline

1944—Allies launch Normandy invasion on June 6; ballpoint pens go on sale; Congress passes the “G.I. Bill of Rights”

1945—U.S. uses atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan; Second World War ends

The Big Picture

1941
CREATION OF THE POSITION OF STATE DIRECTOR OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND APPOINTMENT OF J.B. PERKY AS STATE DIRECTOR
Under the organization of Oklahoma’s vocational system since 1929, the system had no director as such. The superintendent of public instruction assumed those additional duties. To create a separate directorship was to reorganize the entire system. To reorganize the system was to repeal one law and enact another. To exchange statutes was to have the acceptance of the system’s existing leader (the elected superintendent of public instruction), the agreement of its governing body (the State Board of Education appointed by the governor), the support of the leadership and the votes of a majority in both the state House and Senate, and the signature of Gov. Leon Phillips. To get all of that was to have the skills and connections of a master politician—someone, say, like J.B. Perky, maybe with Henry Bennett’s help.

A new law in April 1941 reorganized the state department of education, but continued to assign the State Board of Education the dual identity of being the State Board for Vocational Education as well. The vocational board was required by law to fill two new positions: an executive officer for itself and a director for vocational education. J.B. Perky became simultaneously

Discussion Guide
Refer to Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma.

1. A decade after the Smith-Hughes Act, what kinds of programs—day courses, evening courses, and part-time classes—came to characterize trade and industrial education? Home economics? Vocational agriculture? Why?
2. What new responsibility was added to the vocational board in 1927 and became a fourth department—joining agriculture, home economics, and trade and industrial education?
3. How did agriculture and home economics divide the new money provided by the George-Reed Act in 1927? According to Goble, what did it mean?
4. How did the George-Deen Act significantly change the level and the form of federal spending for vocational education?
5. New to the George-Deen law was money to supplement teachers’ salaries and to train teachers for what form of vocational training?
6. What does Goble mean when he says “The system was separate-but-equal; the dollars were just separate”? What impact did separate-but-equal have on schooling every day in Oklahoma?
7. What was one early effect of the Great Depression on vocational agriculture training in Oklahoma’s high schools?
8. What Oklahoma governor saved home economics from extinction by using money from his special contingency fund in 1943?
9. Why did, as Goble says, “nothing so became E.B. Nelms’ life in vocational education as did his leaving it”?
10. What was the “cross-section plan” of J.B. Perky in 1931?
11. According to Goble, why were Henry Bennett and J.B. Perky natural allies?
12. What move of “great political acumen” did J.B. Perky make in 1932?
13. What caused T&I to cut back its oil-related programs in the 1930s?
14. How were the FFA and FHO similar? How and why were they different?
15. How did Washington make Oklahoma “a special case,” according to Goble, in 1941?
16. How long did it take the recommendations in the June 1940 report prepared by J.B. Perky and other vocational educators to become federal policy, after they submitted their report? What was unique about the amount of money involved?
17. How did the Second World War (1939-1945) affect the financial support and supply of teachers for home economics and vocational agriculture in Oklahoma, after America entered the war in 1941?
18. How did the War Production Workers Program—administered through the trades and industries division—give vocational education “its finest hour”?
19. According to Goble, the vision of vocational education from the Second World War to the 1950s still focused more on “the America that had entered the war than the America that emerged from it.” In what ways was this demonstrated?
20. What changes took place in Oklahoma in the 1950s to make that decade possibly “the hinge upon which the state’s entire history turned”?
executive officer of the state vocational board and state director of vocational education—and also remained state supervisor of vocational agriculture.

1946
PASSAGE OF THE GEORGE BARDEN ACT INCREASING FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
The George-Barden Act of 1946 more than doubled the annual federal appropriations for all forms of vocational education and changed the formula for distributing the funds. Congress had previously divided $12 million annually among agriculture, home economics, and trade and industries equally. From the larger appropriations approved by the new act, vocational agriculture would receive $10 million per year, home economics and trade and industries $8 million each, and distributive education $2.5 million. This revised federal formula helped assure agriculture training its primacy in Oklahoma.

1947
FORMATION OF DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION CLUBS OF AMERICA
Distributive Education Clubs of America—DECA—is formed at a convention of state organizations held in Memphis, Tennessee. Oklahoma becomes a charter member. (In 1943, the Association of Oklahoma Distributors Clubs was officially organized and recognized as the student organization associated with distributive education.)
The Second World War had put change in motion, and the momentum carried over into the fifties and beyond. Few then could have sensed it—only the perspective of time made it evident—but the 1950s may have been the hinge upon which the state’s entire history turned.

In what is commonly referred to as the Brown decision, the United States Supreme Court unanimously holds that legally imposed segregation of the public schools violates Constitutional guarantees under the Fourteenth Amendment. Although other states resist, all stubbornly, Oklahoma begins dismantling its separate-but-equal school system immediately. The beginning comes quickly for Oklahomans, but the end will come slowly for everyone.

--From Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma.

1950-1960s
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1950 CHARTERING OF FUTURE BUSINESS LEADERS OF AMERICA
Future Business Leaders of America—FBLA—was chartered in Oklahoma as a club for college-age students.

1956-1963 EXPANSION OF THE MISSION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION THROUGH FEDERAL LEGISLATION
With the so-called Health Amendment to the continuing George-Barden Act, Congress in 1956 added the preparation of practical nurses to the mission of state vocational education programs. To encourage the preparation of practical nurses, Washington made $5 million available to the states for each of the next four years. The money was to pay 75 percent of the cost of preparing these nurses in the first year, half in each of the next three. Oklahoma jumped in line at once. Within weeks, the state produced and Washington approved a plan to turn out practical nurses. Initially assigned to trades and industries, practical nursing education only later broke off to become an independent division.

When the Soviet Union launched the Sputnik satellite, it put America on notice that the United States had fallen behind. In response, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act of 1958. This act further broadened the scope of vocational education's mission. Title VIII of the act rewrote previous statutes as far back as the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. One change involved providing another $60 million into states' vocational training over the next four years, almost double what had been available. More importantly, the new law required that the extra funds were to be used exclusively for the training of "highly skilled technicians in recognized occupations requiring scientific knowledge in fields necessary for the national defense."

In 1962, Congress enacted the Manpower Development and Training Act, an expansion of the Area Redevelopment Act of 1961. The new act provided for advanced technical training to the unemployed and those considered the victims of automation.

Two months after receiving the report of the Panel of Consultants on Vocational Education, President Kennedy sent Congress what became the National Education Improvement Act of 1963. Modifying formulas used in earlier laws, the 1963 act stayed with the practice of assigning set percentages of each state's share of federal funds to its agriculture, home economics, and similar programs. However, the law for the first time ignored those traditional divisions when it came to calculating the sum of money that each state received—the money was divided up according to the state's population in the ages most likely to gain from vocational training. In addition, the 1963 act embodied substantive and philosophical judgments. They shared the resolve that vocational education had to transcend serving professions
to serving people. The law made commitments not to different occupations but to different groups in different ways. In addition to traditional groups—such as high school students needing to learn a trade and adults wanting to update skills or add new ones—vocational education was now charged with serving new groups of people: those who had completed or discontinued their formal education and are preparing to enter the labor market and those with special education handicaps. The new law also brought new money dedicated to new things, including new programs and new, independent divisions. Curriculum development, strategic planning, program evaluation, demonstration and experimental projects—each a recommendation of the consultants’ panel—became an obligation under the new federal law and funded by federal money.

Finally, the 1963 act required that one-third of each state’s money had to be reserved for postsecondary education for adults and for area vocational schools for secondary students. Oklahoma was the first state to receive the new money.

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1964
HIRING OF FRANCIS TUTTLE AS STATE COORDINATOR OF THE NEW AREA SCHOOLS DIVISION
Area schools had to be just that—they had to rely on any number of districts over an entire area—and the division’s success would depend directly on its director’s personality and skills. Independent school districts had no need to participate and no reason to appease the state office. As a result, this position called for an administrator who was both a seasoned educator and a natural diplomat. It needed a leader who could persuade and motivate people, who understood and had the respect of school superintendents, and whom other people could work with, rather than for. Francis Tuttle, then superintendent of Muskogee’s public schools, accepted an offer from Oliver Hodge, state superintendent of public instruction, and J.B. Perky, to head the new area schools division.

Tulsa opened the first area school in 1964, acting primarily through Tulsa Public Schools. Over the next three years, other area schools opened in Oklahoma City, Ardmore, Duncan and Enid.
1960—Black college students stage a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth’s lunch counter in North Carolina; lasers invented

1961—Construction of Berlin Wall begins

1962—Cuban missile crisis; John Glenn becomes first US astronaut to orbit Earth

1963—President John F. Kennedy assassinated; Martin Luther King, Jr., gives “I Have a Dream” speech

1964—Food Stamp Act established; Congress passes Gulf of Tonkin Resolution allowing President to “take all necessary measures” to repel armed attack on U.S. forces in South Vietnam; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act establishes Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to enforce federal statutes prohibiting employment discrimination

1960s-1970s
In a stunningly short time, Oklahomans reinvented almost everything about their state’s vocational education—its mission, its organization, its governance, its funding, everything, even its name.

By pooling the resources of separate school districts, the combined vocational districts were able to accomplish more than any single district could conceive or the state by itself could fund. In fact, this innovative intergovernmental mechanism was what ended up giving Oklahoma’s vocational system a financial security unknown but not unenvied by every other state.

In November [1966], Dewey Bartlett is elected governor. Between his election and his inauguration in January 1967, Bartlett commits himself to becoming Oklahoma’s “job-gettingest” governor ever and resolves to make the state’s vocational education system a major force in his crusade for economic expansion.

--From Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma.
1965—New Farmers of America merges with Future Farmers of America; Medicare established under Social Security; racial violence in Selma, Alabama
1966—Child Nutrition Act launches the school breakfast program
1967—First Super Bowl; first heart transplant
to levy up to five mills for capital construction and 10 more for operating expenses, subject to the approval of voters within each district.

The idea of vocational education programs designed to serve an area of a State rather than a single community found expression...in the National Defense Education Act [of 1958]. The purpose then was to train highly skilled technicians for fields necessary for the national defense; but the Vocational Education Act of 1963 specifies area schools with a larger purpose—to provide vocational education in the broad sense in which the act defines it. What the new act does is to provide funds for the construction of area schools—something that NDEA did not do.


1967
FIRST APPROVAL BY VOTERS OF AN AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
District voters approved Tri-County Tech in Bartlesville as the state’s first area vocational-technical school. (Before the passage of SQ 434 in 1966, five area vocational-technical schools were formed that were a part of their public school districts: Tulsa Tech, Foster Estes—which would eventually become Metro Tech—Red River in Duncan, Southern Oklahoma in Ardmore and O.T. Autry in Enid. While it is recognized that Tulsa was the first entity to form an area school in 1964, acting primarily through the Tulsa Public Schools, all five of these schools stuck their necks out to test the new concept of the area vo-tech school.)

1968—Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy assassinated; Warsaw Pact troops invade Czechoslovakia
1969—Neil Armstrong becomes first human to walk on the moon; ARPANET, the precursor to the internet, is created; Woodstock music festival; Concorde supersonic aircraft makes first test flight
1970—The first Earth Day is observed; The Beatles break up
1971—A ban on radio and television cigarette advertisements goes into effect in the United States; All in the Family premieres on CBS; the 26th Amendment is ratified, giving 18-year-olds the right to vote

There had to be a management team, and that team had to use all of the talents and energy available in a large, diverse, and expert staff.

1968
FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE MISSION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION THROUGH FEDERAL LEGISLATION
The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 fundamentally reordered the purposes and nature of vocational education in America. The law reversed the entire thrust of vocational education away from vocations and toward education. From that moment, its defining mission has been to educate people as people rather than for any particular trade or job. (In fact, the mission as stated in the 2005 Strategic Plan is “We prepare Oklahomans to succeed in the workplace, in education, and in life.”)

One outcome of the 1968 law was the creation of five new divisions. The common purpose of these new divisions was to assume responsibility for the administrative needs of the entire system, rather than serve any single occupation or occupational grouping. The new divisions had oversight for business and finance; manpower training; research, planning, and evaluation; educational services; and special services.

1968
FORMATION OF OKLAHOMA CIMC
Oklahoma established the...
Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center to design, develop and disseminate instructional materials for vocational programs statewide. The hallmark of CIMC curriculum was its competency-based structure and its color-coded components. (The CIMC would operate for 50 years as an example of Oklahoma’s investment in quality instructional materials to support its vocational—later career and technology—education system.)

Not even ten years after... the CIMC opened its doors, Oklahoma already had established its primacy as a national resource for curriculum and instructional materials. That meant a lot — and a lot more than just prestige. It made Oklahoma a major player in a billion-dollar-a-year business and a major influence where occupational training was presented anywhere by anybody.

—Danney Goble, Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma

1968

TRANSFER OF GOVERNANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FROM THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO A NEW STATE BOARD OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT STATE DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

As of July 1, 1968, Oklahoma made the oversight of vocational education the single purpose of a newly defined, distinct official board—the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education. Because its members included the elected superintendent of public instruction (assigned by statute to chair it) along with the six members of the state education board, the new board was assured both continuity with the past and cooperation in the future. Because those were joined by six members appointed by the governor plus the state director in a non-voting capacity, the primary role of the new board was clear: to guide a new, independent agency—created by the same statute—the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education.

Besides improving upon the South Carolina model, Oklahoma soon charted new paths for other states to follow. Oklahoma offered the nation’s first quick-start occupational
training programs for new and expanding businesses; was the first state to maintain a division dedicated to short-term adult education; was first to establish a division promoting business productivity; and was first to dedicate an entire division to developing human resources. In addition, while South Carolina’s area schools were purely postsecondary, those in Oklahoma were intended for both adults and secondary students.

1971
FIRST DELIVERY OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO INMATES AT A SKILLS CENTER
Under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Corrections, the first vocational training classes were provided to inmates at the Ouachita facility, near Hodgen in eastern Oklahoma. Since then, the Skills Centers Division has grown to encompass multiple programs in public and private correctional facilities statewide, including juvenile facilities. It has evolved into a virtual statewide school system within prison walls.

1974
FORMATION OF HEALTH OCCUPATIONS STUDENT ORGANIZATION
The Oklahoma Health Occupations Student Organization was formed (Health Occupations Students of America—HOSA—was officially organized in 1976, with Oklahoma as a charter state.)

1975
MAVCC ORGANIZED
Encouraged by the U.S. Office of Education, Oklahoma took the lead in organizing the Mid-America Vocational Curriculum Consortium, a multi-state project to coordinate, develop, and distribute curriculum materials. Ann Benson, who joined the state staff as a curriculum specialist in 1973, directed the project during its first 10 years. (MAVCC remained a prominent source of curriculum for career and technology education nationwide for 40 years.)

1976
ENACTMENT OF THE DISPLACED HOMEMAKER ACT BY THE OKLAHOMA STATE LEGISLATURE
President Gerald R. Ford signed into law the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976. This law prohibited gender discrimination in vocational education’s programming. That same year, Oklahoma enacted the Displaced Homemaker Act requiring the State Board of Vocational and Technical Education to develop job training, counseling, money management and placement programs for displaced homemakers through multipurpose centers established within the area vocational-technical schools. In 1978, the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education set up a counseling, training, and job placement service for displaced homemakers with seed money from the governor’s office. Moore-Norman AVTS had the first pilot program. This pilot was so innovative and so successful that the U.S. Department of Labor adopted it
**History of CareerTech**

1. What was the significance of Oklahoma voters’ approval of State Question 434 in May 1966?
2. Why were the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 “a landmark in federal law for vocational education”? What five new divisions were created as a result?
3. What was the purpose of the trip to South Carolina? What made South Carolina’s vocational system stand out? What was the “common lesson” that resulted?
4. What happened on July 1, 1968? Why was it important?
5. According to Francis Tuttle, what was the most significant factor in the development of vocational education programs in Oklahoma?
6. As Goble describes it, what contributed to an “evolutionary eruption” in Oklahoma’s vocational system?
7. How did Oklahoma improve upon South Carolina’s model?
8. How did the emergence of the two-year colleges help to remake higher education and vocational education in Oklahoma?

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**Discussion Guide**

Refer to *Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma.*

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**Timeline**

1975

- The Trans-Alaskan Pipeline opens; Apple II computer introduced; Atari launches video computer system game console; Radio Shack (Tandy) introduces the TRS-80

1976

- **Vocational Education Recognized for Contributions to Statewide Investment and Jobs**
  - As a measure of vocational education’s contributions to bringing new investments and jobs to Oklahoma, its various programs—the Training for Industry projects in particular—were credited with being major factors in the year’s increase of $58,471,000 in capital investments in Oklahoma and the addition of 2,672 new jobs for its people.

1978

- **AIASA**
  - The American Industrial Arts Student Association was established with Oklahoma as one of the first state associations. (AIASA would become TSA in 1988.)

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**The Big Picture**

1977—The Trans-Alaskan Pipeline opens; Apple II computer introduced; Atari launches video computer system game console; Radio Shack (Tandy) introduces the TRS-80

1978—“Garfield” comic strip debuts; Texas Instruments, Inc., introduces Speak & Spell, a talking learning aid for children aged 7 and up and the first electronic duplication of the human vocal tract on a single integrated circuit

1979—Sony introduces Walkman; hostage crisis in Iran; nuclear accident at Three Mile Island

1979—Margaret Thatcher becomes the first woman prime minister of Britain; Soviet troops invade Afghanistan; U.S. recognizes China; VisiCalc is developed, automating the recalculation of spreadsheets

1975

- 1977—The Trans-Alaskan Pipeline opens; Apple II computer introduced; Atari launches video computer system game console; Radio Shack (Tandy) introduces the TRS-80

1978—First test-tube baby born

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As a model for other states.

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**Discussion Guide**

Refer to *Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma.*

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1. What was the significance of Oklahoma voters’ approval of State Question 434 in May 1966?
2. Why were the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 “a landmark in federal law for vocational education”? What five new divisions were created as a result?
3. What was the purpose of the trip to South Carolina? What made South Carolina’s vocational system stand out? What was the “common lesson” that resulted?
4. What happened on July 1, 1968? Why was it important?
5. According to Francis Tuttle, what was the most significant factor in the development of vocational education programs in Oklahoma?
6. As Goble describes it, what contributed to an “evolutionary eruption” in Oklahoma’s vocational system?
7. How did Oklahoma improve upon South Carolina’s model?
8. How did the emergence of the two-year colleges help to remake higher education and vocational education in Oklahoma?
1980s-1990s It was not much longer before the state’s top political and economic leaders were crediting the refashioned vocational system, especially its TIP projects, for doing more to bring jobs to Oklahoma than anything the state had done since there had been a state, since 1907.

Jim Perky, Francis Tuttle, Roy Peters, Ann Benson—of course, she was the first woman to hold the director’s job, but by 1999 that fact may have been more incidental than anything else. At least, it may have been incidental with the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, for that was about the only species of education in Oklahoma in which gender tended to be insignificant, if not irrelevant.

—From Learning to Earn: A History of Career and Technology Education in Oklahoma.

1981 EXPANSION OF FHA TO FHA/HERO
The Oklahoma chapters of the Future Homemakers of America expanded to include HERO—Home Economics Related Occupations—chapters.

1985 PETERS NAMED STATE DIRECTOR
Francis Tuttle retired after 18 years as state director. During his tenure, vocational enrollments reached over 200,000 and the system grew into a network of 25 districts with 41 sites statewide. Roy Peters was named state director.

1985 STATE AGENCY LAUNCHES TESTING CENTER
The state CareerTech agency inaugurated a Testing Division—later named the CareerTech Testing Center. The mission of the CTTC is to provide standards and assessments for vocational education programs. The CTTC also partners with state agencies to develop and deliver examinations required for certifications and licensures. The agency testing staff developed a series of duty-task lists that became a hallmark of their work in the years before national standards and the internet.

1984-1998 ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION ENHANCING VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND EXPANDING STUDENT POPULATIONS
In 1984, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act authorized funding over a five-year period to improve vocational programs and serve special populations of students. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 authorized up to $1.6 billion a year through 1995 for vocational education, including Tech Prep. This increased federal funding reflected the continued commitment of Congress to and support of vocational education and reflected the education policies and reform efforts of the time. The act placed a great deal of emphasis on the integration of vocational and academic instruction. Congress believed that for vocational education to remain relevant and to be able to prepare students for the increasingly technological and complex jobs of the future, it would have to teach broader skills and incorporate basic academic concepts into its curriculum. The act further strengthened the provisions related to the provision of educational services to disadvantaged, disabled and other special population students. Both Tech Prep and the integration of academic and vocational instruction were intended to position the Perkins act as a tool for educational reform by linking vocational education more closely with academics and with instruction at the postsecondary level. The definition of “vocational education” meant “organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses which are directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment.
According to author Danney Goble, “If Oklahoma’s TIP projects outdid other states in attracting new employers, even they were no match for what Oklahoma did on behalf of its existing businesses and industries.” What did Oklahoma do for its existing businesses and industries?

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In current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree. Such programs shall include: competency-based learning which contributes to the individual’s academic knowledge; higher-order reasoning, and problem-solving skills, and the occupational-specific skills necessary for economic independence as a productive and contributing member of society.”

In 1993, the Oklahoma State Legislature established the Oklahoma Youth Apprenticeship Program administered and supervised by the Oklahoma Board of Vocational and Technical Education. In 1995, Oklahoma was one of the first states to be awarded federal startup funds—$1.7 million—for its school-to-work system. In 1998, the Oklahoma Legislature established competitive grant dropout recovery programs within technology center districts and established pilot programs at technology centers for the expansion of rural businesses. Also in 1998, the new Perkins Act offered vocational education greater flexibility in how federal funds were spent, while maintaining vocational education as a separate program administered through the educational system. The reform initiatives of Tech Prep and the integration of academic and vocational instruction were continued, and the requirements of the act were streamlined and simplified.

1986
DEVELOPMENT OF BID ASSISTANCE NETWORK
The state agency oversaw the development of 21 bid assistance centers to help Oklahoma businesses compete for federal government contracts. The centers were located at area vocational-technical school sites statewide.

1988
STATE AGENCY ORGANIZES TO CONNECT BUSINESSES TO FEDERAL RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY OPPORTUNITIES
The state agency added a Small Business Innovation Research program to help Oklahoma’s technology-oriented firms compete for federal research and development funds. A new Technology Transfer Network connected state companies directly to federal laboratories and assured them access to resources available from several federal agencies.
1993
**STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVES AND TRAINING**
In the early 1990s, a major focus of industry training was on quality principles and strategic planning. The BIS/ACD staff at the state agency were major providers of this training to industry clients. The entire agency staff also participated in a quality improvement process. The CIMC developed a related instructional resource in 1993 titled, *Strategic Management for Business: A Process for Design and Implementation*.

1999
**BENSON SUCCEEDS PETERS AS STATE DIRECTOR**
Roy Peters resigned as state director in 1999. During his tenure as director, total vocational enrollments more than doubled. Dr. Ann Benson succeeded Peters as state director, having joined the state staff as a curriculum specialist in 1973. Her tenure witnessed the renaming of the agency and its governing board, the awarding of a $2.2 million grant to manage a national career clusters initiative, and the creation of the CareerTech Learning Network, among other achievements. She was the first woman to hold the state director’s job.

1999
**STATE AGENCY LAUNCHES “SKILLS TO REBUILD” EFFORT**
After a series of tornadoes struck across the state on the evening of May 3, the state agency prepared and presented a comprehensive “Skills to Rebuild” curriculum through 13 of the area vocational-technical schools. The classes were intended to equip people with the skills they needed to repair their own homes and businesses.

1999
**FHA BECOMES FCCLA**
Voting delegates approved the proposed name change to Family, Career and Community Leaders of America at the National Leadership Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts.
2000—Changing of “vocational” to “career and technology” education with House Bill 2128
Gov. Frank Keating signed House Bill 2128 into law on May 19, 2000. This law changed the name of the agency to the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education and that of the state board to the State Board of Career and Technology Education. This change paralleled a national trend; the American Vocational Association had already become the Association for Career and Technical Education, and 30 other states had replaced “vocational” in the names of agencies and governing boards with “career,” “technology,” and other variations. In Oklahoma, the area vocational-technical schools became technology centers. This change reflected both evolving style and substance.

2000—Change from FBLA to BPA
Oklahoma FBLA programs became affiliated with Business Professionals of America.

2000—Creation of a new state board structure
The Oklahoma State Legislature established a new structure for the State Board of Career and Technology Education. Whereas the former board consisted of 13 members, the redesigned board had nine members consisting of the state superintendent of public instruction, two members from the State Board of Education, five members appointed by Congressional district, and one at-large member.

2004—Berkenbile named state director and 500,000 total enrollments reached
The CareerTech System reached the milestone of 500,000 total enrollments during the same year that Dr. Phil Berkenbile was hired as the sixth state director in the system’s history; he had been the acting state director since May 2003. (Berkenbile succeeded Peter Buswell, who served as state director briefly in 2003.)

2004—Oklahoma Lottery Initiative
In 2004, Oklahoma voters approved two state questions that created the Oklahoma Lottery Commission and the Oklahoma Lottery Trust fund to help support education. Lottery tickets first went on sale in Oklahoma in 2005. Since 2006, Oklahoma CareerTech has received a percentage of the Oklahoma Lottery Education Trust Fund. The majority of this money provides additional funding for computers and other equipment for technology centers and comprehensive schools. Approximately 10 percent of the lottery money CareerTech receives funds scholarships for staff professional development. As of 2018, the lottery had raised nearly $900 million for the state’s educational system.

2004—Passage of state bill 1271
The Oklahoma legislature passed State Bill 1271, which authorized technology centers to hire certified instructors to teach math and science (including calculus and physics) for pre-engineering, biomedical science, and biotechnology students. In addition, CareerTech partnered with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to launch the Cooperative Alliance Program, which allowed high school students to earn college credit toward science degrees by completing courses at technology centers or colleges.

2005—Launch of Oklahoma Horizon
In cooperation with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the CareerTech state agency began producing the television program “Oklahoma Horizon,” which focused on agriculture, economic development, and training and education for career success. The weekly 30-minute show aired for 12 years on OETA channels in multiple time slots. The “Oklahoma Horizon” staff ceased production in June 2017, largely due to statewide budget cuts that affected all state agencies.
2006
PERKINS ACT INCLUDES CTSO ACTIVITIES AS ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS
The 2006 Perkins Act, an updated version of earlier Perkins laws passed in 1998, 1990, and 1984, provided resources to secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs to support innovation and program improvement. The Perkins Act specifically includes career and technology student organization activities as an allowable use of funds at the state and local level. Local uses of funds for supporting career and technical student organizations can include “student preparation for and participation in technical skills competitions aligned with career and technical education program standards and curricula” (Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended through P.L. 116-6, enacted February 15, 2019).

2010
STATE AGENCY ADAPTS DURING ECONOMIC DOWNTURN
After several years of declining state revenue, the state agency began to adjust priorities and tighten its belt. In spite of the oil boom that occurred from around 2008 to 2015, Oklahoma public school funding faced a 24 percent budget reduction during that time. As one of many cost-cutting measures, CareerTech’s Service Center and Warehouse divisions merged to increase efficiency. An early retirement incentive followed by a reduction in force resulted in 30 fewer full-time employees.

2012
PARTNERSHIP WITH OKLAHOMA MILITARY CONNECTION
Oklahoma Military Connection places civilian employers in contact with Oklahoma Transitioning military, veterans, service members, and their families. It is a cooperative effort among the following:

- Office of Workforce Development.
- Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (CareerTech for Vets).
- Oklahoma Military Department (Employment Coordination Program).
- Citizen Soldier for Life.

2013
SOMMERS NAMED STATE DIRECTOR
Following Dr. Berkenbile’s retirement, in April 2013, the CareerTech Board named Dr. Robert Sommers the agency’s seventh director. Governor Mary Fallin also named him the state’s secretary of education and workforce development. Sommers placed digital delivery as a priority for the CareerTech system. He facilitated a mini-reorganization of the agency, in addition to strategic planning and performance-improvement efforts. After serving as state director for 16 months, Dr. Sommers returned to his home state of Ohio.

2014
ADDITION OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
The state legislature moved the Adult Education-Lifelong Learning grant to the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act provides supplemental funds to help adults become employable, productive citizens through the following:

- Adult basic education.
- High school-level courses for GED students.
- English as a second language.
- U.S. citizenship classes.
- English language literacy.
- Civics education.
What became official on May 19, 2000, and the signing of House Bill 2128 into law?

What challenges do you think will face the Oklahoma CareerTech System in the next three years? In the next 10 years?

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to them in energy. Gov. Kevin Stitt also tasked the Oklahoma CareerTech System with creating a strategic emphasis on educating and training the next generation of the state’s energy workforce.

2019 CAREERTECH SYSTEM BUDGET REQUEST FOCUSES ON ELIMINATING STATE SKILLS GAP
The state agency’s appropriations request for fiscal year 2020 targeted narrowing Oklahoma’s skills gap through a proposed funding increase to allow CareerTech to achieve the following:

• Fund more than 130 unfunded programs and provide for 90 new programs to be added to K-12 CareerTech offerings.
• Add 12 new programs in state correctional facilities that would serve 500 to 600 more inmates.
• Increase Training for Industry Programs by 10 percent to more than 3,200 enrollments.
• Increase customized training by 10 percent to almost 300,000 enrollments.
• Increase certifications/credentials annually by 5 percent, adding almost 2,400 more during three years.

2020 STATE CAREERTECH SYSTEM RESPONDS TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC
With the COVID-19 outbreak, the state CareerTech system responded to safeguard the health of its students, employees, partners, and the public. Agency and technology center leadership implemented specific measures to help mitigate the known and potential risks, in line with directives issued by Gov. Kevin Stitt and guidance provided by state and national public health authorities. These measures included implementing telework processes for agency and school employees, canceling or rescheduling events as appropriate, moving instruction to online platforms, and pursuing opportunities to proactively address the unique needs of partners and stakeholders statewide, among many other measures. A hallmark of the CareerTech System’s response was its flexibility in supporting the safer-at-home efforts of all Oklahoma residents.