



Mike Huckabee
Governor

Department
of Workforce Education

John C. Wyvill
Director

August 22, 2006

The Honorable Jim Argue
State Senator
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

The Honorable Joyce Elliott
State Representative
State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Senator Argue and Representative Elliott:

Please find enclosed our written testimony in response to the Joint House/Senate Interim Committee on Education's review of state programs and funding levels for vocational education programs. We believe that the testimony is responsive to your need for information to conduct your review as required by Act 57 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process that addresses a very critical component of the adequacy evaluation, career and technical education. Please let us know how we can be of further service to the Committee as you undertake your charge of providing an adequate and equitable system of public education for the citizens of this state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Wyvill", written over a printed name.

John C. Wyvill

jma
Enclosure

(501/683-1152)

07/JCW/0131

Joint House/Senate Committee on Education

**Review of State Programs and Funding Levels
for Vocational Education Programs
as Required by Act 57 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003**

August 23, 2006

**Written Testimony
of
the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education**



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Introduction

If you were like most students in high school, you took at least one class that made you think, “Boring! I am never going to use this stuff again.” Unfortunately, that’s still a problem with too many classes students take in high school – they have no perceivable relevance to real life. In fact, boredom is the biggest reason students drop out of high school.¹ That’s why career and technical education (CTE) is being used to reform our nation’s high schools. By integrating rigorous academics into its curriculum, CTE makes these subjects relevant. In doing so, it prepares students for both the world of work and postsecondary education.

Thus, CTE is vital to the adequacy of secondary education in Arkansas. Although the Supreme Court recognized the importance of CTE in an adequate education in *Lake View* and the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Education recommended that workforce education be uniformly available across the state and that every student have reasonable access to a secondary area technical center, CTE has been largely ignored by the Picus funding reports as well as the Technology Task Force reports. This is unfortunate given the role CTE plays in the future success of our students.

To understand this role, one must get past the traditional stereotype of the vo-tech courses of old that were reserved for problem kids, the academically challenged, or students who had no thought of going to college. Today’s CTE courses prepare Arkansas students for jobs and further education in such fields as architecture, business, computers, engineering, health sciences, information technology, journalism, law enforcement, and marketing as well as agriculture, automotive technology, cabinet making, family and consumer sciences, and welding.

So who takes CTE courses these days? Just about everyone. For the 2004/05 school year, 75 percent (156,226) of Arkansas students in grades 7-12 enrolled in at least one CTE course – up from 69 percent in 2002/03. Today’s courses reach across the board to honors students as well as special needs students. And the ethnic diversity of CTE students pretty much reflects the diversity of our state. In the 2004/05 school year, 71 percent of Arkansas students taking at least one CTE course were white, 22 percent were black, 4.8 percent Hispanic, 1.4 percent Asian, and 0.5 percent American Indian. (U.S. Census figures for 2004 show 77 percent of Arkansans were white, 15.8 percent black, 4.4 percent Hispanic, 0.9 percent Asian, and 0.7 percent American Indian.)

Because CTE points students toward real-world careers that demand a high level of thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills, the students are encouraged to take the Smart Core academic courses and prepare for postsecondary education – be it a technical institute, two-year school, or a four-year university. As a result, 66 percent of the CTE completers – students who completed a full CTE program of study – in 2004/05

¹ In a national survey of high school dropouts, 47 percent cited boredom as a major factor for leaving school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morrison, 2006).

also completed college prep courses. Since CTE students have more relevance in their coursework, they have a higher graduation rate than that of the general high school population. The 2004/05 graduation rate for CTE concentrators – high school students who took two units in an occupational area – was 90.1 percent. But the graduation rate for the state as a whole that year was 81.3 percent (ADE, 2006).

When they graduate from high school, many CTE students already have earned national certification in a particular field or several hours' worth of college credit (concurrent or articulated). Having developed real-world skills, sampled a career area, and performed college-level work, CTE students have more options when they graduate. Sixty percent of Arkansans who complete a CTE program in high school go on to college², 31 percent go straight into the workforce, and 3 percent join the military.

While we are committed to fulfilling our mission of providing the leadership and contributing resources to serve the diverse and changing workforce training needs of the youths of Arkansas, we are the first to admit that, as a state, we need to do more for our statewide CTE programs. There are four areas that need improvement – area technical centers, CTE start-up funds, CTE replacement equipment, and industry certification.

Secondary Area Technical Centers

Sponsored by high schools, education service cooperatives, or two-year colleges, secondary area technical centers offer CTE programs to high school students within a 25-mile radius. Each center draws students from several high schools, enabling the schools to provide high-cost programs that they otherwise could not afford. By participating in an area center, a local high school can offer six or more additional CTE programs of study at a greatly reduced cost. The state Board of Education increased the demand for the area centers by requiring all high school students to have six career focus units to graduate.

The following statistics are for the 2005/06 school year.

- 24 area centers are in operation.
- 187 high schools are sending students to area centers.
- A total of 36 different programs are available through the area centers (not all programs are available at each center).
- With the existing 24 centers, students in 133 high schools do not have access to an area center or an expanded choice of CTE programs. (See Attachment A.)

² Of the CTE students going on to college, 66 percent enroll in a four-year university and 34 percent go to a two-year college.

- We have worked with other state agencies and colleges/universities to develop a system to provide a seamless transition for students from high school to postsecondary education. Of the 24 secondary area centers, 15 have established partnerships with postsecondary schools. The partnership allows students at these centers to earn both college and high school credit for some of the courses they take. According to a recent U.S. Department of Education report on student success in college, earning some college credit while in high school is a positive factor for college graduation (Hoover, 2006). In the 2004/05 school year, more than 2,000 high school students in Arkansas earned nearly 15,000 hours of concurrent college credit through an area center.
- Funding for secondary area technical centers comes from two sources – training fees from the high schools that send students to the centers and Vocational Center Aid, which is distributed by DWE. The funding for the training fees paid by the high schools is part of the public school funding formula. Vocational Center Aid, the primary source of funding for the centers, is distributed through a DWE formula based on each center's pro rata share of total full-time enrollment. Although the number of centers and students in those centers has grown, the total level of Vocational Center Aid, nearly \$10.3 million, has not changed since July 2000. If maintained at current levels, this funding will not adequately support the area centers in the future or allow for the establishment of centers in unserved areas.
- The State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities requires each secondary area center to offer at least six programs of study from five different career clusters.

Remedy:

The current appropriation for the secondary area technical centers is \$11,336,383. An appropriation of \$16,989,824 for 2007/08 and \$19,598,736 for 2008/09 would provide adequate funding to set up the seven centers needed to provide access to every student in the state and allow for 5 percent annual growth in enrollment at existing centers. (See Attachment B.)

Resolving the college credit issue is more complex as it requires buy-in from the state's two-year colleges and universities. In 2004/05, 24,073 CTE students earned 54,378 college credit hours through the Tech Prep program, but the bulk of this credit was articulated, which means a student would not receive the credit until after graduating from high school and then enrolling in the one college that would grant the credit. Such credit would be more meaningful to students if it could transfer to the college of the student's choice. Some of the state's two-year colleges are reluctant to recognize this credit.

CTE Start-up Funds

When high schools and secondary area technical centers want to offer a new program of career and technical study to address economic development needs in their communities, they apply to DWE for approval and funding for the instructional equipment, nonconsumable supplies, and program software required for that program.

In each of the past three years, we have received more than 200 new program applications from schools and centers. Because of an appropriation capped at \$2.37 million for new program start-ups, we have been unable to fund more than 60 percent of the applications each year. This issue needs to be addressed statewide.

Remedy:

If the new program start-up line item in the public school fund were increased on a one-time basis to \$6 million, we would be able to fund most of the backlog of districts with approvable programs. This one-time increase would enable us to return to a year-to-year approval/funding cycle. In subsequent years, the new program start-up appropriation should be increased to \$4 million to allow for the continued growth of quality CTE programs. (See Attachment B.)

CTE Replacement Equipment

The new program start-up appropriation cannot be used to replace broken or obsolete equipment in an existing program. Prior to the 2000/01 school year, the state provided funds, on a limited basis, to help schools replace such broken or out-of-date equipment. Because of state budget concerns, this line item was cut in 2000 and has never been reinstated.

With no funding stream for equipment upgrades, schools must use local sources of funds or, in many instances, teachers are required to raise those funds themselves. If the funding is not available, a school may be forced to shut down a program. This problem is intensifying with the rapid evolution of workforce technology and the costs of this technology.

The state has an investment of more than \$113 million in CTE instructional equipment, including more than 25,000 computers, that is in critical need of repair or upgrade. Some of this equipment is broken or poses a threat to student safety. Much of it is decades old and is not adequate to prepare students for the workplace of the 21st century.

Remedy:

As with school facilities, instructional equipment falls into a state of critical disrepair if there is no funding for repairs or upgrades. Based on a seven-year equipment life cycle, the average cost of an annual equipment upgrade exceeds \$16 million statewide. While a continuing equipment replacement/upgrade line item of \$16 million in the public school fund would not remedy the need immediately, it would – over a seven-year cycle

– reduce most of the backlog of unreliable and sometimes dangerous equipment. (See Attachment B.)

Future Issue: Industry Certification

Every year, 35-45 percent of the high school students who have completed a CTE program of study go directly into the workforce or military upon graduation. To better equip these students for the workplace, the state of Arkansas should require that every CTE program of study be linked to national certification in that field – when such certification is available – and that every student get the IC3, a Microsoft certification, before graduating. Currently, Arkansas CTE students are on their own to pay for national certification exams in IC3 and the following:

- automotive service,
- child care,
- computer engineering,
- construction,
- data base,
- heating and air,
- lodging management,
- medical,
- restaurant management, and
- welding.

Required certification would provide a consistent (equitable) offering of quality programs throughout the state and would go a long way in enhancing the skills and professionalism of Arkansas' workforce. It also would help better prepare the students who go on for postsecondary training.

Since national certification leads to advanced placement in the world of work, it is the workforce-bound student's equivalent of the college advanced placement (AP) exam. The state funds AP exams for students who have completed the appropriate curriculum, but it does not fund national certification exams.

Conclusion

Our commitment is to the student and the future viability of Arkansas' workforce. With that in mind, our CTE staff works with national experts and industry professionals to ensure our assessments, frameworks, curriculum, programs, and professional development meet state and federal accountability benchmarks and are sufficiently rigorous; integrated with academic subjects; aligned to current industry standards; and taught by well-trained, knowledgeable instructors.

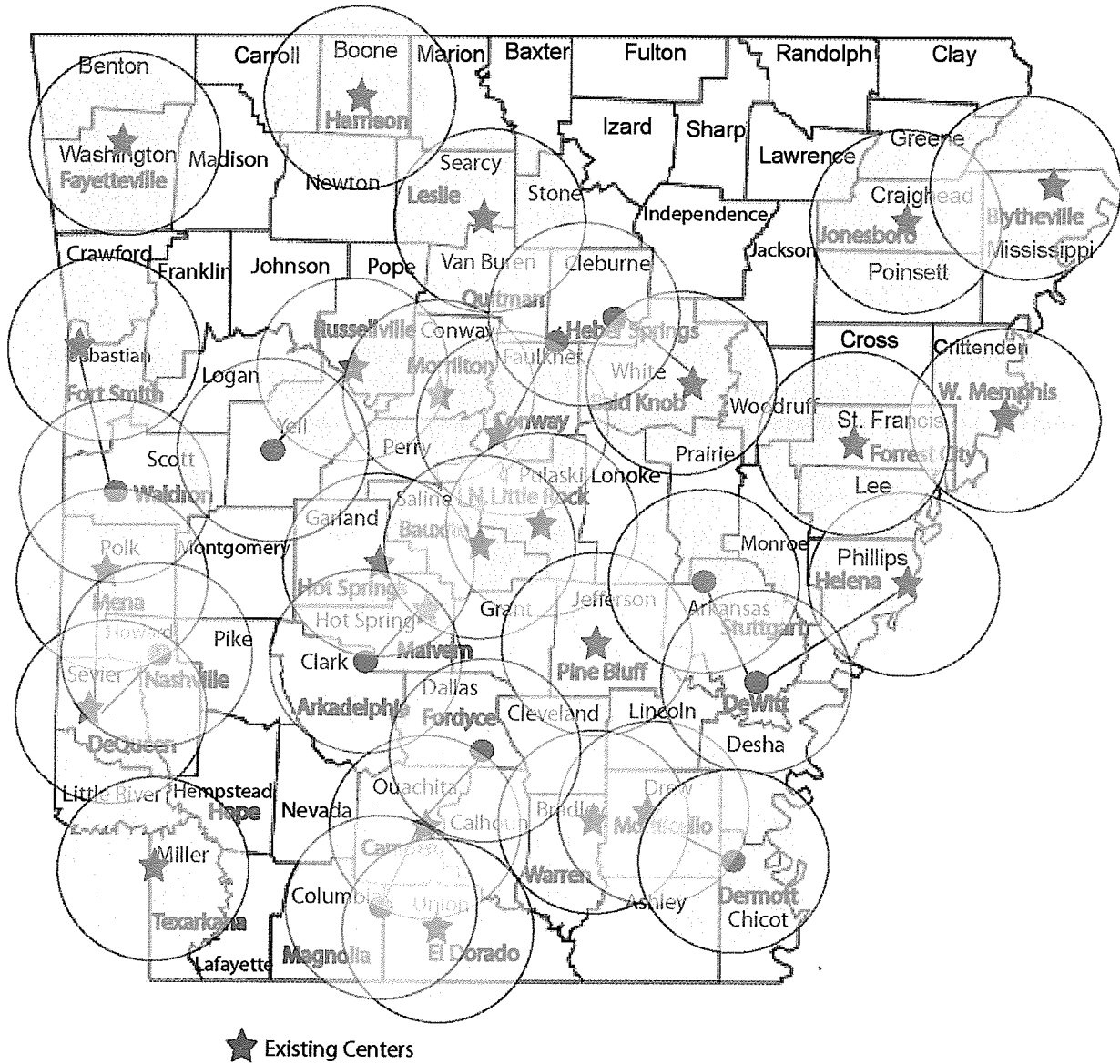
In all our CTE programs, we teach our students that to be competitive in a global market, they must do more than develop adequate skills – they must strive to excel in their field of choice. We take that same attitude at the Department of Workforce

Department of Workforce Education

Education. If we are to succeed in our mission of preparing our students for the workforce of tomorrow, we cannot settle for adequacy – we must pursue excellence. But we need your support to do so.

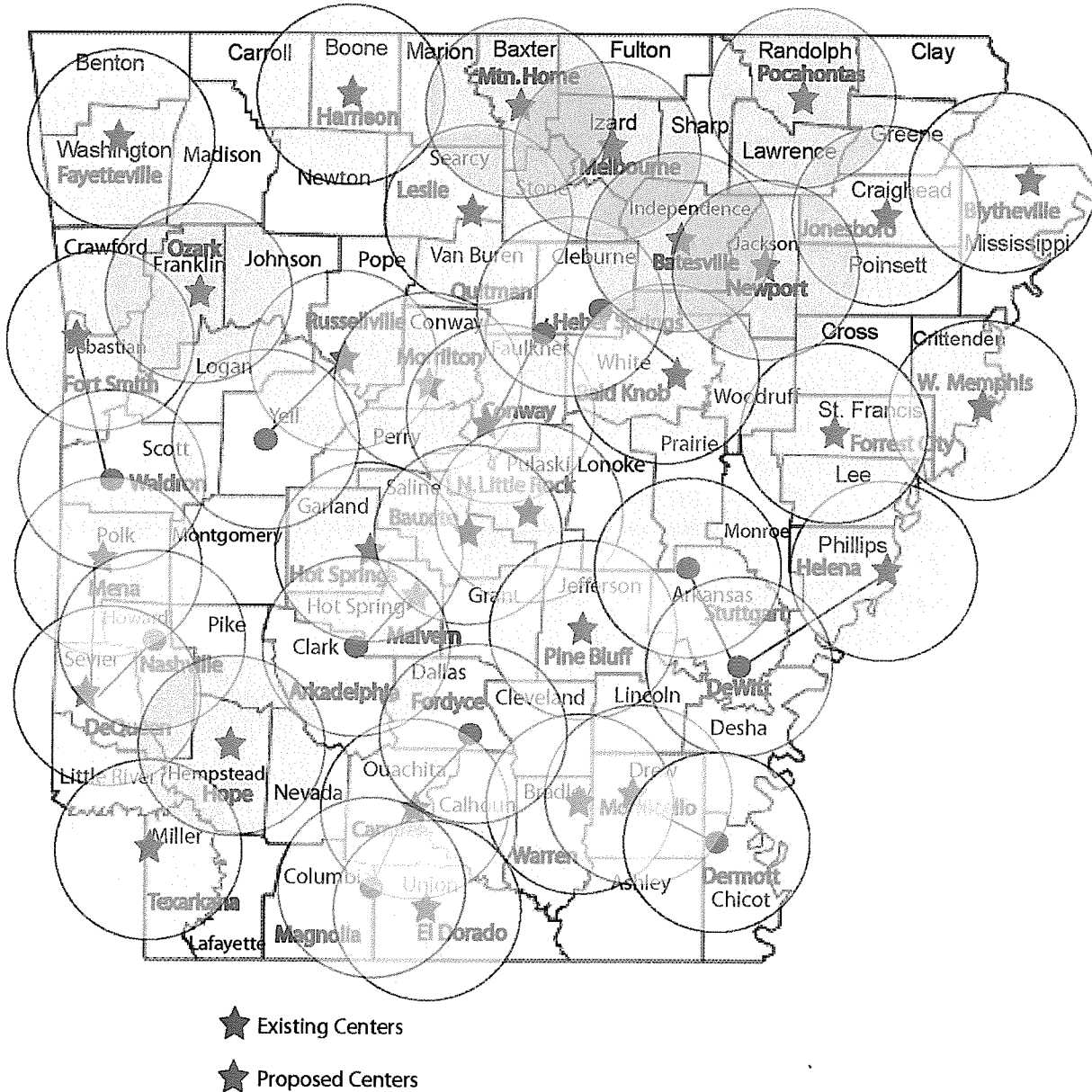
Attachment A

Secondary Area Technical Centers Service Areas 2005



Revised 1-2006

Existing & Proposed Secondary Area Technical Centers Service Areas



Revised 5-2006

Attachment B

Funding Required to Address CTE Lake View Issues

<u>Current appropriations (2006-07)</u>	\$13,706,383
Secondary Area Technical Centers	\$11,336,383
CTE Start-up Equipment	\$2,370,000
CTE Replacement Equipment	\$0
<u>Total needed for 2007-08</u>	\$38,989,824
Secondary Area Technical Centers	\$16,989,824
CTE Start-up Equipment	\$6,000,000
CTE Replacement Equipment	\$16,000,000
New money requested for 2007-08*	\$25,283,441
New for Secondary Area Technical Centers	\$5,653,441
New for CTE Start-up Equipment.....	\$3,630,000
New for CTE Replacement Equipment	\$16,000,000
<u>Total needed for 2008-09</u>	\$39,598,736
Secondary Area Technical Centers	\$19,598,736
CTE Start-up Equipment	\$4,000,000
CTE Replacement Equipment	\$16,000,000
New money requested for 2008-09*	\$25,892,353
New for Secondary Area Technical Centers	\$8,262,353
New for CTE Start-up Equipment.....	\$1,630,000
New for CTE Replacement Equipment	\$16,000,000

* as compared with 2006-07 appropriations

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U.S. Census Bureau (2006). State and county quick facts: Arkansas. Retrieved August 16, 2006, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/0500.html>.