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THE ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN TEXAS

VE COMMISSIONER ADDRESSES COUNCIL

Open communications and improvement of vocational programs were two of the main points discussed by Robert Caster, new Associate Commissioner for Occupational Education and Technology, at a recent Advisory Council meeting.

"If there is anything that I want to emphasize while I am in this position, it is better and more open communications so that we can jointly solve problems. I don't have all the answers and I don't know one person who does, but by the assemblage of persons of varied interests and backgrounds, we can come up with some of the answers to the problems."

Caster explained to the Council about some of the projects that were waiting for him upon his arrival in the position -- getting the State Plan approved and developing "Methods of Administration" for the Office of Civil Rights. Other projects demanding his attention are the Vocational Education Data Systems and ways of meeting its requirements, and staff development within the Agency.

He mentioned that the Agency was working on an Industry Services Program, which grew out of an Advisory Council recommendation. "This program will allow people from all agencies and groups to sit down and pool their resources and really address the needs of the state as it relates to skilled workers and technicians," Caster said.

In discussing adult education, funding, planning and evaluation, the Associate Commissioner said: "The matter of more adult vocational education seems logical, especially in the fact that people change jobs quite frequently and technology changes so rapidly. We must come up with more flexible means of providing vocational services to adults. We have to face the reality of the pie remaining essentially the same size and the necessity for starting new programs or getting more slices to the pie when it remains the same. It seems the only way we can do this is to set some priorities. We may

have to bite the bullet and phase out some programs and add others. We must continually address the problem of getting people off the unemployment rolls. We would encourage cooperation between the community education programs and vocational education. We are going to have to look more closely at training for displaced homemakers. This is certainly a fast growing population.

"Improving the planning and evaluation of vocational programs must be a high priority at both state and local levels. We are going to have to be looking down the road not just six months, but five years and do some long-range planning rather than putting out brush fires like we have been doing for the last six weeks. I am not afraid of mid-course corrections. Planning is not a contract."

Mr. Caster stated that he agreed with the need to improve the policy base for vocational education and the need for statutory direction upon which to build a policy base.

He affirmed his support to expand the effort to serve special populations, particularly handicapped students.

"We must address the issue of high youth unemployment. We have many students going into the sophomore and junior years in high school who have never worked with their hands. Every seventh and eighth grade student in Texas should have had the opportunity to take some sort of industrial arts program or other exploration.

"We need to work on pride in our vocations and our work and we must concentrate upon attitudes about work and improving working relationships between educators and employers. Certainly the improvement of awareness and interest and understanding of vocational education is an important priority. We need to be getting some National Merit Scholars in vocational programs. We need to make vocational programs appropriate to the needs of students. Excellence in whatever field of endeavor the student pursues should be recognized with equal acclaim," the Commissioner concluded.

CHANGES IN FEDERAL FUNDS DISTRIBUTION

Major changes are being made in the way federal vocational funds are distributed in Texas.

The 1979-80 State Plan for vocational education was approved on January 15, 1980, by Health, Education, and Welfare officials in Washington. The delay in its approval was due to the fact that the Texas Plan did not flow federal funds to eligible recipients based on their ability to pay. On January 12, the State Board of Education approved a new formula for distributing \$40 million of federal vocational funds.

The formula determines funding for local school districts based on the following factors: 1) Relative financial ability; 2) Low income families (determined by free and reduced meal statistics); 3) Economically depressed area (county income per capita); 4) General unemployment; 5) New programs put in school district; and 6) Drop out rate. For other eligible recipients, which includes postsecondary institutions primarily, the formula factors would be modified by replacing number 2 above with high-cost students, which refers to the number of disadvantaged, handicapped, and limited English proficiency vocational students as a percentage of the fall student enrollment. And item 6, "drop out rate," would not be a factor in the other eligible recipient formula. Number 1 and 2 factors above will represent at least 51 percent weight in funds distribution.

The impact of the new formula will be felt during 1979-80 by adjusting the percentage which local institutions will pay of their allocation and in the case of secondary institutions this will range from 81 to 99 percent, while for other eligible recipients the range will be from 90 through 99 percent. However, for 1980-81 the formula will be used to determine the allocation of federal funds using the factors mentioned before and the number of vocational students to determine the allocation of federal funds. Eligible recipients will take their allocation for 1980-81 and develop a local plan in consultation with their local advisory council for vocational education and submit the plan to the Texas Education Agency. The local application for 1980-81 has been revised substantially and will include only allocation of federal funds while the minimum foundation program funds for salary, maintenance and operation, transportation,

and instructional materials will be allocated from state funds on another application for secondary institutions. The allocations made to eligible recipients will include funds for several special purposes, which include the basic grant, adult vocational education, and special funding for disadvantaged and handicapped. These funds must be budgeted and spent in accordance with requirements set forth in Public Law 94-482.

In previous years the Texas Education Agency has maintained discretion on many of the funds that will now be allocated on formula. For example, many of the basic grant funds in previous years have been allocated to local school districts for purposes of travel and equipment. These needs must now be satisfied from the allocation for the 1980-81 school year. Some eligible recipients will find that they will now have adequate funds to meet the previous levels of expenditure for travel and equipment, because the factors in the formula have sent more funds to districts with higher concentrations of low income families and lower relative financial ability to pay. This simply means that in these districts funds will need to come from local sources or services modified or discontinued. The planning process will now focus quite clearly upon the local leadership. The application must be signed by the chairman of the board, the chief administrative officer, and the chairman of the local advisory committee indicating a meaningful partnership in planning at the local level.

The requirements for local advisory councils is set forth in Section 105 (g) of the Federal Act, Public Law 94-482, which states each eligible recipient receiving federal funds to operate vocational education programs shall establish a local advisory council to provide advice on current job needs and relevance of courses offered by eligible recipients. The committee members will be from the general public with special attention paid to industry and labor representation. It is vitally important that advisory council members fully understand the vocational program offerings and their relationship to community needs.

During the first week of March, 20 regional conferences were held at which time officials of the Texas Education Agency distributed 1980-81 preliminary fund allocations to eligible recipients and met with the administrators of each eligible recipient to provide information on the changes brought about by allocating of

federal funds through the new formula and to answer questions of local administrators. The local applications for federal vocational funds must be received in the Texas Education Agency by April 15, 1980, for the 1980-81 school year. Associate Commissioner

for Occupational Education and Technology, Mr. Robert Caster, has asked administrators who have questions concerning their allocation and program planning to call his office -- (512) 475-2585.

STATEWIDE CAMPAIGN PLAN UNVEILED

A bold new plan to improve the image of vocational/technical education and skilled work in Texas was unveiled at the Advisory Council's Statewide Conference in February. This plan would put vocational-technical education before the eyes and ears of every Texan and make skilled work the "in" thing.

A statewide public information campaign will "sell" vocational/technical education and skilled work and make them more attractive to Texans.

Campaign activities are being coordinated by three groups: the Advisory Council for Technical-Vocational Education, Texas Education Agency, and Texas Vocational-Technical Association.

A partnership is being formed between education and business/industry/labor for implementation of the plan. The private sector will be asked to provide funding for the campaign, and the educational sector will coordinate activities. This is not just a campaign to benefit education...it's a campaign to benefit business and labor. By improving the image of skilled work and vocational training, more well-trained persons will be available for employers to hire.

The campaign will target audiences such as students, parents, high school counselors, policy makers, legislators, general educators, and the general public. Stigmas attached to vocational education and skilled work that will be attacked include: "Only dummies go into vocational education," "Vocational education students and skilled workers are sec-

ond class," "Vocational education students can't or don't go to college," "Everyone should have a college education to be a success," "Most technical or skilled workers are not professionals."

The campaign will take place at two levels. Level I will be aimed at changing the general image of vocational education and skilled work and will be handled by a professional public relations firm. All audiences will be "targeted."

The second level will be more localized and specialized, aimed at specific audiences in local communities. Activities will be coordinated by staff members from state agencies, professional associations, and local schools.

This campaign is an attempt to do something tangible about the shortage of skilled workers available to Texas business, industry, and labor. To be a success, though, the campaign must have the support of interested people across the state -- business/industry representatives, labor leaders, school administrators, teachers, public relations professionals, etc. If a partnership can be formed between business/industry/labor and education and adequate support is provided, the project will be successful. All involved will benefit as the image of vocational education and skilled work is enhanced in Texas.

Your help is needed. Educators or business/industry/labor representatives who are interested in taking part in this bold venture should fill out the form provided (see page 4) and return to Jeanine Hicks, ACTIVE, P. O. Box 1886, Austin, TX 78767.

(continued on page 4)

* All persons who wish to continue to receive ACTIVE News must so indicate in writing. *

* This is one of the provisions contained in recent legislation (HB 558, Article V, *

* Section 66(C)) passed by the 66th Legislature. Paraphrased it says that all State *

* agencies that publish periodicals with state funds at no charge to recipients shall *

* carry three notices that anyone wishing to continue receiving copies should so indi- *

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_____ Please send more information on the Statewide Public Information Campaign.

_____ Yes, my company/labor organization would like to be a part of the team to help end the shortage of skilled workers by improving the image of vocational education in Texas. Contact me to determine the kind/amount of assistance.

_____ I feel my district or institution might be interested in participating in the campaign through utilization of materials.

_____ I would be willing to contact business/industry in my community regarding this project or send their names to the Advisory Council to be contacted.

_____ I would personally be interested in becoming involved in the campaign to assist in whatever way needed.

_____ (Name)

_____ (Title)

_____ (Company/Institution)

_____ (City, State, Zip)

_____ (Telephone)

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