Skills Center Feasibility Study Executive Summary
March, 2007

The Pierce County Skills Center Consortium recently just completed a thorough feasibility study to determine the viability and need of creating a skills center for high school students in the county.

A skills center is a regional secondary school that serves high school students from multiple school districts. It provides instruction in preparatory programs that are either too expensive or too specialized for school districts to operate individually. Examples include: dental assisting, collision repair technology, culinary arts/chef training, robotics technology, and medical lab technology.

The feasibility study's conclusion: Build it – and build it soon.

The attached report covers the main points regarding the need and viability of a Pierce County skills center.

• Pierce County is one of the fastest growing regions in the state – and the K-12 student population will continue to grow, with a boom after 2010.

• The county's high school drop-out rate stands at more than 25 percent. Skills centers attract students who might otherwise quit school.

• Pierce County is experiencing strong economic growth, which means we need an educated/skilled workforce.

• The greatest need in the job market is for workers with some postsecondary training, but not a college degree.

• A survey of 5,000 students, teachers, parents, business and community members showed strong support for a Pierce County skills center.

• Bethel, Eatonville, Fife, Franklin Pierce, Orting, Steilacoom, Sumner and University Place have all signed letters of intent to join a skills center consortium

• The skills center steering committee has mapped out a curriculum – based on examples from the state's 10 other skills centers – to meet student needs.

Details of the above points are included with explanations in the following three pages. For the full 300-page report, go to http://www.bethelsd.org/content.php?id=4

FINAL REPORT OVERVIEW

Skills Center:

A regional secondary school that serves high school students (juniors and seniors) from multiple school districts and provides instruction in preparatory programs that are either too expensive or too specialized for school districts to operate individually. Some examples would be Dental Assisting, Collision Repair Technology, Culinary Arts/Chef Training, Robotics Technology, Medical Lab Technology, etc.

Purpose of the study:

♣ To determine the feasibility of building a technical skills center in Pierce County to meet the historical needs of providing high cost and limited enrollment capstone programs

♣ To detail the conditions and resources necessary for the implementation of a skills center in Pierce County for the school districts that become members of the skills center consortium.

Purpose One Findings
The Research and Study Survey Results

County Demographic and Employment Profile:

♣ The majority of state population growth since 2000 remains concentrated in Western Washington, with the largest five-year gains being an increase of 98,254 in King County and 72,682 in Pierce County.

♣ Over the last thirty years, Pierce County has shown a significantly faster rate of growth than the region's largest county (King). This trend is expected to continue into the future.

♣ The effects of labor shortages will be felt as the baby boomer generation retires.

♣ After 2010, as the *baby boom echo* children reach childbearing age, K-12 enrollments will show substantial annual increases.

♣ Though Pierce County's employment expansion was slow in the 1970's, the county kept pace with the state employment growth and outdid the nation for the next two decades. By 2004, Pierce County had surged ahead of the state average.

♣ At the midpoint of this decade Pierce County's economy continued to demonstrate momentum, with sustained, solid performance and respectable growth. This continuing growth pattern will increase migration to the county.

♣ Pierce County ranked in the top ten counties for positive employment change in 2006.

♣ Employers are having difficulty finding qualified workers. <u>The shortage is greatest for jobs requiring some postsecondary training, but not a baccalaureate degree</u>.

♣ Employers also expressed having difficulty finding applicants with general workplace skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, as well as positive work attitudes.

Conclusion: The demographic, economic and employment research conducted for this study shows a county that is vibrant and growing. Based on this research, **it is the conclusion of the author of this report that building a skills center for the students of Pierce County would be feasible and that start-up be pursued.** A county skills center could be an important strategic partner in helping to provide for Pierce County's employment needs.

County School Districts Demographic Profile:

- ♣ The student enrollment pattern in the county's public schools should mirror that of the general population, that is, continued growth projections for both.
- ♣ With the exception of the Tacoma School District, enrollment in the schools of Pierce County has steadily increased over the last decade.
- ♣ The K-12 yearly average grew from 97,327 students in 1998 to 104,620 students at the end of 2006, a gain of 7293 students over the eight year period.
- ♣ Despite the loss in enrollment in the Tacoma School District, the increase in school population for the school years ending 1998 through 2006 averaged 10.7 percent countywide.
- ♣ The total K-12 enrollment, as of October 2006, was 105,638 students countywide. This was over 1000 students more than the 2005-06 school year end enrollment for all districts.
- ♣ 99,520 children were born in Pierce County between April 1990 and April 2000, another 61,505 were born between April 2000 and April 2005.
- ♣ When tracking the enrollment patterns for Pierce County's graduating classes, a significant loss of students can be observed between the freshman year and graduation. This pattern has been true for each of the last six graduating classes.

Conclusion: Based on this research, future student space needs, and future expanded educational needs for students, **it is the conclusion of the author of this report that building a skills center for the students of Pierce County would be feasible and that start-up be pursued.** A county skills center could be an important strategic partner in countywide career and technical education, both secondary and post-secondary.

The Survey Findings:

- ♣ The majority of parents, employers, business community members, and community members-at-large who completed the survey indicated they were somewhat to very interested in having a skills center option available to Pierce County students.
- ♣ When students were asked if they would be in favor of having a skills center in Pierce County, nearly sixty percent answered yes.
- ♣ When examining what is most important about a skills center's program offerings, the theme of employability skills emerged as most important among all survey groups.
- ♣ The vast majority of survey respondents would like to see a late afternoon and/or evening session made available to skills center students.

Conclusion: Based on the survey outcomes, **it is the conclusion of the author of this report that building a skills center for the students of Pierce County would be feasible and that start-up be pursued.** A county skills center could be an important strategic partner in helping Pierce County's students develop the skills they desire and need to be successful in the workplace and their chosen career.

Purpose Two Findings
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The Skills Center Program Details

Consortium Membership:

- ♣ Committed to membership – Bethel (host district), Eatonville, Fife, Franklin Pierce, Orting, Steilacoom, Sumner, University Place
- ♣ Interested in membership - Puyallup, Tacoma

Projected Location:

- ♣ Frederickson area

Projected Program Offerings:

- ♣ Year 1   Construction, Medical Science (therapeutic careers), Computer Science (hardware), Computer Science (software), Business Services, Materials Engineering/Nanotechnology, Engine Technology, Culinary Arts, Law Careers, Interior Design

♣ Years 2-3   Travel & Tourism, Medical Science (diagnostic)

♣ Years 4 and beyond   Environmental Sciences, Aerospace, Pre-Engineering, Medical Sciences
                                       (informatics), Biotechnology, Robotics, Photonics, Veterinary Careers, Collision
                                       Repair Technology, Emergency Services

Proposed Schedule (a variety of options will be developed to best meet the student's personalized learning plan, per Washington Learns initiative):

♣ Block schedule model (half-day at skills center, half day at high school)
♣ 24-7 model with access through technology (on-line learning)
♣ Hybrid schedule model with a combination of on-line/distance and on-site learning
♣ All-day model for some students
♣ Extended day model (sessions offered beyond the regular school day hours)
♣ Extended year model (summer session)
♣ Interim programs model (programs offered during school breaks)

Student Participation:

♣ Each districts allocation of skills center slots based on percentage of total students enrolled in consortium member districts
♣ Participation by non-member district students based on space available

Critical Factors for Success:

♣ Commitment from top down
♣ Cooperation among the member school districts
♣ Cooperation between the skills center and sending high schools
♣ Cooperation and collaboration between the skills center, community and technical colleges and other post-secondary institutions or training entities
♣ Long-range planning
♣ Flexibility to meet local needs
♣ Continuation of strong career and technical education programs in the county's high schools
♣ Implementation of programs that build on or provide advanced training for CTE programs offered in the high schools
♣ Implementation of programs tied to industry standards and industry certifications
♣ Operation of programs as realistic training enterprises
♣ Integration of clinical, internship, and employment opportunities into all programs
♣ Year-round operation of programs (summer session)
♣ Integration of job placement assistance in all programs
♣ Use of labor market and other research to guide program planning and changes (to both close and start programs)
♣ Articulation agreements in place with community and technical colleges, apprenticeships, certification completion programs, and other post-secondary training
♣ Active program advisory committees
♣ Strong business partnerships
♣ Steadfast educational leadership

Conclusion: Based on the visionary work completed by the steering and review & validation committees for this project, **it is the conclusion of the author of this report that building a skills center for the students of Pierce County would be feasible and that start-up be pursued.** A skills center could be the centerpiece of the county's secondary education system.