



Good-bye to Friends at OBME!

**From Tiah Van Dusen
Legislative Representative**

Thank you for the opportunity to meet wonderful colleagues through serving on the OBME board. As most of you know, I moved to Chicago in June and thought I'd share some information:

It is my understanding, fall 2007 Oregon will pilot WorkKeys!

If you're looking for a way to enhance your job skills, call WorkKeys and volunteer to be a pilot school! Volunteer to be a WorkKeys Trainer!

Here is what's happening in Illinois—WorkKeys is REQUIRED!

Situation

Chicago Public Schools, like all secondary school districts in Illinois, administer the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) to juniors every spring. The PSAE includes the ACT[®] test and two of ACT's WorkKeys job skill exams: Applied Mathematics and Reading for Information. Chicago Public Schools put a special emphasis on the WorkKeys exams for students, as they are designed to assess students' work-ready skills. The schools use businesses' input to determine how to use WorkKeys exam results, adjust curricula, and better prepare students for local employment. The project involves WorkKeys skill assessments, as well as KeyTrain skill training courses. Lake View High School, Chicago's oldest public high school, piloted the first phase of the project. It involved the local business community, Chamber of Commerce and workforce advisory board. James Peterson, Education to Careers coordinator, performed an in-depth survey of the local businesses to determine the WorkKeys-defined skill levels required for entry-level jobs. The school used [WorkKeys Estimator](#) to survey businesses. This information is being used to change the school's business curricula to meet the needs of business, as well as getting the businesses to invest time and resources into the program. As a result, the businesses became partners, providing internships, job shadowing, career fairs, seminars and other opportunities for students.

Results

Working with the businesses, Chicago Public Schools instructors incorporate WorkKeys and KeyTrain skill training into their curricula. This includes a pre-test for students and follow-up with the WorkKeys exams that are part of the PSAE. The teachers use KeyTrain materials to provide remediation for students to help close their skill gaps. Officials also created a guide that showed instructors how to align KeyTrain lessons with Illinois statewide learning standards. "Using WorkKeys and KeyTrain provides a way for us to better address any weaknesses in our own programs in terms of preparing students for the workforce, while the skill training helps students reach the levels businesses require," said Loretta Begley, manager for the office of high school programs for Chicago Public Schools.

Outlook

The Chicago Public Schools' ultimate goal is to issue "Certificates of Mastery" to seniors who have raised their WorkKeys scores to the levels required by businesses. Many of the schools' business partners use WorkKeys and are willing to accept these certificates as a factor when hiring entry-level employees. "This allows us to add a credential factor to students' resumes," Begley said. "The certificates validate that students across the city will be able to meet the challenges of the workforce." In 2006, teachers plan to find new ways to drive instruction using WorkKeys findings. This will include an extension to elementary and junior high classes to identify skill gaps earlier, as well as establishing a leadership team to determine effective teaching practices.

Respectfully Submitted by

**Tiah Van Dusen
2150 North Lincoln Park West
Chicago IL 60614**