Utilizing Texas Business-Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.) Module
for Texas Career and Technical Education Administrators

This module is designed to assist career and technical education administrators to understand, create, and utilize a Texas Business-Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.).

Guiding Questions:

I.   **What is a Texas Business-Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.)?**

II.   **What is the difference between a Texas Business-Education Success Team and a program area advisory committee?**

III.   **What are the benefits of a Texas Business-Education Success Team?**

IV.   **What policies authorize a Texas Business-Education Success Team?**

V.   **How does a school implement a Texas Business-Education Success Team?**

    A. What are the different types of meeting options?

    B. What are the procedures for arranging each type of meeting?

VI.   **What assessment strategies are needed to determine the impact of a Texas Business-Education Success Team?**

VII.   **What are the barriers and challenges to a Texas Business-Education Success Team?**

VIII.   **Where are additional resources located?**

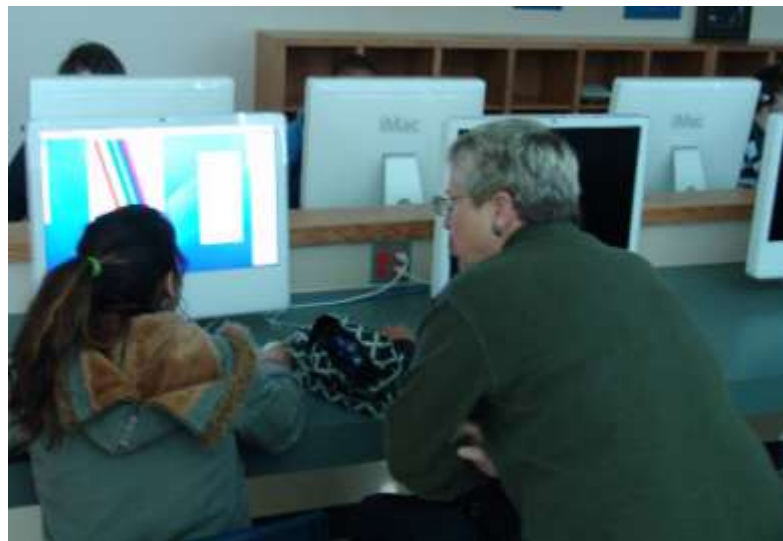**I.   What is a Texas Business-Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.)?**

A Texas Business-Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.) is a major feature of the AchieveTexas initiative[1] to integrate rigorous academics and career

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[1]   AchieveTexas incorporates the sixteen federally defined Career Clusters as the basis to reorganizing Texas schools. Each Career Cluster has a number of Programs of Study (POS) available to students that reflect their interests and career goals.

education into the Texas education system, from pre-school through a two- or four-year college program. The initiative calls for each school district to form a B.E.S.T. to oversee local implementation of AchieveTexas and help promote reorganizing the district's schools. The group is meant to become a permanent component of the school district.

Members of the district's B.E.S.T. should be among the most respected community leaders from education, business and industry, government agencies, professional and trade organizations, Chamber of Commerce, and other groups (AchieveTexas, 2006). Ideally, the first co-chairs of the district's B.E.S.T. should be the community's most prominent business and education leaders, such as the districts' superintendent and a C.E.O. of a local business.

The work of B.E.S.T. is critical to the success of the AchieveTexas initiative. It must clarify the vision, obtain community buy-in, identify implementation steps, set timelines, determine assessment methods, and continuously monitor progress. In other words, it must oversee the development of and obtain support for the reorganized local education system, ensuring that the district's AchieveTexas initiative becomes a reality.

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For more information, see AchieveTexas Implementation Guide
http://www.achievetexas.org/Implementation.htm.

II.	**What is the difference between a Texas Business-Education Success Team and program area advisory committee?**

For many years, specific career and technical education (CTE) programs (e.g., automotive technology, agriculture) have used local advisory committees designed to align the CTE program they represent with the field. These local advisory groups are instrumental in assisting local instructors in their specific fields by promoting their CTE programs in the community, area, and state; offering work opportunities to graduates in the form of internships and employment for graduates; serving as student mentors; advising programs instructors and administrators on safety, up-to-date equipment, required skills, and trends in the field; and in many other ways.

While local advisory committees work with one program area in a school, the Texas Business-Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.) serves as the oversight committee for the entire school district. Its membership should include people from many areas, such as education, business and industry, government agencies, professional and trade organizations, Chamber of Commerce, community colleges and universities, several career clusters, local and state government, trade associations, and others (AchieveTexas, 2006). Their role is to clarify the vision of the initiative, share the vision with the community, establish implementation steps, set timelines, and much more.

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For more information, see AchieveTexas
http://www.achievetexas.org/index.html.

III.	What are the benefits of a Texas Business-Education Success Team?

The AchieveTexas initiative is a major undertaking for a school system that requires the support and resources of the community. A Texas Business-Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.), whose members are community leaders in business, education, and other areas, will assist the school district in many ways, including the following:

- Determine implementation steps and provide oversight of the initiative;
- Help select career clusters schools will teach;
- Help select Programs of Study (POS) for career clusters;
- Provide valuable input on curricula, assessments, and business and industry standards;
- Clarify the vision for AchieveTexas;

- Enlist buy-in from the community;

- Guide the development of new career and technical programs to meet industry labor needs;

- Advocate for the district's career and technical education programs;

- Work with area and state political leaders to gain support of AchieveTexas; and

- Continuously assess progress and address problems.

IV. What policies authorize a Texas Business-Education Success Team?

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 supports stronger partnerships between the community, business and industry, and career and technical education. A purpose of the act is "supporting partnerships among secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, baccalaureate degree granting institutions, area career and technical education schools, local workforce investment boards, business and industry, and intermediaries" (Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, S. 250-2).

Furthermore, school districts that accept Perkins funds must offer Programs of Study (POS), which is the Perkins name for the National Career Clusters/Programs of Study or AchieveTexas (AchieveTexas, 2006). Local districts may choose the clusters they would like to implement based on student needs, community needs, and the local economy. According to AchieveTexas, "not all schools will be able to offer all clusters, but the goal should be to use advanced technology to give students a sample of each career and targeted industry cluster and enhance their opportunities for high-demand, high-growth, high-skill, or high-wage occupations" (p.4).

V. How does a school implement a Texas Business-Education Success Team?

By deciding to implement AchieveTexas, a school district is also committing to forming partnerships with other educational institutions, business and industry, government agencies, professional and trade organizations, and other groups (AchieveTexas, 2006). The district's first

action will be to establish a Texas Business-Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.) to guide the overall implementation efforts and to oversee progress of the new initiative. A major duty of the group will be to garner buy-in among leaders in the area and state for the redesign of Texas education.

While a district's B.E.S.T. membership is usually around 10-20 people, there will be a number of other groups needed for implementation including many groups already in existence, such as advisory committees for various program areas and parent groups. Indeed, it will be the job of the entire community to help reorganize the school system into one based on career education and rigorous academics where students engage in programs that interest them and lead to high paying, high quality jobs.

Step One: Recruit Leaders Passionate about Improving Education

The first step is to recruit leaders who are passionate about improving education and who understand the benefits of the career clusters system (AchieveTexas, 2006). The people who will become B.E.S.T. members should be able leaders who help create the vision for the reorganized school system and are able to build strong community support for that vision. Thus, B.E.S.T. members should be individuals who:

- Are among the most highly respected leaders in the community;
- Can help enlist buy-in from area and state leaders;
- Are able to influence others and enlist the help of the community;
- Care about students and will work for their success;
- Are known to work for other education initiatives; and
- Have knowledge of the regions' current career opportunities and those in the future.

Choose Co-Chairs

The AchieveTexas literature (2006) recommends choosing the first co-chairs from the most prominent representatives of education and business, such as the district superintendent and the CEO of a business. Once other members fully understand the initiative, other chairs may be chosen.

Set Term Limits

It might be useful for school staff to set term limits for B.E.S.T. members to avoid possibly overworking some people, and to continually infuse new ideas into the group. In order to keep some experienced people, districts should consider ways to stagger terms.

Step Two: Ensure B.E.S.T. Members Fully Understand Initiative and School District's Programs

School district personnel must not assume community members have a full understanding of the school system and its programs, although community members may also believe they do. To avoid confusion and misunderstandings that may very well lead to poor working relationships, there should to be an orientation to the AchieveTexas initiative and the work of the school district. B.E.S.T. members will need the following:

- A full understanding of all aspects of the AchieveTexas initiative, including the 16 federally recognized career clusters.

- A realistic knowledge of the district's resources and needs.

- A familiarity with the district's curricula and the many options of students.

- To be true partners in program building rather than a group who are expected to rubber stamp the implementation ideas of school personnel.

- To be involved from the beginning.

- To be shown respect for their work.

- To feel comfortable asking for clarification and seeking additional information when needed.

- To be met with complete openness and easy access to personnel.

Step Three: Clarify the B.E.S.T.'s Mission

An early task for B.E.S.T. is to work with school personnel to develop a mission statement for their group. Doing so can help alleviate any confusion about work expectations, including the authority they have. These activities will include the following:

- Establish their mission and fully communicate that mission to the community and the district educators.

- Have a written record of the mission and refer to it when questions arise about the purpose of the group.

- Ensure that all members, both now and in the future, understand the mission and fully grasp the work in progress as well as background information.

Step Four: Clarify and Share the AchieveTexas Vision

It is imperative that the community, school employees, students, parents, and all others involved in the education system understand why the school system is changing, and the benefits of that change. Otherwise, confusion and misconceptions may lead to a negative backlash, including lack of cooperation. A vision that is developed by the stakeholders and shared with the community can help alleviate some of these problems.

According to researchers at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) (1993), a vision statement should describe an organization's goal and serve as a means of motivation for others to join the effort. The vision statement must be (SEDL, 1993):

- Clear and concise.

- Future-oriented.

- Likely to lead to a clearly better future for all district students.

- Consistent with the district's purpose (i.e., mission).

It is wise to include as many stakeholders as possible in the development of the vision, including parents, students, faculty, business and industry representatives, school administrators, school board, and other stakeholders. Because the vision is so important, it is also advisable to appoint an experienced facilitator to guide formal visioning exercises for major groups. Surveys and questionnaires will be more useful for smaller stakeholder groups (AchieveTexas, 2006).

A suggested visioning exercise is to ask the group to imagine their schools in 2012, the year set as the goal for full implementation of AchieveTexas (AchieveTexas, 2006). The facilitator can ask questions about expectations, including the following:

- What clusters are implemented?

- How are students' learning experiences changed from this year?

- What extended learning opportunities are available to students?

Share the Vision

The vision should be prominent in communications and displayed wherever possible. A phrase that represents the vision (e.g., *Linking Learning to Life*) might be used on items such as banners for school lobbies, coffee cups, pencils, posters, plaques, etc. As time passes, B.E.S.T. members must work to keep the vision alive and relevant (SEDL, 1993).

Step Five: Establish Steps for Implementation

Because B.E.S.T. members will be people who understand management, including the necessity for establishing steps for implementation and a timetable, there are no "recommended" procedures for this step. However, there are a few words of caution:

Change is a process, not an event.

SEDL researchers Hord, Rutherford, Huling, and Hall (2006) caution those who facilitate change in education that, "Change is a process, not an event" (p.5) with change occurring over time, maybe even years. Too often, educators erroneously assume change occurs after a day or two of introduction to a program and some initial training.

Ongoing staff development is fundamental to the program.

It is critical that a school district provide ongoing training and staff development over a long period. It is also important that people who are hired, or come into the process after startup, receive training. According to Hord et al. (2006), failing to provide ongoing staff development is a common and serious mistake that will very probably lead to failure. Furthermore, methods of staff development will need to change to address <u>current</u> needs. For example, early on, training will focus on awareness and may take place in large groups. Later, coaching, mentoring, and one-on-one activities will be needed, and awareness types of staff development will not be appreciated.

Ongoing assessment to determine process is extremely important.

Continuous assessment to determine how well the program is being incorporated into the system is essential to program success. The B.E.S.T. should include assessment processes in their steps for implementation and use the findings to guide future work.

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For more information on *Taking Charge of Change in Education*, see information from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory at http://www.sedl.org/expertise/change_process.html.

Step Six: Ongoing Communications and Meetings

Changing technology offers groups numerous communication options that can save time and resources. While face-to-face meetings are still important, other communication and meeting options should be considered.

Regardless of the method of communication, there are a few guidelines to follow. All communications should:

- Be concise, well-organized.
- Have a specific purpose.
- Be respectful of all members.

On-line Communications

The internet provides a quick and convenient means of communication. E-mail messages, e-mail groups, message boards, and chat rooms are used by millions daily. However, this relative new form of communications requires new rules of etiquette that district staff and B.E.S.T. members will want to understand and follow. On-line etiquette is referred to as "netiquette."

Netiquette Basics

There are two very basic and important rules:

- **Never send an email message you would not want someone else to read.** There are many ways messages may be shared accidentally or otherwise so that your information may become public.

- **Limit the number of email messages you send.** The number of messages a person receives each day may become overwhelming. Whenever possible, senders should combine messages and always be succinct.

A search will provide a number of internet sites that contain information on netiquette.

The following information is summarized from an internet sight located at http://www.livinginternet.com/i/ia_nq.htm.

- **Research before asking** – Good netiquette includes the following:
  - Send only messages you know to be correct and avoid passing on rumors or false information.
  - Avoid asking questions of individuals and groups that can be easily answered by doing a simple internet search.
  - Check facts before forwarding information. Some good internet sights to assist the user in this effort are http://www.factcheck.org/, http://urbanlegends.about.com/, http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/internet/Internet_Web_Hoaxes.htm.

- **Remember emotion** – Emotions are difficult to transmit over email and are easily misinterpreted. Some cautions are:
  - Capital letters denote shouting on the internet and should be avoided. It is proper to use asterisks to emphasize a word (*excellent*).
  - Humor and satire may be misunderstood and even considered to be rude or insulting.
  - Always be respectful, acknowledge good points, even when disagreeing with others.

- **People aren't organizations** – Do not assume people are speaking for their organization because they use their organization's email account. It is good form for a person to include a statement in their "signature" that

clarifies the information and opinions are personal expressions, not those of their organization.

- **Netiquette of sending messages**
    - Be brief
    - Use white space
    - Use descriptive subject lines
    - Stay on topic
    - Be careful sending attachments
    - Copy the minimum number of people
    - Include your email address
    - Respect non-commercial spaces
    - Avoid flaming – sending outrageous and insulting messages usually in disagreement
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- **Netiquette of replying**
    - Replying – reply only to the person who asked the question or made a statement rather than posting a reply to a whole list or newsgroup.
    - Forwarding – Minimize forwarding as much as possible. Send messages only to those who need to know or may be interested. Do not forward an email to someone who was copied on the original email. Always check the whole list of To: and CC: addressees to avoid duplication.
    - Summarize for the group rather than sending all the information you may have.
    - Check current information before replying.
    - Reference past communications.
    - Acknowledge important communications to avoid having people wonder weather you received an important message.

- **Netiquette of confidentiality**
    - Don't publicize other's email addresses.
    - <u>Never</u> send what you don't read.
    - Remember archiving – many newsgroups, mailing lists, and other groups archive information and sensitive or private information that can resurface at a later date, reaching unexpected people or groups.

- Respect copyrights – always identify information and clarify that it is not your own. Never alter or change information from another party before forwarding it.

The information on Netiquette has been summarized from
http://www.livinginternet.com/i/ia_nq.htm.

Teleconferencing

Teleconference is a method of meeting, usually via phone lines or other telecommunication systems. A simple method of arranging a teleconference is through the local phone company. The person authorized to arrange a conference can contact the local phone company with information about the meeting time and a participant list. The phone company may either call the participants directly at the appointed time or may provide a phone number that participants call to enter the audio conference.

Examples of other companies who arrange audio conferencing are

http://www.unlimitedconferencing.com/index2.asp.

http://www.starconferencing.com/.

http://officedepot.telecomsvc.com/conference/index.asp?gclid=CNyl vviF6JMCFRUdsgodwkTBaA.

Please note: Commercial websites are merely examples and are not endorsed or recommended.

On-line Meetings

People are finding myriad new ways to meet electronically (e.g., web conferencing, webcasts, webinars). In the interest of helping B.E.S.T. members save time, these methods should be explored and those that meet the needs of the school district's budget and capabilities should be explored.

The following are some examples of websites about electronic meetings:

https://www1.gotomeeting.com/?Portal=www.gotomeeting.com

http://www.webex.com/smb/webinars.html

https://www2.gotomeeting.com/tgw/gg/webinars/g2w_semlp?Portal =www.gotowebinar.com&Target=w/g2w_semlp.tmpl

Please note: Websites are merely examples and are not endorsed or recommended.

Step Seven: Networking

The district staff should encourage B.E.S.T. members to network with the schools district's staff, faculty, parents, students, and others. Some means for B.E.S.T. members to network include the following:

- On-line discussion groups
- Listservs with stakeholders
- Attending Conferences, school functions, school board meetings, sporting events, Parent-Teacher Organization meetings, etc.

VI.   What assessment strategies are needed to determine the impact of a Texas Business-Education Success Team?

The B.E.S.T. should work with school personnel and other stakeholders to determine ways to assess their progress As in all types of assessment activities, the results should be used to highlight successes and to identify ways to improve. Some strategies might include the following:

- During one of the first B.E.S.T. meetings, ask members how they will know if they are successful by the end of the first year? Second year? Review these "measures of success" at least once

annually and ask if there are other measures that should be added or if any are no longer relevant.

- B.E.S.T. members might work with school personnel to develop a survey to assess their work and determine who should respond to the survey.

- Compare the work of B.E.S.T. to the progress of AchieveTexas.

- Ask B.E.S.T. to assess their own work, including successes and to suggest ways they might improve.

VII. What are the barriers and challenges to a Texas Business-Education Success Team?

The school district must carefully select members of their first Texas Business-Education Success Team (B.E.S.T.). As stated in the section on Implementation, *Step One: Recruit Leaders Passionate about Improving Education*, and B.E.S.T. members should be leaders who:

- Are highly respected in the community;

- Can help enlist buy-in from area and state leaders;

- Are able to influence others and enlist the help of the community;

- Care about students and will work for their success;

- Are known to work for other education initiatives; and

- Have knowledge of the regions' current career opportunities and those in the future.

Failure to recruit people who fit these criteria may severely impede implementation of the initiative.

The school district and B.E.S.T. will have many challenges in their efforts to reorganize their school district's system. Some common barriers include the following:

- Failure to get buy-in from major stakeholders will create a major barrier to program success.

- Changing any system will most likely be met with resistance from one or more groups who fail to understand the rationale for reorganizing the school system, and those who simply resist change of all sorts.

- Problems result when districts fail to provide <u>appropriate</u> ongoing staff development/training to employees. While first efforts to explain the reorganization will focus on awareness, later efforts

must move to the more complicated staff development that may require coaching, one-on-one assistance, mentoring, and other intensive efforts.

- Failure to assess ongoing efforts and address problems can result in built-up resentment and negativism.
- Failing to assess progress can lead to a failed initiative.

VIII.   Where are additional resources located?

- AchieveTexas http://www.achievetexas.org
- States' Career Clusters Initiative: http://www.careerclusters.org/index.php

- Texas Education Agency www.tea.state.tx.us

- Texas Education Agency, Career and Technical Education, http://www.tea.state.tx.us/cte/

- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/

- Southwest Educational Development Laboratory http://www.sedl.org/

- U.S. Department of Education http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml

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