

Perkins Act Fact Sheet

Integration of Academic and Vocational Education

Traditional schooling has tended to isolate skills and teaching. An extremely solid barrier has often separated academic from vocational courses. The Perkins Act declares that approach obsolete. The Perkins Act explicitly requires that programs fully integrate vocational and academic education.

Integration is a powerful tool to help students gain advanced academic competencies by showing them how academic ideas work in the real world and why they are important. It enables students to understand many different types of information and to use that information to solve problems and make decisions. It is also vital to ensuring that vocational education does not serve as a second-class track within schools, and within society. When vocational students come out of programs with basic and advanced academic skills, they can choose from a much wider array of education and work opportunities.

The **key features** of integration are:

1. encompassing **all** of the academic areas -- math, reading, writing, science, and social studies,
2. including **both basic and advanced** skills in each of those academic areas, and
3. teaching academic knowledge and skills in a vocational **context**, not just in a vocational education **class**.

Integration is **not** reached by simply identifying what academic competencies are already addressed in a vocational program. Nor is it accomplished by teaching one or two competencies from each academic area. It requires taking the content of academic and vocational curricula and developing methods to align, sequence, and mutually reinforce academic and vocational concepts and skills.

The ultimate goal of Perkins programs should be to achieve full integration of the **entire** vocational curriculum with the **entire** academic curriculum. Integration should be through a sequential course of study leading to both academic and occupational competencies.

Integrating vocational and academic education is an important and demanding task. Academic and vocational teachers will need to work together to develop and teach new curricula. Some of the steps to integration include bringing academic and vocational teachers together for:

- joint staff development,
- joint curriculum development,
- revising course objectives,

- structured, frequent joint planning time,
- development of student assessment instruments that demonstrate how well students are able to link ideas and relate academic concepts to vocational goals,
- team teaching, and
- choosing experiential work placement sites on the basis of whether students will be able to use academic as well as vocational competencies.

Successful integration of academic and vocational education is very closely related to, and aided by, strong instruction in [all aspects of an industry](#). Focusing on all aspects of an industry provides a very rich and open-ended framework for bringing in the full range of academics in exploring all the issues that have confronted that industry. It helps avoid the danger of seeing integration as a form of "dumbing down" academics to teach only the academic skills needed to prepare students for a very narrowly defined occupation.

Prepared by the Center for Law and Education's Vocational Opportunity for Community and Educational Development (VOCED) Project. The VOCED Project works on local, state, and national levels to redirect vocational education and school-to-work programs to better meet the long-term educational, social and economic needs of students and communities. Funding for the VOCED Project has been provided by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the Ford Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.