



**“Soft Skills” Give Students An Edge**  
*With advice from employers, high schools pilot Career Prep Certificate*

**FACT SHEET**

September 25, 2008

**Missouri Job Vacancy Survey**

<http://pprc.ums.edu/JVS/>

The Missouri Job Vacancy Survey (JVS), developed by the Missouri Department of Economic Development's Division of Workforce Development (DWD), Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) in conjunction with the Metropolitan Information and Data Analysis Services (MIDAS) division of the Public Policy Research Center (PPRC) at the University of Missouri - St. Louis (UMSL), provides timely information about the quantity and quality of job vacancies in Missouri. The survey results supply a measure of employer demand for workers at a regional level along with an analysis of wage and benefits offered, education and experience requirements, and skill gaps of recent applicants. Offerings on the Web site include summary tables, JVS reports and a data wizard with various tools that allow users to break the data apart according to occupation, industry and geography. Tables entitled "Job Vacancies by Skills," "Job Vacancies by Competencies," and "Job Vacancies by Shortcomings" are available on the last page of the "All Regions" report (accessible at <http://pprc.ums.edu/JVS/jvsregionreports.aspx>). These tables show which competencies and skills employers most often cited as important for applicants, as well as the most common shortcomings of recent applicants. Each regional report also ends with this analysis.

Contact: Mike Muin, MERIC research analyst, [mike.muin@ded.mo.gov](mailto:mike.muin@ded.mo.gov) (573-751-8634)

**Missouri "Skills Gap" Report**

**COMING SOON!** A report focused exclusively on skill gaps is scheduled for release the first week of October.

Find it on either the MERIC home page, [www.missourieconomy.org](http://www.missourieconomy.org), or at <http://pprc.ums.edu/JVS/>.

A forthcoming report by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) called Skills Gap addresses the issue of worker skill gaps. Skill gaps can simply be described as the difference between skills needed for a job and those possessed by an applicant. The report was produced through employer feedback of the Missouri Job Vacancy Survey (JVS). Skills Gap serves as a tool to help students discover what their future employers are saying about skills necessary to fill open job vacancies. The report addresses questions in the survey about job applicant's competencies and shortcomings; education and experience; and thinking, math, and reading skills. For example, a "soft skill" such as interpersonal skills was deemed an important competency of the position for 90 percent of vacancies. Employers responded that such skills like interpersonal skills were common shortcomings among recent applicants. They indicated that recent applicants had the highest rates of deficiencies for the "soft skills" of a positive attitude, good work ethic, good customer skills, and good communication skills.

Contact: Mike Muin, research analyst, MERIC, [mike.muin@ded.mo.gov](mailto:mike.muin@ded.mo.gov) (573-751-8634)

**Missouri Career Preparation Certificate**

[www.dese.mo.gov/careered/career\\_prep\\_certificate.htm](http://www.dese.mo.gov/careered/career_prep_certificate.htm)

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) launched the Career Prep Certificate Program in response to 2006 legislation that required the development of a "ready to work" endorsement program. In 2008, DESE awarded four implementation grants to projects representing 29 schools and 18,000 students. Each of the pilot projects is currently conducting implementation activities to develop a certificate program that best meets the needs of employers in the project's area.

Contact: Steve Coffman, employment training director, [steve.coffman@dese.mo.gov](mailto:steve.coffman@dese.mo.gov) (573-522-6545)

**CPC Pilot Projects and Contacts:**

1. *Fort Osage R-I School District, Independence – Anissa Gustin, EdD (816-650-7184)*
2. *Maryville School District – John Zeliff, assistant superintendent (660-562-3255)*
3. *North Kansas City School District – Amy St. John, career education coordinator (816-413-5058)*
4. *East Central Consortium – Laura Klaus, Tech Prep coordinator (573-468-8287)*

Belle High School	Newburg High School	Sullivan High School
Bourbon High School	Owensville High School	Union High School
Cuba High School	Pacific High School	Vienna High School
Four Rivers Career Center	Rolla High School	Warrenton High School
Hermann High School	Rolla Technical	Washington High School
John F. Hodge High School (St. James)	Institute/Center	Wright City High School
Licking High School	Salem High School	
New Haven High School	St. Clair High School	
	Steelville High School	

**Other Programs Aimed at Strengthening Soft Skills****Career and Technical Student Organizations**

[www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/student\\_organizations.htm](http://www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/student_organizations.htm)

Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) exist within Career and Technical Education programs and are facilitated by a teacher-advisor. CTSOs provide a variety of experiences that either directly or indirectly affect three important outcomes of secondary education: achievement, transition to postsecondary education and training, and employability. Positive student experiences include teamwork, decision-making, competition, leadership, community awareness, career awareness, and personal and social development.

Contact: *Dennis Hardin, career education coordinator, DESE (573-751-3500)*

**First PLACE – Partners Linking Arms for Character Education**

[www.keetercenter.edu/firstplace.asp?page=6](http://www.keetercenter.edu/firstplace.asp?page=6)

The Keeter Center for Character Education is leading a countywide character education initiative in partnership with all public schools in Taney County, Mo.

Contact: *Sue Head, executive director, Keeter Center for Character Education (417-334-6411 x4242)*

**Northwest Regional Culture of Character –Partners Achieving Character Excellence**

[www.nwpace.org](http://www.nwpace.org)

The Northwest Missouri Regional Culture of Character is a collaborative effort of schools, businesses, industries, families, and communities to improve the overall climate of its community.

Contact: *Patty Van Cleave, CharacterPlus project assistant (660-562-1995)*

**CHARACTERplus®**

[www.characterplus.org/page.asp?page=167](http://www.characterplus.org/page.asp?page=167)

CHARACTERplus is a project of Cooperating School Districts working to advance the cause of character education and sustain its impact on the lives of educators and student. CHARACTERplus helps schools build consensus about what values or character traits to teach and which programs to use. Using the CHARACTERplus Process, each school develops a character education curriculum and program that meets its community's unique needs. Begun in 1988, CHARACTERplus now reaches more than 600 schools in over 100 districts, 25,000 teachers and more than 300,000 students throughout Missouri and Illinois.

Contact: *Joan Davis, Missouri state project facilitator (417-334-1188)*

**Springfield's Character Education program**

[www.characteredspringfield.com](http://www.characteredspringfield.com)

Character Ed is a community-wide character education initiative working to create a "culture of character" in the Springfield area through the united efforts of business, schools, civic organizations, the faith community, and media. Partners are asked to focus on one character trait each month, to emphasize its importance in the workplace. The Character Ed initiative is managed by the Ozarks Regional YMCA and the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce.

Contact: *Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce (417-862-5567)*

### **Linn State Technical College Testing “Soft Skills” Grading Program**

[www.linnstate.edu/news/showstory.asp?id=552](http://www.linnstate.edu/news/showstory.asp?id=552)

A major goal this year is the final piloting of the employer-driven initiative to provide students and prospective employers with a percentage of class attendance, as well as a score on work ethic and attitude for every course taken by students. The AJA@LSTC program is a value-added service focusing on Academic achievement, Job readiness, and Attendance. It provides students an opportunity to showcase their work ethic as well as their academic abilities to prospective employers. Linn State Technical College is Missouri's only public two-year college with a statewide mission specializing in technical education. LSTC offers more than 25 associate-level programs offering advanced technical training in both emerging and traditional technologies.

Contact: Ashley Anderson, public relations and marketing director, LSTC (573-897-5135)

## **Work Skill Assessment Programs**

### **Missouri Career Readiness Certificate (MoCRC)**

[www.ded.mo.gov/crc](http://www.ded.mo.gov/crc)

The Missouri Career Readiness Certificate (MoCRC) uses the nationally-recognized WorkKeys® job skills assessment system to measure individual abilities in the three key areas identified by employers as critical to job success: reading for information, locating information and applied mathematics. The MoCRC comes with the Worldwide Interactive Network (WIN) e-learning system that instructs job seekers in career paths in 21st century occupations. Made available through the statewide network of Missouri Career Centers, the MoCRC helps job seekers find careers that fit their skills and interests and helps businesses take the guesswork out of the hiring process. “The MoCRC and Career Prep Certificate are excellent examples of state agencies collaborating to provide valuable tools to benefit Missouri’s workforce and businesses,” said Mike Waltman, manager of policy and communications for the Missouri Division of Workforce Development.

Contact: Michael Waltman, policy and communications manager, DWD, (573-526-8267)

### **ACT WorkKeys®**

[www.act.org/workkeys](http://www.act.org/workkeys)

The ACT WorkKey® system connects work skills, training, and testing for education and employers, makes it easier to meet the requirements of federal programs and legislation, supports economic and workforce development programs, and is the basis for the National Career Readiness Certificate.

## **Related Research**

- “Are They Really Ready to Work?” Employers’ Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce.  
[www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/FINAL\\_REPORT\\_PDF09-29-06.pdf](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/FINAL_REPORT_PDF09-29-06.pdf)  
(This national, landmark study served as a basis for much of the Career Prep Certificate Program planning guide.)
- “Beyond the Three Rs: Voter Attitudes toward 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills,” 2007, Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, [www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org)
- 2007 Statewide Business & Industry Survey [www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/perkins\\_partnerships.htm](http://www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/perkins_partnerships.htm)  
The survey was conducted by the Division of Career Education in response to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006. “While our questions were focused on the knowledge and technical skills students need to be successful within the 16 Career Clusters, employers emphasized very much the need for soft skills,” said Michele Clark, assistant director of communications for DESE’s Division of Career Education.
- “SHRM 2007 Symposium on the Workforce Readiness of the Future U.S. Labor Pool,” Society for Human Resource Management, Nov. 2007, [www.shrm.org/research](http://www.shrm.org/research)
- SHRM: Critical Workplace Skills Now More Important for Experienced Employees, June 2008, [www.ohsonline.com/articles/64650](http://www.ohsonline.com/articles/64650)