

# Myths and Facts about Student Certification and Licensure

The James H. Smith Grant Program Effectiveness Report (PER) includes a section for reporting student success at completing industry certifications and licensures. Judging by the phone calls and emails that State staff members receive, users generally misunderstand this section of the PER. Here are the facts about some common student industry certification and licensure myths.

**MYTH** *The certifications and licensures on the PER list are the State approved or recognized certifications and licensures.*

**FACT** The State does not have a list of approved or recognized certifications or licensures, so districts should not misconstrue the list in the PER to mean the State approves or recognizes exams on that list and/or does not approve or recognize exams that are not on that list.

**MYTH** *The number of certifications your students take affects your district's Smith grant funding.*

**FACT** The number of certification or licensure exams a district offers its students does not affect the district's Smith grant funding in any way.

**MYTH** *Every program of study or coherent sequence of courses must lead to a certification or licensure.*

**FACT** Neither the State nor the Smith grant administrator requires that each program of study or coherent sequence of courses must have a student certification or licensure attached to it.

**MYTH** *The certifications and licensures reported on the PER become part of the school performance accountability.*

**FACT** The certification and licensure exam list in the PER has no impact on a school's performance accountability. While the State includes other factors in its performance-based monitoring, it does not include this measure.\*

**MYTH** *The only certifications and licensures that matter are those listed on the PER.*

**FACT** Many desirable student certifications and licensures do not meet the three criteria in the performance measure definition,\* so cannot be included in the PER list. The State encourages districts to offer students the opportunity to earn any certification or licensure that has benefit and value to students, and that makes sense for the district and its programs. Districts may use Smith grant funds to pay for any certification and licensure that is consistent with the purpose of the James H. Smith Act, if districts make those opportunities available to all eligible students.\*\*

**MYTH** *Districts should use the certification and licensure list in the PER to determine which CTE courses and CTE programs to support.*

**FACT** Districts should not use the PER exam list to drive course offerings or make purchasing decisions, or for any purpose other than to report technical skill attainment data. Most student certifications do not meet the performance measure definition,\* and most programs do not culminate in a related certification that meets the performance measure definition.\*

# Myths and Facts about Student Certification and Licensure

**MYTH** *New certifications and licensures are never added to the list.*

**FACT**

State staff members review the certification and licensure list periodically. The most recent staff review resulted in a net gain of 39 certifications and licensures from the previous year, for a new total of 155 exams. The first edition of the PER listed 80 exams. Most additions are the result of districts recommending new exams through the PER.

The review also resulted in some certifications and licensures being removed from the PER list if these certifications and licensures did not meet the three criteria for inclusion.\*

**MYTH** *Districts should no longer offer students the certifications that the State removed from the PER list.*

**FACT**

NO. While it is true that the State removed a few certifications and licensures from the PER, each continues to be an important and appropriate certification for some students. An example of one of the certifications the State removed is the Tractor and Machinery Operation Certificate. It illustrates why districts should not use the PER exam list to determine which exams to offer students. The Tractor and Machinery Operation Certificate is intended for students who are completing *their first year of course work* in agriculture, and therefore would not be considered *end of program* as the performance measure specifies.\* **Certainly safety instruction and the curriculum content that emphasizes safety and safe practices are crucial.**

**MYTH** *There is no value in recommending other certifications and licensures to the State.*

**FACT**

State staff members need district recommendations for certifications and licensures that meet the three criteria required in the performance measure.\* This is how State staff members gather information for our periodic review (above). This is so important to State staff that we included lines 156-166 in Section 5 of the PER as a mechanism specifically for districts to recommend exams.\*

As you plan for the success of your programs, consider all certification and licensure opportunities that could benefit students. Careful planning enables you to integrate certifications and licensures into the knowledge and skills of many of your courses, so students learn state-of-the-industry skills. Equipping students with relevant industry recognized certifications and licensures is one more way to prepare students for the industries of the 21st century.

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\* *The sole purpose of the certifications and licensures list in the PER is to provide the data to measure and report both district and statewide performance on the Smith performance measure for technical skill attainment. For a certification or licensure to meet the definition for that performance measure, it must include all three criteria in the definition: 1) administered at the end of a program, 2) industry recognized, **and** 3) available and appropriate for secondary students.*

\*\* *Districts may not use Smith funds to benefit individual students; however, districts may use Smith funds to buy block seats for certification or licensure exams if the district buys enough seats for all eligible students and makes those seats available to all eligible students.*