

Myths and Facts about Student Certification and Licensure

The James H. Smith Grant Program Annual Report (PAR) 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 PAR. Here are the facts about some common student industry certification and licensure myths.

MYTH

The certifications and licensures on the PAR 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 PAR 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 PAR become part of the school performance accountability.

FACT

The certification and licensure exam list in the PAR 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 PAR.

FACT

Many desirable student certifications and licensures do not meet the three criteria in the performance measure definition,* so cannot be included in the PAR 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 PAR to determine which courses and programs to support.

FACT

Districts should not use the PAR 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.*

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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 PAR listed 80 exams. Most additions are the result of districts recommending new exams through the PAR.

The review also resulted in some certifications and licensures being removed from the PAR 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 PAR list.*

FACT

NO. While it is true that the State removed a few certifications and licensures from the PAR, 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 PAR 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 PAR 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.

** The sole purpose of the certifications and licensures list in the PAR 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.*