§ 3602-d. Work-prep education program. 1. Legislative findings. The legislature recognizes that rapid technological advances and global economic competition demand increased levels of skilled career education preparation and readiness on the part of youths entering the workforce. Effective strategies reaching beyond the boundaries of traditional schooling are necessary to provide early and sustained intervention by parents, teachers, and educational institutions in the lives of students. The establishment of a work-prep education program requiring systematic career education articulation agreements between secondary schools and post-secondary educational institutions is such a strategy. Youths participating in this program will develop the skills in liberal arts, basic academics, including literacy instruction, and career fields necessary to acquire an associate degree or certificate increasingly required for positions in the workforce.

2. Definitions. As used in this section:

(a) "Articulation agreement" shall mean a commitment between secondary and post-secondary institutions to a program designed to provide students with a non-duplicative sequence of courses leading to competencies, as demonstrated by an associate degree or certificate, in an occupationally oriented field.

(b) "Disadvantaged" shall mean individuals (other than handicapped individuals) who have economic or academic disadvantages and who require special services and assistance in order to enable them to succeed in work-prep programs. Such term includes individuals who are: members of economically disadvantaged families as set forth in regulations promulgated by the department pursuant to sections sixty-four hundred fifty-one and sixty-four hundred fifty-two of this chapter or as set forth in the Federal Job Training Partnership Act of nineteen hundred eighty-two (PL 97-300) (29 U.S.C.A. § 1501 et seq.); migrants; English language learners; and individuals who are identified as potential dropouts from secondary school.

(c) "Work-prep education program" shall mean a combined secondary and post-secondary program which: leads to an associate degree or certificate; provides preparation and establishes competencies in an occupationally oriented field; and leads to employment.

(d) "Occupationally oriented field" shall mean applied science,

engineering, health sciences, mechanical or industrial arts, and/or home economics.

3. Work-prep education program. (a) The commissioner shall, out of available funds pursuant to the Federal Carl D. Perkins Act (PL 98-524) and/or its successor, provide grants on a competitive basis, to pay the cost of activities authorized by this section to a consortia of:

(1) school districts, local education agencies and/or boards of cooperative educational services serving secondary students; and

(2) post-secondary educational agencies which offer an associate degree program or certificate program.

(b) Each consortia interested in initiating a work-prep program shall submit a five year plan for the development and implementation of work-prep activities. At a minimum, the plan shall contain the following:

(1) an articulation agreement between the participants in the consortium;

(2) linkages between the two years of secondary school preceding graduation and post-secondary study. Such linkage must incorporate a next generation of required proficiency in an occupationally oriented field leading to an associate degree or certificate in a specific career field;

(3) the development of work-prep education program curriculum appropriate to the needs of consortium participants, program participants, and the business community;

(4) the development of specific measures to eliminate gender-based bias in occupational recruitment, counseling, instruction, and placement efforts;

(5) the provision of in-service training for counselors designed to enable counselors to effectively: recruit students for work-prep programs; ensure the student's successful completion of such programs; and assist in the student's employment placement; and

(6) performance standards creating measures for evaluating program success.

(c) The commissioner shall give special consideration to applications which:

(1) provide for effective employment placement activities;

(2) demonstrate a commitment to continue such program activities;

(3) include the input of business, industry, labor unions, joint apprenticeship committees, and employers conducting registered apprenticeship programs, in its development; and

(4) address the issues of dropout prevention, disadvantaged youths, and handicapped youths.

4. Apportionment of funds. (a) Allowable costs under this section shall include expenses related to the coordination, administration and/or delivery of the work-prep program such as: costs of assessment, guidance, and instructional materials; purchase of equipment; personal services associated with joint curriculum planning and development activities; and costs of in-service training for participating teachers and guidance counselors.

(b) Moneys appropriated under this section shall be apportioned ensuring an equitable distribution of assistance throughout the state and among both urban and rural participants.