

## New York Builds Statewide Career Management Tools Around O\*NET

The New York State Department of Labor was one of five states chosen to pilot test the original O\*NET database in 1996. New York State set out to design a youth friendly career exploration system built on the foundation of O\*NET. A focus on the youth population led to the development of a very different tool than the other 4 national pilots. The small CD-ROM project tested at 5 school systems across the state developed into today's robust CareerZone website, a career exploration and planning tool firmly built around comprehensive use of the continuously updated O\*NET Database. The New York CareerZone Web site and later development of a companion site for adults called JobZone are "O\*NET delivery systems" that has revolutionized the way New Yorkers access and use career information.

The CareerZone System provides a new audience for O\*NET information and tools. By incorporating O\*NET assessment tools into a youth based career development system New York is able to reach new markets and populations. The youth friendly CareerZone system introduces over half of all middle and high school students, just under a million and a half youth, to important information maintained in O\*NET that they wouldn't otherwise see. In contrast to the national USDOL site, Career Voyages, the CareerZone system has been integrated into New York State's middle and high school curriculum. The O\*NET tool in itself would never be used by students in a career development program in its current form. The power of O\*NET is as a core tool integrated into a state and locally relevant process.

CareerZone is designed to introduce youth to career and labor market data and walk them through a process that encourages informed decision making based on the use of quality information. The O\*NET Database and



accompanying USDOL assessment tools play an important role in how the system was originally designed. An informal self assessment tool was designed to help youth begin the process of self exploration. This assessment module is designed around the six RIASEC interest areas identified by Dr. John Holland. The

corresponding interest codes can be found in the O\*NET database. Without this simple tool many youth would not have a meaningful way to enter the system and begin the career exploration process.

The CareerZone system was built to be used in a 35-40 minute classroom period by teachers and counselors. CareerZone began as a simple tool for individual classes led by individual guidance counselors and teachers. Today is being implemented both across school districts and organizations statewide. Academic as well as career and technical educators and business teachers are building its use into their curricula, particularly when they see how they can link their curricula to the state's learning objectives and their students' career interests. Administrators are learning about the value it offers and are building it into comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. CareerZone has become the state career tool to engage youth in the career planning process.

Focus testing of the system with youth and adults helped to create a quick path to career and labor market information as found on the over 800 + occupational profile pages. On these pages, CareerZone users can find the data necessary to make decisions about education and career paths for the future. While some of the information such as job description and task information seems simplistic to adults, it is easy to forget that for a youth with no knowledge of the world of work this is important information.

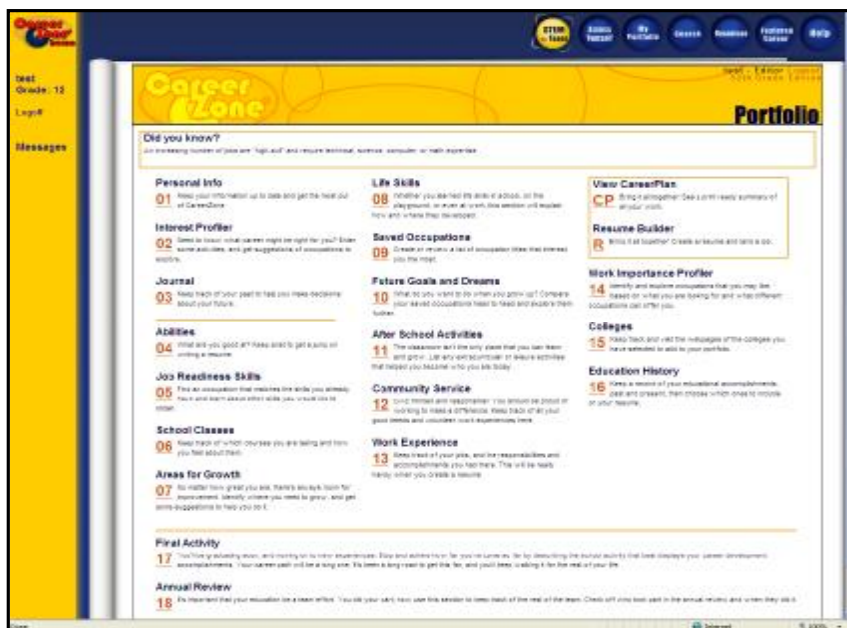
Of the 12 data elements provided for all 800 + O\*NET occupations on the CareerZone occupational profile page, seven of them are pulled directly from the O\*NET Database. The remaining elements of school programs, wages, occupational outlook, and additional resources all return New York State specific information. Up-to-date job openings are provided through a link to America's Job Exchange so that youth get a taste of real world business expectations. Users also have the ability to view career videos as there are over 450 in the CareerZone System.



The CareerZone system was expanded in the year 2000 to include two interactive career portfolios, inspired by the State Education Department's Career Plan initiative. NYSDOL collaborated with State Education officials to build these electronic portfolios and link them to state learning objectives and O\*NET occupational information. The CareerZone Portfolios have become a place for middle and high school youth to save information each time they visited the CareerZone system. Youth use this information to make decisions about their future but most importantly they learn the process of gathering, analyzing and making career decisions over a lifetime. To that end, over 810,000 CareerZone Portfolios have been created since 2000.

The O\*NET Interest Profiler, O\*NET Work Importance Profiler and skills search capabilities were all integrated into the portfolio process to help students identify their interests, work values and skills and relate them to appropriate career possibilities. While this process was designed to support the State Education Department's Career Plan process:

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/cte/careerplan/> web technology allows for engaging activities such as the Future Goals and Dreams module that pulls out the O\*NET tasks for a particular occupation and asks that youth rank these tasks by like, dislike or unsure. This simple reality check concept is far more powerful than the traditional adult intervention offered to unrealistic students. The connection back to the O\*NET Database encourages youth to discover this information for themselves and use it to make informed career decisions. The CareerZone Portfolio outputs as seen below in the high school version are a Career Plan document and Resume.



CareerZone is one of many career information systems used in the United States that incorporate the important common language of O\*NET

and O\*NET assessment tools into a youth friendly interface. Unlike the web of the past, the web of the 21<sup>st</sup> century offers multiple sites and tools for career information. The lessons learned in designing and developing the CareerZone System were applied in the development of the JobZone System for adults in 2006.

JobZone is a different user interface that targets an adult jobseeker population in disseminating O\*NET resources and tools. JobZone, like CareerZone, is a free online service. JobZone integrates a series of new labor market assessments with O\*NET based personal assessments to match jobseekers with local labor market opportunities. The strength of the new JobZone System is its ability to offer the most up-to-date, local and relevant content based on the interests and job-seeking activities of customers.



After creating a personal JobZone account, customers can make a better match between careers and their personalities, preparation and preferences. Then they can search the hundreds of positions posted daily and store resumes for positions of interest. Job seekers today are very different than those of yesterday. In order to succeed in today's competitive job market, they must learn to manage their careers. JobZone is a valuable career management tool that was designed to help guide customers through this process.

JobZone provides current O\*NET occupational information, wage and job outlook information. The Jobseeker Portfolio provides customized lists of

occupations in demand based on customers prior work history and job search activities. In addition JobZone:

- Enables the Labor Department and workforce partners to deliver important messages to people in their local areas.
- Allows customers to input O\*NET skills and work activities from previous jobs to determine their preparedness for future employment options through a new skills survey.
- Connects results of the skill survey to the Eligible Training Providers database and link customers with training opportunities to address gaps in skill areas.
- Helps job seekers find occupations suited to their personal work values through use of the Work Importance Profiler.
- Provides a new resume-builder allows users to create and save multiple resumes.

The JobZone system is continuously updated with feedback from customers and staff across the State. Website traffic and statistics are carefully monitored to ensure that the system is easy to navigate and access. Over 260,000 JobZone accounts have been created since the system went online and approximately 300 new accounts are created each day. Work is underway to integrate a new management system that would allow employment counselors to use the tool for distance counseling. The JobZone system has enables the Department of Labor to provide targeted job search assistance to customers' right in their own home.

For more information, regarding the CareerZone or JobZone, please call Doug Reamer at the New York State Department of Labor at 1-518-457-1278 or e-mail at [douglas.reamer@labor.state.ny.us](mailto:douglas.reamer@labor.state.ny.us).