Passport to College to be Unveiled

The Berkshire Compact for Education’s Passport to College will be distributed for the first time to students attending the Sixth Grade College Visits in April. A second version of the Passport, the Passport to Educational Success, will be distributed during Wee Read Berkshire Events, also in April.

“The Passports highlight milestones during a student’s education that lead toward postsecondary education,” said MCLA President Mary Grant. “This will be a great way for young people to begin planning early for college and stay on track.”

The Passport to College is designed for students from grades six through twelve. Some of the milestones that students may pursue are:

- Sixth grade college visits, career fairs and science fairs
- Dual enrollment courses
- Job shadowing days and internships
- Junior year Accuplacer to determine college readiness level
- Applying for financial aid
- Visits to three or more college campuses
- Participation in SAT or ACT preparation and testing

The Passport to Educational Success is aimed at children from early childhood through fifth grade. This version of the Passport features milestones such as:

- Open a savings account
- Attend an early childhood education program
- Enroll in kindergarten
- Participate in third grade college visits
- Score proficient or above on assessments
- Go on www.mefa.org for college financing strategies

Online versions of the Passports, available on www.berkshirecompact.org, provide links to websites that with more information about the milestones and programs that are featured.

First North County Career Fair Held January 11

The Berkshire Compact’s first North County 8th Grade Career Fair was held at MCLA on January 11. Approximately 400 students from Drury High School, Hoosac Valley High School, Mt. Greylock Regional High School and Berkshire Arts and Technology School attended.

MCLA President Mary Grant welcomed the students with inspiring comments about the value of higher education. Keynote speaker Paul Hutchinson, Coordinator of Experienced Based Training at Boston University, spoke about finding a career path and featured some of his former classmates from Hoosac Valley High School. Students chose two workshops to attend out of a total of 18 that were offered. Some of the careers covered were architecture, banking, law, health care, marketing, media, fire and police, electrician, veterinary medicine, auto mechanic, engineering, information technology and green technology. The 8th Grade Career Fair will now become an annual event.

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Reach Out for Education Covers Wide Range of Topics

The Berkshire Compact for Education’s monthly television series, *Reach Out for Education*, engages Berkshire County viewers each month with compelling discussions about topics related to education and workforce needs.

The program is produced at PCTV in Pittsfield and was developed by Compact member Shawn Serre, who is PCTV’s educational programs as well as Chief Engineer. Doug McNally, Chair of the Compact’s Aspirations Committee, is the host.

From November through April, the Compact records two episodes per month, which are shown on PCTV and also distributed to the public access stations in North Adams, Williamstown, and South County. A team of trained students from Miss Hall’s School serve as the crew for the show.

Past episodes have focused on topics such as The College Application Process, How to Pay for College, Internships and Service Learning opportunities, workforce development needs, science fairs, graduate education, women in STEM careers and financial literacy. The Berkshire Compact encourages educators, students and families to view past episodes of Reach Out for Education, as they cover many topics relevant to education.

All *Reach Out for Education* episodes can be viewed at: www.mcla.edu/compact/reachoutforeducation/

Berkshire Youth Leadership Program Accepting Applications

The Berkshire Youth Leadership Program (BYLP) is accepting applications for its 2012-13 class. The program accepts up to 30 students per year, who apply in the spring semester of their sophomore year and participate throughout their junior year.

A program of the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, BYLP is designed to develop young individuals to be the next generation of community leaders, prepare them for responsible involvement in community affairs and teach them about career pathways in Berkshire County. Michael Supranowicz, Chair of the Compact’s workforce committee, launched the program two years ago based on a model program he had visited in Florida.

Applicants are selected based on demonstrated leadership qualities both inside and outside the classroom. This year, 30 students from nine Berkshire County schools are enrolled. The program begins with a weekend retreat in August, held at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts for the past two years, followed by monthly half-day sessions focusing on critical industries.

Applications are due April 27. For more information, contact Christine Hoyt, choyt@berkshirechamber.com.

Berkshire to Offer Financial Literacy Program

Berkshire Compact members Maureen Baran from Adams Community Bank, Liz Bissell from MountainOne Financial Partners and Pete Mirante from Greylock Federal Credit Union are collaborating on the development of a new Financial Literacy Program. The program will be introduced during the 2011-12 school year on a pilot basis to 11th grade students in one or two selected Berkshire County schools.

The Financial Literacy Program will be comprised of a total of five modules taught for one class period on five days. Topics will include basic banking, credit/debit, leasing/owning a car, budgeting, retirement, and investments.

There is pending legislation being reviewed by the Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives that would require financial literacy to be incorporated into curriculum in the schools.

Currently, several of the banks offer their own financial literacy programs for schools. This new program provides a way for banks to work together to address the need for financial literacy in a comprehensive approach.
Sixth Graders will Visit Colleges in April

During the week of April 9, approximately 1,100 sixth grade students from Berkshire County’s public schools will visit one of four college campuses to get a taste of college life.

Berkshire County Goes to College week has been offered for the past five years to help show students what to expect in college and encourage them to aspire toward pursuing higher education in the future. The program is funded through a grant from Berkshire United Way.

The schedule for this year’s visits is as follows:

- **April 10**: Williamstown Elementary, Brayton Elementary, and Lenox Middle Schools visit MCLA.
- **April 11**: Abbott, Cheshire, Greylock, Plunkett and Richmond Schools visit MCLA.
- **April 12**: Clarksburg, Monument Valley, Reid Middle School and Lanesborough will visit Williams College.
- **April 13**: Farmington River and Sullivan Schools visits BCC.

A sixth grade student who visited one of the campuses in 2011 noted “It was cool to see what a college campus looks like. I can’t wait to go to college!”

Second Annual Wee Read Berkshire County set for April

The second annual Wee Read Berkshire County will be offered in April. This year’s featured book will be *Duck on a Bike* by David Shannon.

Wee Read Berkshire County is overseen by the Berkshire Compact for Education in collaboration with the libraries and early childhood organizations of Berkshire County. According to Berkshire Compact Chair Andy Mick, “The initiative is designed to promote the importance of early childhood literacy and reading to children. Developing reading and language skills early in life is a strong predictor of later success in school.”

During the Week of the Young Child, April 22-28, and throughout April, 1,500 free copies *Duck on a Bike* will be distributed at county-wide reading events. Along with the book, children will receive a customized bookmark that has tips regarding the importance of reading along with a copy of the Compact’s Passport to Educational Success.

A full schedule of activities to be offered during Wee Read Berkshire County is posted on www.berkshirecompact.org.

STEM DIGITS Program Offered in Local Schools

The STEM DIGITS program is being offered to sixth grade students in four Berkshire County schools this year.

DIGITS is a classroom program that pairs STEM professionals with sixth-grade classrooms throughout Massachusetts to increase students’ interest in math and science subjects and careers. DIGITS was offered at Brayton School in North Adams and Monument Valley Middle School in Great Barrington in February and will also be offered at Plunkett School in Adams and Nessacus Middle School in Dalton.

For the past year, DIGITS has been implemented to over 10,000 students in 118 schools in Massachusetts. Evaluation results show that students demonstrated increased interest in math, knowledge of STEM careers, and understanding of the steps needed to pursue STEM careers. They also showed greater interest in after-school STEM-related activi-
Centralized Education Access at Silvio O. Conte Federal Building

Beginning in the fall of 2011, a new satellite campus for the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA), Berkshire Community College (BCC) and the Berkshire Readiness Center opened at the Silvio O. Conte Federal Building in Pittsfield. The Center features 4,700 square feet of college classroom, office and meeting space. Part of a unique agreement with the U.S. Central Services Administration, it’s the first time that space for public higher education has been allocated inside a federal building.

The Center is just a short walk away from the Intermodal Education Center, another facility where MCLA and BCC students can take classes. The Intermodal Center serves 2,200 people per year. The success of the Intermodal Center prompted officials to look for additional space to meet the increasing demand for college courses in Central Berkshire County.

Since opening, the Educational Center at the Conte Building has housed MCLA and BCC classes as well as professional development workshops and group meetings.

Mountain One Junior Board serves as Berkshire Compact’s Focus Group

The MountainOne Financial Partners 2011-12 Junior Board of Directors has served as a focus group for the Berkshire Compact for Education during the past six months. The junior board consists of selected high school juniors and seniors from North County schools who meet monthly to learn about corporate structure and the business environment.

Berkshire Compact topics that have been reviewed by the junior board include the new financial literacy program, the Passport to College, the Passport to College Facebook page and the Berkshire Compact website.

Berkshire Compact member Liz Bissell, who is Vice President of Marketing for MountainOne Financial Partners, said “The Compact’s marketing programs have provided an excellent project for our Junior Board of Directors, who represent a segment of the target market that the Compact is trying to reach. The students provide very honest and constructive feedback from a young adult’s point of view.”

The students offered many useful suggestions about the Passport to College Facebook page. Among their recommendations were to share only information that pertains to high school students and parents, as they are the ones who will use the page and make sure photo albums have meaningful and understandable album titles. The students also suggested that language on the site should be formal, but not stuffy, and that acronyms such as LOL or OMB should be used when possible.

Several of the junior board’s recommendations on all of the Berkshire Compact topics they reviewed have already been implemented and others will be reviewed by the Compact’s marketing committee.
**Education is Your Future!**

The Berkshire Compact for Education’s mission is to ensure that every Berkshire county resident aspires to obtain 16 years or more of education and training in order to thrive in the 21st century economy. The Compact’s goals are:

1) Raise the aspirations and improve access for all Berkshire county residents to view 16 years of education or greater as the accepted norm;
2) Make connections between the education system and the workforce.

Visit our WEBSITE: www.berkshirecompact.org
LIKE our PASSPORT TO COLLEGE fan page on FACEBOOK

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