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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BERKSHIRE COMPACT TO SPONSOR TWO STUDENT TOWN MEETINGS

NORTH ADAMS, MA -- The Berkshire Compact for Education is sponsoring two upcoming student town meetings, one with Berkshire Arts and Technology (BArT) Charter School and the other with Lenox Memorial High School.

These televised meetings provide Berkshire County students with the opportunity to research and discuss current issues with experts in the field.

The Compact first introduced the Student Town Meeting program in 2009 as a way to provide young people with an opportunity to share their views with peers and community members and actively involve them in issues of local, regional, state and national importance. These town meetings are modeled after WAMC's town meetings on National Public Radio.

The student town meeting with BAiT will be recorded on Friday, April 30, at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts' (MCLA) television studio. Students in April West's Advanced Placement English and Language Composition class will discuss the topic, "Is the American Dream Still Alive?"

The students will be joined by three panelists, Senator Benjamin Downing, journalist and historian Joseph Manning and MCLA Professor Graziana Ramsden. The discussion will focus on the effects that the development of the middle class and immigration have had on establishing the concept of the American Dream.

Lenox High School's town meeting will be recorded on Friday, May 7, in the school auditorium. The topic they have chosen to discuss is health care reform.

Students from the high school's "Focus 21" class will participate in this discussion along with panelists Chip Joffe-Halpern, executive director of Ecu-Health Care, Darlene Rodowicz, chief financial officer at Berkshire Health Systems, and Karen Smith, account executive with Toole Agency. The group will consider issues such as the pros and cons of a single-payer system, why health reform involves politics, and whether the Massachusetts health reform law has worked as intended.

Pittsfield City Councilor John Krol will serve as moderator of both town meetings. Both programs will be telecast on public access television stations throughout Berkshire County.

Schools that wish to participate in student town meetings during the 2010-11 school year should contact Mary Nash, Berkshire Compact Project coordinator, at mary.nash@mcla.edu.