

**Proposal to establish
The Berkshire Readiness Center**



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Abstract

Berkshire County is well positioned to host a readiness center. Through the innovative work and established partnerships of the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education (the Compact), the region has an established structure, engaged leadership, committed partners and the ability to pilot, implement, scale and sustain programs to serve all learners in the region. With participation from early childhood, school districts, business and higher education, the Berkshire Readiness Center will support early learning, programs to support and sustain the aspirations of learners from Pre-K through postsecondary education, programs for adult learners, and professional development programs for Berkshire County Educators.

Through these programs and a specialization in the area of innovation, the center will address the unique needs and challenges of Berkshire County as well as serving as a statewide resource and part of a network of best practice centers throughout the Commonwealth. In this way, the Berkshire Readiness Center will deliver on the promise of public education and advance the Commonwealth's Readiness Agenda.

Introduction

The Berkshire Readiness Center will be rooted in the innovative work of the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education (the Compact). Building on the accomplishments since its inception in 2005, the Compact will serve as the convener and organizational hub of the Berkshire Readiness Center.

The Compact was established to examine and respond to the educational challenges inherent in the economic and social evolution of Berkshire County in the early 21st century. In particular, the Compact was a response to the shift that happened with the decline of large scale manufacturing as a driver of the regional economy. In the wake of this transformation, the members of the Compact recognized that a new economy would flourish in this new era. The work to capitalize on the challenges of this era would require creativity, innovation, and technology. Responding to this challenge would require increased focus on education.

This was the context that led to the founding of the Compact and it has guided its progress to date. Since 2005, the Compact has made tremendous strides on its stated goals. Working with legislators, educators, and employers from a wide range of sectors, Compact members have envisioned a strong, interconnected educational and employment continuum that ensures educational access, encourages and rewards innovation, raises aspirations, values lifelong learning and takes advantage of the power of technology.

Priority Issues and Concerns

The priority issues and concerns that will be addressed by the Berkshire Readiness Center will be to:

- ensure access to resources across the educational spectrum from early childhood through higher education, and beyond to lifelong learning;
- align the goals and benchmarks at each stage of students' educational experience so the transition from one stage to the next (e.g., middle school to high school, high school to college) is seamless;
- meet the need for expanded and coordinated professional development (PD) activity for educators; and
- develop projects and programs that lead students to aspire to educational attainment, especially aspirations to higher education. As a corollary to this effort, the Center will address the education and workforce training needs of adult learners so that parents and caregivers can meet their own educational goals, develop or strengthen their commitment to education as an aspirational goal, and model behaviors of educational engagement and attainment to the children in their care.

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) will serve as the lead partner and fiscal agent for the Berkshire Readiness Center, working in close partnership with Berkshire Community

College (BCC). The center will be based on the MCLA campus. Berkshire Community College will serve as another higher education partner in the Berkshire Readiness Center, will provide physical space for two alternate readiness sites in Berkshire County, and will deliver a range of programs that align with the mission and goals of the center, the Compact, and the Commonwealth's Readiness Agenda.

The executive committee of the Compact will serve as the core of the Berkshire Readiness Center Board of Directors. Their efforts will be augmented and complemented by additional representatives from key stakeholder sectors (early childhood, K-12, vocational education, workforce development, and business) in the region. Through their efforts and in collaboration with the Regional Assistance Director (RAD) for Berkshire County and the staff resources of the Berkshire District and School Assistance Center (DSAC), the Berkshire Readiness Center will coordinate a diverse array of readiness programs in collaboration with the early childhood, K-12, higher education, and business and workforce development sectors.

Readiness Center Content and Scope

The content and scope of Berkshire Readiness Center services and activities will reflect the goals established by the Compact. These are to:

- raise the aspirations of all Berkshire County residents to view 16 years of education or greater as the accepted norm;
- improve access to education, training and lifelong learning;
- advance the availability and effectiveness of technology in the educational and workforce development arenas to prepare learners to thrive in the new economy; and
- promote the value and necessity of education as a vehicle for learning, employment and civic engagement.

Working with these goals as benchmarks, the Berkshire Readiness Center will develop, deliver and promote programs across the continuum of educational experience including early childhood education, K-12 (including college access and aspiration focused programs, as well as early college programs), educator professional development, and workforce development and lifelong learning programs.

These goals accommodate or are consistent with those of a range of programs being delivered across the region. MCLA and BCC present a range of programs that address local and regional needs and the priorities of the Commonwealth's Readiness Agenda. The introduction of the Berkshire Readiness Center provides an opportunity to further develop the connections between these programs and provide additional resources for expansion.

Early Childhood Education Programs

The Readiness Center will support educator development beginning at the early childhood level. The early years are considered by some as the formative and most important years in the life span of a child, and set the stage for later successes in formal school setting. All educators agree that children should develop across a continuum, and that early education professionals guide learning in math, literacy, science, social studies, arts and technology. In the early childhood education (ECE) sphere, there is a need for educator preparation that provides training in areas of practice (e.g., observation and assessment) not covered in the programs that currently exist in the region. In addition, early childhood educators require greater support to enhance their credentials for personal or statutory reasons. Finally, regional leaders seek to promote ECE as a valuable economic development tool as well as the starting point for a continuum of educational readiness. Members of the workforce and other community members must have access to childcare and educational programs that are both high quality and affordable.

The Readiness Center will support educator development beginning at the early childhood level. It will promote on-going excellence in teaching strategies and practice, tailored for young children, birth through age seven, so that children experience success prior to arriving at kindergarten.

The early childhood education field has many challenges regarding the recruitment, training and retention of its workers. Employees who have bachelor's degrees in education often leave the field for jobs in elementary and secondary schools where salaries are much higher. It may be difficult for all early care workers to further their education while working. They must to balance the hours required to earn a degree with their work schedule and family responsibilities.

Several organizations, all members of the Berkshire Compact, will collaborate with the Readiness Center in addressing early childhood issues:

- **Berkshire Children and Families** offers a variety of programs in Berkshire and Hampshire Counties focused on early childhood care and education, parenting and family literacy, and adoption and foster care. Their early childhood care and education programs are offered at six sites in Pittsfield.
- **Child Care of the Berkshires** provides early education and care services in both child care center and family child care settings, early literacy initiatives including the Parent Child Home Program, and parent education and parent support groups. A number of its classrooms and family child care homes are participating in the Universal Pre-kindergarten (UPK) initiative. Child Care of the Berkshires believe that services are best provided in a collaborative and cooperative fashion and should reflect the cultural diversity of the communities they serve. **Resources for Child Care**, a program of Child Care of the Berkshires, is the State funded (Department of Early Education and Care) child care resource and referral program. It provides referrals for child care services as well as subsidies and scholarships for income eligible families throughout Berkshire County. It also provides a variety of professional development opportunities for early childhood educators.

- **Berkshire County Head Start** is a state and federally funded program serving 357 preschool children in half-day Head Start classrooms, full-day full-year childcare classrooms and through a home visiting program for young three-year-olds. Head Start provides comprehensive services that include parent involvement, education, health, nutrition and oral health. It also provides mental health and disabilities services, social services and transportation. A number of its classrooms are participating in the UPK initiative.
- **United Ways:** Berkshire United Way and Northern Berkshire United Way foster community-wide collaborations and provide funding for community impact initiatives. Both organizations include early childhood education and school readiness among their top priorities. Nationwide, education is one of the top three priorities of United Way of America. Berkshire United Way, through a series of community meetings, has developed the goal that in order to help children and families to succeed, “All children will arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and all young adults will successfully transition to work, higher education or training.”
- **Berkshire Community College:** Berkshire Community College offers degree programs for early childhood educators and also has their own child care center. The Norman Rockwell Early Childhood Center is an on-site child care center for the children of Berkshire Community College students and for the children of faculty and staff members as well as the community. Intern and work-study students are placed at the Center. The Center is operated by Child Care of the Berkshires, Inc.

These organizations have been working with MCLA and the Berkshire Compact to develop strategies for enhancing programs that support children and their families at the early childhood education stage. The early childhood community in the Berkshires is close-knit and already works together collaboratively. These professionals have a strong understanding of the needs and gaps in their field. While the necessary services are in place, more must be done to engage families and to remove barriers to effective education and training practices. The group has determined that they should work through existing collaborations and coalitions to explore best practices and to develop and expand effective educational programs, including professional development, mentoring and coaching.

An important component of successful educational outcomes at all levels is to engage the whole family. The Berkshire Compact has identified family engagement as one of their top priorities for 2009-2010 in their efforts to raise student aspirations. Children thrive in programs where parents are involved, have opportunities for participation and eventually become active members of the school community. Through the Readiness Center, the early childhood programs will develop strategies to better engage families of at-risk children. Some successful strategies already identified are providing outreach through home visits, following up by phone and in-person contacts, building connections with human services agencies, and hosting recreational activities for families.

Along with engaging families, early childhood organizations require access to more customized educational programs that eliminate barriers for the early childhood workforce and encourage more people to get trained in the field. They must find ways to offer programs during the workday and to offer coaching and mentoring onsite. Creative solutions must be explored, such as funds to hire extra help while their employees attend training or providing tuition forgiveness for recent graduates who use their education degrees to go into and remain in the early childhood education field.

The Center will work with the local early childhood organizations, under the guidance of the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), to develop a pathway for post-secondary education for the early education workforce. The goal will be to develop professional development that is related to core competencies, the Quality Rating and Improvement System and child care regulations that meet the needs of the region's mixed delivery system of child care centers. More courses in observation and assessment are necessary. A child development associate credential (CDA) offered within Berkshire County in addition to certificate, associates and bachelors degree options would be beneficial. Evaluation tools will be developed to measure the impact of the educational and professional development programs that are offered.

Degree completion pathway for early educators

A key issue in ensuring that early educators receive appropriate professional development and credentials is creating quality, affordable and convenient paths to degrees. The Readiness Center can engender collaboration among early care agencies, Berkshire Community College, and MCLA to promote such a path. BCC already has programs for both degree-seeking and non-matriculated early educators. MCLA will work to align more closely the delivery model of its bachelor of early childhood education program for those with an appropriate AA or AS degree, to be delivered in a hybrid format combining intensive coursework with online pedagogy. Funding would allow full or partial underwriting of the cost of the program – frequently a concern for early educators – or exploring creative options to assist them, such as loan forgiveness for those who make a commitment to stay in early care or an agency setting once they have completed their degrees.

Best Practices Model

The Readiness Center will also ensure that best practices models are shared among the early childhood agencies in the region. There is interest in learning more about the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) childhood programs and how to apply them to a rural setting. Berkshire Families and Children is considering implementing a program like HCZ in Western Massachusetts. The Northern Berkshire United Way has provided support to an Early Childhood Outcomes project (EChO), which is still in the developmental stages. As project leaders work on developing a business plan, they agree that the preferred model for EChO is some variant of HCZ.

The Harlem Children's Zone has created a unique community-wide approach aimed at keeping children on track throughout school, college and into the job market. Several innovative programs are offered in the area of early childhood education:

- *The Baby College* is a nine-week workshop for expectant parents and those raising children up to three years old.
- *The Three Year Old Journey* teaches parents about their child's development and language skills and about parenting skills.
- *The Harlem Gems* is an all-day pre-kindergarten program with a 4:1 child to adult ratio serving more than 250 children. Recent outcome results showed that 100% of participants in the program have been found to be "school-ready" for the sixth year in a row.

Berkshire County early childhood organizations are considering participating in learning opportunities offered by HCZ, which offers a Practitioner's Institute that enables them to share information with other communities about the success of their programs. This year, they are also conducting a two-day national conference in New York City about replicating the Harlem Children's Zone model.

Programs to Promote Access to Education

Berkshire Passport

The Berkshire Passport will make higher education accessible to everyone and removing barriers that could hinder students' aspirations. The Passport offers a roadmap and rewards to students on the path to college, introducing them to college as young as third grade. Later, these students will be motivated and guided along the path to higher education through an array of educational milestones. The Passport fosters cultural change in Berkshire County by helping all students and their families to develop aspirations for a college education from a young age. Ideally, students who complete all the milestones of the Berkshire Passport will be rewarded with reimbursement of college application fees, financial assistance for SATs, and even free or reduced college tuition and fees. The Berkshire Readiness Center seeks funding for these incentives, which are a priority for the Berkshire Compact, as they are for the Commonwealth.

College Visitation Programs

Each spring, through the Berkshire County Goes to College initiative, sixth grade students in Berkshire County (over 1,000 students) visit one of four college campuses. By touring a campus and speaking with college students and faculty, young people are encouraged to aspire toward pursuing higher education. Reaching students at an early age inspires them to set goals and choose courses and activities that will lead them along the path to college.

The program was developed by MCLA in response to the Compact's efforts to improve access to a college education for all Berkshire County students. The participating higher education institutions are MCLA, BCC, Williams College, and Bard College at Simon's Rock. Activities included in the college visits are: 1) campus tours in which students get to visit facilities such as classrooms, gyms, libraries, computer labs, TV studios, and radio stations; 2) demonstrations and workshops by faculty members such as science demonstrations, performing arts mini-class,

introduction to language and literature, biology and chemistry labs; and 3) discussions with college students.

In addition to the popular and successful sixth grade college visits, MCLA sponsors visits for third grade students. These visits provide a targeted and age-appropriate introduction to college for these younger students. MCLA plans to expand this program to serve the entire County. The inception of the Readiness Center provides an opportunity to begin to scale up this program.

PSAT Preparation Course

In order to assist students with the process of preparing for and taking the standardized tests that are part of the college application process, the Berkshire Readiness Center will request funding to subsidize the cost of the PSAT examination for area students. Along with college readiness, a benefit to students taking the PSAT is the opportunity to receive college brochures.

College Advising Corps

MCLA and Drury High School currently serve as pilot sites for a four-year program through the Massachusetts Campus Compact. The College Advising Corps places a recent college graduate in a local high school to assist high school students as they apply to and attend college. Through the program, the advisor acts as a liaison between MCLA and Drury High School. This advisor works with high school students requiring higher education assistance; mentors them through the process of getting into college (including standardized tests, college searches, applications, and financial aid); and supports these students and their families as they apply to and transition to college.

As a component program of the Berkshire Readiness Center, the advising model will be adapted to additional sites in central and south County as a tool for raising aspirations and providing increased access to higher education.

Early College Advising and Transition Services

BCC offers an Early College Advising and Transition Model for career-vocational technical education (CVTE) students designed to increase the number of CVTE students entering postsecondary education. School guidance counselors from selected schools (McCann, Taconic, Pittsfield High, and Wahconah) identify students who are eligible to receive the program's specialized individual and small group advising as well as academic skills assessment and course placement services. Once enrolled in the college, students are oriented to the college and to each of the services it provides. The progress of the entering student cohort is monitored through a case management system by the program director who then provides the appropriate support services required for students to persist and graduate.

Campus Connection

Campus Connection is a one-week summer program for graduating seniors from Berkshire County high schools who have been admitted to BCC for the fall semester. There is no cost to

students for participating and those who successfully complete the program also receive a tuition waiver for a three credit class during the fall term. More importantly students are able to gain a head start making the difficult transition from a high school to a college environment. The program curriculum offers activities that are designed to help students reinforce their math, reading, writing, time management, note taking, and study skills as well as familiarize them to the college computer network and web-advisor functions.

Service Learning

Both BCC and MCLA provide its students a range of service learning options. Service learning courses are semester-long projects that combine meaningful community service with enhanced academic learning and preparation for civic participation in diverse social contexts. Students are encouraged to enrich their classroom experiences by participating in service learning activities that have been integrated as components into many academic courses. Projects typically require 15 to 20 hours of community volunteer service and reflection activities on the link between the experience and course content.

The colleges maintain partnerships with numerous community-based organizations, the public school districts, community centers, environmental groups, and social service agencies where students are able to volunteer time to projects that help address critical problems in the region such as sustainable agriculture; literacy; domestic violence; immigrant rights; youth empowerment and role modeling; teenage pregnancy; poverty reduction; and access to education. These projects provide unique opportunities for civic engagement and experiential learning within agencies where volunteer assistance is critical to achieving their mission.

The Write Stuff

This program manifests the educational aims of MCLA, literary nonprofit Inkberry, Inc., and the North Adams Public Schools for the improvement of writing and reading. Authors associated with Inkberry collaborate with Conte Middle School faculty and MCLA students to work with students during the school day, out of class and during after school sessions. During the after school session students write creatively with MCLA writing coaches and/or complete their writing or reading homework. Students are tutored and mentored over the course of the year through their connections with the MCLA volunteer Write Stuff corps. At least once each term writers host a reading night with parents and families to share and celebrate their best work. The North Adams Transcript, the local newspaper, publishes middle school student's written work as part of a series twice each year.

Programs to Promote Raising Aspirations

College Readiness

The goal of this course is to begin to prepare high school students for college. Currently in the planning stages, the course will provide information relative to searching for a college, applying, and the financial aid process. In addition, the course will teach college skills such as time management, study skills, budgeting funds, etc.

The Positive Options Project

First offered in 2007 in collaboration with Drury High School in North Adams, BCC offers Positive Options, a program designed to encourage students to both complete high school and enroll in college. The program targets teens at risk of dropping out of high school and allows them to attend BCC and receive credit toward high school graduation while at the same time earning college credit. Through participation in this “alternative high school” program, students may either earn a GED or diploma outside of the traditional classroom setting. Three high schools will offer classes at the college during the coming year as part of this unique program.

Dual Enrollment Programs

Dual enrollment programs offer qualified high school students the opportunity to enroll in introductory level college courses free of tuition and fees. BCC’s Bridge to College and MCLA’s Courtesy program help students make an early transition to college.

Through participation in these programs, students earn college credit that is applied back to their high school requirements as well as applicable to future college enrollment. Dual enrollment serves as a means for students to gain direct experience with the academic demands and social expectations of a college environment.

Adams Scholars Recognition Events

The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship awards non-need-based state-supported undergraduate tuition waivers to students who are awarded John and Abigail Adams Scholarship by the Massachusetts Department of Education. MCLA hosts an annual reception to honor Adams Scholarship recipients from Berkshire County in order to raise student aspirations by recognizing academic achievement and to support the scholarship program’s goal to help attract more high-performing students to Massachusetts public higher education. Going forward, plans for the program include follow up sessions on the college application process to assist these students in making the transition to college.

Empowering Women for Success

BCC offers “Form and Function: Discovering Strength and Beauty in Nature” as a focus for its innovative summer program Empowering Women for Success. Designed primarily for young girls, the objectives of the program are to demonstrate how math and science are an integral part of everyday life and to foster a greater understanding of the numerous careers available to women in these fields. Conducted by professional women in the fields of biology, engineering, math, health sciences, and fine arts, the week-long summer workshop is designed to not only strengthen academic success in math and science through applied learning and interactive field experiences but also promote wellness, self-awareness and confidence through an exploration of the mind-body connection. The program utilizes the BCC campus and the grounds of Canyon Ranch as natural laboratories for support of investigations and experiential learning. Twenty-four (24) high school girls participate in the program each summer.

National Girls and Women in Sports Day

MCLA hosts National Girls and Women in Sports Day annually. This event brings girls in grades 3-8 to campus for an afternoon to participate in sports clinics and connect with student-athlete mentors as well as coaches, administrators, and other members of the campus community. The program raises awareness about athletics participation opportunities and the way that college enables students to participate and excel in athletics and academics.

In School Accuplacer Assessment Testing

BCC administers the Accuplacer Skills Assessment test in reading, writing, and mathematics to the entire 11th grade class in each of Pittsfield's three high schools and in eighty percent (80%) of all high schools county-wide. Offering Accuplacer to high school juniors constitutes an important effort to help them assess their preparedness for college-level work and to focus more effectively on their academic strengths and weaknesses during their senior year. During the 2008-2009 academic year, 927 juniors received the benefit of testing services which each year is coordinated through the BCC's Office of Assessment and Testing.

Reaching Parents

Parents need information about the college application and financing process so that they will know that a college education is within reach. In a survey that was conducted during the Berkshire Compact's sixth grade college visits, many students said they did not plan to attend college or that they were uncertain it would be possible to do so. Among these students, the most frequently cited reason preventing them from aspiring to attend college was the belief that it is too expensive.

To address this perception and to raise aspirations, the Compact has identified programs and resources for parents. Examples of these programs are community meetings (such as a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) family program that was piloted recently) and a parents' resource center. The goal is to make information available to parents and families about the process of preparing for college, developing strategies for working closely with school guidance counselors and researching other programs to replicate. In addition to addressing the challenges identified among Berkshire County families, these resources will encompass the goals of the Readiness Portal project proposed by the Department of Higher Education (DHE).

The brochure and marketing strategy will provide information about financing as well as other considerations in preparing for the college application process.

Programs to Promote Technology and Innovation

Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative

The Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative (BWLI) is a pilot program that was implemented in Berkshire County to evaluate a 1:1 approach (one laptop for every student and educator) of using

laptop computers and wireless communication to transform teaching and learning. The program's goals are to help improve student achievement and transform the way education is delivered in North Adams and Pittsfield, Mass. Robust wireless communications have been installed in four middle school buildings, enabling teaching to occur in many different school settings. In total, more than 2,300 laptops were distributed to middle school students and educators over the course of the pilot program from 2006 through 2008.

A BWLI Evaluation Study conducted by Boston College provided evidence that student achievement was enhanced through the initiative. Most notably, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between BWLI participation and 2008 English Language Arts MCAS performance for 8th graders who had participated in BWLI for two years. In addition, 71% of all BWLI educators reported that their students' quality of work had improved. Further evidence of BWLI's impact on student achievement was demonstrated by a computer writing study in which students who were randomly assigned to use computers wrote longer, higher scoring essays than students who used pencil and paper.

The districts continue to operate 1:1 programs in their middle schools but require additional resources to maintain the equipment and to provide further professional development to educators. Expanding the program to additional school districts also would require additional funding.

Online Learning

Faculty from MCLA and BCC are working to develop online curricula, making it easier for students to achieve higher education degrees. Already, BCC offers online classes in computer literacy, web development, childhood education, health care, computer science, mathematics, environmental studies, literature, biology, humanities, computing, history, the arts, psychology, and software integration. MCLA is expanding their distance learning opportunities for Fast-Track and traditional graduate students through online course offerings.

Drury High School Math Lab Collaboration

Numerous studies focusing on college readiness have confirmed that high school graduates frequently require remedial college coursework. College placement tests most frequently indicate gaps in students' mathematics readiness. MCLA offers Mathematics for College (SKIL 096) as a remedial math course for students who do not place in to the college's Core curriculum. Once testing into a remedial level, students are required to either test out or to complete the remedial course prior to enrolling in a college level mathematics course. Through the MCLA Drury High Math Lab collaboration, Drury High School students complete MCLA's Mathematics for College course as their fourth year math course - prior to college enrollment. The course utilizes the Anywhere Learning Systems (ALS) computerized curriculum, which is aligned with MCAS standards and incorporates lessons covering the SKIL 096 course. ALS incorporates adaptive testing, study and testing components and assigns individualized lesson plans to students based on their identified strengths and areas for improvement.

BCC's Got Math STEM Initiative

BCC's Got Math? program continues to make an important ongoing contribution to the western Massachusetts STEM Pipeline of projects coordinated by MCLA. This after-school initiative is offered each year to elementary and middle school students in order to improve their computational skills and promote greater academic interest in science through the study of applied mathematics. Over the years the program has offered math applications and experiential learning in a range of fields as diverse as engineering, aviation, robotics, manufacturing, and dance. This past year alone, one hundred seventy-nine (179) students together with twelve (12) educators from eleven (11) of the county's middle schools and eight (8) local business partners participated directly in Got Math? innovative educational activities.

Massachusetts Region I Science Fairs

Through the Berkshire STEM Pipeline, MCLA hosts Massachusetts Region I Science Fairs for middle and high school students. Through participation in the fairs, students design experiments, conduct research, and present their findings. The high school fair serves as a qualifying effect for the annual Massachusetts State Science and Engineering Fair. Research from the UMass Donohue Institute demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between the amount of science students study in high school and the likelihood they will study STEM subjects in college. The number of students participating in the fair, and the quality of the presentations, have grown significantly in recent years.

Robotics Project

In an effort to encourage middle school students to pursue an education in the sciences and technology, BCC collaborates with the Berkshire Applied Technology Council, the county's public school districts, and MCLA to coordinate a county-wide school robotics challenge. This past year 22 teams comprised of college faculty and students, business partners, and public school STEM educators and their students participated in the competition.

In addition, MCLA hosts summer robotics and science camps for students ages 9-14. These camps feature science projects, field trips, and games to provide campers with a well-rounded learning and recreational experience.

Programs to Promote Lifelong Learning

Fast Track

For busy adults, accessibility to higher education means being able to earn a degree while working full-time or part-time, and while taking care of a family. In 2007, MCLA launched the Fast-Track degree program, which allows busy adults to earn a Bachelor's degree through an accelerated pace of study, flexible enrollment options, and convenient scheduling. Classes are offered on the MCLA campus, at the Intermodal Education Center in Pittsfield, and at BCC's South County Campus.

The program recognizes that significant learning occurs outside the formal academic experience in work and home settings, through community activities, military service, or in individual reading and study. Students participating in Fast Track may earn up to 30 credits for learning experiences outside of college. The first group of students graduated in May 2009.

Northern Berkshire Adult Basic Education (NBABE) Program

NBABE, based at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts for 37 years, has continuously helped area adult learners achieve their academic goals. Students enroll in NBABE to advance their academic readiness for post secondary education, or to build academic skills making them more competitive in the workplace. The Program offers classes in North Adams, Adams and Williamstown. The program features courses in GED, skill building, and life planning. Funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, division of Adult and Community Learning Centers, all classes and educational materials are free to enrolled students.

Project Link

Initially designed under a five-year implementation grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, BCC's Project Link is offered as one the state's benchmark Adult Basic Education college transition programs. The overall goal of the project each year is to provide transition and academic support services for students possessing a GED with the purpose of increasing their ability to access, succeed, and persist in higher education. Since its inception, over 300 students have enrolled in the program and of those who complete the curriculum 87% percent enter a standard college certificate or degree program. BCC partners with the Berkshire County House of Corrections and the Pittsfield Adult Learning Center to expand program components and offer additional services to potential college students.

ESOL – College Connections

BCC's College Connections program offers a comprehensive, interdisciplinary program to immigrant, ESOL, and other underrepresented high school students in order to improve access and success in postsecondary education and to increase the likelihood that students remain in high school through graduation and continue on to college. The program helps to identify academic strengths and weaknesses and includes the topics of math applications, English comprehension and writing skills, study skills and learning styles, career as student, as well as health and wellness, and a summer transition component. The program also features a peer-mentoring component comprised of BCC ESOL and immigrant students. Other program elements include Learning Skills Workshops, college information sessions for high school students and their parents as well as an intensive summer program. Members of BCC's faculty collaborate with area high school educators, administrators, and guidance counselors to provide special educational services to over thirty (30) English language learners throughout the year.

Support for Immigrants

The Berkshire Compact supports the work of the Berkshire Immigrants Center. These events provide essential information to immigrants about job opportunities and legal issues. The Compact is also endorsing the Educational Parity bill, which will allow undocumented residents to pay in-state tuition if they are taking steps to get documented.

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at BCC was established in 2007 following a grant from the Bernard Osher Foundation of San Francisco to the Berkshire Institute for Lifetime Learning (BILL). OLLI delivers classes, trips, special events and lectures to over 1,000 adult learners annually. In addition to BCC, OLLI is also a partner in education with MCLA, Williams College, and Bard College at Simon's Rock.

Other Noteworthy Passport Programs

Youth Leadership Program

The Berkshire Chamber of Commerce is working toward implementation of the Berkshire Youth Leadership Program. Up to 30 high school juniors per year will participate in a summer retreat at MCLA followed by workshops throughout the year designed to help them develop leadership skills, learn about careers in critical industries and address important community issues. Students will earn dual credits toward both high school and local colleges.

The program will target a diverse group of students from across the county who have leadership potential, but may or may not have prior experience in leadership roles in their school or community. Students will develop basic skills to form a foundation of leadership skills, awareness of community issues and career opportunities along with a commitment to lifelong involvement in the Berkshires. The program will begin in the summer of 2010 and run throughout the 2010-11 school year.

Student Town Meetings

Students responding to the My Voice survey indicated they do not feel they are not recognized for their positive contributions. As a way to engage students and provide an additional opportunity for recognition, the Compact sponsors a series of recorded student town meetings for high school students that are shown on public television. These town meetings are modeled after WAMC's town meetings on public radio. The goals of this initiative are to 1) provide a structured process to prepare students to critically analyze and discuss social and political issues affecting them with recognized specialists; 2) provide young people with an opportunity to share their views with peers and community members; and 3) actively involve young people in issues of local, regional, state and national importance.

In the spring of 2009, student town meetings were conducted by an American Law Class at Taconic High School, which discussed the pros and cons of alternative energy sources, and by

the Unity Program of Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, which discussed pressures on youth. For the 2009-10 school year, the Compact will identify four classes in Berkshire County to record their own town meetings.

Professional Development Programs

According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, professional development points are “the currency for renewing an educator's license.” The mechanism for earning these points is participation in content-focused activities, including graduate courses, seminars, and institutes delivered by approved providers.

MCLA and the DSAC will collaborate with all Readiness partners to deliver quality, focused professional development, and to assess the effectiveness of this development in accordance with district goals, state standards, and the evolving national conversation about 21st century education. MCLA and BCC, along with other regional partners and providers, will advance and create additional professional development opportunities for educators in Berkshire County.

MCLA’s Center for Professional Development will provide facilities and programs in professional development for K-12 educators in Berkshire County. Programs will be offered in traditional content areas, as well as in specialty areas like Special Education and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). In some cases, MCLA will deliver its own professional development programs for educators through the center. MCLA will also coordinate professional development for its own and other higher education faculty in the region, focused on faculty professional development as well as dissemination of best and promising practices related to K-12 teaching and learning. Dissemination of information to school districts and related stakeholders will also be organized by MCLA via the Center.

The benefit to students will come through the opportunity to learn from highly-trained educators who regularly participate in professional development activities.

Examples of successful programs underway in the region include:

Educational Leaders Initiative

In recent years, a number of senior K-12 administrators in Berkshire County, including principals and superintendents, have retired. There is an opportunity to develop leaders in the region to fill these gaps. To support the work of the Berkshire Readiness Center, MCLA will develop an Educational Leaders Initiative to identify, recruit, train, mentor and support these prospective principals and superintendents for Berkshire County. Modeled on the existing innovative Leadership Academy, this leadership development program will offer intensive study in educational administration. By creating a way for teachers and leaders from other sectors to pursue advanced coursework and practicums that lead to licensure, this initiative helps strengthen educator workforce across the County.

Brayton Elementary School Partnership

The MCLA Education Department has offered a Student Teaching Seminar for Elementary and Early Childhood Education on site at Brayton Elementary school in North Adams. An MCLA Education Department faculty member works on site at Brayton supervising Brayton student educators and pre-practicum students, serving as a liaison between MCLA and cooperating educators for any issues that may arise. With the recent closing of the middle school in North Adams and the increase in students at the elementary school, MCLA is exploring how best to structure this program for the future.

Curriculum Alignment in Mathematics and English

Based upon an analysis of the eleventh grade student Accuplacer assessment scores, BCC mathematics and English faculty are collaborating with curriculum coordinators and educators in the schools to develop senior level courses that better prepare students for college-level work. The goal is to work with the school personnel in a joint effort to substantially reduce the number of students entering college that require developmental courses in the basic skills areas of math, reading, and writing. Thus far, curriculum alignment work has taken place in three selected school districts where a senior level course in mathematics has been developed and offered as pilot for the coming academic year. On-going alignment work in math and English will continue to strengthen the compatibility between the high school and college curricula in order to foster a more consistent pathway for students interested in entering postsecondary education. This is a general Compact goal as well as a natural platform for Readiness Center collaborations.

Training in Early Childhood Education

BCC offers training programs leading to an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education as well as an Associate Degree and Certificate in Elementary Education. Through a Building Careers in Early Childhood Education grant award, BCC provides tuition remission for up to thirty (30) students annually to enroll in two 3-credit courses in order to help them complete their degree or certificate. Students are also provided with support services including tutoring, mentoring, and career counseling. The college maintains relationships with area early education service providers and places approximately 12 student educators each semester in local programs such as Head Start as well as positions within the region's public school districts. BCC works closely with the Pittsfield Community Partnership Program and Resources for Childcare, which oversee area workforce and training needs in the field.

Through the Readiness Center, BCC and MCLA will continue to respond to input from the early childhood education programs in the region about priority areas for training.

STEM Pipeline Network

The STEM Pipeline Network is a countywide initiative housed at MCLA. The STEM Pipeline coordinator has developed a database of more than 700 educators and a website for easy access to professional development opportunities for Berkshire County educators. An online resource

center lists equipment available for STEM educators as well as other professional development opportunities for Berkshire County educators.

Upper Housatonic Valley Experience Course

In collaboration with Berkshire Community College and the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, MCLA sponsors a graduate course for educators who wish to integrate regional history into their courses. The course is team taught by faculty from BCC and MCLA. History, business, and environmental experts weave their content and perspectives through a series of mini lectures, hands on activities, and guided field trips. The material learned in the Upper Housatonic Valley course is suitable for use in social studies, history, economics, science and English courses, and is a model for collaborative professional development programs.

Raising Aspirations Initiative

In 2006-07, the Berkshire Compact hired the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations to administer the My Voice Student Aspirations Survey to middle and high school students in Berkshire County. Students were asked for their opinions about a variety of topics such as sense of belonging, sense of accomplishment, if they enjoy being in school and find learning fun and if they see themselves as leaders. The responses of Berkshire County students were generally less positive than those of their national peers and positive responses diminished as students moved through the grades. In an effort to learn more about programs that raise student aspirations, several Berkshire County school districts visited the Westfield, Mass., middle schools in May 2009. These visits helped to generate interest among Berkshire County educators in starting their own aspirations initiatives.

As a next step in this initiative, the Berkshire Compact will sponsor a county-wide professional development session in October 2009, *Closing the Participation Gap*. The session will be facilitated by Ray McNulty, Senior Vice President of the International Center for Leadership in Education. The training session will examine issues such as: 1) What are the eight conditions that need to exist in all schools for student aspirations to be enhanced? 2) What issues inhibit students from actively engaging in their own learning? and 3) Can schools close the achievement gap if they do that ensure that there is no participation gap? Is closing the participation gap the first step in improving student achievement? Every public school system in Berkshire County plans to send a team of faculty and staff to attend the session.

Berkshire Readiness Center Area of Specialization

In addition to the delivery of core programming, the Berkshire Readiness Center will offer specialized activities in the area of innovation. In particular, the program will focus on the innovative educational potential of the creative economy and the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pipeline.

Historically, innovations that originated in the Berkshires have had worldwide influence. Berkshire County and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have played host to world changing individuals and developments in the areas of science, technology, business, politics, culture, and

the arts. In business and manufacturing, the Crane Paper Company has produced all of the paper used to make U.S. currency since 1879, up to the “smart paper” of today’s bills. The County has also been an innovator of long standing in the plastics industry. The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) is located in a facility that has been part of three distinct waves of technological and commercial innovation, from textile manufacturing in the 19th century to advances in electronics that helped launch the United States into the space age to the fabrication and showcasing of world-renowned works of art.

For the purposes of Berkshire Readiness Center programming, innovation will manifest in two primary ways:

- **Creative Economy:** Berkshire County is home to an array of world-class cultural organizations including museums, galleries, theatres and dance venues. In addition, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions across the region recognize the powerful role that creativity plays in economic development. As a result, there is recognition across the region that the creative economy encompasses a range of activities, including specialty manufacturing, film and video production, fabric arts, and other commercially-focused creative ventures. These ventures not only provide rich educational possibilities but also serve as incubators for the technological innovations reflected in the goals of the Berkshire Compact. The goals of the regional creative economy are represented by Berkshire Creative, an organization whose mission is to stimulate new job growth and economic opportunity by sparking innovative collaborations among artists, designers, cultural institutions, and businesses.
- **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education:** The Berkshire STEM Pipeline Network is a collaboration among educational institutions (including BCC and MCLA), businesses and nonprofit organizations across the county. The network provides a range of programs (BCC’s Got Math?, the Massachusetts Region I Science Fairs hosted by MCLA, STEM Career Fairs, and the Robotics Challenge, to name just a few) targeted at STEM awareness and learning activities for students as well as STEM professional development for educators.

One such program which aligns with the professional development goals of the Berkshire Readiness Center is the Berkshire STEM Fellows program. Through this program, educators from districts across the county develop curriculum in the area of astronomy. The program leverages the Starlab inflatable planetarium as a platform for educators to develop lessons (aligned with state frameworks), pilot the lessons in the classroom, and assess and evaluate their professional development as well as student outcomes.

The Berkshire Readiness Center is well-positioned to disseminate information about best practices and replicable instructional models in the specialty area of innovation through the existing STEM network, which includes an active online component that connects educators and other stakeholders to programs, activities and opportunities in STEM disciplines.

Readiness Sites

At its inception, the Berkshire Readiness Center will occupy three sites across Berkshire County. These sites will be located in the north, central, and south parts of the County.

The headquarters of the Berkshire Readiness Center will be on the MCLA campus in North Adams, Massachusetts. This site will provide office space and equipment for the Readiness Center director, including computer, telephone, office supplies, and access to College resources. The MCLA readiness site will also make space and equipment available for the Berkshire RAD and other DSAC staff resources.

To support the work of the DSAC, MCLA will provide classroom and meeting space as needed, to support program delivery.

The partners will also support the work of the Berkshire Readiness Center by providing programmatic resources. The Readiness Center will receive access to and support from MCLA's Education Department, which is the provider of educator preparation programs in the region. The Center will also connect with the programs and activities of MCLA's Center for Professional Development (PD), an initiative to organize and disseminate information about PD opportunities available to County educators. This center will both develop PD programs for area educators and host PD activities delivered by external providers.

In the central part of the County, the Berkshire Readiness Center and the DSAC will receive access to office space, technology, equipment and supplies and other resources on the BCC main campus on West Street. From this site the Center will connect with existing BCC readiness-centered programs.

The readiness needs in South County will be addressed through BCC's South County Center on Main Street in Great Barrington. As with the other readiness sites, this office of the Berkshire Readiness Center will deliver services and provide office space, technology, equipment and supplies, and resources.

Partnership Description

These efforts will be supported and sustained through the robust partnership that is at the foundation of the Compact. MCLA and BCC as partners in STEM, the Intermodal Education Center in Pittsfield, Mass., and other collaborative initiatives, will coordinate the higher education sector response to the priorities and needs identified by the Berkshire Readiness Center, the RAD and the DSAC.

Since its inception, the Compact has been active in developing new partners and engaging additional stakeholders in its work. Member of the Compact and its executive committee regularly work to identify opportunities to bring in new perspectives and to encompass areas of interest not previously represented. In 2009 for example, new Compact members included representatives from a new educational collaborative in the region, as well as individuals representing the early childhood education community. Under the auspices of the Readiness

Center this work will continue and expand with new partners joining the effort as opportunities arise.

As with the Compact, the process for engaging new stakeholders for the Berkshire Readiness Center would begin with potential candidates being identified to the Board of Directors. The board will assess the candidate's fit with the Center's work as well as any gaps in representation. If the decision is made to invite the candidate to become a partner in the center the board will assign a member to meet with the candidate, discuss the work of the center with them, and determine their interest in being part of the effort.

Implementation Plan

The Berkshire Readiness Center will foster change in the region and contribute to the statewide Readiness Agenda by leveraging the existing structure of the Compact.

The first year of the Readiness Center will focus the following:

- establishing the Readiness Center sites, promoting the center, and coordinating the work of the Berkshire Readiness Center with the activities and priorities of the DSAC and RAD. During this stage in the Center's development, stakeholders will also connect with the other Readiness Centers across the state to begin the process of building a statewide network, including a proposed annual convening of regional readiness groups.
- defining the roles and responsibilities around data collection, metrics, and evaluation;
- working with the early childhood education agencies and practitioners in the region to further align education and training programs with workforce needs;
- identifying existing P-12 programs to expand and scale up;
- meeting the need for expanded and coordinated professional development (PD) activity for educators; and
- determining financial needs and identifying potential resources to support Readiness programs in the region.

The Berkshire Passport will provide a framework to link educational activities and experiences from early childhood through lifelong learning. As noted previously, the Passport has served as an effective organizing structure that has guided the development of Compact activities to date.

The previous pages list just a few of the programs being advanced by the Compact to date. In response to the opportunities presented by the Readiness Center model, the Passport will explore earlier linkages with learners and families starting with early childhood education programs and activities. The Passport model will expand professional development and lifelong learning opportunities in the region.

Key Passport programs that will be launched or scaled up during the initial implementation of the Berkshire Readiness Center are highlighted below.

Early Childhood

In early childhood, children and parents lay the foundation for a lifetime of education. Early literacy, educational modeling, reading, and parental support programs will serve as the essential activities that provide readiness for learning. An educated and prepared early childhood workforce is essential to the success of these programs.

- Degree completion pathway programs: will provide accessible and affordable training and professional development for the early childhood workforce.
- Parents programs: will engage parents and caregivers from early childhood in preparing children for school and fostering their educational aspirations. This is an ongoing activity with a variety of touchpoints as students transition into Pre-K, through kindergarten and elementary school to middle school, high school and beyond.

Elementary School

As they move into the elementary school years, children can begin to understand for themselves the value of education and to begin to view it as a real, fully attainable goal.

- Third grade college visits: the initial work of the Berkshire Readiness Center will include expanding this program county wide.

Middle School

At the middle school level, students will have opportunities for additional access through the targeted programs that emphasize applied education, the realities of what students can do with what they learn.

- Sixth grade campus visit: the center will continue the Compact's commitment to this highly popular, visible, and effective program, with the goal to sustain the program over the long term.
- Science fairs: the center will build on the work of the Berkshire STEM Network to grow participation in the science fair programs at the middle school and high school levels.

High School

As students transition into high school, the Berkshire Passport will provide guidance through the complex process of setting goals, selecting a higher education path, applying to colleges and/or training programs and preparing for this critical transition.

- College Advising Corps: will be expanded to additional schools in the county, with two additional deployments (to Central and South County) anticipated during the first phase of the center's implementation.
- Accuplacer: through the center, Accuplacer testing will be sustained and scaled up to serve more students.
- Dual Enrollment: with future funding from the Commonwealth in question, the Readiness Center will determine how to sustain and grow dual enrollment programs at BCC and MCLA.
- Math Lab Collaboration: additional computer based math skills courses and schools will be included in this program.

Lifelong Learning

For lifelong learning and continuing education students, the pathways of access and aspiration will be different. Established programs at BCC and MCLA in Adult Basic Education and ESOL will serve to get adult learners ready for postsecondary education and training. Alternative delivery models like MCLA's Fast Track accelerated degree program provide working adults with flexible options to meet their educational goals.

These programs will not only benefit adult learners in pursuit of their education, but also for those adults who are parents or caregivers, educational attainment is an excellent modeling strategy for younger learners. In this way, lifelong learning programs complete the circuit of opportunity that begins with early childhood.

- Fast-Track: with a focus on outreach and promotion, the goal will be to raise awareness of and participation in Fast-Track.

Professional Development

There will be a coordinated program of professional development among MCLA and BCC, Berkshire County schools, principals' and superintendents' groups and the Southern Berkshire Educational Collaborative (SBEC) that will be available to them to ensure they have access to the resources and training they need to serve students and remain current with the requirements in their content area.

- Educational Leadership Program: MCLA's Center for Professional Development and MCLA Education Department will work with schools and districts to offer this program.
- Curriculum Alignment: ongoing alignment activities will continue to make the transition from high school to college more seamless.

In addition, establishing the Berkshire Readiness Center will reflect a number of additional collaborative opportunities in the region and across the Commonwealth. The Center will be part

of a network of the six statewide centers. Network participants will address areas of the primary functions such as evaluation of professional development, identification of specialization areas and strengths, and identification of best practices and replicable models. The network will develop and implement a best practices website to disseminate and share information and will host periodic meetings to keep the respective centers connected.

Governance Structure

The Compact has an existing and effective governance structure in place. The work of the Berkshire Readiness Center will draw upon the expertise and existing structure of the Compact. The executive committee of the Compact will serve as the core of the Berkshire Readiness Center board of directors. This group includes the presidents of MCLA and BCC, the chairperson of the Compact, school superintendents and business representatives. Their efforts will be augmented and complemented by additional representatives from key stakeholder sectors (early childhood, K-12, vocational education, workforce development, business, and STEM) in the region. The RAD for Berkshire County will be a member of the board as well.

The board will determine strategy, ensure the alignment of existing and proposed programs with center goals, and identify additional readiness partners, programs, and sites as necessary.

The board of directors will hire a director to manage day to day operations of the center and its sites, and to coordinate with with the RAD and statewide stakeholders. In addition to the director, there will be a part time site coordinator at each Berkshire Readiness Center site who will serve as a point of contact for the RAD and other constituents.

Evaluation Plan

Growing out of the work of the Compact, the Berkshire Readiness Center represents the evolution of a long-term strategy whose efforts will be realized incrementally.

The Berkshire Readiness Center board of directors will hire an outside evaluator who is expert in evaluation design and implementation to design formative and summative evaluation tools to assess the effectiveness of the center, its programs, and the participating partners and organizations. These evaluations will focus on the unique aspects of the various component programs of the center – early childhood education, the passport programs rooted in the goals of the Compact, and professional development programs – as well as on the ways that these programs translate into classroom outcomes, school performance, and student development.

In the area of professional development, for example, the evaluation will assess how the professional development experiences of participating faculty members influence instructional changes in their schools, and how over the longer term these changes affect student performance, using, for example, MCAS performance remediation as a measure.

As part of a statewide network of Readiness Centers, the Berkshire Readiness Center will participate in shared evaluation activities. Best practices identified through these evaluations will be disseminated statewide.

In the short term, we will measure our success by looking at several factors, including:

- community involvement in the Berkshire Compact;
- the number and depth of programs available to promote learning readiness, access and attainment for students and educators; and
- the number of students and educators participating in Berkshire Readiness Center programs.

Longer-term success will be determined by assessing multiple quantitative measures such as:

- the number of students who enter kindergarten ready to learn;
- the number of educators who are advancing their credentials through professional development and lifelong learning;
- school and district MCAS performance relative to the level of center, RAD and DSAC intervention;
- raising the Berkshire County high school graduation rate to at least 90 percent, the goal established by Governor Patrick's administration;
- the rate of high school graduates who go on to attend colleges or other postsecondary education;
- increased freshman year college retention rates for Berkshire County graduates; and
- post-secondary graduation or completion rates by Berkshire County residents.

In addition to promoting and supporting these programs, the Readiness Center will define and collect performance data, and conduct needs and outcomes assessments based on articulated Compact and program goals.

For existing programs, evaluation activities will be based on the goals defined for the program, as well as additional data and metrics that reflect readiness center and state-defined requirements. Typically, data collected for these programs include number of participants, pre- and post-assessments and surveys of participants to assess their progress and attitudes as a result of program participation.

For new programs developed as a result of readiness center operations, goals will be established that identify intended learning outcomes, targeted increase in student proficiency (as measured

by pre-and post assessments), target number of participants, and other unique indicators related to each individual program.

These measures will be used to assess short term progress, to adapt programs to changing circumstances, to adjust or revise targets, and to identify additional opportunities for program improvement.

Over the long term, the Readiness Center will track these data against benchmarks of educational attainment, outcomes for students served by individual readiness programs against those students who did not participate, school and district performance, and other measures as warranted.

Finally, Readiness data will be aligned with other regional initiatives such as the Berkshire Economic Development Corporation (BEDC)'s Berkshire Blueprint and the database of demographic and economic data being developed by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

Conclusion

Berkshire County is well positioned to host a readiness center. Through the innovative work and established partnerships of the Berkshire Compact, the region has an established structure, engaged leadership, committed partners and the ability to pilot, implement, scale and sustain programs to serve all learners in the region. With participation from early childhood, school districts, business and higher education, the Berkshire Readiness Center will support early learning, programs to support and sustain the aspirations of learners from Pre-K through postsecondary education, programs for adult learners, and professional development programs for Berkshire County educators.

Through these programs and a specialization in the area of innovation, the center will address the unique needs and challenges of Berkshire County as well as serving as a statewide resource and part of a network of best practice centers throughout the Commonwealth. In this way, the Berkshire Readiness Center will deliver on the promise of public education and advance the statewide Readiness Agenda.