

Readiness Center Summary

Introduction

The Berkshire Readiness Center will be rooted in the innovative work of the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education (the Compact).

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 executive committee of the Compact will serve as the core of the Berkshire Readiness Center Board of Directors.

Early Childhood Education Programs

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.

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.

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) (Baby College, and other programs) childhood programs and how to apply them to a rural setting.

Programs to Promote Access to Education

- Berkshire Passport
- College Visitation Programs
- PSAT Preparation Course
- College Advising Corps
- Early College Advising and Transition Services
- Campus Connection

Readiness Center Summary

- Service Learning
- The Write Stuff

Programs to Promote Raising Aspirations

- College Readiness
- The Positive Options Project
- Dual Enrollment Programs
- Adams Scholars Recognition Events
- Empowering Women for Success
- National Girls and Women in Sports Day
- In School Accuplacer Assessment Testing
- Reaching Parents

Programs to Promote Technology and Innovation

- Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative
- Online Learning
- Drury High School Math Lab Collaboration
- BCC's Got Math STEM Initiative
- Massachusetts Region I Science Fairs
- Robotics Project

Programs to Promote Lifelong Learning

- Fast Track
- Northern Berkshire Adult Basic Education (NBABE) Program
- Project Link
- ESOL – College Connections
- Support for Immigrants
- Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

Other Noteworthy Passport Programs

- Youth Leadership Program
- Student Town Meetings

Professional Development Programs

- Educational Leaders Initiative (Leadership Academy model)
- Brayton Elementary School Partnership
- Curriculum Alignment in Mathematics and English
- Training in Early Childhood Education
- STEM Pipeline Network
- Upper Housatonic Valley Experience Course
- Raising Aspirations Initiative

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:

Readiness Center Summary

- 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.

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

Early Childhood

- 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

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

Middle School

- 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

- 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.

Readiness Center Summary

- 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

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

Professional Development

- 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.

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.

Readiness Sites

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

Governance Structure

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, business, and STEM) in the region. The RAD for Berkshire County will be a member of the board as well.

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.

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.

Readiness Center Summary

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.

Conclusion

Through 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