

annual report 2009



growing opportunities

A Partnership That Works





Marlin Miller, Jr.
Chairman
Berks Business Education Coalition

a message from Marlin Miller:

“ The school counselors of Boyertown Area School District, both elementary and secondary, have been trained in the aspects of BerksWorks, the information it contains, and how to navigate the site. BerksWorks provides a wonderful resource for all levels as we work to implement the career education and work standards. Career awareness is raised at the elementary level, and BerksWorks provides a great connection to speakers from various career fields who will provide presentations to students. At the secondary level, the site connects our schools with speakers and opens the doors for job shadowing opportunities for our high school students as they complete their career portfolio activities and plan for post-secondary life.



Marilee Cassidy
School Counseling Coordinator
Boyertown Area School District

Our Berks Business Education Coalition will count 2010 as its 19th year of operation. From the beginning, the mission of the Coalition has been to support quality education and to improve understanding of career opportunities and their required preparation, with the goal of assuring a well prepared Berks County workforce. This report outlines 2009 progress in programs developed over the past years to support the Coalition’s mission. The enthusiasm and support of the business and education communities have been outstanding in this effort, and the Coalition today represents a model that many communities in Pennsylvania and elsewhere are seeking to emulate.

Over the last two years, the Coalition, working with the Berks County Intermediate Unit, has put considerable effort and resources behind the introduction and adoption of Performance Pathways, a software and professional development program designed to track and measure each year the

educational value added for each grade and each individual student. The Performance Pathways program provides the information needed to validate current instruction or to modify curriculum or instructional approaches. As training and utilization has expanded across school districts, teacher enthusiasm for the program has been high, and there is every reason to believe that this initiative will improve student achievement in the years ahead.

A more recent and evolving initiative is a program to bring together teachers in specific disciplines, such as math, from our five area colleges and eighteen school districts to discuss how to better prepare all students for college-level work. Initial meetings have generated positive feedback toward a goal of reducing remedial work sometimes required at the college-freshman level. Our Berks County colleges are to be commended for their ongoing and increasing support of the Coalition’s work and objectives.

Dr. Robert Runkle, our executive director, continues to provide outstanding day to day direction to the Coalition, and on behalf of the board of directors and our loyal supporters, I thank him once again for his very positive leadership.

Marlin Miller

growing

STUDENT SUCCESS

berks county career pathways integration project

Over the last year, the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) and the Berks Business Education Coalition (BBEC) partnered to assist Berks County school districts with the implementation of the PA Career Education and Work (CEW) Standards through the Berks County Career Pathways Integration Project. This project, requested by Berks County school districts, is funded by a grant under Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) and the BBEC.

Supported by the BCIU, teachers representing districts from across the county assembled to: 1) identify core competencies for each content area to create an end-of-the-year common assessment; 2) produce a curriculum map for each of the content areas that outlines the content, skills, and standards necessary for each student to be competent on each content area common assessment; and 3) develop relevant and meaningful career activities for each content area that align to the PA Career Education and Workplace Standards.

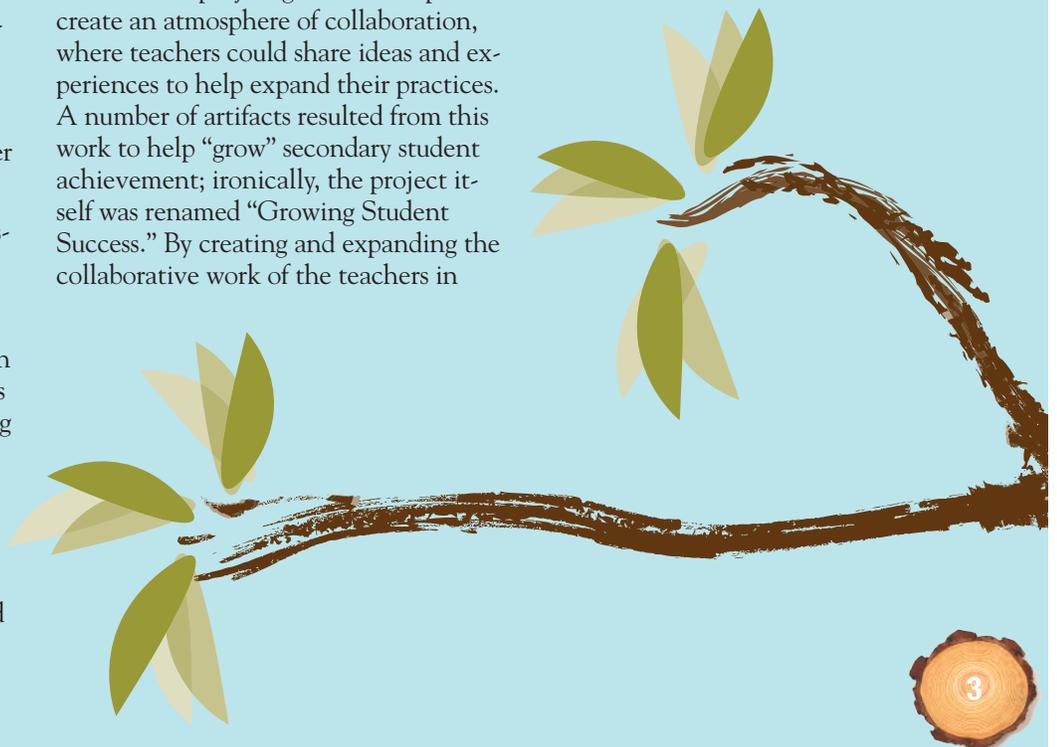
During winter 2009, using backwards-design methodology, BCIU piloted the common assessment creation protocol in an effort to determine whether the process was effective. At the completion of that project, the finished product was an Algebra I common assessment. Using that protocol, facilitators from the BCIU worked with math, science, and writing teachers over the summer months in 2009 to mirror that process and create end-of-the-year common assessments, curriculum maps, and related career activities. The process included discipline-specific curriculum-writing

and assessment-development teams composed of discipline-specific educators, career educators, and facilitators to ensure quality and consistency across all curriculum-writing teams. Since the content area of writing is not conducive to a selected response examination, the teachers instead created a grade-specific writing assignment matrix and writing genre rubrics as their common assessment. Some of the work continued in fall and winter 2010 as the earth and space teachers collaborated to complete similar products.

This project was designed to provide districts with a suggested framework that serves as a foundation to build upon using content-specific expertise within their own districts. The professional dialogue that emerged from the process was useful to the project goals and helped to create an atmosphere of collaboration, where teachers could share ideas and experiences to help expand their practices. A number of artifacts resulted from this work to help “grow” secondary student achievement; ironically, the project itself was renamed “Growing Student Success.” By creating and expanding the collaborative work of the teachers in

curriculum, assessment, and instruction through key artifacts, this project enables Berks County secondary educators to not only utilize a common curricular framework, but also to integrate career education and work standards that will help prepare students for post-secondary experiences.

The curriculum and standard assessments were developed utilizing the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Standards Aligned System for continuity and sharing of resources. In addition, national consultant Jay McTighe, co-author of the text, *Understanding by Design*, has provided guidance on the development of the curriculum and will be working with teams of teachers on the further development of this initiative.





2009 in review

The Berks Business Education Coalition, with the support of business partners, continued to assist member schools in the pursuit of improved student achievement and career success. The goals of the Coalition adopted by the board of directors continued to focus on efforts to improve career planning, academic performance, and higher education enrollment for students in Berks County. The programs listed below continue to advance the goals of the Coalition.

Career Pathways

The Career Pathways Strategic Team met throughout the year to set priorities and assist member schools in providing quality career development programs for their students. School representatives requested assistance in integrating career standards into the academic curriculum of the schools. The Berks County Intermediate Unit utilized resources from a federal grant of \$85,000 to facilitate the development of model curriculum and standard assessments in English, mathematics, and writing, to include the integration of career standards and activities. This activity involved 55 teachers from 12 school districts in Berks County. The curriculum was developed utilizing the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Standards aligned System format. The curriculum will be offered to all of the school districts in the county, both electronically and in hard copy.

The Coalition was fortunate, also, to receive federal grant funds to augment the development of a consortium of business education partnerships throughout eastern Pennsylvania. Currently, the consortium represents seven separate 501 (c) (3) non-profit business education partnerships that meet on a regular basis to share best practices across the region and leverage resources where possible. The

consortium represents the counties of Berks, Carbon, Luzerne, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, Wayne, and Pike.

The Coalition funded the creation of a series of Middle School Planners to foster career development in the middle grades. The series of booklets were developed by teachers and career counselors from the schools and included age-appropriate activities related to career planning built around Pennsylvania's Career Education and Work Standards. The booklets were published and distributed to all of the member districts in Berks County. Copies of the planners can be downloaded from the Berks Career Pathways website at www.berkscareerpathways.com.

BerksWorks

BerksWorks, a web-based resource to connect students with employers was launched in early 2009 through the partnership of the Coalition, the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Keystone Innovation Zone, the Berks County Community Foundation and the Penn State University, Berks Campus. Berks Works is an online database designed to connect students with employers who offer internships, cooperative work experiences, or other career-development opportunities. College and high school students use BerksWorks to identify opportunities with local companies and organizations. Employers utilize BerksWorks to advertise internship and other work-based opportunities to students in college and high school.

In addition, schools and students can utilize the tool to locate resources for other career-related activities, including career days, job shadowing, or facility tours. Currently 3,872 employers are listed in the database; 622 students are registered; and 92 job postings are listed. In addition, 134 active postings and 298 archived postings are listed. Career activities are listed, including 210 job shadowing opportunities, 91 career speakers, and 34 facility tours. Currently, in addition to the employer contacts, which number 4,516, there are 287 users registered on the system.



Kutztown University students are consistently using BerksWorks to research local area employers for internships. Many students also take classes while interning, so a quality experience within driving distance to campus is what they need, and BerksWorks delivers! It has become of great benefit to area students and employers.



Kerri G. Gardi, Director
Career Development Center
Kutztown University of PA



“As you know, changing schools requires a change of mind. We have seen incredible changes of mind as the consortium of districts move from a loose concept of how to use data to inform decisions to a more measurable and accountable process using the data from the technologies provided by Performance Plus. Each district has focused on using the assessment data to establish goals and then make important curricular decisions that ultimately lead to improved student performance. The data retreat held in fall 2009 was the culmination of a year's focus on setting measurable goals, monitoring results, and planning for improvement. As a result, the 2009-2010 school year has started off with a more clear and concise use of data to set goals and monitor results.

Jeff Colosimo
Vice President, Performance PLUS

2009



Inside Berks Business

The Coalition also continued its support of Inside Berks Business, a program sponsored by the Berks County Intermediate Unit that provides educators with workplace learning experiences. During summer 2009, twenty-nine educators, representing the majority of the school districts in Berks County, participated in the one-week summer internship. The program was a huge success, and a goal was established by the steering committee to expand the program for 2010 to accommodate 40 educators.

The Coalition also financed the inclusion of a Career Gates video series on the Berks Career Pathways website. This video series represents many of the high priority occupations found in Pennsylvania and provides information on those careers to prospective students.

The Coalition was also the recipient of a \$55,000 grant from the Pa. Department of Labor and Industry in cooperation with the Berks County Workforce Investment Board. Resources from the grant assisted programs including BerksWorks, Inside Berks Business, Middle School Planners, and other Career Pathways activities.

Performance Plus

Performance Plus, formerly Performance Pathways, is a program supported by the Coalition and utilized by most of the member districts in Berks County. The innovation provides educators with tools and expertise to make informed decisions about instructional modifications that may be necessary to continuously improve student achievement. SunGard Systems, the Berks County Intermediate Unit, and the Coalition provided aid to member school districts throughout the year in implementing this initiative. Assistance included the facilitation of a “Critical Factors” analysis tool to assist districts in assessing their degree of implementation of the initiative, and helping the districts to formulate action plans for staff training and development. The Coalition provided financial support to districts for professional development and the facilitation of “data retreats,” wherein teachers and administrators were coached in the interpretation of student assessment data and the modification of curriculum and instruction to enhance student achievement.

year in review



bbec

goals and objectives 2009

goal:

To support member schools in their efforts to facilitate the improvement of student academic performance.

- The Coalition will support member schools in the utilization of SAS inSchool software, a Web-based curriculum resource in the core academic areas.
- The Coalition will support member schools in the implementation of Performance Pathways, an innovation designed to improve student achievement by informing the modification of curriculum and instruction through the use of student assessment data.

goal:

To support member schools in their efforts to increase the interest in and pursuit of higher education for all students in Berks County.

- To facilitate dialog between basic and higher education administration and faculty designed to achieve the stated goal.
- To facilitate high school student visits to Berks County college campuses.
- To facilitate an ongoing exchange of ideas between high school and college faculty targeted toward enhancing the college preparedness of incoming college students.



I have found that BerksWorks is being utilized by Alvernia University students in a surprisingly short time after being introduced. Perhaps a third of our students are from the immediate region, and they very much want internships in the counties surrounding Berks. Even those that are from across the nation or international often still want to find internships that are close to campus.



In a very busy career services center, I find that Berks has a niche in that it is great to have so many local internships shared by the five institutions of higher learning in the organization also fosters a feeling of shared resources and communication among the colleges which can only benefit students and graduates - not to mention the surrounding

Jen Gittings-Dalton | Coordinator of Career Services, |



“ Performance Pathways provides us with the ability to use our data to improve educational programs and instruction. The reports generated in Performance Tracker are used to disaggregate the data and determine trends occurring in our subgroups. Teachers feel comfortable using the reports to find root causes and to target instruction that meets student needs using Assessment Builder. ”

Barbara E. Davis
Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Tulpehocken Area School District

goal:

To support member schools, employers and community-based organizations in providing quality K-12 career development programs for students in Berks County.

- The Coalition will support member schools throughout the year in offering training sessions on career resources and strategies to enhance career instruction.
- The Coalition will facilitate and support the implementation and enhancement of a countywide internship program called BerksWorks for high school and college students.

goal:

To provide for the viability and sustainability of Coalition programs and services.

- To pursue grant opportunities in consort with the mission of the Coalition and in support of member schools and employers.
- To facilitate communication among Coalition members and promote membership in the Coalition through the enhancement of the BBEC's communication tools, including the Web site, newsletters, and annual report.
- To facilitate an evaluation of programs and activities of the Coalition on an annual basis, and to recommend modifications where recommended and appropriate.

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Alvernia University

Berks Works

the student  employer connection



“It is clear Berks County is working hard to keep its workforce local with a new countywide internship and job shadowing initiative. BerksWorks is an invaluable advising tool! When working with students, I find using a shared countywide internship and job shadowing site to be extremely helpful. Now students in Berks County colleges and high schools can find corporate contacts and internships in one web location.”

Tish Jepsen, M.Ed.
Coordinator of
Career Services
Penn State Berks

The Berks Business Education Coalition, in partnership with the Berks County Community Foundation, the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry through a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority via the Greater Reading Keystone Innovation Zone and Penn State University, Berks Campus, provided funding and support for the development and implementation of a county-wide internship program called BerksWorks. The resource is made available through “Career Services Management System,” a web-enabled software program provided by Symplicity Corporation. The software is a robust career management tool that includes both employer and student databases. The software is also currently utilized by Penn State University at University Park and all of its branch campuses for the purpose of managing college internships.

The program was officially launched in December 2008 with the hiring of Clare Kilpatrick Benz, a full-time coordinator whose office is located on the Penn State Berks campus. A part-time support person was also hired to maintain the database software and to provide support to Clare in the discharge of her responsibilities. The initial objective of the program was to populate the employer database, notify employers of the opportunity, and encourage them to utilize the resource to find college interns. All five colleges in Berks County provided their employer databases for use in Berks Works. Employer databases from the colleges were imported into BerksWorks; all of the employers were notified of the import and asked if they wanted to participate in the BerksWorks program. Any employer who declined was removed from the database. Presentations were provided to many different employer groups through the co-

operation of the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Marketing to employers continues to be ongoing. The current number of employers in the database is 3,872; the total number of employer contacts in the database is 4,516.



Marketing continues to college students in ongoing through the career services offices of each of the Berks County colleges and universities. A website at www.berksworks.org describes the program and encourages participation. Bulletin board marketing materials were also developed and distributed to each of the colleges and universities. Currently, 622 college students are registered in the database.

The BerksWorks program is also providing services to high school students through counselor contacts in each of the 18 public schools districts and 2 parochial high schools. Training has been provided to counselors in most of the schools, and school districts are utilizing BerksWorks to obtain job shadowing opportunities, internships, facility tours, and guest speakers. The software provides employers the opportunity to identify the types of activities that they are willing to participate in and provide a contact for the school representatives to access the resource. School districts are utilizing BerksWorks to supplement their career programs in the schools by contacting employers to provide work-based experiences and information for elementary, middle, and high school students.

In the short period of time it has been operating, the BerksWorks program has accomplished its initial goal of establishing a rich and robust employer and student database connecting employers and students for work-based experiences, including internships. The activity on the BerksWorks site has been brisk, with employer postings exceeding 325. Career activities also have been posted by employers and include 210 opportunities for job shadowing, 91 career speaker postings, and 34 facility tours offered. Employer contacts on the system have grown to 4,516. More than 280 educators have been registered to utilize the system for counseling high school students.

More information on BerksWorks is available at www.berksworks.org. You are encouraged to visit this site and recommend it to anyone interested in supporting the goal of providing more career information to the youth of Berks County.

“ Here at Southern Middle School, we are working very hard to close the achievement gap. Currently we use many different resources and databases to house our materials, resources, and assessments. We realize that using Performance Pathways will centralize our student data and planned courses, as well as link them to the appropriate eligible content. We are excited about the evident alignment of Performance Pathways components, such as Assessment Builder and Tech Pathways, to the six-part structure of the Standards Aligned System for Student Achievement. We embrace the opportunity to use Performance Pathways and its components to increase student achievement and school improvement.

”

Joel T. Brigel
Principal
Southern Middle School



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- Berks Career & Technology Center
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- Berks County Intermediate Unit
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