

**BERKS BUSINESS  
EDUCATION COALITION**



MAKING  
**IDEAS**  
HAPPEN



**John P. Weidenhammer**  
Chairman, Berks Business Education Coalition

## Chairman's Report

We have a long history of private and public sector collaboration to strengthen the cultural, educational, and economic fabric which characterizes Berks County as a great place to live and work. The Berks Business Education Coalition is proud to continue in the vision set forth in our founding 24 years ago to identify and support programs that enhance the educational aspirations of our students.

In 2015, we continued our commitment to two long-standing programs, bringing ninth grade students onto the five Berks County based colleges and universities and arranging for week-long summer internships for Berks County educators to learn directly about a Berks County business, taking what they learned and observed back into the classroom.

For the third year, working with the schools and businesses, we arranged for 3,500 students to experience directly, on site, the requirements, opportunities, and expectations for employment within our business community. Additionally, we've begun a conversation about the importance of pre-kindergarten learning and how important pre-k skills are to lifetime success.

We know from research that educational attainment can be directly linked to reducing poverty in our community while preparing a more job-ready workforce. To that end, BBEC has charted a course by which we are expecting to collaborate with the community on those activities which will lead to better outcomes for our students as they complete their education and many begin their full-time career in our community.

As you read through this report, you will gain a comprehensive picture of how we have gone about fulfilling our mission and goals in 2015. You will see that our board of directors and the schools, businesses, and organizations that constitute our membership represent a complete cross section of our Berks County community.

We are especially grateful for everyone that joined in our work this past year and supported our initiatives. We could not have completed this work without your thoughtful generosity. We welcome all persons and organizations who share in the ideals of our mission to make education in Berks County a top priority and even stronger than it is today.

**John P. Weidenhammer**

## MISSION:

The mission of the Berks Business Education Coalition is to develop and coordinate resources within the business and education communities to promote initiatives which improve the competencies of students and enhance their aspiration for continuing education.

## GOALS:

- Promote career awareness and development programs for students in Berks County.
- Support member schools in the effort to improve basic academic performance.
- Promote appropriate, differentiated interest in pursuit of post secondary higher education.
- Facilitate continuing dialogue between, with, and among K-12 and higher education.
- Provide for the viability and sustainability of coalition programs and services.

2015



*Wyomissing Area School District ninth graders with the Nittany Lion at Penn State Berks.*

## YEAR IN REVIEW

### College Visits

The Berks Business Education Coalition's (BBEC) longest standing program is the **Higher Education Campus Visits**. Over the course of 12 years, we have facilitated visits for some 18,000 Berks County ninth graders to the five Berks County based institutions of higher education. Albright College, Alvernia University, Kutztown University, Penn State Berks, and the Reading Area Community College each extend themselves, their staff, and student guides to make for a meaningful introduction to the college/university experience for the students.

The program has grown markedly the past several years. In 2015, we had some 3,900 students participating from 16 of the 18 public school districts. Typically, the students were welcomed to the campus, provided baseline information about the culture and expectations of higher education, and given a campus tour in small size groups. Each visit culminated with lunch in the school cafeteria, or at the Reading Area Community College, the Schmidt Technology Center.

Hearing directly from the student tour guides, themselves only a few years older than the 14-year-old ninth graders, brings special meaning to the day. Responding to, "What do I know now that I wish I knew when I was in ninth grade?" has special import when spoken by someone just recently out of high school.

A special thanks to Berks County's colleges and universities for making this program a reality.

### Students Interacting with Business

2015 marked the third year of the BBEC-sponsored **Students Interacting with Business** program. Ninth graders (Boyertown, grade 10) from around the county, 15 of the 18 public school districts, engaged in a day long set of activities throughout the course of one week, September 21-25, with the business community learning first-hand about the culture and expectations of business, about employment opportunities in Berks County, and about the

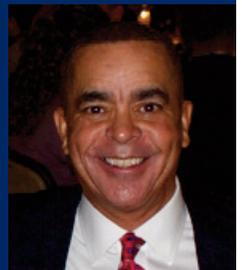
educational requirements for entry into various career areas.

The program started with a morning assembly program, a PowerPoint and video presentation centered on the

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When the groups come back from their tours and interaction with our employees, the energy level is always much higher than when they arrived. With each group, there are one or two children that make us look at one another and say, "This makes it all worthwhile, they get it." At Brentwood, we feel that if we reach one child it's a success and that's why we will keep participating.



**Carl Staples**  
Executive Vice President/  
General Manager,  
Brentwood Industries, Inc.

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2015  
 MAKING IDEAS HAPPEN  
 YEAR IN REVIEW



**Students Interacting with Business**

*Brandywine Heights Area students spent time at Fraser Advanced Information Systems to learn about their business offerings.*

factors that employers consider when hiring. A special thank you to the 15 volunteers from business for making these presentations.

After each assembly, the students boarded busses to visit one

of the 24 businesses participating in the program. The students listened in class size groups to some of the same messages from the morning assembly but presented viscerally at a business site. They learned about a business

and concluded with a walking, informative tour, all within a two-hour time frame.

Each of the schools then developed follow-up review activities for the students to reflect on what they had experienced and learned. In a majority of the schools, the review consisted of still other business persons coming into the classroom, the last class period of the day, to engage the students in formal and informal dialogue about what they had learned. All told, 82 such sessions were held.

The first group of students are now high school juniors or seniors (Boyetown), poised at the next juncture of their lives, senior year study decisions, and what direction to take upon graduation.

The Students Interacting with Business Program is a testament to the goodwill of the Berks County business community to help students sort out the direction they want to take in their lives. Ninth and tenth graders are 14 or 15 years old in September. They are impressionable. They really do want to do what is right for themselves and they respond positively to the care directed to them by the businesses and professionals that give so selflessly in this way.

**STUDENTS INTERACTING WITH BUSINESS SEPT. 21-25, 2015**

**PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS**

- Antietam Middle-Senior HS
- Boyetown Area Senior HS
- Brandywine Heights HS
- Conrad Weiser HS
- Daniel Boone Area HS
- Fleetwood Area HS
- Governor Mifflin Senior HS
- Hamburg Area HS
- Kutztown Area Senior HS
- Muhlenberg Middle School
- Oley Valley HS
- Reading Intermediate HS
- Schuylkill Valley HS
- Tulpehocken Junior-Senior HS
- Twin Valley HS

**PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES**

- Alcon Research, Ltd.
- American Crane & Equipment Co.
- Brentwood Industries
- Cambridge-Lee Industries LLC
- Carpenter Technology Corporation
- East Penn Manufacturing Co.
- EnerSys
- Fraser Advanced Information Systems
- Godiva Chocolatier, Inc.
- Met-Ed, A First Energy Company
- National Penn
- Penske Truck Leasing Co.
- Quadrant Engineering Products
- Reading Eagle
- Reading Electric
- Reading Health System
- Remcon Plastics
- R. M. Palmer Company
- Sealstrip Corporation
- SFS intec, Inc.
- St. Joseph Regional Health Network
- UGI Energy Services
- UGI Utilities, Inc.
- World Electronics





*Reading Intermediate High School students construct a “crane” as a team building exercise during their visit to the American Crane and Equipment Company.*

## Internships

In November 2015, the Berks Business Education Coalition received a state grant (federal dollars) for \$90,000, administered through the Berks County Workforce Development Board, to promote career education in the schools. Half of the funds are designated to reimburse each of the 18 school districts for career education initiatives during the 2015/2016 school year. Eligible costs include the purchase of career education materials, and transportation and substitute teacher expenses associated with the Higher Education Campus Visits and Students



*Twin Valley junior Jordan DeGary, considering a career in criminal justice, and her internship placement with Honey Brook Court Justice Michael Cabry, Chester County.*

Interacting with Business programs. The remaining \$45,000 focuses on the development of business site internship placements for schools interested in developing such programs.

Internships are suitable for both college-bound students and those students who intend to begin work immediately upon graduation. Students entering their senior year of high school typically have only three or four required courses to study, leaving plenty of time for elective study. The internship placement then, routinely consists of out of school study two hours a day, five days a week, for the semester or year.

Students report to the worksite at the start of the school day and then to school about one third of the day through or, conversely, leave for the worksite two thirds of the day through. They are responsible for their own transportation. The program is highly structured and closely supervised. The students receive academic credit for the experience.

College-bound students might wish to explore a career path they are considering for their collegiate study. They might be placed at an engineering firm, at a small business with accounting, a healthcare facility, or any of a broad range of businesses where the placement can be tailored to their perceived interest.

Typically the placement is unpaid. The student completes the internship, sometimes one each semester, accruing a better, more ingrained sense about their future collegiate study.

*continued on page 6*

## FACTORS EMPLOYERS CONSIDER WHEN HIRING

### School Performance:

Completion of high school diploma (indicating successful achievement of an important goal), mastery of basic skills, and participation in extracurricular activities.

### Communication Skills:

Proper completion of employment application, ability to read instructions, to listen and understand, to speak and write and be understood.

**Attitude:** Neat personal appearance, record of good attendance, cooperative view toward shift work and overtime, ability to work as part of a team, and does not use drugs.

### Computer Literacy:

Background and practice in fundamental principles and usage.

**Work Experience:** Prior work experience (paid or unpaid), volunteering a plus; demonstrates maturity, responsibility and commitment.

**Reputation:** Trustworthiness, honesty, reliability, good team member, able to work independently. What people think of you follows you!

### Understanding of How and Why a Business Operates:

Businesses operate to make a profit (a good thing), businesses will continue to exist and to employ people only as long as their rewards are greater than their costs.

MAKING IDEAS HAPPEN

# 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

continued



As a school counselor, this experience was invaluable as I'm now able to share first-hand experience and knowledge with my students about multiple career paths within the field of environmental engineering.

Not only did this opportunity put me, "in the field," I was able to interview multiple engineers and scientists about their specific job duties and responsibilities, further increasing my knowledge base about career pathways. I learned from employees what skills and aptitudes are needed to perform their job effectively. I also learned from the employer about the skills and personality traits he looks for as well as the deficits some college students bring with them to the workplace.

I had a wonderful, enlightening experience and recommend this program to all school counselors and teachers!



**Sabrina Andrieux**  
Wilson High School Counselor

Students intending to go directly into the workforce after high school gain the same value from their experience. Placements here generally involve hands on activity, typically paid experiences. Different than work release only, the students are mentored, nurtured, and held to defined standards and accountability. Not unusually, the students continue to be employed at the site after graduation. Some do not, some may decide that further education is the direction they should take, sometimes, in fact, as it relates to the work experience.

In Berks County, the Twin Valley School District runs a model internship program. Twin Valley presently places about 80 students annually, mostly seniors, but also some juniors, at worksites where the students express an interest.

## Participating Businesses & Organizations

Baker Tilly Virchow Krause LLP  
Berks Conservancy  
Berks Women in Crisis  
East Penn Manufacturing Co., Inc.  
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary  
Kutztown University  
Liberty Environmental, Inc  
Met-Ed, A FirstEnergy Company  
Olivet Boys & Girls Club  
Reading & Berks County  
Penn Werner Hotel  
Quadrant Engineering Plastic Products  
Reading Eagle  
Reading Fightin' Phils  
Reading Health System  
St. Joseph Medical Center  
Weidenhammer Systems Corporation  
White Star Tours & Travel Center  
Wyomissing Neighbors

Six of the 18 Berks County public school districts, including Twin Valley, are now actively engaged to make internships part of their senior year curriculum for the 2016/2017 school year. The grant funds, up to \$5,000 to each school, are available as seed money to make internship programs a broader reality here in Berks County.

## insideBerksbusiness

The **insideBerksbusiness** (iBb) program affords Berks County educators the opportunity to learn on site about a Berks County business or organization. Sponsored jointly by the Berks County Intermediate Unit and the Berks Business Education Coalition, participants spend four days over the summer experiencing the culture of the business or organization, gaining knowledge that they can take into their teaching responsibilities in the new school year. A fifth day brings the participants together as a group collectively, first at East Penn Manufacturing and then to share with each other in small groups a PowerPoint presentation they have developed about their experience to use in their classroom.

Twenty-four educators from ten school districts, the Berks Career and Technology Center, and Berks Catholic High School participated at 18 businesses and organizations in 2015. The participating business organizations and educators uniformly gave the program high marks. A number of businesses have participated yearly since the inception of the program in its present form in 2005.

Special thanks to our Berks County businesses and organizations for their commitment to this program.



Community volunteer Lori Lillis, with a student at 12th & Marion Elementary School.

## Early Childhood Education

The importance of early childhood education is taking on increasing currency. The United Way of Berks County, Ready.Set.READ! program, now in its fourth year, focuses on engaging community volunteers to provide one-to-one tutorial reading assistance to students in grades 1-3. As of December 31, 2015, this growing program was in place in 29 schools in 12 school districts across Berks County, with 376 tutors serving 402 students.

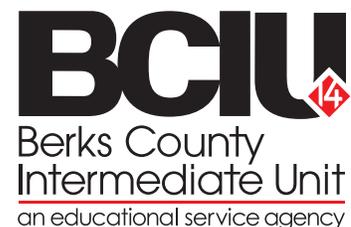
In 2015, the Berks Business Education Coalition (BBEC) worked with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC) to promote the connection between positive early childhood experiences and future education and life success. ELIC is a group of 75 senior-level business executives appointed by the governor who know that a future, strong economy is achieved by investing in our youngest learners today.

In January, BBEC Vice Chairman and of the Berks County Intermediate Unit Executive Director **Dr. Jill Hackman**, along with then-Director of ELIC **Nancy Fishman**, presented to the BBEC

board some of the important brain research and economic analysis that has led Pennsylvania to gradually increase the quality of and accessibility to early learning programs over the past decade. 90% of the human brain is developed by age five – with the foundation laid for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) skills between ages one and four, and that for executive function skills between three and five. The Early Learning Investment Commission is making a strong case for reaching children, especially at-risk children, early so that they, our workforce, and our community can succeed later in life.

While Pennsylvania has made strides in developing quality early childhood infrastructure in recent years, only one in six eligible children can currently access these programs. In 2015, the BBEC advocated for increased quality and access, penning opinion editorials for the regional media and hosting a breakfast meeting where ELIC member **Julia Klein**, Chairwoman & CEO of C. H. Briggs Company, made the connection between quality early learning programs and economic development.

Legislators statewide have been listening to advocates like the BBEC. There is now widespread bipartisan support for increasing public investment in high quality, early learning programs. In September 2015, **Governor Tom Wolf** made a new round of appointments to the Early Childhood Investment Commission, including BBEC Board member and secretary **Alan Ottinger**, President, Quality Investment Castings, Inc.



# Education Policy: Reflections on Federal and State Direction

Every president since Dwight D. Eisenhower, in one form or another, has pronounced himself as the “education president.” Whether it has been the 1958 federal legislation focusing on science, passed in reaction to the Russian satellite Sputnik scare; *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983 under Ronald Reagan; or *No Child Left Behind* promulgated by George W. Bush in 2002, each new generation of national leaders, every 8-10 years has proclaimed new insight, new determination, the next great set of ideas to “fix” the perceived ills that are American education.

Next up has been President Barack Obama. He too cannot leave office without setting his own stamp on the issue. On December 10, 2015, the President signed into law the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, intended, somehow to remedy deficiencies in the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, providing states more flexibility to define and meet standards, the very flexibility that *No Child Left Behind* was intended to eliminate.

The states in turn have set their own programs and policies, regularly changing goals, creating their own new version of what is best, newly minted schemata

every four or five years. The local school districts, where the rubber really meets the road, are left to regroup, refocus, to align anew to address as best they can the federal and state pronouncements on what really is best for children.

Pennsylvania is no exception. For 2013/2014, the Pennsylvania Department of Education published academic score cards, school district by district. Arguably, the factors included in the calculations were reasonably selected, making for a fair presentation of the academic achievement of the students throughout the district. We presented those scores in this publication last year and present them again this year.

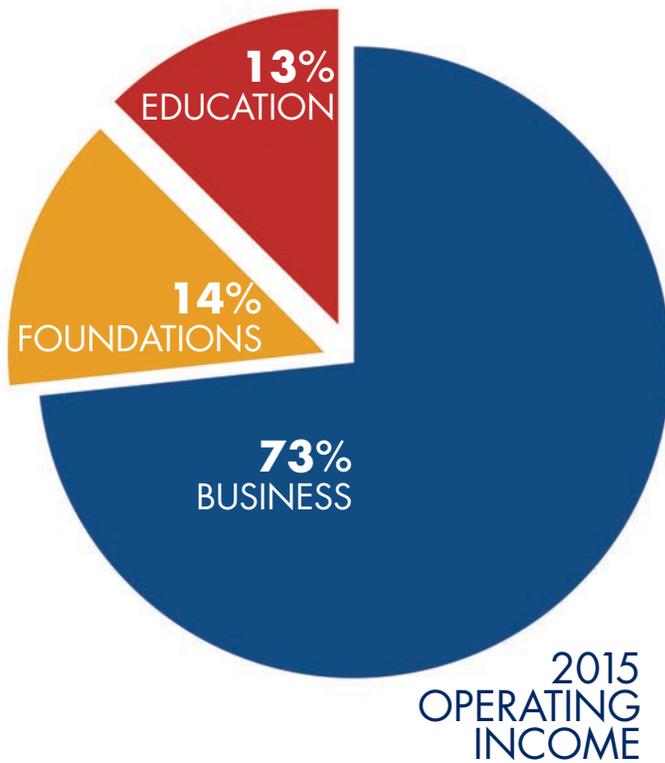
For 2014/2015, however, Pennsylvania has determined that the previous year’s calculations were insufficient. Only scores for high schools and certain elements within the scores are valid, with 2014/2015 being a year of “transition.” The scores for high schools presented this year are for the 2014/2015 school year ending June 30, 2015, with comparable scores for 2013/2014.

What may we conclude? The federal and state governments keep changing the criteria. Nothing long remains the same. But progress takes time. It takes multiple years. It can’t be done when the only constant is the changing political wind. Meanwhile, real needs for real children remain unaddressed.

Solomon Lausch, Ph.D.

## PA Department of Education Academic Score Card Data

SCHOOL DISTRICT	DISTRICT 2013/14	HIGH SCHOOL 2013/14	HIGH SCHOOL 2014/15
Antietam School District	70.5	57.2	62.7
Boyertown Area School District	87.2	93.2	84.3
Brandywine Heights Area School District	81.2	77.7	64.3
Conrad Weiser Area School District	81.2	67.4	81.3
Daniel Boone Area School District	81.8	83.8	69.6
Exeter Township School District	84.5	86.2	81.0
Fleetwood Area School District	79.0	72.6	76.7
Governor Mifflin School District	83.8	76.4	74.4
Hamburg Area School District	80.7	77.1	82.9
HEAD Charter School	33.5	33.5	40.0
Kutztown Area School District	83.7	90.8	81.6
Muhlenberg School District	72.9	75.6	70.2
Oley Valley School District	75.1	69.4	83.3
Reading School District	60.9	60.2	65.2
Schuylkill Valley School District	79.6	68.0	66.0
Tulpehocken Area School District	81.0	75.0	70.4
Twin Valley School District	80.9	77.0	64.5
Wilson School District	86.2	94.2	87.8
Wyomissing Area School District	83.8	81.3	89.3



## 2014/2015 FINANCIAL REPORT

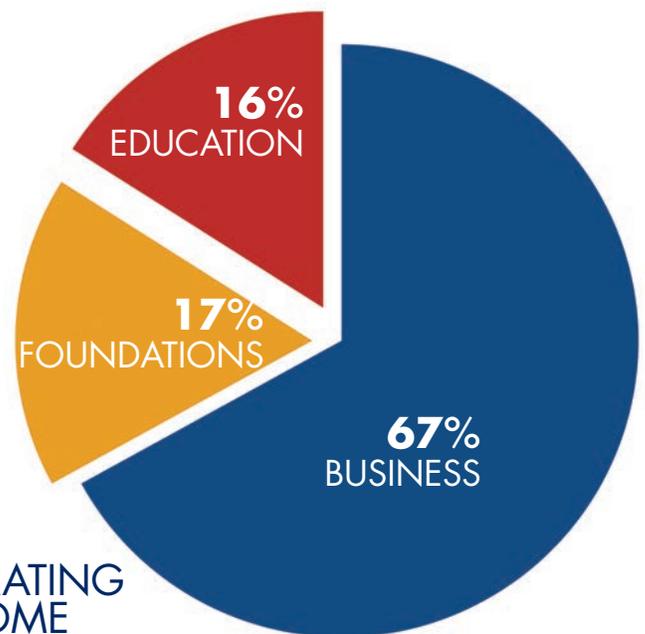
OPERATIONS	2014	2015
<b>Operating Income:</b>		
Business	67,800	85,550
Education	16,600	16,500
Foundations	17,610	14,600
Interest on Savings	60	62
<b>Total Operating Income</b>	<b>\$102,070</b>	<b>\$116,712</b>
<b>Operating Expenses:</b>		
Salaries and Benefits	78,082	81,026
Other Operating Supplies & Expenses	30,578	30,335
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$108,660</b>	<b>\$111,361</b>
<b>Operating Gain (Loss)</b>	<b>(\$6,590)</b>	<b>\$5,351</b>

### PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

	2014	2015
Direct Payment to Schools	15,983	1,064
inside BERKS business	11,500	12,245
Higher Education Campus Visits	3,152	2,380
<b>Total Program Expenditures</b>	<b>\$30,635</b>	<b>\$15,689</b>

### Financial Position

Total Liability and Equity	\$175,523	\$197,947
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- |   |  |                                      |   |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Albright College                            | Conrad Weiser Area School District               | Greater Reading Economic Partnership | Reading Electric                              |
| Alvernia University                         | Customers Bank                                   | Hamburg Area School District         | Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center |
| Antietam School District                    | Daniel Boone Area School District                | Jerlyn Foundation                    | Reading School District                       |
| Berks Career & Technology Center            | Diocese of Allentown                             | Kutztown Area School District        | Reinsel Kuntz Leshner                         |
| Berks County Community Foundation           | East Penn Manufacturing Co., Inc.                | Kutztown University                  | Riverview National Bank                       |
| Berks County Intermediate Unit              | E. J. Breneman, Inc.                             | M&T Bank                             | R. M. Palmer Company                          |
| Berks County Workforce Development Board    | EnerSys  | Marlin Miller Family Foundation      | Rolf D. Schmidt                               |
| Berks Technical Institute                   | Exeter Township School District                  | Meridian Bank                        | Schuylkill Valley School District             |
| Brentwood Industries                        | First Energy Foundation                          | Muhlenberg School District           | Susquehanna Bank                              |
| Boyertown Area School District              | First National Bank of PA                        | National Penn                        | Tompkins VIST Bank                            |
| Brandywine Heights Area School District     | First Priority Bank                              | Oley Valley School District          | Tulpehocken Area School District              |
| Carpenter Technology Corporation            | Fleetwood Area School District                   | Penn State Berks College             | Twin Valley School District                   |
| Catherine V. & Martin W. Hofmann Foundation | Fulton Bank                                      | Penske Truck Leasing Co.             | UGI Utilities, Inc.                           |
| Connors Investor Services Inc.              | Giant Food Stores                                | Quadrant EPP USA                     | Weidenhammer Systems Corporation              |
|   | Governor Mifflin School District                 | Quality Investment Castings, Inc.    | Wilson School District                        |
|   | Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry | Reading Area Community College       | Wyomissing Area School District               |




[www.berksbec.org](http://www.berksbec.org)

# bbec

## 2015

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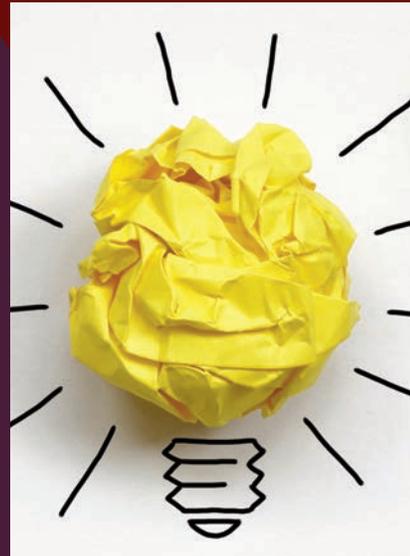
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