





a message from Marlin Miller:



Marlin Miller, Jr.
Chairman
Berks Business Education Coalition

making ideas happen

I would like to thank the Berks Business Education Coalition for \$2,500 grant the Exeter Township School District received to support the Cooperative Education Program for seniors in our high school. The program allows students to follow an interest or passion while still in high school, providing them direct experiences in the workforce under the sponsorship of various community businesses and the direct supervision and mentorship of a district employee. The experiences have been very positive for our students, helping them develop occupational skills, encouraging attitudes and habits that meet acceptable employment standards, and offering critical opportunities for employment. In the present fiscal climate, we would not be able to sustain this program without the Coalition's help. We are most appreciative of this support.

Dr. Beverly A. Martin
Superintendent
Exeter Township
School District



In our formation 21 years ago, we resolved to become a fulcrum for the interaction of Berks businesses and schools to promote greater student achievement. The business community is keenly aware that the innovation and productivity we need to be competitive locally, nationally and globally is a workforce with the skills to make that innovation and competitiveness a reality.

We have invested in programs that broaden the students' awareness of new career paths and opportunities as they move through their high school years. We have encouraged the use of technology to inform instruction and to enhance teaching skills. And we have consistently strived to promote forums for teacher to teacher dialogue, educator and business interaction, and exchanges between basic education and higher education.

We have a lot of which to be proud in education in Berks

County. We are blessed with four fine 4-year colleges and universities and in the Reading Area Community College have one of the finest such programs in the state. As we present elsewhere in this report, most of our students are doing well in acquiring the basic skills that are the building blocks for all educational attainment. Not all of our students are successful, however. And where there are needs, particularly but not only in the city of Reading, we have an ethical responsibility to do our part to enable them to acquire the knowledge, skills, habits and values that enable success.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Bob Runkle on his retirement after six years as executive director for the Coalition and to welcome Sol Lausch as his replacement. We wish Bob well in his new endeavors and are pleased to have Sol coming aboard.

We continue to be indebted to our business partners for their support of the Coalition initiatives and believe that our sustained partnership between business and education is making a difference for the youth of our community.

Marlin Miller, Jr., Chairman



student ACHIEVEMENT

by Solomon Lausch, Ph.D., Executive Director

In almost every culture worldwide, the focus of instruction for the first eight or nine years of schooling is the basic skills of reading and mathematics. The curriculum is largely the same for all students. At about age 14 or 15, however, the curriculum begins to differentiate markedly. For the Chinese it is grade ten. In the United States it begins typically with high school, or grade nine. In Europe the change can begin even earlier but with the reservation that options remain open. The differentiation results either from student self selection, as in the United States, or in most other countries, from placement after formal testing.

A host of factors contribute to the level of achievement that students attain. Universally, girls tend to achieve more rapidly in the early years with boys catching up by high school. Cultural homogeneity is a factor. Achievement and level of poverty correlate inversely. Home stability and parental expectations associate importantly with academic performance.

The foregoing makes it difficult to evaluate student achievement across countries and cultures. There are obvious reasons why small nations such

as Singapore and Finland always rank highly on international lists of student achievement. Unfortunately these facile rankings too easily become the basis for drawing conclusions about student achievement here in the United States.

The judgments tend to result in federal and state policy making on a one size fits all model. We engage in alarmist hand wringing: the outcry about science education in 1957 with the Russian launch of the Sputnik satellite; Secretary of Education Terrence Bell's 1983 publication, *A Nation at Risk*, in which he predicted that America was on the path to second class status within a generation if the educational system did not improve. Most alarming of all may have been this from Princeton University, 1946: ninety percent of the students entering college today are unprepared for college work.

Every president since Lyndon Johnson has in one way or another declared himself to be "the education president." Jimmy Carter went so far as to create a separate cabinet level department of education which every president since has seen fit to continue.

Berks County is a microcosm of the United States. We are rural, urban and suburban. We are middle class. We have pockets of affluence. We also have significant poverty. We are culturally heterogeneous. How then are we doing locally in public education?

A review of the 2012 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) of basic skills in mathematics and reading for eighth grade is enlightening. On any given year there are about 5,000 students in grade 8 in the 18 public school districts, approximately 1,000 or 20% in Reading and 4,000 or 80% in the remaining school districts. The data clearly distinguish, when evaluated for Berks County as a whole, and separately, with the Reading School District excluded.

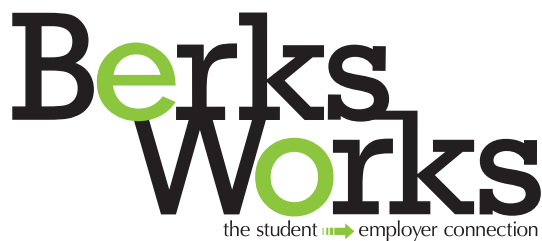
County-wide, 76.4 of the eighth graders tested proficient in mathematics and 79.85 in reading. Looking separately at the Reading School District, 62.0% and 50.0% tested proficient, respectively, in mathematics and reading.

In the rest of the county, exclud-

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2012 YEAR IN REVIEW

The Berks Business Education Coalition came into being 21 years ago, the result of a group of business persons and educators coming together to identify ways for the business and education communities to work together for the betterment of student achievement in Berks County. More than 40 businesses and each of the 18 school districts, the five Berks based colleges and universities, the



two vocational technical schools, the Berks County Intermediate Unit, and the Diocese of Allentown are members of the coalition. Throughout these 21 years, the Coalition has remained true to its stated mission **"...to develop and coordinate resources within the business and education communities to promote selective initiatives which improve the competencies of students and enhance their aspirations for continuous education."**



The focus of the Coalition's activities during 2012 was in the areas of career awareness and preparation, assisting member schools in improving academic achievement and facilitating dialogue between basic and higher education institutions in support of post-secondary education. The Career Pathways steering committee, comprised of representatives from basic and higher education identified priorities for school-based programs, including support for BerksWorks, the expansion of an elementary component of Career Cruising, and schools interested in implementing "Keys to Work."

The Coalition provided funding to support the Berks County Intermediate Unit and member school districts to implement an



inside BERKS business:

A five-day learning experience for educators

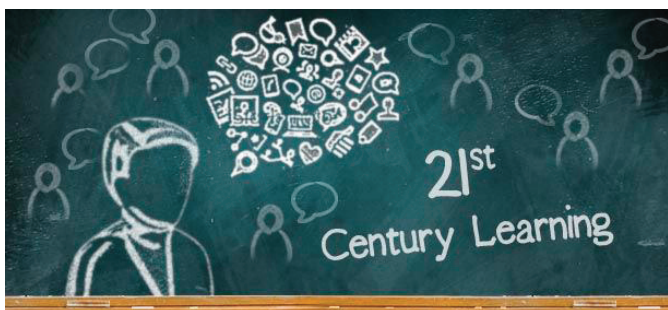


2012 East Penn Manufacturing Mentors and Educator Interns

online teacher education resource called Edu-Planet 21. The program provides opportunities for teachers and administrators to access high quality professional development topics and to dialogue with colleagues from other districts on topics of common professional interest.

The Inside Berks Business (iBb) program provided a stipend for teachers and other educators to engage in a set of experiences over five days in a Berks County business. The participants gained practical knowledge about the requirements in a given work environment which they then can adapt usefully in their teaching assignment.

The Coalition continued to facilitate dialogue between basic and higher education through the



Basic/Higher Education Committee comprised of representatives from school districts, the Berks County Intermediate Unit and the five colleges and universities in Berks County. Programs included dialogue between basic and higher education faculty in discipline specific groups and the facilitation of faculty exchanges between basic and higher education through classroom visitation and observation.

The Coalition continued its long standing support for high school students, usually ninth graders, including those who might not necessarily project as college bound, to get a firsthand look at the environment of a college campus. Fifteen hundred students from eight Berks County school districts visited in class size groups at Alvernia University, Albright College, Kutztown University, Penn State Berks, and the Reading Area Community College with the Coalition arranging the initial logistics and picking up the cost for lunch where applicable.

And in 2012 for the first time, the Coalition afforded school districts the opportunity to apply for grants of up to \$2,500 to support programs of particular value to them. The intent here was to leverage a small amount of money to achieve a larger end. The Coalition awarded a total of seven grants for such purposes as an outdoor education program for eighth graders and an internship program for course credit for high school seniors.

2012 YEAR IN REVIEW



2013 GOALS:

- Promote quality career awareness and development programs for K-12 students in Berks County.
- Support member schools in the effort to improve basic academic performance.
- Support efforts to promote appropriate, differentiated interest in pursuit of post-secondary, high education.
- Facilitate continuing dialogue between, with, and among K-12 and higher education.
- Formulate action on the specific topic of public funding for cyber charter education.
- Provide for the viability and sustainability of coalition programs and services.

Adopted December 6, 2012

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 aspirations for continuing education.



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ing Reading, 85.9% and 87.1% tested proficient, respectively, in mathematics and reading. Another 4.1% (160) and 2.9% (120) would have had to test proficient, respectively, in mathematics and reading to reach a standard of 90% proficiency.

Clearly the picture for most of Berks County is very positive for most students. The point is important. Work is yet to be done, but, assuming that the knowledge and skills being tested holds constant over time, an uncertain assumption, most of the school districts are close to reaching a 90% standard. Three, in fact, already have.

The 90% standard is important. If a test is of sufficient rigor, it is fair to expect that some students will not achieve the standard. This does not mark them as failures. Most, one would expect, have achieved some basic level. For others, with pronounced handicaps, the 2-3% of the population in that category, it is unfair even to expect them to attempt the same assessment.

The data remind us to look carefully at Reading. Half or more of the students do test proficient. For the others, short of the 90% standard, it is incumbent on all of us to find ways to help the under-achieving students overcome the effects of poverty and other impediments which prevent them from achieving to their full potential.



Pennsylvania System of School Assessment GRADE 8

2008	MATHEMATICS	READING	TOTAL
State	70.3%	78.3%	148.6%
Berks County	74.5%	80.2%	154.7%
Excluding Reading	79.1%	85.1%	164.2%

2012	MATHEMATICS	READING	TOTAL
State	76.4%	79.8%	156.2%
Berks County	81.4%	81.7%	163.1%
Excluding Reading	85.9%	87.1%	173.0%


Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education





Cyber Education

by Solomon Lausch, Ph.D., Executive Director




The explosion of information technology (IT) into all sectors of society most certainly includes the arena of education. The curriculum in every public and private school in Pennsylvania includes elements of internet-based instruction ranging widely from the most fundamental usages to fully integrated, cyber-based connectivity for all elements of the program.

Depending on the district and the identified needs of the student, the cost can range anywhere from \$8,000 to \$20,000. The payments significantly exceed the actual cost to provide the programs. In just a few years of operation, these programs have become an expensive and wasteful proposition.

The cost to Berks county taxpayers for the 2011-12 school year was \$16,261,539. Citing extensive problems in the formula for charter and cyber charter funding, Auditor General Jack Wagner this past June called for major changes in the funding formula for these schools.

The issue is not only financial. The academic and graduation rate record for cyber charter schools is very poor. None of the 12 cyber charter schools in 2012 met the federally mandated standard for progress in achievement required of all schools in Pennsylvania. School districts have repeatedly documented that they can offer the same or similar cyber-based program as offered by the cyber charter schools, at a fraction of the cost, and with substantially better results.

We need a change in the law. The law must change to require that a student who wishes to enroll in a publicly funded cyber-based curriculum must select a program provided in his district of residence. The student wishing to pursue a cyber-based program other than that offered by his district of residence shall do so at his own expense. This simple change will return millions of dollars to taxpayer pockets, result in improved, more appropriate education, and, importantly, keep the student active in the mainstream of community life.



“With the tightening of school budgets and funding available to school districts throughout the state, Pennsylvania’s flawed and overly generous funding formula for charter and cyber charter schools is a luxury taxpayers can no longer afford.”

Auditor General
Jack Wagner

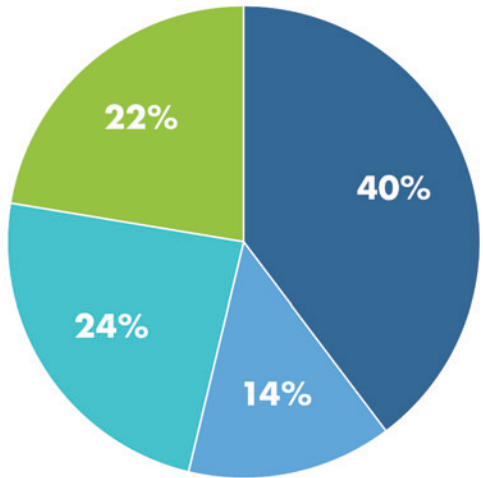
Schools have invested heavily in IT backbone, hardware and software to promote differentiated instruction, address special needs across the learning spectrum, and bring to the student’s fingertips the rich plethora of knowledge that internet-based inquiry affords. Literally, schools can and do design curricula specific to a single student’s needs.

The extent and breadth of this deployment of information technology over the past 15 years is such that it ranks second only to teacher salaries in the budgetary allocation for instructional resources in most of Pennsylvania’s 500 school districts. The money is well spent. IT funding is a cost effective, prudent use of taxpayer resources.

There is a problem, however. Under present state law, publicly funded cyber charter school programs have been approved throughout the state, offering a cyber-based curriculum to any interested student. Upon enrollment, the cyber charter receives a payment from the student’s district of residence based on that district’s “average instructional cost.”

financial report

Financial Statement - Calendar 2011 and 2012



2011 OPERATING INCOME

- Business
- Education
- Foundations
- Program Operating Support

Operations

Operating Income:

Business	33,284	59,254
Education	11,750	13,100
Interest on Savings	375	21
Foundations	20,000	15,000
Program Operating Support	18,750	12,750
Total Operating Income	\$84,159	\$100,125

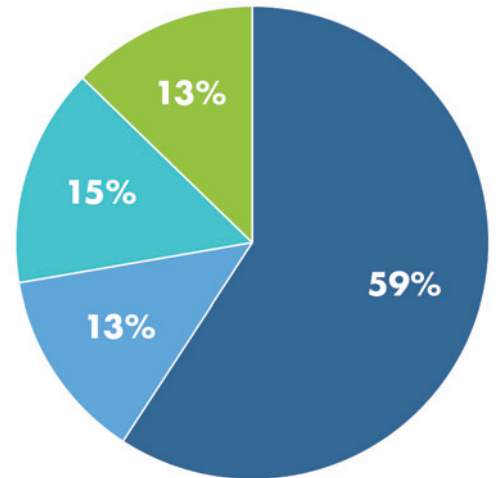
Operating Expenses:

Salaries and Benefits	73,799	76,084
Other Operating Supplies & Expenses	29,728	32,731
Total Operating Expenses	\$103,527	\$108,815

Operating Gain (Loss)

(\$19,368) (\$8,690)

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- Business
- Education
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Programs

Program Funding:

Business	14,000	38,578
State and Federal Funding	59,090	36,250
Total Program Funding	\$73,090	\$74,828

Program Expenditures:

Career Education Partnership Project	65,609	64,661
Verizon Reads		10,000
Total Program Expenditures	\$65,609	\$74,661

Program Gain (Loss) 7,481 167

Total Gain (Loss) (\$11,887) (\$8,523)

Financial Position

Total Assets - Cash and Investments \$289,220 \$235,896

Less Assets Deferred for Future Program Projects (\$220,816) (\$196,736)

Assets/Equity available for Operations \$68,404 \$39,160

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membership list



“

The ninth grade college visit program is an excellent opportunity for students who are beginning their high school experience to take a look at educational facilities and career opportunities in Berks County. In addition, the program is a valuable resource to help satisfy the career education standards in our high school. ”

Joshua Kuehner
Assistant Principal
Schuylkill Valley
High School



- Albright College
- Alvernia College
- Antietam School District
- Automotive Services, Inc.
- Berks Career & Technology Center
- Berks County Community Foundation
- Berks County Intermediate Unit
- Bills Khakis, Inc.
- Boyertown Area School District
- Brandywine Heights Area School District
- E. J. Breneman, Inc.
- Carpenter Technology Corporation
- Community Banks
- Connors Investor Services, Inc.
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- Daniel Boone Area School District
- Diocese of Allentown
- East Penn Manufacturing Company, Inc.
- EnerSys, Inc.
- Exeter Township School District
- Fleetwood Area School District
- Fulton Bank/Great Valley Division
- Giant Food Stores, LLC
- Governor Mifflin School District
- Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Hamburg Area School District
- Mr. Thomas Handwerk
- Herbein + Company
- Hofmann Industries
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- Kutztown University
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- National Penn Bank
- Oley Valley School District
- Penn State Berks
- Penske Truck Leasing Co.
- Performance Sports Apparel, Inc.
- Quadrant Engineering Plastic Products
- Reading Area Community College
- Reading Electric
- Reading School District
- Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center
- David W. Rohrbach
- Mr. Philip Rowe, Jr.
- Mr. Rolf Schmidt
- Schuylkill Valley School District
- SFS intec, Inc.
- Susquehanna Bancshares, Inc.
- Tulpehocken Area School District
- Twin Valley School District
- UGI Utilities, Inc.
- Verizon
- Weidenhammer Systems Corporation
- Wilson School District
- Wyomissing Area School District



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Connors Investor Services Inc.

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EnerSys, Inc.

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Dr. Rudy Ruth
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making

ideas
happen

2012 ANNUAL REPORT



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