



persevere

| ˌpɜrsəˈvɪr | verb

They persevered
until the work
was finished:

steadfast, resolute,
unflagging, persistent.

bbec

**BERKS BUSINESS
EDUCATION COALITION**

2020
ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION:

The mission of the Berks Business Education Coalition is to develop and to coordinate programs within the business and education communities which improve the competencies of students and ensure that they have the aspirations, skills, and knowledge to plan appropriately for their lives after high school.

GOALS:

1. Promote career awareness and development programs for students in Berks County.
2. Support member schools in the effort to improve basic academic performance.
3. Promote appropriate, differentiated interest in pursuit of post secondary education.
4. Facilitate continuing dialogue between, with, and among Pre-K, K-12, and higher education.
5. Support initiatives to assure that quality Pre-K education, ages 3-5, is available for all children in Berks County, in particular, for those from disadvantaged or at risk backgrounds.
6. Provide for the viability and sustainability of Coalition programs and services.

As we began 2020 few foresaw the impact that coronavirus (COVID-19) would have on our society. Providing for a robust and thorough education for Berks County's students this past year was an immense challenge. Hardly an overstatement!

The challenge crossed two academic years, a struggle to finish with some sense of normalcy in the spring and a struggle to commence and carry-on in the new school year in the fall. Preschool, K-12 and higher education separately and collectively weighed the competing concerns for health and safety and the best courses of action to provide instruction. Superintendent Dr. Richard H. Faidley of the Wilson School District puts the challenges into perspective in his essay on page 3 of this report.

As we do each year, we report here on our program initiatives over the past year. The reports are reflective. Some of what we planned just could not happen. COVID-19 took its toll. But good things did happen. We report, for example, on the value of the Students Interacting with Business program historically has had for students but conservatively, the impact for teachers, also.

Above all, we want to underscore our resolve to carry on. We want to see students again visiting at businesses and on college campuses early in their high school years. We want to place interested teachers in one-week summer internships at participating Berks County businesses. And we want to continue and strengthen our partnerships with organizations such as the Manufacturing Resource Center and the World Affairs Council of Greater Reading, all to do our part to assure a bright future for the next generation and for our community.

John P. Weidenhammer

“You Don’t Know What You’ve Got Until It’s Gone” Reflections From a Grateful Superintendent

The lyrics “you don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone” have been swirling around in my head since March. There has been so much that we’ve all taken for granted that vanished in what seemed like an instant. The roar of the crowd in a capacity filled stadium; the hug of a friend you haven’t seen in months; and the community gatherings that make so many summer memories.

But for me, what I will never take for granted again are the excited faces of our students and staff as they engage in all the activities that make school the memory-making, life-changing experience that it is for so many.

In March of 2020, when Governor Wolf ordered all public school districts to shutter their doors to students, the once vibrant, energetic hallways of our school buildings fell eerily silent. Our classrooms, athletic fields, theatrical stages, performance halls, and graduation podiums – all silent. For our students and our staff, the sudden loss of any sense of normalcy was a shock that some are still recovering from today.

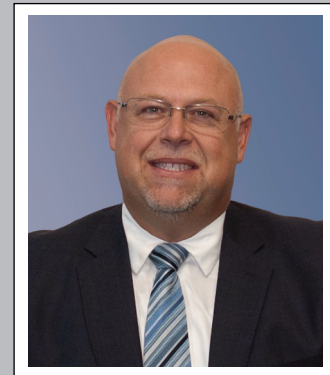
When we gathered together as a leadership team to discuss the start of the 2020-2021 school year, one thing we all embraced was that, for the Wilson School District, a return to school needed to include options for in-person instruction across all grade levels. We knew that the opportunity to return to the classroom meant more than just a restoration to the type of instruction that we know is best for students. It meant access to regular meals, social services, expert instruction

and support, and most importantly, contact with peers and classmates that forge the relationships so vital for emotional development.

The return to the classroom, to the school buildings and to a sense of normalcy wasn’t without its challenges. How could we ensure the safety of our students and staff in the midst of a global pandemic? What about the guidance that changed almost daily? What about students and staff in masks, kids maintaining social distance, families that opted for remote learning? The questions just kept coming and the answers weren’t always apparent.

But with a total team effort, the support of our BCIU, Berks County School districts, the input of our local medical professionals, and the encouragement of our staff and community, a plan began to take shape. As a district, we are pleased that we have been able to offer our families school choice options so that they can choose the educational plan that works best for them. We are so proud of our professional educators, staff and administration who have embraced this plan and put it into practice. But most of all, we are proud of our students. They are our daily inspiration for why we do what we do. The hours of planning, the frustration we felt and the tough decisions we made were all worth it when we greeted those smiling faces at our school sites for the first time since March.

And while we long for the day when we can welcome all of our students



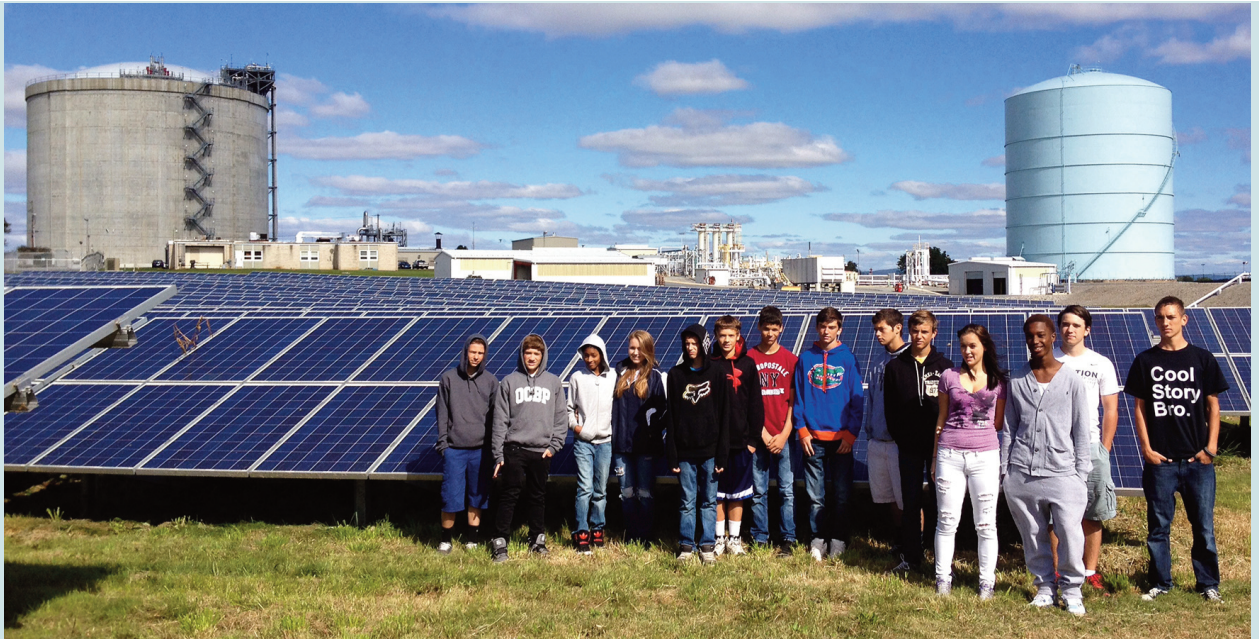
back to their classrooms, we will keep moving forward with the end goal in mind—to provide for our student’s educational needs, but also support their social and emotional well-being as well. If we’ve learned anything from the past nine months, it’s that we need to be flexible, open to new ideas and supportive of each other.

And we’ve also learned that those lyrics are so very true; you really don’t know what you’ve got until it’s gone. So, let’s embrace today, learn from yesterday and hope for a better tomorrow.

Dr. Richard H. Faidley,
Wilson School District
Superintendent



Ninth grade students from Conrad Weiser Area SD visit UGI Energy in 2013.



Students Interacting with Business

The Students Interacting with Business program exemplifies the commitment Berks County businesses have to education. Over the course of seven years, 2013–2019, some 26,000 students visited in class size groups at participating Berks County businesses.

The day typically begins with an assembly program led by a business person, focusing on the factors prospective employers consider in assessing a candidate for employment. The students then travel by bus to a business to learn first-hand about the business, employment and career opportunities, and to hear again about the attributes that make for a good employee. The schools then follow-up with reflective, written assignments to be entered into a student-kept career portfolio required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

The program focuses on ninth graders. The intent is for students to have a direct, visceral “real world” experience at the start of their high school years, helping them frame a sense and purpose for their ongoing studies.

One understated outcome of the program is the knowledge gained by the teacher chaperones. Some of the chaperones, because they teach mostly ninth graders, have been part of each of the trips. Conservatively, extrapolating for a 15–1 student / teacher ratio, and allowing for the ebb and flow of duties, more than 600 teachers have chaperoned one or more times, bringing back to the classroom their reflections, also.

COVID-19 put an end to the program in 2020, again making its disruptive presence felt in education and for that matter within businesses, as well. We fully intend to resume the program in 2021.



Brandywine Heights Area High School enjoying the sweet taste of success at R. M. Palmer Company, 2017.

bbec in the news

The Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU), the BBEC and the Manufacturing Resource Center (MRC), with the BCIU as the driving force, have collaborated to produce a three-part study unit for students to address in part the goals of the Students Interacting with Business program.

The unit draws upon material which guides students to reflect upon their interests, the factors employers value in a good employee, and avails students access to the MRC library of 119 short videos about manufacturing produced by middle school students in Berks and Schuylkill counties over the past four years. As with Students Interacting with Business, students who complete the study unit enter what they have learned into their personal career awareness portfolio required for all students by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

The study unit may be accessed at:

<https://sites.google.com/berksiu.org/bbecbusinessstrip/home>

The MRC video library may be accessed at: www.whatssocool.org



Reading Intermediate High School ninth graders learn about Pennsylvania horticulture at Ontelaunee Orchards in 2016.

Our thanks to the businesses who participated in our 2019 program.

- Alcon Research, Ltd.
- Berks County Agricultural Center
- Brenntag Northeast LLC
- Brentwood Industries
- Cambridge-Lee Industries LLC
- Carpenter Technology Corporation
- Custom Milling and Consulting
- DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
- East Penn Manufacturing Co.
- Electro Space Fabricators
- EnerSys
- Good Life Companies
- Grosfillex
- Met-Ed, A FirstEnergy Company
- Misco Products Corporation
- Mitsubishi Chemical Advanced
- NAI Keystone
- New Castle Lawn & Landscaping
- Packaging Corporation of America
- Penn State Health St. Joseph
- Penske Truck Leasing
- Radius Corporation
- R.M. Palmer Company
- Seakeeper, Inc.
- Sealstrip Corporation
- SFS intec, Inc.
- Solo Laboratories
- Sunsweet
- Tower Health – RH&MC
- UGI Energy Services
- UGI Utilities, Inc.
- Viwinco Windows
- Weidenhammer
- WORLD electronics

bbec in the news



Full Steam Ahead! inside Berks business Program Provides Meaningful Experiences

This longstanding program engages teachers for a one-week set of experiences June – August, with Berks County businesses and service organizations. The teachers take what they have learned and translate it directly into their responsibilities in the classroom.

The Berks Business Education Coalition (BBEC) and the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) collaborate in carrying out the program with the BCIU handling the logistics and the BBEC identifying the business or organization to match each teacher's expressed interest. In 2019, thirty teachers engaged with 23 businesses and organizations around Berks County.

In 2020, a record number of 33 teachers was set to participate with the BBEC having identified 29 placements and the BCIU seeking placements in the arts for the other four.

Unfortunately, as with elsewhere in this report, COVID-19 put an end to most placements – all but three, that is!

Carolyn Woodford teaches German at Exeter High School. Carolyn's experience was with the Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center at Kutztown University, working directly and remotely with **Patrick Donmoyer**, the Center's director. The obvious fit with her teaching enabled Carolyn to delve into the traditional Pennsylvania German (Dutch) culture and language to carry into her teaching of German. Carolyn in turn assisted Mr. Donmoyer in the preparation of video clips useful to the Center in its community outreach.

Dr. Jullien Searfoss, gifted education teacher, Muhlenberg School District, is a recent doctoral graduate in the Educational Leadership program at Alvernia University. Her experience there in conjunction with her teaching duties instilled an

inside BERKS business:



A five-day learning experience for educators

Our thanks to these participating businesses and organizations:

Alcon Research, Ltd.	Morgan Corporation
Alvernia University	Pennsylvania's Americana Region
American Crane & Equipment Corporation	Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center
East Penn Manufacturing Co., Inc.	Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad
Family Guidance Center	Reading Fightin Phils
GoodLife Companies	Safe Berks
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary	Senator Judith Schwank
Liberty Environmental, Inc.	Tower Health
Met-Ed, A FirstEnergy Company	UGI Utilities, Inc.
Mitsubishi Chemical Advanced Materials	White Star Tours & Travel Center

interest in learning about the college admissions selection process, A to Z. Jullien worked directly with **Mary-Alice Orzechowski**, Vice President of Enrollment. She accomplished her goal, taking from her experience a wealth of information about the admissions process and the criteria schools, such as Alvernia University employ, leading to an admissions decision.

Caroline McRobbins teaches social studies at Twin Valley High School. One of her assignments is an elective class, one she created, "Pennsylvania and Local History." The class focuses on the history of Pennsylvania, its important role in the American Revolution, the Civil War, American industrialization and then dives more deeply into Berks County and the Twin Valley community. Caroline expressed a very specific interest in the Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad. She spent a day in person taking a "ride on the Reading" and then read and researched about the railroad's long history.

Her mentor was **Matt Fisher**, General Manager, Passenger Department.

Using her research, Caroline wrote a paper on the Reading Company Class T-1 Northern 2102, one of four engines completed in October, 1945 and among the last of steam locomotives built in the United States. The Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2020. Caroline's paper contributed importantly to the celebration. And Caroline now has a fund of knowledge about rail transportation history in Berks County and its continuing importance today, knowledge she can take directly into her classroom.

Our thanks to the businesses and organizations which agreed to host one or more teachers for *inside Berks business* until COVID-19 put an end to the program. The placements with Alvernia University, the Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center, and the Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad, as noted, were completed.



A Look Back at Higher Education Campus Visits

The longstanding *Higher Education Campus Visits* program takes students, primarily ninth graders, in class-size groups onto the campuses of Albright College, Alvernia University, Kutztown University, Penn State Berks, and the Reading Area Community College. The goal is for students early in their high school years to be able to experience firsthand the culture and expectations of higher education, whether or not their high school graduation path leads them in that direction.

Over the course of 16 years, 2003-2019, more than 34,000 students from each of the 18 Berks County school districts participated in the program.

The schedule was set for the spring 2020. Unfortunately, only three of the 18 high schools were able to complete their visits before COVID-19 brought the program to an abrupt halt.



Wyomissing Area School District ninth graders visiting in 2015 with the Nittany Lion at Penn State Berks.

Some great news. In consultation with the BBEC, Alvernia University is producing a presentation which highlights the five Berks County based colleges and universities and also the Berks Technical Institute. It will be available to the schools in early February 2021 and appropriate for students, grades 9-12 to address in part, at least, the goals of the onsite visits.

Our sincere appreciation to Alvernia University for making this project happen.

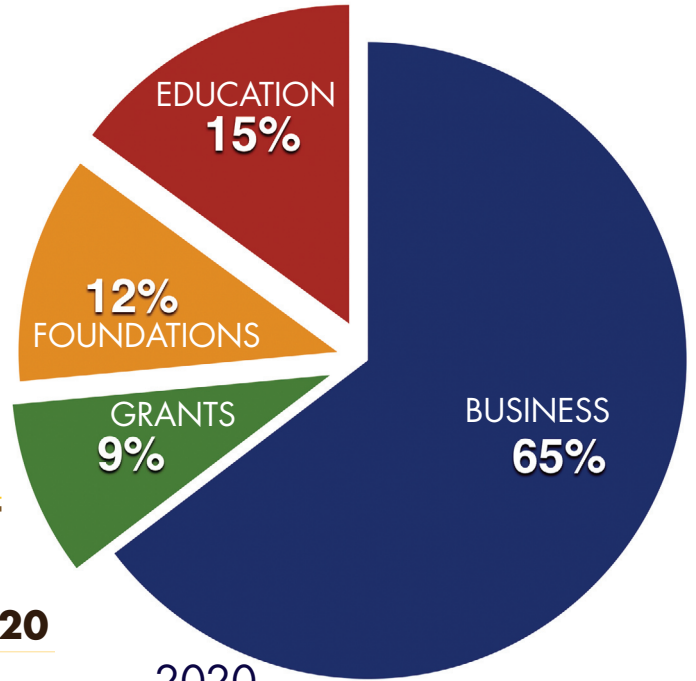
The concept of offering interested students an opportunity to experience an internship as part of their curriculum continues to gain traction among the high schools in Berks County. Sixteen of the 18 Berks county public schools high schools again offered the internship opportunity to seniors (and sometimes juniors) for the 2020/2021 school year.

COVID-19 adversely impacted participation to a degree. Still, 458 seniors, representing 9.9% of the total cohort were so engaged first semester, compared to 568 students first semester last year. Internships provide students valuable insight into possible direction for further study post high school and/or a direct link for possible employment upon graduation.

Kyle Vonderlinden is a senior at Daniel Boone Area High School. His internship placement is with the Southern Berks Regional Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Kyle writes: "I am hands-on and learning a lot as I run calls with the emergency medical technicians (EMT) and paramedics. I am doing a virtual EMT class for three months and will be an EMT by the end of February. This internship is giving me many different career pathways to pick from and also helped me figure out what I want to do when I graduate college. I am currently working on my EVOC class in which I will be able to drive the ambulance and also be able to drive some trucks at the fire company where I am currently a volunteer."

Kyle plans to attend college to become a nurse practitioner.





2020 OPERATING INCOME

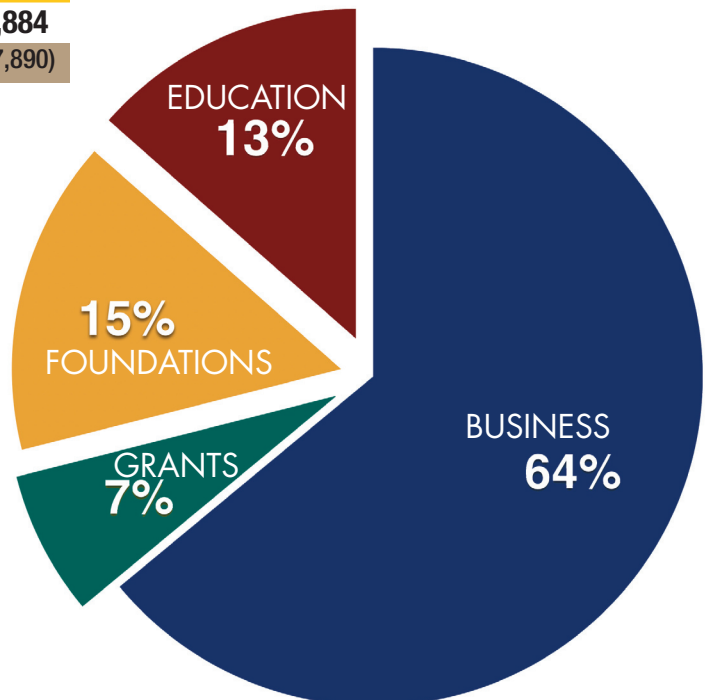
FINANCIAL REPORT

OPERATIONS 2019 2020

Operating Income:			
Business	76,900	72,750	
Education	16,200	16,800	
Foundations	18,600	13,000	
Grants	8,500	10,000	
Interest on Savings	1,603	444	
Total Operating Income	\$121,803	\$112,994	

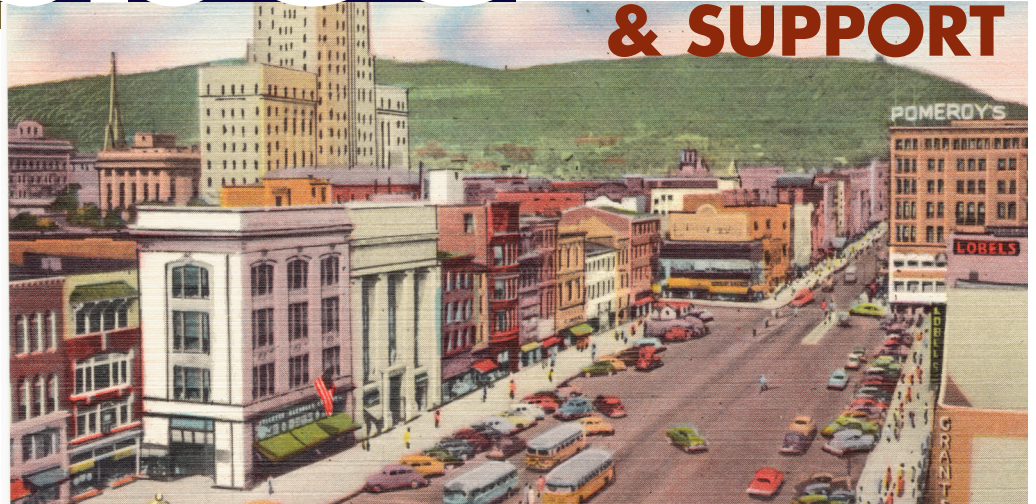
Operating Expenses:			
Salaries and Benefits	94,348	99,988	
Other Operating Supplies & Expenses	28,772	20,896	
Total Operating Expenses	\$123,120	\$120,884	
Operating Gain (Loss)	(\$1,317)	(\$7,890)	

2019 OPERATING INCOME





MEMBERSHIP & SUPPORT



Albright College
 Alcon Research Ltd.
 Alvernia University
 American Crane & Equipment Corp.
 Antietam School District
 BB&T Bank
 Berks Career & Technology Center
 Berks County Agricultural Center
 Berks County Community Foundation
 Berks County Intermediate Unit
 Berks County Workforce Development Board
 Brenntag Northeast LLC
 Brentwood Industries
 Boyertown Area School District
 Brandywine Heights Area School District
 Cacoosing Family Charitable Foundation
 Cambridge-Lee Industries LLC
 Carpenter Technology Corporation
 Catherine V. & Martin W. Hofmann Foundation
 CNH-Case New Holland
 Conrad Weiser School District
 Custom Milling and Consulting
 Customers Bank
 Daniel Boone Area School District
 Diocese of Allentown
 DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
 East Penn Manufacturing Co., Inc.

Electro Space Fabricators
 EnerSys
 Exeter Township School District
 Family Guidance Center
 First Energy Foundation
 First Priority Bank
 Fleetwood Area School District
 Fulton Bank
 Gage Personnel
 Good Life Companies
 Governor Mifflin School District
 Greater Reading Chamber Alliance
 Grosfillex
 Hamburg Area School District
 Hawk Mountain Sanctuary
 Herbein+ Company Inc.
 Jerlyn Foundation
 Kutztown Area School District
 Kutztown University
 Liberty Environmental
 M&T Bank
 Marlin Miller Jr. Family Foundation

Met-Ed, A FirstEnergy Company
 Meridian Bank
 Misco Products Corporation
 Mitsubishi Chemical Advanced Materials
 Morgan Corporation
 Muhlenberg School District
 NAI Keystone
 Newcastle Lawn & Landscaping
 Oley Valley School District
 Packaging Corporation of America
 Penn State Berks
 Penn State Health St. Joseph
 Penske Truck Leasing Co.
 Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center
 Radius Corporation
 Reading Area Community College
 Reading Fightin Phils
 Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center
 Reading School District
 R. M. Palmer Company

Safe Berks
 Schuylkill Valley School District
 Seakeeper, Inc.
 Sealstrip Corporation
 SFS intec, Inc.
 Solo Laboratories
 Sunsweet
 Tompkins Vist Bank
 Tower Health
 Tulpehocken School District
 Twin Valley School District
 UGI Energy Services
 UGI Utilities, Inc.
 Viwinco Windows
 Weidenhammer
 Wells Fargo Foundation
 White Star Tours & Travel Center
 Wilson School District
 World Affairs Council of Greater Reading
 WORLD electronics
 Wyomissing Area School District
 Wyomissing Foundation

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**“We will either
find a way
or make one.”**

--Hannibal (247-182 BC)
Carthaginian General

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EDUCATION COALITION**

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January 2021

Designed and produced by
Berks County Intermediate Unit