BERKS BUSINESS EDUCATION COALITION

Student Satisfaction & Program Evaluation Study

Presented by: LEPSON RESEARCH GROUP

Research Design

6 Focus Groups

7th-12 Grades

7 School Districts Represented

Brandywine Heights, Kutztown, Conrad Weiser, Schuylkill Valley, Twin Valley, Reading, Governor Mifflin

*Focus groups were conducted at three Berks County CTC locations (Berks CTC East, Berks CTC West, Reading-Muhlenberg CTC)

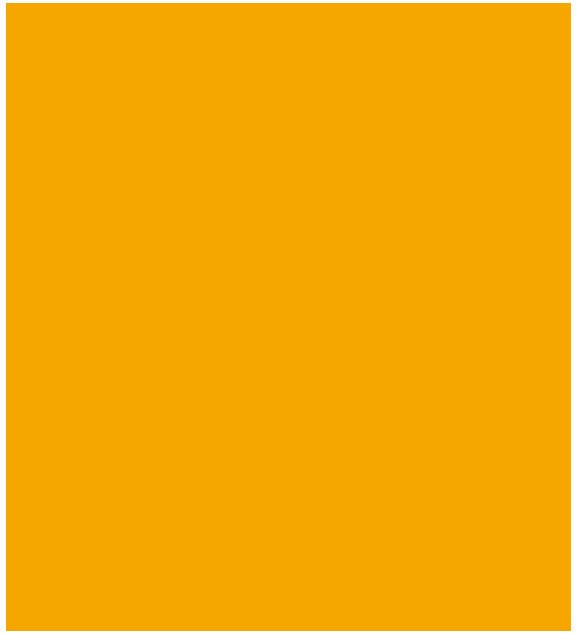
The Challenge

The questions isn't: "What did students say?"

The question is: **"What do we do with what they said?"**

How can BBEC best utilize this information, as a third-party advocate, to help schools, higher education, businesses, and non-profits within Berks County build meaningful initiatives and collaborations for career readiness?

Major Findings



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What Must Programs Have To Be Meaningful?

Customized/Personalized

"Make It Personal To Me." - Will not accept a generalized, one size fits most approach

- Personal Interests
- Strengths
- Motivations
- Opportunity to choose

Interactive/Firsthand Learning

"Let me experience it."

- Praised activities that allow for hands on learning & real-world exposure
  - Internships
  - Shadowing programs

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Evaluation of Career Readiness Activities

Highly Rated

- Internships/Shadowing Programs
- Career-focused Clubs/ Extracurricular Organizations

Opportunities To Strengthen

- College Campus Visits
- On-site Business Visits
- Career fairs

The difference wasn't simply the activity. It was how the activity is delivered.

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Timing Is Key: Reaching Students At The Right Time

Most students feel **"on par"** with others in their grade regarding their readiness for life after high school.



Turn Career Readiness Into A Continual Journey

Students don't want career readiness to begin when the decision feels urgent.

- **Earlier exposure** to grade appropriate opportunities
- **Multiple touchpoints** across different grade levels
- Opportunities to **repeatedly experience activities** at different stages of their school tenure to build upon the benefits of the various programs and activities

Explore → Experience → Revisit → Refine → Decide

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What Motivates Students?



Pursuit of Personal Interests

- "I want to do something I care about and interested in.



Financial Earnings Potential

- "I want stability and a good quality of life."



Education Pathway

- "More traditional schooling is not for me."
- "I want to go to college"

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What and Who Influences Students' Decisions?

Students are influenced by a wide range of factors and people, both formal and informal.

Internships/Shadowing Programs

Career-focused Clubs/ Extracurricular Organizations

Money/Cost

Students

Social Media

Community/Personal Experience

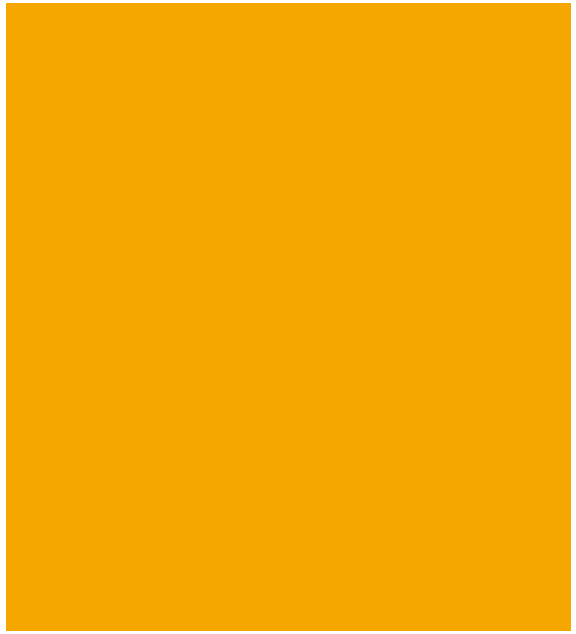
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Parents/Guardians

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Researcher's Observations

Identifying Strategic Actions



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Strategic Action: Expand What Already Works

Continue Cultivating Relationships To Expand Current Programs

What we heard.
Students highly value hands-on experience and real-life perspective, such as internships and shadowing.

What we see.
Our relationships provide a strong foundations for successful programs
Don't reinvent successful programs – expand access to them.

What we could do.
How might we further cultivate our relationships to not just sustain, but expand these valued experiences, making them available to more students across Berks County?

Strategic Action: Put Students At The Table

Creating An Advisory Council

What we heard.
Students' experiences with career readiness programs vary.
Students want readiness opportunities that reflect their interests, strengths, and motivations

What we see.
Program availability does not guarantee that programs meet students' needs

What we could do.
Establish a county wide or regional advisory council
Use differing and collective perspectives to review existing programs and identify opportunities for improvement

Strategic Action: Build the Roadmap

A Roadmap A Continual Career-Readiness Journey

What we heard.
Student perceive a sharp increase in career-readiness activities and decision-making entering 11th grade
Some experiences occur too early and other too late to be truly meaningful
Students want multiple opportunities to explore and build upon their experiences

What we see.
Career readiness should be treated as a continuous journey, not a series of one-time activities and tasks – timing and repetition matter.

What we could do.
Develop a grade appropriate roadmap of career readiness experiences
Identify opportunities to introduce and build on activities from 7th – 12th grades

Strategic Action: Share The Opportunities

Increase Access & Reach Through Collaboration

What we heard.
Students interest and potential career pathways vary widely
Students expressed interest in opportunities offered at other schools

What we see.
No single school can realistically offer every program or career-related experience. Some schools lack access to particular clubs, activities and experiences

What we could do.
Explore partnerships that allow students to participated in neighboring schools' programs and activities

- Increase opportunities for students without overextending individual schools' resources
- Schools can continue to focus on "what they do best" without leaving students behind

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Strategic Action: Learn From What Works

Best Practices Forums

What we heard.
Some existing programs are highly regarded by students.

What we see.
Effective best practices already exist in implementing programs
Schools could learn from one another instead of independently developing solutions to similar challenges

What we could do.
Facilitate periodic Best Practices Forums for teachers, counselors, and others responsible for developing and implementing career readiness programs

- Share successful approaches and lessons learned
- Identify practices that could be adapted to meet the needs and resources of other schools

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Strategic Action: Engage The Influencers

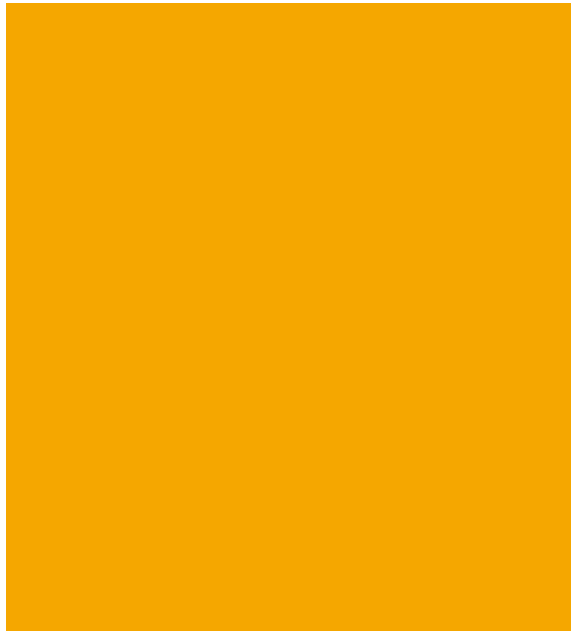
Enhance Students Support Systems With Relevant Information

What we heard.
Parents and guardians are consistently identified as important influences on students' decision-making

What we see.
Current programs primarily target end-user stakeholders
Supporting students also means equipping those that influence their decision with relevant and current information about readiness opportunities and pathways.

What we could do.
Explore ways to develop touchpoints with parents/guardians – provide accessible information regarding career pathways, readiness opportunities, and education/training options

Now What?!



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Turning Research Into Action

Take 2 minutes. Think about your role(s).

1. Which finding or strategic action stood out to you?
2. What could YOU do differently because of what you heard today?
3. If you were BBEC, what is one way you would take this information and move it forward?

Interested in discussing your ideas further or joining a committee to aid in further developing programs? Please place your name and organization on the back of your index card.

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Thank you

Jessi Mitchell, President/Owner