Barr Foundation Grant: Portrait of a Graduate

Overview: The Berkshire Portrait of a Graduate (PoG) grant is a unique opportunity for cross-district collaboration within Berkshire County. The aim of the project is to support deep research, stakeholder engagement, and discussion leading to a collective vision of what all high school students will know and be able to do by and beyond graduation. This collaborative project is sponsored by the Berkshire County Educational Task Force (BCETF) through the BARR Foundation.

Core Facilitators:
Kim Roberts-Morandi, North Adams Public Schools
Brendan Sheran, Pittsfield Public Schools
Jane McEvoy, Lee Public Schools

Project Facilitator:
H. Jake Eberwein, BCETF

Districts Included in Grant:
North Adams Public Schools (Drury High School)
Pittsfield Public Schools (Pittsfield and Taconic High Schools)
Lee Public Schools (Lee Middle/High School)
BART (Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter School)

Each school will include two identified working team site leads, ten faculty/staff design team members, and a range of community and school stakeholders (including students) who actively participate in and inform the design process.

BARR Foundation Mission:
The mission of the Barr Foundation is to invest in human, natural, and creative potential, serving as thoughtful stewards and catalysts. The PoG grant strives to facilitate locally-driven portraits that ensure:
- Students are prepared with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to thrive in a rapidly changing world (college, career, and community)
- Equity of opportunity for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, schools, and communities.

Berkshire PoG Collaboration Aims:
We aspire to develop a portrait of a graduate that is responsive to student and community needs, the realities of our region, and the diversity of our communities. This will occur by:
- Powerfully engaging our communities in identifying and addressing countywide challenges;
- Involving schools and communities in envisioning what’s possible for high school education, and;
- Cultivating conditions so all students can successfully prepare for college, career, and community life.

In doing so we will:
- Prepare each graduate with the skills, knowledge, and disposition to thrive in a rapidly changing world.
- Promote equity of opportunity for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, schools, and communities.
**Essential Questions**: Throughout this project the study team seeks to consider four overarching questions:

1. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions will our students need to thrive in a rapidly changing, unpredictable world?
2. How can we successfully address achievement gaps among different students?
3. How can our schools deepen our collaborative ties to better serve students?
4. How can our schools strengthen our ability to provide high-quality education for all Berkshire County students in the face of challenges, such as shifting demographics and tight budgets?

The net result of the PoG project will be stronger connections within and between districts, a deeper understanding of practices and possibilities, clearer definitions of competencies and outcomes, and an action plan that articulates a pathway towards implementation.

**Timeline/Methods:**
The PoG project will occur over the next 12 months. Over that time period, a leadership team will engage school and community stakeholders in thinking about possibilities, collectively forming definitions, and designing solutions.

Processes include:

1. Conduct research to determine common strengths, weaknesses, and needs of participating districts;
2. Study and learn from research and best practices across national networks;
3. Participate in exploratory site visits to schools and districts already implementing the Portrait of a Graduate core competency focus, and/or those engaged in progressive and interesting high school approaches;
4. Gather, assemble, and seek input from a wide and inclusive range of educational and community stakeholders;
5. Identify core competencies through broad consensus at Design Team Conference, which will include broad representation from both the community and education;
6. Articulate a Portrait of a Graduate for the Berkshires that reflects common values and aspirations;
7. Develop a plan of action that ensures the achievement of the core competencies as central to our work as educators and as a community and describes a phased implementation plan (post-December 2020) that ensures that every graduate has met the core competencies at the individual district and school level.

**BCETF Mission:**
BCETF is committed to a rich, rigorous, and equitable education for all students in the Berkshires. We believe that every child in Berkshire County deserves a high-quality public education, regardless of background or circumstance. We assert that strong public schools are necessary for healthy communities and a thriving region.

**BCETF is dedicated to developing community-informed solutions to regional challenges facing public education.** By strengthening our public education infrastructure, we endeavor to generate positive outcomes for our students, respond to the fiscal realities of our communities, and bolster the economic vitality of the Berkshire region.

Additional information about BCETF can be found at http://www.berkshireeducationtaskforce.org/pog