Condition of Education in Western Massachusetts
Rethinking Where Learning Happens
Thursday, November 2nd, 2023

#COEWMA2023
Welcome

Chad d’Entremont
Executive Director,
Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

#COEWMA2023
The Project

The Condition of Education in the Commonwealth project is one way the Rennie Center fulfills its mission of producing non-partisan, high-quality, independent research that promotes improvement in public education for all Massachusetts children.

Key Components:

➔ Release Event
➔ Action Guide
➔ Data Dashboard

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OPENING REMARKS
Paul Belsito | Executive Director, The Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation

KEYNOTE
Patrick Tutwiler | Massachusetts Secretary of Education, Executive Office of Education

RESEARCH PRESENTATION: CONDITION OF EDUCATION IN WESTERN MA
Alexis Lian | Policy Director, Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy
Meghan Volcy | Associate, Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

PANEL DISCUSSION
Matt Brunell | Co-Executive Director, Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership
Tricia Canavan | Chief Executive Officer, Tech Foundry
Heather Williams | Youth Director, MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board

CLOSING REMARKS
Ed Lambert | Executive Director, Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
Opening Remarks

Paul Belsito
Executive Director,
Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation

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Keynote Address

Patrick Tutwiler
Secretary of Education,
Massachusetts Executive Office of Education
Rethinking Where Learning Happens

Alexis Lian
Director of Policy,
Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

Meghan Volcy
Associate,
Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

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COE 2023 Timeline

January
COE Event, Action Guide, Data Report

April
Rethinking People: Community Forum

May
Policy Breakfast #1: Rethinking People: the Teaching Profession

August
Policy Breakfast #2: Rethinking Time - Education & Early Childhood

September
9:30 Call: Rethinking Education & Early Childhood

November
COE Western MA: Rethinking Where Learning Happens

January 2024
COE Event, Action Guide, Data Dashboard

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Over the course of this year, we dug into data in five different buckets:

- Responding to the Current Moment
- Early Education & Care
- Instructional Practice
- Student Wellbeing
- College & Career Pathways

Today, we’ll highlight a few of these indicators related to the need to rethink where learning happens.
Chronic absenteeism (students who miss 10% or more school days) increased for all students from 13% at the onset of the pandemic to nearly 28% in 2022.

Despite districts and schools returning to fully in-person schooling and a slight decrease in 2023, chronic absenteeism is significantly higher than pre-pandemic rates.
8th grade math scores have declined since 2018, exacerbated by the pandemic.
A wider variety of post-secondary pathways has become more attainable to students due to policies and programs such as early college, innovation career pathways, and increased internship opportunities. This graph illustrates the increasing diversification of high school graduates’ planned next steps.
Today we are focusing our attention on Western Massachusetts by taking a deep dive into the condition of education in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties.
Trends Across the Region

There is much higher interest in plans to attend a 2-year public college than the state aggregate.

Students in Western MA have increasingly planned to go directly to work after high school at similar, and at times higher, rates as the state since 2015.
Looking specifically at Western MA counties, students have increasingly planned to go straight to work over the past seven years, with a significant jump mid-pandemic.
Counties in Western Massachusetts have mirrored state trends regarding chronic absenteeism. While numbers are improving, students are chronically absent from school at higher rates than 2021 and 2020.
In 2023, nearly 30% of students identifying as Hispanic/Latino were chronically absent.

Students identifying as Hispanic/Latino make up 32% of the Western MA student population.
31.2% of students in Pittsfield plan to attend a 2-year public college compared to just 13.5% of students across the state.

13.2% of students in Pittsfield plan to go straight to work, though it is important to note that 0% are planning to start an apprenticeship.
Selected Bright Spots in Berkshire County

★ Monument Mountain Regional High School (MMRHS) in Great Barrington developed designated Innovation Career Pathways in the following sectors:
  ○ Business and Finance
  ○ Healthcare & Social Assistance
  ○ Manufacturing

★ MMRHS created specific staffing positions related to internship placement and CVTE initiatives.

★ North Adams Public Schools (Drury High School) has partnered with the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts to create an Early College program for students.
West Springfield High School developed designated Innovation Career Pathways in the following sectors:

- Manufacturing
- Business & Finance
- Healthcare & Social Assistance
- Information Technology

Several high schools have partnered to develop and offer Early College programs to their students. Some include:

- Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) partnering with Springfield High School of Commerce and Veritas Preparatory Charter School
- Holyoke High School partnering with Holyoke Community College and Westfield State University
Panel Discussion

Chad d’Entremont
Moderator

➔ Matt Brunell | Co-Executive Director, Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership

➔ Tricia Canavan | Chief Executive Officer, Tech Foundry

➔ Heather Williams | Youth Director, MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board
Closing Remarks

Ed Lambert
Executive Director,
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
Wrap Up & Next Steps

Thank you!

Save the Date!

See you on **Tuesday, January 30th, 2024** for our Condition of Education Report at the Omni Parker House in Boston.