CONNECTING ACTIVITIES
ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2019

An annual report that highlights the work of the Connecting Activities initiative.

Connecting Activities: Advising, Assisting, and Advocating for youth employment opportunities since 1998.
Introduction and Welcome

The 2018-2019 school year was a year of immense growth for the Connecting Activities initiative. Connecting Activities leaders at the MassHire Boards have acted as champions for both the Innovation and Early College Pathways, by supporting schools, engaging with institutes of higher education, and cultivating employer partnerships to promote access to ever expanding opportunities for college and career awareness, exploration, and immersion. As we continue to focus on connecting students with opportunities outlined in the Regional Labor Market Blueprints we see connections with new and growing industries and access for students who have been underrepresented in higher education and in growing industry sectors.

As the new lead for Connecting Activities, I have enjoyed opportunities to visit each of the sixteen MassHire boards and observe the wide range of career development activities that help to ensure that all students are college and career ready. I have been impressed by the resources and materials that this network has developed and by the expertise that resides within the network. I am happy to help share these best practices and promote this work.

Please enjoy this annual report, and feel free to share it with colleagues who may be interested in joining us in this work.

Kerry Akashian

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education CCTE Unit
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How do students in your school and community navigate the path from school to postsecondary education and careers? What are the experiences that help them to set goals and decide on first steps? How do they develop and practice the skills that will help them to navigate these steps? How do they find out about opportunities in new or growing career pathways?

Across Massachusetts, the Connecting Activities initiative plays an integral role in connecting schools, employers and communities to support students in their career development.

- A local manufacturing company provides a company tour for students and teachers, highlighting emerging career opportunities and describing the new technology that makes the work possible.
- A teacher develops new classroom lesson plans through a summer externship experience with a local bank.
- A start-up software firm becomes a first-time participant in the local school’s annual career day.
- Students attend workshops and research local companies in preparation for the annual career day.
- During a senior year internship program, a student explores a dream career field in oceanography through the internship experience.

During the 2018-2019 program year, Connecting Activities supported activities in 250 schools, working with approximately 5,000 employers, providing work-based learning experiences for over 12,000 students and supporting career development activities such as career days, job shadowing, career exploration workshops, field trips and career speaker series with an estimated statewide total of over 90,000 student participant counts. Wages for employer-paid work-based learning experiences totaled over $16 million. These career development experiences connected students to the broad range of industries in Massachusetts, including science, technology, engineering, manufacturing, the arts, media and communications, environment, agriculture, business, finance, construction, transportation, education, childcare and more. The following report describes experiences and skills that students have gained and some of the work that goes into making these experiences possible.
What is Connecting Activities?

Connecting Activities is an initiative led by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), with long-standing partnerships among economic development, workforce development and higher education agencies. Connecting Activities creates a statewide network organized through the sixteen MassHire Workforce Boards connecting employers and schools to support work-based learning and career development education activities for students.

How is it organized?

Connecting Activities provides the infrastructure for schools and partners to connect locally, regionally, and statewide and responds to the desire for strong college and career planning experiences. Through this network, educators can exchange ideas and practices by accessing a wide range of tools, resources, and experiences that support students. Connecting Activities may look a little bit different in every region and community, but the basic structure, mission and goals are the same everywhere.

What do the Connecting Activities program staff do?

Staff from the workforce boards play multiple roles and use their time, expertise, and resources to build systems that bring partnerships together.

Specifically, they:

- Work directly with schools, school-to-career local partnerships, one-stop career centers, chambers of commerce, and other organizations, to support work-based learning and career development activities and to provide resource materials, professional development and to build collaborative networks to support this work.
- Support schools in the development of high quality college and career pathways including Innovation and Early College Pathways, including providing guidance on internship courses, capstone projects, and other career-related courses and experiences.
- Record and organize data on work-based learning and career development experiences.

Students from 10 area high schools participate in the Greater Brockton Area Construction Career Day. Students meet professionals from the construction industry, observe and try out equipment, and gather information about careers in the construction field.
As a result of this system-building work, we seek to help every student to take part in a continuum of career development education activities, from career awareness to career exploration to career immersion.

Reflecting this goal, across Massachusetts, students participate in a wide range of career awareness, exploration and immersion activities sponsored by schools, employers, industry groups, summer youth programs and others in the community, often with Connecting Activities staff directly serving by:

- Arranging work-based learning placements
- Leading career exploration workshops and organizing events
- Providing key resources or materials
- Acting as the “bridge” or “glue” that brings partners together

**FY2019 Key Accomplishments**

During FY2019, the Connecting Activities initiative:

*Continued creating opportunities for students to explore STEM fields*

STEM fields include Science, Technology, Engineering and Math-related career fields that expose students to STEM concepts and/or STEM career paths. These may be in: Manufacturing, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, Information Technology, Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, Finance, Health Care or in a STEM-focused occupational area in any industry cluster, such as an information technology position in a retail setting or a robotics youth instructor in an educational setting.

In FY2019, 2,569 students worked in STEM-related placements through Connecting Activities. This represents approximately 22% of all Connecting Activities work experiences.
**Developed strategies to connect students with key regional industries as outlined in Regional Labor Market Blueprints.** At the start of FY2019, Connecting Activities leaders developed 3-year plans to use the Regional Labor Market Blueprints to help shape Connecting Activities programming. Leadership meetings and professional development sessions, both statewide and within each region, explored ways of connecting with these key industries. Blueprint industries vary by region, including Advanced Manufacturing, Health Care, Finance, Education, Transportation and Construction. Smaller emerging industries are also an area of focus, such as Agriculture/Organic Food in the Pioneer Valley and Blue Economy in cities in Southeastern Massachusetts and Cape Cod and the Islands. Many innovative career development opportunities have started to emerge from this work.

During FY2019, 3,232 employers participated in career development activities with local high school students and 5,027 employers provided work-based learning experience (with many of these providing both career development and work-based learning). Approximately 24% of these employers represented blueprint industries in their regions.

**Coordinated with the new statewide High Quality College and Career Pathways (HQCCP) initiative to help school leaders connect with local employers in support of Innovation Pathways.**

As schools introduce Innovation and Early College Pathways, and have expanded Career/Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) programming, Connecting Activities is available to provide resources and support for the development of internship programs and to help to make other industry connections. The work of creating new pathways under the HQCCP umbrella has been developing during FY2019, with many internship programs projected to begin in FY2020.

As of the end of FY2019, there were 70 Innovation Pathway programs in Massachusetts in 26 high schools. **22 of these 26 schools** were partners in the Connecting Activities initiative.
The Connecting Activities network and the High-Quality College and Career Pathway (HQCCP) initiative are natural partners in the work of creating pathways for students. The following charts summarize some of the core components and guiding principles for the HQCCP initiative. Practitioners from Connecting Activities see opportunities to help support this work as new Innovation and Early College Pathways and new Career/Vocational Technical Education programs are created in the schools in their communities.

### Guiding Principle 1: Equitable Access

### Guiding Principle 2: Guided Academic Pathways

### Guiding Principle 3: Enhanced Student Support

### Guiding Principle 4: Connection to Career

### Guiding Principle 5: Effective Partnerships

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**Components**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>Students complete a college and career plan that identifies areas of aptitude and interest, explores career opportunities, and establishes a transition path to college, apprenticeship, and/or employment training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Market Demand</td>
<td>Students engage in curriculum that develop both career alignment strategies and gain the awareness of job growth opportunities across the Commonwealth. Pathway programs vary based on the specificity of the alignment to an industry sector.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrated Instruction</td>
<td>Students participate in a carefully designed sequence of integrated, rigorous instructional courses aligned to the student’s college and career plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work-Based Learning</td>
<td>Students participate in structured career readiness activities and career development education (CDE).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credential Preparation</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to progress towards and/or earn an industry-recognized credential and college credits toward a Certificate, Associates, or Baccalaureate degree.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Linkages</td>
<td>Students participate in a wide range of college, apprenticeship, and employment training awareness, engagement, and preparation activities.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What Does Work-Based Learning Look Like?

In Massachusetts, the term “Work-Based Learning” describes a wide range of work experiences that are designed to provide authentic experiences that combine learning and work. These include paid and unpaid internships, summer and after-school jobs, internship and volunteer opportunities within the school and throughout the wider community, and co-operative education and career-pathway-related practicum experiences.

The experiences are enriched though participation in workshops or internship classes that focus on career planning, industry research, and career skill development; and through use of the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan.

Work-based learning experiences take place across all industry clusters. Connecting Activities programs strive to open doors for students to a wide variety of workplaces, especially STEM-related workplaces in manufacturing, health care, information technology and other STEM areas, and a variety of emerging opportunities in business, finance, the arts and media, agriculture and environment, hospitality and tourism, construction, transportation and more. Internship providers from all industry clusters seek to provide opportunities that help participants to develop career skills, learn about career options, and contribute to the work of the organization and wider community.
SPOTLIGHT: Jessie Mai, Josiah Quincy Upper School, Boston

Jessie Mai, a 2019 Josiah Quincy Upper School graduate, first received training in technology through Square Tech, a CBO tech training organization and PIC partner. In 2018, Jessie landed a summer job as a Boston Private Industry Council Tech Apprentice at GE. During the following school year, Jessie returned to Square Tech to work in its computer repair depot while taking a course in AV technology at Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology. Her training and work experience qualified Jessie for a PIC IT support internship at Boston Properties this past summer. She is now a freshman at the Wentworth Institute of Technology.
Drury High School, in North Adams, has an internship program that provides students with unique opportunities to experience the career fields they are considering going into in the future. Alison Felix, profiled here, completed an internship at Moresi & Associates, a commercial and residential development and property management services company.

What do you like most about your internship?
“I like the friendly environment and amazing people I get to work with every day. Everyone who works for Moresi & Associates is so hard working and really make me feel welcomed and assure me that business is a good fit for my future.”

What are your responsibilities?
“My responsibilities include becoming aware of good business practices and the expectations of being successful in the business world.”

How do you feel this internship is preparing you for your future?
“It is introducing me to the economic and social aspects of business. Moresi & Associates exemplifies dedication, expertise and knowledge in their work.”

Career Goals:
“A possible career goal of mine is to get a Master’s degree in Business and work for a successful company in either Sports Management or Real Estate”.
SPOTLIGHT: Environment and Green Jobs

As Connecting Activities seeks to expand opportunities in STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – we include a wide range of STEM career possibilities in our work. We define STEM to include work in health care, manufacturing, science and technology, information technology, engineering, finance, statistics and math, environment, natural resources and agriculture.

In the Pioneer Valley, the regional Labor Market Blueprint includes a focus on Agriculture and Food Systems. Pictured here, the STC Youth Green Team from Greenfield High.
What Skills Do Students Gain During Work-Based Learning Experiences?

The Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan is a document that is used to structure work experiences for participants in Connecting Activities and in many of the other Massachusetts youth employment programs. It can be completed online or as a paper-and-pen form.

The Work-Based Learning Plan includes a brief job description, a list of essential skills that can be used throughout their lives and are used in all types of careers, and community and academic settings, and a list of three or more workplace-specific skills, with definitions, that are relevant to that specific work experience.

Performance evaluations are conducted at least twice during a work experience, allowing the participant a time for reflection and feedback, and also providing valuable information about the skills that participants gain during their work experiences.

The workplace-specific skills and definitions may be selected from a list of common workplace skills that are provided with the Work-Based Learning Plan, or other skills may be written in. Job descriptions may be written specifically for the experience or may be adapted from a bank of typical job descriptions. Please see the following examples of students working with the work-based learning plan.

- **A student interning at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History wrote:** “As an intern at the Natural Museum of History I observe and help to take care of marine animals. I help maintain a proper environment for certain animals. I also make sure the animals have the proper amount of food for the week and help with feedings.” Skills included on the Work-Based Learning Plan were: Active Learning, Customer Service, Environmental Literacy, Health Literacy, Time Management, and Understanding All Aspects of the Industry.

- **The job description for a Medical Lab intern reads:** “Intern will work under the supervision of the mentor to shadow and assist with patient care x-rays and phlebotomy while learning skills needed for a successful career in a laboratory setting.” Work-Based Learning Plan skills include: Active Learning, Career Awareness, Medical Office Vocabulary, and Science Lab Concepts.

- **A Fitness Intern, with a job description that states:** “The Fitness Intern under the guidance of experienced staff members will learn about all aspects of a fitness business from maintaining the equipment to conducting personal and group fitness sessions. The student will learn how to speak and act responsibly and professionally in assessing clients’ goals and tailoring safe exercise programs geared specifically to them. The student will also learn about the sales and marketing aspects of the business as well as the need for accurate assessments and documentation in preparation for a future career in this field.” Work-Based Learning Plan skills include: Career Awareness, Documentation/Reflection, Health and Fitness Assessments, Safety, Sales and Marketing, Set-Up and Maintenance, and Training and Fitness Class Fundamentals.
The graphs below present a “Skill Gain Analysis” showing the average performance review rating, on a 5-point scale, at the first and second reviews, for the six Essential Skills that are included on every Work-Based Learning Plan and for the most common Workplace-Specific Skills that are specific to the participant’s work experience placement.
SPOTLIGHT: Angelique Sanchez and Ashanti Santana, Holyoke High School

Holyoke High School students Angelique Sanchez and Ashanti Santana are interns at Homework House, tutoring students in Kindergarten and grades 3-7.

Angelique, a junior in the Engineering and Life Sciences (ELS) Academy, has been interning at Homework House since last semester. She is interested in pursuing a career in nursing.

Ashanti Santana is a senior at Holyoke High School and just began her internship at Homework House this semester. She is interested in attending college in the fall to pursue a career in the medical field.

Angelique and Ashanti look forward to meeting regularly with these young scholars and enjoy helping them with their schoolwork.

Internships, job shadows, and work-based learning opportunities offer valuable experiences for our students to learn about potential career pathways and explore their interests while receiving the essential foundations for academic success.

This photo highlights the district logo and tagline “Holyoke Public Schools: A Pathway for Every Student.” The Holyoke Public School System has completed a redesign process that offers career pathway programs for all high school students. The program of studies includes work-based learning and career development opportunities along with technical courses and a full MassCore aligned program of study in each year of the grade 10 through 12 curriculum.
Career Development Education includes a continuum of activities, starting in the early grades, with preliminary stages of career awareness through more in-depth career exploration to hands-on career immersion. Recognizing that career development is a lifelong process, a continuum of activities allows students multiple opportunities to gather information about careers, reflect on their own interests and goals, and try out a variety of skills and interest areas through classes, internships, summer jobs, capstone projects, entrepreneurial projects and other in-depth activities.

In the Massachusetts Career Ready Database, Connecting Activities program staff recorded information about career development activities in their schools and information about 1,540 different career development events during FY2019 including guest speakers, workshop series, career days, and company tours. These events may serve small groups of 10-12 students, an entire grade level, or an entire school, with an estimated statewide total of over 90,000 student participant counts. Examples are highlighted in the chart that follows.

Our statewide Connecting Activities Leadership Meetings bring together leaders from every region to collaborate on program strategies and approaches.
**SAMPLE CAREER DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>Career Awareness</th>
<th>Career Exploration</th>
<th>Career Immersion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Interest Inventories *</td>
<td>Career Skills Workshops *</td>
<td>Work-Based Learning Experiences (Jobs, Internships, Co-operative Education) *</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Labor Market Information *</td>
<td>Job Shadow Days * Career-Related Field Trips and Company Tours *</td>
<td>* Capstone Projects *</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guest Speakers *</td>
<td>Community Service Projects *</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship Projects</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Career Days</td>
<td>* Career-Focused Coursework</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXAMPLES</td>
<td>In an 8th Grade math class in Palmer, students research a career and create an informational brochure about that career, emphasizing ways that math is used within that career path.</td>
<td>In Fall River, BMC Durfee High students participated in a tour of the Factory Five Racing facility. Students learned how their academic coursework connected to each department at the factory. Junior Achievement scheduled the trip and provided transportation, the Career Specialist and school staff chaperoned the event.</td>
<td>Southwick Regional High School’s Diversified Learning Experience Program is a highly structured internship program designed to provide students the opportunity to gain experience and develop competencies essential to success in the workplace. Students usually spend two periods of the day in academic classes and attend work-based learning experiences during the remaining time for a full semester. Students spend part of their release time in a seminar series designed to help develop an understanding of the essential personal and interpersonal skills necessary for job success. In addition, students will design and produce an effective resume, cover letter, and reference sheet. Each student is also responsible for maintaining a daily journal, completing a career display project, and preparing a formal presentation on internship experiences and skills gained. The Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan (MWBLP) is used to evaluate the student skills.</td>
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<td>In the Berkshires, the Berkshire Compact for Education holds an annual 8th Grade Career Conferences at Berkshire Community College for South County students and at MCLA for North and Central County students. Students choose career areas of interest and meet with professionals from their chosen career areas. The Berkshire United Way, Guardian Life and the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board support these events.</td>
<td>Students in the Farm to Table class at Attleboro High School worked with the owners of a local farm called Big Train Farm, to learn about soil chemistry, produce production and maintenance, and the science behind manipulating microfungal communities in order to maintain plant health.</td>
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<td>Nipmuc High School students and faculty participated in a conference title &quot;Empower All Learners To Thrive.&quot; Centered on idea that all students should be prepared to actively participate as members of a local, global, and digital society, the school offered over 100 workshops designed to provide students with the civic skills and knowledge so highly desired in college and the workplace in an authentic conference experience. Workshops were designed by Nipmuc faculty, who used their expertise, career experiences and passions to develop interdisciplinary interactive workshops.</td>
<td>In the Cape and Island region, students from Mashpee Middle/High School mentored younger girls to help them to explore STEM subjects.</td>
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<td>Schools from throughout the Pioneer Valley participated in UMass/Amherst’s Women in Engineering and Computing Career Day for High School Girls.</td>
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On January 12, 2019, Bristol Community College hosted a student orientation for 24 high school students and their parents who have been selected to participate in Bristol’s Cyber Security Certificate program. This dual enrollment program is funded by a grant issued to the MassHire Greater New Bedford Workforce Board by the Baker-Polito Administration. The purpose of the grant is to train high school students in the field of cyber security during a one-year period. The Workforce Board partnered with Bristol to provide state-of-the-art training to students in this innovative and growing field.

During the orientation, participants heard from Stephanie Helm, Director of the MassCyberCenter, at the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, who serves as the funding source. During her presentation, she spoke about the importance of preparing qualified employees who are ready to enter the cyber security field immediately upon graduation.

Sergeant Jon Vieira, of the Massachusetts National Guard Cyber/Robotics Unit, also presented his experiences of 20 years serving in the cyber security field, as well as potential cyber threats to national security.

The students then formed teams and under the direction of the National Guard representatives, built robots and participated in several engaging projects. Following lunch, Bristol Community College Assistant Professor of Cyber Security Steve Frechette spoke to students about the courses they will be taking and the benefits of the certificate program they are entering.

“We’re very excited to be selected as a grant recipient, as it is the first of its kind offered by the state. The training aligns with our regional strategic plan and if successful, will serve as a potential blueprint for high school programs of this kind, across the state,” said David Slutz, Board Chair of the MassHire Greater New Bedford Workforce Board. This will be Bristol Community College’s first cohort to participate and graduate from the college’s cyber security program. Bristol looks forward to replicating the program in the coming years.
Spotlight: School to Career High School Career Day

During Career Days, students meet with industry representatives to learn about a wide range of industries and to learn about emerging technologies and career pathways. In this photo, Greg Garrison, from Northeast Solar, is talking to youth at a School to Career High School Career Day in the Franklin/Hampshire Region.

To Learn More:

To read more about Connecting Activities, visit the Connecting Activities page on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, at http://www.doe.mass.edu/connect. To learn more, contact Kerry Akashian at kerry.akashian@mass.gov or the MassHire Workforce Board for your region.
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