

## Getting a Jump Start: College Connection at Berkshire Community College

I apologize for the long lapse in posts. It's not that I was on vacation all summer. Quite the opposite, I spent a good deal of it preparing for our summer bridge/extended orientation program for incoming high school seniors. College Connection, as it is named, took place from August 20-24. This year we had 26 students from all over Berkshire County come to the program and spend a very busy week getting to know that campus and each other.

The goals of College Connection are to help students get a jump start on college, both academically and socially. The week includes four days of math instruction (I know...not exactly a day at the beach). At the end of the four days, the students all re-test on the math part of our mandatory college placement test. Many significantly raise their scores saving themselves and/or their parents hundreds of dollars.

When the students weren't doing math, they were learning about listening and interviewing. We asked them to read *Listening Is An Act of Love* which is a compilation of Storycorps interviews (the ones that make us cry as we drive to work listening to public radio). During the week, they then did their own interviews using very cool Sony Bloggies. On the last day, they all shared their interviews. Some were very touching. One young man interviewed his father, an EMT, who was called to the Towers after the attack on 9/11. Sharing his stories with his son was particularly moving in that his father didn't like to talk about his experiences in 9/11, but felt safe enough with his son to open up.

We also spent a day at Jiminy Peak swinging from ropes and riding the alpine slide at their adventure park. Obviously this is a highlight of the week.

In the end, all students left feeling much more prepared to come to BCC because of the connections they had made with each other and the college. As I told them, the program gives them a "jump start". They all agreed.



College Connection Students August 2012