

# 1BERKSHIRE

## BERKSHIRE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

### Education Session Biographies April 25, 2019

**Christopher Himes, Director of Engineering & Technology Innovation / STEAM Coordinator**  
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Christopher Himes, Ph.D., joined MHS in Fall 2016 as the Director of Engineering & Technology Innovation/STEAM Coordinator, overseeing the new Department of Engineering and Technology Innovation and directing STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) initiatives. Dr. Himes comes to MHS from the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, Massachusetts, where he was an Assistant Professor, the Jorge Endowed Chair of Education, and STEM Program Manager. A teacher for more than fifteen years, Dr. Himes holds a B.S. in Biology from the University of Massachusetts Boston, and a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Washington.

**Dr. Jason P. McCandless, Superintendent, Pittsfield Public Schools**  
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Dr. Jason McCandless has worked in public education since 1993, and has served as an alternative education program director, English teacher, football and wrestling coach, department chairperson, assistant principal, principal, and for the past 11 years, as a superintendent of schools. His career spans public school service in Pennsylvania, Virginia and Massachusetts. A graduate of Grove City College with degrees in Literature and Communications, with a Master's Degree from the University of Virginia, and a Doctorate from Boston College, Dr. McCandless is currently the superintendent of the Pittsfield Public Schools. Dr. McCandless and his wife, Tamara, are the parents three children, ages 17, 16 and 13. The McCandless family has called Pittsfield home since 2002.

**Wendy Laurin, Physics Professor and STEM Career Coordinator, Berkshire Community College**  
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Wendy Laurin is a Pittsfield native who graduated from Smith College with a double major in Astronomy and Physics. The Astronomy program is a five college cooperative major so she was able to take classes at the other Colleges in Pioneer Valley; including UMass, Amherst and Mt. Holyoke. It was an early lesson that collaboration is a wonderful tool for education. After graduation, she joined the family business that published a photonics technology magazine. Starting in marketing, she transitioned to sales/editorial and moved to California to open the West Coast office. Since corporations and photonic research organizations knew she understands science they were willing to share material about their products and technology. This opened a door that gave the magazine readers information they couldn't get elsewhere. She moved back to the Berkshires, becoming the Publisher of Photonics Spectra and created Biophotonics magazine. She also directed the editorial mission of the company. It was truly an amazing journey. The sixty plus hour work weeks and workload got in the way of a balanced life and she decided on a different path. She consulted for some

photonics companies but on a whim took a job at BCC teaching a physics lab. She now teaches physics classes at BCC, is a STEM Career Coordinator and directs a summer math remediation program. She is delighted to be part of BCC and work with amazing colleagues who deliver a quality education for great students. She volunteers at local Berkshire organizations as well as consults for the photonics industry.

**Dana A. Schildkraut, Content Manager and STEAM Educator, BRAINworks Grant Program**

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Dana Schildkraut serves as the Content Coordinator for the Berkshire Regional Arts Integration Network (BRAINworks) grant program, which provides high quality professional development in arts integrated curriculum for Berkshire County educators. Dana is part of MCLA's Division of Graduate and Continuing Education, and she serves as an adjunct faculty member. Formerly Dana served as a STEAM Educator with the Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) grant program where she worked with preschool through second grade teachers in four Berkshire County school districts and preschool centers to promote and implement STEAM programming. Dana has been employed in both traditional and nontraditional education settings. Her diverse background includes work at Mass Audubon, the ecology-centered Arm-of-the-Sea Mask & Puppet Theater, and the technology-meets-art company iLuminate. Dana is also a visual artist and has written feature articles in arts trade magazines, including a paper sculpture article in Paper Art Magazine (2014).