



FRIENDLY FACES



Manuel Lamarche AdviseMI College Advisor



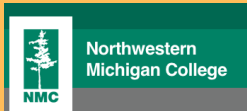
Emily Burrus
Benzie Central High School Counselor



Patty Roth
Frankfort High School Counselor



Erica Whiting
NMC College Completion Coach



BEST Benzie County Local College Access Network

To create and support a culture in Benzie County that reduces barriers and improves access to early childhood and post-secondary education for all residents including children, students and families, and adult learners.



IMPACT

The Benzie County AdviseMI College Advisor (Manuel LaMarche) worked, on a daily basis, with 140 (mostly) seniors on their college or career goals. This is the story of one of those students and his journey.

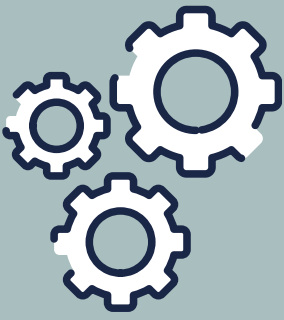
Over the course of 7 months, Manuel worked with this young man on his career goals. This student was POSITIVE no post secondary educational opportunities were in his future. While he had a strong interest in becoming proficient in a technical career, he was certain that was not attainable given his financial circumstances.

Manuel and the student took a deep dive into financial aid opportunities. Now, if you are a high school senior who cannot imagine yourself in a college setting, the idea of completing the FAFSA must seem like a exercise in futility. But, Manuel was gently persistent.

At the end of those 7 months, they found the student would be eligible for a Pell grant and was TIP eligible. Once the facts were laid out, this "I can't go to college" student was quoted as "huh, how about that, I really didn't think this was possible".

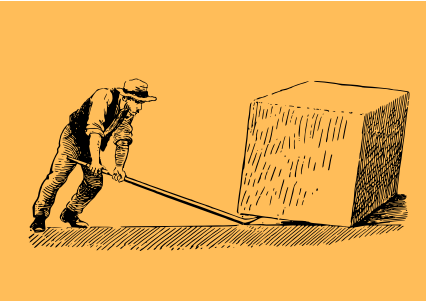
But, that is not the end of this story. The real story is the 25 minute conversation Manuel had with the student's guardian. The student went home and said to his guardian, I can go to Northwestern Community College! The very next day, that guardian called Manuel and said, "I don't have money for this child to go to college". Manuel replied, "There are several programs that can make this happen for this child. You just need to continue to love him; there are programs in place to help make it happen financially". Manuel has subsequently reached out to the College Completion Coach at NMC to make some early connections for the student and assisted with the funding arrangements.

These are the stories we want to share with our community. This is the impact an AdviseMI College Advisor offers our school systems. Spread the word.



Collective Impact

The BEST Benzie County Educational Network seeks to work with the community and school partners to remove the roadblocks to early childhood opportunities, high school opportunities or after high school opportunities for students - of all ages - living in Benzie County. With each story, we want to share a bit about those roadblocks and the role our partners play in removing them.



Students face several barriers to post-secondary success. These barriers include: the challenge of paying for those “after high school” certifications and, if desired, traditional college, lack of information about the post-secondary system (college AND skilled trades), a belief system that says, “you are not college material”, and a lack of life skills preparation for what “post-secondary” work will be.

Overcoming the Barriers:

The partnerships between the school counselors, the AdviseMI college advisor, the college completion coach, the local community college and the Benzie County community was instrumental in making this story possible.

- Encouraging a change the belief system: from "I can't do this" to "I can!"
- Focus and support of the school and county community on completing the FAFSA to reduce financial barriers to educational opportunities beyond high school.
- A community college offering skilled trades courses and certifications
- A community college with a college completion coach to level the playing field.

Sustainability and Alignment

Sustainability and Alignment with BEST Benzie County Cradle to Career Educational Network goals - ensuring this story can be **the** story for every student - requires:

- A community and a the school system that supports school counselors and college advisors,
- A focused awareness (community wide) of the importance of FAFSA completion - its for so much more than "college",
- A community college that offers students skilled trade certification as well as traditional college,
- A community college values the role of a college completion coach and,
- A community that sees the value and support after high school education for all of its residents.