



WEC Bulletin - Winter 2024

New Strategic Plan for Worcester Public Schools is Approved by School Committee

On December 21, 2023, the Worcester School Committee unanimously voted to approve the **2023-2028 Strategic Plan**. The initial draft of the plan had been introduced to the Standing Committee on Governance and Employee Issues on November 28, receiving unanimous approval to progress to the full School Committee for thorough review and discussion on December 7. Following minor revisions, the conclusive plan received approval on December 21.

Worcester Education Collaborative, along with Worcester Regional Research Bureau and members of the Worcester community, and in concert with the Worcester Public Schools, developed the strategy as a promise to students to improve our public schools and ensure that all students are prepared for success after graduation.



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE Rachel H. Monárrez, PhD

Welcome to the Worcester Public Schools (WPS) Strategic Plan: Our Promise to the Future!

The WPS Promise was developed through an extensive listening and learning process. The WPS Promise is a roadmap that aligns our collective shared aspirations for the youth of Worcester. Our focus on fostering future-ready skills, embracing technological advancements, and cultivating a culture of lifelong learning underscores our dedication to preparing all scholars for academic success and for the dynamic challenges of the world beyond the classroom walls. Moreover, the plan places a paramount emphasis on access, opportunity and equity, acknowledging and addressing the unique needs of all our youth. The WPS Promise represents our collective dedication to educational excellence, innovation, and the unwavering belief that every child in our district deserves the opportunity to thrive. Together, we have laid the foundation for a future where our scholars can excel, lead, and contribute meaningfully to the global community.

From here, anywhere...together!

Rachel H. Monárrez

Rachel H. Monárrez, PhD



Worcester Superintendent Named 25 to Watch Across the Country by NSPRA

In December 2023, the
National School Public
Relations Association



(NSPRA) announced Superintendent of Worcester
Public Schools, Dr. Rachel Monárrez, as a recipient
of its 2023 Superintendents to Watch recognition
award.

This year, 25 superintendents nationwide were
selected for the honor in recognition of their
innovative and effective use of technology to engage
and inform the school community, and to expand
two-way communication and outreach efforts.

This nomination comes in Dr. Monárrez's second
year in her role. NSPRA will recognize each award
recipient with a profile piece in upcoming issues of
its monthly Member Memo e-newsletter to
association members as well as on its website and
social media channels. Honorees will also be
recognized at the NSPRA 2024 National Seminar in
Seattle/Bellevue in July.



Above: Dr. Rachel H. Monárrez, Superintendent of Worcester
Public Schools, named one of 25 "Superintendents to Watch" by
the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA).

"We are so fortunate to have
Dr. Monárrez leading our
district."

Patty Eppinger
Board Member, Worcester
Education Collaborative



[Click here to read the release.](#) [Click here to read the article.](#)

WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Gathering for Excellence

A Discussion on What It Means for Scholars to be Future-Ready
Led By Dr. Rachel H. Monárrez, Superintendent

Tuesday, January 30, 5:00-8:00 PM
Worcester Technical High School

Inaugural WPS Gathering for Excellence

The inaugural event will feature a panel discussion with
audience questions about the strategic plan, "**Our Promise to
the Future**." Student performances will also take place outside
and in the beginning of the event.

WPS Gathering for Excellence

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

5:00 - 8:00 PM

Worcester Technical High School

1 Office Manny Familia Way

Worcester, MA

[Click here to learn more and add to your calendar.](#)

Recent Happenings

Worcester Education Equity Roundtable (WEER)

The Worcester Education Collaborative (WEC) was selected by Abt Associates to receive pro-bono technical assistance services for the 2023 Fiscal Year to help assess the health of the Roundtable (WEER), as well as to evaluate the quality and impact of WEER/WEC events.

Key findings and recommendations were discussed at a monthly Roundtable meeting and presented in a final brief. [View the brief here.](#)

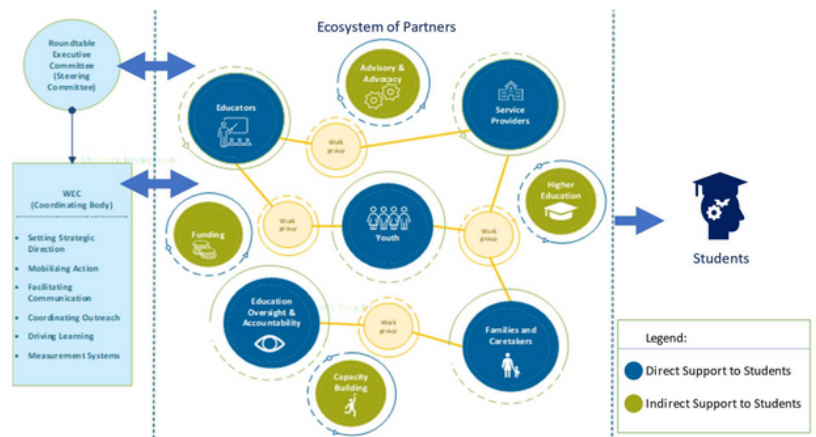
Supporting Parent Engagement

WEER efforts are also underway to support expanded parent engagement across the district including:

- Regular meetings with new district Family & Community Engagement co-directors to support and coordinate with their plans.
- Organizing two community conversations on family engagement needs and strategies involving WEER partners and Worcester parents.
- Sponsoring a two-part workshop for parents and community members on achieving equity in education conducted by the Collaborative Parent Leadership Action Network (CPLAN) with workshops to be repeated later this spring.
- Plans for providing training to promote more active school sites councils with more engaged parents.
- Plans to establish a Roundtable Parent Advisory Group to parent perspectives on Roundtable priorities and plans.

Launch of New Allied Communications Group

This coming spring, WEER partners will launch a new Allied Communications Group to unify strategic communication partners at the district level. The goal is to support the existing work of the communication leaders within WEC, the school district, Roundtable organizations, and other community organizations by coordinating efforts to share key messaging and viewpoints with an expanded audience, as well as share content related to the district with more frequency in order to amplify the work being done by individual partners throughout the district. The group is currently soliciting interest from WEER member organizations and other youth-serving organizations throughout the district. To learn more or to get involved, please email Kyla Pacheco at kpacheco@wecollaborative.org.



Above: A visualization of WEER's role within the education ecosystem in Worcester. This graphic can also be found in the linked brief produced by Abt Associates.

Leadership Worcester visits Worcester Public Schools

Yolonda Ramos, Leadership Worcester participant and local professional, shares her experience visiting Worcester schools and engaging in deep conversation with educators, parents, students and policymakers.

READ MORE



Woo-Labs: Building Skills for Life



Hanover Fellows Thrive in Supporting Students through Project-Based Learning

The Hanover Fellows supporting Woo-Labs projects have collectively contributed over 600 hours of service across 11 partner sites in the past year. As winter break unfolded, these dedicated Fellows completed their initial project-based learning projects, marking a successful start to their journey.

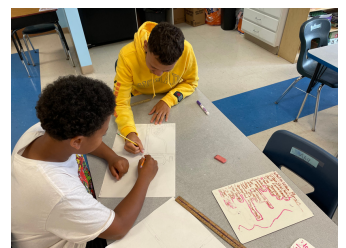
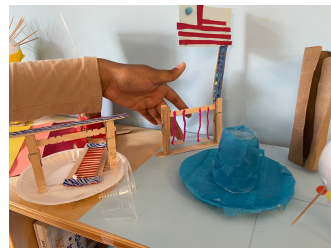
Returning from the break, Fellows are brimming with enthusiasm, eager to dive into new projects in the upcoming year. The diverse range of projects this spring includes mural design, the creation of a captivating book spotlighting Massachusetts birds, the development and performance of original plays, and an exciting egg drop engineering challenge.

The Woo-Labs program continues to foster creativity, collaboration, and impactful learning experiences. Stay tuned for more updates as our Fellows embark on these engaging projects, shaping a future full of innovation and community involvement!



Above: A student at Guild of St. Agnes presents his final smart city design.

Below: Selected photos highlighting the weekly progress students made developing their smart city concepts.



"The kids have a choice of what they want to learn and how they want to learn it, and it makes the children want to learn. Especially coming from a long day at school, to come back to the Guild to do a lesson, it can be hard to get them motivated. So when [projects] comes from students, that makes it worth it for them."

Ani Reyes

Assistant Director
School Age Programs
Guild of St. Agnes
Woo-Labs Project Site

WEC Releases New Video: Woo-Labs Project-Based Learning at Guild of St. Agnes

By 6th grade, low income students have 6,000 fewer hours of learning compared to their middle-income peers. Researchers estimate this gap accounts for up to two-thirds of achievement differences.

This is a problem we can solve, and Woo-Labs is one solution.

Witness firsthand how Woo-labs reimagines education, weaving together a tapestry of high-quality, culturally responsive, project-based learning opportunities in out-of-school time right here in Worcester.



Reading Together

Citywide Literacy Efforts Continue

Worcester Education Collaborative continues its dedicated efforts to foster a love for literacy among local elementary school students and their families. Through our continued partnership with seven local elementary schools and seven former teachers, WEC has successfully provided more than 1400 books to students this year, contributing to the building of home libraries.

Highlighting the success of the Summer Reading Together program, WEC reached over 700 students, equipping them with five books each alongside summer literacy packs. In addition, the program has distributed more than 250 backpacks and essential school supplies, and hosted 12 family literacy events so far this year.

The impact of WEC's Reading Together program extends beyond the distribution of books and supplies. With 77 classrooms already visited, the organization continues to engage with students across the district to help foster a high-quality literacy experience for all children. A second round of reading and book distribution is scheduled for this February.



77

CLASSROOM VISITS



12

FAMILY LITERACY EVENTS

1,400+
BOOKS DISTRIBUTED

The Inaugural John E. Bassett Symposium



Worcester Education Collaborative hosted its inaugural John E. Bassett Symposium on Monday, November 13, at the Beechwood Hotel. The event, named to honor WEC's founder, featured a fireside chat with Dr. Rachel Monárrez, Superintendent of Worcester Public Schools, and Dr. Gisele Shorter, President & CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, who discussed their lessons learned as leaders in education. Paul Reville, Professor of Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and former Secretary of Education served as the moderator for the discussion.

Jennifer Davis Carey, Executive Director of WEC, opened the evening with a reminder that Worcester finds itself in a once-in-a-generation inflection point, and applauded the new superintendent and her team for their work to capture this important moment in history for the city, and their courage to be fearless in making change.

"Worcester, the second largest city in New England and growing, is at an inflection point. With new leadership open to what is possible, new funding through the state Student Opportunity Act, and a new configuration of and membership on the School Committee, we are at a once in a generation moment to make substantive, long term meaningful change in our education system and by doing so, assure a strong a vibrant future for our city and its residents," she said.

The fireside chat specifically called attention to the importance of building relationships with business and civic leaders when developing responsive, equitable approaches to education that best serve the needs of all students.

John E. Bassett, honored guest of the evening, closed the program with a nod to the City's ecosystem and its unique ability to respond to today's challenges in education.

Read more about the event in an article published by The Worcester Guardian on November 20, 2023.

 The Worcester Guardian [Click here to read the article.](#)
Free | Nonprofit | News



NOVEMBER 13, 2023

JOHN E.
BASSETT SYMPOSIUM

LESSONS IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

with Dr. Gisele Shorter, President & CEO of The Nellie Mae Education Foundation, and Dr. Rachel Monárrez, Superintendent of Worcester Public Schools
Moderated by Paul Reville, former MA Secretary of Education

[WATCH NOW](#) 

Upcoming Events

UPCOMING SPRING EVENTS

FY25 WPS Budget Forum

Explore the ins and outs of the Worcester Public Schools budgeting process and learn how to effectively advocate for your priorities within the city's education spending. [Register here.](#)

Wednesday, February 7, 2024 | 4:00-5:15PM | via Zoom

Principal for the Day

The program aims to strengthen the connection between the schools and the community by inviting community leaders to shadow principals at Worcester Public Schools.

Monday, March 4, 2024

Parent Advocacy Trainings

Leadership training to empower parents with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the education system effectively. Led by [CPLAN](#).

February-April | More details to come

Thank you to our steadfast supporters.



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STODDARD CHARITABLE TRUST
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WOOSOX FOUNDATION

Special thanks to the United Way of Central Massachusetts, which has housed WEC and served as its fiscal sponsor since our organization began operation in 2010. It is a special relationship—one that allows WEC to focus solely on its mission without the demands of attending to the structural supports that are vital to any organization. Many thanks to all of the United Way staff for these years of support and collegiality.