



# 2022-2023

## WORCESTER EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE INTERIM REPORT

# INFORMING THE COMMUNITY

## Briefings & Knowledge Sharing

WEC has a well-earned reputation as a knowledgeable contributor to the work of education and as a tenacious and critical friend of both our schools and our community—one that keeps the needs of our children unrelentingly at the fore. We are regarded as an honest broker and are consistently called upon to lend our expertise to projects and working groups focused on teaching and learning.

Throughout the Winter, WEC hosted a 3-part series on the MCAS, Massachusetts' standardized test, to answer key questions about its purpose and the impact of planned changes on student success.

**MCAS SERIES | PART 1:**  
**MCAS Purpose & 2022 Results**  
DEC 14

**MCAS SERIES | PART 2:**  
**Changes & Implications**  
JANUARY 19, 2023  
4:00-5:30PM VIA ZOOM  
**LIVE DEBATE**  
Will increasing the scores required to pass the MCAS benefit or harm students?  
**EDITH BAZILE**  
Black Advocates for Educational Excellence  
**DR. MARTIN WEST**  
Harvard Graduate School of Education & Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

**MCAS SERIES | PART 3:**  
**Beyond MCAS: Alternative Assessment Options**  
Featuring Jack Schneider, Executive Director of the Education Commonwealth Project  
MARCH 14, 2023  
4:00-5:30PM VIA ZOOM  
PRESENTED BY THE WORCESTER EDUCATION EQUITY ROUNDTABLE

- Part 1 provided a brief history of the MCAS and an analysis of Worcester's 2022 results, followed by a panel of local and statewide education stakeholders discussing key equity issues raised and how districts could effectively harness MCAS data to promote student achievement.
- Part 2 featured a live debate between Dr. Martin West, a Harvard Education Professor and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education member who led efforts to raise MCAS passing scores, and Edith Bazile, Founder of Black Advocates for Educational Excellence and former Adjunct Professor of Education at UMass Boston, who strongly opposes the planned increases.
- Part 3 included a presentation by Jack Schneider, Executive Director of the Education Commonwealth Project, exploring innovative assessment methods that could be used to evaluate student learning and school quality.



## MEEP Toolkit for Families on School Funding

*The Worcester Education Collaborative supported the development of the Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership's Family Funding Toolkit. Following the toolkit's development, WEC organized a two-part series to enhance community understanding of the Worcester Public Schools budgeting process and highlight this resource as a tool for continued advocacy for community stakeholders.*



**MASSACHUSETTS EDUCATION  
EQUITY PARTNERSHIP**  
*There is no excellence without equity*



*The mission of the Worcester Education Collaborative is to advance excellence and equity in education for all Worcester Public School students. We achieve this mission through community mobilization and partnership, advocacy, and strategic action.*



## Uplifting Community Voice

This fall, WEC launched Uplifting Community Voice, a series of targeted reports, community tools, and engaging resources to promote education equity in Worcester. The project works to build community advocacy capacity, as well as aid in the development of a responsive, equity-focused community education agenda as the City experiences a once-in-a-generation inflection point in public education. To date, Uplifting Community Voice has published two briefing series with accompanying resources:

### The WEC Briefing Series

- **Early College: The Best Investment for College Success** provides a snapshot of the college success equity gap in Massachusetts and recommendations for expanding Early College access in Worcester.
- **WPS Student Transportation & Worcester Education Ecosystem** includes a review of past practices for after school student transportation offered by WPS and the impact these policies and practices have on students and families. The paper offers recommendations for addressing transportation needs in partnership with the community.

### The Excellence Series with the Worcester Regional Research Bureau

- **Investing in Excellence** aims to demystify the WPS Budget with an overview of Worcester's school funding model and WPS' FY23 budget priorities. Complementing the report is an interactive dashboard created using Tableau that allows you to explore budget line items and make comparisons across time.
- **Strategizing for Excellence** offers a comprehensive review of the progress made on outcomes and benchmarks established in Worcester's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. While much of the data collection was hampered by pandemic-related disruptions and insufficient data systems, the report offers a timely reminder of the importance of implementing sound mechanisms for effective data collection and reporting as Worcester develops a new strategic plan for the district.
- **Governing for Excellence** covers recent changes in WPS' governance structures, including changes to School Committee rules and structure and organizational changes at WPS. The report is accompanied by an interactive portal with voting information created with ArcGIS.



Early College: The Best Investment We Can Make in Supporting College Success for Worcester Students

**NEW REPORT**

Early College students are **21% more likely to matriculate immediately to college** after high school graduation.

[Read More](#) [wecollaborative.org](http://wecollaborative.org)

## In the Press



**Pre-K, diversifying teachers among top Worcester priorities for state funds** | Published October 14, 2022 | [Read the article](#)



**Viewpoint: Early College Boosts the Workforce**  
Published January 9, 2023 | [Read the article](#)



**Carey: Grading Worcester schools' 5-year plan** | Published January 22, 2023 | [Read the article](#)

Read the reports and more at:  
[www.wecollaborative.org/uplifting-community-voice](http://www.wecollaborative.org/uplifting-community-voice)



# INSPIRING ACTION

## Worcester Education Equity Roundtable

Convened by WEC, the Worcester Education Equity Roundtable (WEER) is a coalition of partners—colleges, universities, cultural organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and parent advocates—working to align key programs, outreach, and advocacy efforts with a commitment to equity for historically marginalized people in the PreK-12 public education system in the City of Worcester. Complementing the work of the District, WEER has played a vital role in developing a strong learning ecosystem across Worcester that collaboratively works to address school improvement, social-emotional learning, district accountability, funding advocacy, and school-community relations.

*The Roundtable is currently focused on cultivating a community-district partnership with the new Superintendent of Schools to promote excellence and equity in Worcester's K-12 education system. Phase one of this work involves supporting the Superintendent's transition to the district, laying the groundwork for a new strategic vision, and developing a shared community-district learning ecosystem to build capacity for fostering student-centered, equitable environments.*

## WEER Welcomes Dr. Monárrez

As the WPS district welcomed new leadership this school year, members of the Roundtable were eager to introduce Dr. Monárrez to Worcester's vast web of community-based supports and resources for students and families. To facilitate this, a subcommittee of Roundtable members organized two community tours this fall, during which the Superintendent, along with Assistant Superintendent Marie Morse and Director of Diversity Ivonne Perez, visited community agencies in each of the four WPS Quadrants. Site visits included: YWCA Central Massachusetts, Worcester Youth Center, Black Excellence Academy, African Community Education (ACE), Girls Inc. of Worcester, Friendly House, the Ecotarium, and the Guild of St. Agnes. At two of the sites, students served as tour guides and were delighted by the opportunity to represent their programs and meet the Superintendent.

Following the tour, the subcommittee coordinated the creation of an in-depth briefing booklet highlighting the work of 32 community agencies. Each agency compiled a 2-page profile on their work, and the booklet was presented to the superintendent as part of her onboarding and has been further distributed and shared within the school district. The briefing booklet is a testament to the thriving ecosystem of community partners across the city working on behalf of students and families. [View the Briefing Book](#)



*"The information was invaluable, and your hospitality was top notch! I look forward to a long, strong partnership."*

**Dr. Rachel Monárrez**  
Superintendent, Worcester Public Schools

## Advocacy in Action



December 5, 2022

Dear Governor-Elect Healey and Lt. Governor-Elect Driscoll,

Congratulations on the history you made on November 6 of this year. We look forward to the bold action that you will take as an administration with an understanding of and commitment to education. As a part of the transition to your administration, you will without doubt receive many proposals concerning an agenda for education in the Commonwealth. As an education policy and research organization with a focus on advocacy on behalf of the children in the Worcester Public Schools, we hope that our ideas are a useful complement to the thoughts of others as you develop your list of priorities for the coming years.

## WEC Transition Memo

In December 2022, WEC sent a [transition memo](#) to the Healey-Driscoll Transition Team regarding matters specific to education in Worcester and in our sister Gateway Cities. Key priorities included:

1. Addressing School Building Quality
2. Enhancing Student Transportation Services
3. Supporting Teacher Diversity
4. Addressing Assessment Concerns
5. Expanding Early College
6. Cultivating an Ecosystem Approach to Education
7. Investing in Community Schools

## WEC'S Trauma Work

Initially funded by the Daniels Foundation and The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, WEC has worked to address the impact of trauma on learning with the development of highly regarded trainings and web-based resources for practitioners in the youth development, education, and juvenile justice sectors. Trainings utilize short videos to provide participants with a theoretical understanding of relevant issues, as well as practical tools to foster students' positive behavior and resilience. Over the past year, WEC has delivered 6 trainings reaching over 120 professionals supporting local youth.



### Trauma Trainings

*Over the past year, WEC provided our intensive training series on the impact of trauma to Early Education & Care (EEC) Providers, as well as ASOST-R grantees. These trainings fostered participants' knowledge and skills around how to support all young people's sound social and emotional development.*



## 13th Annual Meeting October 26, 2022

Our 13th Annual Meeting welcomed Ron Walker, Founder and Executive Director of the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color, as keynote speaker. Ron shared his lessons learned from supporting school leaders serving boys of color, and how relationship building, cultural relevance, and centering the student voice is critical to building an equitable education ecosystem.

Following his talk, Ron was joined by Dr. Rachel Monárrez, Superintendent of Worcester Public Schools, for a guided conversation about building community capacity and developing an equity-focused approach to public education in Worcester. [Learn more about WEC's 13th Annual Meeting.](#)



# IMPLEMENTING FOR IMPACT

## Reading Together

Each school year, WEC's Reading Together program reaches over 1,300 K-3 children at 7 Worcester public elementary schools and distributes over 5,000 new, culturally diverse books chosen to emphasize qualities of character and community, and aligned with elements of the WPS' curriculum.

Reading Together's unique, multi-pronged approach also invites parents and caregivers to join students in the classroom four times each year for engaging read-alouds that model techniques for guiding students through fun, connected literacy activities.

In the summer, WEC partners with 8 youth-serving agencies to provide Summer Literacy Kits to over 1,100 K-6 students. The Summer Literacy Kits provide a set of 10 books, an activity guide, and school supplies. Books and literacy materials help curb learning loss typically experienced in the summer months (also known as the "summer slide").



### Impact and Outcomes

- In SY21-22, students made significant skill gains over the course of the program, with the percentage of students at or above grade level proficiency in English Language Arts rising from one-third to 73%, those demonstrating proficiency in the area of communications rising from 20% to 65%, and engagement in learning rising from 29% to 69%, as measured by pre and post SAYO assessments.



## A CRITICAL MILESTONE

*Proficiency in reading by the end of third grade enables students to shift from learning to read to reading to learn, and to master the more complex subject matter they encounter beginning in the fourth grade. Research shows that students who reach this critical milestone have significantly higher likelihood of completing high school and earning a diploma.*

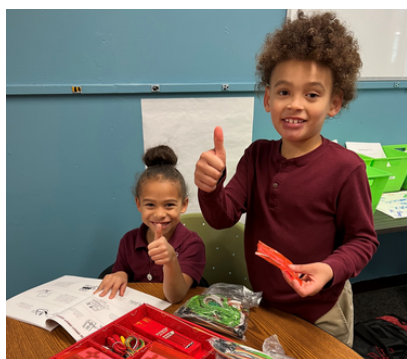
# Woo-Labs: Amplifying Teacher & Learning in Worcester

Led by WEC, Woo-Labs is a network of community-based partners advancing educational and racial equity by increasing their capacity to provide high-quality, culturally responsive, project-based learning in out-of-school time. Woo-Labs' 11 Host Partners target Worcester K-6 grade students experiencing persistent gaps in opportunity and achievement. WEC supports program capacity building by providing Host Partners with extensive professional development, support implementing a joint measurement-for-improvement data system, and a local college student, called "Hanover Fellow," to help implement key Woo-Labs activities.



**This year, Woo-Labs is reaching over 600 students across 11 partner sites.** Partners are engaging in two ongoing communities of practice to hone their project-based learning skills and advance their understanding of trauma, resilience, and racial equity.

**Learning is coming alive for students as they design and implement projects based on their own interests.** Broad Meadow Brook students devised board games to teach peers about climate change; Guild of St. Agnes participants made an Animal Magazine based on their favorite creatures.



**WEC built and launched a PBL Learning and Lending Library this fall with cutting-edge PBL goods and well-vetted PBL lesson plans.** The library currently houses over 45 PBL lesson plans as well as durable goods such as laser printers and coding-focused invention kits. At left, YMCA students explore coding-focused invention kits made available through the Lending Library.

## Measurement Catalyzes Improvement

Woo-Labs' trainings and capacity-building activities are resulting in tangible improvement and student skill building. Partners use a shared measurement system from the well-regarded National Institute on Out-of-School Time to catalyze continuous improvement and maximize student skill gains. Results demonstrate significant and consistent growth in program quality as measured in third-party program observations. Students routinely provide positive feedback on surveys, reporting they have supportive adults and find programs enjoyable and challenging. Ultimately, these efforts have translated into skill gain: students have demonstrated meaningful skill growth in critical thinking, communication, engagement, and initiative.



**2,000**  
STUDENTS  
SERVED



**6 in 10**  
STUDENTS MADE SIGNIFICANT  
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILL  
GAINS



**100%**  
IMPROVEMENT IN ALL 13  
PROGRAM OBSERVATION  
CATEGORIES



**30+**  
HANDS-ON PBL  
PROJECTS



**80+**  
HRS OF  
STAFF  
TRAINING

THANK YOU TO OUR  
FOUNDATION, CORPORATE, AND PUBLIC  
GRANT FUNDERS THAT SUPPORT OUR  
WORK THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

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