

WEC Bulletin - Summer 2021



Welcome, Emily!

On May 17, WEC welcomed Emily Dodge to the staff as Assistant Director. Emily is a newly minted graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a summa cum laude graduate of Middlebury College. A former staffer at Boston After School and Beyond, she has a wealth of experience in out-of-school time programming and evaluation. Woo-Labs will be her primary responsibility.

Woo-Labs Phase I: A Strong Summer Start

Years of hard work came to fruition this summer as the Worcester Education Equity Roundtable formally launched Woo-Labs, a network of education ecosystem partners committed to advancing educational and racial equity for Worcester K-6 students by improving their capacity to provide high-quality, culturally responsive, student-centered, project-based learning opportunities. The Phase I launch includes five pilot sites: African Community Education, Mass Audubon's Broad Meadow Brook Conservation Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, Boys and Girls Club of Worcester's Harrington Clubhouse, Girls Inc of Worcester, and Greendale Family Branch YMCA.

With the support of a highly trained group of mentors enrolled in our local colleges, partner organizations work to enhance students' experiences, cultivate their social and emotional competencies, and develop their 21st century learning skills through hands-on, project-based learning.

In addition to direct work with children, staff from partner organizations along with the college student mentors engage in ongoing professional development and a community of practice to connect with each other, share best practices, and address emerging issues. The Worcester Education Collaborative houses and provides administrative support to Woo-Labs.

Woo-Labs is made possible by funding from Greater Worcester Community Foundation and United Way of Central Massachusetts' Worcester Together Fund and the Amelia Peabody Foundation.



Check out the T&G article on Woo-Labs' launch [here!](#)



Recent Happenings



Reading Together Expansion

With the generous support of the AbbVie Foundation, WEC implemented its first summer reading initiative. Eight Woo-Labs partners received over 13,000 carefully curated books related to STEM, Health and Wellness, School Readiness, Social Justice, Social Emotional Learning, and more. Special thanks are due to the Worcester Technical High School for providing a staging ground and to intern Heidi Coronel, who wrangled this massive effort.

WEC's Understanding Trauma Sensitive Practices training for teachers, youth workers, and others continues to garner attention. We have delivered the training to Woo-Labs partners, several of our Roundtable partners, St. John's High School, and Thrive Support and Advocacy. In response to the challenges of our times, we have also added modules on grief, racism as trauma, and COVID-19 as community trauma.

WEC Training in High Demand



Effective Foster Care Advocacy

In the summer of 2018, as part of our work in the area of trauma and learning, WEC hosted a conference on the education of children in foster care. This was followed by a series of meetings with Heather Forkey at UMass Medical School and Representative David LeBoeuf (Worcester, Leicester) to focus on solutions. As a result of that work, the state legislature used its oversight authority to create new positions in the Department of Children and Families to monitor the education progress of kids in state care. WEC works. Advocacy works. Read more [here](#).

In collaboration with partners, our work to enhance WPS students' opportunities to earn college credit while in high school through the state's Early College Program continues. Our advocacy bore fruit: the state has generously increased its support for this program.

In addition, Jen is working with Chris Gabrieli and others on a statewide initiative to support districts with best practices and opportunities to expand this important tool for equity and opportunity for students to broaden their learning experiences. In April, Jen also participated in a statewide forum hosted by MassInc on Massachusetts' early college initiatives.

Early College Advocacy Efforts Successful



Congrats, Julia!

Join us in congratulating Julia for her acceptance into the prestigious Rennie Center Education Policy Fellowship Program! We're excited for Julia to further hone her leadership and public policy skills through this year-long fellowship, which brings together education advocates from all of the over the state for monthly professional development seminars.

Josh continues to serve as the facilitator for the Worcester Education Equity Roundtable with the support of Natasha Ushomirsky of Education Trust. The two most active sub-committees are Woo-Labs, chaired by Kim Davenport, and Social and Emotional Learning, chaired by Amy Ebbeson of Worcester Addresses Childhood Trauma.



WEER Steaming Ahead



Community Capacity Building

Over the spring, WEC hosted several community briefings and forums for providers in the education space and community members on important topics in education:

- In response to the January 6th storming of the Capitol, WEC hosted a two-part series with the Boston Public Health Commission and Facing History & Ourselves on having conversations with children on difficult topics
- WEC hosted a panel discussion on early college including WPS staff, Chris Gabrieli (Chair of the Board of Higher Education), leaders from WSU and QCC, and an early college student

Looking Ahead

Join us at our 12th Annual Meeting

LEARNING BEYOND LIMITS: COMMISSIONING A NEW WAY

Monday, November 1st • 4pm • Zoom



Featuring a conversation with
Massachusetts Education Commissioners
Jeffrey Riley and Carlos Santiago
moderated by
MassInc's Juana Matias

Press

WEC published two opinion pieces:



[Early college a proven winner for students, state](#)

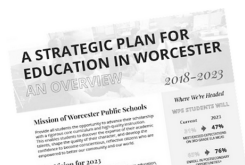
TELEGRAM & GAZETTE

[It's time to consider a hybrid model for Worcester School Committee](#)



WEC will host the education module for Leadership Worcester in October

WEC is collaborating with the Worcester Regional Research Bureau and the School Committee's Standing Committee on Governance to complete a review of and update to the WPS strategic plan at its midpoint



Worcester School Committee Forum:
Putting All Children First

Once again, WEC will co-host a forum for School Committee candidates this fall



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