

COMMONWEALTH PRESCHOOL EXPANSION GRANT

WORCESTER'S PRESCHOOL EXPANSION
STRATEGIC PLAN

WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Worcester Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan

I. Executive Summary

The Worcester Public Schools (WPS) and Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG) planning partners in education and social service sectors across Worcester are pleased to present this PEG Strategic Plan. The plan identifies what would be required in order for the PEG model to be implemented locally to serve children ages 2.9 through kindergarten entry.

Worcester holds the triple distinctions of being the second largest city in New England, a leading Gateway City, and the leading refugee resettlement community welcoming 300 to 500 new families each year, all of which drive our unique, richly diverse city. To be a truly great city, Worcester must have healthy children, engaged families and the very highest standards in our early learning system. Our City is fortunate to have so many people and organizations committing time and resources to improve the education and health of our children and to support families as their children's first teacher.

Worcester's commitment to align resources is part of the fabric of the community. The expansion grant importantly extends upon Worcester's recent Birth to 3rd Grade Framework, which now serves as the City's promise across the earliest and most important years. The framework, called *Birth to 3rd Grade Strategic Framework, Growing the Heart of the Commonwealth: Early Alignment for Children's Lifelong Success* (March 2016), represents a cohesive and comprehensive vision of an early learning system that evolves to support the needs of each child in our community. The strategies in the Framework provide solutions to some of the most significant problems facing Worcester by investing in early and equal development of human potential. Our plan also builds upon Full Day Kindergarten, Educator and Provider Support, CFCE grants, and no less than seven other programs and grants – from Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments to the National Campaign for Grade Level Reading and Worcester's School-Community Data Project.

Whether the focus is on ages 2.9 to kindergarten entry as it is with PEG, or more broadly on birth to 3rd grade, early learning takes place in many settings - home, child care, preschool, libraries, faith organizations, parks, play groups and many other community settings. Early learning is shaped by many people - parents, guardians, grandparents, early educators, teachers, health care providers and a variety of caring adults and programs. This rich variety offers choice for families according to their own values and needs. However, when everything takes place in separate silos, families have a hard time finding the services and information they want. While there have been a number of efforts to build bridges between existing programs, the pieces can be disjointed. PEG will further the City's efforts to integrate the various policies, programs and services for young children with the adults who care for and teach them. When system elements align, children have the best opportunity to reach their full potential.

The Worcester PEG Strategic Plan builds upon a key goal in the Birth to 3rd Alignment Grant to increase access to and quality of education and comprehensive services across the Birth to 3rd Grade continuum so children meet developmental milestones necessary for kindergarten readiness and continued success. As such, the expansion grant will tap into plans already developed by the Birth to 3rd Alignment Team to increase access to

high quality early learning programs and comprehensive services, especially for children with high needs; increase use of evidence-informed instructional practices; increase use of data for quality improvement and decision making; increase academic achievement; and reduce the achievement gap.

The PEG planning process has prompted the Planning Team to focus on needs of children ages 2.9 to kindergarten entry and their families. It required that we continue to identify strengths within the community, resources that can be leveraged, and barriers to achieving a PEG model. Our strategic plan repurposes a building in Worcester to be a central early learning center, to house multiple new preschool classrooms, offer shared professional development (PD) for educators, and comprehensive services for families. The new learning center will serve as a demonstration project for the City, with a dedicated room to expand curriculum and activities for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEAM). The learning center will enable PEG to actualize collaboration at a new, visible level. The plan offers two options to extend transportation to the many families who need it in Worcester. It bridges new immigrant and refugee families into our education system through culturally-supportive playgroups. And it develops a pipeline of leaders. In total, the **Worcester's PEG Plan supports an additional 104 children (80 in classrooms plus 24 in playgroups) and reaches more than 1,000 children already in care at early learning partner sites, as high quality, research-based practices are transferred into existing programs.**

Worcester's PEG Plan supports competitive compensation for educators while increasing access to education attainment. Through a new nexus at Quinsigamond Community College, along with arrangements with Worcester Technical High School, Worcester State University, Becker College and Fitchburg State University, the plan cultivates a pipeline of professional educators to expand the early learning workforce. The Plan offers a unique model where each staff participating in PEG will participate in a specific certificate and degree cohort, and where preschool expansion will be braided with existing early education funding support to advance cohorts moving to the next level of degree attainment.

PEG will provide program wide training and PD, classroom based coaching, and monthly professional learning communities (PLC). Educators and leaders will participate in CLASS observer trainings, with Head Start taking the lead in designing an educator support plan for utilizing CLASS in PEG classrooms. PEG will fund Curriculum Coaches to support curriculum implementation and individual educator development through CLASS. Worcester PEG partners already are at higher levels of QRIS than other cities. All partners will aim for a Level 4 rating or NAEYC accreditation within four years. The plan anchors PEG curriculum and assessment in *Worcester's Characteristics of Kindergarten Readiness; Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten* and will implement the Boston Public School K1 Preschool models as a common curriculum. Our plan explores the portability of the kindergarten screening and registration processes in a central location. PEG will enhance the partner's collaborations with Early Intervention providers, home visiting providers and resettlement agencies under leadership from Worcester Family Partnership and Edward Street Child Services.

Our plan targets hard to reach families, including families who are new to the country and working poor. Funding will be channeled to extend upon the work of the Birth to Grade 3 Strategic Framework already in place and will move toward developing a citywide philosophy of family engagement. PEG will fund Family Engagement Specialists and Family Advocates, and will embed mental health services into new classrooms via Together for Kids and other community based partnerships. Finally, it expands the CFCE pilot with a new playgroup model to support specific cultural groups and recent immigrants and refugees.

II. Leadership

Our strategic plan operationalizes a partnership between the Worcester Public Schools (WPS) and private early learning providers as we plan and implement each aspect of expanded preschool programming. The Strategic Plan, spearheaded by the Managing Director of Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment in Worcester, represents a partnership between the WPS and five licensed early learning providers (ELPs) shown in the Table below. Together, the PEG partners will provide full-day, full-year programming (8-10 hours/day, 12 months/year).

The organizations below have anchored the early learning environment in Worcester, with a combined early education tenure of more than two centuries. They remain committed to providing high quality early learning experiences for Worcester’s youngest citizens. They embed current research-based practices and tools in their programming and continuously strive for improvement through thoughtful innovation and community partnerships. The partners’ roles will collectively cover each aspect of PEG necessary to implement PEG effectively. Each partner contributes unique strengths, from community convening and collaborative leadership, to DCF collaboration, capacity planning, Federal and State grants, corporate partnerships, special education (SPED) services, and out-of-school time programming.

The Worcester PEG Team

Partners	Role(s)	Strengths - Highlights	Individuals Involved
Edward Street Child Services <i>(Established 1883)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convener • Chair Alignment Partnership Council • Chair PEG Steering Committee • Coaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ECE Knowledge ➤ Community Convening ➤ Collaborative Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Director, B-3rd Alignment • Executive Director • Master Teacher
Guild of St. Agnes <i>(Established 1913)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE Services • Advocacy & Champion • Center Operations • Braided Funding • Capacity Planning • Transportation Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ECE Knowledge ➤ DCF Contractor ➤ Multi-site Operation ➤ Out of School Time 	Executive Director
Quinsigamond Community College/Children’s School <i>(Established 1972)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE Services • TSG Assessment • Coaching • Field Placement • Curriculum Development • Workforce PD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ECE Knowledge ➤ Higher Education Teacher Preparation ➤ Leadership Development ➤ Workforce PD ➤ Capacity Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Coordinator, ECE • Faculty
Rainbow Child Development <i>(Established 1971)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE Services • Advocacy • Center Operations • Family Engagement • Capacity Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ECE Knowledge ➤ Corporate Partnerships ➤ Out of School Time 	Executive Director
Worcester Child Development Head Start <i>(Established 1972)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE Service Provider • CLASS Assessment • Coaching • Family Engagement • Curriculum Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ECE Knowledge ➤ Family Advocacy/Engagement ➤ Coaching ➤ Federal & State Grants Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Start/Early Learning Director • Education Manager
Worcester Public Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPED Support • Comprehensive Service planning • Transportation Planning • Capacity Planning • Data Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State & Federal Grants Management ➤ SPED & Supplemental Services ➤ Research and Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Academic Officer • Head Start/Early Learning Director • Chief Research & Accountability Officer

YWCA of Central MA (Established 1889)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE Service Provider • Center Operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ECE Knowledge ➤ Out of School Time 	Director of Children’s Services
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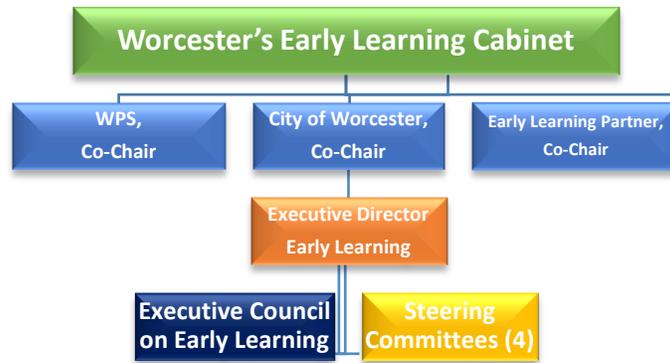
Other collaborating partners include organizations supporting young children and families:

Community Partners	Role(s)	Strengths - Highlights	Individuals Involved
Worcester Family Partnerships (Established 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement • Parent Child Home Program • Playgroups • Raising a Reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CFCE Grantee ➤ Home Visiting Program ➤ Education Playgroups ➤ Community Partner & Leader 	WFP Coordinator
Worcester Public Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books & Materials • Mobile Library • Creative Programming & Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Storytime ➤ Teacher Curriculum Supports ➤ Materials ➤ Hub and Branch Expertise 	Youth Services Coordinator
Family Services of Central MA/Center for Childcare Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD support • QRIS and NAEYC Support and Coaching • Individual Education Plans/Program Education Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regional Educator and Provider Support Grant (EPS) ➤ PD – College and CEU level ➤ Coaching ➤ Connection to Tool Training and Other Training Topics 	Program Coordinator for EPS Region 2
Quinsigamond, Worcester State, Becker, Fitchburg State, UMass Donahue Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Advancement Certificates and Degrees • CLASS Observer Training (UMass) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Institute of Higher Education ➤ Degree Attainment ➤ CLASS Training and TA 	Faculty and Chairs

Preschool Expansion Team Structure and Leadership

The PEG Planning Team will continue to operate under the umbrella of Worcester’s Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment Partnership Council as a formal leadership structure is finalized. Along with nine other early childhood programs and service agencies, the expansion team currently serves on the Alignment Partnership Council, a body that formalizes cross-sector collaboration and decision-making across public and private sector partners.

The governance structure of the Alignment initiative is multi-tiered to ensure that leaders throughout Worcester have a voice in shaping the work. The Preschool Expansion Grant initiative will operate within this structure under an Executive Director of Early Learning. The Alignment governance structure is organized under an **Early Learning Cabinet** and contains four tiers: **Co-Chairs, an Executive Director, an Executive Council on Early Learning, and Steering Committees for each Strategic Area**. These tiers will work collaboratively to outline strategic priorities, implement the PEG Strategic Plan, and guide funding decisions. Additionally, the Early Learning Cabinet will put in place a process that engages the community, promotes public and private partnerships, and aligns resources and investments that serve children birth through age 8. It will launch an intensive communication plan not only to promote the PEG initiative to Worcester educators, service providers, and families, but to generate widespread awareness and support for the initiative among Worcester residents and business leaders.



Steering Committees are aligned to the four Strategic Areas outlined in the *Early Learning for Lifelong Success Birth to 3rd Grade Strategic Framework*: **(1) Early Learning, (2) Family Engagement and Support, (3) Behavioral Health, and (4) Health**. The PEG strategic plan components will reside in a corresponding Steering Committee, already charged with developing and implementing their respective sections of the Strategic Framework into a full-fledged five-year Action Plan with attention to specific outcomes. In addition to the PEG Planning Team, the Steering Committees will be populated with organizational leaders, Institutes of Higher Education (IHE), business and health sector representatives, parents and providers from Worcester's early education centers, family child care systems, early intervention, the WPS (principals, teachers, administration) and Worcester Child Development Head Start. The Executive Director will support the Steering Committees in successful implementation of their respective plans and will coordinate the work of the Steering Committees with the Executive Council.

Continued oversight, development and improvements will be supported by the Early Learning Council and PEG Partners. To be most successful, strong lines of communication with Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) are essential. EEC's partnership in problem-solving is one critical aspect to the success of this plan. In addition, the PEG Planning Team outlined several specific support steps that EEC could play including:

1. **Create flexibility in income eligibility** – consider a percent range so that we can reduce the “fringe” exclusions that are occurring as families experience increases in minimum wage.
2. **Maintain and expand ECE Scholarship funding** – to support educator degree attainment, the ECE Scholarship needs to remain robustly funded, and should expand to support leadership and quality development for educators seeking a Master's degree.
3. **Expand regulatory collaboration between EEC, ESE, and Head Start** – to create flexibility to establish collaborative programming sites without negotiating three differing sets of regulatory requirements.
4. **Increase transportation reimbursement rate** – to support fully-loaded costs of transporting young children (smaller buses, seatbelt requirements, bus monitors, etc.)
5. **Increase reimbursement rates to advance goals on compensation parity** – to increase workforce compensation towards stabilizing and growing a high quality workforce.
6. **Align workforce credentialing and MA QRIS requirements** – to support the development of the highest quality workforce with deep early childhood content knowledge.

Worcester's PEG planning partners look forward to future collaboration to advance these goals.

III. Preschool Expansion Program Design

A. Needs Assessment

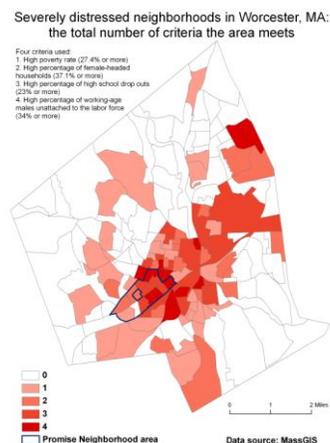
More children in Worcester need to be served. Worcester has a well-documented demand for increased preschool services in the community, particularly for children facing multiple risk factors to success in educational outcomes such as poverty, high numbers of recent immigrants, high percentage of homeless families, and high crime rates.

Worcester, aptly named the Heart of the Commonwealth, is the second largest city in New England with a population of 182,511. It was the hub of 19th century industrial revolution and its roots in innovation continues today with industry pioneers in biomedicine and biotechnology. It is home to ten colleges and universities, and 38% percent of all jobs in the city are in the education and medical fields.

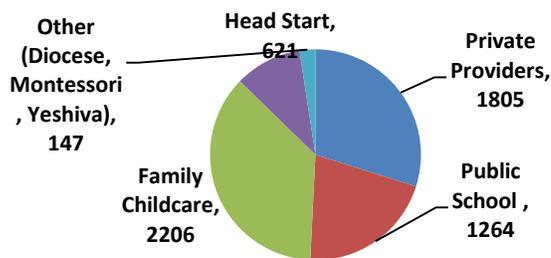
Worcester is also a Gateway City that welcomes immigrants from around the world. It is home to 37,970 immigrants from 85 countries who make up 21% of the city’s total population. Each day Worcester welcomes refugees seeking to build a new life in the United States. Between 2007 and 2012 the US State Department estimates that 2,196 refugees arrived in the City. The number continues to climb.

Despite its strengths, Worcester continues to grapple with challenges. According to the US Census Bureau’s Five-Year American Community Survey, there are 39,987 family households in Worcester. The number of children in Worcester age 0 to 5 is 14,134. The number of children under 6 with all parents in the workforce is 8,480. A staggering 22% of Worcester’s population is below the poverty level, compared to a state average of 15.6%. More than 30% of youth under the age of 18 live in poverty. The complex challenges associated with poverty impact our community and our schools. Deep pockets of poverty are concentrated near the heart of the city, and programs serving to ameliorate poverty focus their efforts accordingly.

Today, thirty-nine (39) licensed child care centers, five (5) Diocese or Yeshiva schools offering preschool, four (4) Head Start sites, and approximately 235 licensed family child care homes serve Worcester families with young children. Worcester’s current capacity to serve children between birth and age 5 (typical kindergarten entry age) is 6,037 across these settings.



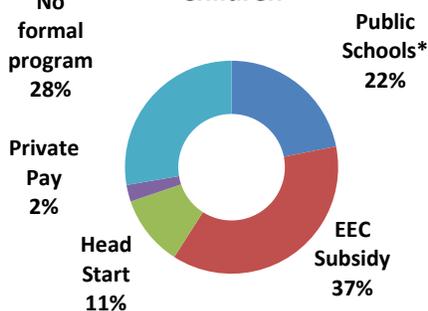
Enrollment of Worcester's Children Ages 0-5 by Education & Care Setting May 2016



Worcester Public Schools enrollment data, Worcester Child Development Head Start enrollment data, Child Care Resource and Referral (Seven Hills) licensed and subsidy data, Edward Street Child Services capacity tracking data.

When the data above is stratified by children ages 3 to 5, Worcester enrollment shows a similar pattern to the state. That is, on average, one-third of children are not participating in any formal preschool program.

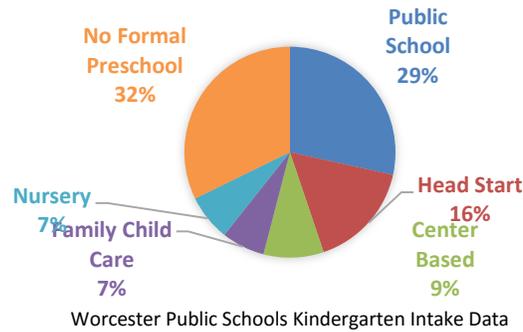
PreK Participation by Worcester's Children



Worcester Public Schools enrollment data, Worcester Child Development Head Start enrollment data, Child Care Resource and Referral (Seven Hills) licensed and subsidy data, Edward Street Child Services capacity tracking data.

Worcester kindergarten intake data shows a similar pattern. At kindergarten registration, WPS Parent Information Center intake specialists share a list of potential early learning experiences and ask parents to indicate their child's recent experience in formal or informal settings. WPS data identifies a significant gap in formal preschool experiences. On average, approximately one-third of the 2,300 entering kindergarteners have had no formal preschool experience. WPS reports that more than 50% of entering kindergarteners are classified as English Language Learners. WPS identifies more than 100 different languages spoken across its student population.

Parent Reports of Preschool Experience At Kindergarten Entry (2015)



Enrollment, Capacity and Capacity Utilization. A survey was sent to providers throughout Worcester to obtain data on capacity utilization. The respondents represent a range of different child care settings, although Head Start and WPS are not included in the respondent pool. Program enrollment among these providers ranges from 7 to 110 children. Capacity ranges from 10 to 110 children, and capacity utilization (enrollment/capacity) ranges from 70% to 118%. Average enrollment across the programs/systems is 55.6 children; average capacity is 57.6; and average capacity utilization is 95%.

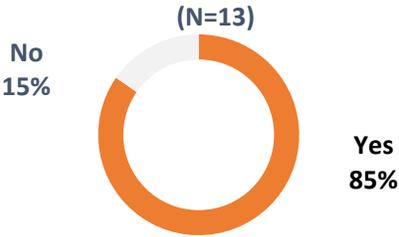
Enrollment, Capacity, and Capacity Utilization (N=15)

Enrollment	Capacity	Capacity Utilization
110	110	100%
100	100	100%
84	87	97%
80	80	100%
59	64	92%
57	57	100%
56	57	98%
55	61	90%
49	49	100%
47	40	118%
42	39	108%
40.5	50	81%
27	37	73%
21	23	91%
7	10	70%
Average Enrollment: 55.6	Average Capacity: 57.6	Average Capacity Utilization: 95%

Worcester Provider Survey, May 2016

Waitlists: While overall capacity is 95%, 85% of the respondents report that they have a waitlist, indicating that more data on the waitlist is warranted.

Worcester Programs with a Waitlist



Worcester Provider Survey, May 2016

Seven Hills (CCR&R) data indicates that there is also an active waitlist for preschool vouchers for Worcester residents. As of June 2016, there were 257 Worcester children on a waitlist for preschool program support. Follow up conversations reveal several contributing factors for waitlists across early learning programs and Worcester Child Development Head Start. Those factors include: transportation, income-eligibility, and available capacity due to staffing shortages. Further, WPS reported shrinking enrollment in its half-day preschool programs due to changes in special education eligibility criteria resulting in fewer children eligible for services, and the half-day format does not support working families. Head Start administrators reported on the “trap” of the working poor. Federal poverty levels remain fixed and do not reflect regional cost of living. And, recent increases in minimum wage bump families above eligibility guidelines. A family of three making \$24,050 is no longer eligible. After rent, food and clothing, this family has \$3,000 left to pay for child care. The annual cost of preschool care ranges from \$11,000 – 12,000.

PEG will expand options for families. Center-based programs in Worcester operate for longer days and more weeks throughout the year than Head Start and the WPS. While WPS serves 1,264 preschool children, it operates in most cases a half day program, which does not adequately support the needs of working families. A survey of families conducted by Worcester Family Partnership in June 2016 confirmed that for the several parents of three and four year olds, who had their children in either Head Start or the WPS preK, one-third maintained that program did not meet their needs. Half of the parents requested full day care, and the other half requested half-day care, but for the whole year. When asked if they could get full day, high quality, free preschool in Worcester, all of the parents said they would use it.

The survey confirms the need for expanded preK in Worcester that includes more capacity, more accessibility with regard to costs, additional full day care, transportation, and high quality teaching. The parents reported that the most important aspects in choosing a preK program were that the (1) hours met their needs; (2) the space was clean; (3) they could afford the school; and (4) teachers were qualified. On the other hand, key barriers to getting preK were that preK costs too much money; it is difficult to get to the program; and not knowing where to get information. Forty percent of the parents surveyed said they were eligible for financial assistance.

What Matters Most to Parents	Key Barriers to Getting PreK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours meet needs • Classroom space of setting is clean • I can afford the school • Teachers are qualified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs too much money • Difficulty getting to the program • Do not know where to get information

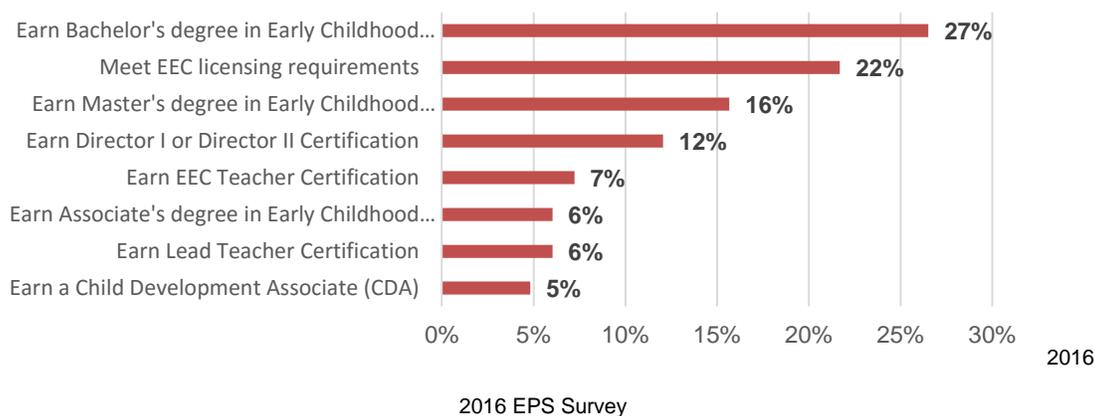
Worcester Family Survey June 2016

Teacher Capacity in Worcester

Data on Worcester analyzed from the EPS Survey yielded a respondent pool of 77 educators working across a range of settings serving children infants to school age in Worcester. The educator respondents had longevity in the field, with one-third having worked in early education or out-of-school time programs for more than 16 years; and another third between 6 and 15 years. In terms of education, 53% of respondents reported having ECE-related degrees, with 51% at the Associates' or Bachelors' degree level. An additional one-quarter are in the process of obtaining a BA, while the remaining 13% are enrolled in an AA, MA, or other degree program. Overall, data indicates high levels of experience among preK educators in Worcester; moderate levels of ECE degree attainment; and moderate levels of participation in degree programs. The City's workforce is obtaining field-specific degrees but more support is needed.

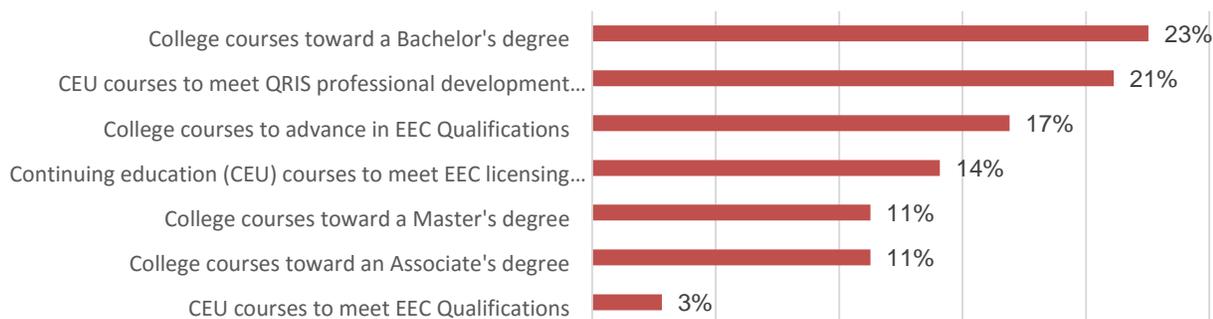
Professional Development Needs: Two different surveys, the Worcester Provider Survey (May 2016) and EPS Region 2 Survey (Spring 2016) reveal a pattern of professional development (PD) needs. When asked about their PD goals with regard to degrees or certifications, the three most frequently cited goals are "earn a Bachelor's degree in Early Education", followed by "meet EEC licensing requirements", and finally, a "earn a Master's degree in Education". EEC teacher certification, Associate's degree in early education, Lead Teacher certification, and CDA were mentioned less frequently.

PD Goals Related to Degrees or Certifications (N=83)



Likewise, educators are most interested in college courses with a Bachelor's degree.

What PD Opportunities are You Interested In? (N=71)

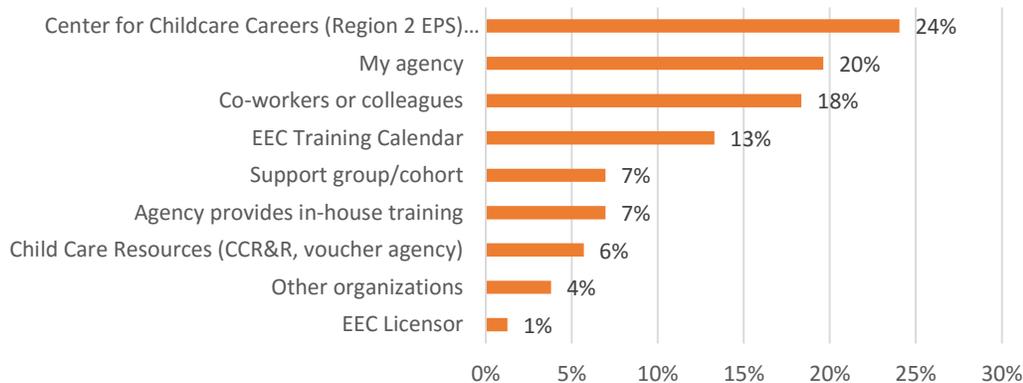


2016 EPS Survey

Worcester providers indicate a range of PD topics needed to support their staff’s continuous learning. Topics of highest interest are behavior and classroom management, SPED and children with disabilities, and four areas of STEAM, PreK-K Social Emotional Learning Standards at (28% and 27% respectively), and Children in Trauma and Supporting English Language Learners, at 25% and 20% respectively. The topics of most interest were incorporated into preschool expansion PD.

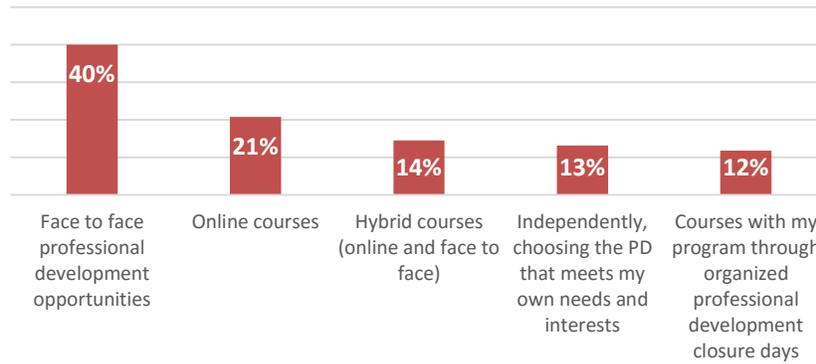
The main sources for information on PD and training opportunities are 1) the EPS Region 2 Center for Childcare Careers Training Bulletin; 2) their own agency; 3) co-workers; and 4) the EEC training calendar.

Sources of Information on PD and Training (N=158)



Face-to-face PD is the most popular instructional format, with 40% of respondents preferring in-person instruction. Online courses follow, with 21% of mentions. Fewer individuals prefer hybrid formats and courses offered through PD closure days.

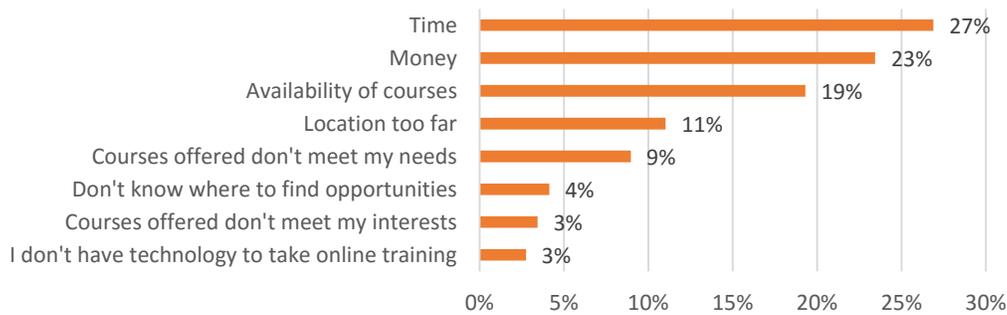
Preferred PD Learning Formats (N=145)



Weeknights followed by Saturday mornings are the most desirable time for PD. Nine out of ten prefer instruction in English, while only one out of ten prefer Spanish.

Top barriers to participating in PD are having the time for PD (27% of mentions); having the money for it (23%); and availability of courses (19%).

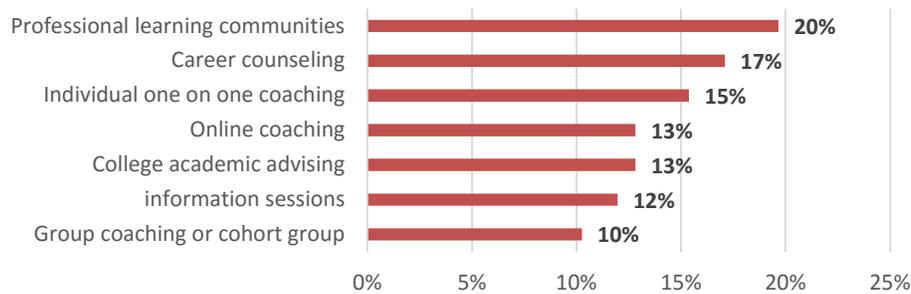
Barriers to Participating in PD (N=145)



2016 EPS Survey

Coaching and Mentoring Preferences. Educators were asked to denote interest in one or more of seven possible venues for coaching and mentoring. They express the most interest in receiving coaching and mentoring via PLCs (20%), career counseling (17%), and individual/one-one coaching (15%).

**Interest in Different Coaching and Mentoring Services
(N=117)**



Coaching and mentoring for QRIS implementation; family and community engagement; children’s mental health; and infant and toddler care draw the most interest, ranging from 13% to 8% of all mentions.

Coaching and Mentoring Topics of Interest (N=214)

Interest in Coaching and Mentoring Related To:	Percent
QRIS implementation	13%
Family and community engagement	10%
Children's mental health	9%
Infant and toddler care	8%
Health and safety	7%
Teaching dual language learners	7%
Program planning and environments	6%
Business management practices	6%
Leadership development	6%
Understanding developmental screenings and/or observational assessment tools for program improvement process	6%
NAFCC accreditation for family child care	4%
School age care	4%
Inclusion	4%
IPDPs and Continuous Quality Improvement Plans (CQI)	4%
NAEYC accreditation for group child care	4%
CDA advising	3%
COA accreditation for school age	1%

2016 EPS Survey

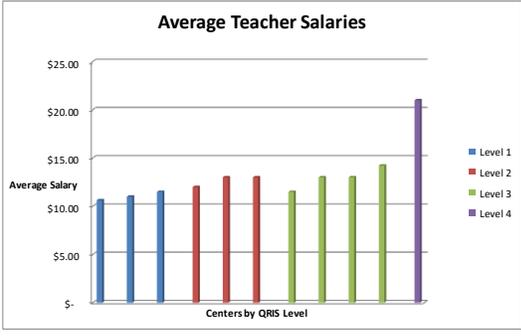
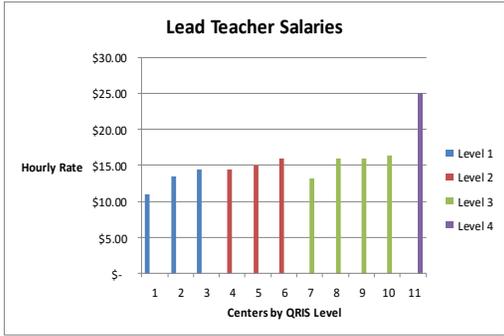
Compensation. Worcester’s Educator Workforce is shrinking due to low compensation. A recent salary and benefits survey conducted by Edward Street Child Services (April 2016) shows the following compensation levels:

- A comparison of starting salaries for teachers of preschool-age children show dramatic differences among program types and funding sources.
- The median hourly rate for teachers in Worcester is \$12.
- The median income in Worcester is \$46,105 and so the average annual cost of care for one infant of \$15,320 is a staggering 33% of median income. Most families need childcare at the beginning of their careers when their salaries are lowest.
- Higher QRIS levels also had higher compensation bands across all teaching and administrative positions.

A high quality, well compensated workforce produces high quality programming. Worcester is home to one of the first early learning centers to earn MA QRIS Level 4 status in December 2015. As the graphs below indicate, the compensation level for that program is a significant outlier in the general compensation structure for the early learning workforce in the City.

“We have a 21st century set of expectations about childhood development, but in many ways we still have a 20th century view of work and pay structure for educators. There’s a gap between the expectations and promise of early childhood and the way we think about the people who do the work.” Executive Director, Rainbow Child Development Center

Most programs are unable to hire qualified staff with the dismal reimbursement rates currently being paid. We should look at strengthening our foundation, our educators, before we begin to have a plan/discussion regarding expansion.
Worcester Center Director



What would success look like in Worcester? When asked what success would look like for expanded preschool, leaders most often mentioned (1) having high quality teachers (educators with degrees, training); (2) involving parents and the community; (3) sufficient pay and pay equity for teachers (appropriate compensation with degrees, raising salaries for teachers and administrators and equal to the public schools); (4) a high quality, diverse, culturally rich curricula; and (5) access to/provision of mental health, health, a health care consultant, and speech and language services.

What would Success Look Like in Worcester? (N=43 Comments)



EPS Survey Spring 2016

Quality of Programs and Practices in Worcester

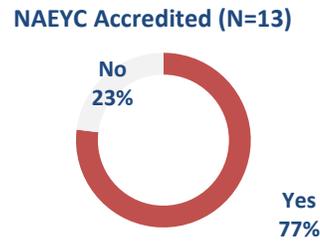
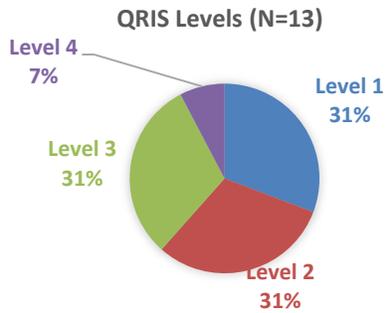
Worcester’s early education programs strive towards continuous improvement in the provision of high quality services for young children and their families, and in fact, Worcester’s overall quality picture is on par or exceeds current PEG communities. Most early learning programs participate in the MA QRIS and have achieved increasingly growing levels of quality.

MA EEC’s QRIS Levels Center-Based Programs in PEG Communities and Worcester April 2016

City	QRIS Level 1	QRIS Level 2	QRIS Level 3	QRIS Level 4	Total # Participating Programs
Boston	15	5	3	1	24
Holyoke	7	5	3	0	15
Lawrence	8	7	5	0	20
Lowell	18	1	4	0	23
Springfield	26	7	5	0	38
Worcester	15	6	8	1	30

Data provided by Quality Specialist at EEC, Central Region Office.

QRIS Levels and NAEYC Accreditation: In the recent survey of Worcester’s early education center-based providers (May 2016) many program leaders indicated their commitment to and measurement of program quality in their responses. All 13 respondents participate in the EEC QRIS, and they are equally divided between Levels 1, 2 and 3. One is at a QRIS Level 4. All but three are NAEYC accredited.



Worcester Provider Survey, May 2016

All of the PEG partners focus on quality and have a strong track record of achievement. All partners are currently NAEYC accredited. As the Table below shows, Worcester’s PEG partners are well positioned to continue delivery and expansion of quality programs and services.

Preschool Expansion Early Learning Partner QRIS Level and NAEYC Accreditation Status

Early Learning Partner	QRIS Level (PreK)	NAEYC Accreditation	NAEYC Valid Until
Guild of St. Agnes - Granite	Level 2 (Self Assessed Level 3)	YES	2017
Guild of St. Agnes - Grove	Level 3	YES	2020
Quinsigamond Children’s School	Level 4	YES	2017
Rainbow Child Development	Level 3	YES	2021
Worcester Child Development Head Start – Greendale	Level 3	YES	2019
Worcester Child Development Head Start – Mill Swan A	Level 3	YES	2019
Worcester Child Development Head Start – Mill Swan B	Level 3	YES	2020
Worcester Child Development Head Start – Millbury Street	Level 3	YES	2019
YWCA	Level 3	YES	2018

Data provided through NAEYC Accreditation website program search. Data gathered April 2016.

According to the EPS survey of 77 Worcester ECE providers, over half of respondents (53%) are working on moving to the next QRIS level; and 60% were interested in having a few training days devoted to QRIS. Nearly all (92%) are registered in EEC’s Professional Qualifications Registry. Over two-thirds (68%) are familiar with the Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Scholarship program. Over half (53%) have an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP).

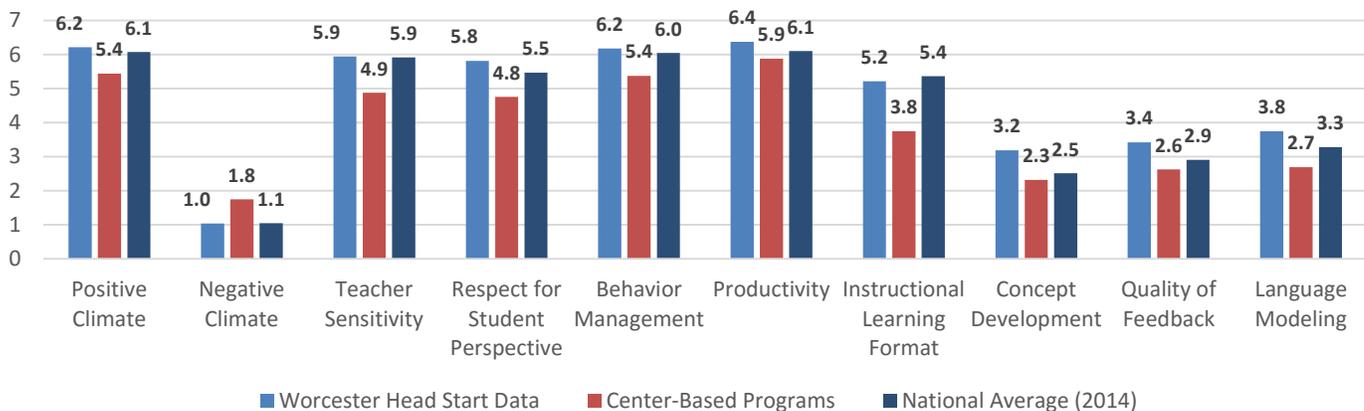
Classroom Quality: To better understand individual classroom quality and teacher capacity, Worcester’s PEG Planning Team conducted CLASS Observations of Worcester Head Start and two of the center-based programs participating in PEG. Effective teaching is a cornerstone of Worcester’s Strategic Framework, and relationships and play are key components of learning environments for young children. The CLASS tool looks at three domains and ten dimensions of teacher-child interactions and measures those observed interactions on a seven point scale.

Three sets of scores – 1) Head Start in Worcester from CLASS Scores; 2) four classrooms across two Worcester Centers (two classrooms in each center), and 3) National average scores are presented below. The Worcester

Head Start and Center-based CLASS Scores combined capture baseline scores for 90 children. Head Start CLASS Scores were conducted in November 2015 and the Center observations were conducted in June 2016. Worcester Head Start meets or exceeds the National Average in every Dimension with the exception of Instructional Learning Format. Seven out of ten CLASS dimensions score in the “High” or “High-Middle” range. Concept Development, Quality of Feedback, and Language Modeling – all in the Instructional Support Domain – score in the “Middle” range, but exceed the National average scores.

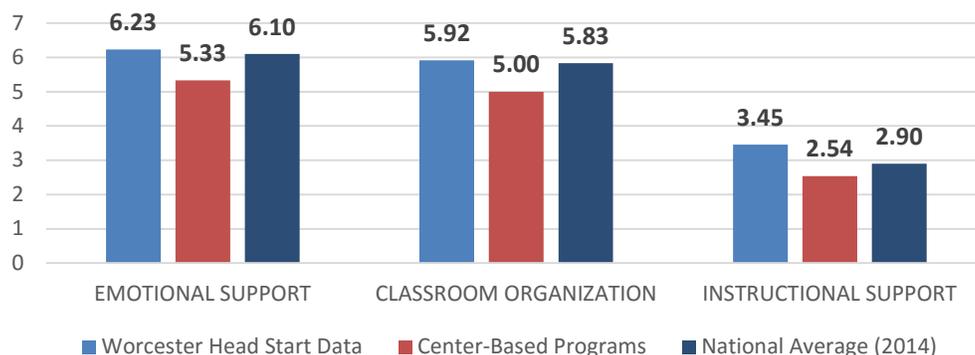
However, the four classrooms observed across two different Center-based programs participating in the PEG partnership are notably lower than both the Head Start and National averages in each Dimension. Comments from the CLASS observers explain some of the scores and inform PD moving forward. On the positive side, little negativity was observed, teachers were in close proximity to children, transitions were smooth, and many materials were out and ready. However, the teachers did not make learning objectives clear, there was little encouragement with regard to analysis and reasoning. In one classroom, there was not much time allotted for deeper conversation.

Average Dimension CLASS Scores Worcester Head Start and Center-Based Programs (2) Compared with National Head Start

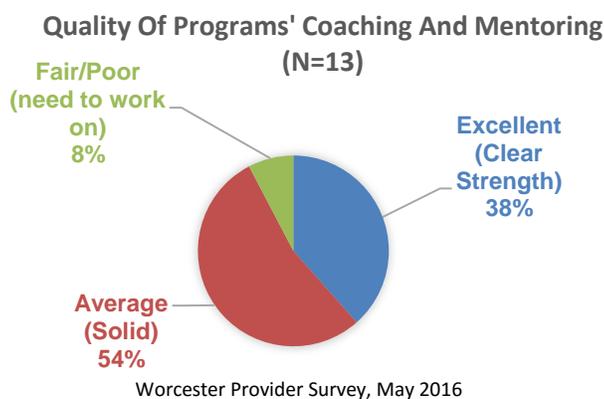


Average Worcester Head Start CLASS scores exceed the National averages for each Domain. Worcester’s Head Start Domain scores place Worcester in the Median 50% nationally for Emotional Support, and Classroom Organization, and in the highest 10% bracket nationally in the Instructional Support Domain. Again, the average Domain scores for the Center-based programs are below Worcester Head Start and National Averages.

Average Domain CLASS Scores Worcester Head Start and Center-Based Programs (2) Compared with National Head Start



Coaching/Mentoring Quality: Worcester providers were asked about their perceptions of whether their implementation of coaching and mentoring services is excellent, average, or fair/poor. Most providers claimed they implemented coaching and mentoring on an “excellent” or “average” (solid) level. On a 3-point scale, with 3=Excellent and 1=Fair/Poor, the average quality score for Coaching/Mentoring is 2.3.



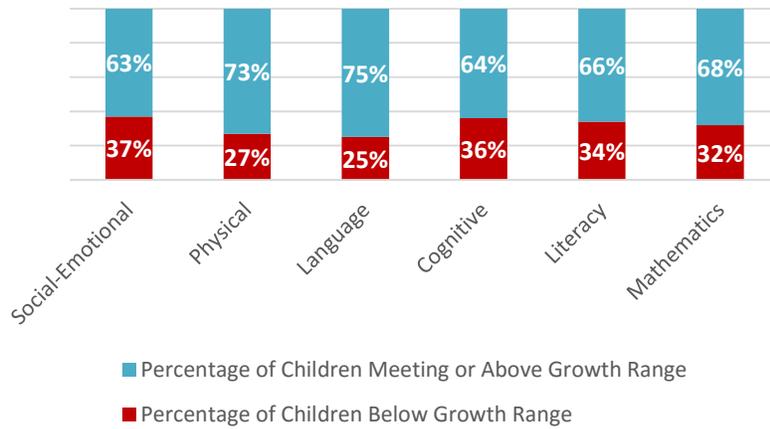
Adult/Child Interactions: The majority of providers (7 out of 13) rated the quality of adult/child interactions as “excellent”; while an additional five respondents reported interactions to be “average” (solid). On a 3-point scale, with 3=Excellent and 1=Fair/Poor, the overall score for Adult/Child Interactions is 2.5.

Child Assessments: PreK programs throughout Worcester typically utilize Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) as an authentic, comprehensive assessment of children. TSG assesses growth with regard to preK children age 3 and age 4 in six Learning Domains to plan appropriate early childhood learning experiences. It is fully aligned with the MA Common Core State Standards and Curriculum Frameworks, MA Early Learning Guidelines, and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

- Worcester TSG Scores for PreK Age 3.** The chart below shows data from 183 three year old children in seven Worcester preK programs/systems across six developmental areas between Fall 2015 and Fall 2016. The chart shows the percentage of preK age 3 children who meet or exceeded the average growth range with regard to TSG scoring system compared with the percentage of children who were

below the average growth range. Two-thirds to three-quarters of the children, depending on Learning Domain, have average scores that meet or exceed “widely held expectations” for growth.

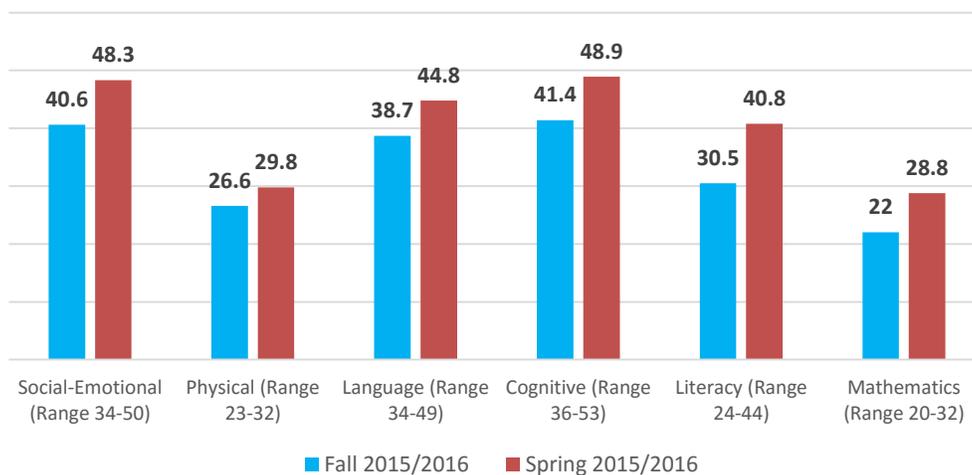
**TSG Growth Summary Report PK 3
(N=183) Across 7 Programs**



TSG Growth Summary Report for Worcester 2015-2016 (Source: DEEC, May 2016)

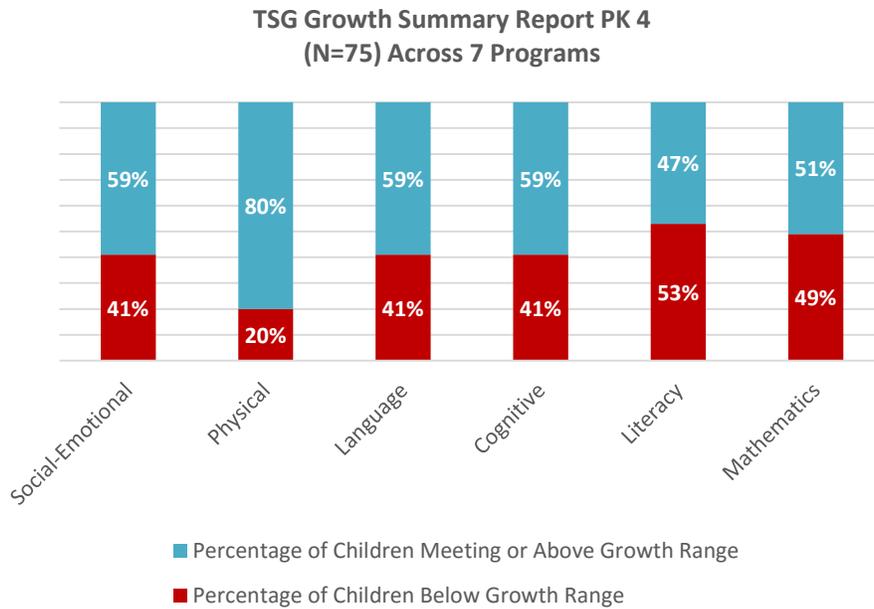
The following chart shows the actual average TSG scores for 183 children in the seven Worcester preK programs/systems across six Learning Domains. Scores are compared to a normative range of scores called “widely held expectations” consisting of “low” and “high” benchmarks. In all Learning Domains, 25% to 49% of children met or exceeded the given growth range for a Domain. However, on a setting by setting basis, two Learning Domains – Social-Emotional and Mathematics – show room for improvement. Fewer programs meet or exceeded “widely held expectations” for improvement in these two areas compared with others.

**Growth in TSG Scores Fall 2015 to Fall 2016 PreK Age 3
(N=183 Children across 7 Programs/Systems)**



TSG Growth Summary Report for Worcester 2015-2016 (Source: DEEC, May 2016)

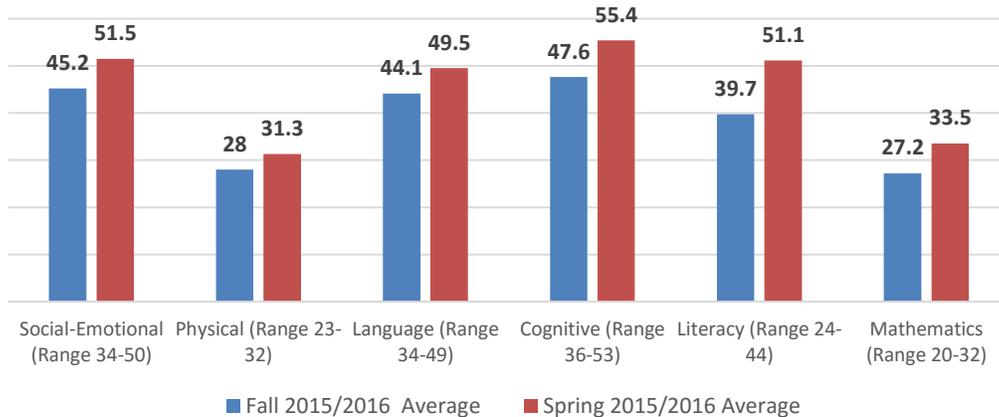
- TSG Scores for PreK Age 4.** The chart captures data from 75 four year old children in seven Worcester PreK programs/systems across six Learning Domains of Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy and Mathematics. The Chart shows the percentage of four year olds who meet or exceed the average growth range with regard to TSG scoring system compared with the percentage of children who were below the average growth range. Between 47% and 59% of the children meet or exceed the average growth in any given Learning Domain, with the exception of Physical, in which, 80% of Worcester children met or exceeded average growth. The lower scores for four-year olds compared with those for three-year olds in the charts above warrant discussion and more examination.



TSG Growth Summary Report for Worcester 2015-2016 (Source: DEEC, May 2016)

The following chart shows actual average TSG scores across all developmental areas of Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Mathematics for the 75 four-year olds. In all Learning Domains, 25% to 49% of children met or exceeded the given “widely expected” growth range for a Domain. However, on a setting by setting basis, three Learning Domains– Social-Emotional, Literacy, and Mathematics – show room for improvement. Fewer programs meet or exceed “widely held expectations” for improvement in these areas.

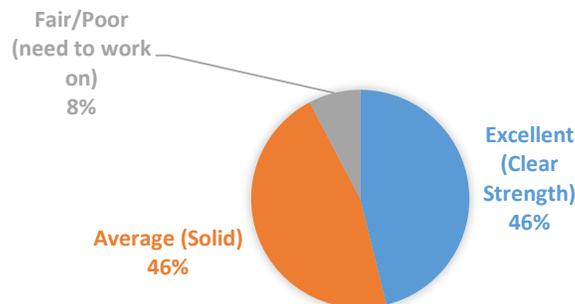
**Growth in TSG Scores PreK Age 4
(N=75 Children across 7 Programs/Systems)**



TSG Growth Summary Report for Worcester 2015-2016 (Source: DEEC, May 2016)

Worcester Curriculum, Planning, and Assessment. Most of the providers (62%) in the Worcester Provider Survey utilize Creative Curriculum, followed by their own curriculum. Emergent Curriculum, and a Project Approach were each mentioned once. High/Scope, Opening the Word of Learning (OWL) and Big Day for PreK are not utilized. When educators were asked about the quality of their curriculum planning, six reported it to be “excellent”, six reported it to be “average”, and one reported it to be “fair/poor”.

Quality Of Curriculum Planning (N=13)

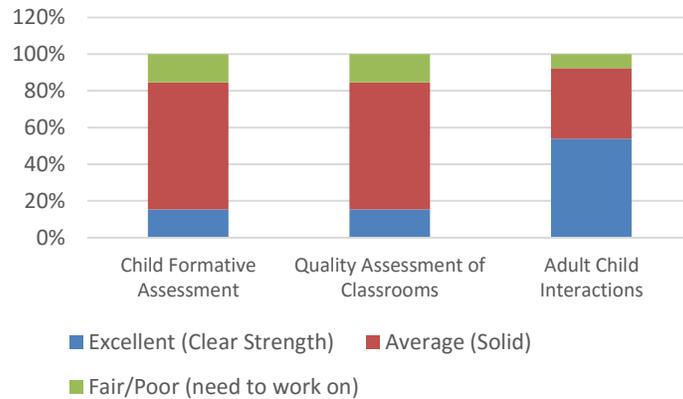


Worcester Provider Survey, May 2016

Child Formative Assessment. The Worcester providers also were asked about the quality of their formative assessments of children, most providers (9 out of 13) rated their implementation of child formative assessments as “average” (solid). On a 3-point scale, with 3=Excellent and 1=Fair/Poor, the overall score for Child Formative Assessment is 2.0.

Classroom Quality Assessment. When asked about how well they assessed the quality of their classrooms. The majority (9 out of 13) rated their Classroom Quality Assessment as “average” (solid). On a 3-point scale, with 3=Excellent and 1=Fair/Poor, the overall score for Classroom Quality is 2.0. However, adult-child interactions are rating higher.

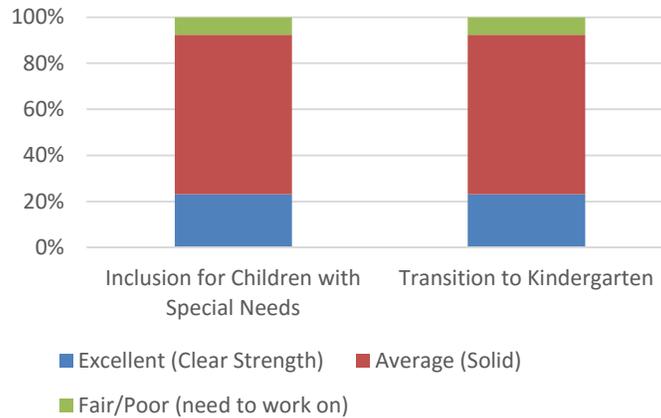
**Quality of Child Assessment, Classroom Assessment and Adult-Child Interactions
(N=13)**



Worcester Provider Survey, May 2016

Transitions to Kindergarten. Most respondents reported doing an “average” job with transitions to kindergarten. On a 3-point scale, with 3=Excellent and 1=Fair/Poor, the average quality of transitions to kindergarten across the respondents is 2.2. Similarly, with regard to inclusion practices, most of the providers responded that they do an “average” (solid) job. On a 3-point scale the average quality of Inclusion across respondents is 2.2.

**Quality of Inclusion and Transition Practices
(N=13)**



Worcester Provider Survey, May 2016

Family Engagement and Comprehensive Services in Worcester

Types of Comprehensive Services Needed by Worcester Residents: MASS 211 is a free, confidential helpline and website that connects people to health and human services—whether financial, domestic, health or disaster-related. A call log generated by 211 provides an overview of the types and frequency of services

requested by Worcester residents. A total of 3,716 calls were made to 211 from Worcester between 2015 and Q1 2016. The 3,716 calls are grouped into key areas of service needs in Worcester.

- Calls associated with early childhood education comprise most (30.4%) of all calls made. These calls cover inquiries for child care programs, Head Start, childcare financial assistance, assessment, early literacy and early intervention.
- Basic services such as housing, financial assistance, food, and mental health are the next most frequently cited reasons for calling 211. Specifically, housing and homeless-related calls comprise 21.5% of all calls. Financial assistance, including inquiries about Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), mortgage and utilities assistance, comprises 7% of all 211 calls. Food inquiries on pantries, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) comprise 6%; Behavior/Mental Health and Addiction together comprise another 6% of the calls, and include questions about mental health screenings, suicide prevention, counseling, autism, stress reduction, depression, and psychiatric and addiction services and treatment.

**Reason for 211 Calls from Worcester Residents
2015 Quarters 1-4 and 2016 Quarter 1 (N=3,716 Calls)**

Reason for 211 Calls from Worcester	Percent of Total	Number of Calls
Early Childhood Education Information and Services	30.4%	1,129
Housing Information and Assistance	12.8%	476
Homeless	8.7%	324
Financial Assistance	6.8%	252
Food	6.2%	232
Behavior/Mental Health	3.8%	142
Legal Issues and Assistance	2.9%	107
City Resources	2.2%	83
Health and Medical	2.1%	77
Insurance	2.1%	76
Support Groups and Services	1.8%	68
Other	1.7%	62
Weather-related Issues	1.7%	62
Jobs and Employment	1.6%	60
Addiction Services and Support	1.6%	59
Information	1.5%	57
Donations	1.4%	50
Clothing	1.1%	41
Seniors	1.1%	41
Disability Services	0.8%	30
Domestic Violence	0.8%	29
State Resources	0.7%	27
Transportation	0.7%	27
Youth Programs and Services	0.7%	26
Education	0.6%	22
Law Enforcement Issues	0.5%	17
Parenting Information and Support	0.4%	15
Advocacy	0.4%	14
Home Improvement	0.3%	12
Safety	0.3%	11
Veterans Issues	0.3%	10
Tax Assistance and Information	0.2%	9
Community Groups/Resources	0.2%	8
Immigrant Information and Assistance	0.2%	7
Burial	0.2%	6
Federal Resources	0.2%	6
Animal Services	0.1%	5
Foster Care	0.1%	5
AIDS/HIV	0.1%	4
Crisis	0.1%	4
Fire	0.1%	4
Language Assistance	0.1%	4
Violence	0.1%	4
Heat	0.1%	3
Adoption/Foster Care	0.1%	2
Case Management	0.1%	2
Disaster	0.1%	2
Family Programs and Services	0.1%	2
Total	100.0%	3716

A small cohort of Worcester parents of preschool aged children surveyed as part of the PEG planning process checked all of the following services they needed:

Most frequently identified (60%)	Less frequently identified (40%)	Least frequently identified (20%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Places I can go to play or have fun with my child Places I can go to be with other parents and children around my child's age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help with housing Transportation Help with my child's speech and language development ABE/GED/HS Diploma ESL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial assistance to participate in an early learning preschool program Home visiting

Worcester Parent Survey June 2016

Family Engagement Practices. Worcester providers on average, use four strategies to engage families, with the most frequent being parent conferences, newsletters, and family events. Other successful strategies identified include an annual art exhibit, daily notes/newsletters, family events with performers, home visits for teen mothers, inviting siblings, information on community events, book socials, parent cafes with yoga, child care provided, dinners, prizes, parent informational open houses, teacher/parent communications at drop-off and pick-up, information on upcoming events, and offering different times for family activities.

Strategies Used to Engage Families (N=13)

	Percent
Parent Conferences	85%
Newsletters	85%
Family Events	69%
Parent Workshops	46%
Open House/Curriculum Nights	38%
Classroom Volunteers	31%
Other (Hands-On Cooking Classes and Parent Information Night)	15%
Home Visits	8%

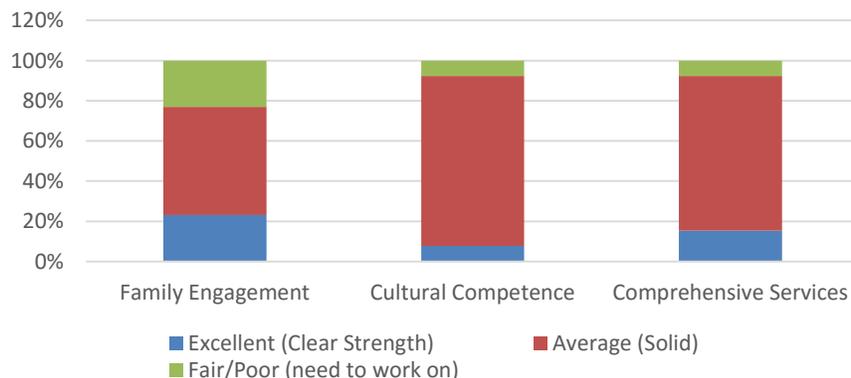
Worcester Provider Survey, May 2016

When asked what would make it easy for them to attend activities at their child's preschool, parents overwhelmingly state that the "times are good for me". They next most frequently report "feeling welcome", and "the program is close to my home". All parents said they would like the program to share information on their child's growth and learning. A majority wanted information on how they could be involved, how they can help their children success in school, daily activities that occurred at school, and ideas for what they can do at home.

Quality of Family Engagement and Services. Worcester providers were asked about their perception of how well their program does in terms of family engagement, cultural competence, and in providing comprehensive services. For all three of these areas, respondents most frequently cite that their program

does an “average” or solid job. On a 3-point scale, with 3=Excellent and 1=Fair/Poor, the average score for each of the family engagement areas is about 2.0, although, as the table below shows, the distribution of excellent, average, and fair/poor ratings is different for each area. The scores indicate room for additional focus on family engagement, cultural competence, and comprehensive services.

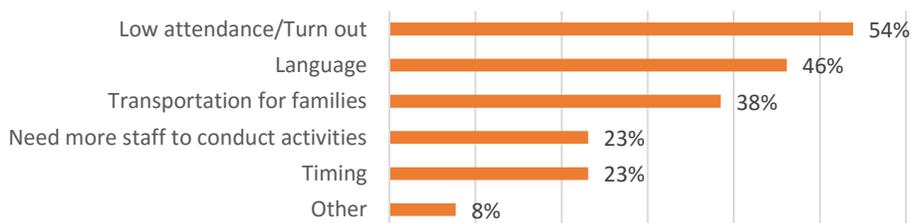
Quality of Family Engagement, Cultural Competence and Comprehensive Services (N=13)



Worcester Provider Survey, May 2016

Key barriers to engaging families, according to providers, are low attendance and turnout, language barriers, and transportation.

Issues/Barriers to Engaging Families (N=13)



Worcester Provider Survey, May 2016

B. Teacher Capacity and Program Quality Strategies

Worcester’s Preschool Expansion Plan targets high-risk, hard to reach families with young children. We seek to serve families across three categories: (1) Immigrant and refugee families, (2) “working poor” who are caught in the gap that exists over the income guidelines but beyond ability to pay, and (3) families not participating because they do not qualify for support but have other socio-economic and behavioral risk factors.

Expand Capacity

Worcester's early learning partners are at physical capacity in their centers. New space needs to be identified to grow the number of preschool classrooms. The PEG Planning Team developed an ideal model: centralized early learning space designed to support multiple classrooms.

Strategies here are designed to:

- Create a demonstration site to support research and innovation
- Push-out and spread best practices across early learning partners across the city
- Leverage existing infrastructures

Strategy 1: Repurpose a building in Worcester to be a central early learning center. This early learning hub would house multiple new preschool classrooms. Each ELP would operate two classrooms. Inspired by other physical models, this central site would serve as a demonstration project for the City. It would actualize collaboration at a new, visible level. Space would be dedicated for classrooms, typical center supports and space to support specialists, families and co-locate key child/family organizations, such as Early Intervention.

Features of this space and model include:

- Share common space – playground, multi-purpose room, family room, common library of materials
- PD space – to conduct trainings, meetings and support the delivery of some college courses on-site, as feasible.
- STEAM room – In partnership with Worcester's Head Start, a dedicated room designed to expand curriculum and activities for science, technology, engineering, art and math. Worcester Head Start recently installed two STEAM rooms with enhanced curriculum. Expertise and time would be provided in-kind and some materials support would be drawn from the community and smaller grants.
- Shared staff include:
 - A nurse, who will serve as Health Care Consultant/Liaison to child's medical home/health center; The nurse will coordinate physical, dental, hearing and vision screenings for program through community resources; serve as liaison to the WPS Nursing Unit and WPS Supplemental Support Services;
 - A Program Administrator, at the EEC Director II level, and a PT Administrator for up to four classrooms (.5 FTE for each of 2 ELPs, meeting EEC regulations on maximum ratios); The position will report into each ELP; participate in regular PLCs, monthly Steering Committee meetings, and other PD;
 - A Family Engagement Coordinator will oversee the Family Service Advocates; liaison to ELPs; develop/coordinate family trainings leveraging partner strengths and community agencies;
 - On-site support for SPED services where specialists come to the hub to service children.

The PEG Steering Committee will guide decisions about shared services. Regular communication will be expected and supported in meetings, emails and centralized website. In addition to salaries, costs necessitate funding to support planning, architecture, project management and construction.

Strategy 2: Place new classrooms in existing schools or buildings in small clusters. Space in Worcester's public schools is at a premium. The PEG Planning Committee is now exploring future options with the WSP Superintendent this summer. Sites under consideration include a former nursing home (purchase) and lease of space at St. Peter Marion. The Committee will be approaching city leaders with the PEG strategic plan in order to identify suitable space, which may be part of the city's inventory, and which could be repurposed.

Beyond the physical capacity strategies identified above, Worcester’s PEG model aligns a constellation of community assets to support infrastructure and high quality programming:

Expand Transportation

Given both the large geographic area of Worcester combined with the limited resources of residents, the provision of transportation is essential for program participation, and transportation must be incorporated into PEG planning. While the city continues to build and improve its transportation systems, the reality is that it cannot efficiently support family needs. Reliable transportation better ensures higher regular attendance for children. Several ELPs (Rainbow Child Development, Guild of St. Agnes, Head Start and WPS) operate or contract for transportation. Two options were identified to address the inclusion of transportation in this Plan:

Strategy 1: Contract Services through WPS – WPS has an extensive contract with Durham School Services to provide transportation. Should funding flow through the public schools, transportation contracts can be expanded to include transportation for PEG classrooms. This arrangement already happens for Worcester’s Head Start program. Currently, contracted rates are approximately \$350 per vehicle per day. Bus monitors would be supported through PEG funding.

Strategy 2: Expand Private Fleet through Guild of St. Agnes – This option leverages the experienced Guild of St. Agnes transportation fleet. The Guild currently operates a fleet of vehicles and transports children to and from its programs. The agency has a dedicated transportation department. Costs here would include additional vehicles and staff (drivers, monitors, and a transportation specialist, depending on the scope of the transportation need).

Expand Teacher Capacity via 1) Competitive Compensation and 2) A Professional Growth and Development Cohort Model

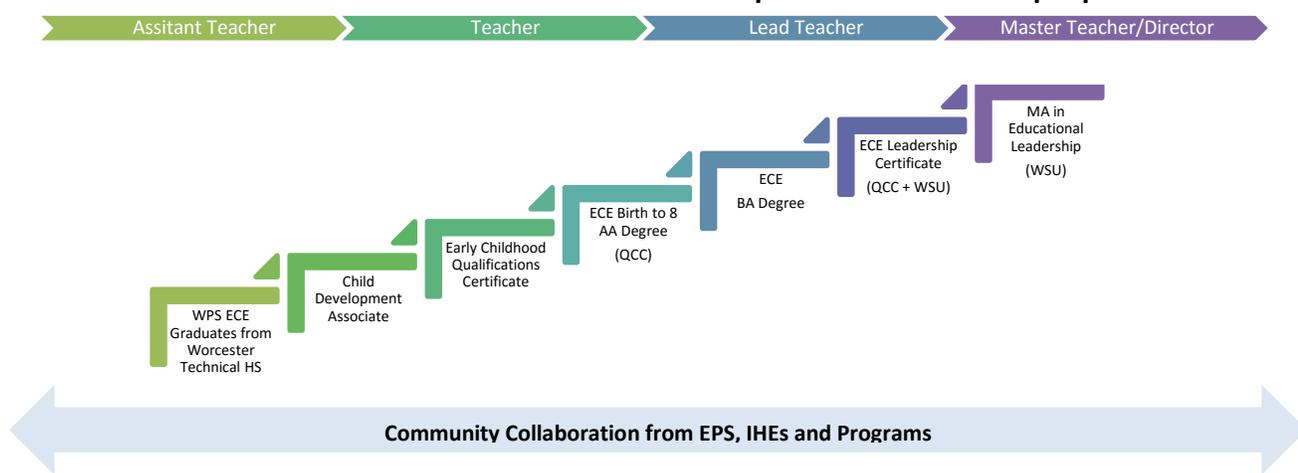
This core PEG strategy builds on Worcester’s high quality programs while addressing a shrinking workforce and need for increased compensation and professional development. Worcester’s early learning providers are experiencing significant challenges with staffing with implications on enrollment, capacity and continuity of care. Partners regularly report struggles with both hiring and then retaining qualified staff with Bachelor’s degrees or above because compensation is not adequate to support cost of living. Qualified staff are increasingly drawn to work in the WPS system or Head Start program (also under WPS), or leave the field entirely. While the state average turnover in early childhood programs hovers at 30%, at least two of Worcester’s centers experienced 50% turnover during the 2015-2016 school year. Compounding this issue are protracted hiring times. These factors produce darkened classrooms or shift program administrators into classrooms and away from leadership tasks.

Strategy 1: Worcester’s early education community seeks to cultivate and sustain a pipeline of professional educators and leaders. Over time, a high quality workforce would be cultivated for both the PEG and other classrooms in the City. This Plan includes provisions to better support a competitive compensation package for educators while increasing educational attainment. We aim to build a career ladder and demonstrate the positive impact in child outcomes and staff retention through the ladder. The ladder includes two key provisions:

- Program staff will be paid at comparable levels to equivalent positions in WPS; and
- Each staff level will participate in a professional growth and development cohort

Worcester’s higher education partners are well positioned to support workforce development. Over the past several years they have developed and piloted several workforce-related educational programs and pathway supports. For example, Worcester’s pipeline allows for multiple points of entry and includes harnessing new graduates from Worcester Technical High School’s early education program and engaging veteran educators in leadership development opportunities. Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) plays a central role in the formal educational pipeline for our preschool expansion project. It is at the nexus of entry for our new and developing workforce and has articulation agreements with WPS’s early education programs, Becker College, Fitchburg State University, and Worcester State University, QCC. Currently, QCC is designing a formalized Birth to Age 8 Workforce Associate’s degree program. Students can enter at one of several points and work on a stackable set of credentials to advance towards an AA.

Worcester’s Educator Professional Development and Leadership Pipeline



Strategy 2: Base Educators’ Compensation on WPS and Worcester Child Development Head Start Salaries. Compensation targets for PEG classrooms and programmatic staff are based upon equivalent salaries to WPS and Worcester Child Development Head Start (WCDHS)—also under WPS—salaries. An hourly rate was determined to pay for a full day, full year equivalent. All staff earn at least the proposed minimum wage target of \$15 per hour. Compensation is based on available 2015-2016 school year contract data or averages from 2015-2016 Head Start salary data. For general budgeting purposes, a fringe rate of 20% will be added. Average annual increases of 2% to 3% will need to be applied.

Staffing Plan for Centralized Location

Classroom				
				Class size 20 Preschoolers 1:10 ratio or better Total = 80 children
Position	Qualifications	Annual Salary	# Needed	Notes
Lead Teacher	BA ECE EEC Certified	\$53,248	4	Similar to WPS 1 st year teacher \$25.60/hour
Teacher	AA ECE EEC Certified	\$35,880	4	No equivalent WPS b/c AA level HS equivalent \$17.00 – 17.25
Assistant Teacher	CDA	\$33,280	4	Paraprofessional level

	EEC Certified			\$16.00/hour
Administration				
Position	Qualifications	Annual Salary	# Needed	Notes
Program Administrator	EEC Director II MA in ECE	\$63,149	2	PT split for each 2 classrooms (36 children) with ELP – total 4 classrooms (72) RCD, Guild, YWCA, HS/QCC Similar to WPS Step 2 with MA \$30.36/hour
Family Engagement Specialist	Model on HS	\$50,000	1	Similar to HS Family Engagement Specialist Shared across all classrooms
Family Advocate	AA ECE/Social Work	\$35,880	2 (1:4 classrooms)	Similar to HS FSA \$17.75 – 20.78/hour
Master Teacher	MA in ECE EEC Certified Coach	\$60,237	1	Similar to WPS 1 st year with MA \$28.96/hour (.5 FTE to start)
Curriculum/CLASS Coach	BA ECE EEC Certified CLASS Reliable	\$56,048	2 (1:6)	Similar to Instructional Coach Teacher level with \$2,800 stipend
Support Services				
Position	Qualifications	Annual Salary	# Needed	Notes
Nurse	RN	\$50,000	1	Serve as health care consultant Shared across all classrooms Based on HS costs
Behavioral Health	TFK Embedded Clinician	\$70,000	1	Research-based TFK model
QCC Workforce Faculty	MA in ECE FT faculty member	\$52,800	.5 FTE	44 weeks (~10 months) Coordinate cohort education, pipeline support WTHS and WSU; EPS liaison; Field placement liaison
Bus Monitor	Follow EEC/HS Guidelines	\$31,200	2 FTE	Minimum wage: \$15/hour
Custodial Services	WPS Guidelines	\$80,000	1 FTE	Based on WPS salary base plus average OT

Worcester PEG Planning Team 2016

PEG Classrooms Will Participate in a Two-Tiered Plan for PD: Program Wide Professional Development and Educator Advancement through Cohorts

The second critical piece to ECE workforce development is the intentional development of educators and the provision of career development lattices.

Strategies here are designed to:

- Elevate the quality of preschool programming
- Stabilize and cultivate a high quality, well educated workforce and leadership pipeline

First Tier – Program Wide Training and Professional Development: Participating PEG classrooms will all receive program-wide training and PD relevant to implement the high quality programming (curriculum,

assessment, etc.). PD includes cross-sector training sessions, classroom-based coaching, and a monthly facilitated PLC group. Core training will be offered across all areas of the program's design including curriculum, assessment, family engagement, and specialized topics (such as cultural competence). Educators will be trained on standards and content related to EEC's initiatives through trainings offered via EPS and local trainers, including ESCS' Master Teacher who has completed recent TOT modules in PreK-K Social and Emotional Learning/Approaches to Play and Learning Standards (SEL/APL), Wisconsin/Delaware/Arkansas (WIDA) Early Language Development, Coaching and Mentoring (PAC), and Children in Trauma. Through the Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment Early Learning Challenge Grant Worcester has successfully designed and implemented cross-sector training on a similar range of topics including family engagement and social-emotional early learning standards.

Through our collaboration with Head Start (WCDHS), educators and leaders from early learning partner organizations will participate in CLASS observer training and additional technical assistance sessions. WCDHS is a local leader in CLASS implementation. A recent Federal review (November 2015) demonstrated that the program is operating at or above national benchmarks in all areas of CLASS. The program has a significant training and implementation model led by the Education Manager. The Head Start program is taking the lead in designing an educator support plan for utilizing CLASS in PEG classrooms. In addition, through their partnership with the New England Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Center at the UMASS Donahue Institute, a cadre of educators and leaders from ELPs (approximately 18) will be trained as CLASS observers. The cadre will include leader/supervisors from Early Learning Partners who can expand the use of CLASS throughout their centers. This will also serve to increase Worcester's cadre of reliable CLASS observers.

Supporting children who have/are experiencing trauma is a focal point for Worcester. WPS recently received a grant from the Health Foundation to implement Worcester HEARS (Health Environments and Resilience in Schools) to support a pilot of training and support across five public schools in the North Quadrant. Our proposed preschool expansion targets children living in the North Quadrant. To further support the successful implementation of a community-wide strategy to support children experiencing stress and trauma, PEG educators and leaders will participate in CEFEL training and the EPS will offer training to family child care and other providers in the North Quadrant. Educators also will receive the new Childhood Trauma training, supported through our EPS and Master Teacher.

Family engagement is a focal point for ongoing PD. It lends itself to collaboration and training across the birth to kindergarten continuum as we aim for seamless transitions and common expectations for families. Foundational training based on Dr. Karen Mapp's Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships alongside research-based practices from Dr. Parades' Academic Parent Teacher Team (APTT), and a parent empowerment model from California's Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) will be developed and implemented.

Second Tier—Educational Advancement through Cohorts: Each staff level (assistant teacher, teacher, and lead teacher) will participate in a certificate and degree cohort. In partnership with our local IHEs, Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester State University and Becker College, preschool expansion funding will be braided with existing early education funding support to advance cohorts to their next level of degree attainment.

- **Assistant Teachers** would work towards their Associates Degree in early childhood, via QCC's Workforce **AA degree** program.

- **Teachers** with an AA in early childhood would join a cohort towards completion of their **BA degree** in early education/birth to age 8.
- **Lead Teachers** already have their BA degrees would be entered into a cohort of learners to complete the Early Educator Leadership Certificate offered through a collaboration of QCC and WSU. The classes would be taken for graduate credit and all five (5) course transfer directly into WSU's **Masters** in Educational Leadership program.

Implementation of this innovative comprehensive cohort education model will be supported through collaboration between Region 2 EPS and a Workforce Faculty Lead at QCC. It will be supported initially by several existing funding streams:

- EEC's ECE Scholarship, targeting professionals seeking their AA and BA degrees in early childhood
- EPS funding, targeting professionals moving across the continuum (CDA to AA to BA) through a constellation of courses
- Edward Street Child Services Scholarship Program, targeting professionals in the Leadership Certificate

Through its existing services, the Center for Childcare Careers (EPS) will provide access to Individual Professional Development Plans and other key supports for educational growth and attainment. Solving the compensation crisis is not something a single plan can achieve. However, Worcester seeks to demonstrate that a child's early learning outcomes are predicated on quality which requires equal emphasis on two interrelated goals:

- High Quality ECE Workforce to grow and develop teachers and leaders.
- High Quality Early Learning Environments to offer nurturing environments that help children thrive.

The preschool expansion classrooms will demonstrate growth and development for children, families and the educators serving them. PEG will contribute to a vibrant Early Learning System and stimulate success for children today and graduates of tomorrow while ensuring a healthy community and economic outlook.

Program Quality: Achieve QRIS Level 4 or NAEYC in Four Years

Participating entities in Worcester PEG have, as a goal, a Level 4 rating in the Massachusetts Quality Rating and Information System (QRIS) or National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation of participating ELPs within four years. Worcester Programs are Leaders in Quality. The Worcester PEG Planning Team believes that children learn best when exposed to and are engaged in high quality environments, interactions and relationships. Children learn through play, self-directed as well as meaningful, intentionally planned experiences in a typical sequence of awareness, exploration, inquiry and application. To achieve this vision in preschool expansion classrooms, the Team set in place quality measurement and growth components including high quality PD and the program-wide use of the CLASS tool to improve educator practice. All partners agree to quality components of a maximum class size of 20 and maximum child-teacher ratio of 10:1. In fact, ELP partners are aiming for a maximum class size of 18 and child-teacher ratio of 9:1. There will be, regardless of setting, at least one educator in each classroom with a BA in a relevant field. All educators (including assistants) will be paid salaries that are commensurate with those of comparable positions in the public schools. Professional development for all staff, including coaching, group trainings, and other supports for planning and implementation of curriculum, will be provided in collaboration with the WPS. The Center for Childcare Careers (EPS) will provide supports towards QRIS

and/or NAEYC accreditation for new PEG classrooms. Worcester’s ELPs are all well experienced with both MA QRIS and NAEYC with high-levels of quality achievements to date.

C. Comprehensive Services and Family Engagement Strategies

The child and the family are a complete entity requiring community support for each child’s healthy growth, development and learning. Indeed, our belief about the central role families play in children’s lives necessitates incorporating a range of supports to meet needs. The family is where children gain their first experiences in life and it is the most prominent and continuing influence in their child’s life. We believe that all children and their families, regardless of their ethnic origins, value system, faiths, abilities, customs, language, and compositions must be equally respected and deserving of the opportunity to thrive and succeed thereby ensuring the cultural and economic viability of our community.

The Expansion Plan will leverage the careful planning recently undertaken in the Birth to 3rd Grade Framework. The Framework encourages opportunities for families to engage actively and meaningfully in their children’s healthy development and education by: Increasing cultural and linguistic competence; increasing family education and supports; increasing family engagement in decision making and advocacy; building relationships and trust among families, providers, and schools; strengthening coordinated efforts of public and private entities to use culturally competent engagement strategies; developing a citywide philosophy of family engagement to build “learning partnerships”; and assessing whether information is geographically and socioeconomically distributed to all families residing in our City.

Strategies here are designed to:

- Extend Birth – 3rd Grade alignment successes and implement Worcester’s city-wide vision
- Create a family engagement and support model that can be leveraged across the city
- Integrate and promote physical and behavioral health supports
- Expand culturally-sensitive programming and outreach to hard-to reach populations
- Expand collaboration and support for seamless transition to kindergarten

Align the PEG Initiative with Worcester’s Growing the Heart of the Commonwealth, Birth to 3rd Grade Strategic Framework

The Framework outlines four interconnected strategic areas that would support a child’s growth and learning. They are: (1) Early Learning, (2) Family Engagement and Support, (3) Behavioral Health, and (4) Health. Each area is defined by a strategic direction and a comprehensive set of objectives and action which guide planning for comprehensive services.

Strategic Area	Strategic Direction
Early Learning	Increase access to and quality of education and comprehensive services across the Birth to 3 rd grade continuum so children meet developmental milestones necessary for kindergarten readiness and continued success.
Family Engagement and Support	Encourage opportunities for families to engage actively and meaningfully in their children’s healthy development and education.
Behavioral Health	Ensure access to quality mental and behavioral health services for young children and their families, and support the reduction of toxic stress in children’s learning and living environments.
Health	Coordinate with healthcare providers and agencies to ensure access to quality healthcare, nutrition services, fitness and playful engagement.

Programmatic design decisions are based on supporting multiple objectives encompassed in the framework.

Provide New Staffing Supports to Adequately Meet the Needs of Worcester Families with Young Children

PEG Early Learning Partners already work with families with diverse needs and all serve families with multiple risk factors including poverty and trauma. They also have an extensive network of community-based support agencies to help meet the needs of families. Specific PEG supports are designed to replicate and extend successful practices necessary to the support of families.

These supports include:

- The PEG Family Engagement Specialist will be responsible for developing practices, policies, training, and supports to ensure high quality education services engage families and create learning partnerships. This position will be designed collaboratively across ELPs and be informed by the Head Start model.
- PEG Family Advocates will be responsible for supporting families’ service needs. The Family Advocates will conduct home visits and provide community connections to needed services. This position and function will be modeled after Head Start Family Advocates. The Family Advocates will:
 - Connect families with Worcester Community Connect Coalition (WCCC) for a comprehensive list and guidance to services and supports. WCCC is a parent led organization that works to improve access to services. They maintain the most current list of agencies providing services.
 - Connect families with early learning supports through Worcester Family Partnership (CFCE)
 - Leverage the tools developed under WPS’ new Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) plan, specifically the Family and Community Guide as an opportunity to link to resources and organizations in a centralized format.
- Embed mental health services into new program classrooms via Together for Kids and other community-based partnerships.
- Through the PEG Nurse and in collaboration with PEG Planning Team, embed physical, dental, vision and hearing screening and health services into programming by extending existing city-based collaboration among:

Physical Health and Well-Being	Existing Community Resources
Health	UMASS Medical School, Ronald McDonald Care Mobile
Vision	Massachusetts College of Pharmacy
Hearing	Worcester State University
Dental	Quinsigamond Community College Dental Program

Ensure Access to Quality Mental and Behavioral Health Services for Young Children and Their Families

Comprehensive Services via PEG will fulfill many of the strategic goals in Behavioral Health in the Birth to 3rd Grade Strategic Plan Framework. These strategies range from increasing evidence-based social, emotional and mental health training and support; expanding environments that provide mental health

consultation; and fostering nurturing behaviors among families and early childhood professional, particularly in understanding how to address trauma. An underlying assumption of that framework is that health of mind and spirit are central to growth, development and learning in children. Children and the adults in their lives all need supports to build resilience and perseverance as they encounter milestones, changing family and societal dynamics, and stress factors. We believe that children develop the capacity to reach their full potential when they are in secure, trusting relationships with adults that provide safe, nurturing environments. Social and emotional learning is critical to every child’s ability to self-regulate, to identify their own feelings, to cultivate flexibility in thinking and to interact successfully with others.

PEG will ensure access to quality mental and behavioral health services for young children and their families, which will work to reduce toxic stress in children’s learning and living environments. Specifically, expansion funding will be channeled to children 2.9 to 4 with regard to implementing specific strategies outlined in the Strategic Framework, such as identifying a core set of practices and strategies to be used by early educators across mixed delivery settings; embedding mental health services in programs servicing young children; ensuring coordinated transitions of mental and behavioral services as children grow along the early learning continuum.

“Books don’t put food in your belly or keep you safe from bullets. Our families don’t always see the priority of education.” – Executive Director, SEAC

Promote Physical Well-Being of PEG Children and Families

PEG will promote physical health in Worcester in acknowledging that physical health is an important component of the early education system for PreK age children and that healthy and thriving citizens participate fully in our economy and enjoy the community’s resources. Children learn best when they have adequate nutrition, access and use of outdoor play spaces and continuity of pediatric health care from birth with a dual focus on prevention and treatment. Pediatricians and their medical support teams serve as the family’s first partners in growth and learning.

The outcomes will be improvements in health of children; increased knowledge of the importance of health and wellness; increased access to healthy food and food security; increased access to facilities and parks for playful exercise and gross motor activity; increased number of healthy homes (lead, asbestos and heavy metal free); and increased coordination of efforts to support health and wellness across the community.

PEG staff led by the nurse and family services coordinator will coordinate with healthcare providers and agencies to ensure access to quality healthcare, access to consistent sources of healthy food and nutrition services; expanding access to shared outdoor spaces; extending embedded health clinics and services into schools, centers and programs serving young children; and promoting and support use of medical, oral, and mental health as well as developmental, vision and hearing screening and services.

Target Hard-To-Reach Families in Outreach and Communication

Worcester’s plan specifically targets hard to reach families, including families who are new to the country and the working poor. Local refugee resettlement agencies and agencies with significant community outreach networks will be engaged in outreach and recruitment. The expansion partners have relationships with the major resettlement agencies in the City through Edward Street Child Services and Worcester Family

Partnership. Outreach will involve faith-based organizations and Alignment Partnership Council members. WPS will use its ConnectEd system so that partner organizations can share information through their networks and communication tools, and will leverage local media outlets. Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC) maintains a daily e-newsletter designed to disseminate information across all community agencies in the City. Partnerships with health care providers, particularly Health Centers and pediatricians will support outreach. Local faith-based leaders will also be engaged in this effort. Finally, being in the community's neighborhoods and at cultural events and community fairs will serve as another connecting point with families. Successful events like Day of Play, FatherFest, Convoy of Hope, Health and Safety Fair serve as models for outreach.

Outreach and engagement is necessarily an evolving process. Worcester's PEG Plan incorporates significant guidance from cultural and religious organizations to expand outreach to and communication with vulnerable, hard-to-reach populations.

Outreach must be culturally competent, which necessitates deeper focus group work with specific neighborhoods within Worcester. Community organizations like ACE, SEAC, Ascentria, and LEI have expressed interest to the PEG Planning Team in discussing strategies, providing cultural insight, and building educator and ELP capacity to work effectively with families. They have also offered to set up focus groups with families. This work is in process for Summer 2016. Translation needs will be supported by a number of agencies including WPS' translation department, resettlement agency staff, and the new Translation Center in the World Languages Department at Worcester State University.

Extend CFCE Pilot Project to Support Immigrant and Refugee Families

To support immigrant and refugee families within PEG initiative, we propose to expand a pilot project that introduces families to an engaging, non-threatening education setting. The unscheduled and often chaotic arrival of new refugee families necessitates a caring and supportive introduction to the community's early education offerings. Worcester's CFCE (Worcester Family Partnership or WFP) has played a pivotal role in developing and facilitating a large number of playgroups across the city. This past year, in a collaborative pilot with WPS, MIRRA, and African Community Education, WFP facilitated a new playgroup model designed to support a specific cultural group's recent immigrants and refugees, and introduce families to information and educational opportunities for their children. Worcester PEG will expand the use of specialized culturally-relevant family playgroups in partnership with other resettlement agencies as an introduction to the educational culture and bridge into preschool. Playgroups would run in 10-week cycles for approximately 30 weeks. Staffing support will be provided to work with families with trauma history and outreach and work with culture broker organizations. Culture broker organizations like Southeast Asian Coalition and Latino Education Institute are ready to partner to support this project. PEG would initially support the development and implementation of these playgroups in conjunction with the CFCE grant.

Explore the Portability of Kindergarten Screening and Registration Processes in a Central Location

In an expanded preschool program, the WPS Early Learning Director will lead planning to explore the portability of the screening and registration processes related to kindergarten to the early learning hub. Screening and assessment are part of the kindergarten registration process. WPS screens all incoming kindergarteners, with enrollment overseen and facilitated by the WPS Parent Information Center. The Early Learning Director will also facilitate parent information sessions on kindergarten. Finally, the PEG partners will explore the opportunity to have a Visit Kindergarten Night at one of the local elementary schools. The event has been piloted through Head Start with great success and can be replicated for additional preschool

classrooms. These strategies enhance support for families making the transition from preschool to kindergarten.

Support Kindergarten Transition in PEG Classrooms using Worcester’s Characteristics of Kindergarten Readiness

Worcester’s early educators are setting forth a set of goals, experiences, and skills that provide a lens through which we identify characteristics of kindergarten readiness captured in *Worcester’s Characteristics of Kindergarten Readiness: Transitioning from Preschool to Kindergarten* and new companion parent tool, *Let’s Get Ready for Kindergarten!* (September 2015). One of the special milestones in a child’s life is his/her entry into kindergarten. It is a magical – if not overwhelming – time of transition, when children are eager, excited and ready to explore. These tools are meant to be the foundational bridge between preschool and kindergarten, sparking dialog around curriculum, practice and instruction, and will serve as a springboard for shared PD across all educational settings serving our young children.

D. Inclusion Strategies

Enhance PEG Partner Collaboration with Community Partners under Leadership from Worcester Family Partnership and Edward Street Child Services

Inclusion and supporting children with emerging and identified special needs is an existing commitment and practice that Worcester’s early learning programs, WPS and the WCDHS support in collaboration with community partners in the health and behavioral health fields. Each Early Learning Partner in Worcester’s PEG Plan has extensive experience in supporting children with special needs and children experiencing trauma. They enroll and support children without permanent homes and children engaged with DCF services as state contracted providers. Each partner has experience and competencies in supporting dual language learners and immigrant and refugees families.

ELPs in Worcester work with professionals and organizations across the city that provide early intervention services, home visiting services, playgroups, and resettlement support. Through PEG, ELPs will enhance their collaboration with community partners under leadership from Worcester Family Partnership and Edward Street Child Services including:

- Early Intervention providers – Pernet Family Health, Thom, and Criterion
- Home Visiting providers – Parent Child Home Program (Worcester Family Partnership), MSPCC
- Resettlement Agencies – African Community Education, Southeast Asian Coalition, Latino Education Institute, Ascentria Care Alliance

Deliver Services Directly in Classrooms

WPS will provide evaluation and special needs determination. This year Worcester Family Partnership collaborated with the SPED team to offer a standing playgroup in a common location so that the team could observe children in a more natural play-based setting to support evaluation. Specialists would come to a centrally located center to work with children from across all classrooms. The building would provide space to host IEP meetings and facilitate the delivery of services. Should services be required, and as possible, WPS will provide services to children in the PEG classrooms to minimize disruption to the child’s schedule and

avoid transportation barriers. The PEG Planning Team will work with the SPED team to share processes and create a plan of support.

The PEG Planning Team will explore with Together for Kids (TFK) the opportunity to embed a clinician in the PEG classrooms to support behavioral health. TFK provides comprehensive mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention model of service comprised of the following components: 1) infant, toddler, preschool, and school age (ages 5-13) behavioral health consultation for educators and families; 2) trainings for educators and families on a variety of topics related to social-emotional health in children; and 3) referrals for intensive services (e.g., child/parent psychotherapy, psychological assessment). Services are designed to promote social-emotional wellness in children, assist educators/families to understand and appropriately respond to challenging behaviors, strengthen home-school partnerships, and reduce suspensions and expulsions from early education and care settings. The goal is to assist children to become enjoyable family members, valued friends, and successful learners so that they will develop a “foundation for success” in kindergarten and beyond. The ELPs are familiar with and use TFK services for their existing programs. Worcester’s PEG plan embeds TFK support into classrooms to best support vulnerable, high-risk children and families.

E. Curriculum and Assessment Strategies

Anchor PEG Curriculum and Assessment in Worcester’s Characteristics of Kindergarten Readiness Worcester blended the Commonwealth’s seminal planning document, *Building the Foundation for Future Success for Children from Birth to Grade 3* with the latest research on child development to align a set of developmental characteristics that bridge preschool into kindergarten. *Worcester’s Characteristics of Kindergarten Readiness: Transitioning from Preschool to Kindergarten*, developed in 2015, represents the community’s definition of readiness. It anchors the plan for many aspects of Worcester’s PEG plan, but most importantly the Plan’s curriculum and assessment.

Building a strong foundation for growth and learning requires: (1) Equal emphasis on all domains of early childhood development; (2) Acknowledgement of how these domains are interrelated; and (3) Recognition of individual abilities, strengths, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and needs. Relationships and play are key components of learning environments for young children. The intersection of the five core areas is predicated on two basic learning principles: 1) Children learn within strong, positive relationships; and 2) Children learn primarily through play – the creative, active exploration and manipulation of materials and objects with ample time to engage with peers, materials and their environment.

Strategies here are designed to:

- Embed Worcester’s community-developed definition of Kindergarten Readiness
- Implement a common research-based curriculum elevating support for language and literacy development
- Align assessment and data management practices and leverage WPS resources to understand near and long-term impact

Utilize Worcester's Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten to Educate Parents on Readiness

Parents will be engaged in understanding these characteristics through continuous access to emotionally and physically safe, culturally and linguistically inclusive, and high-quality learning and play experiences in homes, educational settings, and communities. In June 2016 the Alignment Partnership Council launched a new tool, *Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten* to help parents understand what it means to be ready and how they can support their child. The tool was launched at WPS' Kindergarten and Preschool Open House. It has been translated into seven languages and is being widely distributed across the community through education and community partners. Additionally, parents will be invited to participate in a variety of Countdown to Kindergarten events which begin each January. These touchpoints and activities build families' understanding of readiness and their role in supporting their child.

Implement the Boston Public School K1 Preschool Model as a Common Curriculum

Given the dual goals of kindergarten readiness and alignment, ELPs look forward to implementing a common curriculum. The Curriculum is the BPS K1 (preschool) model. ELPs are exploring the BPS weekly site and will be examining the Opening the World of Learning (OWL) curriculum, which serves as a backbone for the K1 curriculum. The K1 curriculum is well-researched, and demonstrates strong language, literacy and math outcomes in children. It is being adopted by other districts and cities across the country. The common curricular focus affords early educators the opportunity to collaborate more deeply. This curriculum pilot serves as a model for broader implementation of a community preschool curriculum in the future. The PEG partners currently use a combination of Creative Curriculum, OWL and teacher-created curriculum.

PEG will hire Curriculum Coaches to support curriculum implementation and individual educator development via CLASS. Coaches will implement monthly PLCs on topics of curriculum and assessment to support all PEG educators. Coaches will be overseen by a Master Teacher who has been a PAC leader for Region 2 EPS and has participated in advanced training on coaching and mentoring. The Head Start Education Manager (LEA) will further coordinate support for Coaches through sharing of HS protocols, trainings, and technical assistance for the CLASS tool. QCC's faculty will support the coaches in curriculum implementation. PEG classrooms will serve as demonstration sites for ELP teachers to observe and will serve as future field placement sites for QCC's early education students.

Utilize Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) for Formative Assessment

Formative assessment will drive curriculum and instruction in each PEG classroom. Measurement of skills and competencies tells educators where children are and informs instructional approaches and resources to support children's individual learning trajectories. All of Worcester's Early Learning Partner centers use TSG online for their existing preschool programs, while Worcester's Head Start and WPS programs uses the Work Sampling System covering similar domains. Expansion classrooms will use TSG. PEG educators will examine children's growth and development after each check point. Use of a common tool strengthens the community's ability to monitor children's growth, and align with curriculum and practice. A crosswalk was developed to support alignment with Head Start and WPS and facilitate common educator dialogue. One PLC topic each quarter will be devoted to formative assessment discussions across all PEG educators.

Support PEG Assessment through the WPS Research and Accountability Office

Assessment efforts will be supported by WPS' Research and Accountability Office and through kindergarten transition processes in place in Worcester. Through a School-Community Data Working Team, the ELPs established data sharing practices for participation in preschool programs. Preschoolers entering kindergarten will be identified by their PEG classroom in a data transfer to the WPS each summer. Individual

development and learning information from TSG reports and other data will be shared with each child's WPS kindergarten teacher. The WPS Early Childhood Director leads the outreach process to all Worcester centers each spring and collects data to share with kindergarten classrooms. Permission forms, data sheets, and a Cumulative Record tool have been developed to support the collection and transfer of information and files. As Worcester Child Development Head Start is under the umbrella of the WPS, there is an established data migration and sharing protocol in place that is led by the Head Start Family Engagement Specialist. The PEG Planning Team and Early Learning Council will examine aggregate data reports on children's progress into kindergarten, and from kindergarten through 3rd grade to inform practice and decision-making.

F. Birth to Grade Three Alignment

Children benefit from a strong foundation of family, community and education. We have one small window in which to get it right. The expansion grant fits directly into *Early Alignment for Lifelong Success* (March 2016). Worcester's Birth to 3rd framework now serves as the City's promise across the earliest and most important years. Physical, social, emotional, and academic success of all children is dependent on how we – as educators, parents, physicians, leaders, and community members – intentionally and creatively partner to ensure our children's diverse strengths and needs are nurtured and well supported.

Our community's imperative is to honor young children and their families with an aligned and sustained investment. The future of a thriving and vibrant Heart of the Commonwealth begins when each child grows to her full potential.

In Worcester, the community actively collaborates to improve the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for children based on a foundation of strong, healthy families and a top-notch early learning system preparing children for 3rd grade reading proficiency *and* college, career and life success. *Early Alignment for Lifelong Success* represents a unique model of community collaboration that aligns the resources of health, early learning and family engagement thereby aligning all of the City's resources toward common goals. The Framework is intended to create a comprehensive citywide system of care, education, supports and services that recognizes a child's success in school and life is strongly influenced by foundations that begin at birth through third grade. It outlines a larger set of interrelated strategic directions, objectives and actions. It leverages the work of the Alignment Partnership Council formed in 2014. Partner membership engages many organizations representing an array of state funded initiatives and grants from DEEC, DESE and IHE. Our collaboration offers the City the following advantages:

- **Greater returns on investment.** By working together toward common goals, resources are leveraged, duplication avoided, and efficiency is greatly increased.
- **Higher quality services.** Utilizing expertise from multiple organizations alongside research-based practices guarantees a broader perspective and wiser approach.
- **Enhanced capacity.** Very few organizations have the capacity to create community-wide impact. A collective effort enhances the impact of each organization, while generating a much larger impact overall.

A sample of specific activities demonstrating our Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment work over the past two years is below.

Full Day Kindergarten (FDK)/Transition to Kindergarten: Worcester Public Schools provides FDK services through EEC's High Quality Full Day Kindergarten Grant. The WPS Director of Early Learning oversees the grant and is a member of both Worcester's APC and the PEG Planning Team. The APC focused on the critical transition between preschool and kindergarten. The APC implemented a number of improvements: Created community definition of kindergarten readiness; Strengthened Countdown to Kindergarten events (new event calendar; developed transition protocols for data; Developed potential new enrollment strategies via early learning centers); Hosted Meet-and-Greets with elementary principals and participated in Principal PLAN meetings to share resources, exchange ideas, and problem solve across common topics of interest.

Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) – Worcester Family Partnership (WFP) is Worcester's CFCE grantee and is under the umbrella of WPS. The WFP Coordinator is a sitting member of Worcester's B-3rd Alignment Partnership Council and participates on the PEG Planning Team. Community leaders and WPS coordinate WFP events, support projects, and have been strong collaborating partners for many years in community-based activities ranging from playgroups, Raising a Reader, and Parent Child Home Program to the development and implementation of a citywide events like Worcester's Day of Play Family Festival, and the annual Countdown to Kindergarten events.

Educator Provider Support (EPS): Family Services of Central MA/Center for Childcare Careers is the Central MA grantee for EPS. The Program Director is a member of Worcester's Alignment Partnership Council and is a collaborating partner on the PEG Planning Team. The EPS is also a founding member of Worcester's Summer Learning Action Network and leads the Summer Literacy Initiative which provides embedded literacy coaches in more than 11 summer programs across the City. Results demonstrate children in kindergarten through 3rd grade are maintaining, and in some cases gaining, key literacy skills. Children enrolled in Early Learning Partner organizations benefit from this summer programming.

Early Childhood Mental Health: Several of Worcester's Early Learning Partners participate in Together for Kids Second Step (TFK) program. Community Health Link is the lead agency for the TFK project. It was developed in Worcester in response to early childhood center needs to support a diverse and significant array of behavioral needs in young children. Worcester's Birth to 3rd Grade Framework specifically includes behavioral health as a core strategic area.

Early Childhood Special Education Entitlement Grant (Fund Code 262): Worcester Public Schools holds a modest grant under Fund Code 262 to support special education services for 3, 4, and 5 year olds in Worcester. The grant is overseen by the SPED department and the WPS Director of Early Learning is a liaison with that team. The APC continues to strengthen the working relationship between WPS SPED and community providers. We will examine opportunities to leverage funds to benefit children 3-5 in Worcester.

Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments (IPLE): Worcester Public Schools is a current recipient of IPLE funding. Its current half-day preschool programming serves more than 1,200 children annually. WPS Early Childhood Director is an active member of Worcester's APC and PEG Planning Team. PEG planning will align services and programming to best support Worcester's preschool children.

City Focus on National Campaign for Grade Level Reading (CGLR): Worcester is one of six CGLR communities across the Commonwealth and earned a Pacesetter Community designation several years ago. Worcester Reads, founded under Worcester’s initial Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment grant and co-chaired by Edward Street Child Services and the Worcester Educational Collaborative, represents the community’s collaborative investment in early literacy and embraces the goals of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. Worcester Reads is the community lead in implementing the WPS District Literacy Plan. The campaign is: (1) building awareness about the importance of early literacy including the importance of “reading 20 minutes a day;” (2) getting resources into the hand of high-need neighborhoods; and (3) increasing the focus on literacy in schools by reinforcing the “20 minutes a day” message and transferring best practices. Principals, early educators, more than 13 community organizations like Reach Out and Read and cultural institutions such as the Worcester Public Library and Worcester Historical Museum are active members in creating, sharing and leveraging resources across the birth to 3rd grade continuum. Worcester Reads is creating public awareness through city-wide events, reading events across the Worcester public library system, and parent-friendly resources.

Exploring Boston Public Schools (BPS) K1 & K2 Programming: Over the past year, ESCS’ Managing Director of Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment, WPS Early Childhood Director and a small team of WPS kindergarten teachers and special educators examined the aligned BPS preschool and kindergarten curriculum. They attended state and regional trainings and have piloted some of the protocols and practices from Focus K2. Curriculum plans for preschool expansion will pilot the BPS K1 curriculum. Several kindergarten teachers want to pilot the full K2 curriculum, which will align educational practices for children.

Worcester’s Community-School Data Working Group: Worcester’s Alignment Partnership Council formed a new collaboration with WPS’ Research and Accountability Office to connect early education centers with WPS in order to learn more about the impact of preschool programming. The group’s purpose is to explore how Early Childhood Centers (ECCs) and the WPS can collaborate on determining which students in the WPS had a preK experience; understand the relationship between preK and student outcomes; and develop a system for sharing data on school readiness.

The Data Working Group collected and examined participation data from a pilot group of centers. More than 85% of children were found in WPS’ kindergarten classrooms in the 2015-2016 class. WPS can now track and share aggregate data on those children. Currently, the group is examining results from 2015-2016 Kindergarten class. The APC extended an invitation for all centers in Worcester to participate and is currently collecting participation data. The project also supports data needs for Worcester’s Summer Literacy Initiative (SLI) which is a project of Family Services of Central MA. WPS is supporting pre and post summer data analysis on participating student performance in 1st through 3rd grades using District literacy and reading measures.

Worcester’s commitment to align resources is part of the fabric of the community. It’s what Worcester does. It is who Worcester is. The work to align resources across education and community agencies has a long and proud history. The work of tomorrow is before us: to more fully support young children’s health and development by establishing a world-class early learning system that ensures each child has the opportunity and resources he needs to be successful.

IV. Costs and Sustainability

Worcester’s Preschool Expansion Plan costs represent a number of options and variables. Final costs will be determined based on funding stream support and location of services.

Start Up Costs for the PEG Model

The fully-loaded cost per child is between \$22,000 and \$25,500. This cost is inclusive of staffing, materials, professional development, food, and transportation for eight new preschool classrooms and two culturally-supported Playgroups. It assumes a fringe rate for staffing of 20% and an indirect rate of 10% of total costs. Second and subsequent years costs assume reductions in furnishing and materials, and a 2% - 3% increase in salaries.

Year 1 Operation Costs				
	Base Cost	Quantity	Extended Cost	
Staffing				
Executive Dir. Early Learning	120,000	0.6	\$72,000	
Program Administrators	63,149	2	\$126,298	
Lead Teachers	53,248	4	\$212,992	
Teacher	35,880	4	\$143,520	
Assistant Teacher	33,280	4	\$133,120	
Family Engagement Specialist	50,000	1	\$50,000	
Family Advocate	35,880	2	\$71,760	
Master Teacher	60,237	1	\$60,237	
Curriculum/CLASS Coaches	56,048	2	\$112,096	
Nurse	50,000	1	\$50,000	
Behavioral Health Clinician	70,000	1	\$70,000	
Custodian	80,000	1	\$80,000	
Bus Monitors	31,200	2	\$62,400	
QCC Workforce Faculty	52,800	0.5	\$26,400	
Staffing Subtotal			\$1,270,823	
Fringe	20%		\$254,164.60	
Total Personnel			\$1,524,987.60	
Professional Development				
Cost Share College Courses	22,500	1	\$22,500	
BPS Training Team				
Year 1: BPS				
Year 2: PD Consultant (tbd)	8,000	1	\$8,000	
Total PD			\$30,500	

Materials

Classroom Furnishings & Supplies	22,000	8	\$176,000
TSG Licenses	9.95	80	\$796
OWL Premium Kits	2170.47	8	\$17,364
Trade Books	500	8	\$4,000
Printing	250	8	\$2,000
Total Materials			\$200,160

Food

(5.75 per child per day)	2070	50	\$103,500
Total Food			\$103,500

Transportation

a) WPS Contract Expansion	3500	50	\$175,000
WPS Extension Cost			\$175,000

OR

b) Private Fleet Expansion			
Cost per day (\$17/child*72)	1224	250	\$306,000
Vehicles & Maintenance	100000	2	\$200,000
Transportation Coordinator (1/2 FTE)	35000	0.5	\$17,500
Fleet Cost			\$523,500

Cultural Playgroups	15,000	2	\$30,000
Playgroup Cost			\$30,000

PEG Subtotal WPS Trans			\$2,064,147
PEG Subtotal Fleet			\$2,412,647

Indirect

Indirect WPS Trans	10%		\$206,415
Indirect Fleet	10%		\$241,265

Grand Total WPS Trans			\$2,270,562
Grand Total Fleet			\$2,653,912

Cost per child	
WPS Transports	\$21,832
Private Transports	\$25,518

Cost Estimates for Plan Components

New Classroom Costs Estimates

Costs Elements for New Classroom (Assumes 20 children)	Cost
Furnishings and Materials* (start-up)	22,000
Classroom Teaching Team	146,880
Staffing 122,400	
Fringe 24,480	
Program Administration Oversight (15%)	18,360
Food (5.75/child/day) for 18 children	25,875
Transportation (\$17/child/day) for 18 children	76,500
Total Cost per Classroom	\$289,615

The cost per child for first year of a new preschool room is approximately \$14,500. This does not include enhanced services and support from professional development, coaching, and family engagement.

*New Classroom Furnishing and Materials cost is \$22,000 per room. This estimate is drawn from NIEER research on the costs of furnishings and materials for a new preschool classroom and was confirmed by experts in center development, planning and construction.

Culturally-Supported WFP Playgroups

Programmatic Needs	Costs	Notes
EEC Certified Playgroup Staff	\$200 per week	Implement weekly Playgroup at community-based site
Culture Broker Staff Support	\$100 per week	Support outreach, translation, culture competence knowledge
Supplies	\$150 per week	Children's books and general supplies
Average Weekly Cost	\$500 per week	
Annual Budget per Playgroup	\$15,000	30-week program in 10-week cycles

Assumptions for Space Renovation*

Budget Considerations	Costs	Notes
Space Renovation Cost Assumes 120 sqft per child \$230/sqft renovation cost	2,208,000	120 sqft includes wall-to-wall estimate inclusive of hallways, office, parent room, indoor/outdoor gross motor, etc.
Consultant	30,000 – 40,000 (estimate only)	Oversee design, budget, architectural design
Architect	50,000 – 75,000 (estimate only)	Specializes in designing children's spaces
Project Manager	35,000 – 45,000 (estimate only)	Oversee building construction for project

*Assumptions not inclusive of lease or purchase costs.

Funding: A Collaboration of Will and Resources

Funding plans for the PEG Plan integrate a three-part strategy:

1. Identify and pursue new state resources
2. Expand and braid existing funding resources
3. Pursue new local funding in partnership with local foundations and businesses

New State or Federal Resources

Funding sources would support three key areas: 1) implementation planning work for 1st year; 2) building and renovation costs; and 3) compensation targets for PEG staffing. The magnitude of the lift for the PEG model, particularly as it relates to compensation necessitates a significant infusion of funding.

Braid Existing Funding

To cover costs and bridge gaps the PEG model would make use of existing subsidy reimbursements for care, transportation, food, etc. and identify the remaining gaps need to fully cover costs in each area. For example, current transportation reimbursements are \$6.00 per day one-way or \$9.00 per day round trip. Actual round trip costs are closer to \$17.00 per day so gap funding would be sought for the balance.

Funding sources in this area include: Department of Early Education and Care, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and CACFP (food) reimbursement. Additionally, partner funding sources currently in place will be expanded over time to help cover longer term sustainability. Sources here include Early Childhood Mental Health Grant, CFCE, EPS, and sources supporting community agencies expanding their footprint of services.

Local Funding from Foundations and Businesses

Worcester prides itself on its small-town community feel and its ability to help its citizens. Community foundations and businesses consistently look to support efforts that advance the quality of life and contribute to the economic vitality of the city. Longer term sustainability of Worcester's Early Learning System, and the related preschool expansion program, requires sustained investment from foundation and local businesses. The PEG Planning Team is generating initial interest from foundations like the United Way, Greater Worcester Community Foundation and others that focus on education and youth. Many of the supporting agency services and contributions may be funded through existing efforts. While careful not to cannibalize those funding stream, leaders from foundations will be called together to brainstorm funding solutions. City leadership will be engaged, and the business community will be called upon to make a lasting investment in the future of our most valuable economic resource.

V. Appendices

- *Growing the Heart of the Commonwealth: Early Alignment for Children’s Lifelong Success – Worcester’s Birth - 3rd Grade Strategic Framework*
- *Worcester’s Characteristics of Kindergarten Readiness: Transitioning from Preschool to Kindergarten*
- Distribution Map of Preschool Programs - Provider Overlay Maps for City of Worcester (2 versions)
- Letters of Endorsement
 - YWCA of Central MA
 - Worcester Public Library
 - Worcester Family Partnership
 - Rainbow Child Development Center
 - Quinsigamond Community College
 - Worcester Child Development Head Start
 - Guild of St. Agnes
 - Family Services of Central MA/Center for Childcare Careers
 - Edward Street Child Services

Acknowledgments

Worcester’s Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan was developed in concert with education, health and social service community leaders. Special thanks to the PEG Planning Team and a cadre of community partners who provided data, insight and support in the development of this plan. Project leadership and management provided by Marco Rodrigues, Ed.D, Worcester Public Schools, and Kim Davenport, Edward Street Child Services. Funding to support the development of the Strategic Plan was made possible through a MA Department of Early Education and Care Planning Grant. Consulting support and data analysis provided by Benita Danzing and Linda Warren of Early Childhood Associates, Inc.



A. Growing the Heart of the Commonwealth: Early Alignment for Lifelong Success – Worcester’s Birth-3rd Grade Strategic Framework

Growing the Heart of the Commonwealth: Early Alignment Children’s for Lifelong Success

Worcester’s Birth-3rd Grade Strategic Framework

MARCH 2016

Acknowledgements

This Framework was developed in concert with school, health and community leaders. Worcester's Alignment Partnership Council commissioned the work in November 2015. Special thanks to the Strategic Planning Working Group comprised of leaders from Worcester Public Schools, Edward Street Child Services, Quinsigamond Community College and the Guild of St. Agnes. Funding to support the development of the Framework was made possible through the MA Department of Early Education and Care and an Early Learning Challenge Grant. Consulting support provided by Linda Warren of Early Childhood Associates, Inc.

Worcester's Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment Partnership Council

Edward Street Child Services

Worcester Public Schools

Worcester Child Development Head Start

Quinsigamond Community College

Family Services of Central MA

Worcester Family Partnership

YWCA of Central MA

Worcester Comprehensive Education & Care

Guild of St. Agnes

Rainbow Child Development Center

Webster Square Day Care Center

Worcester Public Library

Worcester Education Collaborative

Latino Education Institute

Pernet Family Health Services

Funding supporting provided by



Leadership provided by



Introduction

Worcester is poised to take bold action on one of the most strategic and important investments we can make in our **children**, our City, our economy and our future. **Early learning** is a smart investment. The strategic directions and strategies in this framework will provide solutions to some of the most significant problems facing our City by investing in early and equal development of human potential.

We hold the triple distinctions of being the 2nd largest city in New England, a leading Gateway City, and the leading resettlement community welcoming 300-500 new families each year, all of which drive our unique, richly diverse City. To be a truly great city, Worcester must have healthy children, engaged families and the very highest standards in our early learning system. Our City is fortunate today to have so many people and organizations committing time and resources to improve the education and health of our children and to support families as their children's first teacher.

Early Alignment for Lifelong Success, Worcester's Birth to 3rd Grade Strategic Framework represents a unique model of collaboration that aligns the resources of health, early learning and family engagement thereby aligning all of the City's resources toward common goals. It plays a vital role in our City's efforts to ensure that all children are successful.

Our collaboration offers the City the following advantages:

- ❖ **Greater returns on investment.** By working together toward common goals, resources are leveraged, duplication avoided, and efficiency is greatly increased.
- ❖ **Higher quality services.** Utilizing expertise from multiple organizations alongside research-based practices guarantees a broader perspective and wiser approach.
- ❖ **Enhanced capacity.** Very few organizations have the capacity to create community-wide impact. A collective effort enhances the impact of each organization, while generating a much larger impact overall.

Our proposed framework is intended to create a comprehensive citywide **system** of care, education, supports and services that recognizes a child's success in school and life is strongly influenced by foundations that begin at birth through third grade. These are the formative years that shape a child's growth, development and learning. Each stage of a child's development builds on the platform for success to the next stage.

The framework is based on the premise that efforts to ensure an opportunity for **every** child to succeed in school and life must address the needs of the whole child – i.e. physical and mental health and well-being, as well as intellectual and social-emotional development skills.

The aim of this framework is to provide guidance and direction for priority setting, staffing and budget decisions, and an advocacy agenda and partnership opportunities during the next five years. Specific Action Plans for each strategic area will be built considering connections within the framework and across our community.

Why We Need this Plan

Early learning takes place in many places - home, child care, preschool, and kindergarten through third grade, libraries, faith organizations, parks, play groups and many other community settings. Early learning is also shaped by many people - parents, guardians, grandparents, other relatives, early educators, teachers, health care providers and a variety of caring adults and programs. Similarly, school age programs take place in many community settings and are organized by partners across the city, including schools and community-based programs. This rich variety offers choice for families according to their own values and need. However, when everything takes place in separate silos, families have a hard time finding the services and information they want. Further, while there have been a number of efforts to build bridges between existing programs, the pieces are still disjointed. An early learning system organizes and integrates the various policies, programs and services for young children alongside those for the adults who care for and teach them. When the elements work well and align with each other, children have the best opportunity to reach their full potential.

Our Vision

In Worcester, the community actively collaborates to improve the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for children based on a foundation of strong, healthy families and a top-notch early learning system preparing children for 3rd grade reading proficiency *and* college, career and life success.

Our framework identifies four interrelated Strategic Areas critical in promoting development of the whole child: **early learning, family engagement and support, behavioral health, and health**. These Strategic Areas are supported by four Absolutes that must permeate all we do: **community engagement, partnerships, workforce development, and aligned resources and investments**.

Together these Strategic Areas and Absolutes form a comprehensive and dynamic early learning system.

Worcester's Early Learning System



Absolutes

Community Engagement Partnerships

- ❖ Our community thrives when **all** members are actively engaged.
- ❖ We seek coordination, creativity and new strength through our partnerships.

Workforce Development

- ❖ We must build and support a highly-skilled workforce of professionals who care for and teach children birth to 3rd grade with high-quality, cross-sector professional development and compensation parity for all educators.

Aligned Resources & Investments

- ❖ Success is predicated on aligning existing resources and strategically inserting new resources towards highest return strategies.

Our Guiding Principles

Our work is anchored by a set of interconnected guiding principles. They represent the high standards we must uphold if we are to honor the children and families we intend to serve with our programs, policies, and investments.

Whole Child

- Take into account all areas of a child's growth and learning.

Child Focused and Family Centered

- Promote meaningful partnerships with parents and families since they are their children's first and most important teacher.

Culturally Relevant

- Be flexible, culturally responsive, and reflect the needs of the community and individual children and families.

Comprehensive, Aligned, High-Quality

- Promote a comprehensive and aligned system of high quality services across the birth through third grade continuum, including a workforce with equitable compensation.

Accessible and Accountable

- Be accessible to all children and families; address the lack of equity of opportunity that many children and families face because of race, ethnicity or family income, especially the preparation gap that stems from a variety of risk factors.

Strengths Based

- Build on strengths of children, families, early educators, community stakeholders, leadership and prior planning efforts.

Data Driven

- Promote accountability in all policies, programs and services.

Connections and Partnerships

- This plan only works if everyone in the community plays a part.

Strategic Areas

Worcester’s four Strategic Areas are inextricably linked. Each encapsulates a core focus necessary to fully support the development of strong, healthy children who are ready for learning and life. Each is guided by a set of core beliefs and is linked to objectives, actions and outcomes that our community has defined as paramount in successfully nurturing children.

Strategic Area: Early Learning

Children are born ready to learn. They construct knowledge based on their own curiosity and are driven by their interests as well as through interactions with adults and other children. Each child has a unique learning style which is influenced by his or her experiences, strengths and interests.

We believe that children learn best when exposed to and engaged in high quality environments, interactions and relationships. Children learn through play, self-directed as well as meaningful, intentionally planned experiences in a typical sequence of awareness, exploration, inquiry and application.

Strategic Direction: Increase access to and quality of education and comprehensive services across the Birth to 3 rd Grade continuum so children meet developmental milestones necessary for Kindergarten readiness and continued success.	
Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions
<p>EXPAND QUALITY PROGRAMMING: Work across Worcester’s mixed delivery system to expand access to home visiting and high quality Pre-Kindergarten, and maintain full day Kindergarten.</p> <p>Prevent summer learning loss.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop specific plan to expand preschool opportunities for all four-year olds within 3 years. ■ Identify funding opportunities to expand home visiting slots over 3 years. ■ Advocate and ensure funding is maintained for full day Kindergarten. ■ Align and promote high quality summer enrichment and learning programs towards the maintenance and growth of cognitive and social skills.
<p>ALIGN STANDARDS AND SYSTEMS: Collaboratively develop and implement aligned learning standards, assessment tools, and data systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify the following components of quality improvements for all Birth – 3rd Grade programs: standards, curriculum, assessment, instruction, learning environments, and leadership. ■ Collaborate with community and school stakeholders to advance <i>Worcester’s Characteristics of Kindergarten Readiness</i> definition.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure the Birth – 3rd Grade educators have the data management tools, support, and expertise to analyze and effectively use data to continuously improve teaching and learning.
<p>CONTINUITY OF CARE: Increase availability of and access to cross-sector professional development opportunities (including coaching and professional learning communities) and a stable high-quality workforce with adequate compensation for Worcester’s Birth to 3rd Grade workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deliver high leverage professional development for teachers and caregivers based on needs assessment data. ■ Conduct outreach to family, friends and neighbor caregivers and provide information on how they can promote learning and development of young children in their care. ■ Develop and implement a citywide transition plan to ensure seamless transitions for children and families along the early learning continuum, particularly for all rising Kindergarteners.
<p>EQUIP PROGRAM LEADERS: Increase the capacity of program and school leaders to support teachers in providing high-quality, evidence informed and inclusive early learning supports and environments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop training/coaching opportunities for leaders to expand knowledge and practice of early childhood development and developmentally appropriate curriculum, environments, and assessment.
<p>VIEW CULTURE AS A COMMUNITY ASSET: Support children in retaining their home language and culture while becoming proficient in English.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthen the culture competence of educators and leaders across our City.
<p>OUTCOMES</p> <p>Increased access to high quality early learning programs and comprehensive services, especially for children with high needs; increased use of evidence-informed instructional practices; increased use of data for quality improvement and decision making; and increased academic achievement and reduction in the achievement gap.</p>	

Strategic Area: Family Engagement & Support

The family is where children gain their first experiences in life and is the most prominent and continuing influence in their child’s life. Families desire the best for their children and our partnership with families begins there.

We believe that all children and their families, regardless of their ethnic origins, value system, faiths, abilities, customs, language, and compositions must be equally respected and deserving of the opportunity to thrive and succeed thereby ensuring the cultural and economic viability of our community. Children learn best through everyday activities with nurturing people in familiar contexts and when the adults in their lives work in partnership.

Strategic Direction: Encourage opportunities for families to engage actively and meaningfully in their children’s healthy development and education.	
Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions
Promote culturally sensitive, strengths-based orientation to working with families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthen coordinated efforts of public and private entities to use culturally competent strategies to engage families. ■ Build relationships and trust among families, providers and schools along the B-3rd Grade continuum
Encourage family participation in decision making regarding their children’s education and care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop citywide philosophy of family engagement with an orientation to building “learning partnerships”.
Increase opportunities for families to engage in parenting education activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide tools and information to families to strengthen their own engagement and involvement in their children’s lives.
Support family capacity with access to information and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure program staff and educators have the tools and professional development needed to support families with young children. ■ Routinely assess whether information is geographically and socioeconomically distributed to all families residing in our City.
OUTCOMES	
Increased cultural and linguistic competence; increased family education and supports; and increased family engagement in decision making and advocacy.	

Strategic Area: Behavioral Health

Health of mind and spirit are central to growth, development and learning in children. Children and the adults in their lives all need supports to build resilience and perseverance as they encounter milestones, changing family and societal dynamics, and stress factors.

We believe that children develop the capacity to reach their full potential when they are in secure, trusting relationships with adults that provide safe, nurturing environments. Social and emotional learning is critical to every child’s ability to self-regulate, to identify their own feelings, to cultivate flexibility in thinking and to interact successfully with others.

<p>Strategic Direction: Ensure access to quality mental and behavioral health services for young children and their families, and support the reduction of toxic stress in children’s learning and living environments.</p>	
Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions
Increase the use of high quality, evidence-based social, emotional and mental health training and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify a core set of practices and strategies to be used by early educators across mixed delivery settings. ■ Provide early learning professionals with effective practices that promote children’s social and emotional development and mental health, with emphasis on trauma-sensitive strategies. ■ Identify assessment tool(s) to support educator’s development of nurturing, secure environments and positive adult-child relationships.
Increase the number of environments that provide mental health consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthen and expand community-based mental health services. ■ Embed mental health services in programs servicing young children. ■ Ensure coordinated transitions of mental and behavioral services as children grow along the early learning continuum.
Increase knowledge and practice of nurturing behaviors among families and early childhood professionals, including the community’s understanding of trauma-informed strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote caregiver’s knowledge of the social, emotional, and mental health milestones of young children. ■ Promote neighborhood model so all adults in the community understand and practice trauma-sensitive strategies in their interactions with children and families.
Provide specialized support for children in challenging family situations, including homelessness, child protective services, foster care, and poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide early support for children with learning and behavioral challenges that affect developmentally appropriate growth and well-being.
<p>OUTCOMES</p>	
<p>Improvements in emotional well-being (for example, improved relationships with peers and adults); improvements in family life; and improvements for children in schools.</p>	



Strategic Area: Health

Healthy and thriving citizens participate fully in our economy and enjoy the community’s resources. Our citizens’ health is supported through an ecosystem of healthy environments, playful spaces to promote active living, preventative and restorative services, and nutrition and food security.

We believe the overall health of a child impacts her growth and development. Children learn best when they have adequate nutrition, access and use of outdoor play spaces and continuity of pediatric health care from birth with a dual focus on prevention and treatment. Pediatricians and their medical support teams serve as the family’s first partners in growth and learning.

Strategic Direction: Coordinate with healthcare providers and agencies to ensure access to quality healthcare, nutrition services, fitness and playful engagement.

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions
Ensure access to information to increase understanding of healthy development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve prenatal, infant and toddler, and maternal health through quality prenatal and home visiting services.
Improve the health, nutrition and active living of young children and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote access to consistent sources of healthy food options for children and families. ■ Leverage existing partnerships to distribute nutrition information and optimize nutrition during pregnancy and early childhood. ■ Continued and expanded investment in shared outdoor spaces for children and families, such as parks, fields and green spaces.
Increase access to preventive oral and medical health care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seek opportunities to extend embedded health clinics and services into schools, centers and programs serving young children.
Increase number of children who have and use a medical home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote and support use of medical, oral, and mental health as well as developmental, vision and hearing screening and services.

OUTCOMES

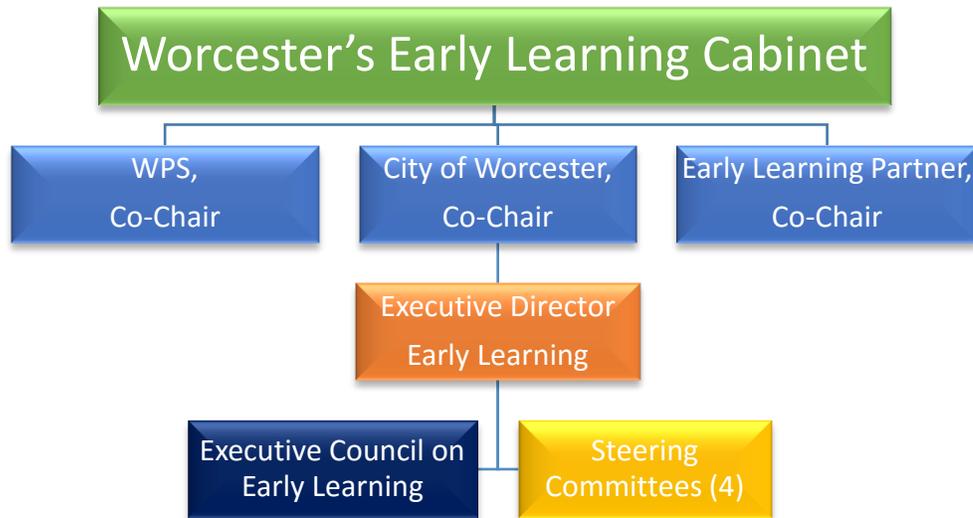
Improvements in health of children; increased knowledge of the importance of health and wellness; increased access to healthy food and food security; increased access to facilities and parks for playful exercise and gross motor activity; increased number of healthy homes (lead, asbestos and heavy metal free); and increased coordination of efforts to support health and wellness across the community

Governance Structure

Ensuring that all of our children succeed takes more than a village – it takes a community with common ownership and responsibility for its children. *Early Alignment for Lifelong Success*, Worcester’s Birth to 3rd Grade Strategic Framework represents a cohesive and comprehensive vision of an early learning system that evolves to support the needs of each child in our community. Much is already underway in terms of initiatives and programs that connect to this vision.

A living frame work requires **leadership**. No one entity can do this alone. Our proposed structure formalizes cross-sector collaboration and decision-making roles across public and private sector partners and strengthens leadership capacity to advance the work. The strategic directions, objectives and strategies outlined in Worcester’s Birth-3rd Strategic Framework are intended to provide the foundation for a more comprehensive strategic Plan that includes a budget, targets and benchmarks to drive the work and ensure accountability. Our work next is to fully identify those programs and resources, examine the gaps, and put forth Action Plans that chart next steps in each strategic area over the next five (5) years.

The new governance structure will provide leadership, management and oversight of Worcester’s Birth to 3rd Grade Framework, Action Plans and Strategies. The governance structure is multi-tiered to ensure all of Worcester’s leaders have a voice in shaping the work. The governance structure is organized under an **Early Learning Cabinet** and contains four tiers: **Co-Chairs, an Executive Director, an Executive Council on Early Learning, and Steering Committees for each Strategic Area**. These tiers will work collaboratively to complete the strategic plan, outline strategic priorities, guide funding decisions, and oversee the implementation of the Plan. Additionally, the Early Learning Cabinet will put in place a process that engages the community, promotes public and private partnerships, and aligns resources and investments that serve children birth through age 8. It will launch an intensive communication plan not only to promote the Plan but to get high level buy-in from Worcester’s citizens.



Co-Chairs will provide leadership to ensure the strategic directions and priorities align with both the early care and education and public school agendas and policies and practices reflect the goals and desired outcomes of both private and public sectors. The proposed co-chairs are the Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer of Worcester Public Schools, a leader from the City of Worcester, and a leader representing Early Learning Providers

Executive Director will manage all aspects of strategic planning and implementation including development of a multi-year plan to accomplish strategic priorities and objectives, support Co-Chairs in leading the plan, share regular progress updates, and ensure accountability. The Executive Director will work closely with the Executive Council to promote community partnerships and widespread community engagement and design a communication plan that is relevant to Worcester's diverse citizens, organizations and businesses.

Executive Council on Early Learning will build local support, raise public awareness and engagement and form strong strategic partnerships. Council members will work together to promote effective policies, practices and services to eliminate resource and service disparities and achieve equal access for young children and families, develop mechanisms for integrating the plan into partner organizations, and engineer a process for funding and sustaining the work. The 12 member Executive Council will be chosen from Worcester's businesses, organizations, foundations, and municipal departments. Membership *may* include the District Attorney, Chief of Police, Cultural Brokers organizations, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Health and Medical Institutions, Higher Education, Department of Children and Families, and Together for Kids. At this

level of leadership and engagement, membership will include a financial contribution which would directly support the Executive Director and directed projects.

Steering Committees will be aligned to the four Strategic Areas outlined in the Strategic Framework: **(1) Early Learning, (2) Family Engagement and Support, (3) Behavioral Health, and (4) Health.**

Steering Committees will be charged with developing and implementing their respective sections of the framework into a full-fledged 5 Year Action Plan with particular attention to specific outcomes. Steering Committees will be populated with organizational leaders, IHEs, business and health institution representatives and parents and providers from Worcester's early education centers, family child care systems, early intervention, the Worcester Public Schools (principals, teachers, administration) and Worcester Child Development Head Start. The Executive Director will support the Steering Committees in successful implementation of their respective plans and coordinate and integrate the work of the Steering Committees in alignment with the Executive Council.

Conclusion

Children benefit from a strong foundation of family, community and education. We have one small window in which to get it right. This framework serves as our community's promise across the earliest and most important years – birth through 3rd grade – when children's growth and development is like no other time period. Physical, social, emotional, and academic success of all children is dependent on how we – as educators, parents, physicians, leaders, and community members – intentionally and creatively partner to ensure our children's diverse strengths and needs are nurtured and well supported. Our community's imperative is to honor young children and their families with an aligned and sustained investment. The future of a thriving and vibrant Heart of the Commonwealth begins when each child grows to her full potential.

For more information and to become involved in Worcester's Birth to 3rd Grade work, contact Edward Street Child Services at 508.792.0220.

B. Worcester’s Characteristics of Kindergarten Readiness: Transitioning from Preschool to Kindergarten

Worcester’s Characteristics of Kindergarten Readiness: Transitioning from Preschool to Kindergarten

Let’s Get Ready

The years prior to entering kindergarten are full of development and learning for young children. The experiences and skills practiced before formal schooling begins lay the foundation for later academic and life success. One of the special milestones in a child’s life is his/her entry into Kindergarten. It is a magical – if not overwhelming – time of transition, when children are eager, excited and ready to explore. Educators work tirelessly to make that transition positive and rewarding. Worcester’s early educators are setting forth a set of identifiable goals, experiences and skills that provide a lens through which we identify characteristics of kindergarten readiness.

Readiness begins with a strong foundation that encompasses all domains of learning and seeks to identify both strengths and needs of young children. Building a strong foundation for growth and learning requires:

1. Equal emphasis on all domains of early childhood development;
2. Acknowledgement of how these domains are interrelated; and
3. Recognition of individual abilities, strengths, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and needs.¹

Children from birth through grade 3 who are on a path to lifelong success need to build competencies in five interrelated core areas.



Relationships and Play are Key Ingredients

The intersection of the five core areas is predicated on two basic learning principles: (1) Children learn within strong, positive relationships, and (2) Children learn primarily through play – the creative, active exploration and manipulation of materials and objects with ample time to engage with peers, materials and their environment. Children are active participants in the learning process; the environment including nurturing, responsive engagement with adults and peers, provides the context for their learning.

Essential Competencies and Experiences Establish the Foundation for Success

Continuous access to emotionally and physically safe, culturally and linguistically inclusive, and high-quality learning and play experiences in homes, educational settings, and communities will lead to the development of the following competencies in young children. Worcester blended the Commonwealth’s seminal document, *Building the Foundation for Future Success for Children from Birth to Grade 3* with the latest research on child development to align a set of developmental characteristics that bridge preschool into kindergarten.

At Kindergarten entry we look for certain characteristics in each domain to inform our curriculum and instruction. We recognize that children’s development exists on a continuum towards mastery. Our measurement of these skills and competencies tells us where they are in that development, which enables us to adjust instructional approaches and resources to support children’s individual learning trajectories.

BIRTH TO 3RD GRADE ESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES, FOUNDATIONAL EXPERIENCES and TRANSITIONING TO KINDERGARTEN

Approaches to Learning

Children should:

- Develop curiosity about the world around them and excitement about exploration and learning
 - Increase confidence about their ability to learn knowledge and skills
 - Become proactive, independent and collaborative learners
- Essential experiences provide opportunities for discovery, problem solving, and the acquisition of knowledge through interesting and interactive activities; promote creativity, cooperativeness, and persistence; and support individualized growth, learning, and multiple pathways to success.*

What we look for as children enter Kindergarten

- ❖ Demonstrates persistence
- ❖ Demonstrates independence
- ❖ Demonstrates curiosity
- ❖ Organizes self and materials
- ❖ Demonstrates problem solving

Social and Emotional Development

Children should:

- Develop and maintain trusting, healthy, and positive interactions and relationships with adults and peers
- Develop a positive sense of self and self-efficacy
- Express a healthy range of emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways
- Engage in constructive social interactions
- Develop the skills needed to regulate attention, impulses and behavior

Essential experiences provide emotional stability, security, and mental well-being; promote the development of self-regulation and executive functioning skills; increase social awareness; create positive and enriching opportunities for social exploration, growth and learning with both peers and adults; and promote the development of collaborative and positive relationships between early educators and families

What we look for as children enter Kindergarten

- ❖ Demonstrates self confidence
- ❖ Demonstrates self-control
- ❖ Transitions between activities
- ❖ Demonstrates sharing and turn-taking
- ❖ Demonstrates empathy
- ❖ Follows classroom rules and routines
- ❖ Demonstrates conflict resolution strategies
- ❖ Develops relationships with peers and adults

Cognitive Development and General Knowledge

Children should:

- Interact with adults and peers, objects, and materials in their environment and learn how to think and reason
- Develop curiosity and knowledge about the world around them
- Understand they are active contributors to their environment
- Continually enhance their ability to acquire and utilize multisensory knowledge and skills

Essential experiences promote the active exploration of both physical and social environments; provide opportunities to explore linguistic, artistic and mathematical concepts, including the quantification, classification, and categorization of objects; and promote the exploration of numbers, letters, words, sounds, and stories.

What we look for as children enter Kindergarten

- ❖ Demonstrates flexibility and inventiveness
- ❖ Makes symbolic connections

- ❖ Engages in socio-dramatic play
- ❖ Sorts, classifies and compares objects
- ❖ Demonstrates interest in identifying letters and numerals
- ❖ Identifies sounds in words, such as rhyming or beginning sounds

Language and Communication

Children should:

- Learn how to use sounds, gestures, and language to effectively and creatively express emotions, thoughts and needs
- Interact and exchange information with adults, peers and other individuals
- Develop knowledge and ideas
- Build the skills necessary for reading and writing proficiency (in multiple languages as applicable)

Essential experiences promote the creation of language-and-literacy-rich environments – those that celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity – in the home and community; and these experiences also provide continuous opportunities for expanding vocabulary; engaging in active conversation and storytelling; developing listening skills; and building skills needed to read, write, and respond to/ask questions in multiple media.

What we look for as children enter Kindergarten

- ❖ Speaks in complete sentences
- ❖ Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary
- ❖ Participates in class and peer discussions
- ❖ Uses social rules of language
- ❖ Demonstrates comprehension

Physical Development and Well-Being

Children should:

- Have access to primary preventative health care and mental health care
- Opportunities in their home and learning environments that will enable them to achieve physical developmental milestones as well as gain gross, fine, sensorimotor, and oral motor skills

Essential experiences promote physical safety; include indoor and outdoor movement and fitness activities; and provide opportunities to develop healthy eating, nutrition, sleep and exercise habits.

What we look for as children enter Kindergarten

- ❖ Cares for personal needs independently
- ❖ Coordinated eye-hand movement
- ❖ Grasps drawing and writing tools appropriately
- ❖ Demonstrates control of writing, drawing and art tools
- ❖ Demonstrates balance and control in movements
- ❖ Demonstrates increasingly complex movement patterns

Conclusion

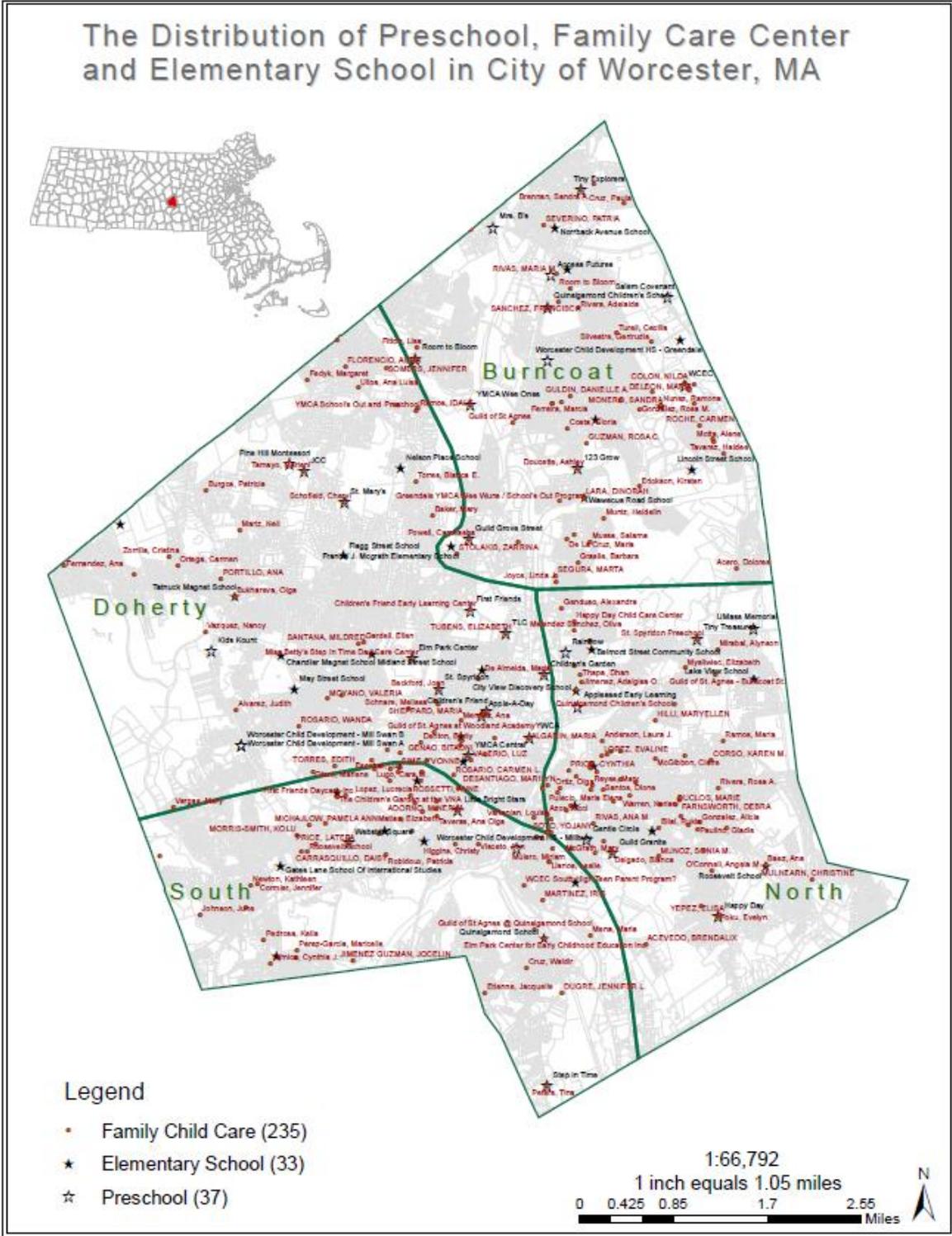
Children benefit from a strong foundation in skills and dispositions that are developmentally appropriate and are essential for academic growth and success. This Characteristics document is meant to be the foundational bridge between preschool and kindergarten, sparking dialog around curriculum, practice and instruction, and serving as a springboard for shared professional development across all educational settings serving our young children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

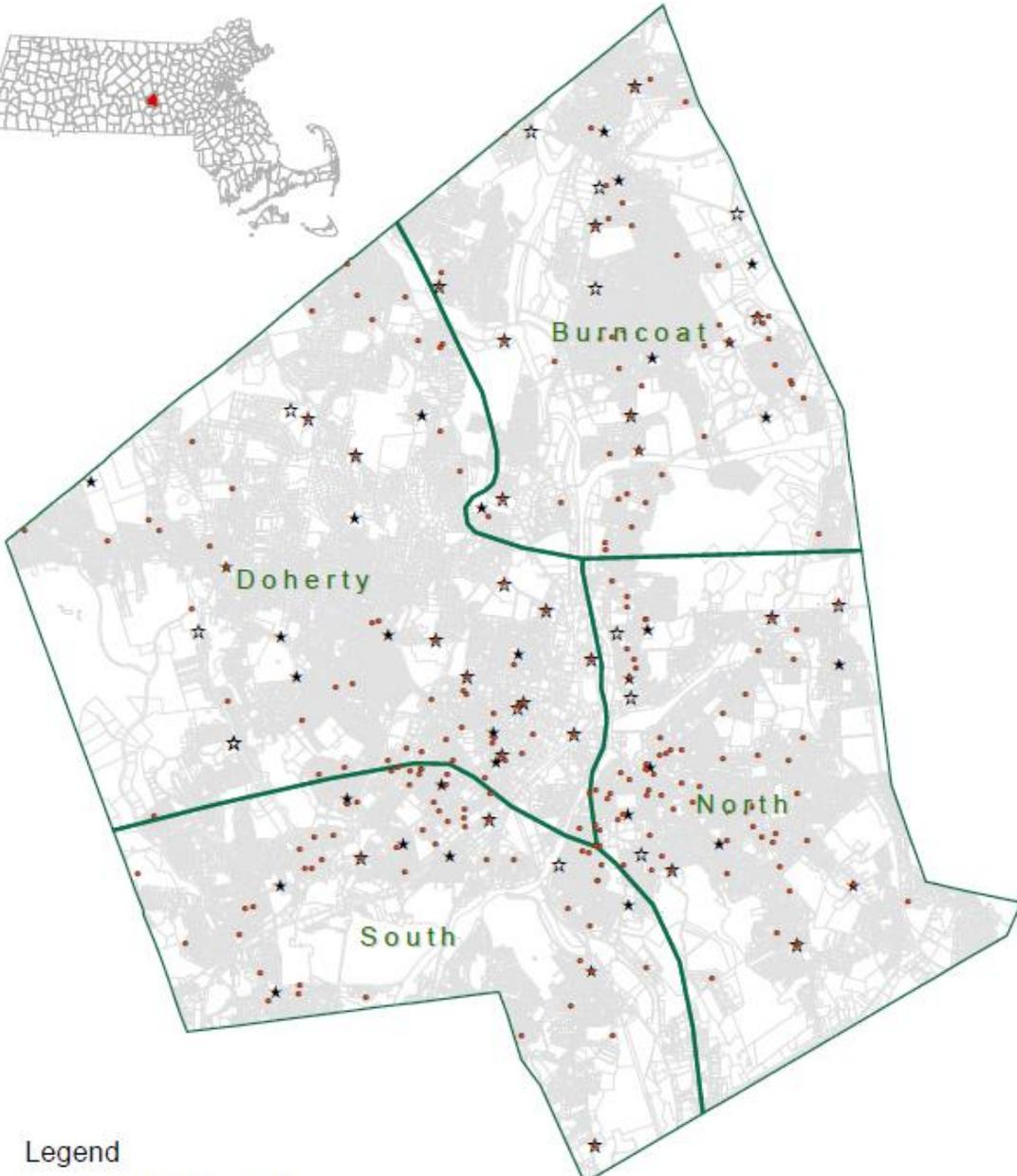
Special thanks is extended to the Characteristics of Readiness Subcommittee which was comprised of educators and leaders from Worcester Child Development Head Start, Worcester Public Schools, Community-based Providers, and Quinsigamond Community College: Jill Arrell, Kim Davenport, Laurie Kuczka, Charlene Mara, Diane Smith, Shirley Sherman, and Kristina Young. The Subcommittee worked in partnership with Worcester's Alignment Partnership Council on the development and review of this document. Additional comments and review were solicited from Worcester's Division of Public Health, and pediatric school health consultant, Dr. Beverly Nazarian.

ⁱ Building the Foundation for Future Success for Children from Birth to Grade 3. (2015) Massachusetts National Governing Association State Team. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Boston: MA.

C. Distribution Map of Preschool Programs - Provider Overlay Maps for City of Worcester (2 versions)

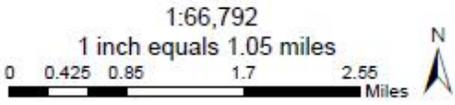


The Distribution of Preschool, Family Care Center and Elementary School in City of Worcester, MA



Legend

- Family Child Care (235)
- ★ Elementary School (33)
- ☆ Preschool (37)



D. Letters of Endorsement

June 27, 2016

Department of Early Education & Care
51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Central Massachusetts
www.ywcacentralmass.org

Dear Commissioner Weber:

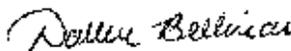
As Director of Children's Services for the YWCA Central Massachusetts, located in Worcester (MA), I wanted to share my support of Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan. For more than 130 years, the YWCA has served as a life-long positive force for women and girls, their families and communities. Our work necessitates creative strategic collaboration with partners committed to high quality, socially just services that eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all people. High quality preschool programming for all children is in service of that mission.

Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan formally elevates the City's collaboration in expanding high quality early education for our preschool children. It requires an equal combination of high quality, well compensated staff, high quality learning environments and high expectations, alongside of significant sustained investment from federal, state and local entities. This plan represents our collective planning efforts to deliver on all three pieces.

The YWCA has a long history of providing early childhood education programs that promote child development and school readiness, are vital for helping parents obtain and retain employments, and prepare future generations for lifelong learning and success. Our early education and care programs support families through quality care, developmental learning and family support services. Our programs empower parents and children by providing an environment that encourages social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth. The program nurtures and encourages individual progress, allowing children to experience success at their own level.

We remain committed to extending our high quality services in partnership with other community providers, health and mental health services, and the Worcester Public Schools. We look forward to continuing to plan and, with the availability of new funding, implement an expanded high quality preschool program for Worcester's children.

With kind regards,



Darlene Belliveau
Director, Children's Services

for every woman

WORCESTER

PUBLIC LIBRARY

June 25, 2016

Department of Early Education & Care
51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Roston, MA 02210

Dear Commissioner Weber:

As the Youth Services Coordinator for the Worcester Public Library, I wanted to share my support of *Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan*. Through my participation on Worcester's Alignment Partnership Council, the WPL is ready to extend support across the community.

The Worcester Public Library is committed to providing high quality resources and services to young children across the City. Through innovative in library programs across two community branches and four One City One Library locations located within elementary schools, agency and center visits, special events, Summer Reading Programs, and our Mobile Libraries (Libby and Lilly), we extend an array of services that reach beyond the walls of the library itself. Our librarians collaborate with educators from all settings to support their curriculum needs. As a founding member of Worcester Reads, we participate in innovative programming and messaging to promote parents singing, talking, playing and reading with their young children.

Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan formally elevates the City's collaboration in expanding high quality early education for our preschool children. It requires an equal combination of high quality, well compensated staff, high quality learning environments and high expectations, alongside of significant sustained investment from federal, state and local entities. This plan represents our collective planning efforts to deliver on all three pieces.

We are committed to extending our high quality services in partnership with Worcester's early learning providers, Worcester Family Partnership, Head Start, and the Worcester Public Schools. We look forward to continuing to plan creatively to meet the community's needs in support of high quality programs for Worcester's young children.

With kind regards,


Sondra Murphy
Youth Services Coordinator



Supported by a Grant from the MA
Dept. of Early Education and Care

BRAIN BUILDING IN PROGRESS



WORCESTER FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Families and Communities Growing Together

130 Leeds Street – Worcester, MA 01606

Tel: 508-799-3136 - Fax: 508-799-3129

www.wfcp.worcesterschools.org

*Family Partnership develops supports for all
those who care for our children*

June 25, 2016

Department of Early Education & Care
51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Commissioner Weber:

As the CFCE Coordinator at Worcester Family Partnership I wanted to share my support of **Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan**. Through my participation on Worcester's Alignment Partnership Council and the Preschool Expansion Planning Team WFP is prepared to extend support across the community.

Worcester Family Partnership participated in the development of Worcester's Birth to 3rd Grade Framework which outlines four core interrelated areas of focus: early learning, family engagement and support, health, and behavioral health. The plan broadly outlines how we as a community can align efforts to create a seamless and vibrant early learning system. It also underscores our current collaborative work in the community and its role in supporting the City's youngest children and their families. Over the past two years through the APC, we have strengthened the transition to Kindergarten, developed tools for families to understand the characteristics of Kindergarten readiness, initiated data projects with WPS, and started Worcester Reads.

Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan formally elevates the City's collaboration in expanding high quality early education for our preschool children. It requires an equal combination of high quality, well compensated staff, high quality learning environments and high expectations, alongside of sustained investment from federal, state and local entities. This plan represents our collective planning efforts to deliver on all three pieces. Worcester Family Partnerships enthusiastically supports the plan and looks forward to extending our services and partnerships across an increasingly diverse community of families.

We are committed to extending our high quality services in partnership with Worcester's early learning providers, community-based service agencies, Head Start, and the Worcester Public Schools. We look forward to continuing to plan creatively to meet the community's needs in support of high quality programs for Worcester's young children.

With kind regards,

Beth Vietze
Worcester Family Partnership Coordinator



Making a difference academically, socially and emotionally

June 25, 2016

Department of Early Education & Care
51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Commissioner Weber:

As Executive Director of the Rainbow Child Development in Worcester, MA I wanted to share my support of *Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan*. With more than 45 years' experience providing quality early education and care services to the children in Central MA, Rainbow continues to strive to increase the quality of our programming so that all children can develop to their fullest potential.

Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan formally elevates the City's collaboration in expanding high quality early education for our preschool children. It requires an equal combination of high quality, well compensated staff, high quality learning environments and high expectations, alongside of significant sustained investment from federal, state and local entities. This plan represents our collective planning efforts to deliver on all three pieces.

Rainbow Child Development consistently seeks opportunities to develop innovative programming in the delivery of high quality services and support for children and families. Our recent work to expand corporate and community partnerships has led to creation of health, nutrition and arts programming that expands program content and quality. We are committed to extending high quality services in partnership with other community providers, health and mental health services, and the Worcester Public Schools. We look forward to continuing to plan and, with the availability of new funding, expanded high quality preschool programming for Worcester's children.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joyce L. Rowell".

Joyce L. Rowell

Executive Director



19 EDWARD STREET • WORCESTER, MA 01605
TEL: 508-791-6849 • FAX: 508-791-8194 • WWW.RAINBOWCDL.COM

DLLC Licensee





QUINSIGAMOND
Community College

June 25, 2016

Department of Early Education & Care
51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Commissioner Weber:

As the Coordinator of Early Learning Programs for Quinsigamond Community College I wanted to share my support of **Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan**.

QCC has a long history of providing high quality teacher preparation and innovative workforce professional development. Our lab school, established in 1972, is NAEYC accredited and recently earned the state's highest quality ranking, Level 4, serves as a world-class education facility. Our faculty and staff are committed to developing and growing educators and their learning environments to support each child's development. QCC's community commitment extends beyond its doors through our field placements in early education programs, including those of Head Start, CBOs and the Worcester Public Schools. Most recently, we have been proud collaborators in the development of **Worcester's Birth through 3rd Grade Strategic Framework** and new strategic plan to expand preschool.

Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan formally elevates the City's collaboration in expanding high quality early education for our preschool children. It requires an equal combination of high quality, well staff, high quality learning environments and high expectations, alongside of significant sustained investment from federal, state and local entities. This plan represents our collective planning efforts to deliver on all three pieces.

QCC is ready to support the professional development and leadership pipeline to develop high quality educators for our classrooms as well as tomorrow's program leaders. Leveraging our competencies and resources in workforce professional development and teacher preparation, our new Workforce Birth to 8 Associates degree, and our innovative ECE Leadership Certificate in partnership with Worcester State University, we are eager to support **Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan**.

We remain committed to extending our high quality services in partnership with Worcester's early learning providers, health and mental health services, and the Worcester Public Schools. We look forward to continuing to plan, and, with the availability of new funding, implement an expanded high quality preschool program for Worcester's children.

With kind regards,

Charlene Mara
Coordinator of Early Learning Programs



WORCESTER CHILD DEVELOPMENT - HEAD START PROGRAM

770 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01610
(508) 799-3237
FAX (508) 799-3633

June 25, 2016

Department of Early Education & Care
51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Commissioner Weber:

As Head Start and Early Childhood Director for the Worcester Public Schools, I wanted to share my support of ***Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan***.

Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan formally elevates the City's collaboration in expanding high quality early education for our preschool children. It requires an equal combination of high quality, well compensated staff, high quality learning environments and high expectations, alongside of significant sustained investment from federal, state and local entities. This plan represents our collective planning efforts to deliver on all three pieces.

We remain committed to extending our high quality services in partnership with Worcester's early learning providers, health and mental health services, and other community services. We look forward to continuing to plan and, with the availability of new funding, implement an expanded high quality preschool program for Worcester's children.

With kind regards,

Laurie Kuczka
Early Childhood Head Start Director
Worcester Child Development Head Start
Worcester Public Schools



Early Education and Child Care
Since 1913

Administrative Offices
405 Grove Street • Worcester, MA 01605
(508)755-2238 • Fax (508)754-2026
www.gulldofstagnes.org

June 25, 2016

Department of Early Education & Care
51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

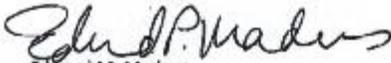
Dear Commissioner Weber:

As Executive Director of the Guild of St. Agnes in Worcester, MA I wanted to share my support of **Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan**. With more than 100 years' experience providing quality early education and care services to the children in Central MA, the Guild continues to strive to increase the quality of our programming so that all children can develop to their fullest potential.

Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan formally elevates the City's collaboration in expanding high quality early education for our preschool children. It requires an equal combination of a high quality, well compensated workforce, high quality learning environments and high expectations, alongside of significant sustained investment from federal, state and local entities. This plan represents our collective planning efforts to deliver on all three pieces.

The Guild of St. Agnes remains committed to extending high quality services in partnership with other community providers, health and mental health services, and the Worcester Public Schools. We look forward to continuing to plan and, with the availability of new funding, implement an expanded high quality preschool program for Worcester's children.

With kind regards,


Edward M. Madaus
Executive Director

The Guild of St. Agnes is a tax exempt corporation (tax ID # 04-2104267)
Supported in part by the United Way
All centers are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children



Center for Childcare Careers

Family Services of Central Massachusetts

June 25, 2016

Department of Early Education & Care
51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Commissioner Weber:

As the Program Director at the Center for Childcare Careers, Region 2 EPS, through Family Services of Central MA, I want to offer support for the *Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan*.

The Center for Childcare Careers has a long history of supporting high quality innovative professional development and quality improvement initiatives across the mixed delivery system in Central MA, and most especially Worcester. Our work intersects with early childhood programs, educators, and higher education institutions. This collaboration enables us to creatively align resources to support workforce development and continuous quality improvement efforts in settings serving young children. Most recently, we have been proud collaborators in the development of *Worcester's Birth through 3rd Grade Strategic Framework* and new strategic plan to expand preschool.

Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan formally elevates the City's collaboration in expanding high quality early education for our preschool children. It requires an equal combination of a high quality workforce, high quality learning environments and high expectations, alongside of significant sustained investment from federal, state and local entities. This plan represents our collective planning efforts to deliver on all three pieces.

The Center for Childcare Careers is pleased to help develop and support the professional development plan for educators and leaders participating in *Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan*. The plan includes significant connections to the state's current and future initiatives through work with us as the EPS. We are excited to see the creation of a career pipeline and expansion of professional development and education initiatives developed in partnership with Worcester's early learning community and IHEs. The plan weaves together current high quality supports, services and programming.

We remain committed to extending our high quality services in partnership with Worcester's early learning providers and the Worcester Public Schools. We look forward to continuing to plan, leverage EPS' professional development assets, and, with the availability of new funding, implement an expanded high quality preschool program for Worcester's children.

Sincerely,



Joanne Gravell
Program Director

Center for Childcare Careers, a program of Family Services of Central Massachusetts
31 Harvard Street, Worcester, MA 01609 www.cccfscm.org
Tel: (908) 757-1503, 1-800-278-1503 Email: mail@cccfscm.org

Edward Street Child Services

50 Portland Street • Worcester, MA 01608 • 508.792.0220

June 25, 2016

Department of Early Education & Care
51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Commissioner Weber:

As the interim Executive Director of Edward Street Child Services, I wanted to share my support of *Worcester's Preschool Expansion Strategic Plan*.

Established in 1883, Edward Street Child Services was the first agency in Worcester, and one of the first in the nation, to understand the need for high quality care for young children. Our work began in direct services, focusing on the care of young children during maternal birth stays in hospitals. We continue to be on the forefront of identifying needs and galvanizing the community to support young children and their families. Today, our work focuses on advocating and supporting all early learning programs in the City, particularly those serving low-income, high-risk populations.

We lead community collaboration across providers, social service agencies, and community-based cultural broker organizations. Our innovative community programs including Worcester' Day of Play, Book Buddies, Early Childhood Central website, and Master Teacher Project provide high quality supports directly to families and early educators so that they may have the tools necessary to support children's healthy development. We actively collaborate with the Worcester Public Schools, Worcester Family Partnership, Family Services of Central MA (EPS Region 2), *Together for Kids* early childhood mental health services, Worcester's center-based early childhood programs, and an expanding array of support agencies. We are consistently reminded of Worcester's collaborative spirit and our ability to come together to solve problems.

Worcester's Preschool Expansion Plan formally elevates the City's collaboration in expanding high quality early education for our preschool children. It requires an equal combination of high quality staff, high quality learning environments and high expectations, alongside of significant sustained investment from federal, state and local entities. This plan represents our collective planning efforts to deliver on all three pieces.

We remain committed to extending our collaborative partnerships in early learning. We look forward to continuing to plan creatively to meet the community's needs in support of high quality programs for Worcester's young children, and, with the infusion of new federal, state and local funding, will support the implementation of expanded high quality preschool.

With kind regards,



Eve Gilmore
Interim Executive Director