



ALL-AMERICA CITY FINALIST WORCESTER, MASS.

Community Snapshot

Worcester, in the center of Massachusetts, is known as the “Heart of the Commonwealth.” With immigrants from Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, as well as Southeast Asian refugees and new Americans with roots in Africa, Worcester is a diverse community. Coupled with the tradition of innovation dating back to the Industrial Revolution, Worcester is a leader in 21st century bio-medicine, biotechnology and the life and health sciences. Hard work and close-knit neighborhoods that foster greater opportunity for the next generation help shape Worcester’s character.

Community Solutions Action Plan

Private and public partners, local academic institutions and a broad network of community organizations and residents have committed to a comprehensive strategy to boost grade-level reading:

- **School Readiness:** Worcester, in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and partners on the federally funded Early Learning Challenge Grant, will develop a shared universal assessment to measure school readiness to track progress. By expanding existing programs, such as the Parent Child Home Program and Countdown to Kindergarten, Worcester intends to ensure school readiness for every student
- **Student Attendance:** The Worcester Public Schools system will work closely with parents and students to solve individual barriers to regulate school attendance. Through programs funded in part by a Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant, attendance will be diligently monitored and appropriate action will be taken to address repeated absences
- **Summer Learning:** The Worcester Public Schools system, in collaboration with community programs, will encourage summer reading for all students by publishing appropriate reading lists and providing a free four-week summer learning program. As part of the MA Summer Literacy and Learning Initiative, Worcester strives to mitigate learning loss through targeted reading activities

Partnerships

Worcester’s grade-level reading plan was developed by the Worcester City Council and School Committee and the Worcester Education Collaborative, a nonprofit that brings together of leaders from the higher education, business, parent and philanthropic communities. The plan was also supported by the Education Roundtable, which is made up of parents; community organizations; elected and appointed city, school, and public library officials; and leaders in the business, faith and nonprofit communities.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 181,045 residents
- 24,411 students
- 72 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals
- 39 percent of students read at grade level (state tests)
- 72 percent graduation rate
- 32 percent of students are English language learners
- 94.2 percent student attendance
- Summer learning programs are available

GOALS

- Eliminate the third grade reading proficiency gap by 2020
- Increase average daily attendance to 95 percent for each school
- Increase school preparedness to 90 percent
- Increase involvement in summer reading programs to 90 percent by 2020

“[We are] working to ensure every young person growing up in Worcester has a clear path to a successful career. Worcester is ready to tackle the issue.”