



Worcester Community Action Council

Community Conversation Series

Series 1. Early Education and Care: An Economic Imperative for Success

MODERATOR/SPEAKER BIOS



Eve Gilmore is the Executive Director of Edward Street, having worked throughout the past decade to advance awareness, professionalism and the importance of high-quality early education and care for young children and their families. A non-profit professional for 30 years, she has also held positions at the United Way of Central Massachusetts and the YWCA of Central Massachusetts and remained active with multiple boards and committees in the fields of early education and care and social services. A Worcester resident, she graduated from the College of the Holy Cross, has a MSW degree from Boston College School of Social Work, and has raised three children. She is a recent recipient of the YWCA's Katharine F. Erskine Award.



Amy O'Leary, Executive Director, Strategies for Children

Amy O'Leary is Executive Director of Strategies for Children, an advocacy and policy organization that works to ensure that Massachusetts invests the resources needed for all children, from birth to age five, to access high-quality early education and care programs. Amy manages the overall advocacy and policy strategy, legislative and field engagement, strategic partnerships, and fundraising. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, she has led SFC's support efforts including hosting the daily "9:30 call" for the early education and care field.

Amy joined SFC in 2002 as the early childhood field director and has served in many roles including the Early Education for All Campaign Director. Prior to that, Amy worked as a preschool teacher and program director at Ellis Memorial in the South End of Boston. She serves on the adjunct faculty at Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development and Cambridge College. Amy was elected twice to serve on the Governing Board of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She served from 2011 – 2014 and 2017 -2021 serving as President from June 2018-2020. In July 2020, Amy was appointed an Alumna Trustee for a four-year team to serve on both the Skidmore College Board of Trustees and Alumni Board. Amy is a member of the Massachusetts Kids Count Advisory Council and the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Advisory Committee. Amy also serves on the Board of Directors of the Children's Investment Fund in Boston. Amy earned a Master in Public Administration degree from the Sawyer Business School at Suffolk University. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and early education from Skidmore College.



Tom Weber

Eastern Bank Foundation Fellow and Executive Director,
Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood Education

Tom Weber, a Lynn, Massachusetts native, joined the Eastern Bank Foundation as a Foundation Fellow in 2019 and transitioned into his current role as Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Coalition for Early Childhood Education in 2021. He is determined to make early childhood education more accessible, affordable and stable for working families, more rewarding for early childhood professionals, and a point of differentiation in attracting and retaining a strong workforce across the Commonwealth.

Prior to his current role, Tom was the longest-serving Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. During his tenure, the Department expanded services for eligible families in need, which included advancing higher program quality and increased workforce supports, the successful application for \$60 million in federal funding to support free, high-quality preschool in five communities, and the implementation of the Commonwealth's \$50 million Federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, which supported numerous program quality improvement initiatives.



Llanet Montoya, Family Child Care Services Provider, Worcester, MA

Llanet L. Montoya was born in Colombia, South America and moved to the United States in 2001 shortly after she married. Llanet came from a long line of educators in Colombia, there is at least fourteen educators between her parents, siblings and aunts.

In 2003 Because of an unfortunate medical diagnosis she opened a family child care program in order to spend more time with her daughter and to be able to have an income to support her family as well. Llanet's English language was very limited however she started to pursue her professional development to learn on how to provide a quality environment to the children and families she was working with. In 2011 got her CDA, it was her first achievement, then in 2014 She got the NAFCC, in 2015 she got her Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education. In 2017 she got her Bachelor's degree on Arts in Psychology. In 2017 Llanet became a volunteer at the Worcester County Chapter maaeyc and at the same year she became a coach with the Educator Provider Support Grant at Region 2 in Massachusetts. In 2019 Llanet graduated in the Leadership Certificate Program which opened her world in an adventure on the advocacy, coaching and mentoring experience where she has been able to support early childhood educators in different areas. In the same year her program was awarded level 4 on the QRIS. In 2021 Llanet became a coach and facilitator for Strong Start region 2. Her experience, her willingness and unconditional support has really motivates others to keep growing and not to be afraid to take risks



David Connell, President & CEO of YMCA of Central Massachusetts

David Connell assumed the position of President and CEO of the YMCA of Central Massachusetts in the spring of 2019. In his current role, he leads the non-profit organization covering a footprint of almost 70 cities and towns in Worcester County. He is responsible of leading more than 500 full and part time staff in the day-to-day operations of six branches, three camps, childcare and family centers with a budget of over \$22M. David has been active in leading critical initiatives including management agreement, mergers, expansion and Diversity, Inclusion and Global/Equity practices in Central MA. The Y is one of the most well-known and trusted brands in the nation and under David's leadership partnerships have been formed with local non-profits and private organizations to deliver critical programs. David has been a leader within multiple communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. He served on various committees, focus groups and guest speaker as the YMCA demonstrated intentional leadership in Emergency Childcare, Remote Learning and Feeding Programs. He is active on local and national boards and served on one of the State's Reopening Taskforce and the Worcester Public School's Reopening Committee and YUSA Diversity Equity and Inclusion Leadership Council. He serves as an officer of the Board of Directors on the Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs. He previously held the executive leadership position of Vice President and Chief Human Resources and served as interim Executive Director/CEO of the Montachusett Regional YMCA in Fitchburg, MA.