MAKING HEADLINES: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

2018 ANNUAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WECA LEADING THE CHARGE FOR BOLD CHANGE

If you’ve been reading the news lately, you are aware that early care and education is making headlines; here are just a few: “Republicans and Democrats are taking early education more seriously,” “Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crises,” “At the Breaking Point - How to Better Compensate and Support Teachers of our Youngest Learners,” “Taking on the Child Care Crisis in Monroe and Vernon Counties” and so many more. Wisconsin is taking notice of a crisis that threatens the well-being of children, families, early childhood educators, business community and our communities all across the state.

Here at WECA, we are considering the problems and solutions from a variety of angles. We have experienced 2018 as a year of strengthening relationships, building new partnerships, and discovering advocates in many more places. We realize that fixing our child care system requires innovative thinking and a diverse array of stakeholders. More than ever before, we are collaborating with a variety of sectors including healthcare, business and economic development groups, local governments, social justice organizations, schools, libraries and more to create multi-pronged solutions to the problems we face.

Solution-oriented approaches that help to stabilize the current early care and education workforce are at the heart of this work, and exemplified through WECA’s core programs including, our scholarship and stipend programs (T.E.A.C.H. and REWARD), and our Food Program for family child care providers. In 2018 we’ve added a new core program, Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESN). This network allows early childhood programs to capitalize on economies of scale and tap into a variety of sources of expertise as a larger group to increase revenues and cut staff hours spent on administrative tasks. Also at our core is growing the power of this profession through membership in our association.

Opportunities presented through a number of collaborative grants that WECA has been a part of are also addressing some of the unique challenges facing children, families, and child care providers in both urban and rural parts of Wisconsin. WECA received a grant from Milwaukee Succeeds to provide coaching and mentoring to child care programs within some of the most under-resourced zip codes in Milwaukee, resulting in a 100% staff retention rate and increased quality rating for some during their tenure in the program. WECA received a Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program grant to start a shared services network to stabilize and increase access to child care in Vernon and Monroe counties. In Dane County WECA, along with a host of partners, has advanced to the final round of a substantial grant from Schmidt Future’s Alliance for the American Dream. Our “Dream Up” proposal is focused on out-of-school time children, working families, and the early childhood workforce.

Finally, we cannot minimize the opportunities that arise from the talented staff who work daily to elevate the early care field through professional development training and counseling of the workforce. Also, they work with Wisconsin’s colleges and universities to enhance the quality of professional preparation. WECA staff are also involved in countless committees and events focused on creating positive change for children, families and the workforce. Through these interactions, we keep our pulse on how policies and programs are impacting communities around the state.

This annual “year in review” propels us to reflect on what is truly newsworthy and to imagine the headlines to come. It begins with the headline with which we would end 2018:

“WECA is leading the charge for bold change in early care and education!”

Executive Director, WECA

Citations for Headlines:
Taking on the Child Care Crisis in Monroe and Vernon Counties - LaCrosse Tribune 4/24/2018
At the Breaking Point - How to Better Compensate and Support Teachers of our Youngest Learners, - New America livestream panel presentation 11/8/2018
Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crises - Ready Nation Report, 1/16/2019
Republicans and Democrats are taking early education more seriously, - The Economist 1/24/2019
In the first five years, brains are growing more rapidly than during any other time of life and the actions we take today support healthy brain growth... or not. The evidence is in: for the hundreds of thousands of young children in Wisconsin whose parents are in the workforce high quality early education can help lay the foundation that children need. This relies, however, on a well-educated and stable workforce able to provide a stimulating and supportive learning environment. The skill of early childhood educators is paramount and T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Wisconsin scholarships are making a difference. T.E.A.C.H. means more early childhood educators are going to school (1,168 scholars in 2018) to improve their education (2,865 courses taken in Wisconsin schools of higher education), and strengthening the care children receive in more than 400 child care programs statewide. Overall, these teachers earn more and stay longer in their jobs because of their commitment to school while they work. Jeanette Paulson, director of workforce initiatives at WECA states, “In an industry characterized by low wages and high turnover, these ‘Brain Builders’ need all this support and more.”

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Wisconsin is sponsoring innovative programs in support of non-traditional students, first generation college attendees, Spanish speaking early childhood educators, and tribal early childhood educators through Early Learning Grants to five Wisconsin technical colleges. Additionally, T.E.A.C.H. supports a unique collaboration between UW-Whitewater and Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal College in an innovative program known as “A Pathway to a Degree Program - ECE4U.” The grants initiated in 2018 are an effort to increase access to education in support of new students and a diverse student body. In addition, WECA is sponsoring five higher education institutions in pursuit of NAEYC accreditation, with a goal to increase high-quality pre-service and ongoing professional development for early childhood educators in Wisconsin.
MILWAUKEE SUCCEEDS WHEN OUR YOUNG CHILDREN SUCCEED

WECA staff bring expert knowledge to the field through professional learning opportunities for the child care workforce. For example, the Early Childhood Coaching and Mentoring Program (ECCMP) in Milwaukee, worked with ten 3-star programs that were struggling to retain quality early childhood educators. The programs were provided with over 450 hours of classroom training and program coaching on classroom environment, teaching practices and licensing standards. All programs completed the program and we saw a 90% retention rate for staff during the life of the program, significantly higher than the control programs. Additionally, two programs increased their YoungStar rating from 3 to 4 stars. This project also helped forge relationships with local organizations such as the Milwaukee Public Library, the Betty Brinn Children’s Museum, UW-Milwaukee, Books 2 Go and the child care programs with whom we worked. What was truly newsworthy about this program was the participant responses:

“The rest of my staff want to know when it will be their turn to have Jeanne or a coach come into their classroom to offer support and guidance. At first this seemed like it was going to be a burden, now I wish I could offer it to all my staff.”

“Our YoungStar technical consultant came to our program in the last month of the ECCMP and exclaimed about how much we had improved since the last time she had visited. She asked us what happened, and we were able to tell her that we had participated in the ECCMP and it made a huge difference in our ability to improve our quality.”

ECCMP was just funded for another round of coaching and mentoring and to include 10 new family child care programs.

THE WISCONSIN EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE GETS “WISER”

This year Wisconsin joined 31 states in providing an online resource platform known as the Wisconsin Shared Education Resources or WISER. The resources provided will benefit early childhood program directors, family child care providers, early childhood educators, trainers and consultants, and higher education faculty. The WISER online platform (www.WISERECE.org), includes over 1,600 administrative and classroom supports including sample policies and procedures, customizable handbooks, curriculum and classroom tools, health and safety procedure guidance, state regulation information, professional development opportunities and exclusive cost savings programs. The WISER platform also features an exclusive online job board (Wisconsin ECE Jobs) which manages each step of the hiring process from job posting to making the hiring offer. With funding support from the Department of Children and Families (DCF), WISER is free to our T.E.A.C.H. scholars, sponsors and higher education partners. Others may join for a nominal membership fee to gain access to all resources, including the job board.
As demand for high-quality early education grows, so must the wages of the workforce. Those who make significant gains in their education and stay in their jobs may be eligible for an annual stipend. REWARD Wisconsin provided 1,257 stipends to early childhood educators in 743 child care programs in 2018; stipends averaged $486 annually. The year began with some additional funds from the Dept. of Children and Families to temporarily extend agreement periods and increase stipend amounts. REWARD, however, is so popular that it is once again operating with a waiting list. While we have a long way to go close the gap between what the early childhood education workforce deserves and what it is paid, REWARD is poised to be a leader on compensation issues in the early childhood field in our state and in the nation. 2018 marked the end of our official engagement in a multi-state national effort called “Moving the Needle on Compensation” but the work continues. We will continue to increase awareness, network with other states, and seek solutions to low wages and high turnover in our field.

1. To read more, check out https://teachecnationalcenter.org/center-initiatives-and-resources/center-initiatives/compensation-project/

WECA REVIEWS

“Thank you WECA, my check is much appreciated. I’m so glad Wisconsin has the REWARD stipend program.” -Anne Alexander, Owner, Wee Family Child Care, DeForest, WI

“Wisconsin Early Childhood Association is wonderful. I appreciate how dedicated they are to teaching and learning. I highly recommend them.” -Autumn Roeling, early childhood education student, Elkhorn, WI

“I enjoyed Kelly’s workshop on WEESSN so much! Extremely informative on an amazing pilot program from WECA. Kelly’s passion and drive for better childcare in Wisconsin was infectious and I can’t wait to see the shared networking system grow. Thank you Kelly and your team for the work that you do!” -Maxine Bieritz, Assistant Director at Small World Inc, New Glarus, WI
FOOD PROGRAM NEWS

CELEBRATING
50 YEARS OF SUPPORTING CHILDREN’S NUTRITION

The WECA Food Program celebrates its 50th anniversary of supporting family child care programs in providing healthy meals. In 2018 alone, we helped family child care providers serve **2,299,362 meals** to **5,840 young children** in **758 family child care programs** all around our state! The WECA Food Program, the only one of its kind to serve the entire state, is instrumental in providing partial funding to programs that serve meals in every Wisconsin county. We have the unique opportunity to connect with many diverse programs, and learn from the providers themselves about some truly delicious, nutritious and amazingly creative meal options that feed thousands of Wisconsin young children.

Family child care providers in Wisconsin are rising to the challenge of serving healthier meals to children. Recently, the **U.S. Dept. of Agriculture updated the Child Care Food Program meal patterns** to require: more frequent servings of fruits and vegetables, an increase in the use of whole grains, lower sugar levels in yogurts and cereals, a wider variety of foods for children to try, and more support for breastfeeding. We also see more local, healthy foods infused into menus with the **Farm to Early Care and Education Initiative**. This initiative connects children to food origins through gardening and food-based activities. Together these programs are alleviating hunger and setting healthy eating patterns for our youngest Wisconsinites.

This past year has been one of learning and integrating the new meal patterns, beginning with training our own Food Program staff and then taking what we learned out to providers. We offered the guidance they needed to make the changes while still receiving reimbursements for food during the learning process. Providers excelled at embracing the healthier guidelines and were creative in finding ways to implement them. We’re proud of our family child care providers and the wonderful work they do each day serving healthy meals and snacks to the young children of Wisconsin!
In 2018 we’ve added a new core program: the Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESSN). WECA is at the forefront of bringing this innovative concept to Wisconsin child care programs. Working with local communities, child care providers, and national experts we’ve developed a network of partners who are not typically engaged in child care conversations to develop and implement meaningful, targeted support to child care programs.

WEESSN allows programs to capitalize on economies of scale and tap into a variety of sources of expertise as a larger group, resulting in an increase in revenues by cutting staff hours spent on administrative tasks. By streamlining regulation compliance, business practices, purchasing, and program logistics, WEESSN helps providers work smarter so they can focus on what matters most – the children and their families. Still in its infancy, this will be a program to watch as it takes on some of the seemingly intractable issues in the early education field and works to solve them in new, collaborative ways.

This project is funded in part by the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Forward for Kids describes both the direction we promote for Wisconsin public policy on children and families, and the name of our online advocacy network. 1,492 Forward for Kids Network subscribers receive a monthly digest connecting them to recent reports, blog posts and research to help them be effective advocates. Network members are called upon to act on behalf of children and families and engage in our activities as needed. Advocacy at WECA takes many forms.

Here’s just a sampling of our 2018 activities:
- visiting legislators in their offices and building relationships across both political parties
- engaging in the statewide Early Learning Coalition and the Pre-Natal to Three Coalition
- participating in Wisconsin Partners
- co-sponsoring a Week of the Young Child event called Wisconsin Strong! to build partnerships and advocates among business leaders
- Getting Out the Vote activity at our annual conference
- showing a new and powerful documentary No Small Matter as a free community event
- participating in a multi-state project called Moving the Needle on Child Care Compensation
- writing an article on child care for the League of Municipalities monthly magazine
- The year ended in a flurry of grant writing to support more advocacy efforts in 2019.
WECA MEMBERS
ARE THE POWER OF OUR PROFESSION

Joining WECA is an opportunity to act collectively with professional colleagues on one’s beliefs and values to affect the changes we envision. WECA has been engaging in a national dialogue called Power to the Profession, to have a say in our future. There is power in saying what we know; there is power in articulating the value of our work, and there is power in our numbers - WECA is currently 1137 members strong.

What hasn’t changed is reduced member rates for our trainings and annual conference, which continue to be a draw for both members and non-members. Connections, our annual fall conference, engaged 589 educators in a variety of inspiring professional development experiences. We welcome all to join us in 2019 - November 14-16 in Pewaukee, WI.

This past year has been one of change as we followed our national organization’s lead in a restructuring and rebranding process. Big changes can be hard on membership, especially for those active in what were formerly called local affiliates, now called chapters. The year ahead of us will be one of re-building and welcoming new members.

SPOTLIGHT
WECA CHAPTER LEADERS

The Chapter Leaders serve as support for WECA’s local chapters across the state such as, planning events and providing resources to WECA members.

Beyond Dane:
Heidi Heller, President
Jenee Jerome, Vice President
Amanda Ehlert, Treasurer
Mary Catherine Green, Secretary

Fox Valley:
Amy Nogar, President
Gina Heling, Vice President
Deana Pupp, Secretary
Autumn Gill, Treasurer

Greater Milwaukee Chapter:
Michelle Sorce, President
Catherine Roach, Treasurer
Jennifer Fremgen, Secretary

Great Rivers Chapter:
Kim Gorka, President
Jenny Ahlert, Secretary
Kim Amundson, Treasurer

Kenosha and Racine Early Educators (KARE) Chapter:
April Orth, Treasurer

Rock County:
Michelle Weirich, Treasurer
Sue Schimke, Board Member
SPOTLIGHT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WECA’s Board of Directors is comprised of 9-13 members with varied backgrounds, from professionals who work directly with children to those who carry the voice of our workforce, and from ECE leaders to leaders in other businesses who know the importance and value of early childhood education for Wisconsin’s children. The purpose and focus of the Board is to carry out the legal, fiduciary and operating responsibilities of WECA. We are proud to recognize them for their volunteer service.

**Robin Fox, PhD, President**
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Whitewater, WI

**Abby Abrisham, Vice President**
Careplus Child Care, Inc. & Fitchburg
Careplus Preschool
Fitchburg, WI

**Luke Chirhart, Secretary**
Amazon Web Services
Libertyville, IL

**Rick Perrin, Treasurer**
B2B CFO
Verona, WI

**Rafat Arain**
Crescent Learning Center
Milwaukee, WI

**Janean Dilworth-Bart, Ph.D**
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI

**Corrine Hendrickson**
Corrine’s Little Explorers
New Glarus, WI

**Dipesh Navsaria, MPH, MSLIS, MD**
University of Wisconsin
School of Medicine and Public Health
Madison, WI

**Laura Krystal Porterfield, Ph.D.**
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Whitewater, WI

**Sue Schimke**
Little Turtles’ Playhouse Cooperative
Beloit, WI

**Henry Wilde**
Acelero Learning
Cudahy, WI

**Patricia Wooldridge**
Mariposa Learning Center
Stoughton, WI
WECA had a successful year in fundraising. In March, it was WECA’s fourth year in the 2018 The Big Share, an annual online day of giving hosted by Community Shares of Wisconsin. Our campaign secured $7,620 from 42 donors. Corrine Hendrickson, family child care provider and WECA Board member shared her thoughts on the giving day. “I am proud to donate to WECA to continue their advocacy for young children and their early childhood educators.”

Also this year, our conference revenue hit a 5-year high with more than $11,500 in sponsorships.

### CONTRIBUTION BREAKDOWN

Where did $19,873 come from?

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### CALLING ALL ALLIES

As WECA continues to explore solution-oriented approaches that help to stabilize the current early care and education workforce, we’re also seeking allies and invite you to join us! Here are three ways you can support WECA in the near future.

1. **Donate:** Visit wisconsinearlychildhood.org/donate and give a gift in honor of a special early childhood teacher or program.
2. **Advocate:** Join WECA’s Forward For Kids advocacy network to receive updates and action alerts on key early childhood education issues. To join, visit https://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/get-involved/forward-for-kids/.
3. **Connect:** Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter. Share your thoughts and join the conversation.