

# Merrimack Valley YMCA Unveils Renovated Child Care Space at Lawrence Branch

Hundreds of Lawrence kids will be greeted each day by bright, modern preschool and after school classrooms at the Lawrence YMCA, unveiled in a ceremony this morning. Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Finance/CFO for the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) Bill Concanon joined YMCA officials for the celebration and ribbon cutting for the new facility, made possible in part thanks to an Early Education and Out of School Time (EEOST) Grant of \$800,000 from the EEC. Theresa Jordan, Director of Children's Facilities Finance for the Children's Investment Fund also spoke at the event. The Children's Investment Fund partnered with the EEC to administer the grant.

The new classrooms are just the first phase of a planned \$5.2 million renovation and expansion of the Lawrence YMCA, which is being funded by the HERE FOR GOOD Capital Campaign.

The classrooms will serve up to 230 children in a secure, NAYEC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) accredited preschool program as well as an afterschool program.

"What made your application compelling was the rehabilitation of the out-of-school space so that it was beautiful and warm and the preschool space that was full of light," Concanon told the group. "It was also clear to us that this community has a need for these excellent services."

Preschool rooms on the second floor are designed for learning and connected to a large common space, giving teachers the freedom to collaborate and offer special programs. The ground floor is home to the afterschool program, which is connected to the Lawrence Music Clubhouse and other multipurpose rooms, giving children the

opportunity to explore interests, make new friends, and build self-confidence.

"The YMCA has a proud history of serving families in Lawrence. With this renovation and expansion, we have an unprecedented opportunity to improve and expand our services and influence the health and well-being of current and future generations of the City of Lawrence," said Merrimack Valley YMCA President Gary Morelli.

The Merrimack Valley YMCA has provided children with access to quality before, during, and after school child care programming for nearly 30 years. The renovation creates modern, efficient spaces designed to support growth and learning today and into the future.

To date, the capital campaign has raised \$1.9 million to improve and enhance the Lawrence branch. The next phases include a new wellness center and active education center, welcome center, locker rooms, and an intergenerational space. For more information on the project or to make a donation, please visit <http://mvymca.org/lawrenceexpansion>

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 Undersecretary and Chief Operating Officer for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, Anne Reale; Director of Children's Facilities Finance for the Children's Investment Fund, Theresa Jordan, Merrimack Valley YMCA President and CEO, Gary Morelli, Lawrence YMCA Executive Director Dan Halloran, Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Finance/CFO for the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) Bill Concanon.



Top row: Children's Investment Fund Senior Project Manager Bree Horwitz, Executive Director of Child Care for the Merrimack Valley YMCA Cathy Flynn, Undersecretary and Chief Operating Officer for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, Anne Reale, Director of Children's Facilities Finance for the Children's Investment Fund, Theresa Jordan, Merrimack Valley YMCA President and CEO, Gary Morelli, Lawrence YMCA Executive Director Dan Halloran, Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Finance/CFO for the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) Bill Concanon



# Phoenix Charter Academy Network awarded \$150,000 by Barr Foundation to advance greater success for all New England students

This week, Phoenix was named one of nine grantees in the Barr Foundation Education Program's Engage New England: Doing high school differently initiative. We are proud to join this first cohort of education innovators participating in the multi-year initiative to connect all students to success in high school and beyond by assuring they have access to high-quality high schools. Phoenix received a planning grant of \$150,000 to take part in a comprehensive review and design process that is - at 11 years - a perfect next step in Phoenix's evolution as a dynamic, ever-responsive learning organization dedicated to doing whatever it takes for off-track young people to succeed. The Barr funded design process will focus on Phoenix's flagship school in Chelsea as its pilot site, with the work expanding to Phoenix's other two schools and beyond in future years.

The Barr Foundation's Engage New England: Doing high school differently initiative is a \$30 million investment over five years to help New England innovators improve existing high schools and bring new school models to life in their communities. Participants receive one-year planning grants to support technical assistance with planning and capacity building, with the potential to be invited

to apply for implementation grants of up to \$750,000 over two years. Participants also become partners in a learning community, to share and learn from like-minded innovators across the region. Together, they are doing high school differently by building a diverse set of school models that expand student success.

"Phoenix is extremely proud and humbled to have been chosen as part of the Barr Foundation's inaugural Engage New England cohort. We have enjoyed partnering with the Barr Foundation and Springpoint over the past few months, and look forward to continuing our model design work to better serve our students to have a greater impact in the Chelsea and Greater Boston communities," said Phoenix founder and CEO Beth Anderson. "We hope our work can be part of generating new - and higher - accountability standards for alternative education programs by providing a successful model of best pedagogical and cultural methods for off-track youth. We view this work and funding as both an opportunity and a call to action to increase life-sustaining results for our amazing, ever-changing students. Being faithful, accountable, and humble in the face of doing right by our students is a cornerstone of the work we have always

done at Phoenix."

Intentionally designed around the principles of positive youth development theory, schools supported under this initiative will be as rigorous as they are flexible in developing content knowledge, successful habits, creative know-how and navigation abilities—the integrated knowledge and skills that are essential for today's students to connect to success in high school, college, career and community.

"This partnership brings together a diverse group of educators who share the belief that all students can meet high expectations when their schools engage their interests, empower their potential and fully prepare them for success in life," said Leah Hamilton, the Barr Foundation's Director of Education. "We are thrilled to include Phoenix Charter Academy Network in our first cohort of Engage New England: Doing high school differently grantees, and to support them in a planning process to refine



their vision for cohesive school models that address the unique needs of their students and communities."