A whole community in North Central Mass caught doing great things!

Instilling empathy, leadership, teamwork, and collaboration for the next generation
YEAR 2 OF THE CHANGEMAKER INITIATIVE

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Changemaker Communities of North Central Massachusetts is a connected, regional ecosystem created through intentional partnerships with influential institutions in our region to build support for the next generation of Changemakers.

To thrive in a world increasingly defined by change, we need children, young people and adults to be Changemakers—to discover their power to co-create their world. Through Changemaker Communities, we hope to empower the next generation to take the initiative to create positive change for the greater good.

Partnering organization, Ashoka, identifies and supports the world’s leading social entrepreneurs, learns from the patterns in their innovations, and mobilizes a global community that embraces these new frameworks to build an “Everyone a Changemaker World.” Ashoka is the largest network of social entrepreneurs—more than 3,500 Ashoka Fellows in more than 90 countries—whose systems-changing ideas are solving society’s problems for the good of all.

Ashoka has identified the new framework needed for living and working together in this radically different world drawn from insights working with a global network of Ashoka Fellows, the world’s leading social entrepreneurs. The four elements of the framework are empathy, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving.

**EMPATHY**
In a world where rules can’t keep pace with the speed and complexity of change, empathy is crucial.

**LEADERSHIP**
Every player on the team needs to be an initiator. Each person must see the big picture and advance solutions that contribute to positive social outcomes.

**TEAMWORK**
We rely on everyone having the capacity to work in fluid, open “teams-of-teams” to see and seize the ever-changing opportunities in this new landscape.

**PROBLEM-SOLVING**
This is the ability to freely and effectively innovate for the good of all.
The Imperative for Changemaking

To thrive in a world increasingly defined by change, we need children, young people and adults to be Changemakers—to discover their power to co-create their world.

IT TAKES AN ECOSYSTEM TO RAISE A CHANGEMAKER

- TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS
- NON-PROFITS
- FAITH INSTITUTIONS
- COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES
- GOV'T
- PARENTS & FAMILY
- SCHOOL DISTRICTS
- COMPANIES
OUR CHANGEMAKING JOURNEY

Everyone’s journey looked a little different—whether that be a mindset, culture, or curriculum shift—but there are clear transformations happening.

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes an ecosystem to raise a changemaker. This ecosystem is created through the collaboration of our community’s institutions—such as schools, companies, and nonprofit organizations—working together to support youth social entrepreneurship.

In our process, we take passionate members of the community through the Changemaker Journey which is designed to unfold over a nine-month period. Key stakeholders are invited to gather for a series of experiences facilitated by Ashoka and MWCC staff and our newly trained Changemaking Trainers. These stakeholders include (but are not limited to) teachers, children, policymakers, and business professionals. We encourage these sessions to have a diverse background of stakeholders that represent the unique members of our community.

Following each full-day co-creation session, we check-in with Changemakers regularly to provide coaching and encouragement. The individuals participating in Changemaking are already Changemakers in a variety of ways. The goal of the co-creation sessions is to amplify their ability to help others in the community find their Changemaking potential and grow confidence in their identity as an empathetic leader.

In addition to supporting the teachers, guidance counselors, professors, and other professionals in the cohort this year, we convened a North Central Mass Change Leadership Team, which consists of senior and inspirational leaders of our partnering organizations—Fitchburg Public Schools, Leominster Public Schools, and Mount Wachusett Community College. Within each of these institutions, it is critical that our Changemaker participants see and experience support and positivity for their attempts to make a difference. The Change Leadership Team is charged with removing barriers to positive change, recognizing effective problem-solving, encouraging learning from failures, and cultivating a culture that nurtures Changemakers.
The Changemaking calendar includes intensive professional development co-creation sessions led by Changemaker Trainers, monthly checkpoints with individual school Change Teams with a group coaching approach, and targeted engagement for specific stakeholder groups to engage the regional ecosystem.

**September**
- 18 - ECOSYSTEM CHANGE TEAM MEETING AT MWCC GARDNER

**October**
- 4-5 - TRAIN THE TRAINER RETREAT AT COGGSHALL PARK
- 10-11 - CHANGEMAKING CO-CREATION SESSIONS BEGIN AT MWCC

**November**
- 30 - CO-CREATION SESSION - PROBLEM-SOLVING AT MWCC GARDNER

**December**
- 11 - CHANGE LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING AT LEOMINSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**January**
- 16 - ADMINISTRATORS REV SESSION AT MWCC LEOMINSTER
- 17 - TRAIN THE TRAINER PART 2 AT MWCC LEOMINSTER

**February**
- 8 - CO-CREATION SESSION - STORYTELLING AT MOC'S FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
- 11 - CHANGE LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING AT LEOMINSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- 14 - UWYV SPRING SHOWCASE
- 16 - ADMINISTRATORS REV SESSION AT MWCC LEOMINSTER
- 17 - TRAIN THE TRAINER PART 2 AT MWCC LEOMINSTER

**March**
- CHECK-IN MEETINGS WITH CHANGEMAKER TEAMS
- 14 - UWYV SPRING SHOWCASE

**April**
- 5 - CO-CREATION SESSION - NEXT YEAR PLANNING
- 6 - MEET AND GREET WITH VIPIN AT COGGSHALL PARK
- 25 - CHANGE LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING AT FITCHUBRG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**May**
- SCHOOL CHANGE TEAM YEAR-END MEETINGS

**June**
- 4 - PRESENT TO MA DEANS OF ED SCHOOLS AT WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY
- 11 - CHANGEMAKER CELEBRATION AT WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN

**July**
- 18 - ECOSYSTEM CHANGE TEAM MEETING AT MWCC GARDNER

The Changemaking calendar includes intensive professional development co-creation sessions led by Changemaker Trainers, monthly checkpoints with individual school Change Teams with a group coaching approach, and targeted engagement for specific stakeholder groups to engage the regional ecosystem.
For this year’s cohort of Changemaking leaders, Fitchburg Public Schools supported their Elementary Honors Academy (EHA) and Middle School Advanced Academic Learning Initiative (AALI) coaches as a cohesive team during Changemaker professional development sessions. The goal of these innovative teachers is to challenge students with STEM- and project-based work involving critical thinking and creative problem solving. The coaches built Changemaking into the work they are already doing with students, encouraging them to identify and solve real-life problems that incorporate empathy for the end user. The result is a spectrum of student efforts, solutions, and products, all designed with helping others in mind.

The following pages detail Changemaking progress at Fitchburg’s elementary schools as a result of the EHA coach leadership.

Wait, we actually have a say?!?
Hmm, I didn’t know I liked math.
Aw man, it’s time to leave already?
– Student reactions at McKay Arts Academy
Kim Pheymannicie is a Changemaker and EHA/AALI coach at McKay Arts Academy, which serves elementary and middle school students. She has been integrating Changemaking in her work at McKay using passion projects.

Third-grade students learned how to solve curriculum-embedded problems with minimal directions. Students built drawing machines to learn about motion and, pictured at left, designed an experiment to determine the strengths of different magnets to move toy cars. Students transferred this mindset to problems that impact them and their community. Once students were exposed to the Changemaking mindset, they looked towards the school for improvement projects they could embark on as a team.

Third graders researched and designed inspirational quotes they could put on the walls of McKay to positively impact their school culture and environment. Fourth graders made holiday pop-up cards for loved ones, using computer design software and engineering skills. They also made Valentine’s Day boxes filled with homemade candy and fudge to give to others.
Terry Montemurro is a Changemaker teacher at Crocker Elementary School, working with third and fourth grade EHA students weekly to problem-solve together. Terry models extraordinary non-controlling behavior in her facilitation of trouble-shooting discussions. She allows the students to come up with the biggest things they would like to change at their school campus, then she helps them plan out exactly how they will spark the change desired. This year, her students planned an inspirational whole-school morning meeting for their fellow students as well as organized a lending library in the cafeteria. These young Changemakers are also working to promote student involvement in keeping the cafeteria clean and increasing physical activity throughout the school day.

Terry does an amazing job of showing young students that they have a voice, their voice matters, and they all have the ability to make positive change. Along the way, these students are learning how to speak publicly, work in a team, and also become effective problem solvers, while also building empathy and growing into amazing leaders. It is no easy feat to teach seven, eight, and nine year-olds a sense of agency, but Terry recognizes that young students are smarter and more capable than the world may expect them to be. In the spirit of creating a stronger, smarter, kinder future, Terry leads Changemaking meetings with her students every week and in the process, has revolutionized what it means to come to school and learn for these students.

“Mrs. Montemurro has inspired me to do more things to try and change my community.”
– Caleb Kwapien, Crocker Student
Katie LoBuono is a Changemaker teacher at South Street Elementary School. Katie saw an opportunity to teach her students agency, and show them the power they all have to create positive change. They began by sending out two questionnaires to the school—“I Think Adults Should Know...” and another asking about issues students have noticed in the school building. In self-made teams, Katie’s fourth grade students began tackling issues by creating new rules for hallway and cafeteria behavior, and improving soccer game efficiency and kindness at recess. Students created videos, wrote plays, and presented their ideas to their principal.

Learners in Katie’s classes now have a platform to take action and feel heard, which is tremendously important in the development of fourth graders as leaders and civically-engaged students. Katie is transforming the way students are learning in the classroom, and in the process transforming the lives of these students overall.

Matt Puma is a Changemaker teacher from Reingold Elementary School. This year, he has taught second, third, and fourth grade students how to make short videos about their ideas for improving the community.

Key to the Changemaking approach is that students generate and develop their own project ideas initially and as their skills grow, will become “directors for hire.” They commissioned short videos on topics requested by teachers or fellow students in response to an identified need within the school community. Creating videos was a vehicle for students to learn and creatively express what is important to them as they interact with a community of artists using the same sets of tools and props.

The project operates during the school day with EHA students and at the 21st Century After School Program. Initially, students used a Google tool called Screencastify to create short videos about themselves and their understanding of Changemaking. Now, students are creating “simulated worlds” as vehicles for telling stories of personal significance. These projects develop students’ creativity and problem-solving, which are vital to becoming autonomous Changemakers.
Before (left) and during (right) South Street 21st Century After School Program students makeover the lost and found eyesore.

Proud South Street students with their greatly improved home for lost items (left) and delivering winter gear to the Montachusett Opportunity Council’s Family Resource Center (right).

South Street’s *Mini Venture* on their hat fundraiser day with winter gear collection boxes (left) and MWCC’s Jake VanHillo and Rachel Vargeletis at the Fitchburg AweSTEM event (right).
In addition to the independent Changemaking efforts led by the Elementary Honors Academy teachers, the partnership between Fitchburg Public Schools and MWCC has enabled many other unique Changemaking opportunities for students.

Sue Tourigny, district coordinator for the 21st Century After School Program, welcomed the United Way Venture staff team at Crocker and South Street schools, resulting in two whole-school Ventures. Under the guidance of Champion, Stacey Brassard at Crocker, second through fourth grade students organized a week-long Penny War between classes that raised $850 for the Animal Control Officer. This first-ever Venture team at Crocker, is also notable for being the youngest students to lead a Venture team. With help from Champion and guidance counselor Cathy Walker, South Street Venturers led a clothing drive for warm winter wear that was donated to the Montachusett Opportunity Council. Students working after school at South Street also were inspired to make over their disorganized lost and found area.

Terry Montemurro of Crocker, and Jessica Stodulski, District STEM Support Specialist, won support from Mass Clean Energy Center for a Clean Energy Day field trip to learn about wind energy with help from partners at MWCC. The day was so much fun for everyone involved!
Kelly Morrison, a first grade special education teacher and Changemaker at South Street Elementary School, has been teaching her first grade students how to write by using the Humans of New York idea, morphed into what she calls "Humans of South Street".

Humans of New York started as just a photography project, where the mission was to photograph over 10,000 people in New York and have this extensive catalog of New York faces. Along the way, the photographers noticed they naturally spark conversations with the people they are photographing about their lives. After learning so much about all of these thousands of people, they began recording what they heard, and now along with a collection of pictures of New York people, they also had little stories about them: who they were, the life they lead, some struggles they had. And this became the new Humans of New York.

So instead of teaching these six and seven year-olds how to write and compose a sentence about any old thing, these students are learning at a very young age how to tell their own story, and then how to write the stories of their peers. Kelly has been working hard to teach these students that they have a voice, and they should use their voice to do wonderful things like even just in sharing their stories.

Kelly’s future plans with this Humans of South Street project is to have the students pick one or two people in all of South Street, or even in the Fitchburg community to interview and expand this from just her class.

In doing this, Kelly has noticed a huge increase in the writing quality that the students are outputting, and an even bigger increase in students engagement through the whole process.
“CHANGEMAKING HELPS EVERYONE SEE THE POWER IN GIVING CHILDREN CHOICE AND RESPONSIBILITY. WITH CHANGEMAKING IN OUR SCHOOLS, OUR LEARNERS WILL HAVE MORE AUTONOMY IN CREATING AND LEARNING WITH DIFFERENTIATED AND MOTIVATING PATHS.”

Jenna Roberts is a first grade teacher and Changemaker at South Street Elementary. At the beginning of the school year, Jenna was feeling frustrated and discouraged before she came to the Changemaking sessions, and took time to reflect that that wasn’t how she wanted to show up for her students. This led Jenna to Changemaking, a shift in mindset, and a launch into transformational inner change. Jenna’s change started with things like daily morning meditation and a gratitude journal which helped her to be present for her students and center herself in a Changemaking mindset, so she could then spread the spirit of Changemaking in her classroom as a calm and authentic educator. Jenna’s efforts in this Changemaker mindset journey have even been noticed from those outside her classroom, and she has been told that her room feels remarkably calm—a natural byproduct of embracing the Changemaker mindset. When Jenna made sure her own mindset was in the right place for her students, the student response and outcomes were tremendous.

Jenna and Amber decided to partner together for a Changemaker project with their students where first and third grade inclusion rooms paired to create what they call “buddy rooms”. At first, they were apprehensive of how this activity would work, given some struggles they’ve had with student behavior. However, as Amber says, “some students who need a mentor are the best mentor for others”. And that is exactly what they saw.

Their buddy activities included reading to each other, having paired buddy conversations over popsicles, and working together in the classroom. When given the opportunity, their first and third graders rose to the occasion and developed healthy relationships and mentorships among each other, improving their behavior and overall engagement. Not only did Jenna and Amber experience Changemaking together, but they built a support system for themselves and their students.

“STUDENTS ARE UNDERSTANDING THEY ARE THE CULTURE—NOT THE TEACHERS.”

Amber Dutton is a third grade and special education teacher, as well as a Changemaker at South Street Elementary. Amber’s transformation surrounded the idea of looking at each student as a person first, rather than student, test score, or a number in her class roster. Amber believes strongly in teaching young people that they are all contributing members in the world who have the strength and tools to make change, and we can start with something small every day to make that change. Amber recognizes that by giving students ownership over their education and their future, they start to feel the power and the possibility to become the best person they can be.
“My journey as a changemaker has been one full of inspiration, joy, and fulfillment. As an educator, I have always been extremely passionate about educating the whole child. Through the Changemaker mindset, I was reminded of the importance of this. This past school year I chose to refocus my attention on supporting and nurturing students’ social and emotional needs. I worked hard to incorporate it as a daily practice and by implementing targeted social and emotional lessons. Additionally, I joined the social emotional learning committee at my school. As a team, many of whom are also fellow Changemakers, we worked with administration to advocate for the need for a curriculum and began the process of planning to implement one next school year. I look forward to continuing to grow personally as a changemaker, and to continue to help foster and create future Changemakers in my own classroom.”

–Stephanie Manning

“I WANT ALL KIDS TO KNOW THAT THEY ARE THE ONES IN CONTROL OF THEIR LIVES AND THE WORLD THEY LIVE IN. THEY HAVE CHOICES EVERY SINGLE DAY AND THEIR FUTURE IS WHAT THEY MAKE OF IT. OUR FAMILIES AND OUR PAST SITUATIONS ARE PART OF US, BUT THEY DON’T HAVE TO DEFINE US.”

Stephanie Manning is a second grade Changemaker teacher at South Street Elementary. Recently, she opened up her classroom to showcase an incredible lesson about getting rid of enemies where she taught her students the power of empathy, teamwork, problem-solving, and some pie. Stephanie read her students the popular children’s book, Enemy Pie, and reflected with the student not only on what they were thinking when reading the book, but what the characters must be thinking as well. For those who are not familiar with the book, it follows a young boy who decides the new boy in town is his enemy, so his dad offers to make him an enemy pie to get rid of his enemy. The boy excitedly takes up his father’s offer under one condition: that the boy spend the day with his enemy before eating the pie. After spending this day with his enemy, the boy ends up making a new friend out of this enemy, and it turns out the pie his father made was delicious rather than poisonous.

After the book was finished, Stephanie led the students through an exercise to brainstorm what they originally thought was going to be in the enemy pie and what the consequences might have been had the boy’s enemy eaten it. Then she directed the students to reflect on the real recipe to enemy pie in a more abstract sense. After the students practiced this together, they created their own enemy pie recipe and instructions for when they feel like they’ve encountered an enemy. Ingredients in the second grader’s recipes consisted of things like: kindness, play together, work on a project together, and many more awesome examples.
Jillian Santucci, a Changemaker at Samoset Middle School, has been working with sixth and seventh graders on their very own student-led, student-created school news project.

Some of the students felt a disconnect in their school and wanted to know more about what is going on at different grade levels, clubs, and life in general. In order to bridge this gap, eight students decided to take action by bringing back the Samoset School News. With the help of two seventh grade boys and their amazing camera and directing skills, the sixth-graders came up with their own news segments, wrote scripts, made backdrops, filmed each other, and edited clips to create news episodes for their school.

Jillian’s role has been that of a mentor, and an empowerment coach. As a Changemaker, she teaches her students that this project matters, that they have a voice and people want to hear it. She helps them in their production as needed, and guides them through whatever roadblocks they may encounter. Jillian has been a superstar in modeling non-controlling behavior with these students and really letting them manage their own process, allowing them to grow and learn in an awesome way.

Ms. Santucci is my favorite teacher because she’s very open to our opinions and what we have to say. She likes to listen to our ideas and talk about what she can do better and how we can improve in the classroom. I think that’s really cool, because I’ve never had a teacher do that before.”

—Molly Welton, Samoset Student
"I HAVE SEEN STUDENTS RISE TO MY STANDARDS AND TURN THEIR EDUCATIONAL LIVES AROUND SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY KNOW I BELIEVE IN THEM, WILL STAND BY THEM, AND HELP THEM TO BE SUCCESSFUL."

Donna Little is a Changemaker teacher at Samoset Middle School. Lately, Donna’s Changemaker journey has honed in on the goal of fostering more welcoming and kind culture at Samoset. Donna decided to try something different that might help students she teaches build more empathy for each other and ultimately impact their school.

In that spirit, Donna started randomly selecting students in her classes to have lunch with her every week. Donna allows each student who is picked to decline the offer in a pressure-free manner. If they join the lunch, they are allowed to bring a friend along with them. Initially, Donna’s students seemed very apprehensive about the idea. Donna wanted to make sure they did not view this as a lunch detention or anything of the sort, and instead see it as a chance to build community and have fun. As a result, in the beginning not as many students attended the lunch as she would have liked. However, as time went on, exactly what Donna hoped for happened. Students became excited to be chosen for “family lunch,” and they looked forward to it. Students from different cliques and backgrounds who may not have typically associated in their school were now coming together and eating lunch with some of their teachers and they could not be more excited and happy. All of the students that had lunch together like each other and are friends—and as we know, this is not exactly an easy feat at a middle school.

Donna has noticed a tremendous culture shift in the seventh grade. The lunches created closer, trusting relationships between students, as well as between students and teachers that attend. In the short lunch period they have, invaluable Changemaking lessons are learned.
MORE CHANGEMAKING AT SAMOSEET

Samoset Venture Team, All Star Angels, celebrate with seed funding to help bring a speaker on drug addiction (left) and Mark, a local therapy dog visits with students (right).

Venture Team, Toyz 4 Joy, exhibit with Youth Venture Champion, Francine Meigs, and superintendent, Paula Deacon at the Spring Showcase—these leaders give gifts and activities to kids in foster care.

Students celebrate a successful year of social entrepreneurship with a competitive game of giant Jenga (left) and MWCC Professor Lexi McNamara speaks to students about the plight of shelter animals (right).
Deb Marchand is a Changemaking Teacher at Samoset Middle School. Deb’s Changemaking journey brought her to realize that students have the desire and passion to make a difference but need guidance to express their thoughts and ideas. Every day as she teaches her students she thinks of herself as a Changemaker maker.

One activity she does with her eighth grade ELA colleague is called a “Collaborative Team Building” activity. Because of her participation in Changemaking this year, she has a newfound realization of just how important activities like this are. There are four steps to this team building process: greet, share, discussion, and closing. Students use a ball to greet one another by passing it from one student to the next. When each student has the ball they are asked to share something that relates to the readings they were assigned, which all tie closely to social emotional learning. After each student has a turn with the ball, they conduct conversations among each other without raising their hands. This sparks rich, meaningful, and respectful conversation which has been extraordinarily impactful to the student’s learning and connection with each other, but also in Deb as the educator.

Typically, these activities focus on what they are learning in their curriculum, but Deb always ties in key skills and values like empathy, compassion, tolerance, and acceptance to name just a few. The closing for this activity is generally a “call to action” as Deb likes to put it. One at a time, with the passing of the ball again, each student shares what they will do on their own to make a difference or express a trait relating to the original key idea for that day.

Deb is also an advisor for Samoset Middle School’s Student Council. This year the eighth grade officers had the idea to conduct a workshop to discuss and problem-solve issues middle schoolers face. The officers named this the “Leadership Workshop” and assembled all eighth grade students together to work in groups to discuss twelve topics they previously identified. Each group collaborated and came up with solution suggestions for each topic, recorded down on chart paper. Each of the twelve groups chose a spokesperson and presented their findings and suggestions to the whole grade, analyzed results from these workshops, and shared the feedback with the sixth and seventh grade as well.

Deb acts as a non-controlling facilitator for these students, allowing them to develop key skills needed to be a successful and positive contributing member to society. These students learned what it means to be leaders and the power they have to make a difference when they embrace the role. Deb has always believed students have much to offer this world. Her lessons foster and endorse the importance of good citizenship and giving back to society as a champion for others, especially those who may not have a strong voice.

I’ve been reaching out to students every year for the past 25 years trying to pull out the best in each one, instilling a sense of community and caring in those I touch.

– Deb Marchand
Mark Trainor is an assistant principal and Changemaker at Sky View Middle School in Leominster. As this was Mark’s first year in Leominster, his highest Changemaking priority was to connect with students. For a school of 900 students, getting to know the names and faces of kids as well as colleagues is no easy feat. However, when it came time for Changemakers to put a plan in place for how they could make a difference this year, Mark kept his goal straightforward—get to know 100 students and be present to meaningfully greet them as they enter the school building each day. Fast forward to the end of the school year, and Mark far surpassed his goal by getting to know and remember 450 students by name. One of the ways he connected memorably was to volunteer for a “Tape Your Teacher to the Wall” fundraiser. As one student shared about Mark, “he makes us feel valued and I feel like he gets me.” Another student observed, “Mr. Trainor has only been here one year, but he makes the school a better place.”

Dayna Margarita-Dixon is a Changemaker and sixth grade special education teacher at Sky View Middle School. One of her biggest challenges is helping students to become more proficient readers. Dayna’s approach? Help students connect to subjects they are passionate about through reading. She helped students through a self-discovery process to identify topics that sparked their interest. Then she picked a selection of articles, books, and other texts at their reading level for the kids to choose from. Dayna relied on close reading strategies, encouraging students to mark up the texts, write summary sentences, and share with each other. As a result, she’s noticed increased engagement with her students. This is not a frequent practice in middle school because classes typically do required reading together. For next year, Dayna hopes to jump into passion exploration at the beginning of the school year and expand the library of resources connected to student passions.
Building relationships with students is the number one step that needs to be taken before other crucial like skills can be explicitly taught.

– Dayna Margarita-Dixon

Mark Trainor bonds with students during lunch (above) and sacrifices his eyebrows to duct tape for a student-run fundraiser (left)
Christie Murphy, who teaches eighth grade at Sky View, put her Changemaking skills to use during VIEWpoint days, which occur every half day of the school year. In this unique format, the whole school is devoted to exploring personal interests and creating passion projects to share with families by the end of the year. For Christie and her students, they decided to tackle the neglected courtyard areas in their otherwise beautiful school.

Working with three groups of students, each taking responsibility for one of the three courtyards, Christie guided them through a process of measuring, mapping, and planning for a more productive and beautiful common outdoor space. One group ran with the project easily, flying through the steps and gaining confidence in themselves and their leadership abilities. Meanwhile, the other two groups struggled with conflict and discouragement when they encountered roadblocks. It would have been easy at this point for Christie to feel frustrated herself, and take over the project to get it done more quickly. However, Christie continued to coach the students to troubleshoot and focus on their goal. She is committed to helping them learn from the experience regardless of whether the end product looks exactly like what they initially imagined, and to appreciate the journey they have been on together this year. As the end of the school year approaches, Christie is still working with her students to help them conclude their project with pride.

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
– African Proverb

Leo LeClair is a sixth grade social studies teacher and Changemaker at Sky View. He is also an ardent supporter of learning through experience, particularly in ways that positively impact the community. This year was an opportunity for Leo to support students in making a difference by serving as an “Ally”, or coach, to a newly formed Venture Team, Sports for Smiles. From working with this group of passionate students during the VIEWpoint half day sessions early in the school year, the girls created an action plan to collect and fundraise for gently used sporting equipment and host fundraisers to defray the expense for families to participate in school and community sports.

In his classroom, Leo partnered several times this year with fellow Changemaker and social studies teacher, George Grossman. They collaborated while learning about civil war in Sudan, bringing in a speaker to share with students about the plight of the Lost Boys of Sudan in the 1980s. Leo also invited Andres Vera, principal of Frances Drake Elementary, and father of one of Leo’s students, to speaker about the Venezuelan economy, culture, government, and immigration.

Leo revealed that he felt in tune with what kids need for self-care, has been able to more readily see their perspectives, and observed a greater willingness to be motivated.
Thanks to Christie Murphy’s gung-ho students, the overgrowth in Sky View’s courtyard is groomed and complemented with a seating area for students and teachers to enjoy fresh

Leo coaches Sports for Smiles to a $400 seed funding win (left) and sixth grade students welcome a speaker from the 2006 film documentary “God Grew Tired of Us” (right)

Guest speaker, Andres Vera talks about Venezuela with students (left) and Leo makes students’ day at the “Tape Your Teacher” fundraiser (right)
Changemaking STEM Resource Coach, Becky Colo, works to challenge and engage students with new opportunities to experience technology at Longsjo Middle School. With some 360 degree cameras as inspiration, she and her students imagined a filming project to make nature, the arts, and potentially other experiential places accessible in new and exciting ways.

Her students got their feet wet with a virtual reality tour project in Google Expedition. The students worked together to compile photos into a comprehensive tour of the the Pinkham Notch region of the White Mountains where Longsjo students take an annual sixth grade overnight trip. They were then invited to present their project in February at the LearnLaunch Learning Innovation Showcase with schools from across Massachusetts represented. Most recently, Becky’s students shifted their focus from nature to the arts, taking their camera equipment on a quick field trip to the Fitchburg Art Museum—just a few blocks’ walk from their school. Inside the museum, the team was focused and professional (with bursts of excitement as they delighted in the various exhibits). Two teams of sixth graders captured 360 degree shots of exhibits throughout the museum with the end goal of compiling another virtual reality-compatible tour so members of the community can explore and enjoy the arts in new ways. Perhaps most exciting for the students is that they presented their final product to representatives at the State House on June 5. What a tremendous opportunity!
Kim Pheymannicie is a Changemaker at McKay Arts Academy. She integrates Changemaking in her work at McKay using passion projects. To introduce the powerful mindset of Changemaking, Kim had her middle school students work on their own Passion Projects with the starting prompt of, “if you could come to school and learn about anything, what would it be?” What she saw next was amazing.

Students took initiative immediately, teaching themselves how to code, draw freehand or with technology, create fonts, learn about various sports, and many more skills. Once students were exposed to the Changemaking mindset, they looked for improvement projects they could embark on as a team to help the school.

Middle school students identified school improvement topics they feel strongly about and are developing solutions to present to administration. Some of these projects include anti-bullying, schedule proposals, revised dismissal procedures, after school program offerings, and locker and bathroom repair/beautification, to name a few.

The students have a totally unique and powerful experience through Kim to use their math and science skills to make a change in their immediate communities. Kim found a way to support her students that engages them fully and teaches them the core skills of the curriculum, while also teaching them the adaptable skills and values needed for a successful Changemaker future.

Jean Beckner is a STEM teacher in charge of the advanced learners at Memorial Middle School. She has done an amazing job of integrating the four Changemaking values of teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and empathy in her classroom.

Jean is teaching fifth through eighth graders how to use a 3D printer, which in itself is an amazing opportunity for students. However, Jean has made sure that in this process she also is teaching important skills and techniques which can be translated to what they will need to be successful in a fast-paced and ever changing world.

Bella Cavallo, a quiet and bright eighth grader developed a sense of leadership in her time with Jean. She came up with the “LEGO Project” for every AALI student to continue at Memorial before ascending to high school. Each student who works with the 3D printer creates a large LEGO with their name, school, the date they made it, and an inspirational message on each of the four sides. These LEGOS stack together, visually signifying the community at Memorial. As years pass, the stacks of LEGOS will grow, as will the inspirational messages for all to read. Jean empowers students, like Bella, to become creative thinkers and leaders in their school. She also teaches her students how to creatively problem-solve, critically think, and challenges them to grow every day.

Another important value Jean has worked into her teaching has been that of empathy. Jean encourages students to help out other teachers who may need special 3D printed objects. One example is a dog tag project for their school therapy dog, Lady (shown in the cover photo). The design process includes empathy to ensure comfort and safety. This is integral for the appropriate design, and ensures the creation of something the customer needs and wants, instead of just student preferences. The process has been transformational and educational all in one. Truly, Jean has found incredible ways to spread her Changemaker wings at Memorial Middle School.
Dr. Kim Cochrane is the Library Media Specialist at Fitchburg High School. Her goals through Changemaking are to make students at FHS feel like they are all members of the community, to emphasize that we all matter, and that we all can make the world a better place. Kim’s pathways for her goals are through a Changemaker bulletin board that she has in the library of FHS, and running after school clubs.

The bulletin board highlights the anniversary of the creation of the periodic table of elements, and also draws the students in to brainstorm ways they too can change the world for the better. This board also allows and encourages students to color on it, which Kim thought important to encourage mindfulness. Kim says, “our students don’t get many opportunities to stop and think”, so the importance of a bulletin board such as this one is evident. Kim plans on having this board up for the remainder of the year, and then switching it up for next year, but dedicating it as the Changemaker bulletin board of FHS.

As for Changemaking in her clubs, Kim believes it to be important to draw in generally un-involved students so they can get involved—working on her goal of building a better sense of community among students. She runs clubs for a variety of interests, but each is an opportunity for students to find their niche and ways to connect with others.

For Kim, Changemaking is her avenue to make not only FHS a better place, but the future of our society as a whole.
Megan Normandin is a Changemaker teacher at FHS who has been up to many amazing things this year. She helps her classes think about the ways they have the power to make change in the world. This prompted an interactive “Be the Change” board which was put outside her classroom door. Megan uses this as an invitation to join the conversation. The board is essentially a dry-erase world map welcoming students to share what and how to change the world for the better.

In working with her freshmen, Megan found a fantastic opportunity to enter a national NPR podcast competition while gaining practice using a Changemaking lens. The goal is that students develop a deeper understanding of the power of their own voice (contest results are still pending). Megan also encouraged students to use poetry as a form of expression, culminating in a moving Open Mic Night at the Fitchburg Historical Society in April. In the past, FHS has hosted open mic nights in their library and it was exclusive to FHS students. In the spirit of building community, Megan decided to open the event up to the rest of the community. The evening was truly unforgettable, meshing contemporary student and adult perspectives with poetry from 19th century Fitchburg youth.

In May, Megan organized a “Stress Less Day” for students to unwind through creative expression and tactile activities, including everyone’s favorite—fluffy slime! Through her Changemaking process, Megan empowered students and noticed changes among them, but she also noted a positive change in her own mindset growth, and how she now sees every interaction with a student as a possible Changemaking opportunity.

“Ms. Normandin lets me know that there is someone in the building who cares, and taught me to accept myself for who I am.”
Andrea Grimes is a Changemaker teacher at LHS who uses Changemaking as a lens to view everything she teaches and everything she does. In her International Justice and Global Community course, the focus is on what is right with the world, what is wrong, and what we can do about it. Students engage in a service learning project on behalf of the Leominster Lion's Club, helping to process donated eyeglasses. The eyeglasses are then sent around the world to people in need. Through this activity, her students were first building gratitude, then empathy, and finally, a deeper understanding that even though they are individuals, they can make huge and impactful change for others through something as simple as sorting through and sending out eyeglasses. Many of the eyeglass cases are left over and cannot be used by the Lion’s Club, so Andrea and her students re-purposed the cases into things like first aid kits for the homeless.

Students anonymously share their perspectives in a poignant “Walk in My Shoes” exercise.

Another huge Changemaking application example which Andrea does with her class is through a final project where students are required to come up with a Changemaking agency based on their passions. They must design their agency and then pitch it to the class afterwards. The causes the students aim to support range from human rights, to education, and mental health—many of these students have plans to pursue their ideas in the future.

What amazing ways to empower students, build empathy among them, and show them that they can each make impactful positive change!
“Changemaking gave me perspective on other people’s lives and experiences (not just through films, but also the lives of the people in our class and school).”
   —Anya S.

“Negativity bothers me. Here we acknowledge it, but are also aware of and grateful for the good stuff.”
   —Justus R.

“One of my favorite activities was when we stared into another person’s eyes for four minutes. It was about allowing ourselves to be vulnerable.”
   —Isabel B.

“Changemaking can start with one person...people will join in.”
   —Liam G.

“Changemaking gave me a chance to realize that people can be a lot more open and can discuss issues with others in a safe environment.”
   —Marcos P.

“The world has lots of problems, but I have learned that making change can be as simple as doing something small.”
   —Isabel B.

“I tend to be a confident person and I realize that if I use my confidence to share, it may encourage sharing by peers who are hesitant.”
   —Justus R.

“NOT GONNA LIE, COMING INTO THIS CLASS, I THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO BE BORING. I WAS ABOUT TO SWITCH OUT, BUT SOMETHING HAPPENED AND I ENDED UP STAYING. I CAN TELL YOU I AM THANKFUL I STAYED IN HERE. THIS CLASS HAS TAUGHT ME A LOT. IT TAUGHT ME HOW TO ACCEPT MYSELF AND BRING MYSELF UP AND NOT DOWN. IT HAS ALSO TAUGHT ME HOW TO TREAT OTHERS. EVERY DAY WE WOULD DO SOMETHING THAT WOULD BENEFIT OURSELVES. IT WASN’T YOUR NORMAL SCHOOL WORK...INSTEAD THIS CLASS WAS A WAY OF TAKING A MOMENT AND JUST THINKING ABOUT YOURSELF. WHAT IS THE NEXT THING YOU ARE GOING TO DO? WHAT IS ONE THING GOOD YOU WILL DO TO BENEFIT THE PLANET? HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE YOURSELF? THIS CLASS TAUGHT ME HOW TO KEEP MYSELF MOTIVATED.”
   —FERNANDO A.
“One reason Mr. Kyne is a great teacher is that he wants his students to be successful and wants everyone to do the best they can. He tries to encourage kids to get involved in the learning and be interested.”

–LHS Student

“CHANGEMAKING HAS EMPOWERED ME TO RETHINK THE WAY I APPROACH MY CLASSROOM ON A DAILY BASIS. EMPOWERING MY STUDENTS TO COLLABORATE AND PROBLEM SOLVE HAS CREATED A MORE DYNAMIC AND AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE FOR MY STUDENTS, ALLOWING THEM TO BE MORE READY TO TACKLE THE CHALLENGES OF LIFE BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL.”


Erica Redner-Danzig is an English teacher and Changemaker at Leominster High School. She shared her Changemaking journey in her own words:

“This experience has empowered me to stop wrestling to be someone I am not, and to ‘give myself permission’ to be more ‘me.’ In the classroom I take risks, make mistakes, try something else, get feedback from kiddos and share my thought processes with the kids. In my personal life, I work to be more forgiving of my family and myself when things don’t go quite as planned, and in the few quiet moments I can find, I try new crafts, and even learned to make soap from scratch. In this sense, I have truly learned from my failures as saponification (soap-making) is all about chemistry, and chemistry is a high school subject I failed to understand.

Throughout my career I have struggled to come to terms with teacher training in ‘systematic, explicit instruction,’ and who I am (not someone organized enough to be as systematic as I should/want to be). I think Changemaking has the missing component I have sorely needed, as it has given me permission to add humanity into the mix. I have realized that my kids need to learn about the world around them and need to learn about empathy (for themselves, their peers, and their broader community) while improving their critical thinking, reading and writing skills. In order to find a balance between my training and students’ needs, I have changed my curriculum to include graphic novels that address the struggles of refugees as well as of kids growing up with family members battling addiction. I am teaching by putting connection on the forefront and it is paying off in increased effort and motivation from my students.

The increased effort may also come from a change in my approach, as I respond more effectively when students come into class riled up and in need of some calm/quiet time. Instead of a ‘here is the do now, do it now’ approach, I am more cognizant of students’ emotional needs and coach them through their struggles instead of simply trying to fix the problem for them. I ask them what steps they can take, what steps they may need me to take, I offer them choices if the first two questions lead to increased frustrations, and I try to make one of those choices time to color, listen to music, write, or anything else that allows the students time to regroup, reflect and decompress. I can’t be their therapist, but I can be more mindful and help them develop more effective coping strategies.

I have used Changemaking to empower me to help my students become lifelong learners. I try to help them learn from their mistakes and failures, and learn how to conduct themselves through owning mistakes, taking charge, and approaching the struggle differently next time.”
Rich Barnaby is a Changemaker teacher at Leominster High School. His Changemaker initiative this year includes Changemaking curriculum integration, and introducing the power of mindfulness with his freshmen students.

Rich’s highly anticipated “Changemaker Fridays” start the class each Friday with activities that build trust among the students, practice mindfulness, and focus on being present. With so much going on elsewhere in these students’ lives, Rich understands that it can be extraordinarily hard as a high schooler to experience feeling present or comfortable in their peer environment. Therefore, for up to ten minutes at the start of every Changemaker Friday class, Rich invites everyone to participate in a Changemaker mindset activity. In the photo above, the students shared a guided ten minute meditation focused on gratitude—every student stopped what they were doing, closed their eyes, and became fully immersed themselves in the exercise. The air in the room changed as a result, and everyone was engaged and glad to be there. The students reported feeling “better”, “happier”, and that it made the class “more fun”. Rich also uses other Changemaking themed activities like “Cross the Line”, other guided meditation tracks, and breathing exercises with his class.

As for curriculum integration, Rich decided to teach civics to his ninth graders with a twist—making it far more personable, engaging, and impactful to the individual student. He gives his students choice, and teaches them they have a voice, empowering them in the process. The choice he gives his students is in what they personally are going to try and change in society right now. He assigned them to get in contact with a local representative, or someone in the political sphere, and write a letter. Students have to research the cause they would like to support, or the issue they would like to solve, and then actively engage in local politics to do something about it. When asked about this, Rich says, “it’s all about teaching them that they really do have a voice, and about making Changemaker makers.”
The first year of Changemaking in 2017-2018 was very intentionally a pilot experience. Courageous and patient teachers, guidance counselors, staff, administrators, and students joined us as we felt our way through what the Changemaking process should look like. At the end of this guinea pig year, all of our participants reported that they felt an increased sense of purpose and joy—amazing!

Of this cohort of innovators, several stepped forward to continue helping us learn, grow, and become more sustainable in developing Changemaking in others. During a two-day intensive retreat in early October, and a part two in January, these Changemaker Trainers learned facilitation techniques and activities to help colleagues and youth tap into their inner Changemaker.

We are so proud and thankful to these inspirational leaders for their contributions this year—planning and co-facilitating our big sessions for this year’s cohort, running professional development and information sessions at their own schools, coaching colleagues new to Changemaking, and most importantly, continuing on their own journey and modeling Changemaking for others. Here are just a few of their stories and highlights...

"When I think about Changemaking, I think of it more as a perspective or paradigm—the way you look at your students or the world. Through Youth Venture, you can see the culture shift to awareness. Now when it is embedded in curriculum, it’s way more than awareness. It’s embedded in them [students] and becomes part of them. It’s kids doing small things that can make a big difference in their lives."

– Stacy O’Day
English Teacher, Sky View Middle School

Eva Kelly is the director of enrollment and family outreach for Fitchburg. In this role, Eva is the first face that welcomes new families coming to Fitchburg. Eva used the ideas and experiences gained from the three days of Changemaker Training sessions not only to frame her interactions with families, but also to host a Changemaking parenting night. The event was a simple introduction to Changemaking with the goal of including families in supporting empathy, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving at home.

Eva also hosts an astounding number of family programs and events throughout the year, ranging from monthly Beginner Bookworms nights at the Fitchburg Public Library, to seasonal festivals and family breakfasts with STEM activities and book swaps—all of these events feel warm, positive, and welcoming, just like Eva!
Craig Chalifaux is the principal at Longsjo Middle School in Fitchburg. It was a tremendous opportunity to have Craig’s support and leadership as a trainer this year. Craig was fearless in facilitating icebreakers and activities that get participants out of their comfort zones (he also yielded to students with rolls of duct tape for a student-run fundraiser). His energy and natural coaching ability made individuals at our Changemaking co-creation sessions feel more at ease and able to give themselves up to new experiences meant to push their boundaries and help them grow.

Carey Mount is a teacher at Longsjo Middle School and die-hard Changemaker. Carey has been incredibly passionate about her role as a Changemaker and the potential for positive change for young people since day one. As a trainer this year, Carey was the definition of dependable—always available when we needed her to facilitate co-creation sessions and continuing to be a visible point of light at her school. She is creative and outgoing, the perfect person to get a group feeling comfortable and positive.

Michelle Brennan is the assistant director of the United Way Youth Venture program at Mount Wachusett Community College. Michelle leads Changemaking through UWYV, by helping hundreds of students each year flex their social entrepreneurship and empathy muscles. This year, Michelle was active in running co-creation sessions, as well as touching base regularly with Changemakers across all of our partnering schools and working directly with Crocker Elementary students on their Venture plan.

Sue Tourigny is the Fitchburg district coordinator for the 21st Century After School Program. It is because of Sue’s drive and passion that Changemaking was introduced to Fitchburg students. Crocker Elementary students launched their first ever Venture Team project to help homeless animals; Reingold students excited about Changemaking had extra time to work with Matt Puma; South Street students took action to make their school a more friendly and pleasing environment; and so much more!

Paula Giaquinto is the assistant superintendent of Fitchburg Public Schools. For such a tremendously busy and strenuous job, it is remarkable how she prioritized Changemaking as a unifying philosophy for teachers and staff in her district. During the past two years, Paula has viewed and lived her life through a Changemaker lens. As for many people, being a Changemaker was already part of Paula’s identity—this process helped to bring this side of her to the forefront. For colleagues in the district this means that decisions are made with students in mind first and foremost.

Paula delights in celebrating Changemaking successes (and learning from failures) with students and teachers, and is ever-present when these opportunities arise. Paula has also been instrumental in sharing Changemaking with other leaders in the community, including Fitchburg State University faculty, MA Deans of Education schools, Mayor DiNatale, School Committee members, and the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

George Grossman is a social studies teacher at Sky View Middle School. After the first year of the Changemaker Initiative came to a close, George volunteered to take on a leadership role for this year. He encouraged fellow teachers to consider participating, resulting in Leo LeClair signing up. George and Leo then joined their classes together for multiple lessons, speakers, and projects throughout the year. George was instrumental in planning and supporting multiple professional development sessions for the Year 2 cohort of Changemakers. And probably most memorable of all, George contributed his DJ skills for the United Way Youth Venture Spring Showcase event, giving 150 young social entrepreneurs a chance to blow off some steam.
Sharyn Tomasso is an eighth grade English teacher at Sky View Middle School in Leominster. For many years, Sharyn has served as the school’s Champion for the United Way Youth Venture program, encouraging and coaching students through the process of identifying a community need and trouble-shooting their own unique solution. Sharyn is so creative, and making a difference is her passion—these two factors inevitably lead Sharyn on numerous Changemaking journeys each year. This year was no exception. The examples shared here are just a few instances where Sharyn modeled Changemaking, enabled students to be Changemakers, or made a difference for people in her community. Sharyn is an inspiration and a go-to person for those looking to make Changemaking a part of their daily routines.

“While going through the Changemaker training, it became very apparent that this initiative was truly unique. It was not “one more thing to do” or “the latest and greatest pre-packaged curriculum. Rather, Changemaking is an ideology, and a shift in mindset, that focuses on the approach and perspective applied to the students and to the classroom. To me, the two key principles of Changemaking are:

1) viewing the teacher more as a coach, versus as an all-knowing purveyor of information, and

2) fostering a learning environment in which there is a true sense of community and one that elicits student involvement, engagement, and ownership.”

When a fellow student’s family lost everything in a house fire, the kids in Sharyn’s classroom wanted to do something to help. It was winter, cold and bitter outside, and the students immediately thought about how it would be particularly difficult to be displaced and homeless at this time of year. They decided that they wanted to raise money to assist the family in replacing lost items. When Sharyn suggested that they do something within the classroom, perhaps a “Hot Chocolate Bar,” the kids were all for it! The next Friday, while students were working on an independent assignment, Sharyn set up a hot chocolate station in her room where students could purchase a cup of hot chocolate and various toppings. The planning for this was done by the kids...they told Sharyn what to buy, how much to charge, and offered suggestions as to when to do it. In addition, they set up and cleaned the station during the “event.” Not only did they raise over $200 in one day, but the side benefit was that the kids got to relax and enjoy a hot treat, on a dismal cold day, while getting their work done. Running the hot chocolate station was incredibly easy and it was done just during Sharyn’s class (so it didn’t affect or interfere with any other class. The real, metaphorical “whipped cream on top,” was that every student worked quietly and productively as this was part of the agreement when deciding to do this!
“At the beginning of the school year, our eighth grade ELA classes read the novel, *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lee, which details the ‘based on a true story,’ journey of a Vietnamese refugee whose family immigrated to America after fleeing South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. The novel is part of a curriculum unit we teach entitled, ‘Cultural Belonging and Identity.’ Within our school, there is a wealth of diversity and the obvious goal is to celebrate the value of difference and to help others understand the negative individual impact of divisiveness within a community. A few years ago, while in the midst of a conversation about the challenges of refugees and immigrants, several students shared their real-life stories about the difficulties they, or their relatives, had when coming to the United States. It became clear that before us was an opportunity to get first-hand, ‘live’ information, knowledge and understanding about this topic. Born from this discussion was the idea of hosting an “Immigrant Panel” which would be an event where refugees and immigrants, within our school families and the Leominster community, would come in and share their personal stories with students. Over the next few years, this became an annual event that has grown in scope and in impact. This year, each of my students shared his/her cultural background (ethnic and/or familial) through a ‘Recipe Project.’ The kids were tasked with designing a ‘recipe page’ that featured a favorite, traditional dish that represented their personal heritage. The page included the recipe, a photo related to the recipe, and a brief paragraph explaining how/why the recipe was significant to the students’ culture. Ultimately, the kids decided that we should compile the recipe pages and create a cookbook that we could sell to raise money for families in need. Finally, the students also asked if they could make their food item and bring it in to share with their peers at the ‘Immigrant Panel.’ This year, we had twelve panelists and enough food for all students to sample and to provide panelists with an amazing smorgasbord lunch!”

**STUDENTS AS TEACHERS**

“As I see it, the classroom is like the Land of Oz...teachers are perceived as being the great Wizard to whom students go to receive what they lack. This ‘Oz’ mentality has resulted in the very structured roles of teacher as omniscient purveyor of knowledge and student as naïve, helpless seeker of ‘things needed, that are outside of myself.’ Yet, in reality, I’ve come to realize that students possess way more knowledge, desire, ability than they let on or believe that they have. This is particularly true for kids who struggle in the traditional academic environment and for ELL kids who confuse language barrier challenges with intellectual ability. Shifting the classroom, from being the Land of Oz to becoming a wholistic, participative learning environment is key to increasing student engagement and academic self-efficacy. One simple truth led me to begin changing the culture in my room...students, collectively, know more than I do! Not only that, but individual students know way more than I when it comes to certain topics such as: using technology; overcoming the challenges of being an immigrant; and the nuances of the social environment in which young people now live.

Realizing, and recognizing this, I decided to abdicate teaching responsibility to the students when discussing or learning about a topic about which they have the expertise. For example, a group of students were trying to help me figure out how to navigate a certain computer app, that I wanted to show my students how to use, and it occurred to me they should be the ones teaching this to their peers. They were more competent and knowledgeable in technology and they were far better equipped to deliver this content to the class. The result: a group of students taught all of my classes how to use the app, answered students’ questions, and sat one-on-one to re-teach the struggling learners. These student teachers also experienced the frustration and the satisfaction that come with teaching. Not only did they have increased empathy for their teachers, but the experience sparked a passion within them to want to create a *Technology in the Classroom* course for teachers in our school. To that end, the group researched, planned and designed a curriculum for their course and presented it to the school principal. These students then held teacher sign-ups and successfully taught three courses!”
PAULA DELIGHTS IN FIRST GRADE
“HUMANS OF SOUTH STREET” BOOKS AT A SOUTH STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LAUNCH PARTY

PAULA GIAQUINTO
Assistant Superintendent, Fitchburg Public Schools

INTERVIEW
Q. What is your role with Fitchburg Public Schools and how is that connected to Changemaking?

A. In my role as assistant superintendent and also as a community member in Fitchburg, I see the world around us changing. I’ve been with the district for over 40 years and it is significantly different from how it was in 1970, 1980, and 2000. To me the real issue is to keep our community robust and populated by citizens that are engaged, active, and alert, we need to help our young people discover that in themselves.

Q. What drives your work?

A. I’ve been inspired by working together with colleagues from this [region], to really work through internal, reflective questions about “where is my passion and how can I contribute to this initiative.” It’s inspiring to me to have [Changemaking] take hold with the staff members from our district. I’m inspired by the small steps that we are taking, but with the big picture in mind.

Q. How would you describe your sphere of influence?

A. As assistant superintendent, I have the opportunity to have the big picture and understand the details of how to operationalize [Changemaking]. I think I’ve been able to impact my community by supporting the staff teams from the schools, and meeting and speaking individually with them so they can integrate this work as they plan for next year. There are a number of initiatives I have been able to support, if not directly, then indirectly through structural changes. We had one at the high school where students led a memorial in response to the Parkland situation. It was a beautiful event led by students. My role was to help talk to the larger community about why it was important for students to own that.

Q. How has the Changemaking process brought the community together?

A. Fitchburg and Leominster are rivals in sports, for over 100 years. Sometimes that sports idea can be very powerful in the community and we’ve had an opportunity to work with our colleagues in Leominster and find significant common ground for thinking about how to make our collective and individual communities and shared opportunities more productive, effective and humane.

Q. What does a world look like where everyone is a Changemaker?

A. A world where even young children can identify the world outside themselves, a passion, and think they have the capabilities and disposition to impact that in a positive way. It would be a world where that shared sense of self-efficacy could create the synergy for huge improvements...it may be as simple as on the playground, lunchroom, or classroom, or helping support their six year-old friends get through hard times...and then the opportunity is boundless.
Meet the leaders of our Changemaker Community in North Central Mass...these individuals are committed to working together to collectively raise the next generation of young Changemakers. Within their organizations, our dream team creates a space for voluntary participants to discover their inner Changemaker.

Vipin Thekk, the founder of Changemaker Communities initiative at Ashoka, is responsible for creating the blueprint that has become the Changemaker journey. We are fortunate to have him join us multiple times during the school year to facilitate co-creation sessions.

Lauren Mountain, leads the United Way Youth Venture staff team in deploying Changemaking resources to North Central Mass. The remaining Change Leadership Team members comprise executive leadership of partnering organizations, Fitchburg Public Schools, Leominster Public Schools, and Mount Wachusett Community College.
Special Thanks

This year has been tremendously successful, with countless examples of teacher and student transformation. And much of this positive momentum would not have been possible without the wisdom and experience of three essential community leaders who are retiring and moving on to the next stage of their lives. While they may be moving on to new adventures, we can’t promise to let go of these heroes!

Though Gina Wironen retired in October of this year as veteran administrator of Leominster Public Schools, you wouldn’t know it by her continued laser beam focus on all things Changemaking. Gina juggled the transition to retired life with consistent check-ins and support for her colleagues in Leominster and the United Way Youth Venture staff team. She played a key role as connector of people and resources and provided ample opportunities for young people to have a voice at school committee meetings and in the local press.

Paula Giaquinto, referenced on the opposite page, interview feature, and Changemaker Trainers spread, will be retiring at the conclusion of the school year. With forty years of experience in Fitchburg Public Schools, to say that her guidance, intuition, and leadership have been indispensable. One of Paula’s talents is the ability to frame and explain the nuances of Changemaking in beautiful and poetic ways.

Founder of the school-based United Way Youth Venture model, Phil Grzewinski will retire as president and CEO of the United Way of North Central Mass and the Community Foundation at the end of June. His enduring vision and belief in the power of youth to make a difference was the catalyst for not only UWYY to blossom, but also sparked the seed for Changemaking to begin growing in North Central Mass.

WE ARE GROWING!

Beginning in the 2019-2020 academic year, we will welcome new Changemaker partners:

- Gardner Public Schools
- Fitchburg State University School of Education
- Winchendon Public Schools
- City of Fitchburg

New partners are invited to send a team of Changemakers to join in the Co-Creation sessions and will benefit from monthly Changemaker check-in touchpoints.
Rachel Vargeletis is a full-time Commonwealth Corps Service Member placed at MWCC through the Massachusetts Service Alliance in a 10-month, 1,500 hour volunteer capacity.

In her role at the college as Changemaker Innovator, Rachel devoted the majority of her service hours to supporting the Changemaker Initiative in Fitchburg and Leominster Public Schools. She created, designs, and writes about Changemaking in North Central Mass each month in our Changemaker Newsletter. This electronic publication not only shares stories of inspiration from all around us, but also provides ideas and challenges for individual wellness and personal growth as a Changemaker.

Rachel has done a phenomenal job capturing moments of collaboration, passion, and leadership across our community, and much of the content in this magazine is built from her journalistic efforts. Rachel was also responsible for our covert video project capturing students feelings about their Changemaking teachers and compiling them into a moving video that demonstrates the wide-ranging impact made this year.

As Rachel’s term of service winds to a close, we asked her to reflect on her Changemaking journey this year. From all of us here at MWCC to Rachel: we salute and thank you for your dedication, painstaking effort and the many sacrifices made this year to support this work while earning your Bachelor’s degree. And most of all, we thank you for being a Changemaker!

Dear Changemakers,

It seems like this year has gone by so incredibly fast! I think it has been too fast, but I might just be speaking for myself here. My time as a Commonwealth Corps Service Member for United Way Youth Venture is coming to an end this month, but I want to preface this letter by saying this won’t be the end. I also want to make sure every one of you understands what this chapter in my life has meant to me.

Over the course of these ten months of working side by side with all of you, I have met extraordinary people, made connections I only have dreamt of making, became a part of the overwhelmingly amazing, open, and honest Changemaker community, and learned an immense amount from every person I’ve had the pleasure of working with.

This year of being fully immersed in Changemaking has taught me to believe in myself and my power to make a difference and spark positive change. It has given me confidence. Confidence in my own abilities, my professional skills, and that I am a Changemaker.
I have learned some of what it means to be an educator in such a fast-paced and ever-changing society. I have listened to you all through the ups and downs of the year and I want to thank you all so much for letting me in and being vulnerable with me. This year has held much transformational change and ups and downs myself, and all of you have inspired me with the power of your resilience.

I have witnessed incredible and noteworthy growth in each of you from October to now, and it warms my heart like nothing else to have been able to be here to see that. I would not be the person I am today without this past year and every unique and individual experience and interaction I have had with all of you.

This Changemaker community in North Central Mass has a passion for education, teaching, learning, and creating Changemakers like nothing I have ever experienced before. You all have helped me find myself this year and identify what it is I plan to do with this bountiful life I have ahead of me.

I now understand my higher calling, and that is to stay in education, to continue to build an Ecosystem of Changemakers alongside you. And if I can become half as good an educator as any of you, I know I will have succeeded.

So thank you all so much for being an integral part of my growth, joy, and success this past year, and thank you for teaching me about myself, our community, and the world around us. I will never forget this special time as a Changemaker Innovator, and I take pride in knowing I will always be a part of the Changemaker community we have built, just as I know you all will too.

This year and my time here may be coming to an end, but I can assure you that it is only the very beginning of all the amazing things to come out of North Central Mass.

Best and Warmest Wishes,

Rachel Vargeletis
Changemaking Innovator
Commonwealth Corps Service Member
Everyone a Changemaker

World

CHANGEMAKER INITIATIVE OF NORTH CENTRAL MASS

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UNITED WAY YOUTH VENTURE PROGRAM OF MOUNT WACHUSETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

2018-2019 CHANGEMAKING PARTNERS

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