Full STE(A)M Ahead: Implementing STEM Programs in Recreation Worcester
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Introduction
Recreation Worcester Summer Program
- Free summer program for children ages 7 – 12 years old
- Located in 10 public parks across the City of Worcester
- Runs from 9am – 5:30 pm
- Provides two free meals for participants
- Activities include fun games, athletics, arts, and educational programs
- Employs 100+ local youths as summer counselors

Population Served
- Recreation Worcester Summer serves 1000+ children each summer
- More than 60% of students in Worcester Public Schools are economically disadvantaged - many of whom attend Recreation Worcester Summer program
- In 2016, 63% of participants identified as Hispanic/Latino or African American

Objectives
- To engage students at a young age and inspire in them an interest in Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) through hands-on experimentation
- To encourage students to consider a future in STEM careers
- To develop STEM programming for Recreation Worcester that can be used longitudinally in future summer and academic year programs

Project Outcomes
- Designed 6 week STEM curriculum for Recreation Worcester Summer 2018 filled with hands-on learning activities
- Piloted one week of activities during Summer 2017
- Example STEM Activities:
  - Human Body Week (Piloted)
    - Making Muscles Move – Examine how muscles and bones move our bodies through different exercises
    - Incredible Illusions – Explore how illusions trick our eyes and brains
    - Take Your Breath Away – Build a model lung to learn about how we breath
  - Chemistry Week
    - Turn Pennies Green – Learn about oxidation-reduction reactions and use them to turn pennies green
    - Super Spy Ink – Examine properties of acids and bases and pH by making colorful ink
    - Oozing Oobleck – Explore states of matter by making Oobleck which acts as both a solid and liquid
    - Rock Salt Ice Cream – Study the principles of freezing point depression and use it to make ice cream
  - Engineering Week
    - Design an Earthquake-proof Building
    - Build a Rube Goldberg Machine – Learn about simple machines and use to build a Rube Goldberg Machine
    - Pop Goes the Balloon (Drop) – Design and build a contraption that will prevent a water balloon dropped from 10 feet from popping

Future Directions
- Develop a better understanding of how students view STEM in school, in their lives, and in their future
- Evaluate whether STEM programming in Recreation Worcester changes how students view STEM
- Make further adjustments to curriculum to accommodate other age groups
- Develop additional STEM activities to be used by Recreation Worcester during the academic year

Acknowledgments
I would like to thank the following people for helping me with this project:

University of Massachusetts Medical School
Dr. Heather-Lyn Haley

Division of Youth Opportunities, City of Worcester
Raquel Castro-CorrAzini, Scott Dowling, Vianna Mercedes, Mariana Dos Santos, Matthew Woodruff, Amanda Medina, Audra Blankenship, Participants of the Mentoring Leadership Experience (MLE)

Resources
Recreation Worcester Community Benefits Contribution FY2016 Funding Report, Raquel Castro-CorrAzini