



Family-School Partnerships in Special Education

A World Café style forum was held in Keene NH on November 15, 2011 with participants representing families, schools and community members from Keene, Jaffrey, Troy, Swanzey and Hinsdale. On the back you will find a summary of the discussions that took place.

NH Connections will be holding three additional round table discussions focusing on:

- ✓ **Understanding how the newly adopted PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships can support family-school partnerships in special education.** December 8 at Claremont Savings Bank 145 Broad St Claremont co-hosted by ParentLinks from 6 to 8 pm
- ✓ **Strategies for using the results of the NH Department of Education's Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education in your school/district.** January 24, 2012 location TBD
- ✓ **Strategies for increasing your school/district's response rate for the NH Department of Education's Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education** March 6, 2012 location TBD

These discussions will provide you with an opportunity to learn new information about family school partnerships, to connect with others and to get new ideas. You will leave with concrete ideas and learn how to make a difference for your school.

Learn more about what NH Connections is doing to support improving family-school partnerships in special education at www.nhconnections.org.

Contact Denise Feeny, Regional Facilitator (603-224-7005) or dfeeny@picnh.org

What are the ingredients of a successful family-school partnership in special education?

This question fostered animated conversations with a great mix of “needed ingredients”. All agreed that the following are key for success:

- Individual contributions are respected as we work together to build relationships.
- Welcoming atmosphere where all individuals feel comfortable contributing.
- School personnel and families have open two way communication.
- Parents and educators have access to each other without barriers.
- A shared investment in the student as the reason we are all here.
- An open door school policy and a friendly tone from the top down.

How is your school a community?

As this discussion evolved we discovered that if the school has the “ingredients” from question one it indeed feels like a community where students in special education can succeed. This community is built through:

- A joint effort where parents and educators go above and beyond for the student.
- Administrators set a welcoming tone.
- An open acknowledgement of each others’ efforts and expertise in educating the student.

Who is responsible for educating children with disabilities and why?

The phrase “it takes a village,” was raised, corroborating the fact that schools, families, communities and beyond share the responsibility in educating our students. Our group believed it is a circular and reciprocal responsibility where all participants are responsible to each other in the process. Our group discussed how this collaborative effort will look different depending on the culture, norms, and ideals of the region. The group recognized that even with many “ingredients” in place for educating children with disabilities we need additional supports to be successful. All agreed that creative planning together is needed to compensate for lapses in financing.