



Fremont - SAU 83 Sit & Chat Forum

Exploring the Development of
Parent Partnership Group - June 1, 2011

Results of the World Cafe Style Forum Discussion

What is your idea of family school partnerships in special education? What is your vision for the group?

- Better communication between families and school and amongst families; regular, open communication
- The school staff/teacher's job to keep a parent informed and a parent's job to keep school staff informed
- Informational sessions; information night by staff to better explain testing, terminology and progress reports for parents
- Get support and resources from another parent; a strong resource group that provide support; a positive support group for those who want support
- Hear from another parent about the different paths/options; not reinvent the wheel; after a parent gets information (re: your child) from the school, get specific information/resources
- Foster respect; respectful collaboration between parents and school staff; collaborative approach to the whole process
- A more detailed explanation of special education process and terminology
- A place to learn from parents about the process in special education and share resources and to know who to speak with about certain things
- Who is accountable for what and what is the next step, to hold the school accountable?
- How can those involved hear our concerns?
- Advocacy group; resource sharing and advocacy
- Set up an e-mail/online forum for resources/direction

How does informing and involving families/staff about information help build family school partnerships in special education?

- Communication; equal no surprises; full disclosure
- Use of layman's terms -no jargon ,clarify - stop me if you have a question
- Family has special knowledge about student
- Sharing personal events
- Convey motivators
- Help to clarify and carryover and generalize between home and school; day to day support at home and school
- Gain insight
- Consistency
- Working together allows for accuracy
- Partnership allows for more give and take - honesty
- All working toward same goals
- Hard to give bad news to someone you don't know
- Creates respect for all roles
- Helps parents to still feel that they have influence
- Informing schools of concerns

- Removes walls - informal - less mechanical
- Opportunity to make connections
- "advocate hat," translate, decrease the overwhelming feeling-accountability (definitions)
- Reading your audience
- Gain feedback
- Sharing resources - re: politics
- Helps to set goals; make plans
- Updates
- It is in best interest of the child
- Helps to understand child
- Planning with the team - seeing issues beforehand
- Finding resources for parents in the area

What are the topics that staff/families wish they had more information about? What would you like to see included?

- Therapies that have worked or are available; outside the normally provided ones; Music Therapy and how it would help students and ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis); Therapeutic Listening in schools; providers of alternative therapies in the area
- Have specialist present at a meeting to describe each therapy in general overview
- Sensory integration
- Visual Perceptual
- iPads apps (applications) to use in schools
- Resource list with parent reviews of doctors in the area (dentist, hairdresser, etc.)
- Respite providers in the area that families use
- Troubleshooting process for identification, insurance -how to access outside therapy
- Special Olympics, recreational activities (not therapy based) that are available and are understanding; summer camps/swim programs/yoga programs in the area that are understanding
- List of available resources in the area
- Information on special education process; definition list for special education lingo and acronyms; difference between 504 and IEP (Individualized Education Program)
- Special education as a whole and how it affects the kids and how the process works through transitions as kids grow
- What is true inclusion? How to teach regular education and special education and parents what inclusion is and is not
- What "LRE" (Least Restrictive Environment) means
- What "FAPE" (Free and Appropriate Public Education) means and how it affects students

What information or resources are available in the schools? Where do you find these resources? Do you have resources/information to share?

- Parent Information Center (PIC), Easter Seals, Institute on Disability, Miracles Farms, Area Agencies - One Sky/Gateways, staff at Ellis School will refer to other resources
- Nashua Area Agency website (parent get to post on a message board), and Manchester area website
- SMH Spectrum program - out and community
- early interventions - Achieving Connections; child development center - evaluations

- People are resources- classroom and special education teacher, out of district coordinator, special education director, principal, case manager/teacher, social worker, screenings- school evaluations (i.e. Sensory), parents - you are your own advocate!
- School partnership with therapeutic horseback riding; horseback riding (North Road)- 4H -> Kingston Barn, Wings & Hooves Therapeutic Riding
- Katie Beckett waiver
- NDI website that will send material about different diagnosis
- NH State Library Family Resource Connection - Nancy Christinao
- Library of information about special education (between parents and school- lending library)
- Searching the web (knowing more about funding)
- Understanding of the IEP process, captures your child
- You are made aware of rights
- Booklet of acronyms and special education process
- Worrying with funding cutting of resources- resources going away
- Appreciate feedback and communication

Possible Next Steps:

- Begin to send out info on topics identified at forum via email - ex: special education acronyms
- Put together a welcome letter/ resource packet for our parents who are just beginning the special education process -informing them of the parent/school partnership with really great resources both on the web and around NH
- Coordinate "survey" asking parents to rank the free PIC trainings in order to set up a fall line-up.
- Showing the film "Including Samuel"
- Hosting the 8-hour NH Connections Parent Leadership in Special Education Training in the fall.