

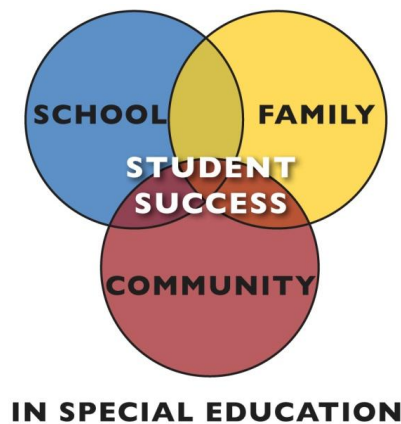


Partnerships for Student Success in Special Education

NH Connections provides technical assistance, training, and resources to your school district to enhance strategies to improve parent involvement and to effectively engage in partnerships in special education. NH Connections is now helping districts to prepare for improvement in the results of the Parent Involvement Survey. Call NH Connections today for suggestions!

Table of Contents

<i>Why Partnerships for Student Success</i>	3
<i>Promotion of Partnerships – Ten Strategies for Success</i>	4
1. <i>Family, school, and community partners</i>	5
2. <i>Acting together for shared interests</i>	6
3. <i>An opportunity to build relationships</i>	7
4. <i>Parents becoming informed</i>	8
5. <i>Parent Leadership Training</i>	9
6. <i>Professional Approach</i>	11
7. <i>Recognition that we are all part of the solution</i>	12
8. <i>Opportunity to share experiences and resources</i>	13
9. <i>Mutual Respect and Understanding of the IEP TEAM</i>	14
10. <i>Participating in the special education process and meetings</i>	15
<i>Contact NH Connections</i>	16



To find out how you can receive technical assistance and professional development for your school/school district contact the NH Connections.

Why Partnerships for Student Success

The Partnership for Student Success (P4SS) in Special Education Guide provides ten concepts to establish structure of meetings and connections to create and sustain relationships in your school community among school personnel and parents of children with disabilities.

- Developed by NH Connections
- Provides strategies to support districts and parent groups
 - To assist districts to collaborate with parent groups
 - To provide step by step guidance to foster the health and sustainability of a group in your district
 - To offer activities taking a professional approach
 - To create a welcoming environment
 - To engage family involvement in special education
- The P4SS includes
 - A Guide of Information sheets
 - Templates and forms
 - Resource links
 - Checklists
 - PowerPoint to help guide groups



This **P4SSinSE Guide black and white** can be downloaded and printed. It is available as a pdf and as a word document that can be modified to suit the needs of the district. It can be used as a booklet or as separate informational sheets.

The strategies offered in the P4SS Guide are key components for the success of the special education community relationships and ultimately the success of children in special education. Key concepts include inform the parents of the special education process, act together for shared interests, create opportunities to build relationships, use a professional approach, recognize that we are all part of the solution, provide opportunities to share resources and experiences, create mutual respect and understanding of all partners, and encourage participation of parents in their child's IEP and in the school community to support district priorities of children in special education.

As the concepts in the guide are implemented, the collaborations between school personnel and parents of children with disabilities will be improved and ensure quality decisions are made. Informed school personnel and parents working in collaboration with the special education team will be better used to ensure the success of children in your district.

Promotion of Partnerships – Ten Strategies for Success

Creating partnerships for student success is a unique opportunity for families, school staff, and community members to hold conversations about issues relating to the success of students who receive special education. Following are 10 strategies to promote a successful partnership group.

Partnership groups promote:

1. Family, school staff, and community member partnerships.
2. Acting together for shared interests.
3. Opportunities to build relationships.
4. Parents becoming informed.
5. Parent leadership.
6. A professional approach.
7. Recognition that we are all part of the solution.
8. Opportunities to share experiences and resources.
9. Mutual respect and understanding for various members of the IEP Team.
- 10.** Participation in the Special Education process and meetings.



www.nhconnections.org

1. Family, school, and community partners

Reasoning and suggestions:

“The main reason to create partnerships is to help all children to succeed in school and in life. When families are involved, students hear common messages from home and school about the importance of attending school, staying in school, and working hard as a student.

There are many benefits for developing family, school and community partnerships. Partnerships can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with other families in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work.

Joyce L. Epstein, Karen L. Mapp, and Anne T. Henderson.

“Embrace a philosophy of partnership and be willing to share power with families. Make sure that parents, school staff, and community members understand that the responsibility for children’s educational development is a collaborative enterprise”.

Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

Getting started with family, school and community partners

For all potential partners ...

- Meet with the NH Connections Regional Support Network facilitator.
- Review the technical assistance that can be provided to your team.
- Ask how the facilitator can help create partnership teams in your district.

For parents ...

- Meet with the school Special Education or Education Director/Coordinator. Ask if they or their staff would like to partner as a way to hold conversations about special education issues.
- Talk to parents– see enclosed survey template to help you to define needs and expectations.

For school administrators or staff ...

- Meet with your administration team. Ask if they or their staff would like to create a partnership group as a way to hold conversations about special education issues and a way to address Indicator 8, Parent Involvement.
- Consider identifying a staff member responsible for increasing parental involvement and teacher preparedness.
- Prepare your special education teachers with strategies to address parent participation and involvement.
- Ask NH Connections for guidance on professional development for educators.
- Talk to parents– see enclosed survey template to help you to define needs and expectations.

2. Acting together for shared interests

“The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life”

(A New Generation of Evidence, Henderson and Berla (1994, p. 1).

Three decades of research have demonstrated that parent-family involvement is a “critical element of effective schooling”
(Mental Health in Schools Training and Technical Assistance Center, 1996).

Begin to share:

Discuss what group teams will achieve.

Conduct a brainstorming session or use world café –style forum to share members’ ideas and interests. Begin to develop your group goals.

The group can research issues by talking to students, parents, siblings, teachers, para-professionals and administrators.

The group can then prioritize what they would like to work on in their schools and then talk about the involvement of each member partner.

List all of your ideas.

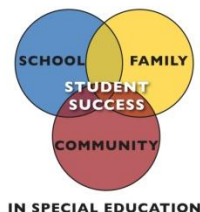
Your group should focus on one or two goals.

If required, have your members vote on the issues.

The group can then unite together to work the goals that receive the most votes.

Define what your group is about, state your mission, and summarize your goals into a press release that the group can send out to the local newspaper and through email.

Share the group goals with as many family, school and community members as possible.



www.nhconnections.org

3. An opportunity to build relationships

The Meeting Time is Here: Creating a welcoming environment.

Prepare

- Choose a neutral meeting place.
- Be ready before members and guests or presenters arrive.
- Be sure the meeting place is sign-posted clearly and people can find their way easily.

Physical environment

- Keep main gathering area uncluttered.
- Have seating ready beforehand.
- Maintain workable meeting room temperature.

As Members and Guests Arrive

- Greet and welcome people warmly.
- Make sure you personally greet everyone who comes.
- Serve light snacks to create a welcoming atmosphere.
- Have a sign-in sheet to collect contact information.
- Observe how conversations flow as people eat, drink and visit.
- Be alert to greet those who are alone and first time visitors.
- Stay on your feet during the welcome and wait for latecomers.

Begin with a funny story or headline from the news

- Give everyone a chance to laugh and smile.
- Get participants talking in an informal way and help them to relax.
- Allow members get to know one another. This time can help to provide memory pegs.
- Draw visitors into the group in a non-threatening way.
- Serve as a practical reminder that we are all in similar situations and face similar challenges.

As members and guests leave

- Encourage connections between members.
- Share contact information.
- Thank everyone for coming.



IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

www.nhconnections.org

4. *Parents becoming informed*

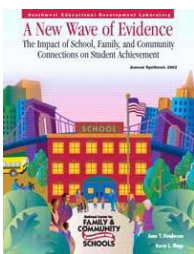
NH Connections encourages training as a frequent event on P4SS schedule. Sharing resources such as parent and teacher workshops strengthens relationships between partners. The Parent Information Center and NH Connections offer workshops that you can host to provide an opportunity for people to gather, learn and support one another.

Invite local experts to speak. Educators, special educators, administrators, parents and local community service organizations have specialists who can provide trainings on specific issues related to improving student success. This will build community and relationships within your district.

Specialists are also listed on the Speakers' Bureau page of the nhconnections.org website.

“Work with families to build their social and political connections.”

The lack of social and political capital can seriously restrict families' capacity to support their children's learning and make sure they get a high-quality education. When parents feel they have the power to change and control their circumstances, children tend to do better in school. Their parents are also better equipped to help them. When schools work with families to develop their connections, families become powerful allies of schools and advocates for public education.



The New Wave of Evidence is a review of research on parent involvement and student achievement. Taken together, the studies strongly suggest that when parents are involved in their children's education at home, their children do better in school. When parents are involved at school, their children go further in school, and the schools they go to become better. Programs to improve achievement are more likely to have positive results if they engage

families.

A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp (2002)

5. Parent Leadership Training

Parents are partners to increase successful educational outcomes for students with disabilities. NH Connections offers professional development to develop parents as leaders to support their successful participation on partnership teams, including school improvement teams and other collaborative entities that improve outcomes for students with disabilities, and working with parent-teacher organizations.

Developing Leadership Skills

Developing parent leadership skills is presented in six 2 hour sessions or two all day sessions.

The NH Connections Parent Leadership Series provides information and training for developing effective partnerships between school faculty and parents of children with disabilities. Training will develop the leadership skills suggested for effective partnerships with schools and working with parent-teacher organizations and school improvement efforts.

The phrase “knowledge is empowering” summarizes the overall conclusion of a study of the long-term effects of Kentucky’s Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) training on its decade of graduates, from 1997-2006. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, the study tracked if parents’ participation in the leadership program had a continuing effect well beyond their training period in the areas of educational advocacy and involvement. Follow-up evaluation discovered that: Fellows (the name by which CIPL graduates are known) changed their perspective on educational involvement from being concerned primarily about their own children to promoting the best interests of all children. Fellows sustained their post-training involvement, and, in fact, broadened its scope beyond their children’s schools. Fellows reported that they felt empowered to act based on their new levels of knowledge, and that their activity stemmed directly from the confidence and competence they gained from their CIPL training. Fellows not only became more actively involved, but also became more influential. © 2008 Presidents and Fellows of Harvard College
Published by Harvard Family Research Project <http://www.hfrp.org/>



www.nhconnections.org

Parent Leadership Series

This series of workshops gives parents the skills to assume leadership positions in their child's school and district groups.

Benefits to a District to develop parents as leaders:

- Someone equipped to help other parents understand and navigate the special education system
- Someone who understands the district position of special education issues and topics
- Someone who will support the district at school board meetings
- Someone who can nurture collaboration among parents and educators
- Someone who is adept at identifying the school needs and figuring out what needs to be done
- Someone who is able to enlist, advocate for, and represent other parents on behalf of the school's students
- Someone who can act as a bridge between educators and parents
- Someone who can work with school administrators and teachers
- Someone who can offer themselves as a resource to teachers and administrators

Components of the Parent Leadership Series include:

The Basics—An Overview of the NH Special Education Process

This workshop provides participants with an introduction to the NH special education process. It includes a brief overview of each step, a description of the important role parents have in the process, and how to navigate the special education system in your district.

Rising to the Leadership Challenge

Parents will learn to understand and use exemplary leadership practices; develop a shared vision; mobilize and enlist others to act; understand the roles and responsibilities of members within a partnership; and celebrate every success!

Developing Effective Partnership Teams

This session teaches how to set SMART goals; develop effective Action Plans; understand the basic principles of partnership; understand the stages of partnership development; develop strategies for effective communication and collaboration; and obtain official funding and support.

Me, You, Us and Them: Diversity in Practice

The goal of this workshop is to increase awareness, knowledge and skills required to function effectively in team and community settings with cultural, ethnic, gender and generational differences.

Parents and Educators Working Together

Effective and frequent parent-teacher communication is essential for ensuring your child's academic success. This session teaches parents how to: understand positions vs. interests as a means to mediate conflict; develop a variety of effective home/school communication strategies; and prepare for successful parent/teacher conferences.

Taking the Next Step

The final session will give participants an opportunity to apply what they have learned by choosing a project — large or small — and developing an action plan individually or in partnership with others. We will also celebrate the graduates of the Parent Leadership Series.

6. Professional Approach

Seven Norms of Collaboration

Pause

Don't be in competition for air space.

Taking time to pause and think is a way to increase productivity and satisfaction.

Paraphrase

Signal your intention to paraphrase, "So, you're suggesting..."

Choose a logical level with which to respond:

1. Acknowledge and clarify content and emotion
2. Summarize and organize
3. Shift focus to a higher or lower logical level

Probe for specificity

Ask for clarification to vague nouns and pronouns (they), action words (improve), comparators (best), rule words (shouldn't), and universal quantifiers (everyone).

Put ideas on the table

When individuals own ideas, other group members tend to interact with the speaker out of their feeling for and relationship to the speaker rather than with the ideas presented. To have an idea be received in the spirit in which you tell it, label your intentions, "This is one idea..." or "Here is a thought." Pull an idea off the table when you believe it is blocking the progress.

Pay attention to self and others

Be aware of what you are saying and how you are saying it. Include paying attention to your posture, gesture, proximity, muscle tension, facial expression, and the pitch, pace, volume, and inflection in your voice.

Presume positive intentions

Positive assumptions reduce the possibility of the listener perceiving threats or challenges in a summary of what has been said or a question.

Pursue a balance between advocacy and inquiry

The intention of advocacy is to influence the thinking of others. Group members sometimes attempt to influence with volume and passion. Advocacy works through revealing logic and the chain of reasoning that supports assumptions and conclusions. The power of advocacy increases when it is structured to influence multiple audiences. Global reasoners increase their impact when they learn to frame issues for concrete and sequential thinkers. Those driven by logic and facts increase their influence when they learn to frame their ideas within feelings and emotions.

Adapted from Chapter 3, The Adaptive School By Robert J. Garmston and Bruce M. Wellman

7. Recognition that we are all part of the solution

Partnership for Student Success in Special Education strengthens collaborative decision making whereby solutions are accepted by all parties involved.

To understand that we are all part of the solution first we need to:

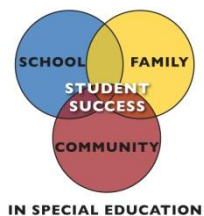
- Consider the most pressing issues
- Research the facts that create and surround the problem
- Ask - what part we play?
 - who has the power to influence change ?
 - what can we change now, and in the future?
- Identify our partners who have shared interests in finding a mutually acceptable solution.

To practice shared decision making, the group might create a Meeting Survey (see template in this guide). Members collaborate on the selection of questions, create and issue the survey, and use the responses to research their most pressing issues.

Once the group has established.....

1. **Mission statement** - Short enough to deliver during side-walk conversations, but clear as to “what the group is about”.
2. **Goals** - what issues will the group address?
3. **Actions planning** - what and who. See sample in this guide.
4. **Funding and sustainability**- See ‘funding opportunities’.

.....Then work can begin.



www.nhconnections.org

8. Opportunity to share experiences and resources

Venue for success

- Ensure the meeting is structured to encourage participation.
- Develop a resource exchange area or file.
- Ask participants to make recommendations – book swap etc.
- Allow time for sharing of experiences.
- Provide writing materials.
- Invite agenda items.
- Start an online group.
- Publish a newsletter/ memorandums/ or press releases.
- Complete meeting surveys, (see example) and discuss results.
- Create communication format that all can contribute toward.
- Display ‘work’ on flip charts.
- Capture flip-chat information via digital camera and circulate.
- Report back to group findings and results of research.
- Share the mission and contact information with others.
- Encourage affiliations with other groups and organizations.
- Have fun!

“When partners collaborate, they share resources, power, and authority to achieve goals which could not be achieved independently”.

(Kagan, 1991). Kagan, S. L. (1991). United we stand: Collaboration for child care and early education services. New York: Teachers College Press.

9. Mutual Respect and Understanding of the IEP TEAM

Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams are made up of parents, school personnel, and other individuals who bring different perspectives and expertise to the table. Pooling their knowledge, team members create a plan to address student's unique needs taking into account the strengths and talents of the student. The end product is the individualized education program designed for the student. The IEP is a partnership for student success!

How do Partnership for Student Success Members become Respectful, Relevant and Resourceful?

BY...

- Developing meaningful two-way communication
- Promoting efficient time management
- Documenting proceedings
- Clearly defining their roles and responsibilities
- Considering perspectives of the student and all others
- Allowing time to process - listening and validating
- Being Punctual - Prepared - Present
- Valuing efforts, and praising frequently
- Demonstrating parent leadership
- Encouraging professional development
- Asking questions, and learning the process
- Becoming informed through training and experience sharing
- Bringing coffee and donuts!

To learn more about the Special Education process Call PIC at (603) 224-7005.
Ask for the Steps in the Special Education Process booklet.

10. Participating in the special education process and meetings

In successful IEP Team meetings, members have a mutual respect and understanding for one another's roles and responsibilities.

Effective communication strategies are key so that all perspectives are heard and considered. Meetings bring an opportunity to further develop a partnership to ensure student success.

How do Partnership members participate?

BY...

- Understanding the Special Education process.
- Preparing questions and concerns to share before and during the meetings.
- Speaking up: sharing concerns and asking questions.
- Capturing the proceedings and sharing notes with members.
- Clearly understanding members' roles and responsibilities.
- Putting the student first in all actions.
- Listening and affirming your understanding.
- Being Punctual - Prepared – Present.
- Thinking about how ideas discussed can be implemented.
- Understanding the student's IEP and how progress will be reported, and celebrated!
- Becoming informed through training and experience sharing.
- Using the Team Meeting Survey to improve participation.

Contact NH Connections

NH CONNECTIONS STAFF

Deborah A. Rosato
Director, NH Connections
800.947.7005 in NH 603.224.7005 ext. 35 or
603.848.4204
drosato@picnh.org

Region Facilitators

Marlene Marchand
North Country
603.466.2089
mmarchand@picnh.org

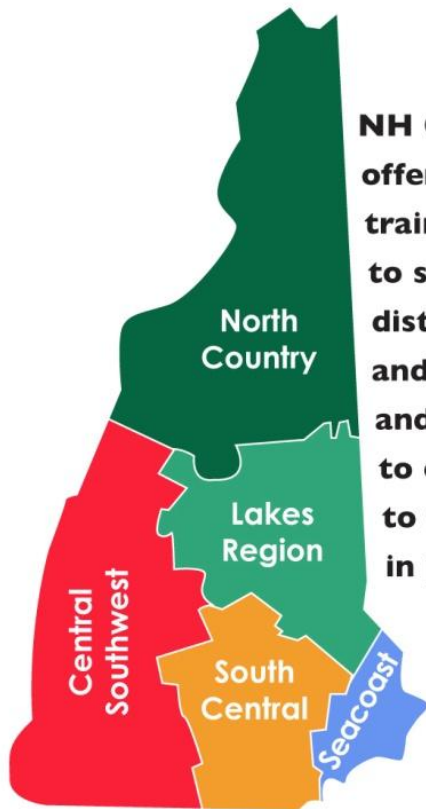
Audrey Burke
Concord/Lakes
603.860.7015
aburke@picnh.org

Liz Macdonald
Central/South West
603. 866.3111
lmacdonald@picnh.org

Deborah Rosato (Interim)
Seacoast
603.848.4204
drosato@picnh.org

Joe Hatch
South Central
603. 848.4251
jhatch@picnh.org

P.O. Box 2405 Concord, NH
03302-2405
603.224.7005
800.947.7005
Fax: 603.224.4365
www.nhconnections.org



NH Connections offers education, training, and support to schools/school districts, parents and family members, and community leaders to enhance strategies to effectively engage in partnerships.

www.nhconnections.org