



Spark NH Vision: All New Hampshire children and their families are healthy, learning, and thriving now and in the future.

Spark NH Mission: Provide leadership that promotes a comprehensive, coordinated, sustainable early childhood system that achieves positive outcomes for young children and families, investing in a solid future for the Granite State.

Director's Report – December 10, 2015

Spark NH Council Proposed Bylaws Changes

The Executive Committee approved the attached proposed changes to the Council Bylaws (the document has the edits in “track changes”. The changes are as follows:

1. Changing the terms of officers of the Executive Committee to 2 years
2. Adding the immediate past Chair of the Council as an additional Executive Committee member for one year following the end of her term as Chair. This will help to ensure continuity of leadership.
3. Changing the Annual Meeting to December (from October when our Fiscal year was October – September).
4. Changing language about “electing” officers to reflect our consensus model.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have about these. Erika will be calling for your consensus to approve these changes at the meeting.

Vroom Planning Grant

Spark NH has submitted a grant to the Endowment for Health to develop a plan with key stakeholders to launch Vroom statewide. For those of you not familiar, Vroom was developed by the Bezos Family Foundation to help parents, grandparents and other significant adults in a young child's life to turn everyday moments into brain building moments. The implementation of Vroom in NH will bolster the ongoing work of Spark NH and its partners in creating a culture shift around the first five years of life. We should hear about whether the grant has been awarded in late January.

Regional Early Childhood Initiative Reports

I am very pleased to introduce what I hope will be an ongoing part of the Spark NH Director's report and Spark NH Newsletter. The regional early childhood development initiatives participating in the Spark NH Community of Practice will be providing short updates on the work they are doing.

You may remember that Spark NH received a grant from the Endowment for Health to support the creation of a Community of Practice among the directors regional, cross sector, early childhood initiatives in the state. These include Belknap County's Financial Stability Partnership- Early Childhood Workgroup, the Carroll County Early Childhood Coalition, the Coos Coalition for Young Children and Families, Impact Monadnock, Project LAUNCH Manchester, and the Early Childhood coordinators of the Safe Schools Healthy Students initiatives in Concord and Rochester. (The Laconia Safe Schools Healthy Students currently does not have an early childhood coordinator.)

Spark NH's mission is to *provide leadership that promotes a comprehensive, coordinated, sustainable early childhood system that achieves positive outcomes for young children and families, investing in a solid future for the Granite State.* A critical part of the work of Spark NH is to be the connector between all the great work being done for young children and families in the state and highlight best practices. That is why I am so thrilled for you to be able to read about all the innovative work happening in these regional initiatives. As you learn more about the initiatives, I encourage you think about what collaborations and connections you can make with these groups and their work in the future. I continue to be excited and energized by their work and think you will be too!

Belknap County Financial Stability Partnership - Early Childhood Workgroup

Goals

- Licensed Plus Child Care – Increase the number of high quality child care centers
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3 (ASQ3) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social Emotional (ASQ-SE) Screenings for all children birth to 8 in Belknap County
- Busy Corner "Pop Up" Farm Stand -Promote optimal child development through health and nutrition education, and food preparation demonstrations
- Trauma Informed Early Childhood Services Trainings
- Rivers Edge Project "Make It REEL" *Affordable, Quality, Infant Care Meets Affordable Housing - at River's Edge* - Project Funding \$50,000 Harvard Pilgrim grant to the Lakes Region Partnership for Public Health GROW project (pop-up food stands), \$22,500 for River's Edge Early Learning LRGHealthcare, Granite United Way, Agnes Lindsay Trust.

Population-Level Indicators updated 6/19/2015

- % of children receiving subsidized care, enrolled in quality child care - 43.34% (DHHS)
- % of children "off schedule" using the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE - 16.25% (DOE)
- % of children "off track" in reading and math according to 3rd grade assessment scores
- Reading 28%, Math 33% (DOE)
- Child poverty rate (up to 200% of federal level) - 14.7% (Kids Count)

Updates on Current Activities

- "Pop Up" Farm Stands and Food Demonstrations
- Essential elements for successful childhoods include engaged, supportive parents and teachers, and early health, nutrition and learning" (Heckman, 2015).
- GROW Lakes Region received a 3 year grant, from Harvard Pilgrim, to offer year-round farm stands and food preparation demonstrations. The events will take place twice a week throughout the Lakes Region- with the main focus on child care centers and subsidized housing complexes.
- Rivers Edge Early Learning (REEL)
- Supporting breastfeeding in child care promotes healthy babies, mothers, and communities – and saves money.
- River's Edge Early Learning (REEL), a partnership between Lakes Region Child Care Services (LRCCS), Lakes Region General Healthcare, and the Laconia Area Community Land Trust, will provide early care and development services for infants within the Land Trust's new supportive housing site. Funding from LRGHealthcare will focus on environments for breastfeeding, general hygiene, and the storage and preparation of breast milk. LRGHealthcare will also provide ongoing breast feeding education and support within/outside of the program. REEL will be staffed and managed by LRCCS.

Carroll County Early Childhood Coalition

The Carroll County Early Childhood Coalition (CCECC) was established in June 2015 through a partnership between Granite United Way and Children Unlimited, the Family Resource Center for Carroll County. The mission of the CCECC is to establish and promote an early childhood coalition that provides for the optimal development of children and families living in Carroll County, ensuring all children enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn and thrive. Coalition participants include Carroll County SAU staff, home visiting programs, physical and mental healthcare providers, Childcare Aware, Head Start, Family-Centered Early Supports and Services, Carroll County Coalition for Public Health, and other interested community members.

We are developing strategies with shared indicators to help determine if all Carroll County children and their families are healthy, learning and thriving now and in the future. We have chosen the following early childhood success indicators that have also been used by other coalitions to guide our work:

1. A 2-part developmental screening indicator:

- a. Percent of children birth-5 receiving ASQ and ASQ-SE screening once a year.
 - b. Percent of children referred for further assessment and treatment, if indicated.
2. Increase number of families receiving prenatal and postnatal home-based nursing visits.

The Carroll County Early Childhood Coalition is a member of Spark NH's Early Childhood Community of Practice and greatly values the opportunity to share and collaborate with other early childhood regional partnerships in supporting Spark NH's mission of creating a comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable early childhood system.

Coos Coalition for Young Children and Families

The Coos Coalition for Young Children and Families was created to support the healthy development of the next generation in Coos County. Using the research on the importance of early brain development as a foundation, the organizations in Coos serving young children came together to create a plan that will ensure that our youngest children have the strongest base possible for their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development.

Currently, the Coalition is collaborating with primary school educators, early care and education providers, family support workers, mental health professionals, healthcare providers and families in Coos to inform the community about the importance of early social and emotional development and the resources available to Coos families. In addition, the Coalition has also put into place two main strategies.

The first strategy focuses on timely screening for post-partum and maternal depression and yearly child development screenings to identify potential problems and make referrals for further professional assessment. So far, we have provided developmental screening to over one quarter of the children birth through five in Coos and insured that those identified with delays were referred for help.

The second strategy insures that early childhood professionals working with young children have the knowledge and skills to support and strengthen each child's social and emotional growth. Our Home visiting programs now use a new curriculum, Growing Great Kids and 80% of the families who have used this program have improved in their parenting skills.

The good news is we know what to do and how to do it. There are 1,300 children aged 0-5 in Coos County. Together, we can make sure that every child in Coos has the strongest foundation possible.

Impact Monadnock

This spring, the newest Early Childhood Development Initiative in New Hampshire was launched in the Monadnock Region. Spearheaded by a local non-profit organization called [Impact Monadnock](#), and supported by a backbone partnership between Monadnock United Way and Spark NH, the Initiative's vision is that all children and their families are healthy, learning and thriving, now and in the future.

The Initiative targets children age 0-5 based on comprehensive research which shows the long-term benefits that accrue to the wellbeing of an entire community by prioritizing the success of its youngest residents. A 2014 [community wellbeing report](#) which outlines the reasons behind Impact Monadnock's population focus states: "Healthy children who live in a nurturing home, school, and community environment are more likely to achieve success in school and seek career opportunities after high school that contribute to economic growth."

The Initiative is using a Collective Impact (CI) strategy to build a coalition of support in the community and to establish the infrastructure to provide leadership and resources to sustain the long-term viability of its work. CI is used by many organizations to solve complex social problems and stresses the importance of community voice.

Since the Initiative's launch:

- A project director has been hired
- A community-based Steering Committee representing a variety of constituencies - from business to educators - has been formed
- Strategic planning has begun
- A region wide summit has been held to make the business case for investing in early childhood

For more information about Impact Monadnock and the Initiative please visit www.impactmonadnock.org

Project LAUNCH

Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health), a federal initiative funded by SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), is pioneering new ways to promote young child wellness. Project LAUNCH NH is working to ensure Manchester's agencies work together to provide children and families a great start. The population of focus is pregnant women, children ages birth to 8 and their families, and refugees and immigrants. The goal is for all children to enter school with the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills they need to succeed. The Manchester Community Health Center has contracted with Easter Seals Child Development and Family Resource Center, SNHS Head Start, Child and Family Services, and the Manchester Health Department to improve collaboration and integrate culturally relevant, quality early learning, physical, and behavioral health services. We're building strong partnerships that will lead to the replication of successful practices we've tried in Manchester and sustainable systems improvements that will last beyond the life of the project.

Project LAUNCH's Five direct service Prevention and Promotion Strategies include:

1. Increasing Developmental Screening – A Watch Me Grow Coordinator recruits programs to participate, receive training, screen children, and ensure follow-up and referral on developmental screenings.
2. Integrating Behavioral Health into Primary Care – A Care Coordinator and Community Health Workers help families access services and supports in the community
3. Mental Health Consultation in Early Care and Education – Behavioral Support Coaches work with teachers to increase their knowledge of child development and how to respond to children displaying challenging behaviors
4. Enhanced Home Visiting – A Mental Health Assessment Worker uses video to help parents discover the strengths in their interactions with their children and build their relationships with each other. A Technical Assistance Specialist offers training and support to home visitors.

Spark NH serves as the state-level coordinating council for Project LAUNCH, supporting efforts to enhance Manchester's early childhood system to ensure its children and families are healthy, learning, and thriving now and in the future and expand the services and system-building activities throughout the state.

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant Initiative – Department of Education Statewide Initiative

Beginning early in life, social and emotional learning (SEL) is highly important for helping preschool children to understand and manage their emotions, feel and show empathy for others, establish healthy relationships, set positive goals, and make responsible decisions. The Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Planning Project is designed to promote the successful development of social and emotional skills that will lead to future healthy interpersonal relationships, association with nonviolent peers, and improved academic achievement.

This past year, the SS/HS Project has been committed to expanding the use of Watch Me Grow, increasing capacity of early childhood professionals in the areas of early childhood and family mental health, and engagement in culturally responsive practices with all children and their families. The grant is in Laconia, Concord and Rochester.

Safe Schools/Healthy Students - Concord School District

The Concord Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant Initiative has strengthened its efforts to promote early childhood social and emotional learning and development for all children. During the fall of 2015 grant activities have included;

- Outreach to Concord Early Childhood Preschool and Child Care programs to determine current enrollments and needs of young children and their families.
- Increased participation at the three Family Center programs (Mill Brook, Jennings Drive and the Heights). Plans for the opening of an additional center at Beaver Meadow School are in the works.
- Increased opportunities to conduct social-emotional screenings (ASQ-SE) for young children. Screenings have been offered at the Concord School District Child Check, during home visits and at Family Center sessions. A strong collaborative effort with our Watch Me Grow partner, Child and Family Services has allowed us to offer more screenings to families.
- Ongoing commitment to offer high quality professional development opportunities for the Early Childhood Community. Trainings on providing positive behavioral supports, dealing with temper tantrums, and creating positive behavior support plans for students have been well-attended.
- Collaboration to offer a series of parent trainings and workshops this fall has resulted in an ongoing series, which have been enthusiastically received by parents and caregivers, with plans to offer more workshops in the winter and spring.
- A dedication to offering culturally responsive activities in order to include and welcome all families.

Safe Schools/Healthy Students – Rochester School District

The REACH pre-school program is an important part of the Rochester School Department. The pre-school program services Rochester early learners (3 to 5) with many different ability levels. The program is located on the campus of the East Rochester Elementary School, which is on 773 Portland Street. The Pre-School/REACH program is separate from the ERS building, as we have our own building to meet the needs of our early learners. The philosophy of our program is that All Children Learn, Play, Share and Grow Together allowing all to develop at their own personal pace. Our classrooms are integrated and placement of students is based on classroom openings, and not student ability levels.

REACH has four classrooms staffed by highly educated and outstanding staff. All our classroom teachers are N.H. Highly Qualified (HQT), with N.H. certifications in Early Childhood Special Ed, along with Master level degrees. The program also has state licensed Speech Pathologist, Occupational and, Physical Therapist, and a school nurse as part of our support staff. Our Para Educators are also Highly Qualified and well trained in early childhood education.

The pre-school program uses the same Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS), Everyday Math, Reading Street, and Handwriting With-Out Tears that is aligned with the Rochester School District. The PBIS provides a school culture and climate that respects all learners and their families. The program uses the New Hampshire Early Learning Standards for 3 to 5 years old.

The REACH program has two morning sessions for our younger students M-W-F and Tue-Th that both run from 8:50 to 11:00 AM. The afternoon session is for our older students and it runs M-T-Th-F from 12:00 to 2:30, with No afternoon class on Wednesday. The program follows the Rochester school District calendar and during inclement weather if there is a 2 hour delay, there is No Morning Program. If you have any questions regarding the Rochester pre-school/REACH program, or need additional information, please call us at 603-332-2146.

The Rochester School Department is also using the ASQ-SE to do developmental screening at Kindergarten registration and will also be screening 3 & 4year olds in their preschool program using the ASQ-SE.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Milliken,
Director, Spark NH

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." - *Helen Keller*