



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 – February 25, 2016

New Hampshire's State of the State

On February 4, Governor Hassan drew attention to the importance of early childhood in her State of the State Address. The work of Spark NH and our Framework for Action were highlighted. She said: *"Spark New Hampshire has outlined a framework to ensure that our state's children have the opportunity that they deserve to live healthy lives, receive a high-quality education, and experience economic stability at home."* She went on to talk about building on the Framework, calling out some of the policies recommended in the document as part of her Gateway to Work initiative. You can view the speech at <http://www.wmur.com/politics/full-video-gov-maggie-hassans-2016-state-of-the-state-address/37821984>. The mention of Spark NH begins at 27 minutes.

Framework for Action

The Spark New Hampshire Framework for Action policy paper is now available at [http://sparknh.com/uploads/files/Framework%20for%20Action%20Spark%202016_%202-3-16_sm\(2\).pdf](http://sparknh.com/uploads/files/Framework%20for%20Action%20Spark%202016_%202-3-16_sm(2).pdf).

I will also have hard copies for you at the meeting. As you know, this was the product of over a year of work by the Spark NH Policy Committee with guidance from New Hampshire Policy experts.

We had hoped to introduce the Framework for Action to the legislature on February 11, but unfortunately had to reschedule. We will keep you posted as to when the presentation will occur.

Here is what we're saying about the Framework (and what you can say too):

- To achieve the best outcomes for our children, our business and civic leaders need a framework for action that is grounded in the science of what children need for health and well-being.
- The policy recommendations are not presented in any order of prioritization – there is no wrong place to start. The document is organized by the core domains of children's development - health, learning and family economic stability – as well as the systems that serve children and their families.
- Each of the ten policy recommendations is accompanied by a summary of why the recommendation is important; identifies national and state policies currently in place; and discusses challenges facing our state, including steps we might take to address these challenges.
- Spark NH does not lobby, and so does not and will not endorse specific pieces of legislation. We do, however, have a core goal of raising public awareness and educating the public about both the causes of and solutions to children's developmental needs. This report is meant to advise policymakers, community leaders and others working on innovative solutions by summarizing existing and best practices in child and family policy.
- We have titled the report "A Framework for Action for New Hampshire's Young Children", as we hope it provides you with a structured approach to considering how and whether policy can effectively support children and families. We want no more than for the report to become a valuable resource for policymakers as they do the difficult work of managing our state's public structures.

Spark NH Council Bylaws - Proposed Changes

The Executive Committee has approved another proposed change to the Council Bylaws (the document has the edits in "track changes.") Spark NH is subject to the New Hampshire Right to Know law, RSA 91-A.

The law requires that all meetings be open to the public and that we provide notice in advance of meetings in 2 places. When we first wrote our bylaws, our website was not yet complete and we were posting notices on

the NH Reads site on the DOE website. Our current plan is to make the “other” location the Children’s Behavioral Health Collaborative site, but just so we won’t have to keep changing the bylaws, we’re proposing leaving it flexible and just guaranteeing that we post the notice in another location.

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

Project Funds

Committees were informed that \$5000 in project funds was available to committees on a first come, first served basis. We have received requests from 2 committees to use these funds.

1. The Quality Committee is requesting up to \$2500 for a facilitator to lead a short-term (8-10 months) Watch Me Grow Task Force in completing the following tasks:

1) Determine the gaps in identifying NH’s young children (birth to five years) who may have or be at risk for developmental delays or other concerns requiring timely supports and services for the child and/or family; and

2) Generate recommendations to (a) address the gaps and (b) expand the Watch Me Grow system to include evaluation, diagnosis and services for young children and their families when a concern has been identified through developmental screening or other mechanism.

The task force will report to the Quality Committee, as well as to the Watch Me Grow Steering Committee.

2. The second proposal comes from the Workforce and Professional Development Committee. They would like up to \$2500 to hire a consultant to meet with groups, agencies or organizations from health, family support and the DOE. The goal would be to determine what data they currently collect on their workforce (if they do) and if they don’t what would they want to collect, if a mechanism could be developed to do so. Then the consultant would create a list of all these elements and write definitions (similar to the Registry guide). This would then be vetted back to arrive at consensus and to design a common data set.

Vroom Planning Grant

Spark NH has been awarded the Vroom planning grant from the Endowment for Health that I referred to in my last Director’s Report. As a reminder, 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. Erika Argersinger has been contracted as a consultant to lead the planning efforts from now through June 2016.

Regional Early Childhood Initiative Reports

Please look for these soon in Spark NH’s March Newsletter.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Milliken,
Director, Spark NH

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