

**Spark NH**  
**Family Partnership and Engagement Task force**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**10/19/11**

In Attendance:

Ella Weber, Linda Thomas, Kathy Keene, Glenda West, Julie Day, Charna Aversa,  
Laura Milliken, Katie Brissette, Elissa Margolin

Introductions were made and a note taker was identified. Julie Day was chosen as Chair of this task force. The Spark NH vision and mission statements were read. It was stated that the purpose of this task force is to develop and implement strategies for including families in the work of Spark NH. Laura provided a brief history of how and why this task force was created. She also highlighted the differences between a committee and a task force.

Discussion began by looking at the membership of the task force and asking who was missing from the table. Members talked about making sure all regions of the state were represented and it was decided that we might want to recruit someone from the Nashua area. The group generated a list that included parents, childcare organizations, family childcare providers, mental health, health care providers and LEAs. The team identified some potential participants to fill these needs. *Action: Task force members will contact those identified and invite them to join.*

Next, the discussion turned to who is successful in bringing parents in. Laura shared that Michigan is particularly successful with engaging parents. They identified prioritizing parent involvement and dedicating resources as contributing to their success. Linda Thomas shared that their county-based infrastructure might contribute to their success. Ella Weber and others shared that Head Start has successful parent advisory groups. Head Start provides transportation, food, a time that works for parents and a commitment/partnership with the parents and HS staff. PTA was mentioned as another group successful at parent engagement. Julie suggested that we might want to look at some other models. Laura stated that other councils struggle with family engagement as well. *Action: Laura will investigate whether there are other models worth looking at.*

Task force members discussed how we can engage parents. Ideas included:

- Parents forming their own group and advising the council
- Statewide parent network (can we link pre-existing groups?)
- Organize parent groups regionally or by area of interest
- Survey/Questionnaire with incentive
- Active recruitment involving License Plus childcares, school districts. Head Start, local libraries
- Take advantage of school readiness focus and utilize preschool transition coordinators
- Focus groups
- Conference calls/ video conferencing

- Use website

Questions generated:

- What's the pitch? – Participation means engaging with those that make decisions around early childhood and families, connecting to what touches you and makes your life better, latest and greatest information in the field (i.e. effects of bullying).
- What are the barriers? – child care, time (working families), need for compensation, transportation, comfort level for participating in large group, identifying participation as a valuable experience
- Strategies?- find a way to provide reimbursement for expenses, hold meetings at times when families can participate or offer alternatives for participation (conference calls, surveys), provide mentors, clearly identify their responsibilities, use motivational interviewing to meet families where they are and identify positives from being involved, look at Head Start model for preparing families to participate
- What does the outreach look like? – Members of this taskforce and the other committees to do outreach, possibly bring on Outreach Coordinator

*Actions:*

- *Julie Day will report out at the Oct. 27<sup>th</sup> council meeting*
- *Ella Weber will take notes at the next task force meeting*
- *Ella will try to bring a family member from her Head Start Program to the next task force meeting*
- *Group will meet monthly; next two meetings scheduled for Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am-12:00pm & Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> from 1:00pm-3:00pm*
- *Charna Aversa will type up notes from the meeting and email to Julie, Laura and Katie in time to be included with materials for the Oct. 27<sup>th</sup> meeting*

~Meeting Adjourned~