Community Name: Greater Nashua

Primary Contact: Liz Fitzgerald

Date: 2/21/17

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| **Goals / Purpose** | **List or describe the initial goals of your early childhood community project. What were your primary aspirations at the outset of your efforts?** There were three topics that generated a large amount of discussion. First, participants expressed concern about limited access to mental health, particularly for children dealing with high levels of stress and anxiety due to challenging home environments, and the need for more trauma-informed caregivers. Another topic that generated significant discussion was industry stability (costs both for families and for providers/centers). The third topic that generated significant discussion was the disparity in exposure to early learning among students entering Kindergarten ranging from full-day Pre-K for multiple years to no Pre-K at all. Gaps in appropriate social/behavioral skills were voiced as being more prevalently weak in children without Pre-K experience. The technical assistance provided through this RFP will help us identify those areas where efforts made will have the greatest impact and assist in bringing the community together in addressing those issues. **Describe the desired outcomes of a public engagement process focused on early childhood in your community. What will be different as a result of this partnership?** Through our two initial brainstorm sessions it was evident that while there was a wealth of knowledge at the table there were many gaps in knowledge of programs and services already in existence. This gap could be narrowed by a stronger network focused on sharing best practices, resources and toolkits. Being selected to participate in this listening process will help the Greater Nashua community to: • Build stronger relationships between parents, providers, and other community members committed to providing each child with a foundation for life-long success that begins in the early childhood years • Engage other stakeholders in the problem solving work of creating a stable industry in the absence of universal Pre-K. • Create a shared vision and value for Early Childhood issues among stakeholders • Identify parts of the statewide plan already established by SPARK NH that are actionable locally and that result in more children being exposed to rich early childhood learning experiences, more likely to be referred to early intervention, and to build strong bridges to supports and protective services for children coping with adverse childhood experiences.The mission we developed for our Greater Nashua EC work is “to engage people from all walks of life in greater Nashua to improve early childhood outcomes for a strong start in school and in life.” |
| **Coalition** | **Describe or list your planning team or coalition membership, including the roles represented (for example, early childhood educators, school administrators, teachers, parents, community members, business leaders).**Higher Ed: Rivier College, UNH Coop Extension, NCCSERESCSNHSCFSDHHSGN School Districts administrators and teachers (Nashua, Hudson, Milford, BrooklineEC EducatorsPrivate preschool ownersPrivate schools (World Academy)ParentsGrandparents (The Friends Program)Adult Learning CenterSVBGC, BGC Nashua, YMCA of NashuaNashua Public HealthNashua Prevention Coalition; Beyond InfluenceWelfare DirectorsChild Advocacy Centers Child Care AwareUnited WayPolicy Makers/LegislatorsLibraries Girls Inc.Circles Greater NashuaInterfaith Network NashuaOGN membersMBK Nashua membersNashua Mayor’s officeFamily Resource CentersPrevention Makes SenseCommunity Members |
| **Engagement Activities / Events** | **List the top 3–5 activities your planning team or coalition utilized to get input for your implementation plan. These activities can include new engagement strategies as well as enhancements of existing activities and events.**1. Monthly Planning Group Meetings (10 – 20 participants)
2. Community Outreach events including Fairytale Festival Nashua, Trick or Treat on the Oval Milford, Babies R Us
3. Three Focus Groups
4. Online questionnaire for professional and paraprofessional providers
5. Four Raising NH Screenings and Conversations
6. Community-wide Action Forum
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| **Organizing for Inclusion** | **Describe your strategies for being more inclusive. Given the key participants you’ve identified, list the strategies you used or will use in the future for inclusive engagement.** We had strong outreach though One Greater Nashua to help reach families and providers from a range of economic levels and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, our small group discussions and community outreach efforts focused on an inclusive approach. |
| **Community Context** | **Describe the most significant early childhood-related issues, questions, opportunities, or challenges raised in your community engagement efforts in one to two paragraphs.** At the Greater Nashua Early Childhood initiative action forum, over 40 community members gathered together to review the outcomes, actions and innovations the GNEC coalition could consider moving forward. The conversations surrounded two areas of action (that aligned with Spark NH’s framework <http://sparknh.com/Framework-For-Action>): 1. Strong Families and
2. A Coordinated Early Childhood System.

Under these two broad areas of action, the following goals were identified by the steering committee: * Building family support systems
* Communicating with families
* Improved system transitions for families
* Supporting early childhood educators.
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| **Implementation** | **What activities will you focus on in the coming year? Describe your top 2 or 3 ideas for implementation**Our over-arching goal is to build shared knowledge of the value and importance of healthy child development in the first five years of life throughout our community. Here are our priority ideas for implementation:1. Formalize the structure of our planning group and identify the individuals and organizations that will anchor each of the goals and be responsible for delivering the objectives. In addition, strengthen our connections to other formal and informal EC groups working locally and statewide to build a cohesive and shared vision among all stakeholders on Early Childhood success and strong families.2. Create a series of “universal touch points” for families in our community that begin prenatally and continue throughout the first five years in a child’s life. Through these touch points, we will elevate awareness for the critical first five years of growth and brain development and promote active parenting. The touch points will be designed to strengthen transitions and communication between health, early learning, pre-school, kindergarten and grade school teachers and providers and to promote increased and earlier access to developmental screening, early supports and services, and other family supports. All activities will be founded in principles of equity, inclusion and integration for all families in our community. Touch points will be informed by parents and offered at key developmental transitions. For example, our first universal touch point will target expectant mothers and fathers at birth, or during pre-natal care classes for those that participate. This outreach will involve key partners like our local hospitals, birthing centers, OB-GYN and pediatrics health care providers.3. Foster collaboration and support systems between licensed and non-licensed educators and childcare providers in order to strengthen the overall ECE industry. Build awareness and access to professional development opportunities and resources as well as cost-saving partnerships (like SELA). By creating a stronger ECE network we envision the potential for future partnerships and mentorships that could address the needs of smaller unlicensed and informal childcare providers in our area. |
| **Implementation Support** | **Describe what you will need in order to be successful implementing your next steps. Include funding, engagement and convening, project management, leadership coaching, advocacy, and institutional support needed.*** Identify individuals and organizations that will anchor each goal (or group of goals) and provide primary project management
* Develop an organizational structure for the group’s on-going implementation and “universal touch points” development and roll out
* Secure support for local co-chairs (stipends) and for local coalition building assistance during the first year of development of the Greater Nashua Family Collaborative in order to identify project priorities, leads and implementation steps
* Connect with other EC groups and initiatives focused on early childhood success: How do other local and statewide efforts connect / intersect with our specific goals and groups (NH Children’s trust activities, family friendly economy, Spark NH, Childcare Aware, SELA, etc.) and how could we collaborate effectively with them?
* Engage key stakeholders and providers missing from the current table
* Build stronger engagement from local employer base and local businesses
* Establish a better knowledge base /inventory of regional resources for developmental screening, early intervention services, EC and family supports and services, and early childhood development/parenting education resources
* Launch marketing efforts aligned with our region’s capacity to serve and meetour community’s EC needs (and include ways to accurately track unmet needs and capacity shortfalls)
* To address gaps in K readiness, secure funding to build capacity of nonprofit community partners to extend their quality programming to families that cannot afford formal ECE programs (such as Marguerite’s Place’s Strong Families Outreach Initiative, YMCA’s 40-week parent and child workshops, and Nashua School District’s boot camps and foster grandparents programs)
* Secure funding to create opportunities for collaborations between the business community, municipalities, public libraries and family resource center and greater Nashua’s local creative communities to (such as Nashua community music school, Nashua arts council and positive street art)to provide inclusive family friendly spaces and family fun events that promote active parenting and healthy early brain development
* Support local school systems in obtain funding to strengthen their capacity to foster relationships early on with future students and their parents.
* Advocate for funding to increase behavioral health services for children dealing with toxic staff and increase access to trauma informed care training for local early childhood educators.
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| **SPARK NH FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION** | **GREATER NASHUA EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE FOCUS** |
| **A Coordinated Early Childhood System**Goal: New Hampshire’s young children and their families have the benefit of well-coordinated early childhood programs and services that work effectively together on their behalf.  | **Build and sustain a Greater Nashua Family Collaborative focused on identifying universal touch points, universal (destigmatized) parent supports, and ECE provider support in a multi-sector network.**1. **Improve transitions and increase cross-system collaborations(Family Centered Goals)**
* Expand access to transition supports (ex. Interpreters to help remove language barriers; summer boot camp attendance before K; student “passport” information in multiple formats (ex. Electronic and paper))
* Refine goals and implementation plan to increase collaboration FOR families
* Create shared messaging and EC goals across agencies
* Inventory and fortify family friendly spaces in Greater Nashua
1. **Support early childhood educators (Provider Centered Goals)**
* Build universal community understanding and value for early childhood success across stakeholder groups including increased respect for early childhood professionals
* Engage employers and advocate for increased wages and family friendly ECE and workplaces
* Increase professional development opportunities (training, continuing education credits, peer mentors, etc.)
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| **Strong Families**Goal: Families have the skills, basic resources, and supports to promote their children’s development and learning starting before birth and continuing through the primary grades  | 1. **Build family support systems**
* Develop coordinated family supports and eliminate perceived stigma around accessing family supports
* Increase awareness of EC services and parenting resources; tap under-utilized services such as home visiting and parent support groups
* Support family stability (ex. Jobs and livable wages, housing and energy assistance)
1. **Communicate with families**
	* About early child development
* Connect families (at birth and prenatally) with ECE and public schools
* Link families to parenting resources, supports and services including “universal touch points”
* Foster inclusive parenting community across diverse demographic groups (socio-economic, race and ethnicity, cultural, high risk and low risk, etc.) by connecting them with essential community places such as libraries, YMCA, and Boys and Girls Clubs
* Market key messages and touch points (including Vroom) across Greater Nashua
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