

The WSPEI Connector

April 2024



What's Happening This Month:

↴ Spring is a time for renewal, growth and new possibilities. We hope you find a new resource or inspiration from what we share with you this month!

We have a story about the importance of relationships with families for success in gathering survey data.

We have 2 other fantastic survey opportunities for educators and families to share their feedback for the possibility of growth and change.

A favorite Wisconsin conference, Endless Possibilities, has a new location!

Read on to see what else might be new to you!



Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative

WSPEI Learning and Networking Opportunities

[Family Support Community](#)

[Family Support Community Spanish](#) (Comunidad de Apoyo Familiar)

FREE Networking and Learning: [REGISTER HERE to Receive ZOOM Information](#)

A monthly learning opportunity offered to families and other caregivers supporting a child(ren) with a disability. Meeting on the first Wednesday afternoon of the month 4-5:30 or the first Thursday

morning of the month 11:30-1:00 running from September 2023 through May 2024.

[Family Engagement Community of Practice](#)

FREE but registration is required! [REGISTRATION LINK](#)

A learning community for educators, administrators, statewide agencies, community partners, and families focusing on family-engagement-specific topics. Meeting the second Wednesday of the month via ZOOM 4:00-5:30 pm September 2023-May 2024.

Remaining Topics:

April 10 Transitioning from Birth to 3: From IFSP to IEP

May 8 Belonging Matters: Children with Complex Disabilities

"All Hands on Deck!" WSPEI and District Partner for Indicator 8 Success

The Kimberly School District's Indicator 8 Success Story

Contributed by Cheri Sylla

The Kimberly School District, located in Northeast Wisconsin, is one of 92 school districts in the Indicator 8 Survey (information below) cycle this year. WSPEI's Statewide Coaching Coordinator, Cheri Sylla, spoke with the district team which includes Tim Fosshage, Director of Pupil Services, Melissa Hietpas, Special Education Instructional Facilitator, and Tracy Schmit, Administrative Assistant about it last month. They shared how they were able to obtain an over 30% survey response rate from parents of 655 special education students and have also reached their targets for all race and disability categories set by the Department of Public Instruction.

Planning and communication were crucial to Kimberly School District's success. The district accessed free services and supports provided by WSPEI to meet with their special education team to develop a plan for success. **"Communication was key to the Kimberly School District's successful parent response."**

An introduction letter was sent to all families and staff about the survey before the survey window opened. Tim met with all special education case managers and encouraged them to communicate directly with families regarding the survey. Staff engagement helped increase the district's response rate because the case managers work hard to have positive relationships with families. **"It's the personal connection between school staff and families that was key."**

The district's communication department was instrumental in assisting with communicating to all families when the district hit a glitch. The district's email system was not able to handle the large number of emails so they had to find another way. That's where the district's communication app came in. Tim and Melissa feel that they would have never been able to message all families without the support of the district's communication department.

The district also partnered with their **District Family Engagement Liaison**, Angie Petit, to help with the survey work. Angie was a contact for families and she assisted families who sought support to complete the survey. The parent-to-parent support that she provided helped the district to engage

more families in the survey. Visit the [WSPEI website, Family-School Partnerships](#) to learn more about our District Family Engagement Liaison program.

The logistics of the survey work was handled by the strong and highly competent team of Melissa, Instructional Facilitator and Tracy, Admin Assistant. Tim stated. "Tracy was diligent in staying on top of the survey work and was always available to families if there were questions. She has done a tremendous job!"

Melissa commented, "We are looking forward to reviewing the results of the survey and making adjustments based on feedback from our families. We're appreciative that so many families completed the survey, so that the results represent as many voices as possible."

A special thank you to Tim, Melissa, and Tracy for sharing their district's experience with us.

What is the Indicator 8 Family Engagement Survey?

Indicator 8 is a federal special education indicator that identifies "the percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities."

In Wisconsin, Indicator 8 is measured by a family engagement survey that local education agencies (e.g. school districts) must send once every five years to every parent in their district whose child is receiving special education services ages 3 through 17. Milwaukee Public Schools completes the survey every year by surveying families from approximately one-fifth of schools in the district.

In the 2023-2024 school year, 92 LEAs (school districts and public charter schools) are in the survey cycle. Is your school district one of them? You can check the [LEA Cyclical and RDA:PCSA List 2022-26](#) for when your district or charter school is scheduled to complete the Indicator 8 Survey.

To learn more about the Indicator 8 Family Engagement Survey, go to <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/about/state-performance-plan/indicators/8-parent-involvement> or contact Cheri Sylla, WSPEI Statewide Family Engagement Coaching Coordinator at csylla@cesa1.k12.wi.us.



If You Know You Know!

Are you connected to your school district's newsletter or social media? If not, speak to your child's teacher and find out how you can stay informed on what is happening in your school.

These are two examples of how Wisconsin School Districts communicate with families to keep them informed:

- A quick and simple way to sign up for a school district newsletter:
 - [Sign up to stay in touch with MPS](#)

- A district Facebook page that informs and connects with families who have a student receiving services:
 - [Medford Area Public School District Special Education and Student Services](#)
-

Wisconsin Conferences

[Circles of Life Conference - Family Voices of Wisconsin](#)

May 16-17

Stevens Point, WI

This year's theme is **families building their communities**. This includes learning strategies to build a community, as well as programs and services that support families to create an inclusive community for children, teens and adult family members with disabilities.

Registration Deadline May 3rd

[REGISTRATION](#)

Parent/Family Member:

In-Person \$150 or Virtual* \$60

Professional/Provider/Educator:

In-Person \$325 or Virtual* \$150

*Virtual attendees will have access to **2 workshops** per session as well as the keynote speaker. These can be found on this webpage under Sessions, "Livestream." These sessions will also be recorded and available for viewing after the event.

Student/Child:

In-Person \$100

All children/teens attending Sibshop or Gathering of Youth must be registered for the conference and a separate sign up form must be completed.

Adult Caregiver/Chaperone (attending meals only): In-Person \$100

Circles of Life Programs for your kids:

Gathering of Youth is a one-and-a-half-day program for teens with disabilities (ages 13 to 22) as part of the Circles of Life Conference. There is no additional fee for this program, but the teen must be registered for the conference (\$100 per child/teen) and a parent or guardian must be onsite at the Holiday Inn.

[Gathering of Youth Registration](#)

COL Sibshop is offered for "typically-developing" children ages 8-12 who have brothers and sisters with developmental disability, special health, or mental health concerns. Sibshop takes place in the conference area on Thursday morning, May 17 from 9 am - noon.

[Sibshop Registration](#)

[Employment First Conference 2024: Save the Date | Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities](#)

May 21, 2024

Kalahari Resort

Wisconsin Dells, WI

Registration Info:

\$125 Early Bird Rate (ENDS 4.5.24)

\$175 General Registration (ENDS 5.7.24)

\$50 for Person with Disabilities and Family Members

All stakeholders are encouraged to attend, including people with disabilities and their family members, service professionals, school staff, and others who support people with disabilities to achieve employment, make connections and contribute to the community. Stay tuned for more details!

If you have any questions, please contact Beth Lohmann at beth.lohmann@MilwaukeeCountywi.gov

Endless Possibilities - **NEW Location for 2024**

August 2, 2024 - In-Person

[Endless Possibilities Conference Wisconsin | WI FACETS](#)

The Endless Possibilities conference invites families and professionals who support students with disabilities to learn and grow together. WI FACETS, along with the Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative (WSPEI) and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction gather experts to share their knowledge of important topics in special education. We encourage open dialogue between families and professionals to discuss positive solutions for all our students with special needs in Wisconsin.

This year we have also partnered with Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) to host our first in-person conference since 2019! WCTC offers a state-of-the-art venue on a beautiful, easily accessible campus, for a day of engaging in-person learning and community.

WI FACETS

WI FACETS April 2024 Newsletter

This month's newsletter from WI FACETS has a focus on children with Autism. There are multiple resources to explore and an article that looks at issues siblings of children with Autism might face.

[WI FACETS April 2024 Newsletter](#)

Featured Special Education Resource

Do Special Education Laws and Procedures leave you confused?

Then check out **Special Education in Plain Language!** This guidebook was developed by parents and professionals to help families and school teams understand and apply special education policies.

[Online version in English](#)

[Online version in Spanish](#)

For printed copies of this handbook, please contact your area [WSPEI Family Engagement Coordinator](#)

The opening pages provide an introduction and common vocabulary and terms found in special education.

Beginning on page 16 is a large chart of topic specific sections such as IEP Process, Evaluation Reports and Placement. Each section has five columns breaking down special education laws and

language:

Column 1 Topic: Use this to easily find the main topic.

Column 2 What the Law Says: Has the exact words from state or federal law about the topic. State law is shown as "115.xx." It is from Chapter 115 of Wisconsin Statutes. When there is not a state law about the topic, federal law is noted. A citation that begins with "20 USC" is from the federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). A citation that begins 34 CFR 300 is from the federal regulations for IDEA. If Wisconsin has a policy on the topic, there is a reference to the Department of Public Instruction's (DPI's) "Update Bulletins."

Column 3 What the Law Means: Is plain language wording about the law.

Column 4 What Needs To Be Done: Tells the reader things the school or the individualized education program (IEP) team must do.

Column 5 What Parents Need to Know or Do: Gives ideas for parents

The second half of the book provides details about a variety of topics including Problem Solving, Behavior Plans and Transition. This handbook is considered by many Wisconsin families and educators as a primary go-to for answers.

You can talk with your child's teacher if you have questions about their IEP and special education services.

Or if you have issues you would like to discuss with a neutral party you can contact a WSPEI Information and Support Specialist at 833-879-7734.

[WSPEI Phone Support](#)

Example of the SPECIAL EDUCATION CHART

TOPIC	WHAT THE LAW SAYS	WHAT THE LAW MEANS	WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE	WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW OR DO
IEP TEAM	THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY SHALL APPOINT AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM TEAM FOR EACH CHILD REFERRED TO IT. EACH TEAM SHALL CONSIST OF THE FOLLOWING: 115.78(1M)	THE SCHOOL APPOINTS THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE IEP TEAM. PARENTS ARE EQUAL PARTICIPANTS ON THE TEAM.	THE SCHOOL DECIDES WHO WILL BE THE SCHOOL STAFF ON THE IEP TEAM AND SENDS PARENTS AN INVITATION TO THE IEP MEETING. THE INVITATION WILL LIST THE NAMES OF THE PEOPLE, THE CATEGORIES THEY REPRESENT (SEE BELOW FOR THE CATEGORIES). SCHOOLS MAKE ALL PARTICIPANTS WELCOME. SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS LISTEN TO THE INFORMATION PRESENTED BY PARENTS AND THEIR CHILD EXPERTS. SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS UNDERSTAND THAT EVALUATION IS MORE THAN THEIR OWN TESTING.	PARENTS SHOULD TELL THE SCHOOL THAT THEY ARE COMING TO THE IEP MEETING. THEY SHOULD TELL THE SCHOOL WHO THEY ARE BRINGING ALONG AS CHILD EXPERTS OR SUPPORT. AT THE MEETING, THE PARENTS SHOULD MAKE SURE ALL REQUIRED PEOPLE ARE AT THE MEETING TO HELP MAKE THE DECISIONS. PARENTS ARE EQUAL PARTNERS ON THE IEP TEAM.
PARENTS	THE PARENTS OF THE CHILD. 115.78(1M)(A)	PARENTS ARE EQUAL PARTICIPANTS ON THE IEP TEAM, ALONG WITH THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS.	THE SCHOOL MUST WORK TO MAKE THE PARENTS EQUAL PARTICIPANTS IN THE IEP PROCESS AND ON THE IEP TEAM.	PARENTS ARE EQUAL PARTICIPANTS ON THE IEP TEAM.

👏 Shout-Out 👏

Milwaukee Public Schools Announce:

School Psychologist of the Year (2 years in a row!):

[Shashina Robinson of MPS is named Wisconsin School Psychologist of the Year for her work with students](#)



📢 Important opportunities to share your voice!

[WSEMS Survey Spring 2024](#)

The Wisconsin Special Education Mediation System (WSEMS) is looking for your feedback!

Do you have a child receiving special education in school?

Are you a special ed teacher, related service provider or any administrator who serves students with disabilities within a school setting?

Do you represent or support families of students with disabilities outside of the school setting?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, we want to hear from you. Whether you have never heard of the WSEMS or you have used it multiple times, your feedback is important to us. Please take this brief, 5-10 minutes survey, as it will help us to continue to provide information and services that meet your needs. Thank you for your time.

[Disability Rights Wisconsin\(DRW\) Survey](#)

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is working on updating the way we talk about our work to make sure it is clear, accessible, and inspiring. Your opinions are important in helping us understand what people know about our work and how we can better serve people with disabilities.

Your responses will be kept confidential and never shared with our advocacy staff. The survey should take no longer than 15 to 20 minutes to complete.



New information from our partners at TIG!

The Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) is excited to announce the newly revised WiTransition App.

The [WiTransition App](#) serves as an engaging and interactive tool designed to align with the Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP), empowering students and their families by incorporating their voices into the transition planning process. New features of the updated app include:

- App now available in Spanish
- Aligned with the PTP 2.0 application
- Finish the app later
- The updated WiTransition App is currently available at witransition.com and will be available in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store within the next month.

[Self Advocacy Toolkit](#)

The Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) has developed a self-advocacy guidance toolkit to house TIG developed resources as well as highlight resources from national transition partners. The toolkit contains online resources such as: assessments, curricula, student led Individualized Education Program (IEP) materials, law and policy, and opportunities to grow your own learning. Self-advocacy is a predictor of post-school success for students with IEPs and the guidance will enhance the resources available and provide support for educators, students, and families.

Transition Event in Onalaska

[Transitioning To Adulthood Event](#)

April 16th, 2024 6:00-7:30 pm
Onalaska Community Center



Have you heard about The Families Matter Outreach Project?

The Families Matter Outreach Project offers several **free** training options for families preparing for their child's life after high school. There is a training coming up on April 13th in Milwaukee to give families an overview of transition.

Please follow this link to see all the upcoming workshops, dates and registrations:

[Families Matter Outreach Project](#)

Coming soon:

- April 13, 2024 - Transition 101, Milwaukee

Coming in Fall 2024:

- Youth in Partnership with Parents for Empowerment - In person, Milwaukee, WI
- Virtual Parents in Partnership - Online
- Parents in Partnership for Transition (PIP-T) - In person, Green Bay, WI

Southeast Wisconsin Sibshop

We are thrilled to introduce our very first Milwaukee Area Sibshop! Designed for kids aged 6-12 who have siblings with disabilities or long-term illnesses, Sibshops provide a unique space for fun, conversation, and connections with peers who truly understand.

April 13, 2024

12:00-3:00 PM

Germantown High School

[Information and Registration Link](#)

[WisconsinSibs Sibnews](#)

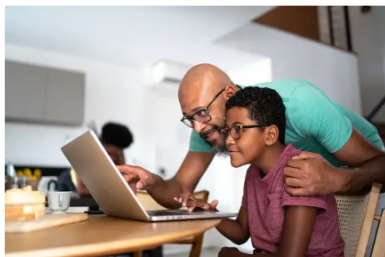
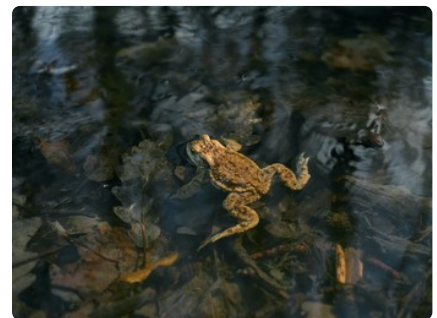
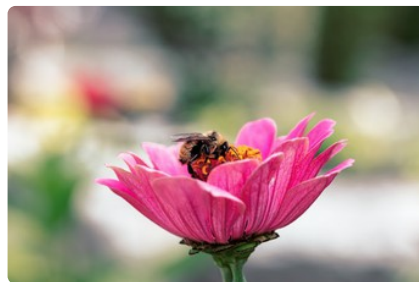
Highlighting another Wisconsin Organization supporting families

Respite Care Association of Wisconsin

This statewide organization connects primary caregivers and respite care providers with resources, referrals, grants, trainings, and the Wisconsin Respite Care Registry.

To learn more visit:

[Respite Care Association of Wisconsin](#)



Connect with us!

Email: wspei@cesa12.org

Website: <https://wspei.org>

Phone: [833-879-7734](tel:833-879-7734)

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