

The WSPEI Connector

November 2025

We Are Grateful for Our Readers! 🧡

Communicating Information and Resources for Wisconsin Families and Educators

During the hustle and bustle of busy life, we don't always remember to hit pause and show gratitude for people in our lives. Here at **WSPEI**, we want to take that moment. We are genuinely grateful for all the Wisconsin families, educators, partners, collaborators and students we have the privilege of working with and supporting. Most especially, we are incredibly thankful for **YOU**, our dedicated readers of ***The Connector***! Thank you for being part of our community.



🗣️ Beyond our regular event offerings and information updates, this issue features truly inspiring work being done by two Wisconsin parents. Driven by their passion, they are courageously challenging our State legislature to approve increased funding for Special Education. They have made great strides but there is still a long way to go! We are so grateful they shared their origin story with us and admire their courage and tenacity as they strive to make a difference for Wisconsin students.

We open this issue with their powerful story, it is essential work and has an impact on all of us.

Be sure to take a moment to read it!



A Step In the Right Direction - A spotlight on two Wisconsin Moms Making a Difference

Wanting to engage with other families around the little known but crucial issue of Special Education Funding was the catalyst for *"Learn in Our Shoes"*, a grassroots, parent led, non-profit, non-partisan organization formed to shed light on how difficult it can be for students with an IEP to get the services they need, and the dire straits of special education funding in public schools...read more.....

[Link to Full Article](#)

November is National Family Engagement Month!

Many states observe November as National Family Engagement month! This is an exciting month to celebrate the work of all the educators, coordinators, school leaders and policy makers who work tirelessly to ensure that families are included, engaged and a part of the process to ensure student success. Our partners at the California Statewide Family Engagement Center [put together a wonderful kit](#) for people to share ideas and graphics to promote Family Engagement Month. Additionally, our friends at [Exceptional Children's Assistance Center](#) also put together a kit with calendars in English and Spanish to share with ideas for celebrating Family Engagement everyday this month along with other materials. We look forward to sharing, posting and "liking" #FamilyEngagement posts on social media all month!

ANNOUNCING - NEW SERVICE from WSPEI

DROP-IN OFFICE SUPPORT HOUR

Beginning on Wednesday November 12, 2025! 12:00-1:00 pm

We are excited to announce we are launching a **FREE weekly, drop-in ZOOM "Open Office Support Hour"** beginning **Wednesday, November 12th at noon**. This weekly support hour is a welcoming space to ask a quick question, share a specific concern and receive direct guidance from WSPEI personnel.

Discussions during the Zoom meeting are not recorded and will remain confidential. Our coordinators are trained in confidentiality practices, and breakout rooms will be utilized for privacy. All Wisconsin parents/families of students with an IEP are welcome! No appointment or registration is necessary. We are here to help you get informed and stay prepared!

[Link to FLYER](#) with more information

WSPEI Program Statewide Learning and Networking Events

WSPEI Statewide Learning and Networking Opportunities

All Statewide WSPEI events are virtual on Zoom and **FREE** for families, educators, and community agency members. Registration is required.

The schedule of winter and spring workshops will be announced in our December Newsletter!

Sign up for our [email list](#) for the monthly newsletter and event notifications.

[Calendar of Events](#)

TOPIC SPECIFIC WORKSHOPS

[Partnering with Schools on Behavior and Discipline for Students with IEPs](#)

This workshop will help participants understand how all policies apply to all children, including those with disabilities; build awareness of IDEA protections for students with disabilities in regard to discipline; and understand dispute resolution options in Wisconsin.

- December 4, 2025 | 9:00 am-11:00 am

[FLYER IN SPANISH](#)

[Click to REGISTER](#)

[Finding Children with Disabilities: What School Districts, Families, and Agencies Need to Know](#)

This workshop will help participants understand the responsibility of school districts to locate, identify, and evaluate all children suspected of having a disability under IDEA and the Child Find Law. And define the rights of families if they believe their child may have a disability requiring special education services.

- 1/ 20/26 | 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

OR

- 1/ 22/26 | 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

[CLICK to REGISTER](#)

ON GOING, MONTHLY NETWORK AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

[November Family, Youth, Community Engagement Network](#)

Wednesday, November 19, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Add More Play to Your Day! Presented by Sharon Ninedorf, Parent, Certified Play Therapist, and Owner of Spark Connections Play isn't just for children, it's for everyone! In this session, we'll explore what play is, why it matters across all ages, and how to weave playful moments into everyday. Discover how play is more than "just" play and has so many benefits such as supporting emotional regulation, connection, communication, and more.

Link to [Flyer](#) with additional Details and Registration

[Family, Youth and Community Engagement Network](#)

(formally known as the Family Engagement Community of Practice & Learning)

A learning community for educators, administrators, statewide agencies, community partners, and families focusing on family engagement-specific topics.

Meetings are held on the **third Wednesday of every month, September to May, 4:00-5:30 pm.**

[Click to REGISTER](#)

[Family Support Community](#)

A monthly learning opportunity designed for families and other caregivers supporting a child(ren) with a disability. These meetings occur on the **second Wednesday of the month from 7:00 pm -8:00 pm** and the **second Thursday of the month from 12:00 -1:00 pm.**

Our supportive community meetings provide valuable learning opportunities and mutual support. They take place from **September through May.**

[Click to REGISTER](#)

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

News and Information from DPI

[Special Education Council Public Forum:](#)

The purpose of this public forum is to assist council members in advising the State Superintendent of Public Instruction on the educational needs of students who receive special education through an Individualized Education Program.

Mark your calendar!

The Council on Special Education will be hosting a virtual public forum on **November 12, 2025 from 5:00pm-6:30pm.** We invite you to participate in the forum by [registering for the zoom meeting](#).

You can also submit a comment online. Online comments will open on November 5th and close on November 14th. To submit a comment please complete the following survey in either [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

Federal Layoffs and IDEA and ESEA Implications

We want to acknowledge the concern and uncertainty that recent federal staffing reductions may bring. The U.S. Department of Education's Offices of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) have experienced significant staff layoffs, including most program personnel. We know how deeply committed you are to supporting students, families, and educators—and how challenging it can be to navigate shifting guidance and systems while continuing to meet the needs of your communities. Despite these changes at the federal level, states and school districts remain responsible for fulfilling all requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). At this time, short-term funding and allocations are expected to continue without interruption. While the long-term impacts of these reductions are not yet clear, we encourage continued focus on meeting student needs and staying informed as more information becomes available. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and share updates as they become available. Please continue to [reach out to DPI with questions related to Special Education](#) as you always have if you have questions or need support by contacting DPI through phone (608) 266-1781

or by filling out an online request through the [Contact Special Education online form](#). Thank you, as always, for your unwavering leadership and dedication during these uncertain times.

DPI Secures Funding To Sustain Services For Deafblind Learners After Federal Grant Termination

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction announced today it has secured new funding to continue critical services for deafblind children and young adults across the state. This comes after the unexpected and sudden termination of federal funding for [the Wisconsin Deafblind Technical Assistance Project](#). More information by [clicking to read the full news story](#).

Related Services in the IEP

DPI developed a new resource outlining what related services are, tips for IEP teams on how to make related services decisions, examples of who and where related services can be provided, and an appendix that includes definitions of common related services, how each service supports students with disabilities, license requirements, and additional resources for each related service. The resource is posted on the DPI [Special Education Related Services webpage](#). The resource should be used to compliment [Bulletin 10.07: Describing Special Education, Related Services, Supplementary Aids and Services, and Program Modifications and Supports](#) that provides additional information on documenting special education services in the IEP. [Click to view the Related Services in the IEP resource](#).

Stay Up-to-Date and Informed!

Did you know that DPI has emails lists on a variety of special education and pupil services topics including early childhood special education, occupational therapists and physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, assistive technology, Wisconsin Deafblind Technical Assistance Project, school nursing and school health, school counseling, school social workers, school psychology, health and physical education teachers, early literacy and act 20, bilingual education, supporting advanced learners, American Indian Studies, GED, HSED, and alternative education, and many more. Just send individuals to [the DPI Email Lists webpage](#) and choose from any number of email lists to get timely information on a variety of topics.



Office of Children’s Mental Health

New Fact Sheet on Attendance, Absenteeism, and Mental Health



Chronic absenteeism from school continues to be an issue in Wisconsin and the nation. Poor mental health can be both a cause and an effect of absenteeism. Absenteeism can lead to social isolation, anxiety, and loneliness. And for those with existing mental health challenges, absenteeism can deepen their struggles.

Chronic absenteeism rates in Wisconsin rose to its highest in 2022 at 22.7%. Rates have since declined to 17.7% in 2024 but are still higher than the pre-pandemic rate of 12.9% in 2019. Regular school attendance leads to improved academic, economic, health, and relational outcomes over a child’s lifetime.

Given the lifelong consequences, we see a role for everyone in improving attendance and child well-being!

[Read the Fact Sheet](#) to learn more and how you can help!

WI FACETS

November Newsletter Topic: Understanding Suspensions for a Child with an IEP

WI FACETS is Wisconsin's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) funded through the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. WI FACETS has a large variety of resources, upcoming trainings, and webinar recordings to help families navigate special education. Check out the WI FACETS [Training Calendar](#), WI FACETS [Webinar Recordings](#) as well as WI FACETS [resources webpages](#).

[November Newsletter - English](#)

[November Newsletter - Spanish](#)



A Supplemental Resource to Consider - Shortened Day Bulletin

Each year the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (department) receives numerous questions from parents, school districts, and other partners about shortened school days for students receiving special education services.

[Link to the complete Shortened Day Bulletin](#)

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

Press Release Statement from DVR (Department of Vocational Rehabilitation):

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Faces Funding Shortfall, Leading to Waitlist for New Participants

Lack of funding limits program that serves Wisconsinites

[Link](#) to full article

Disability Rights Wisconsin

Shutdown Impact on FoodShare Benefits

Delays in FoodShare Benefits Monthly benefits for FoodShare members will be delayed beginning November 1, because of the ongoing federal government shutdown.

[Link to article](#)



Call 211 to find out about other sources of food assistance in your area. You can also learn about 211 and other ways to contact them via [the 211 Wisconsin website](#).

We Are Grateful for all who support our Wisconsin Scholars! ❤️



In the lunchroom🍽️



On field trips🍁



On the playground☐

Wisconsin Conferences 📌

[Special Education Conference](#)

DATES: November 13-14, 2025

LOCATION: Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

Keynote speakers are Katie Berg from the Supporting Neurodiverse Students Learning System, and Brandi Lust founder of Learning Lab Consulting and the author of *Myths of Being Human: Four Paths to Connect with What Matters*.

Register [HERE](#)

[Building the Heart of Successful Schools Conference](#)

Registration is now open for the 2025 Building the Heart of Successful Schools Conference.

DATES: December 11, 2025 with pre-conference sessions on December 10, 2025

LOCATION: Glacier Canyon Conference Center - Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

Register by November 20, 2025.

Check out the [BHSS Conference Booklet](#) for keynote speaker and breakout session information! Register yourself or your school team. Contact the WISH Center (wishschools@cesa4.org) for help with registration. [Link to register](#)

[24th Annual Transition Conference](#)

DATES: February 12-13, 2026

LOCATION: Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

Two days with keynote speakers, **Pam Schuller**, and the "Shut Up Sisters", **Patricia Terrasi** and **Gina Gallagher** bring a wealth of knowledge, from different perspectives, regarding the challenges faced in the world of special education. In addition, we will have over 20 breakout sessions to choose from; relevant exhibitors and built in networking time.

Register [HERE](#)

Circles of Life Conference

SAVE THE DATE

Dates: May 14 & 15, 2026

Location: Holiday Inn Stevens Point Convention Center

Registration Opens February 1, 2026

We need a wide variety of presentations to meet the interests of our attendees.

The theme for our 2026 conference is ***Families and Professionals on the Path Together***. We encourage you to submit a presentation proposal reflecting this theme. If possible, include how partnerships and collaborations improve outcomes for all families.

Call for Proposals for 37th Annual Autism Conference

DATES: April 23-25, 2026

LOCATION: Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

The purpose of the Annual Autism Conference is to provide a wide range of information to those within the Autism community. Our goal is to provide relevant information for attendees of all backgrounds, including those who are new to Autism and those who have years of experience. We are looking for dynamic and empowering proposals that include practical strategies and evidence-based practices encompassing issues facing Autistic individuals, their families, and those who support them.

Deadline: November 21, 2025: [Click here for more information and to submit a proposal.](#)

Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

November is National Family Caregiver Month - read more in the November Newsletter

November is National Family Caregiver Month! Thank you to Governor Tony Evers for proclaiming Wisconsin's support in honor of the dedication and compassion of family caregivers across the state.

[Link to WI-BPDD November Newsletter](#)

[Link to November Newsletter in Spanish](#)

Wisconsin Family Voices

November News and Events

A listing of trainings and events as well as an announcement for a new program - The Nurture Network!

The Nurture Network is inclusive of all moms from southeast Wisconsin who have high-support needs kids, including kids with developmental and intellectual disabilities, medically complex kids, and those who are neurodivergent.

Learn more and join the group [HERE](#)

EVENTS:

Thursday, November 6, 5:00 - 6:00

- **What's After High School?**

Thursday, November 13, 5:00 - 6:00

- **Thinking About Supported Decision-Making**

Friday, November 14, 11:30 - 12:30

- **Medicaid Made Easy**

Monday, November 17, 3:00 - 4:00

- **What's After High School?**

Wednesday, November 19, 5:30 - 6:30

- **Learn about Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)**

[Link to News and Events](#)

[REGISTER for EVENTS](#)

Parents United

Upcoming Workshops

Parents United is a non-profit community-based organization provides regular informational workshops featuring experts presenting a wide range of topics relative to students with disabilities and their families. There are both in-person and virtual workshops.

Parents and families from across the state of Wisconsin are welcome to register and attend these workshops. All events are FREE!

Click the links for each date to go to a flyer with additional details and registration information:

- [November 13 \(Disappear Fear\)](#) VIRTUAL
- [November 18 \(Transition Panel\)](#) IN-PERSON
- [December 4 \(Creating Financial Security\)](#) VIRTUAL

NAMI(National Association on Mental Illness)

Racine County Public Health, Burlington Area School District, and NAMI Racine County



2nd annual **Youth Mental Health Resource Fair**. This is a **FREE** Youth Mental Health Resource Fair!

When: Thursday November 13th, 2025, from 5-7pm

Where: Burlington High School, located at 400 McCanna Parkway, in Burlington, WI.

This Youth Mental Health Resource Fair, will **showcase and highlight** a variety of **mental health and wellness services and supports** (counseling, yoga, physical health and activities, exercise/sports, mindfulness, insurance info, etc) that are available for **YOUTH**, as well as their parents and caregivers, not only in Racine County, but also in our neighboring counties and communities.

Information on the [Facebook Page](#)



Crisis Intervention Partner (CIP) training

Mental health crisis training for anyone who may encounter or support an individual in crisis. A free two-day educational workshop for adults - Group Home Staff, Shelter Staff, Peer Specialists, Teachers, Medical Staff, Social Workers, Families

DATES: December 11 & 12, 2025

LOCATION: Waukesha Public Library

[Link to Flyer](#) with More information

****Only a few spots remain. A spring training will also be held and any who register will be placed on a waiting list.**

[Link to REGISTER](#)

Wisconsin Tourette Association

Upcoming Event: Madison Tourette Community Building Day

There will also be a **children's program** offered by Tourette Syndrome Camp USA.

If you plan to attend, please email:

Scott Loeff at Scott63@prodigy.net with the number of adults and children attending.

There is **no cost** to attend.

Date: Saturday, November 8, 2025, 1:00 PM

Location: Madison Area Technical College – Truax Campus

1701 Wright Street, Main Building, Room C-2408, Madison, WI

Speakers:

Dr. Jordan Stiede, Clinical Psychologist – *"CBIT Treatment for Tourette Syndrome"*

Cody Peterson, Wisconsin Tourette Youth Ambassador

Nicole Hauch, Milwaukee-based Support Group Leader

Project SEARCH

River Falls Project SEARCH

Is hosting the second annual Transition Services Open House!

Date: November 13th from 5-7pm

Location: River Falls Area Hospital

Join us to learn more about our two featured transition programs, **Project SEARCH** and **Northwood Tech's Hospitality Foundations Program**, and chat with representatives from various other transition services including Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC), and more!

Email Natasha Herum at natasha.herum@rfsd.k12.wi.us for more information.

[Link to flyer](#) with additional information



CONNECT WITH WSPEI

We are here to support and assist

Are you looking for information, resources or support about Special Education and IEPs from WSPEI?



Information provided on this form will help us connect you to your local **WSPEI Family-School Partnership Coordinator**:

[Click this link for Support Request Form](#)

Bring a Workshop to Your Area! We'd love to partner with you!

Interested in hosting one of our workshops locally? Reach out and let's make it happen.

Email us at: wspei@cesa12.org

Find past newsletters and downloadable pdfs [HERE](#)



The WSPEI Program

www.wspei.org

Contact

Subscribe

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