

A.P.P.L.E Leadership Notes

The Federation has a new project called **A.P.P.L.E (Advancing Parent Leadership in Education)**. It is a 5 year grant. The A.P.P.L.E project provides collaborative school-system teams of parents and educators with training that will allow parents of children receiving special education services to learn skills that will help them become full & effective partners with their schools. The project implemented its first Parent Leadership Training Institute in March 2006 in Marlboro, Massachusetts.

A.P.P.L.E, with funding from the U. S. Dept. of Education, is dedicated to finding ways to help build better relationships between parents and the schools around special education. As a research project with the Institute for Community Inclusion at U. Mass., Boston, the researchers will follow the participants over time to learn if their involvement in the Institute is helpful in building partnerships between the Parent Advisory Committees (PACs) in those towns and the school administration.



A.P.P.L.E Leadership Institute

In March 2006, the Advancing Parent/Professional Leadership in Education (APPLE) Project held a 3 day Leadership Development Institute for five school districts. The Institute took place in Marlboro, MA. Each district sent a team of parents whose children have IEPs and one Special Education Professional. The school districts which participated in the Institute were, **Ashland, Cambridge, Everett, Framingham & Maynard**. Three Special Education Directors came as part of their district's team. The faculty included Rich Robison, Executive Director of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, and co-director of the APPLE project; Barbara Popper, the co-director of APPLE; and Marilyn Gutierrez-Wilson of the Federation's PTI and APPLE projects. In addition, faculty included Roberto Chene of New Mexico whose special area is conflict resolution; Kathleen Osta, of North Carolina, a specialist in communication strategies, and Cassie Johnston of PAVE, the Washington state PTI who conducts training in True Colors™, a method of helping individuals find their learning styles. The evaluations of the Institute have been very positive.

All participants completed an evaluation form about the Institute for the Federation's use that indicated some key events. They noted: working with their team members on action planning, efforts to enhance collaboration, gaining motivation toward beginning a new PAC, dialogue between SPED administrators and parent team agreeing to the barriers and looking to change, setting goals, and forming relationships.

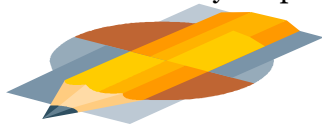
Here are a few comments from the participants from the Institute:

- Explicit agenda, the file & content, team time to work on details
- Efforts to enhance collaboration
- Awareness that as long as you attempt to communicate effectively you've done your part
- Getting to know the participants
- Developing a plan, talking about what's important for PAC, school district & community
- Getting to know folks on a personal level
- Learning or communicating better & listening
- Developing a vision & an action plan
- Forming deeper relationships with home team



A.P.P.L.E Leadership Notes

- Meeting other participants & hearing their stories
- Motivation toward beginning a PAC/developing a successful PAC
- Commitment from team members to stay involved, development of an action plan
- Team is energized & planning to make real differences in our PAC mission
- Getting to know & work with our team with this excellent training
- All of us are or have better input for our PAC group
- Dialogue between SPED admin & parent team agreeing to the barriers & looking to change
- Started to understand how to trust by establishing a human connection-made a human connection with
- Beginning of a collaboration effort
- Setting goals; reorganizing strengths
- Helped to form relationships
- Learned what the other districts are doing
- There is always hope by reframing-it's not impossible to move forward



The APPLE project has sent the school district teams their finalized Team Action Plans to help them increase parent involvement in their PACs over the next year. We will be available to work with them during that time and will incorporate their ideas into future Institutes. We are now working with **Grafton, Canton, Gardner, Medfield and Billerica** to recruit parents from their communities to attend a fall Institute. By fall we will be seeking five more towns to enter the research plan for 2007. We are available to talk with PAC chairs or the SPED director from any interested towns.

If you would like to share your stories, an article, or any ideas you may have, or wish to join our new listserve, please call or email **Marilyn Gutierrez-Wilson** (marilyng@fcsn.org) or call **(800) 493-2338 x151**.

Check out our website for more details: www.fcsn.org/APPLE

