

Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative (WSPEI)

Since 2000, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has funded WSPEI as a parental involvement resource to **families and** school districts. Its goals are closely aligned to Indicator 8 improvement activities to help parents and school districts find or create resources that will help them foster positive working relationships that support shared decision-making and children's learning. Each CESA employs a WSPEI Family Engagement Coordinator who is available to every district. One way WSPEI can help is to train and mentor a district-selected **Family Engagement Liaisons** to support families and district family engagement activities.

Characteristics of a District Family Engagement Liaison

- Parent/Guardian of a child with a disability and has some knowledge or experience with special education.
- Good communication skills and strong interpersonal skills
- Positive attitude and willingness to promote collaborative relationships between families and schools.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality with students, parents, and educators.
- Willing to make a 3-year commitment to this role.

Roles of a District Family Engagement Liaison

- **Disseminate** information to parents/guardians and staff special education topics, family engagement and DPI grant-initiative resources.
- **Communicate** with parents or refer parents to CESA WSPEI Family Engagement Coordinator as needed.
- **Provide information** related to special education to parents and staff.
- **Attend** WSPEI Core and Selected trainings.
- **Meet regularly** and work with the Administrator via email, in-person, etc.
- **Work with** the SPED Director to develop district family engagement plan based on Indicator #8 data.
- **Assist** the school district with activities and strategies regarding Indicator #8 – Parent Involvement
- **Explore** the development of a Parent Advisory Council or district family engagement team and once created, attend the meetings
- **Attend** two (2) other meetings in the school district (school board, PTA/PTO, etc).
- **Maintain** a list of district, regional, and statewide resources for families and students in regards to special education.
- **Enter data** into the WSPEI data system on family engagement and special education activities.
- **No specific time commitment required. Each liaison makes the role fit their schedule.**

Roles of the School District

- **Identify** a District Family Engagement Liaison.
- **Communicate** and work with the District Family Engagement Liaison.
- **Facilitate the dissemination** of information from DPI/WSPEI to district families and staff.
- **Provide orientation** to the district staff and families on the role of the liaison and introduce the liaison to staff members.
- **Work** with the Liaison to create a family engagement advisory group or team.
- **Work** with the liaison to develop district family engagement plan based on Indicator #8 data.





Debbie VanDerLijn is a married mother of 2 boys, the youngest of whom has an autism spectrum disorder. She moved to Rice Lake with her family in 2002. In addition to providing liaison services for parents of children with disabilities, she has also worked as a paraprofessional since 2011. She is currently in this role at Tainter Elementary. Debbie's experiences with the Rice Lake Area School District have taught her valuable lessons and she enjoys assisting other parents by sharing what she has learned.

Heidi Holmes is a married mother of four boys, the youngest of whom is autistic. She grew up mostly in Minnesota, went to college in Eau Claire, and moved to Rice Lake eight years ago to be closer to family. She is currently employed at Brentwood Memory Care as a Resident Care Manager. Being involved in the community is important to her family so her husband and she are active in their sons' hockey and soccer



teams in various ways. She is inspired by her youngest son and is involved in his learning environment both at school and in his in-home therapy. They have overcome numerous challenges but are still learning as they go. She looks forward to working with families as parent liaison and helping kids reach their full potential.



The Rice Lake Area School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities.

Parent Engagement Liaisons do not represent families in any legal way. They serve as advocates for families offering support which may include helping them understand their rights and options to arrive at ideas and solutions to issues. They do not speak on behalf of a family about a child unless given prior permission to do so in specific situations.

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Rice Lake Area School District

Family Engagement Liaisons



Creating Partnerships Between Parents and Educators for Students with Disabilities.

www.wspei.org

OR

<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sped/parent.html>

OR

<http://www.ricelake.k12.wi.us/SPED.cfm>