

Bringing Families to the Table: Family Engagement for Struggling Students

Webinar Transcript

Slide 1 (Laura Magnuson): Hello everyone and welcome to today’s webinar, “Bringing Families to the Table: Family Engagement for Struggling Students.” I’m Laura Magnuson and I’ll be hosting today’s webinar. I am a technical assistance liaison for the Center. Today we have a number of panelists who will bring a variety of different perspectives regarding family engagement. So we’ll get started with a quick introduction of the National Center on Intensive Intervention and we’ll discuss the value of family engagement for students with intensive needs.

Slide 3: We will then hear perspectives from our panelists. First, Kate Augustyn will discuss the District perspective. Next, Kelly Orginski will share a State’s perspective as well as a parent’s perspective. And lastly, Debra Jennings will share a national perspective including the I Five Family Involvement Model. Lastly, we’ll end with questions and discussion.

Slide 4: Before we get started, I want to tell you a little more about each of our panelists. Kate Augustyn began working with parents as the Executive Director of Tuesday’s Child, a non-profit in Chicago, Illinois for twelve years. She then moved to Michigan and worked with Early Childhood Special Education and then Community Instruction classes for five years. And then she became the Special Education Director ten years ago for Grand Haven Area Public Schools.

Debra Jennings is the Executive Co-Director of the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) and she is also the Director of the newly funded Center for Parent Information and Resources.

Kelly Orginski is a statewide trainer at the Michigan Alliance for Families and has over thirty years of experience in Special Education and indirect programs and services to students with disabilities, parents, educators and state and local agencies.

Slide 5: So, before we get started, we’ll talk about why we selected the topic of family engagement and really why this is such an important topic for students with intensive needs.

Slide 6: The National Center on Intensive Intervention arose from a critical and growing need to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities. And while there have been many successful initiatives that have improved outcomes for students with disabilities in the past, data show us that a subset of these students are not responding to those traditional supports and really need something more individualized and intensive. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics show us that one out of three students with disabilities has discipline problems.

Slide 7: Academically, these data show us that a majority of students with disabilities are still struggling with basic Reading and Mathematics skills. So, its data like these that really drive our mission at the National Center for Intensive Intervention.

Slide 8: Our mission is to build district and school capacity to support implementation of data-based individualization in Reading, Mathematics and behavior for students with severe and persistent learning and behavioral needs. And to accomplish this mission, we go about this in a number ways. First, we provide universal technical assistance by sharing evidence-based tools, research and experiences from the field in the form of webinars, reports, tools charts and other resources on our website.

We also provide intensive technical assistance to twelve school districts in four different states across the country, including Grand Haven Public Schools where our panelist Kate Augustyn is the Director of Special Education. Our intensive technical assistance involves the delivery of training and ongoing coaching supports to help the districts build their capacity to deliver intensive interventions

Slide 9: Research and experience have really illustrated the value and impact of family engagement for students especially students with the most intensive needs. Families are such an important partner when it comes to decision-making surrounding services and supports, but understanding multi-tiered systems of support such as RTI or MTSS presents its' own challenges. Family engagement is particularly crucial for students with the most intensive needs but, it comes with unique challenges.

Slide 10: One example of the value of family engagement that has really emerged through our work in the field is a finding from our knowledge development sites. And those are Districts across the country that were selected based on their experienced success in educating their students with disabilities.

So, NCII visited and conducted targeted interviews with these sites including interviews with parents to learn what factors facilitated their success in supporting students with disabilities and their delivery of intensive interventions.

So, the importance of family engagement for students with intensive needs was a common theme across those sites. We found that meaningful engagement and involvement of families in decisions about program planning was important for supporting the implementation of intensive intervention. All sites reported efforts to increase family involvement related to intensive intervention but, they also noted varying degrees of success with their efforts. Interviewees spoke to the importance of establishing regular and systematic communication with families, addressing home life challenges and establishing strong, trusting relationships with schools and specific members as part of their strategy.

So we'll now hear from Kate Augustyn, the Special Education Director of Grand Haven Area Public Schools. So at this time, I will turn the presentation over to Kate.

Slide 11 (Kate Augustyn): What I'd like to do is just talk very briefly about how we have been successful in engaging our parents at various levels in the Tier One, Two and Three at our Elementary, Middle and then High School levels.

Slide 12: At our elementary levels we have worked really hard to have parent nights and I'm sure most of you do that as well. Certainly is you're a Title One school you know that having parent night is something that you have to do. But, what we have worked really hard to do is incorporate our Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) models into each of our parent nights explaining what that is, explaining how it looks at all different levels and having various

members of the teams within each public school, each elementary school and we have seven of them to talk a little bit about that.

We also talk about our interventions in our Math and our Reading programs and how the MTSS model works into that. Looking at our Tier Ones, and how all of our teachers; our General Education teachers work with that. Out Tier Two models and talking about how that is really incorporating some our specialists as well our General Education teachers and then our Tier Three which looks a lot at incorporating most of our specialists and always incorporating the parents. Knowing what that means, what their children are doing within these intervention times and I think we've had good success having our parents feel comfortable with that and enjoying that and enjoying what we do with them.

We also work very hard to look at the kind of character of each of our buildings because certainly, the character of the school kind of is the mindset of the principal. And so, that principal sets that stage. Talking to all of our parents about what they do and it looks a little different at each of our Elementary buildings. But, that's kind of what makes it interesting and intriguing I think. We also send letters home about PBIS and MTSS. E-mail blasts and individual letters to individual families and that sometimes helps us to cover those families that are not able to come into school. Because, certainly some of our most significant parents have trouble coming into the school and what we do is sometimes with that is have some of our staff members go out and meet our families or go out and meet our families either in their home or in areas around Grand Haven if there's a place where everyone wants to meet.

Finally, we work really hard with our PTAs to help explain MTSS and our models. And then also, in our new parent packets and as our principal's take our new parents through their schools. Talking about MTSS and our interventions for Response to Interventions so, our new parents know coming in that that is something we do.

And then finally, we have our grade level meetings for each grade and we're working hard to come up plans and strategies for our students as groups, small groups and then as individuals. And often when we're working with our individuals which, is mostly our Tier Three, parent input is definitely included. And with those grade level meetings, often come child study meetings and those incorporate even more parent input so that we can help our students to be a successful as they can and have our parents understand how important their input is. So, that is what our Elementary's do.

Slide 13: So, at our five/six buildings we have, we really hard to work with our Parent Connect piece. We; this year is our first year that we've tried this and we have had three meetings out of four so far. One that talked about behavior, one that talked about Math and one with Reading and we'll have one more in the spring. We work hard to bring all of our team members together and that would include Social Studies. Sorry, Social Workers, our Psychologist, our Reading Specialist as well as many General Education teachers and our Administration.

To talk about very specifically; we also took video of it and we put our; the videotape of it on the website for our five/six buildings in White Pines as well as on our TV side, school district cameras and stations. And so our parents can go and watch it and watch what happens. So, if you weren't able to come that night, it's right there for you if you're not able to get to the school for some reason. It's right there for you so that we were able to kind of have people look at it that way.

So, that was very, very helpful and I think that we felt really comfortable that and very excited about that. We look forward to our spring one as well.

Slide 14: Now, in our seven/eight buildings we have worked really hard to present to all of our families at orientation which takes place at the beginning of the school year and in parent packets. And what our MTSS model is and again by now, our hope is that many of our families have heard about this coming up through elementary, five/six and into the seven/eight buildings.

So that's very, that's helpful because by now people and parents have a pretty good understanding of what this means. But, we also with our new parents and then also with our families that that have students that are moving into our Tier Two or Tier Three models, we work closely with them individually to explain what our concerns, and to explain what our hope is that what they'll do and to explain how parents can help out at home.

And this will take place either in an individual parent meeting or it will take place over the phone. Those are the primarily the two that we do although, with the most intensive kids often our teachers will go either to the home or meet at the Library to talk about this with their families. To encourage them to talk about what we're doing, ask questions about what we're doing and then come in and visit or meet with us with their student to talk about that. And so, that's what we've done at our seven/eight buildings and we've had quite a bit of success with that.

Slide 15: Finally, from a District; we are very committed to taking; making sure our parents and our community is very involved in understanding our MTSS model and our RTI model because we feel it's very helpful. And it really works with some of our most significant students to help them to be more successful.

We have a leadership team that is based on the MiBLSi (Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative) model which is a RTI model out of Michigan. And that is made up of parents, a lot of community members, school staff and administrators.

We meet three times a year and we actually just had a meeting last week. And we talk very specifically about what can we do as a school community and a community as a whole to incorporate more parents into figuring out and knowing what we do at all three Tiers and how our Tier Three families and our Tier Three students can be more successful with not only in school but also within the community. So, that has been a successful part of what we do. And then finally, as so many do, we work really hard to ensure that we try to bring out what the MTSS model looks like not only in our school environment but also in the community. And we've done that holding some community; some community meetings with members of the community that want to come in and see what each school building is doing and what our school improvement program looks like. Those have been very helpful and have been very exciting I think both for our community and our school communities.

Slide 16: Finally, when we look at taking MTSS into the community, one of the things that I think we're most proud of and that we feel works the best is what we called our Multi-Agency Team (MAT). Our Multi-Agency Team is made up of about fifteen different organizations that are in our community now. Some of these would include some of our Religious Organizations and affiliations as well as Community Mental Health, Department of Human Services, our Police and our; both in the county and right in the Grand Haven area. The area public system as well and then incorporated in that as well as or Salvation Army, our Truancy Department, our Court System and then a wrap around and many of our other; even Head Start and Pre-School programs.

We all meet once a month to talk about specific students or families that have signed waivers so that we can discuss their concerns and their needs. So that all of these people come

together too really talk about specific families and how we can all kind of wrap ourselves around them and help them out.

This is the fourth year we've been doing this and it's been very, very helpful. We really find that that has really helped us to bring families together and understand; especially some of our most significant families. That we're here for them and we work together for success. Central School which is our alternative school works very hard to get mentors involved with the community. They have a very specific mentoring program that is in its second year and is moving along. I think finding mentors for some of our older more significant students can be difficult and we're always looking for those. But being very intentional on looking for those has been helpful and we've found some incredible mentors that have helped some of our most difficult students to start becoming more successful and that is a great thing to see. So, we are pretty excited about all of the things that we're doing here and that is; that kind of is an overview for how we take everything to our community.

Slide 17: And then finally just looking at sort of a brief overview of what I've talked about. The MAT team; for our community and all of our community members have been very helpful. We do a backpack giveaway every fall with some of our more significant families to give backpacks. And during that time, we talk about schools with the families in those areas. So, we go to them and we bring backpacks to them as well as food.

And then we have our administration from each of our Elementary, Middle and High Schools come to talk about school and about positive behavior intervention supports as well interventions in Reading and Behavior and Math and what that's going to look like in each of their buildings. And that is a very helpful piece.

We do a lot of play and learn for our Pre-School's. So, that's also taking our Pre-School teachers out into the areas where some of our more significant families live and giving an hour of what Pre-School would look like to our children and to their parents and giving away books as well as food. And that has been very successful and the kids love it and I think parents then are more likely to sign up for Pre-School and that is kind of our earliest kiddos and we get involved with.

We also for our Early Childhood Special Education kiddos we also have parent nights three to four times a year. We provide childcare and food and we talk about Curriculum, Behavior, Occupational or Physical Therapy and speech and then some other ideas that they have. And that has been helpful for some of our most intense little people to get them hopefully on the right track early on. So we can get them going and to be as successful as they can in our; in our group here at Grand Haven and in our society as a whole.

So, that is my piece and I appreciated everybody listening and if you have questions, I know we have time at the end for you to discuss with us. So, thank you very much and I will turn it over to Laura.

Slide 18 (Laura Magnuson): Thank you Kate. Next we have Kelly Orginski presenting a little bit about her perspective and part of The Michigan Alliance for Families. So Kelly, I will turn it over to you at this time.

Slide 19 (Kelly Orginski): Hi, we are the Local, Federal and State Parent Information Center. Everyone who works for us is either a parent or family member of a child with a disability. We've been around about seven years. In the beginning, we really looked at what is this called

parent involvement and parent engagement. So, I'm going to give you a little bit of information about evidence based models and some practices.

So, we really started to say that this just isn't some nice thing that we do for parents. You know, how do we make sure that parents are getting what they need to be involved in so that their children can have better outcomes with their children when it comes to their education? So, we looked around and there was not a lot around about this specific to children with disabilities and so there some other really good models out there that we used pretty successfully since then.

Slide 20: So just to give you an idea of what we looked at too is that parents as learners. We looked at adult standards for learning and one of the things that we keep telling our staff and that we always keep telling our staff or that we always talk about is that parents that typically to us, there is something that they need help with. These adults tend to be problem centered learners. So, they want to know how do I do this, what's this information, what's going and what sort of resources do I have? So we really looked at aligning adult learning standards to content learning standards.

Slide 21: Practice-based adult learning standards.

Slide 22: And evidence; research and evidenced-based adult learning standards with what we do to have better outcomes for families with children with disabilities. So just that; that we also looked at the needs of how parents get information and what's the best way to get that to them.

Slide 23: We also looked at parental involvement by types and we constantly used Epstein's Model because it is a foundational piece for the work that we do and I believe that we'll talk more about that later. But, I just wanted to give you an idea of what that looks like.

Slide 24: We also looked at the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The parent involvement standards and really aligned not only the standards but with the Federal standards, the Mixing Standards of Measurement and then what we do. So, what we gleaned; because we were evaluated by everybody and their brother. We really looked at how do we make sure that we wind up with those outcomes? So, this just; I'm not going to go through these slides but I know that they will be available to you after the webinar.

We took the PTA standards, we went through the national model on mixing and then we also took what we do. Just so that you can see that they were lined up.

Slide 25: And just trying line up and to give you some good data-based decisions about how do we involve parents about what we do.

Slide 27: The other thing that we looked at is we looked at; we have things that are called parent mentors. They are families; they are typically women right now and we've had a few men. But, they are people who live and work in the communities that they are. And we looked at the standards of what does mentoring mean? We found some good standards from Carnegie Institutes and some other ones. But, our parent mentors are really helping the parents go from the "I" voice to the "we" voice so we can help contribute to the how do we make this better. Our mentoring is really about building trust, it is; and it is respect and it is reciprocal. Our mentoring is not coaching, it is not necessarily teaching although both of those are components of it. So, you're giving as well as you're getting in the mentoring relationship. It is ongoing,

long term and goal oriented. It's not just about talking about what all the problems is it's about finding a solution to what's going on.

And it helps with those skills so they can partner better; so that their students can have better outcomes. It is really all about getting consistent, good information that parents can help so their children have better outcomes.

Some of the long-term outcomes of mentoring is that parents are skilled so that they can mentor other parents, you can pay it forward. There's a strong network of parents who live in Michigan and we continue to grow and build.

We started off with five people on our project I think we just have come; I know we just went statewide and I think it's up to thirty-two plus. And there's increased involvement, parent involvement in schools. So, we have the data actually that shows that what we're doing is actually working.

Slide 28: One of the reasons that our corporation started this about seven years ago is not looking at how to fix the outside but to fix the things with which we can. The Michigan Alliance for Families and our core beliefs is that most communities have the resources but, frequently don't have a way to organize them and this has been a way to get them together help support them to get through this thing called special education and to give their kids the supports and services that they need.

Slide 29: So we went down again to an evidenced-based model and that was John McKnight who did a lot of work in Chicago wrote, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. Three of the tenants that we really worked on by truth are really were asset-based. We have our parent mentors, our staff person within each community and we looked to see what the community has. We have what we call stakeholders meetings, we have Juvenile Justice there, we have Social Workers there, we have the school and we have Churches. We've invited a whole community to come together and we ask them a specific set of questions based on McKnight's Positive Asset Mapping to figure out; to get people together, to have people to talk. But that's also to let you know what the community looks like.

You know when you live some place you don't always know everything that's out there. It is internally focused so that we as a set of people are supporting families of children with disabilities. What do we need to do here and now? We know that the people who live in the community know who the Special Education Directors. You know who the Dentist is, who the caregivers are and those kinds of things.

And last but not least, it is all about relationships. Particularly for parents that have children that have higher support needs. It's really about coordinating or helping to coordinate acute health services. If you've got those things added in there and you need mental health and Doctor's appointments and then school added in there. How do we help parents figure out what they need to do in the community? How do we their forearms and hold them?

Our primary focuses were on families with children with disabilities but, we totally recognize that lots of families need supports for school and other important stuff. So if we get a family that needs something else, we've built these community assets so that going on, we've built these parent assets so that moving on we can then check back with them when they're ready to do something at school we can do that.

Slide 30: So what does this look like? How do we implement this statewide model serving Michigan? Well, it really is about information and resources. We have a statewide model that you can call you can get good information on resources both for Federal and State. We also have what are called our parent mentors and they support at a local connection with information, support and resources. They provide that mentoring one on one, that kind of small group and I'll talk more about that. They provide learning opportunities in our schools and talk about some of partners that we can bring in. They'll use webinars and we've used live people. We've used what we call local experts to talk about things like Positive Behavior Support. And we support parent leaders and emerging parent leaders. What do you want to do next? Are you ready to move on? Do you want to sit on your Parent Advisory Committee? Do you want to sit on the State Advisory Committee? If there is something you want to do because anything that helps supports you around this thing called Special Education.

Slide 31: So, our parent mentors are really about developing those relationships between family members and those professionals. Which are particularly educators but they can be all community members? But, it can really to help them in the understanding of their local system and again how those work because, in Michigan every county looks a little bit different and every school could look a little bit different.

Offering learning opportunities that are designed to meet community needs either in large group, small group or online. The learning opportunities although some people might call them presentations or workshops but it's really just about as an adult learner, it's about how you get particular information. It's about how you apply it, synthesize and use it in your life and how to help your children have better outcomes is a whole different story and then to support and mentor family members.

Slide 32: This whole system consists of what we call collaborative partners. Typically they are non-profits who are in the state of Michigan but some aren't. Wayne State University, Washtenaw Intermediate School District and so these are people who help us get information, who help us present this. They help us get to outside systems that often work well with mentors.

Slide 33: And the other part of our job in Michigan, we are a mandated activity. The Michigan and Alliance for Families so, we worked very hard to establish relationships with the other mandated projects within the state of Michigan and this is just a list of them.

You've heard Kate talk about MiBLSi and we've worked very closely to help them figure out what parent involvement is. What are the standards? How do you do that? How do write into the grant and make sure that the standards are practiced? So not only to look at that local level about what's there you know, we worked at the state level of non-profits but, then we also worked with the other mandated projects.

Slide 34: We are also very well aware of our student's performance plans. We worked with Part C under indicator four and then often under Part B under indicator eight. We often laugh that we go this tattooed on our bodies. We were very serious about making sure how does the state department plan influence our practice. How to help parents find their voices? How do we help communities figure out how to get the parent involvement so that they get better outcomes for their children?

Slide 35: We work as early on as possible and as often as we can.

Slide 36: And this is our state map. When we originally got this Alliance we wanted to find a parent mentor in every county in the state. Well, that was a little cost prohibitive for us so we have since; this is where we currently are. We were really looking at connecting that local parent mentor with the communities to help them figure out the resources that are there but how do we do this with this thing called Special Education.

Slide 37: This is where we are today, working together to help families. This is our website and our eight hundred number.

Slide 38 (Laura Magnuson): Thank you so much Kelly and now we have our third panelist, Debra Jennings. Debra, I will turn it over to you. And I just unmuted you.

Debra Jennings: Thanks Laura. Thanks for including us in this really interesting and I think useful presentation and I'm really excited about the number of people who are interested in this work and interested in; in involving families at more and higher levels and this is has been self-central to the work that I've done since probably about nineteen ninety-two or nineteen ninety-three.

Slide 39: So, what I'm going to talk to you about is a process that we have used with Districts and with schools in the state of New Jersey and have also really been sharing on a national level. In order to help folks who are interested in what it takes to include, involve, engage and partner with parents to be able to have a way of looking at what that going to; what that and what it can look like once you have achieved your goal.

Slide 40: This is a quote that feels so relevant. I think too often we sort of don't necessarily; we kind of leave parent involvement to be what happens after through all of the other kinds of academic changes and implementation of interventions.

Slide 41: But, it's really important to really to think about it and to make sure that you're addressing the parent involvement aspects throughout and early on as we're looking at improving outcomes for infant and toddlers, youth and children in our community.

Slide 42: As Kelly shared, we have based our work around the six types of parent involvement from the Joyce Epstein Model. And this is a way to really organize your thinking around what is it that we have going on in our schools and in our Districts and what are the gaps. What are the things that we need to do in order to really be able to address the breadth and the depth of the parent community; their needs, their interests, their capacities and their strengths. And so using the Epstein model, that's a really excellent way to organize and I think that Kelly has shown that as well in terms of how the Michigan Alliance for Families built their model for the way that they are serving families with children with disabilities in Michigan.

Slide 43: And so you know, we have a framework around multi-tiered interventions or RTI or however it's termed in your community. And so, I'd like to look at how you can overlay the types of parent involvement over the multi-tiered interventions and really thinking about where are the places that we need to address parent involvement and even within each of the; within each of the tiers of MTSS or RTI model.

Slide 44: So, we've had some really great examples of effective strategies. And I think that Kate from Grand Haven gave us some really great ideas on how we can work with families, how we can help to support families and to meet the needs of families. So that families are in a much better way able to support and advocate for their children.

Slide 45: When we're looking at the Epstein model, we talk about one of the types being parenting. And I think in the Grand Haven School District, we have a lot of excellent examples of how you can build programs and communications and activities that will help parents to know what it means to have a very strong home environment in order to support their students.

Slide 46: In the MTSS models, communication I think is one of the key areas. And it's not always clear in the policies and practices that Districts and schools are implementing around RTI. What it means to communicate with families? At what point we should or at what point we should communicate with families? And I think that's an area that is really in need of a lot of development and direction because, it's really important for families to understand the; your processes as early as possible. It's important for families to get the communication about RTI, about interventions, about assessments and progress monitoring, etcetera early on.

So that if their child isn't making the progress that is needed and there is a need for that difficult conversation around interventions you are communicating with a parent who's had a lot of positive communication about RTI. And that their first communication is really not all that challenging communication that says uh oh, something is wrong.

So, it's really important to do that Tier One communication so that as a student requires interventions; those conversations we want you to have with parents at Tier Two or Tier Three are not as difficult. And parents are much; will be much more willing to partner with you in helping to improve the progress for their child.

Slide 47: The parent centers and parents are really resources for you. And it's important to find out what are the ways that parents can support the activities and the programs and even the interventions that schools are implementing. We often sort of either compartmentalize parents as only the resource for fundraisers and volunteers but not necessarily as real partners and we don't always utilize those parent organization and PTAs in the ways that can best support students. And also best support families.

You know the model for the Parent Training and Information Centers and the Community Parent Resource Centers is one which is fundamentally about parents helping parents. The Michigan Family Alliance's concept of parents being mentors is one that is; that really should be a great area to replicate. Even at the school level because, parents; particularly once they figured out how to navigate systems are the best people to talk to parents about that. And when we talk about culturally and linguistically diverse families, it's often that a parent can meet with a parent of a different; you know of their own language or their own culture and really support and communicate with them in ways that schools and District personnel cannot necessarily do.

Slide 48: Learning at home; you know there's homework and then there's learning at home. You know as a parent, we really need to know more about how we can really support our students in their education outside of the school environment. And when schools are sharing activities that the parents can do at home it really makes a big difference. But also, it's important

for parents to be involved in understanding the curriculum and involved in knowing decisions and being a part of the decisions and planning around the school's academic activities.

Slide 52: And we really have some really good suggestions and as has been shared, you will get copies of the Power Point at a later time. Decision making is another area that is really important in this model especially because you really want to engage parents and the community, champions as well as critical friends for the work that you're doing. I believe and many have probably heard me say that when parents are informed and involved and engaged, they are going to be your number one champions for spinning your efforts.

I love the way that the Grand Haven is engaging its communities in meetings around their activities and also have established a leadership team that includes parents because, parents have a lot to say and they also are the best folks to support us for getting things done. And there's a lot of decision making that has to be done particularly about individual students and the interventions that they will need. It's important to make sure that the parents are a part of that decision making process and that they're informed participants and partners in the decision making.

Then also as some students reach certain ages, the students should be a part of the decision making about them and what's going to happen and how they are going to be supported and how they're; and setting their own goals for what they would like to do in terms of achievement.

Slide 54: Grand Haven also talked about how they're collaborating with the community and bringing in those resources that we don't always have within the school or within the District. But, those are resources that families can access that will help in terms of improving their student's achievement.

Slide 56: So when you're making; when you're looking at what you're doing already in terms of parent involvement, I offer this suggestion for a way to organize. Where are we? You know this is something that you can sort of just put up on the wall and say what are the parent involved activities that we're involved in right now? And what areas are they really supporting as we're implementing our RTI or MTSS model? How are we addressing communication and getting parents these resources and collaboration with the community? And what does it mean in terms of our ability to really effectively to operate in our systems of interventions?

Slide 54: So when you're planning for effective parent involvement, you're going to identify your needs in terms of where are the places that we don't have parent involvement activities. You're going to look at the places where you are addressing the needs of parents and also looking; helping parents to bring their assets to bare in terms of improving the outcomes of their children and to improving the overall outcomes of the school and the District. After brainstorming that we typically have the teams; you do this in a group process that includes parents and staff, educators as well as support staff and administrators. To really generate some ideas and say okay, these are the activities that we need to use; that we need to put into place to address these needs. We're looking at the Epstein Model and it's; there are some things that we're seeing in that model that are really going to be useful in our school and that we can replicate or implement here in the school.

Once you have that list, you really want to look at okay, what can we really do? We asked this group to apply a criteria list that says; but ask, what is going to be the impact of these

activities? Does that activity address the needs of families of students? With the greatest needs being students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Are the activities culturally responsive to the various cultures in our school and our community? We also ask is it doable? Do we have the resources? Do we have those whether it's financial resources, staff resources, time resources and are we going to be committed to getting this activity done? And so then once we go through that process with the team, they then prioritize the activities. Put timelines on them and actually develop a plan to implement the activities.

Slide 58: This is the format that we used for their development of the plan. It has the activities, anticipated results, who is going to do it, by when? And then really, really important, I think the Michigan Family Alliance particularly pointed this out. To really look at how are we going to know that what we are doing is successful. What kind of data are we going to collect and what should that data say if we are successful in implementing these activities. It's an intentional approach. It's a planful approach. It's an inclusive approach. And it could take maybe, it could take several meetings or it could take one meeting to get to a plan that you can then go forth and implement over the course of the next you know school year or part of the school year or over a number of school years. And we've found that the schools and the Districts that participate in this kind of approach are; it really helps to, it helps then to really get organized and really think about the intention of the outcomes.

Slide 59: Okay, this is what parent involvement is and this is how we can really make a difference. So, I can't leave the call without really giving you some information about Parent Centers who are really; many of whom really are the experts around how to engage and partner with and support families of children with disabilities. There are more than one hundred across the country. Including many of the U.S. territories and many are state wide, some are for particular areas of states and also for particular communities. But they are all important collaborators in helping to make sure that they are partnering with professionals as well as agencies who are working together to improve assistance to children with disabilities.

Slide 60: I have here a list of resources and with that, I thank you for your attention and turn it back over to Laura.

Laura Magnuson: Thank you so much Debra. Well that concludes the part of our presentation where our panelists are presenting. But, we have many questions that you all have submitted both before the presentation and during. So, my colleague Neo has compiled these questions and we would love to pose them all to the panelists at this time. So let's get that started and if you have any more questions please go ahead and type them into the chat at this point and we will get to as many as we can. So, I'll hand it over to Neo with the questions.

Nioud Gebru: So one of the; to start us off is one of the more general questions that have come up. It is how to deal with culturally and linguistically diverse families? And this is for all of our panelists so, if you have any suggestions or comments that would be helpful.

Kate Augustyn: Well I can, from a Grand Haven perspective. We have been working hard with our ESL; our ELL families. That's one of the areas that we've really put in as a school improvement piece as well. What we do is that we have; part of it is that I think you have people

that you have working with the families and that the families feel comfortable with these people, with the people that work with them. I think a lot of people that we have working with our ELL families go out into the communities where our families live. They go to their homes. They go with them to their doctor's appointments.

And then we have cultural nights based on the cultural ethnicity in the different types of communities that we're trying to serve. We've found that that has been really helpful because, school families that go together around these cultural nights to learn more about the specific culture. And that has been really helpful and I think we are doing more and more of those and we just finished one last week which was very; I think which was quite successful.

So, I think having the people that you choose to work closely with your families and then making sure that the families feel a part of the school community is important. And often we find that going first out into the communities of the parents and the families and then bringing them slowly into the school itself has seem to work best for us.

Kelly Orginski: When we hire the person you know we hire a parent mentor in a given District and partner with them and help them with the community person. We help them to then know how to interface with the schools, the principals. We hire people that are culturally diverse in this language population to help people figure out how to do this.

Nioud Gebru: Perfect.

Debra Jennings: Yeah, culture brokers are really important especially if you have a population that is not only non-English speaking or challenged in terms of the language. But also, if you have a population where there are a number of immigrants who are; who may or may not that may not have their legal residency and are concerned about interfacing a lot with institutions that may cause them to have to be deported. So often, it's going to be better to have a community group or a house of worship or others who are working with them.

We've been really successful in getting sort of parent to parent helpers going by establishing parent groups in many of those communities. So they sort of use each other to make sure that their needs are met and their questions are answered without them being identified specifically.

Kate Augustyn: I would agree with you especially from the church perspective. We work closely with many churches in our area that kind of foster and take on specific cultures and it has been very helpful. They've been helpful in also teaching us how a specific culture or family may look at school and school involvement and that's been really helpful to us as well.

Nioud Gebru: Great, thank you. So, another question that just came in and it is how can a small school district school or District implements family involvement without services near the school?

Kate Augustyn: Well I think again from my perspective in Grand Haven, and we're relatively small compared to a big city but we're probably bigger than some places. I think I go back to again; I think a lot of it is staff related and much the culture of the School District and the community is getting parents involved. Initially I think having opportunities for teaching staff and school staff to pull what community resources you may have. Bringing them out into the

community and then taking them from the community and bringing them back into the school area.

I think at least from our perspective we've seen that the more community involvement we have the more the families will become involved. And it's often times bringing that out into the community rather than only having things at school. So, that has been a little helpful for us at least.

Kelly Orginski: And that's totally what we do Kate. We do the same thing and I mean our parent mentors are working all over the communities in different places information about Laundromats, Libraries and getting registered in Pre-School.

Kate Augustyn: Yep

Kelly Orginski: We just bring information out and then work with the schools to figure out how, do you get that information to the parents on the back end.

Debra Jennings: And parents are often the resource, often know about resources that the school may or may not know about that are in the community.

Kate Augustyn: Absolutely

Debra Jennings: And so it's really important to network with parents and keep parents connected so that they can access; so that they'll know what the resources are. They can share with each other the resources and they may or may not; that may or may not happen within the school context. They should do what it can to help make sure that those connections are available but that parents have those opportunities to work with each other to sort of you know figure out how to get the services that they need that are out there in the community.

Kelly Orginski: Right

Nioud Gebru: Thank you and there's also a lot of interest from the participants and this question is for Kelly. The question is how do you pick and choose your mentors and how you train the parents for the mentoring program?

Kelly Orginski: Sure, so we put word into the communities that we're hiring. There's a job description and there's a very specific set of interview questions that they are interviewed and hired for this job. Our training is really just; there's a lot of stuff on our website. There are webinars around content information. We do lots of things, four times a year we bring our entire staff together for three days where we talk about [Indiscernible] skills. What's the newest things in the law? We also have weekly webinars with; depending on where the staff is with the director.

We discuss what's the latest and greatest in what's happening with rules changes with laws or questions that they have. So I would say our training is multi-layered. It's based on adult learning, it's the gamut about just that kind of here's the information, how do you apply it, how do you synthesize it within your own communities. So it's kind of an ongoing; broad based, you know web based. Persons don't really get face to face meaning.

And then the people that are kind of our leadership team are available to any of our staff to go in and they do some mentoring with one or two of them just like our mentors do with

parents. There are small groups over anything specific that they might have a; be self-identified as things that they might need more content or skill sets around. So, it's very; there's a structure but, we follow the same mentoring practice with our staff and then our staff goes into our community and with the parents.

Nioud Gebru: Great, thank you. And then just to follow up on that, can you speak to the types of discrete data that you're collecting?

Kelly Orginski: I think that if you look back at the slide that would be the statewide trainer slide. I do not collect any data. We have; the data is collected by both Wayne State University. It's collected by both Federal; our Federal Grants, it's also collected by United Way. If you're really interested; and I know that Wayne State's biggest; one of the biggest ones is really around that Mixed Team Ladder that they talked about, that I talked about earlier. That was around Federal Standards also, parent engagement. I know that those are both connected.

If you really want to talk more about discrete data you would need to call Sherri Boyd. If you go on our website, she's there. She's the Operations Director and she would be able to talk more specifically about that. I just know the basics because I'm not in that or involved with those pieces.

Nioud Gebru: Great, thank you and so, I'll open it up to the other panelists also. What is the role of a counselor regarding getting parents on board to assist students to do better academically?

Kate Augustyn: Well from our perspective, our Counselors have a variety of roles and we kind of; sometimes our Counselors and our Social Workers kind of work together hand in hand. Or in taking over what each individual student needs and where we are I think with some of our most significant Tier Three students, certainly the Social Workers are often more involved than the Counselors just because of the Special ED need and that's kind of how we work here. But at all levels, either Counselors or Social Workers work to; first of all, our initial response is to call the families. We talk about what our concerns are. We hope to have the families come in to meet with us or if that doesn't work, going to find them. You know where they feel comfortable. Be it the Library or a McDonalds. Sometimes, where they are; around where they live if that's easier for them. And then pulling them in and seeing what they need from us. I think that we are very blessed to have Counselors and Social Workers that give a lot of additional time and support. So, they figure out what the family needs and help. As a team we try to meet and think about what it is that those individual families need. We do child studies, I think almost; I know that everybody does that and that's just kind of bringing the group together within a school to talk about what does a specific family need and how can we work together to do those or to get those needs met.

And then we just put an action plan in place and decide who's in charge of doing what with the action plan. And then the next time that we meet, we follow up to make sure that everybody has done their job and hopefully that has been the way we work. So, that's what we try to do.

Laura Magnuson: Well thank you so much. I am going to wrap us up now because it is one minute until four. So I want to thank all of our panelists. Thank you so much for being a part of this presentation today. I think it was really beneficial to hear their perspectives. Just as a quick

announcement, the webinar slides will be archived on our website and before that, we will also e-mail a copy out to all of you participants. So, you'll have that.

We apologize, there was an e-mail issue where we tried out a new registration system and maybe not everyone got the e-mail directions. We are working to resolve that so thank you so much for your patience.

Lastly, our next webinar is coming up in February. It is with Dr. Lynn Fuchs and Lee Kern and it will be on *Designing and Delivering Intensive Interventions in Academics and Behavior*. So, please join us for that webinar in February. You can stay tuned on our website for more announcements. We would also just encourage you to please take our survey. You will be e-mailed a link to it and it will also pop up in your browser after this. We would love to hear your feedback we take it into account when we are working with future webinars. So thank you so much everyone and have a great day.