



## Joining Hands – Partnerships for Developing Student Capacities

*Failure to nurture and develop specific capacities in today's children, capacities that can intelligently meet current and future needs directly affects all aspects of our society and every segment of society must take an active role in meeting this fundamental challenge.*

~ Rick Stephens, President, Boeing Company

New Mexico SPARK, initiated five years ago at school sites around New Mexico with the goal of transition from Early Childhood Education to Kindergarten through 3rd grade has used a practice that focuses on collaborative efforts to educate the whole child and consider future community and workforce needs. That practice is called Joining Hands. Joining Hands is a tested “best practice” that provides support by adults and institutions who understand what a child needs at each stage of development, to help equip children for their role and to better communicate with one another. It can be used in any situation to successfully bring people together to create alignment and opportunities for people who may otherwise not communicate.

Joining Hands teams, made up of key teachers, parents, community members, and administration, meet regularly to strengthen teachers' ability to help children succeed. These teams make teaching and learning more transparent and invite the participation and contribution of the larger community. There is vertical articulation for teachers to plan transitions, two-way communication with parents to learn about student needs and interests, input and support from the community for educational enterprise, and an informed administration that can provide support. Joining Hands has a formal procedural guide to help you get started. To learn more, contact Emily Darnell-Nunez, listed under contacts.

So what can a school leader do to make this important shift in educational focus?

1. Start a Joining Hands team, with a regular meeting time and an

agenda. Considers students coming from feeder settings. Plan transition activities.

2. Become active politically in the NCLB reauthorization. Speak about the importance of funding for community liaisons and collaborative partnership that are more realistic than the current AYP goals.

3. Visit a SPARK site to learn what they are doing to work with parents and the community and feeder institutions to be Ready Schools.

4. Attend the legislature during the Children's Cabinet days, March 2,3,4. The focus will be inclusive of all children, birth to age 20, both health and education.

“It is vital that industry, media, government, health and education leaders come together as never before. They must share their best thinking around the idea that family, community, education, and workforce function as integral parts of a broader human developmental system.” Rick Stephens, (2003).

### Contacts:

NM SPARK: State Director, Emily Darnell-Nunez (She can direct you to sites in your area). [enunez@nmc.org](mailto:enunez@nmc.org)

Legislative Day, NM Children's Cabinet: Claire Dudley at [Claire.dudley@state.nm.us](mailto:Claire.dudley@state.nm.us)

Every Child Matters campaign: [www.everychildmatters.org](http://www.everychildmatters.org)

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