

Introducing Spark Sessions:
New NPEA 2020 Conference Session Type

This year, in addition to our traditional workshop sessions, we are seeking individuals interested in presenting an innovative idea, a unique challenge, or an inspiring story that speaks to this year's theme of reaching out, rising up, and forging ahead for student success.

- Every Spark Session will feature 3* presenters, with each session centered around a related theme. Individual presenters will speak for 7-10 minutes in turn, followed by 15-20 minutes of group discussion facilitated by a session monitor.
- Presenters are encouraged to share an innovative idea, challenge, or question with the group that will inspire discussion.
- Interested presenters should submit a proposal for a 7-10 minute slot *within* a Spark Session.

**NPEA will coordinate groups of 3 presenters during the review and selection process; you are not responsible for finding and/or submitting with a group of 3.*

An Innovative Idea: *Some of the obstacles in the field of educational access have remained unchanged, and in many cases have heightened in the current climate. Spark Sessions are the perfect stage for showcasing solutions that you have found that break new ground or remove some of these obstacles.*

A Unique Challenge: *Not all problems have solutions - yet. What questions or ideas are you grappling with where you could use the perspective of others navigating this space? Spark Sessions allow conference attendees a platform to share some of the struggles they have encountered in their work and solicit ideas from others in the field.*

An Inspiring Story: *Sometimes, all it can take to start a great discussion is a great story. Is there a time where you or your organization were inspired by a student or a colleague? A Spark Session is a great place to share one of these stories, either to motivate others or prompt discussions about the field of educational access.*

Spark Session presentations should be **scripted, rehearsed 7-10 minute remarks** that may or may not use accompanying visuals. With limited time, this presentation style is an opportunity to dive immediately into your remarks, foregoing context and background to get right to the heart of your idea, challenge, or story.

Logistics:

There is no need to seek partners for your Spark Session - **NPEA will group presenters thematically** based on the proposals received, at which point you will be assigned to the first, second, or third slot in your session. Presentations will be timed and cut off at 10 minutes, with a facilitated "sit and think" minute between each, and moderated discussion with guided questions will follow after all three presentations have taken place.

Topic Ideas and Suggestions

NPEA seeks a range of perspectives from the educational access and success field, including school- and non-school-based direct service programs; independent, public, and charter schools; colleges and universities; other education nonprofits; funders; and more.

We encourage Spark Session proposals that touch upon any of the following categories, as well as others related to the conference theme and educational access and success.

Collaboration and Partnerships: These sessions will feature successful and innovative partnerships between/among CBOs, schools, and colleges/universities. These collaborations will model working together as a field and share metrics for measuring success as well as replicable strategies and practices.

Examples of topics include, but are not limited to:

- **Cross-sector collaborations:** Intentional partnerships across programs, schools, and other settings to ensure students thrive; CBO/school connections
- **K-12 and higher education partnerships:** CBO/university collaborations; student persistence initiatives; high school to college transitions

Colleges and Universities: These sessions will offer emerging practices related to supporting students transitioning to and persisting through college and beyond.

Examples of topics include, but are not limited to:

- **Supporting student success:** Creating positive learning environments and campus cultures; summer bridge programs; supporting student transitions; early college programming; student retention and persistence; mentoring; college advising curriculum; study abroad; gap years
- **Diversity, equity, and inclusion:** Socioeconomic, racial, and cultural diversity on campus; creating a culture of inclusion; on-campus affinity groups and special offerings
- **College admissions:** Recruitment and support initiatives for low-income, first generation, underserved student populations; college fly-in programming; accessibility and affordability

Data & Evaluation: These sessions will address current research, data, methods of evaluation, and policy in the field, as well as practical tips, tools, and lessons learned about best practices for measuring and communicating impact, and ensuring all aspects of data and evaluation are looked and implemented through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens.

Examples of topics include, but are not limited to:

- **Current research and data:** Demonstrations of research-to-practice in the educational access field; data-driven decision-making
- **Data collection and analysis:** Using data to improve practice and/or tell a story; evaluation and analysis strategies; tools and resources for tracking students
- **State and government policies:** Understanding implications of and navigating current educational and political climate/landscape; current policies and practices impacting students

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: These sessions will address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizational and institutional settings, and will cover topics such as racial or gender equity, intersectionality, socio-economic diversity, systemic inequities, creating inclusive environments, culturally-relevant and responsive pedagogy, and more.

Examples of topics include, but are not limited to:

- **Diverse student populations:** Supporting undocumented/DACA students; working with immigrant students and families; supporting socio-economic diversity in school and program settings; supporting Latinx students; differentiating instruction; culturally-relevant and culturally-responsive pedagogy;

supporting students from across the spectrums of gender and sexuality; working with indigenous communities; non-traditional views of access and equity

- **Inclusive campus environments:** Multicultural campus initiatives; recruiting and supporting underserved students; first generation student persistence; affinity groups; addressing microaggressions; hiring, supporting, and retaining a diverse staff/faculty
- **Systemic and structural inequity:** Exploring root causes of education outcome disparities; addressing issues of racism, discrimination, and oppression; understanding privilege and power; overcoming structural barriers to equitable access and opportunity; policy and resource inequities; implicit bias
- **Advocacy, social justice, and civic engagement:** Empowering/supporting student activism; education policy and reform; organizing and engaging students, families, colleagues, and communities; dismantling white supremacy culture
- **Research:** Connecting research to practice; applying the work of leading researchers (e.g., Christopher Emdin, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Tony Jack, Shaun Harper, Dorinda Carter-Andrews, Tressie McMillan Cottom) with proven results

Elementary and Middle Grades: These sessions will offer innovative and emerging best practices for supporting underrepresented and underserved students in K-8 on the path to college.

Examples of topics include, but are not limited to:

- **College-going programming and curriculum:** Academic enrichment; creating a college-going mindset; family engagement and support; experiential learning
- **School, summer, and critical transitions:** Preparing students for school transitions (e.g., public to private or charter, elementary to middle, middle to high); preventing summer learning loss
- **Lower- and middle-achieving students:** Supporting students with lower GPAs and test scores; asset-based practices and support for average-performing students
- **K-8 and secondary/post-secondary partnerships:** Partnering across sectors for student success; high-impact collaborations (e.g., city, district, schoolwide, K-16)

Financing Higher Education: These sessions will address the rising cost of higher education and how attendees can best support students and families as they navigate the complex world of the FAFSA, college savings, loans, gap funding, student debt, and more.

Examples of topics include, but are not limited to:

- **Financial aid:** Financial aid assistance for entry into secondary and post-secondary schools; FAFSA support; gap funding; financial literacy; college savings plans; financial aid for undocumented students
- **Rising cost of college:** Research, trends, and strategies around the rising cost of college tuition and the impact on low-income, first generation students and families; accessing scholarships and grants
- **Student loan debt:** Advising students and families through student loan debt and repayment

Lower- and Middle-Achievers: These sessions will address the unique challenges and opportunities around recruiting and supporting lower- and middle-achieving students on the path to and through college.

Examples of topic areas include, but are not limited to:

- **Academic interventions and college preparation:** Academic programming and curricula, positioning students for the college application process, scholarship opportunities, college advising
- **College persistence:** Social-emotional and academic services to support student retention and persistence, on-campus resources for student success

Management, Leadership, and Executive-Level Decision-Making: These sessions will share strategies that nonprofit and school leaders can use to drive, manage, and grow programs and initiatives, such as staff recruitment and retention, staff growth and development, office culture, administrative policies, fundraising, self-care, board management, and more.

Examples of topic areas include, but are not limited to:

- **Hiring and retaining diverse staff:** Developing and supporting diverse leaders; capacity building for sustainability and growth; recruiting and retaining diverse faculty/staff
- **Program expansion/replication:** Scaling curricula, programming, social impact; national and regional affiliate fundraising strategies; data-sharing
- **Infrastructure and long-term planning:** Comprehensive strategic planning; communication strategies; marketing/branding; organizational culture; high-impact partnerships; board and trustee development
- **Funding/development:** Ensuring financial sustainability; funder and grant-maker perspectives; fundraising; community and/or corporate partnerships; lack of diversity in philanthropy and the impact on educational program funding
- **Leadership and professional development:** Supporting training and growth of staff; encouraging a positive and fulfilling work culture; developing leaders in the workplace; supporting the onboarding and work “lifecycle” of staff

Program/Student Services: These sessions will offer resources for building, implementing, refining, and/or sustaining programming and student services within an organization or school setting.

Examples of topic areas include, but are not limited to:

- **Resiliency:** Promoting strength-based strategies for working with students; helping students overcome barriers; culturally sensitive and trauma-informed support
- **College readiness and persistence:** College counseling and advising; college application process; high school to college transitions; opportunity youth
- **Career readiness/workforce development:** Career prep training, tools, and resources; fostering leadership; building professional networks; post-secondary pathways (e.g., hard and soft skills development, career readiness, financial literacy)
- **Community, parent/guardian, and family engagement:** Encouraging partnerships among parents/guardians, families, schools, and communities; family engagement programming and resources; inclusive and intentional family engagement in college processes
- **Tools and resources:** Mobile technology, tools, and resources for student success; STEM/STEAM; standardized test prep; innovative curricula

Social-Emotional Learning, Student Mental Health and Well-Being: These sessions will address research and practices around social-emotional learning, non-cognitive skill development, identity and character growth, and non-academic factors in student success.

Examples of topics include, but are not limited to:

- **Social-emotional skills:** Fostering grit, resilience, social intelligence, and/or a growth mindset in K-16 students; assessing social-emotional skills and growth; building communication skills with students
- **Mental health and well-being:** Identifying warning signs for mental illness in adolescence; trauma-inclusive practices for youth of color, including best practices for Latinx students; understanding variables that impact mental well-being of students of color; supporting increased competencies of families, organizations, schools, and/or universities to recognize and support student well-being and implement mental health programs and policies

- **Research:** Connecting research to practice; applying the work of leading researchers (e.g., Angela Duckworth, Carol Dweck, Mandy Savitz-Romer) with proven results
 - **Identity and character development:** Defining and exploring concepts in intersectionality; helping students find their unique voices; reflection practices; restorative justice; mindfulness and meditation; mentoring; independent and post-secondary campus culture; teaching students how to facilitate diversity discussions
 - **Early interventions:** Social-emotional learning, non-cognitive skill development, and college-going mindsets in work with K-8 students
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PRESENTER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The information below may be helpful in addressing your questions about presenting at the NPEA Conference.

Do I need to register and pay for the conference?

- Yes. **All Spark Session presenters must register and pay for the conference in order to present.** NPEA offers a discounted conference registration rate of \$495 per person for each NPEA member presenter, \$680 per person for each non-member presenter, and \$200 for graduate/undergraduate student presenters. Unfortunately, we are unable to offer further discounted or complimentary registrations (including one-day rates). Please keep these costs in mind prior to submitting a proposal.

Does the registration fee cover hotel and/or travel expenses?

- No, the workshop presenter registration fee covers the cost of your attendance as well as breakfast, lunch, and other opportunities each day of the conference. Please book and pay for your hotel and travel accommodations separately.

I can't stay for the full conference. Can I just come and go for my session and could this lower my registration fee?

- Unfortunately, no. You are welcome to come and go from the conference as you please, however this will not lower your fee. We are unable to make any exceptions to the presenter registration fees, but we are pleased to offer the discounted rate to all accepted presenters. Please keep these costs in mind prior to submitting a proposal.

Thank you for your interest. If you have additional questions, please contact Carrie Tate, Associate Director of NPEA, at ctate@tsf.org.