



Connect With Your Special Education Community

How might PATH Intl. Member Center Administrators, Program Staff, Certified Instructors and others reach their community's special educators?

Keeping in mind that every community is unique, there is not a postage stamp answer to how your center might connect with teachers in your area. But there are ways! We've brainstormed the following ideas with equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) professionals who also have a special education background. This list is meant to suggest ways in which one might reach out to the local education community. The goals for outreach might include making contacts and helping them learn about EAAT, letting them know the importance of seeking a PATH Intl. Center and Certified Professionals all while informing them about your center and the services provided. Hopefully your center will become a top-of-mind resource for students who might benefit from EAAT. Perhaps you'll even gain some new volunteers through the process! The following items might be applicable to both public and private schools.

If your center has had success in these areas, please let us know how you made inroads into your education community, and we'll add your ideas to the list!

1) PATH Intl. has created an online resource area for PATH Intl. Members and special educators. In addition to this fact sheet there are links to articles from *PATH Intl. Strides* magazine and a specially created fact sheet for special educators. Center representatives may print the fact sheet for the purposes of connecting with local special educators or school representatives. The page is [here](#). Additionally, there are free webinars developed on this topic for PATH Intl. Members and special educators alike with topics such as IEPs, connecting teachers with PATH Intl. Certified Instructors and transition services.

2) In public schools, there is usually a special education department director for each district. Perhaps email the above mentioned fact sheet with a simple letter offering to meet in person at the school. Ask if the director would forward your email, as seen appropriate, to teachers in the district who work with special needs students. The director's contact information can likely be found on the school district website under administrators.



At the local school level, principals might be the best contact if you need to reach the special education teacher(s) and don't know their contact information.

3) Ask if someone in the administration office would perhaps put a center brochure and/or invitation to a center tour in the teacher mailboxes.

4) Try to connect with teachers through vocational and pre-vocational skill development programs.



Don't forget your local private schools. There are many offering educational opportunities for students with special needs. Some may be more flexible and able to incorporate EAAT activities in their year.

5) Your state might have a Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). This is a wider area than just one district and probably covers several. In some states the SELPA coordinates with school districts and the county office of education to provide a continuum of programs and services for disabled individuals from birth through 22 years of age. They can also

be available as a resource to the community on issues related to special education. See if your state has one and reach out!

6) Many city, county and state offices of education hold informative seminars. Ask if you might present at one about your center and the benefits of EAAT. Even if you can't present, you might be permitted to drop off center brochures and copies of the special educator's fact sheet.

7) Try to approach local school Parent Teacher Associations. They likely have monthly meetings. Ask if you might attend one during a month when they plan to discuss special education or resources for teachers. Explain the services offered at your center.

8) Many school districts set a number of "in service" days for teachers and administrators to obtain continuing education. Ask the school administration if your center might have 15 minutes to talk about EAAT and your center programs.



Contact school social workers and community-based services to link to the school and special educators.

9) Does your local school have a fair, picnic or back to school night? Ask if you can set up an exhibit booth, offer to host a horse-themed game for students. Or maybe even bring a mini!

10) Try a one-time special event at the center. Invite the school, or just the special education classes, out for a spring field trip/open barn day. Maybe consider coordinating a community service project day for older students.

11) If you are fortunate enough to have established relationships with the local school's special education teachers, perhaps you could coordinate a meeting or coffee with the school's related service providers—physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, school psychologists, etc. The opposite might also be effective. If you have a relationship with any of the therapists, perhaps they might link you with the special educators.



12) Contact your state department of education to learn about your state's extended school year (ESY) services. Some students require special education and related services longer than the usual school year in order to receive free, appropriate public education (FAPE). ESY services are special education and/or related services provided beyond the usual school year, at times when school is not usually in session – typically during the summer. Might your center be a good fit?

13) Know a local physical education teacher? Ask if perhaps he or she would consider including a day with a barrel or Equicizer visit for the special education students who participate in gym classes.