

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)



# THE BRIDGE



*Your weekly access to SPAN news, events and resources*

February 18, 2026 | Issue 219 ([View newsletter as webpage](#)) [Para leer este boletín en Español, haga clic aquí](#)

## Important News



### February is National Parent Leadership Month

February is National Parent Leadership Month (NPLM) — a time to honor and uplift the invaluable leadership parents demonstrate every day in their families, schools, and communities. What began as an effort to recognize the vital role parents play in strengthening families has grown into a nationwide observance that acknowledges parents as powerful

## Resources



### Black History Month Resources for Educators

In honor of Black History Month, explore this collection of lessons and resources designed to help educators integrate African American history, culture, and contributions into their classrooms.

advocates, changemakers, and leaders.

For parents of children with disabilities and special health care needs, leadership takes on even deeper meaning. You navigate complex systems, advocate for inclusive education and services, and champion your children's unique strengths — all while building communities of support and connection. Your voice matters, and this month we celebrate your courage, resilience, wisdom, and impact. WE CELEBRATE YOU!

If you'd like to recognize a parent in your life, you can access some NPLM resources by [clicking here](#).



Pictured are Jimmy Cook, Passaic Family Head Start Teacher Assistant, with SPAN's Maria Arrazola.

## Read, Play, Grow!

Families across New Jersey can now access trusted early childhood resources through Read, Play, Grow!, a collaboration among NJ's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Prenatal to Three, Reach Out & Read New Jersey (ROR-NJ), and SPAN Parent Advocacy Network.

Through this partnership, Clifford's Bedtime Story for 1-year-olds and customized bilingual CDC children's books for 2- and 3-year-olds are being distributed statewide by ROR-

Provided by the National Education Association (NEA), [these resources](#) help students understand the reality of Black people's experiences in American history, their impact on American culture, and celebrate their achievements. The NEA compiled a selection of lesson plans that cover a variety of subjects that can be adapted to fit multiple grade levels.

Educators and families alike can also look to the [Black History Month Digital Toolkit](#) on the National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC) website from the Smithsonian. This year, the toolkit celebrates the legacy of *The Green Book*, a travel guide for African Americans listing safe accommodations and welcoming places for Black travelers.



## Disability-Led Supports Across the Lifespan: The Role of Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

**Wednesday, March 4, 2026  
12:00 - 1:00 PM  
Online Webinar**

Discover how CILs:

- Partner with individuals to navigate the systems, while fostering independence through interdependence

NJ pediatric practices and SPAN. Each book includes a QR code linking families to developmental tracking tools and family-friendly resources on SPAN's [Early Childhood webpage](#).

By pairing reading with reliable developmental guidance, Read, Play, Grow! helps families build daily routines, monitor milestones, and access screening resources during the critical first five years.

**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!**  
**WANT TO HELP SOUTH ASIAN FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM?**

**WE ARE LOOKING FOR PARENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A ZOOM-INTERVIEW RESEARCH STUDY.**

**WHY PARTICIPATE?**  
South Asians are a growing demographic in the United States, however, there is currently minimal autism research on diverse families. We want to ask you, the caregivers, whether current measures accurately reflect an autism diagnosis in your culture.

**PARTICIPANTS MUST BE...**  
Caregiver(s) of a child/children who have previously been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)  
Living and raising their child/children with ASD in the United States  
Native speakers of Hindi language  
Can understand written Hindi  
Fluent English speakers

**QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS?**  
please contact  
Calista Marck at [marckc@rider.edu](mailto:marckc@rider.edu) // 201-835-0087  
and/or Dr. Christina Dolyniuk at [cdolyniuk@rider.edu](mailto:cdolyniuk@rider.edu)  
Researchers in Psychology Department at Rider University

**BENEFITS:**  
VALIDATES UTILITY OF A NEW SCREENING MEASURE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER  
AUTISM ADVOCACY FOR SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN POPULATION  
INCENTIVES TO ALL PARTICIPANTS!

## Autism Study Seeks Participants with South Asian Backgrounds

A Rider University student is engaging in a senior research study focusing on how, among South Asian communities, conversations around autism and developmental screening are often influenced by cultural beliefs, stigma, language barriers, and differing understandings of child development. These factors can impact when and how families seek support.

This student, Calista Marck, is seeking participants of South Asian background and Hindi-speaking families who are willing to take part in

- Help children, youth and adults build self-advocacy skills, strengthen community connections, and successfully navigate critical life transitions from an early age
- Prioritize disability-led supports that lead to more equitable effective outcomes across the lifespan

This is a **REAL Transition Partners** webinar with guest presenter Kimberley Tissot, President & CEO of ABLE South Carolina.

To register, [click here](#).

## Upcoming Events

SPAN offers a variety of learning opportunities for families and the professionals who work with them.

### Highlighted Event This Week



## Creating Agreement: Working Together to Resolve conflict

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026  
11:00AM - 12:00 PM  
Online**

This workshop will focus on helping parents and professionals “create agreement” to avoid and minimize conflict.

It will focus on helping parents and professionals “create agreement” and avoid, minimize, or appropriately

an online Zoom interview focused on the cultural aspects of autism screening. Participating families will receive an incentive for their time.

Interested participants can either contact Calista Marck at [markc@rider.edu](mailto:markc@rider.edu) or her advisor, Dr. Chrystina Dolyniuk at [cdolyniuk@rider.edu](mailto:cdolyniuk@rider.edu).



**A SPAN Project\***

## The Latest Edition of the RAISE the Standard Newsletter is Out!

The latest edition of the RAISE the Standard newsletter from the RAISE Center is out and this month the team is exploring how young people with disabilities can build safe, healthy, and fulfilling romantic relationships.

To read the issue and to subscribe, [click here](#).

address conflict in the IFSP and IEP process. Participants will explore the benefits and challenges of parent-professional collaboration, learn best practices for creating agreement, address power imbalances, and implement cultural reciprocity. Individuals will learn how to “create agreement” with others in your district.

To register, [click here](#).

[See all of SPAN's upcoming events with details and registration links here](#)

Para recibir la edición en Español de este boletín semanalmente en su correo electrónico

[haga clic aquí para suscribirse](#)



### THE SPAN YOUTH HUB

A WEEKLY BLOG FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

NEW BLOG POST EVERY FRIDAY – STAY TUNED!



SUBSCRIBE!

## From Idea to Income: A Guide for Young Entrepreneurs

Check out our latest youth blog post, "From Idea to Income: A Guide for Young Entrepreneurs," to discover practical steps to start earning from your creativity.

To read the post, [click here](#).

Subscribe to *The Bridge* by [CLICKING HERE](#)  
Share your SPAN testimonial story! [CLICK HERE](#)

Join the SPAN Team - [View Open Positions here](#)

SPAN Parent Advocacy  
Network | [spanadvocacy.org](http://spanadvocacy.org)



DONATE

SPAN Parent Advocacy Network | 570 Broad Street, Suite 702 | Newark, NJ 07102 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!