



Spring 2025

NEC BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Suzanne Charochak
Beverly Public Schools

Mr. Dan Bauer
Danvers Public Schools

Mr. Ben Lummis
Gloucester Public Schools

Mr. Eric Tracy
Hamilton-Wenham Regional

Dr. Brian Blake
Ipswich Public Schools

Dr. Evonne Alvarez
Lynn Public Schools

Mr. Thomas Geary
Lynnfield Public Schools

Ms. Pamela Beaudoin
Manchester-Essex Regional

Mr. John Robidoux
Marblehead Public Schools

Dr. Michael Harvey
Masconomet Regional

Mr. Rob Liebow
Nahant Public Schools

Dr. Patrick Daly
North Reading Public Schools

Dr. Joshua Vadala
Peabody Public Schools

Dr. Justin Bartholomew
Pentucket Regional School District

Dr. Thomas Milaschewski
Reading Public Schools

Dr. Mark Branco
Rockport Public Schools

Dr. Stephen Zrike
Salem Public Schools

Ms. Pamela Angelakis
Swampscott Public Schools

Dr. Scott Morrison
Tri-Town School Union

Mr. Brian Forget
Triton Regional School District

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,
NEC is 50!

Fifty years ago, shortly after Chapter 766 became the first law in the nation to guarantee children with disabilities the right to a free and appropriate public education, Kevin O’Grady—a pioneer in the deinstitutionalization of children with profound special needs—became NEC’s first Executive Director.

Special education is civil rights work. It ensures that our most vulnerable students have access to the high-quality services they need to thrive. It can be difficult. It can be expensive. But we are incredibly proud of our 50-year legacy of excellence. Thanks to the vision of our board, the dedication of our staff, and the commitment of our partners and friends, NEC has continued to grow and evolve to meet the needs of North Shore districts.



NORTHSHORE
EDUCATION
CONSORTIUM

Celebrating 50 Years

The past few years have brought complex and urgent challenges to our field, our region, and this organization. Yet even in the face of political and economic uncertainty, my hope is that NEC’s 50th year will be one of continued progress—and a time to plan boldly for the next 50 years of supporting young people with special needs in reaching their full potential. I look forward to seeing many of you at our “50th Year Pop-Up” celebrations scheduled for this spring and fall.

NEC’s strong reputation has created new opportunities for advocacy, allowing our impact to extend beyond the North Shore. As President of the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives, I’ve had the privilege of working with state legislators and leaders at the

Continues on page 9

Program News

NORTHSHORE ACADEMY UPPER SCHOOL (NSAU)

Students Shine in Diamond Chef Competition

Each year NSAU holds a Diamond Chef competition which includes three rounds of intense pressure. Three students choose a staff mentor and decide on a pizza, a dessert, and an appetizer to present before judges. The competition takes place over the course of one month and in each round the teams have one hour to prepare their meals, cook, plate, and clean before presenting to judges. Winners receive the prized Diamond Chef Apron.



NSAU Champs Again!!!

For the second year in a row, NSAU has won the Division 1 Greater Boston Basketball League Championship. The team went 12 - 0 in the regular season. Coaches around the league noticed their capabilities and commended the young men for having the skills to compete at such a high level. To add icing to the cake, NSAU's JV squad also won the Division 4 Championship.

Collaboration is Key

Northshore Academy's students are provided ample opportunities for collaborative learning. Here Mr. Willwerth has students exploring historical concepts together making the classroom setting enjoyable and academic.

Great job, all around!



TOPSFIELD VOCATIONAL ACADEMY (TVA)



From Workshop to Legacy

After 19 years of inspiring young carpenters, long-time TVA Woodshop Instructor Mark Webster has retired from teaching. From building boats and bureaus to their highly sought-after Adirondack chairs (and everything in-between), Mark cultivated not only craftsmanship but also a strong work ethic, instilling in his students a lasting sense of pride. Photographed here is Mark with one of his student protégés showcasing his new toolbelt.



A Taste of Something Delicious

A proud moment for this TVA senior! She made the Middle Eastern dish Chicken Shawarma, using her family's recipe.

Program News

NORTHSHORE RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL (NRHS)

Meeting the Need: Short Term Stabilization Program Begins

With support from the Raffa Family Foundation: Frankie's Voice, the Essex County Outreach program, School Psychologist Craig Harris, and our school districts, we have been able to develop a short-term pilot program for students who need additional support to acquire the skills necessary to successfully integrate back into their sending school districts.

Students will be attending classes with NRHS students, as well as group and individual counseling, for goal setting, conflict management, emotional regulation and self-esteem. This program started May 1st and will run through the end of the school year.



A New Look

Northshore Recovery High School refreshed their promotional materials to align with the newly released Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Recovery School Framework. This update is the result of collaboration with Collaborative for Educational Services researchers, DESE, and Recovery School leaders across Massachusetts. The new approach focuses on building students' recovery capital—supportive resources that help them thrive. They're also shifting their focus to early prevention, working closely with students, their support systems, and community partners to help reduce the risk of substance use disorders.



KEVIN O'GRADY SCHOOL (KOG)

"Ivy the Very Determined Dog" Visits KOG

KOG classrooms had a visit from a special guest - Ivy, the Very Determined Dog. Ivy is a dog who uses a wheelchair after her back legs became paralyzed at 3 years old. Her wonderful owner Maureen came to read her book, which tells Ivy's story and how we can all work to overcome challenges in our life. Students and staff loved having Ivy visit!



All Dressed Up

KOG held its first "Fancy Dance" party in February, complete with a red carpet entrance with a cheering "paparazzi", beauty station, corsages, photo opportunities, pizza, karaoke, and dancing!

Staff, students, and families got dressed in their best and had an amazing night! There were lots of big smiles, laughs, and even some teary eyes.

Program News

NORTHSHORE ACADEMY LOWER SCHOOL (NSAL)

“Springing” into Science!

Spring is here and that means more plant and animal projects at the Northshore Academy Lower School.

The second graders are loading up their ant farm with ants to observe over the next few weeks. They are also tracking the growth of caterpillars and will watch their life cycle in real time!



Big Problem, Small Problem, No Problem!

Ms. Ali, Social Worker at the Lower School, works with the youngest class of students to help them identify “size of the problem.” Once they can identify the size of the problem, they can learn to match their reaction to the problem.

Ms. Ali ends the group lesson with an interactive game to ensure students understand the concepts!



TRANSITION PROGRAMS (EMBARK AND SOAR)

Communication Internships Build Real World Skills

Each week, students gain hands-on experience through 5–20 hours of in-house and community-based internships. One of the most popular internships, Communications, offers a deep dive into multimedia, including newsletters, a yearbook, and digital projects enhanced with QR codes and embedded videos. Students build skills in writing, editing, graphic design, and media production preparing them for careers in journalism, marketing, PR, and more.



PARTNERS, SPONSORS & CELEBRATIONS: HONORING 50 YEARS OF NEC



This year marks NEC's 50th Anniversary—a milestone that celebrates decades of dedication to students, families, and communities.

To honor this momentous year, two of our longtime major supporters, Mollie Byrnes and Rockland Trust, have stepped forward as our 50th Year Partners, launching a \$50,000 Challenge Match. **Coming soon, every new or increased gift to NEC will be matched dollar for dollar, doubling the impact of every contribution.**

Joining them in celebration are our 50th Year Sponsors, whose generous support is helping bring this milestone year to life and laying the foundation for the 50th Year Anniversary Match Campaign.

In the months ahead, you'll hear more about how your gift can make an even greater difference—amplifying our ability to meet the most pressing needs in our Vocational and Enrichment Programs. These programs provide students with meaningful, hands-on learning experiences and vital resources that prepare them for success in college, careers, and adult life.

To mark the occasion, NEC schools are hosting 50th Year Pop-Up Parties— fun celebrations popping up alongside already scheduled program events. These events are a great way to experience the incredible work happening in our schools. Please consider joining us at a Pop-Up Party as we commemorate five decades of NEC impact! And don't miss our new 50th Anniversary web page, where you can explore upcoming events, meet our generous partners and sponsors, and **watch our newly released NEC video showcasing the “small miracles” that happen every day in our programs.**

Together, with your support, we're shaping the next 50 years—equipping students with hands-on learning, life skills, cutting-edge technology, and meaningful community connections that will serve them well beyond their time at NEC.



**VIDEO & MORE ON
OUR 50TH
ANNIVERSARY
WEB PAGE!**



Thank you to our 50th Year Partners



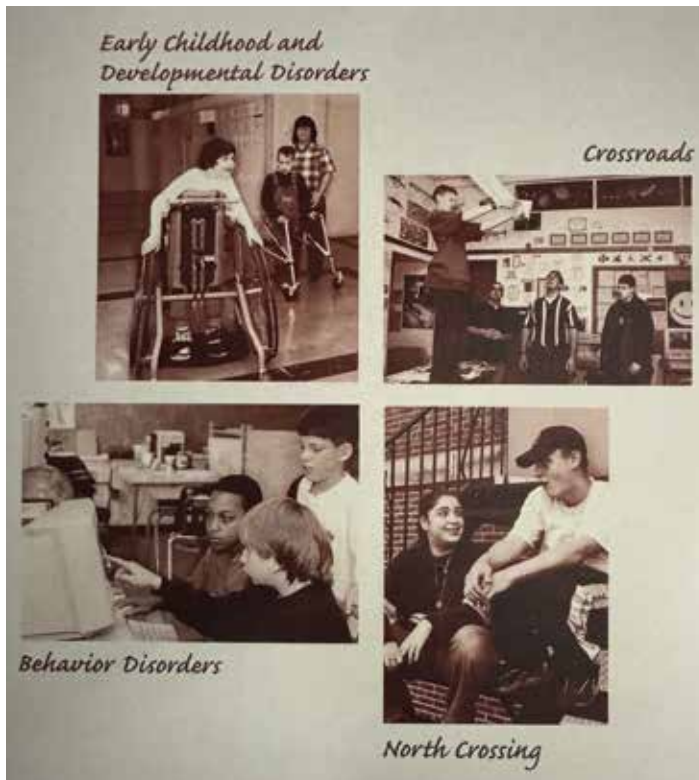
Thank you to our 50th Year Sponsors



The Spinney Family



50TH ANNIVERSARY: HONORING OUR PAST. SHAPING THE FUTURE.



Celebrating 50 Years - The First 25 Years

In the early 1970s, Kevin O'Grady, then principal at Hogan Regional Center (HRC), witnessed firsthand the effects of deinstitutionalization, as children with severe disabilities began transitioning from hospitals back into their communities. Following the passage of Chapter 766 in 1972, which guaranteed public education for all students regardless of disability, cities and towns across Massachusetts turned to Kevin for guidance on how to meet the needs of these students.

At the same time, Bob Kurtz, a former Commonwealth of Massachusetts employee with a passion for serving at-risk youth, launched his own consulting firm, R&K Associates. There, he authored the proposal that led to the creation of educational collaboratives across the state.

Soon after, Kevin and Bob connected. Kevin left HRC to work more directly with local communities, driving from town to town with boxes of student records in his car, helping school districts prepare to serve their most vulnerable learners. Together, they helped establish the Northshore Education Consortium (NEC)—one of the first educational collaboratives in Massachusetts. The founding districts—Beverly, Salem, Peabody, Lynn, Swampscott, Marblehead, and Masconomet—joined forces to share resources and expertise.

As NEC's success grew, so did the need for a unifying body to support the growing number of collaboratives across the state. That need led to the founding of the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives (MOEC), with Bob playing a key role in its early development. He continued to consult for many years, helping expand the collaborative model pioneered by NEC. Today, MOEC supports 24 collaboratives across Massachusetts, and NEC's Executive Director, Francine Rosenberg, proudly serves as the current President of MOEC's Board.

With NEC's rapid growth came a need for dedicated learning spaces. As NEC's first Executive Director, Kevin led efforts to repurpose vacant buildings and rent classroom space in district schools. By the late 1970s, NEC had launched the North Shore Alternative School, supporting high school students with behavioral challenges.

In the early 1980s, NEC began managing state-funded education programs for emotionally and psychiatrically challenged students in hospital settings—including Westborough, Danvers, Medfield, and Northampton State Hospitals.

As statewide programs for students with complex emotional needs were phased out in the 1990s, NEC stepped in again, creating two pivotal offerings: the Autism/PDD Program and the Behavior Disorders



Kevin O'Grady



Bob Kurtz

50TH ANNIVERSARY: HONORING OUR PAST. SHAPING THE FUTURE.

Program, both serving elementary students with significant behavioral and emotional needs.

The 2000s brought further growth and evolution, with new names and expanded services:

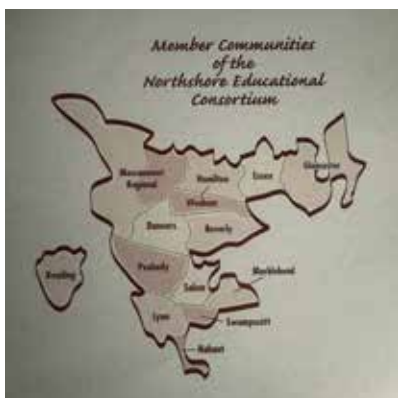
- Early Childhood & Developmental Disorders Program (including the Autism/PDD Program): Supporting preschool and elementary students with special needs
- Crossroads Alternative School (formerly North Shore Alternative School): Serving high school students with emotional and behavioral challenges at Holten Richmond Middle School in Danvers
- Behavior Disorders Program: Supporting students ages 6–14 with complex behavioral and emotional needs
- North Crossing Residential School: Serving youth in the North Crossing Adolescent and Family Treatment Program
- Embark Program: Assisting post-secondary young adults ages 18–22 with intellectual disabilities and learning delays transition to independent adult life

By the late 1990s, NEC had expanded to include 13 member districts: Beverly, Danvers, Essex, Gloucester, Hamilton-Wenham, Lynn, Marblehead, Masconomet, Nahant, Reading, Salem, Peabody, and Swampscott.

In 2002, after nearly three decades of visionary leadership, Kevin O'Grady retired as Executive Director of NEC, leaving behind a legacy rooted in equity, inclusion, and innovation.

From its grassroots beginnings to its wide-reaching presence today, the Northshore Education Consortium has spent 50 years evolving in direct response to the needs of its communities. It now stands as one of the largest providers of special education services on Boston's North Shore—continuing the powerful legacy begun by Kevin O'Grady and Bob Kurtz.

Stay tuned, the next 25 years to come in fall 2025 NEC Newsletter! This will be an e-newsletter so if you have not already signed up to receive our newsletter electronically, please add your name to the list by contacting Sarah Seiler at 978.338.1408 or sseiler@nsedu.org. You can also subscribe to the e-newsletter online at www.nsedu.org!



"Our original mandate was to deinstitutionalize our students. It's a measure of our success to say that none of our students now lives in an institution."

Chris D'Anjou
Director,
Developmental Disabilities Program



"One of our goals is to teach our children how to communicate their feelings, fears and desires, and to give them an understanding and awareness of their environment."

Laurie Hark
Director,
Early Childhood Program



Giving in Action

Development Office Highlights

Clemenzi Crusaders Take the Stage

We recently had the pleasure of meeting Eric Clemenzi, a local music teacher who created an “autism friendly” band called the Clemenzi Crusaders. They visited us this spring, and did four “mini sets” of their “Comic-Con” show for KOG and NSAU students on the autism spectrum. Students had the option of using customized headphones to manage the volume level. Our students enjoyed a multisensory experience featuring music from popular video games, movies, and TV theme songs.

This was all made possible thanks to the support of New England BioLabs!



Water Views and Wonders

Northshore Academy Upper School holds engaging outdoor enrichment experiences in which the students are not only provided opportunities to explore lifelong hobbies, but also engage in tactile learning opportunities. In this photo, a senior student is participating in one of our enrichments called “Water Views” in which students visit various beaches and lighthouses. In total, our outdoor program visits over 40 locations in and around Essex County.

Did you know that many of our enrichment programs are philanthropically supported like this one?



“Every student. Every day. Whatever it takes.”

Thank you! Your giving matters...

Friends of Northshore Education Consortium, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization (#61-1479553).

If you would like to learn more about our giving opportunities, please contact:

Sarah Seiler

Director of Development

Friends of Northshore Education Consortium, Inc.

978.232.9755 ext. 1251

sseiler@nsedu.org



**We now have
monthly
giving options!**



Executive Director Message, Continued...

Continued from page 1

Department of Education to elevate the voices of our students and staff. With the help of Friends of NEC Board Member and Kevin O'Grady School (KOG) parent Shannon Perry, KOG was recently featured in the first segment of Boston25's special series on the 50th anniversary of special education—a proud moment for all of us.

We are deeply grateful to our NEC Board of Directors, who continue to prioritize our mission despite the financial strain on their districts. Still, the gap between what our students need and what public funding provides continues to widen. That's why the philanthropic support of our longtime partners—The Cummings Foundation, The Tower Foundation, Rockland Trust, Mollie Byrnes, and our many generous individual and corporate donors—is not just meaningful, it's essential. Their generosity allows us to offer more than the minimum—providing cutting-edge technology, an engaging curriculum, and enriching learning experiences that foster confidence, independence, and a love of learning.

March was full of energy, spirit, and celebration across our programs! Our NSAU and TVA basketball teams had a strong showing this season, with varsity and JV athletes participating in tournaments. Plus, SOAR and Embark students played in a unified basketball game alongside MAICEI students—bringing together athletes of all abilities for fun and teamwork. We also welcomed Eric Clemenzi and the Clemenzi Crusaders, who performed a sensory-friendly “Comic-Con” concert series. Meanwhile, Northshore Academy Lower School embraced “Kindness Month” with activities like building a growing “kindness tree,” writing appreciation notes, and learning how to care for ourselves and others. KOG students capped off the month with March Madness Week, celebrating school spirit through themed dress-up days and honoring the joyful legacy of founder Kevin O'Grady.

Each spring, I begin to look ahead with excitement to our June graduations. It's incredibly moving to see how far our students have come. This year, approximately 75 students will graduate in highly personalized ceremonies, each one heading off to college, continuing education, employment, or adult services.

Spring is a time of hope and renewal. I wish you a healthy and joyful season—and thank you for your continued support in helping NEC students grow, succeed, and shine.

With gratitude,

Francine H. Rosenberg

Francine H. Rosenberg, M.Ed.

Executive Director

Northshore Education Consortium

978.232.9755

frosenberg@nsedu.org





Coming soon...

50th Anniversary Match Campaign

Every new or increased gift to NEC will be matched dollar for dollar, doubling the impact of every contribution, thanks to our 50th Year Partners!

Upcoming Events



CELEBRATING OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY!

Watch our newly released video showcasing the “small miracles” that happen every day in our programs. Find out about Pop-Up Parties and more on our website!



GRADUATIONS/MOVING UP CEREMONIES

Topsfield Vocational Academy — May 29
Northshore Academy Upper School — June 5
Transitions (Embark & SOAR) — June 6
Northshore Recovery High School — June 11
Northshore Academy Lower School — June 16



14TH RUNNING OF FESTIVUS 5K FOR AUTISM

Save the Date - December 14, 2025 in Salem, MA, hosted by Finz

The Friends of the Northshore Education Consortium Festivus 5K has raised over \$275,000 used to purchase technologies to assist and educate students with autism.