

New England Prison Education Collaborative NEPEC Newsletter

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In this issue:

1. New Hampshire to Commence NEPEC State Strategic Planning Process
2. NEPEC Hosts Virtual Regional Convening
3. Legislative Update from Massachusetts
4. A New Guide to Technology Integration in Prison Education
5. Person-First Language -- Is Your Organization Using It?
6. Growing the NEPEC Team
7. Upcoming Events and Opportunities
8. Staying Connected

New Hampshire to Commence NEPEC State Strategic Planning Process

In November 2024, members of the New Hampshire Corrections Education and Vocational Planning Group (CEVPG) voted to have the state participate in NEPEC's State Strategic Planning process. Work is set to begin later this month. The CEVPG is a cross-sector group that was established through state legislation—specifically [Senate Bill 376](#), which was inspired by the 2023 report of the [New England Commission on the Future of Higher Education in Prison](#). The group has been driving forward efforts to expand educational opportunities for incarcerated learners in New Hampshire.

This commitment is formally reflected in the CEVPG's inaugural annual [report](#) to the governor and legislature. The move marks a significant step toward advancing high-quality, workforce-aligned postsecondary education for system-impacted learners in the Granite State.

For Commissioner of Corrections Helen Hanks, whose department is tasked with convening the CEVPG, the NEBHE-facilitated phase of this work “will bring much-needed planning and resources to support New Hampshire taking a lead—both in expanding educational and vocational opportunities *and* in multiplying the associated benefits to individuals, communities, and the state.”

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*Stay tuned for updates as NEPEC works to support New Hampshire as leaders there work to shape a strategic vision with actionable goals for expanding*

*access to higher education in prison in the state.*

## NEPEC Hosts Virtual Regional Convening

On January 14, 2025, NEPEC hosted "Leveraging Federal Funds to Support Prison Education Programs in the Northeast," bringing together state broadband officers, federal program officers, and stakeholders from state higher education agencies and departments of corrections across New England. The discussion focused on leveraging federal funds through the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)'s Digital Equity Act Programs and Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program to support prison education programs.

With over 50 attendees, the virtual event featured speakers from the NTIA, Maine Department of Corrections, Unlocked Labs, Rhode Island Commerce, and the Vermont Community Broadband Board. It provided a platform for states to showcase how they have utilized federal funds to support higher education in prison while offering stakeholders an opportunity to pose timely questions related to work underway in their state.

This event was the first in a series of regional convenings that NEPEC will be hosting. We look forward to offering additional opportunities to engage on this and other critical topics. Watch the newsletter for upcoming events.

## Legislative Update from Massachusetts

Staff of the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) welcomed the opportunity to discuss a pair of identical bills that were filed in the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts last month. This legislation—presented by Senator Brendan Crighton and Representative Priscila Sousa as [Senate Bill 1309](#) and [House Bill 2468](#), respectively, would authorize work with the Massachusetts Department of Correction to “conduct a comprehensive assessment of the status of the delivery of postsecondary education programs in correctional facilities for the purpose of expanding the high-quality provision of such.” The report on the assessment would also include “recommendations for establishing ongoing inter-agency planning and cooperation to expand and support the delivery and completion of postsecondary education programs during and after incarceration.” We look forward to continuing to engage legislators like Senator Crighton and Representative Sousa, who are exploring how legislative intervention might serve efforts to expand access to higher education in prison.

# A New Guide to Technology Integration in Prison Education

The NEPEC team would like to spotlight the release of a groundbreaking resource from Ithaka S+R: [\*Technology Implementation for Higher Education in Prison: A Student-Centered Playbook for Planning, Preparing, and Assessing Implementation Readiness\*](#). This comprehensive guide offers institutions and other relevant stakeholders a roadmap for integrating technology into prison education programs. By centering the needs of students who are incarcerated, the Playbook ensures that implementation strategies are both practical and equitable, accounting for the unique challenges and opportunities that correctional settings present.

Key takeaways from the report include actionable frameworks for assessing institutional readiness, strategies for fostering collaborative partnerships, and a step-by-step approach to technology integration that both prioritizes student success and the security concerns of correctional stakeholders. The Playbook is designed to support the creation of sustainable and impactful technology-enhanced learning environments.

[Ess Pokornowski](#), author of the Playbook, shares insights below on the motivations behind this publication, the challenges, and key points for those looking to implement technology in prison education programs.

## What drew you to create the Playbook?

*Over the last few years, during my research on technology access and use in higher education in prison programming, I heard several times about a few key issues in the field, from both higher education program administrators and correctional education leaders: (1) a lack of clear and comparable information about device specifications and considerations; (2) a lack of resources to make sense of the benefits and drawbacks of deploying different types of educational technology; (3) technology implementations that sounded perfect in theory but had hidden barriers and constraints when implemented.*

*The Technology Playbook was really aimed at responding to some of those needs. We geared it specifically toward correctional education leaders, since they are the people typically tasked with the decision-making on this, but we hope it is of broader use to the field. I also hoped to help center student learning outcomes from the start of the technology acquisition process.*

## What is a key takeaway you hope that readers will learn or act on after reading it?

*I hope readers understand just how complex the landscape is without being daunted by it. At this point, technology for education purposes is possible inside, it's just a matter of finding the right combination of hardware, software, and network configurations for a given state, facility, and college's needs. But, the challenge is, of course, aligning all those needs and constraints.*

*I also hope that people notice just how much collaboration, communication, and training should be happening for this all to work well, and how procedural*

considerations might limit effective implementation.

## How do you see this playbook fitting into the larger HEP ecosystem?

*I think that the Technology Playbook will stand as a starting point or a generative text and that individual agencies, institutions, and organizations will likely pull some of the helpful information (such as the tables and visualizations), and attempt to adapt the strategic planning exercises for more granular and specific needs. For example, the Playbook doesn't address the details of procurement or contract negotiation, but one could use some of the strategic planning in it as a starting point for developing those conversations and exercises internally.*

*This is very much a first step for the field, but one I have complete confidence my colleagues and peers are already building on. I also hope that this encourages people to reach out to me or to our team at Ithaka S+R to think collaboratively about education, technology, and equity.*

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We encourage our readers to explore and share this valuable resource and to consider how its recommendations can inform your work in expanding equitable access to incarcerated learners.

Person-First Language -- Is Your Organization Using It?



"At FIGGN, we push for the widespread adoption of person-first language, which is the foundation of humanizing those impacted by the criminal legal system. Using humanizing language is a conscious decision that reinforces the idea that everyone deserves recognition as a person first, instead of any institutional label given to them. This paradigm shift is essential in fostering a culture of respect, empathy, and understanding, while building stronger, more inclusive communities."

Terrell A. Blount



"The use of language has been the driving force behind certain narratives and has had the power to shape identity. ...

Transformation comes in many forms, and language itself can be an impetus for transformation. For this reason, we use Person-First language because it moves us to recognize the things we most often miss (especially for those of us who are system-impacted). It allows us the opportunity to change the narrative, reshape identities, and most importantly, gives us the power to take back our shared humanity."

Executive Director
Formerly Incarcerated College
Graduates Network (FICGN)

Joel Negron
SME/Consultant
Center for Justice and
Economic Advancement
Jobs for the Future (JFF)

Person-First language is a respectful and humanizing way to refer to people by acknowledging their humanity before any other circumstance they may be experiencing. When discussing individuals who are, or have been, incarcerated this approach avoids defining people solely by their interaction with the criminal legal system. By emphasizing our identity as people first, we reinforce inherent dignity and shift the focus toward potential, strengths, and individuality.

In the context of education, person-first language takes on critical importance, particularly for learners who are incarcerated. Referring to higher education in prison program participants as students or learners who are incarcerated versus "inmates" and "prisoners" helps to cultivate a learning environment centered on growth and transformation.

This language shift supports the idea that education is a powerful tool for rehabilitation and reentry, moving the narrative from punishment to potential. Ultimately, the intentional use of person-first language can guide a broader societal shift toward respect and inclusivity. By changing how we speak about those of us who are system impacted, we participate in dismantling harmful stereotypes and promote a culture that values rehabilitation and restoration. Person-first language not only affects public perception but also influences how people who have been impacted by the criminal legal system are treated in both institutional settings and the community.

NEPEC's commitment to using person-first language reflects these principles, and we invite others to consider the impact of language in their work. For example, the [Language Matters Guide: Jobs for the Future](#) provides a comprehensive framework for adopting inclusive and humanizing terminology. We encourage organizations and individuals to explore this resource as part of their journey toward equitable practices.

The NEPEC team has taken the [FICGN - Pledge to Use Person-First Language](#) as a concrete step to affirm our commitment to adopting person-first language in our daily interactions and professional work. Check it out.



Growing the NEPEC Team

NEPEC Welcomes Project Coordinator

The NEPEC Team is thrilled to welcome Quinn Barton as Project Coordinator. With her unique skills and fresh perspective, Quinn will play a key role in supporting NEPEC's mission to expand access to higher education for incarcerated learners across New England.

Quinn comes to us from V2 Communications, where she excelled in client

strategy and research on emerging technologies. A Boston University graduate with a B.S. in Media Science and dual minors in International Relations and Political Science. Quinn also contributed to Boston University's Prison Outreach Initiative, coordinating book drives for prison libraries across Massachusetts. We're excited for the energy and expertise she brings to our team.

Welcome Quinn!

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NEBHE's commitment to inclusive hiring practices are essential to driving our mission forward. NEPEC is committed to leading by example through implementing practices that support equitable opportunities for all, particularly those impacted by the legal system.



Upcoming Events and Opportunities

NEPEC Quarterly Workshop

Topic - *Conducting a Higher Education in Prison Needs Analysis: Varied Approaches and Perspectives*

March 19, 2025, 3-4:30PM EST | **Register [here](#)**

NEPEC on the Road

[Community of Practice: Policy Barriers for Justice-Impacted Students](#)

Hosted by the Education Commission of the States

March 3-5, 2025 | Kansas City, MO

[Coleridge 5th Annual National Convening: Empower Collaboration. Unlock Innovation. Drive Impact.](#)

March 26-28, 2025 | Arlington, VA

[14th National Conference on Higher Education in Prison \(NCHEP\)](#)

Hosted by the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison

April 10-11, 2025 | New Orleans, LA

Plans are in the works for a New England stakeholder mixer - Follow NEPEC on [LinkedIn](#) for details as they are released.

[Horizons: Dare To Be Brave](#)

Presented by Jobs for the Future

June 10-11, 2025 | New Orleans, LA



Stay Connected

Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we work to make higher education accessible to all learners who are incarcerated in New England. We look forward to keeping you informed and engaged in our shared mission.

Best regards,
NEPEC Team

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make sure you don't miss a thing!

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#)

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