

CONNECTIONS

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EASTCONN Welcomes Gary S. Mala as its New Executive Director

EASTCONN is pleased to announce that Gary S. Mala has been named EASTCONN's new Executive Director, succeeding Paula M. Colen, who retired at the end of September after 37 years with the agency.

Colen had led EASTCONN as Executive Director since 2005.

"I'm delighted that Gary will be EASTCONN's next executive director," said Colen. "I'm confident that EASTCONN will be in good hands under Gary's leadership, as the agency continues to serve the education needs of northeastern Connecticut's schools and communities." Mala was selected after a national search.

"I am both humbled and honored to have been selected as EASTCONN's next Executive Director," said Mala. "I look forward to assisting and supporting the outstanding work of all of our staff. My work will be to continue the tradition of excellence associated with EASTCONN, and to help our districts manage the wide continuum of challenges facing them today."

Until last month, Mala was superintendent of Avon public schools, a position he had held since 2011. He previously served as superintendent of schools for Region 17, and was superintendent for Southwick-Tolland Regional School District in Massachusetts. During his 34-year career in education, Mala has been a high school principal, elementary principal and pupil services director. He has also taught regular and special education at the elementary level and special education at the high school level.

See GARY MALA, back page

EASTCONN's Hampton Annex Named for Paula M. Colen

The EASTCONN Board of Directors has named its Hampton Conference Center wing the "Paula M. Colen Annex" in honor of retiring Executive Director Paula M. Colen.

The board announced its decision, and surprised Colen with a bronze plaque, during her September retirement party in Woodstock. Colen, who has led EASTCONN as Executive Director for 12 years, joined EASTCONN in 1980. Last winter, Colen announced her plans to retire at the end of September 2017.



EASTCONN's Conference Center/Paula M. Colen Annex

Longtime educator and former Avon superintendent Gary S. Mala succeeds Colen as EASTCONN's third Executive Director. [Editor's Note: See story, left column, page 1]

"I was surprised and very touched that the board so generously chose to recognize my years with EASTCONN this way," said Colen. "I am truly honored."

In contemplating how they could pay tribute to Colen's legacy at EASTCONN, the Executive Board decided that it would be a fitting gesture to name the annex after her.

"The board was unanimous in its decision to recognize Paula's many years of service to this agency and to the EASTCONN region by naming the Hampton annex in her honor," said EASTCONN Executive Board Chairman Herb Arico.



See PAULA M. COLEN ANNEX, page 2

November 1st RESC Alliance Conference, "Personalized Learning: Future or Fad?"

School administrators and teacher-leaders are invited to attend "Personalized Learning: Future or Fad?", a statewide conference hosted by Connecticut's Regional Educational Service Centers (RESC) Alliance on Wed., Nov. 1, 2017, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Southern Connecticut State University, 501 Crescent St., New Haven.

During this full day "think-shop," educators will explore their understanding of personalized learning and consider how it fits into their district's vision and mission.

In addition to break-out sessions and panel discussions, participants will hear keynotes from both Will Richardson and Benjamin Riley.

Richardson, an educator, author and national speaker, will discuss the intersection of social online learning networks and education with "This is Personal: Modern Learning in Self-Determined Classrooms." Visit willrichardson.com.

"I hope educators take away from my presentation a healthy discomfort for the growing distance between school learning and real-life learning," said Richardson

in an e-mail. "Schools were built for a time that no longer exists, a time when content, knowledge, people and technologies were scarce and kids had to come to a classroom to get them. That is certainly not the case today. The world now rewards learners who take advantage of the abundance at their fingertips. The sooner educators begin to reimagine their work in light of this huge change, the better it will be for the kids we serve."

Riley, who founded Deans for Impact, will present "Is Personalized Learning the Right Choice?" An education researcher, writer and advocate, Riley is also a former California deputy attorney general. Visit deansforimpact.org.

"It's my hope that educators will leave the conference with new questions -- and perhaps greater skepticism -- about the value of personalized learning," said Riley, by e-mail. "I'm hoping attendees will be excited and surprised as we explore how the insights of cognitive science might inform their instructional practice. And we'll also spend some time thinking about the role public education plays in our democracy, and whether we want our schools to promote

individual preference over collective dialogue."

Networking and collaborative action planning opportunities are scheduled during numerous conference breakout sessions and panel discussions.



Benjamin Riley
Founder and Executive Director
of Deans for Impact



Will Richardson
International author,
educator and speaker

**"It's my hope
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RESC Alliance Conference Registration

Registration (\$125) includes lunch and morning refreshments. Register at www.aces.org/ct-resc-2017. Or contact EASTCONN's Scott Nierendorf at snierendorf@eastconn.org or at 860-455-1621. Connecticut's RESC Alliance includes ACES, CES, CREC, EASTCONN, EdAdvance and LEARN, each of which is a public, non-profit RESC. Learn more at www.rescalliance.org.

PAULA M. COLEN ANNEX from page 1

Colen led the agency's decision to build the annex nearly 7 years ago, to accommodate a growing staff, and to provide adequate conference meeting space for the region's educators, school districts and communities.

Construction of the 12,000-square-foot, \$6-million annex began in November 2010, and in spite of its being one of the

worst winters (85 inches of snow) in recent memory, the building was finished ahead of schedule and 2.5% under budget, opening its doors officially in the summer of 2011.

During construction, Colen was frequently seen, bundled against the cold and snow and wearing a hard hat, touring the two-story annex's progress.

A fall 2011 ribbon-cutting was attended by Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman, state legislators, board members, staff and agency partners.

The Colen Annex houses sizeable meeting spaces as well as EASTCONN departments, including Teaching and Learning, Technology Solutions, Birth to Three, Early Childhood and Conference Office staff and services.

EASTCONN Connections

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Professional Notes

Five members of EASTCONN's Psychological and Behavioral Consultation Services (PBCS) group presented at the Berkshire Association for Behavior Analysis and Therapy Annual Conference at UMass, Amherst this month:

Erin K. Dunn, Ph.D.; **Ravit R. Stein**, Ph.D., BCBA-D; **Rose Jaffery**, Ph.D., BCBA-D; **Erin Crosby**, BCBA; and **Ashley Boyle**, M.A., co-presented "Breaking Down Barriers to Implementing BIPs: Using the Problem-Solving Model as a Roadmap to Success."

PBCS division members **Jacquelyn DuBois**, Ph.D., NCSP; as well as **Jaffery** and **Chris Barclay**, Ph.D., NCSP, will co-present a workshop, "Setting the Foundation: Effective Coaching Strategies for Classroom Management" at the National Association of School Psychologists' (NASP) Annual Conference in February. **Barclay** will also present "Benchmarks of Equality? SWPBIS and the Discipline Gap" at the NASP conference.



Erin K. Dunn



Ravit R. Stein



Rose Jaffery



Erin Crosby



Ashley Boyle



Chris Barclay

90 Attend EASTCONN Conference on Supporting Special Student Populations



Earlier this month, 90 Connecticut educators attended "Best Practices in Supporting Special Populations: Breaking Down Barriers to Learning," a day-long conference on supporting students with special needs. Presented by EASTCONN's Psychological and Behavioral Consultation Services (PBCS), the conference provided attendees with information and break-out sessions on trauma-informed supports, strategies for maximizing academic engagement and reducing disruptive behavior, critical features of effective behavior support plans, special topics in neuropsychology, and more. Psychologist Melissa A. Collier-Meek, Ph.D., an assistant professor at UMass Boston and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, was the keynote. Learn more from EASTCONN PBCS Director Dr. Ravit Stein at rstein@eastconn.org.



Paula M. Colen Retirement Party



On September 14th, 125 friends, colleagues, staff and agency partners attended a retirement party at The Mansion at Bald Hill in Woodstock to bid farewell to departing EASTCONN Executive Director Paula M. Colen.



GARY MALA from page 1

“My work will be to continue the tradition of excellence associated with EASTCONN, and to help our districts manage the wide continuum of challenges facing them today.”

He completed his doctoral level work at both the University of Hartford and Nova Southeastern University, and earned his superintendent certification and Sixth Year Diploma in Educational Leadership from Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU). He holds a combined master’s degree from SCSU in special education and educational leadership, and has bachelor’s degrees in both elementary and special education from Central Connecticut State University (CCSU).

Mala was recently awarded the Presidential Award from the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents

(CAPSS) and he is currently an adjunct professor in the Educational Leadership Department at Quinnipiac University, specializing in graduate level school finance.

Mala has a strong record of advocating at the state legislative level on behalf of schools and communities. He was appointed to U.S. Rep. Elizabeth Esty’s (5th District) STEM Advisory Council, and currently chairs the Council’s Education Subcommittee.

Mala and his wife reside in New Britain. They have two grown daughters.

To reach Gary Mala, email him at gmala@eastconn.org, or call 860-455-1565.