

CONNECTIONS

Education News From Northeastern Connecticut

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History teachers from EASTCONN's Teaching American History Project recently enjoyed a Summer Institute at Mystic Seaport, where they participated in hands-on activities like learning how to row longboats (above). Teachers crewed on the Seaport's docked 19th-century whaler, the Charles W. Morgan, and attended period-specific classes taught by Mystic educators.

Free American History Lessons For Grades 5-12 Now Available Online

A high-quality collection of more than 170 American history lessons is now available online – for free – thanks to a devoted and enthusiastic group of Connecticut history teachers who participated in EASTCONN's federally funded Teaching American History Project (TAHP).

"It's a rich set of historically sound, content-based classroom lessons and activities that deal with higher-level thinking, primary-source materials, and hands-on activities for students," said Dan Coughlin, who directed the four-year-long TAHP for EASTCONN.

The TAHP U.S. history lessons for grades 5-12 can be downloaded by visiting the EASTCONN Web site at www.eastconn.org and clicking on "Free History Lessons."

The lessons, which vary in length and complexity, have already been used in classrooms and vetted for quality and content, Coughlin said. Many of the lessons can be adapted to different grade-levels.

Educators can easily search the site for grade-appropriate

See **HISTORY LESSONS**, page 6

EASTCONN Opens New Birth-to-Three Program



Tony, 19 months, engages in play-interaction during a recent home visit from EASTCONN's new Birth-to-Three team. Tony was happy to read at home with EASTCONN Early Intervention Associate Ileana Nieto, above, as part of his initial assessment.

EASTCONN has opened a new Birth-to-Three Program, helping ensure that expanded early childhood services for youngsters with developmental delays are available to all of northeastern Connecticut's youngest residents and their families.

The new Birth-to-Three Program is home-based, which means that services are provided primarily in a family's home, or in other comfortable or "natural" settings like playgroup sites or libraries, said Maribeth Stearns, EASTCONN's Birth-to-Three Program Coordinator.

In conjunction with northeastern Connecticut's Head Start and Early Head Start programs, which EASTCONN administers, the new Birth-to-Three Program capitalizes on EASTCONN's existing early childhood expertise and staff, said Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, Director of EASTCONN's Early Childhood Initiatives.

"Our new Birth-to-Three Program complements

See **BIRTH-TO-THREE**, page 5

Calendar of EASTCONN Workshops & Events

NOVEMBER 2008

- 3 Skills & Strategies to Engage Everyone in School Improvement with John Hazard, 5-sessions: 11/3, 12/9, 1/13, 2/5, 4/2
- 4 Personal Video Conferencing Tools
- 6 Clean Energy Classrooms; Clean Energy Communities
- 7 Creativity in Writing Improves Test Scores!
- 12 Responsive Classroom
- 13 Technology Council Meeting
- 14 Early Childhood Outcomes PD
- 14 **FREE** "Motion & Design" STC Workshop
- 15 Early Childhood Outcome PD Opportunity
- 14 ConnCASE Meeting
- 17 Community of Practice: RtI for Related Services Providers
- 18 RSDC Meeting
- 18 RtI and School Climate
- 19 **FREE** "Ecosystems" STC Workshops
- 19 Teaching to CMT Objective D (Examining Content & Structure)
- 20 URSA/NASA Meeting
- 20 Teaching Science Process Skills, Gr. 3-8
- 21 ELL Strategies for Classroom Teachers
- 21 Empowering Writers Presents: Kindergarten-Grade 1 Writing Workshop
- 24 RtI Council Meeting
- 25 **FREE** "Organisms" STC Workshop

DECEMBER 2008

- 1 MSP Physics & Sound
- 1 Related Services Council Meeting
- 3 **FREE** "Solids & Liquids" STC Workshop
- 4 Making Sense of Science Text: Strategies to Help Your Middle & High School Students Read Science Materials
- 4 MSP Magnetism & Electricity
- 4 Teaching to CMT Objective B (Developing Interpretation)
- 5 Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum in Middle and High School
- 6 Shift Happens
- 8 Tiers without Tears: Understanding Data Collection for RtI/SRBI
- 8 Foundations of Reading Success
- 9 **FREE** "Sound" STC Workshop
- 9 Skills & Strategies to Engage Everyone in School Improvement with John Hazard
- 10 Narrative Writing CMT Review
- 11 Journey Through the Solar System
- 11 Persuasive Writing Workshop
- 11 URSA/NASA Legislative Meeting
- 12 ConnCASE Meeting
- 17 Science Bank — Education for the Future

Note: Workshops fill up quickly, so please reserve seats early. EASTCONN workshops are subject to change. Please e-mail the EASTCONN Conference Office at dsylvestre@eastconn.org for more information about any of the meetings and workshops listed here. Register online for any of the above workshops at www.eastconn.org. Click on "Workshops."

New Partnership To Help NE Conn. Schools Analyze Data, Meet NCLB Mandates

Educational Research, Testing, and Evaluation Consultants, LLC

ertec



EASTCONN has formed a new partnership with ERTEC and DASPP, two Boston College-affiliated agencies, which will help northeastern Connecticut schools more efficiently analyze student performance data related to education mandates.

The Massachusetts-based Educational Research, Testing and Evaluation Consultants (ERTEC) and the Data Analysis and Strategic Planning Project (DASPP) will work with EASTCONN-region schools to focus on high-quality, decision-making options in their ongoing efforts to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) education reforms.

"I'm very excited about this new partnership and the assessment resources that this will bring to EASTCONN school districts," said Jim Huggins, EASTCONN's Director of Teaching, Learning and Technology.

The collaboration will enable EASTCONN to offer its districts customized data management and analysis, strategic and school-based improvement planning, locally relevant educational research, and targeted professional development.

"The partnership will help our districts as they put plans in place to implement Connecticut's Response to Intervention (RtI) framework," said Huggins.

DASPP, which serves dozens of Massachusetts school districts each year, offers its partners a core staff of university and school-based professionals who are expert in a variety of disciplines, grade levels, and research areas.

The formative assessment initiative is part of ERTEC's efforts to assist schools and school districts in understanding and addressing their students' academic strengths and weaknesses.

For more information, contact Jim Huggins, EASTCONN's Director of Teaching, Learning and Technology, at 860-455-0707, or via e-mail at jhuggins@eastconn.org.



EASTCONN Connections

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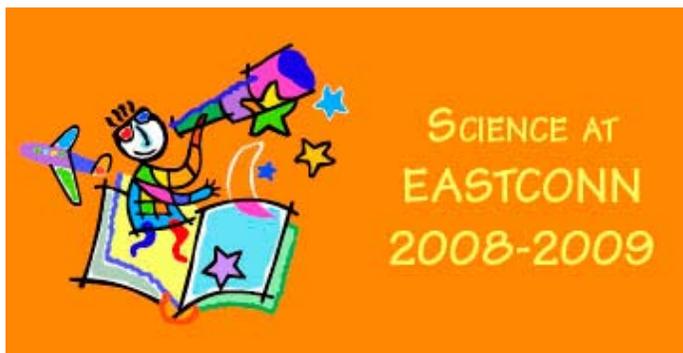
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Carolina Curriculum is New Partner, Funding Free Science PD and Trial Kits for K-5

EASTCONN's Science Cadre has announced a new partnership with Carolina Curriculum, publishers of the Science and Technology for Children (STC) program, which will fund 16 free, kit-based, content-driven science workshops at EASTCONN, along with the opportunity to pilot the associated STC classroom unit.

The free STC workshops, for K-5 teachers, start in mid-November.

"This is an unusual opportunity for teachers and school districts," said Mary Lou Blanchette Smith, Science Curriculum and Instruction Specialist at EASTCONN and a member of the Science Cadre.

"Teachers will be able to attend the workshops for free, then pilot the STC materials on a trial basis in their classrooms."

Districts and teachers will have time to decide whether the science kits are something they might want to purchase.

"The ultimate goal is for increased student achievement in science," Smith said. "Math and literacy are also integrated into each science lesson."

Each STC science-unit kit comes with a Teacher's Guide, a Teacher's Tools CD, and the materials needed for a class of 30. The kits range in value from \$329 to \$1,150, depending upon the subject.

The professional development science workshops will be offered in the four content areas addressed by the Connecticut Science Frameworks and will focus on science standards at the K-5 level.

STC provides a seamless approach to inquiry-based science education by offering hands-on activities that keep inquiry at the center of the learning process; students learn new concepts in a real-world setting.

The National Science Resources Center (NSRC), which developed the STC Program, offers students and teachers the opportunity to access the knowledge and expertise of the prestigious Smithsonian Institution and the National Academies.

Contact Mary Lou Blanchette Smith at 860-455-0707, ext. 3045. Or, visit www.eastconn.org and click on Publications, then on "download a pdf" under the "Science at EASTCONN 2008-2009" brochure.

To register for individual STC workshops, visit EASTCONN's main Web page and click on "Workshops" or "Registration."

New Middle College School Supports, Engages Its Students

Students at eastern Connecticut's new Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School (QVMCHS) say they feel better supported academically, more valued, and more engaged since the school's 10th-grade inaugural class walked through the doors in August.

"It's a great school," said Luis, who lives in Windham and is a member of QVMCHS's first class of 34 tenth-graders. Eventually, QVMCHS will serve grades 10-12. "It's fun," he said. "I learn more. I like the teachers. They take time to teach you as an individual. Before, I didn't like writing, but now I'm really trying to get better."

QVMCHS is located on the Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC) campus in Danielson. The new middle college was designed to offer an educational alternative to students who feel disengaged from their traditional public high school programs.

QVMCHS enables its students to earn both a high school diploma and simultaneously acquire college credits by attending classes at QVCC.



Left to right, Jean Paul, Amanda, Shayna, and Luis — four of QVMCHS's inaugural class of tenth-graders — were happy to chat about their new school, their feelings, and their aspirations.

"I'll get to do all the work that all the college kids do, and I'll get the same credits and I won't be bored," said Amanda, who lives in Thompson. "It's great."

"It's more one-on-one teaching here," said Amanda, who wants to be a nurse. "I like the environment here, the people, the classes. I'm starting a college class on math next week."

Shayna, who lives in Putnam and wants to go into law enforcement, said she enjoys attending QVMCHS because she feels "we have greater freedom to express ourselves."

Jean Paul, who is from Plainfield and aspires to a career in computers, agreed, adding, "We feel like we're building a community here."

QVMCHS's first year was fully enrolled with 34 tenth-graders by early summer. There is currently a waiting list. The school will eventually enroll 200 students. In the next few years, a new facility will be constructed at QVCC to house QVMCHS.

QVMCHS Principal Gino LoRicco said he's very optimistic about his students' academic future at the new school.

"We want our kids to believe that they can do the work," he said, "and that, in the end, their hard work and respect will lead to excellence." Reach him at gloricco@eastconn.org.

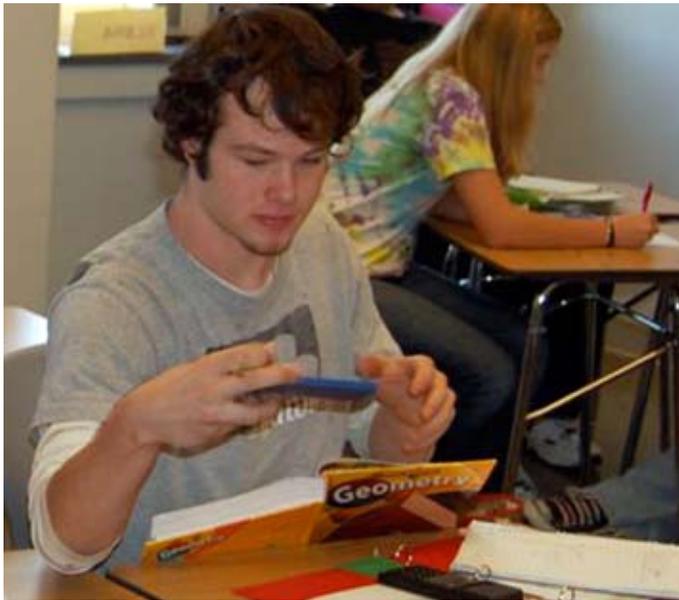
QVMCHS is operated by EASTCONN as part of a partnership that includes EASTCONN, QVCC, Plainfield, Putnam, Thompson, Windham, and Woodstock.



Arts Magnet High School Attracts Growing Numbers

ACT, EASTCONN's full-day arts magnet high school in downtown Willimantic, is attracting a growing numbers of students, with 65 ninth- and tenth-graders enrolled in this year's full-day program and 22 eleventh- and twelfth-graders enrolled in the part-day program.

Last year, ACT enrolled a total of 65 students in both full-day and part-day programs. This year, that number has grown to 87 students; the group represents 18 area towns or high schools. Thomas F. Cronin, EASTCONN's Director of Education Services (K-12), said that ACT's 2009-2010 enrollment will top 100 students.



A tenth-grade ACT student, enrolled in the magnet school's full-day program, works out a challenging geometry problem in class.

ACT (Arts at the Capitol Theater) offers arts classes for both full- and part-day students in acting, singing, dance, theater production, stage design, audio/video production, creative writing and more. Full-day students receive rigorous instruction and support in core academics five mornings a week; four afternoons a week, part-day students arrive and both groups attend arts classes together.

During the 2008-2009 school year, ACT's full-day program is limited to ninth- and tenth-graders, while its part-day program is limited to eleventh- and twelfth-graders. In the fall of 2010, ACT will become a full-day arts magnet high school for grades nine through 12 and the part-day program will end.

Contact Tracy Goodell-Pelletier at 860-465-5636, or via e-mail at tpelletier@eastconn.org. Visit www.eastconn.org/ACT.



ACT 5K Race Raises \$2,240

Forty-six people participated in the Fifth Annual ACT Scholarship Fund 5K Road Race on Saturday, Oct. 18th in downtown Willimantic. The race raised \$2,240 for the ACT Fund.

New Faces at EASTCONN



Richard Tariff has been named Director of Adult and Community Services at EASTCONN. Formerly the regional supervisor of Vernon Regional Adult Basic Education, which serves a 19-town collaborative, Tariff has spent the last 35 years as a Connecticut educator. In 1973, he began teaching in Stafford Springs, where he was also named director of Adult Education from 1979 to 1983. After briefly directing Vernon adult education, Tariff was named assistant principal at Vernon Center Middle School, a post he held from 1984-2000; VCMS was a Connecticut Blue Ribbon School during his tenure. In 2000, Tariff returned to Vernon Adult Education, where he served as supervisor until earlier this year. Contact Tariff at 860-455-0707, or at rtariff@eastconn.org.

Andrew Gutt has been named Technical Coordinator at the Capitol Theater in Willimantic. Gutt has experience in lighting design, theater and stage management, audio/video coordination, set design and construction, scenic artistry, and Web design. He has designed lighting for touring musicians like Chris Botti, Acoustic Alchemy, Spyro Gyra and Staind. He has also designed lighting for the Windham Textile and History Museum's annual Snowball and the Hartford Chorale, among others. Until recently, Gutt was the events manager at WindhamARTS Collaborative. Last year, the Windham Textile and History Museum retained Gutt to produce *Life in a Mill Town*, a documentary on the Willimantic textile industry. Reach Gutt at 860-465-5636 or at agutt@eastconn.org.



Bye Bye Birdie Lyricist Visits



Legendary Broadway lyricist Lee Adams, left, spoke with CTAA Dir. Adam Friedman and CTAA Summer Musical Theater campers at a "Bye Bye Birdie" rehearsal in July. Adams, the lyricist for the Tony Award-winning musical, attended the show's opening night.

CAN Grant Results Are In: Increases in Scores Cited

The results are in and the news is good. Now that the \$2-million College Access Now (CAN) grant has ended, quantitative data show that math and English scores for participating New England middle-schoolers improved significantly during the program.

CAN, a two-year, federally funded initiative that ended last spring, involved 13 schools (10 sites) from the six New England states. EASTCONN managed the grant. CAN's goal was to increase the rigor of middle-school math and English language arts (ELA) curricula that would, in turn, boost the number of students taking pre-AP courses and AP courses. Ultimately, the CAN objective is to increase the number of successful, college-bound students in every district.

"I'm happy to report that as a result of participating in the CAN program, state test-scores in math increased at CAN sites by as much as 41 percent and in English language arts by nearly 20 percent," said Adele Swart, an EASTCONN Staff Developer and Manager of CAN in New England.

"In ELA, the gains from pre-test to post-test ranged from 4.68 to 19.16 points, while the mathematics gains ranged from 17 to 50 points higher," she said. "The data illustrate the growth in knowledge and skills in content areas that are critical to the pursuit of advanced-level courses," Swart said.

CAN involved more than 150 teachers and nearly 1,000 students. The final data were evaluated by UConn researchers Dr. Elizabeth Jean Gubbins and Dr. Siamak Vahidi, Swart said.

The CAN grant also successfully developed a regional New England council aimed at improving low-income-student access to pre-AP courses, Swart said. The CAN program schools met other important goals, including generating an increase in the number of and enrollment in pre-AP and AP courses.

Swart said that existing CAN schools will now become model sites, helping to promote successful CAN strategies and curricula at other middle schools across New England.

To learn more about model CAN schools, CAN middle-school curricula, test results, or consultation, contact Adele Swart at 860-455-0707, or via e-mail at aswart@eastconn.org.



BIRTH-TO-THREE continued from page 1

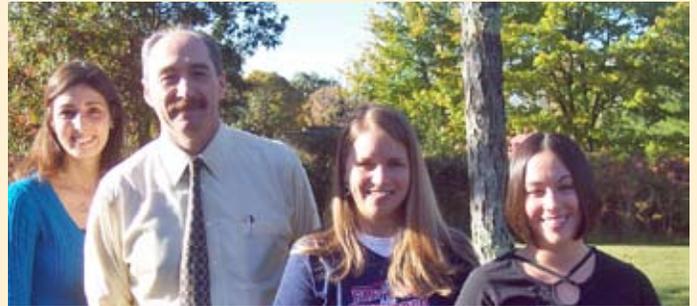
EASTCONN's long-standing experience with providing special education and related services to our region," said Aschenbrenner. The new initiative complies with IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and state guidelines.

The program, for children age 3 or younger, is available to all parents who have concerns about their infant's or toddler's development. A child must first be referred to the program through the Child Development Information Line, Stearns said.

Once the EASTCONN Early Childhood team provides an evaluation, a service plan addressing the child's needs will be developed with the family's input. EASTCONN's Birth-to-Three team includes early interventionists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech-and-language professionals.

Contact M. Stearns (mstearns@eastconn.org) or E. Aschenbrenner (eamaschenbrenner@eastconn.org) at 860-455-0707.

Staff On Board At New Autism Program in Coventry



EASTCONN's new autism team, left to right, are Erin Casper, BCBA; Ron Morin, program director; Alisha Natelle, special education; and Nicole Potterton, instructor. Missing: Ann Kulikowski, SLP; Selena Thomas, instructor, and Valerie Taff, PT specialist.

Top-notch staff is on board at the Integrated Services Program (ISP), EASTCONN's new site-based program for primary-grade students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and related disabilities in Coventry.

"They're a terrific group of professionals who bring a wealth of experience to our new ASD program," said Ron Morin, EASTCONN's Coordinator of ASD Services and Director of ISP.

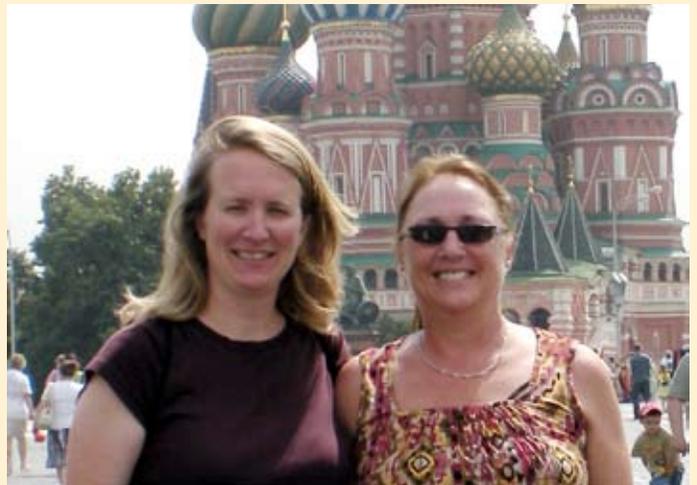
Located at Coventry Grammar School, ISP will primarily serve youngsters in kindergarten through second grade.

"The program is up and running. We have enrollments and are continuing to take referrals," said Morin.

For more information, contact Ron Morin at 860-933-7371, or at rmorin@eastconn.org.



Adventure Staffers Go Russian



EASTCONN Adventure specialists Deb Earl, left, and Frankie Piela, right, paused in front of St. Basil Cathedral in Red Square, during their freewheeling travels through Russia this summer. They were among only 13 Americans chosen to make the all-expenses-paid trek to teach team-building skills and English at the Mr. English Camp for children, ages 7 to 17, in Ruza, Russia. Once the two-week-long camp ended, Earl and Piela set off on their own, traveling with intrepid resolve through Moscow, St. Petersburg, Petrozavodsk, and Veliky Novgorod. [To read a longer version of this story, visit www.eastconn.org/highlights_October08.htm.]

HISTORY LESSONS continued from page 1

TAHP American history lessons, which are arranged in time periods or eras.

Four of Woodstock Academy history teacher Kim Jalet's outstanding lessons are on the TAHP site, including "Hitler's Rise to Power," "The 7 Hats of the President," "The Progressives," and "The Media and the Spanish American War."

"All the TAHP lessons on the site seem fabulous," said Jalet. "They all require students to examine primary sources and to draw conclusions about history."

Lyman Memorial High School history teacher Cynthia Petrie's lesson, "The 1920s: 'It was the Best of Times; It was the Worst of Times...'", is also available. Stafford fifth-grade teacher and TAHP alumna Maureen Festi, who earned the coveted national 2007 Preserve America History Teacher of the Year Award last winter, has contributed her history lessons, as well.

TAHP participant Bobby Skarvelas, who teaches American Studies at Glastonbury High School, has contributed a number of lessons, many of them in partnership with another teacher, Ryan Broderick. Skarvelas said his favorites are "The Impact of War Photography in Vietnam" and "Jim Crow Laws and the Constitution."

Also available for free on the TAHP/EASTCONN site are primary-source skills lessons that are not directly related to a historical period, which many teachers may find useful, Coughlin said.

More than 65 Connecticut social studies/history teachers from northeastern Connecticut have participated in the TAHP since the grant's inception in 2004, Coughlin said, and every participant has contributed lesson plans to the TAHP online collection.

"They were a terrific group," Coughlin said. "They were very hands-on. The goal was to allow them to do the work of historians and, by extension, to have them encourage their students to do the work of historians."

EASTCONN Professional Notes:

Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, EASTCONN's Director of Early Childhood Initiatives, has been invited to speak at the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) National Conference, Oct. 27-30, in Minneapolis, Minn. Aschenbrenner will participate in "Conversations on the Meaning and Implications of RTI in Early Childhood." Aschenbrenner was also invited to speak in October during Jumpstart's Read for the Record at UConn's Child Laboratories, Storrs. Invited guests included the Governor's Early Childhood Cabinet and UConn President Michael Hogan, among others. Jumpstart's Read for the Record day highlights the importance of literacy and early education.

EASTCONN Assistant Director of Early Childhood Services **Kim Lewendon** joined forces with Coordinator of the Regional Accreditation Facilitation Project **Debra Stipe**, and Putnam Head Start teacher **Janet Richman** to make a presentation at the Annual Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children Conference in September.

EASTCONN Staff Developer **Jane Cook** will co-present a workshop called "If You Build It They Will Come: Building a Web Presence," at the 107th Annual New England Association of Teachers of English (NEATE) Conference on Oct. 24-25.

EASTCONN Staff Developers **Rebecca Pilver** and **Donna Drasch** will co-present "The Best of 2 Worlds: Creating the Environment for 21st-Century Learning" at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Conference, Nov. 20-23.

Jane Glenn, a special education teacher at ACT, was honored by Connecticut Commissioner of Education Mark K. McQuillan for a "Successful Practice in Technology Integration" project with her ACT Spanish-class students last year. Students researched Latino artists and made short films, which they presented, using SMART board technology tools.



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EASTCONN, one of six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) in Connecticut, has been serving the educational and training needs of schools, organizations, and individuals of all ages in northeastern Connecticut since 1980.

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