

# CONNECTIONS

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*Windham TEAM District Facilitator Gene Blain, left, chats with TEAM's Director of Training Nancy Celentano (in pink) and Pam Cavanagh and Laura Dawley, two of Windham's TEAM reflection paper reviewers, at a recent TEAM training session at EASTCONN.*

## Educators Agree: TEAM Program Benefits CT Teachers & Students

Now in its second year, Connecticut's professional development program to support and retain beginning teachers appears to be succeeding, as new teachers, their mentors and a host of other educators reflect on the results, tweak the details, and work toward making TEAM as effective and enduring as possible.

The overall response to the Connecticut's statewide TEAM (Teacher Education And Mentoring) initiative has been very positive, said EASTCONN's Nancy Celentano, who directs training for TEAM.

"A lot of this year was spent refining the TEAM process from a development perspective, and making the online tools and the system more user-friendly," said Celentano.

Implemented in 2010-2011 with 4,300 new teachers, TEAM will support 4,600 new Connecticut teachers in 2011-2012, with the help of 4,100 trained mentors (master teachers), 1,400 trained regional reviewers, 249 district facilitators and each district's school administrators.

"The TEAM program is a testament to the collegial relationships formed between the Connecticut State Department of Education, RESCs, districts, unions and higher education," said Nancy Pugliese, CSDE Chief of the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification. "With the expertise of these various groups, we were able to create a standards-based program

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## EASTCONN Celebrates Its New \$6.2 Million Addition in Hampton



*Special guests (l-r) State Senate President Pro Tempore Donald E. Williams, Jr., and Connecticut Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman, joined EASTCONN Executive Director Paula M. Colen and EASTCONN Board Chair Herbert Arico for the ribbon-cutting.*

A ribbon-cutting ceremony, featuring special guests Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman, state Senate President Pro Tempore Donald E. Williams, Jr., D-29th Dist., state Senator Tony Guglielmo, R-35th Dist., and 90 other guests took place recently, marking the official opening of EASTCONN's new Conference and Meeting Center in Hampton.

EASTCONN's new, \$6.2 million, 15,700-square-foot Conference and Meeting Center more than doubles the square footage of the agency's current administrative site in Hampton, expanding it to 28,000 square feet. The EASTCONN facility is located at 376 Hartford Turnpike (Route 6).

Wyman told guests, who had gathered in one of the new conference rooms, that she remembered visiting EASTCONN many years ago when it was a much smaller organization; she and EASTCONN staff met in the only meeting room EASTCONN offered. She was generous with her praise for EASTCONN and the assistance the non-profit organization provides to northeastern Connecticut's schools and communities.

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View the EASTCONN Calendar  
at [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org) and  
Click on "Workshops, Events & Classes"

### RIBBON-CUTTING, from page 1

Williams said people might wonder why EASTCONN needed to expand its conference and meeting space, then listed the hundreds of meetings and regional workshops that EASTCONN had hosted at its facilities just last year. He also told the group that EASTCONN had managed 30 statewide conferences and processed thousands of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for teachers who had benefited from EASTCONN trainings.

"This has been a hub for so much positive activity and progress," Williams said.

EASTCONN's Hampton facility now offers a total of 6,000 square feet of interior event space, providing the region's education and training community with a full-service conference and meeting center. The rest of the facility holds office space, storage and mechanical operations.

Overall, EASTCONN's Hampton site can accommodate up to 300 participants in 10 different rooms, ranging from a 12-person boardroom to a 200-person conference room that can be configured in a variety of ways. A technology center with laptops can serve up to 25 participants and all rooms are equipped with the latest AV equipment and communication systems. On-site catering is also available. The new addition's "green" design elements include an energy-saving geothermal heating and cooling system; energy-efficient lighting, inside and out; a fresh-air intake system; and the use of recycled materials throughout.

EASTCONN's Conference Office provides comprehensive conference support services, both at EASTCONN facilities and at venues across the state, to both public and private organizations.

Contact EASTCONN's Jennie Lavoie for more information at 860-455-0707 or at [jlavoie@eastconn.org](mailto:jlavoie@eastconn.org).



## CTAA's Summer Show, *Barnum*



Northeastern Connecticut youngsters had fun participating in the fully staged summer production of *Barnum*. The cast, shown here, was enrolled in EASTCONN's Capitol Theater Arts Academy (CTAA) summer musical theater program, open to grades 4-12. CTAA is an EASTCONN community arts outreach program.

## EASTCONN Professional Notes



Debra Stipe

EASTCONN's Early Childhood Specialist Debra Stipe has been invited to co-present a workshop with Accreditation Facilitation Project colleague Michele Pearson on "The operations manual—more than a handbook: Writing policies and procedures for an operations manual based on NAEYC Standards and Accreditation criteria" at

the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) 2011 Annual Conference, which will take place Nov. 2-5, in Orlando, Florida. Stipe is among 75 educators from around the world who will also attend the highly regarded Istituzione of the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance in Reggio Emilia, Italy, this fall.



## Updates on Regional Initiatives

**Regional Health Insurance Collaborative** — Health consultants have been retained and are collecting and analyzing data from the region's interested districts and municipalities. Contact EASTCONN Executive Director Paula M. Colen at 860-455-1565, or [pcolen@eastconn.org](mailto:pcolen@eastconn.org).

**Regional Curriculum and Assessment Consortium** — Planning is underway to bring language arts and math teachers together to begin developing units aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Contact EASTCONN Teaching & Learning's Jim Huggins at 860-455-1569, or [jhuggins@eastconn.org](mailto:jhuggins@eastconn.org).

**Expanded Cooperative Purchasing** — New contract for janitorial supplies. Continuing to expand opportunities in food service, office and health supplies, fuel and desktop printers. Contact EASTCONN's Rich Tariff at 860-455-1584, or [rtariff@eastconn.org](mailto:rtariff@eastconn.org).

**Regional School Calendar** — Conversations regarding the 2012-2013 regional school calendar have begun; a draft of the calendar will be available by December, 2011. Contact EASTCONN Executive Director Paula M. Colen at 860-455-1565, or [pcolen@eastconn.org](mailto:pcolen@eastconn.org).

**Regional Student Transportation** — Updated provider data collected from region. Conversation continues with CSDE and RESCs, exploring cost-effective ways to deliver transportation services. Contact EASTCONN's Director of Education Services Tom Cronin at 860-455-1505, or [tcronin@eastconn.org](mailto:tcronin@eastconn.org).

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## USDE Awards EASTCONN \$1.5-Million AP Program Grant

The U. S. Department of Education has awarded EASTCONN a three-year, \$1.5-million Advanced Placement Incentives Program grant, one of 12 awarded nationwide, to continue a successful statewide initiative aimed at improving low-income and minority students' access to and success in AP courses.

The competitive federal grant, called Project Step2Stem, will provide improved access to rigorous AP science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) course work for Connecticut's under-served students, grades 6-12, particularly young women and students from low-income homes.

"Research shows that students who take challenging classes are more likely to earn a college degree," said U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan. "This program will help give more low-income students the opportunity to take advanced courses and prepare them to succeed in college and careers."

Project Step2Stem will supplement the highly successful, EASTCONN-administered, Project Opening Doors initiative, another statewide AP-access program focused on increasing under-served high school students' success in math, science and English; Project Opening Doors has dramatically improved AP test scores among Connecticut's participating high school students since 2007.

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The new Project Step2Stem program targets students who have traditionally been under-served in 17 of Connecticut's high schools, including Ansonia; Bloomfield; East Hartford; Hartford; New Britain; Cooperative Arts, Hill Regional Career, Hillhouse and Wilbur Cross in New Haven; New London; Putnam; Stamford and Westhill; Crosby, Kennedy and Wilby in Waterbury; and Windham. The federal initiative will provide specially designed education services for Bloomfield, Waterbury's Crosby High School and Windham High School.

Connecticut towns with middle schools that will also participate in the Step2Stem program include Bloomfield, East Hartford, New London, Stamford (3 schools), and Windham.

The project will provide professional development, course development, books and supplies, and facilitate student participation in online AP courses.

Look for more stories on the new Step2Stem grant program, in addition to stories about EASTCONN's Project Opening Doors, in future *Connections* editions.

View the *Connections* archives for stories about Project Opening Doors (page 1 in issues from October 2010 and October 2009) by visiting [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org) and clicking on Publications in the Main Menu.

For more information about the new federal AP grant, contact EASTCONN's Step2Stem Project Coordinator Adele Swart at 860-455-1560, or at [aswart@eastconn.org](mailto:aswart@eastconn.org).

## \$370,000 CSDE Grant To Support Children's Executive Function Skills

EASTCONN has received a 2-year, \$370,000 grant from the Connecticut State Department of Education to implement teaching strategies that support executive function skills in preschoolers and kindergarten children.

The brain's executive function involves inhibitory control, attention to task, working memory and cognitive flexibility.

"Research has demonstrated the critical importance that executive function skills have on school success, including increased student achievement," said EASTCONN's Director of Early Childhood Initiatives Elizabeth Aschenbrenner.

"We are extremely excited to use this opportunity to increase teacher skills in supporting young children's development and to demonstrate the significance of executive function."

Aschenbrenner said the initiative will involve children in the EASTCONN region. The grant project will be evaluated by the University of Connecticut's Center for Applied Research and Human Development.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Aschenbrenner at 860-455-1518, or [easchenbrenner@eastconn.org](mailto: easchenbrenner@eastconn.org).



## 9/11 Survivor Shares Story with EASTCONN Students



*Francesco Ambruoso*

To mark the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Francesco Ambruoso shared his narrow escape from New York City's World Trade Center with a group of riveted high school students from EASTCONN's Northeast Regional Program (NRP) and Educational and Vocational Center (EVC).

NRP and EVC high school students had been studying world events that led to the September 11th attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. Ambruoso is a friend of an NRP staffer.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Ambruoso was a 22-year-old graduate of Eastern Connecticut State University enjoying his second day of training at Morgan Stanley's 61st-floor offices in the World Trade Center's South Tower.

He described his disbelief when he and 300 fellow trainees realized the North Tower next door had been hit by a plane. They decided to exit the building and were calmly making their way down emergency stairwells when their building was also hit by a plane, 20 stories above. The impact made a dull boom as the building "shook like an earthquake had hit it."

"The lights went out, dust fell, the emergency lights went on and we knew...it wasn't an accident. It was controlled chaos after that. We knew, just go, go, get down, get out..."

Ambruoso escaped physical harm, but said his ordeal is not over. "It's hard, thinking I got a chance to get out while other people didn't."

"Thank you," he told students after finishing his story and answering questions. "I haven't shared my story for 10 years."

**TEAM**, from page 1

that fits the needs of new teachers.

“By using the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching as its foundation, TEAM provides teachers with the opportunity to translate a standards document into real practice, thus strengthening student learning and the teaching profession,” Pugliese said.

Through TEAM, Connecticut’s beginning teachers are able to document their learning and progress throughout the year in a reflection paper, written in an online workspace on the TEAM Web site ([www.ctteam.org](http://www.ctteam.org)). The reflection paper is read by trained TEAM reviewers, who apply three criteria: “Has the teacher developed new learning?” “Is there a positive change in his/her teaching practice?” and “Are there improved outcomes for students?”

A total of 6,960 reflection papers were reviewed in TEAM’s first year. Most teachers will complete five TEAM modules within two years and each module can take 8-10 weeks.

“Once our beginning teachers have chosen a learning goal, they develop new knowledge by conducting research, by observing colleagues and by having learning-focused conversations with their TEAM mentors, who provide approximately 10 hours of support for each module,” said Celentano.

“What we believe is that teachers will internalize this collaborative process, so that once they’ve successfully completed TEAM, they will continue throughout their careers to reflect on their teaching practice and its impact on their students. That’s the power of this program,” Celentano said.

A recent, statewide survey of TEAM participants high-

*continued next column*

lighted positive perspectives on the program’s first year.

“The TEAM program has definitely helped to push me to become a better teacher,” said one beginning teacher, whose sentiments were echoed by a majority of other survey-takers.

TEAM mentors, who were surveyed agreed, with one observing, “Throughout the TEAM process, both of my mentees put data collection systems in place that support their students. In addition, they found themselves asking their students to ‘reflect’ in much the same way they need to for their own papers... a wonderful bonus!”



*(L-r) Sharing a moment of levity, Chief of CSDE’s Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification Nancy Pugliese joined TEAM Unit Coordinator Beverly Hartstone, TEAM Consultant Claudine Primack, EASTCONN’s TEAM Field Staff Representative Grace Levin and TEAM’s Director of Training Nancy Celentano, following a TEAM meeting at EASTCONN in October.*

In fact, more than 90% of the TEAM reviewers and district administrators who responded to the survey said that the TEAM process positively impacted student learning.

“That’s an incredible statistic and an incredible achievement,” Celentano said.

“TEAM is very successful, which isn’t a surprise to me,” said the Connecticut Education Association’s representative to the TEAM collaboration, Linette Branham. “It’s based on the best practice for professional learning, and was welcomed by mentors and new teachers. Teachers, especially, feel a great deal of ownership for the program, which motivates them to be involved and help make it successful.”

Branham’s CEA members have also responded positively to TEAM. “New teachers and mentors have said the conversations based on the CCT Continuum have been very insightful and helpful,” she said. “New teachers love being able to design their learning plans based on what they need in order to become more effective, and feel the program is very applicable to their everyday role in the classroom.”

“School districts everywhere face the challenge of retaining new teachers and TEAM is essential to retention,” said Carole Clifford, American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut’s representative to the TEAM collaboration. “This critical induction program has proven to be an effective method of providing new teachers with mentors, professional development, and reflection that leads to their becoming successful, confident teachers. By tying the Common Core of Teaching into the modules within TEAM, we are giving teachers the tools they need to succeed.”

To learn more, contact EASTCONN’s Nancy Celentano at 860-455-0707, or e-mail her at [ncelentano@eastconn.org](mailto:ncelentano@eastconn.org).

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