

# CONNECTIONS

*Education News From Northeastern Connecticut*

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## Education Stakeholders To Explore Cost-Saving Measures At Summit on Regional Cooperation, Collaboration

As school districts face the potential ravages of a declining economy and deep budget cuts in 2009-2010, opportunities are emerging for cooperating and collaborating with other districts across the region.

“There is a great history of voluntary collaboration in our region,” noted Paula Colen, EASTCONN Executive Director.

“Districts in our region often partner, both across the region, as well as in neighboring communities, to pool resources and leverage greater results,” she said.

In order to explore additional opportunities for regional cooperation, EASTCONN is inviting key stakeholders to a Summit on Regional Collaboration, so that they can identify both areas for cost-savings and potential cooperative strategies that will help districts continue delivering needed services in a cost-effective manner.

“There may be areas where a regional solution makes sense, or other places where just two or three districts can come together to achieve a common purpose,” said Colen.

The Summit will take place in the coming weeks. EASTCONN has already begun exploring the potential for collaboration among districts by conducting a series of regional data collection activities, including a series of job-alike focus groups and an online survey.

The Summit will review and consider results of the regional data collection, identify areas of highest potential for regional response, and select strategies that educators have indicated they would like to pursue further.

EASTCONN will share the results of the Summit in a future *Connections* newsletter.



*William Oros,  
Union Superintendent*

## EASTCONN Helps Union Stretch Dollars

Regional collaboration is the key to saving money during tough economic times, according to Union superintendent William Oros, who says EASTCONN’s special education and technology experts have given his district an edge.

“We have to get creative these days,” Oros said, “and EASTCONN has helped us do that.” Oros spoke recently from the main office at his Union school.

Oros said he gets part-time access to EASTCONN expertise in several different, highly specialized areas that his district could not otherwise afford full-time.

“Right now, I get special education services, OT, PT, speech-language, a school psychologist, referral backup and technology services from EASTCONN.

“As a result, the services available to our kids and staff are much more varied than in a situation where we were trying to go it alone,” Oros said. “Our relationship with EASTCONN gives me more flexibility and enables us to meet the needs of kids, choose from a variety of programs, and support our teachers.”

“Basically, we’re taking advantage of everything RESCs like EASTCONN were created to do.”

Oros is in his third year as superintendent for Union, the smallest school district in Connecticut. He previously worked as a school administrator in northwestern Connecticut, so he is familiar with the challenges that face rural school districts.

“In northwestern Connecticut, we relied on EDUCATION CONNECTION (a Regional Educational Service Center like EASTCONN) for short-term professional services and other assistance,” Oros said.

Recently, EASTCONN assisted Union educators during a particularly challenging student placement, Oros said.

“To see the professional and smoothly delivered services from EASTCONN staff, well, it was nicely done in a very difficult situation,” said Oros. “It worked out very well for the student.”

EASTCONN technology experts have also created and now maintain Union’s databases, in addition to keeping their

See **COLLABORATION**, back page

# Calendar of EASTCONN Workshops & Events

## FEBRUARY 2009

- 13 ..... ConnCASE Meeting
- 19 ..... Plan Growth and Development
- 23 ..... Language Arts Council
- 24 ..... Forensics: Reconstruct, Investigate, Analyze and Identify
- 24 ..... Motivating the Plugged-In Generation: Digital Storytelling for K-12 Teachers
- 26 ..... URSA/NASA Meeting

## MARCH 2009

- 2 ..... Community of Practice: ECO (Early Childhood Outcomes) Reporting Procedures for Related Services
- 4 ..... The Potential of Podcasting: Twilight Series
- 5 ..... Technology Council
- 13 ..... ConnCASE Meeting
- 17 ..... Regional Staff Development Council
- 23 ..... RtI Council
- 24 ..... Excel in the Classrooms - Students Using Data: Twilight Series
- 25 ..... LAS Links Data Analysis to Inform Instruction
- 26 ..... URSA/NASA Meeting
- 27 ..... Community of Practice: Positioning and Mobility Equipment Expo 2009

## APRIL 2009

- 1, 2 & 3 .... Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing® (LIPS®)
- 3 ..... Differentiation in Practice: Strategies and Tools for Connecting Curriculum and Kids
- 7 ..... Inspire Data for the Classroom - Students Using Data: Twilight Series
- 7 ..... Electric Circuits
- 7 ..... Revitalizing Outdoor Play
- 8 ..... Balancing and Weighing
- 16 ..... Increasing Student Achievement Through Content Area Writing in Middle School
- 28 ..... Rocks and Minerals
- 30 ..... Science in the Primary Classroom

*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](mailto: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](http://www.eastconn.org). Click on "Workshops."*



*Amy Senna, CTAA Director*

## Senna Named CTAA Director

Amy Senna, a former Granby elementary school teacher, has been named director of the Capitol Theater Arts Academy (CTAA), EASTCONN's after-school, community arts program located in the Capitol Theater in downtown Willimantic.

Senna has already begun working as CTAA director, according to Thomas Cronin, EASTCONN's Director of

Education Services.

"We're very pleased that Amy Senna has agreed to join us at CTAA," Cronin said. "She is an outstanding educator with a master's degree in arts education and has tons of enthusiasm for kids and the arts. I look forward to seeing her energy and vision at work in the Capitol Theater Arts Academy."

Senna will oversee CTAA arts classes, which are open to area residents of all ages. Taught by artists and working professionals, CTAA classes are offered in acting, dance (ballet, creative dance, hip-hop, jazz, modern, tap, Scottish dance), cartooning, piano, music theory, and voice.

"I'm delighted to take on these new responsibilities and to become involved in helping the arts academy grow and to foster children's excitement about the arts," Senna said.

Senna, who is a certified teacher, most recently taught both grades three and five in the Kelly Lane Intermediate School in Granby. Senna has been a teacher since 1999.



## Plainfield Teacher Honored

Congratulations to Plainfield Special Education Teacher Marie Constantinou, of Norwich, who has been named 2009 Plainfield Teacher of the Year.

"To be simply nominated is an incredible honor," said Constantinou, who said her peers had submitted her name. "But then, to actually win...wow!"

Constantinou has spent 30 years as a special education teacher, and 15 years as a preschool special education teacher at Plainfield's Early Childhood Center. Before teaching in Plainfield, Constantinou worked for EASTCONN and the former state Department of Mental Retardation, now the Department of Developmental Services.

### EASTCONN Connections

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# EASTCONN Expands Assistive Technology, Audiology Services

EASTCONN is expanding its assistive technology and audiology services in order to meet the growing number of requests from northeastern Connecticut schools.

“There is a real need for experts in these fields in northeastern Connecticut – and around the state,” said Mary Jo Chretien, EASTCONN’s Related Services Coordinator.

As a result, Chretien said EASTCONN has added two new staff members: Assistive Technology Specialist Amy Norton and Educational Audiologist Heather Carter.

“By adding Amy and Heather to our staff, EASTCONN is better able to help school systems address the needs of entire classrooms and schools, as well as help program for specific students.”



**Amy Norton, M.A., A.T.P.**  
*Assistive Technology Specialist*

ogy Specialist, Carol Magliocco, who increasingly focuses on the use of AT for literacy development.



**Heather Carter, Au.D., CCC-A**  
*Educational Audiologist*

Based Intervention (SRBI) initiatives for students, particularly those with ADD/ADHD.

To learn more about EASTCONN’s expanding AT and audiology services, contact Mary Jo Chretien at [mchretien@eastconn.org](mailto:mchretien@eastconn.org).

Or, contact Contact Amy Norton at [anorton@eastconn.org](mailto:anorton@eastconn.org) or Dr. Heather Carter at [hcarter@eastconn.org](mailto:hcarter@eastconn.org).

All three EASTCONN staff may be reached at 860-455-0707.

Norton, M.A., A.T.P., conducts AT evaluations and provides the latest training, information, technical assistance, and consultation on the continuum of AT devices and services for groups and individuals. She also serves on the Advisory Council of the Connecticut Tech Act and will coordinate the Transition Network for the EASTCONN and LEARN regions. Her interests and experiences complement those of

Carter, Au.D., CCC-A., can assist districts in supporting individual students who have hearing impairments, including assessment of the school environment to maximize student success. She can also provide consultation and professional development regarding Sound Field FM systems, auditory processing disorders, Deaf culture, cochlear implants, sign language, teacher vocal fatigue and classroom acoustics (for existing buildings and new construction). Carter’s services support Scientifically Research



**Presenter Mike Wasta, in blue shirt, above, chats with educators at a recent SRBI training session at EASTCONN Hampton.**

## National SRBI Expert Presents Dynamic Workshop to Council

Mike Wasta, Ph.D., took the time to chat with educators following his dynamic presentation on data teams and *Enhancing Effectiveness Through Teaming* workshop at EASTCONN’s January SRBI Council meeting in Hampton. Wasta, formerly the Superintendent of Bristol Public Schools, is a nationally recognized expert on SRBI implementation; he is also a Professional Development Associate for The Leadership and Learning Center, founded by Doug Reeves. Joining Wasta after the SRBI presentation in Hampton were, depicted above and left to right, Sheila McCracken (back to the camera), of Windham Public Schools; Carol Magliocco, EASTCONN’s Assistive Technology Coordinator; Cathy Smith-Carolan, an EASTCONN Staff Developer; and Kelly Doubleday-Bush, an EASTCONN Curriculum Specialist.



## EASTCONN Reaches Out For Interdistrict Grant Ideas

The Connecticut State Department of Education is about to release its new Request For Proposals (RFPs) for the 2009-2011 Interdistrict Grant cycle and EASTCONN is seeking fresh programming ideas from area educators.

“In the coming weeks, we will be reaching out to educators across our region – either through focus groups or via online surveys – to get their ideas for our Interdistrict Grant proposals,” said Nancy Vitale, EASTCONN’s Interdistrict Grant Manager.

Every two years, EASTCONN collaborates with area school districts to respond to CSDE-funded Interdistrict Grant opportunities, which are designed to increase students’ understanding and experience of diversity and improve their academic performance.

EASTCONN was awarded \$1.2 million for Interdistrict Grants in the 2007-2009 grant cycle, which funded 13 Interdistrict programs, serving 32 partner towns and more than 5,500 students in grades 2-12.

**[EDITOR’S NOTE: An insert in this newsletter describes EASTCONN’s 2007-2009 Interdistrict Grant programs.]**

For more information, contact Nancy Vitale at 860-455-0707 or at [nvitale@eastconn.org](mailto:nvitale@eastconn.org).

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computer systems up and running.

“We couldn’t do it without them,” said Oros.

“We rely on the technology training that EASTCONN provides and we are learning from them how to set up databases through the RtI model.”

Oros said he has only “scratched the surface of options at EASTCONN,” particularly those related to professional development, special education and technology.

“As soon as we finish speaking here, I’m going to call Frank [Salce] from EASTCONN’s Transportation Services to see if Union can consolidate our buses through EASTCONN. They already have a whole fleet of buses. It just makes sense.”

To learn about more about shared services, staffing, and programs at EASTCONN, contact Thomas Cronin, Director of Education Services, 860-455-0707, [tcronin@eastconn.org](mailto:tcronin@eastconn.org); Jim Huggins, Director of Teaching, Learning & Technology, 860-455-0707, [jhuggins@eastconn.org](mailto:jhuggins@eastconn.org); Frank Salce, Director of Transportation, 860-465-3160, [fsalce@eastconn.org](mailto:fsalce@eastconn.org).



## Marlborough School Wins Big CAS Award

Congratulations to Marlborough’s Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School, which has been named Connecticut’s 2008-2009 Elementary School of the Year by the Connecticut Association of Schools.

Described by CAS as a “dynamic and lively community,” the highly regarded school, which serves about 670 students, is guided in all things by its theme, “children first.” The preK - grade 6 school was recognized for educating the whole child, with a focus not only academics, but also on each child’s interest in the arts. CAS also praised the strength of the school’s staff, its parent involvement, its outstanding academic programming, and positive sense of community.

Kudos!



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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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## Courtney Visits Windham Head Start



*U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, visited EASTCONN’s Head Start program (through Windham Public Schools), where he met with, L-R, EASTCONN Early Childhood Director Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, Windham Superintendent of Schools Doreen Fuller, EASTCONN Executive Director Paula Colen, and Mary Jane Crotty, Director of the Windham Child Development Center, site of the Head Start program.*



## Legislators Meet with Superintendents



*State Legislators, including senators Don Williams, Joan Lewis, and Pam Sawyer, (pictured here with superintendents), recently met with area superintendents to discuss education funding and the economy, during the Annual Legislative Breakfast session at EASTCONN.*

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