

# CONNECTIONS

*Education News From Northeastern Connecticut*

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## EASTCONN's Head Start Gets Thumbs Up from Federal Review Team

Federal officials have given EASTCONN's new Head Start operation in Windham and Tolland counties a positive review following a recent on-site assessment.

"The report finds us to be in compliance with the Head Start standards," said Cindy Torrence, EASTCONN's Director of Head Start.

"With barely a year under our belt, an 18-person federal review team spent five days visiting with us, our delegate agencies, as well as program parents and representatives of various community agencies," said David Calchera, EASTCONN Executive Director. "I think it is fair to say that they were very impressed with the complex number of systems and partnerships that were put in place to manage the program operations in such a short period of time."

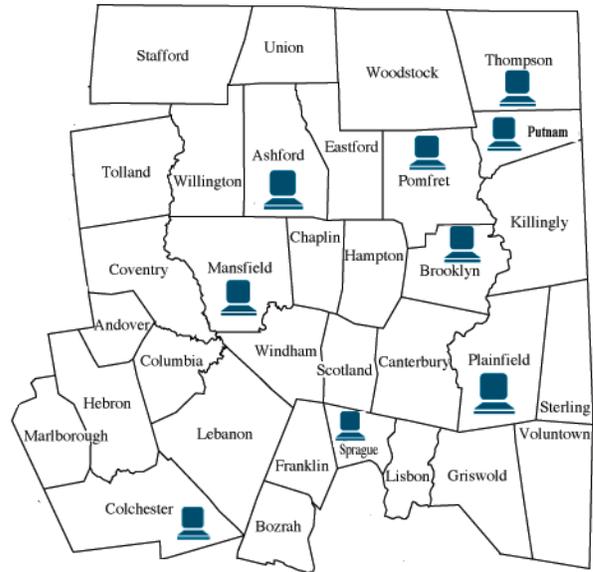
The extent of parent involvement was one focus area during the visit. According to the published report, "Parents described positive relationships [with the various staff with whom they interact] and commented on the difference in staff morale since EASTCONN has taken over." The report also quotes parents as saying they "are amazed at the strides their children have made."

One of the management systems recently implemented is a database for tracking Head Start child outcomes. The program is piloting the CSDE's Preschool Assessment Framework at most sites with the assistance of E.A. Aschenbrenner, an EASTCONN staff developer and early childhood expert and

See **HEAD START**, back page

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Northeastern Connecticut districts that have received grant money for technology are indicated above with a computer symbol.

## EASTCONN Districts Awarded Technology Grants

The first round of federal NCLB grants for Category A under the Enhancing Education Through Technology have been announced. Additional awards in another category will be announced soon.

**Colchester** received \$40,000 to utilize distance learning and expand research-based instruction. **Mansfield** and **Pomfret** each received \$30,000 to acquire courses and curricula. **Thompson** was awarded \$10,000 for technology leader preparation. **Ashford** received \$15,000 to acquire links, resources and services. **Brooklyn** received \$25,000 to implement a performance management system to determine the effectiveness of education technology programs. **Sprague** was awarded \$45,000 to implement a regional data warehouse in collaboration with **Putnam** and **Plainfield**; the data warehouse proposal was featured in the fall edition of EASTCONN's newsletter *Connections*, which can be viewed online at [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org).

For more information about technology grants or educational technology questions, contact Jim Huggins or John Kalinowski at 860-455-0707; [jhuggins@eastconn.org](mailto:jhuggins@eastconn.org), [jkalinowski@eastconn.org](mailto:jkalinowski@eastconn.org).

# Calendar of Regional Activities



## FEBRUARY 2003

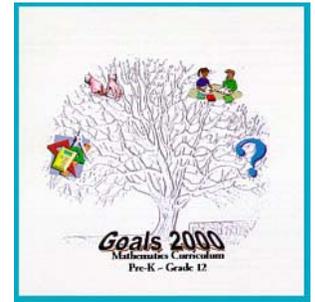
- 3 ..... iMovie: Intro to Making Computer Movies
- 4 ..... iCONN: Using the new Digital Library in the Classroom
- 5 ..... Introduction to Microsoft Excel
- 5 ..... Developing Your School Leader and Professional Development Plan
- 7 ..... URSA Meeting
- 7, 14 & 28 Using Technology to Meet the Needs of Multiple Intelligences
- 10 ..... Beginning Web Searches & Email
- 12 ..... Literacy Strategies to Improve Comprehension in Science
- 20 ..... The Responsive Classroom
- 24 ..... Intermediate Web Searches and Email
- 27 ..... Literacy Strategies to Improve Comprehension in Language Arts & Social Studies

## MARCH 2003

- 3 ..... Facilitating Conversations that Focus on Student Work
- 3 ..... iCONN: Using the new Digital Library in the Classroom
- 6 ..... Orienteering: From Classroom to Forest
- 5 ..... During Reading, Thinking Strategies that Foster Comprehension
- 5, 12, .. Introduction to FileMaker (& April 2 & 9)
- 11 ..... Understanding by Design: A Model for Designing Engaging Curriculum Units
- 11 ..... Charts and Graphs in Microsoft Excel
- 12 ..... Regional Staff Development Meeting
- 13 ..... Portfolio Development of Teacher Evaluation & Professional Development Plan
- 14 ..... The WebQuest: It's More than Just Searching the Web
- 14 ..... URSA Meeting
- 18 & 27 Step into the Stories of America and the Sea
- 20 ..... Something to Write About: Strategies for Student Writing
- 20 ..... Tech Council Meeting
- 21 ..... Models of Web-Based Learning for Your Students
- 26 ..... Literacy Strategies to Improve Comprehension in All Content Areas
- 27 ..... The Marginal Teacher
- 28 ..... Strategies that Work: Technology & Reading in Grades 1-3

**Note: Workshops fill up quickly. Please reserve seats early. EASTCONN workshops are subject to change without notice. E-mail the EASTCONN Conference Office at [conferenceoffice@eastconn.org](mailto:conferenceoffice@eastconn.org) for more information about any of the meetings and workshops listed here. Workshop information is also available on our Web site at [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org). In case of inclement weather, call our cancellation line at 860-455-0420.**

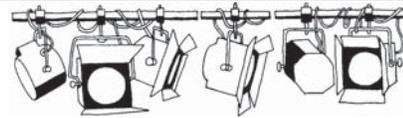
# K-12 Math Curriculum Guide Available Online



The in-demand *Goals 2000 Mathematics Curriculum Guide (PreK-12)* is now available for download through a special link on The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction website: [www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/mathgoal/currmath\\_goal2000.htm](http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/mathgoal/currmath_goal2000.htm) or by clicking on the spotlight link on the EASTCONN home page at [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org).

Originally available on CD-Rom, this comprehensive curriculum resource was produced under the leadership of Helen Weingart, EASTCONN staff developer and facilitator of curriculum, assessment and instruction services, with the guidance of CSDE Math Consultant Mari Muri and the Mathematics Development Committee. Sections of the curriculum were piloted in Stafford, Willington and Plainfield.

For more information about the Mathematics Curriculum or any curriculum, assessment or instruction questions, contact Helen Weingart at 860-455-0707 or [hweingart@eastconn.org](mailto:hweingart@eastconn.org).



## ACT OPEN HOUSE February 11, 2003

(snow date: 2/25/03)

6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

EASTCONN Hampton

376 Hartford Turnpike (Rte. 6), Hampton

*For students, parents, and other persons interested in ACT (Arts at the Capitol Theater), EASTCONN's half-day inter-district magnet school for high school students*

*RSVP to Connie at EASTCONN, 860-455-0707 by 2/7/03.*

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# Sweeney Models Literacy Improvements for Superintendent Network

SWEENEY continued from previous column

Last fall, Windham's Sweeney School modeled its school-wide improvements and literacy programs during an on-site Connecticut Superintendent's Network visit, a project funded by the Connecticut Center for School Change and facilitated by Harvard Professor Dick Elmore, a recognized leader in the field of school improvement.

The Connecticut Network's 14 members share the common goal of school improvement. They take turns hosting the network meetings and posing a problem statement for the members to consider. Pat Proctor, Superintendent of Windham Schools, has been a member of the group since its inception and invited the group to spend a day at Sweeney School observing the first and second grades during their literacy block hour.



**Pat Proctor, Superintendent of Windham Schools, shares Sweeney School's improvement initiatives**

want to make sure that during independent work the students are engaged in quality literacy work.”

The visitors provided validation and some useful suggestions, as well as a lively discussion about the dual demands of affect and academic rigor.

“There is a subtle interplay between high affect and cognitive demand, and the extent to which one can undermine the other,” said Proctor. “The key is that you must have both high affect and high task.”

Proctor selected Sweeney School as the site of the visit because of its long history of systemic school improvement initiatives. Angela Kiss, who has been the principal since the early 1990s, was instrumental in having Sweeney selected as an Accelerated Schools Project site.

“They went through the phases of Accelerated Schools and made some marvelous progress building the school culture in order to enable teaching and learning,” said Proctor.

Sweeney School has been working on a literacy initiative for three years with Jane Cook, EASTCONN staff developer and early literacy expert. Beginning with an Early Reading Success grant, Cook has been training and coaching teachers in a comprehensive approach to literacy. A cognitive coaching delivery model was selected to allow for teachers to work on different aspects of literacy.

“The cognitive coaching model fits regardless of whether teachers are working on guided reading or on how to teach kids

Proctor sought suggestions on how to maximize the time committed to comprehensive literacy improvement. “Our centerpiece is the guided reading,” said Proctor, “but we



**Jane Cook, left, Education Consultant from EASTCONN, works with Angela Kiss, Principal of Windham's Sweeney School**

to be good writers,” said Cook. “The approach fits regardless of the topic.”

Sweeney School staff is also participating in training provided by Vivian Batterson, coordinator of EASTCONN's Early Literacy and Early Childhood Services team, which was begun through a Goals 2000 grant designed to enhance minority student achievement.

“The focus of this work,” said Batterson, “is to learn strategies that actively engage students in the instructional activities of the classroom and increase their capacity to retain the new learning.”

The training is research-based, incorporating what is known about the brain and the way children learn. Research shows that a caring school community helps children demonstrate academic competence and helps both at-risk and average kids achieve success.

“There are instructional strategies,” said Batterson, “which will cause kids to align themselves with the teacher and cooperate in the learning process. We can create a caring community of learners who are working collaboratively to meet and exceed expectations and standards.”

Continuing their commitment to community and student learning will be even more important with the No Child Left Behind initiative, the federal education legislation now being implemented.

“In a standards-based movement,” said Kiss, “the school is the unit of measure, so the success of the whole school is everybody's business. All kids belong to all staff at school.” It is the collaboration focused on students' needs that delights Kiss. “Good things are happening for kids at Sweeney.”

Proctor, who will leave the district in February after 16 years, agrees. “The emphasis in Sweeney, as it has been across the district, has been to improve student learning across the board, to get all students learning at much higher levels and to close the gaps in achievement between those kids who have traditionally been higher achieving kids and those who have not,” Proctor said. “That is Windham's challenge, Connecticut's

# Windham Reading Buddies Program Helps Preschoolers Learn Joy of Reading Program Expands in Second Year



A proud fifth-grader, left, shares some colorful details with her attentive Head Start Reading Buddy

Windham Middle School's Joy of Reading/Reading Buddies program, begun last year as a CSDE-funded Service Learning Grant program, is garnering praise from everyone, especially its young preschool and fifth-grade participants.

The program was so successful that Head Start awarded a grant this year expanding the program to a second Head Start Center in Willimantic.

Featured in December at the New England Regional Head Start Conference, the Joy of Reading program pairs fifth-graders at Windham Middle School with preschoolers at nearby Head Start centers. The fifth-graders read to Head Start children and in the process strengthen not only the language and literacy skills of their young buddies, but their own reading comprehension skills and self-esteem, as well.

The second Head Start site will increase the number of students participating in the project and adds workshops for parents and books for students.

The design of the program was the result of a collaboration between EASTCONN's Donna Drasch and her colleagues incorporating Head Start outcomes, Preschool Benchmarks, and Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) objectives. Central to the design are performance standards and benchmarks for preschoolers as defined in the CSDE Preschool Assessment Framework. **[Editor's Note: See related story, Preschool Assessment Method Debuts, page 5.]** The Joy of Reading fifth-graders are taught how to incorporate these standards into reading activities with their Head Start buddies. During the fall, the Willimantic children's librarian offered a workshop for students illustrating strategies for choosing books, reading aloud effectively and extending a story.

READING BUDDIES continued from previous column

"Fifty-five percent of the fifth-graders are intervention-level readers, currently reading at the first or second grade level," said Drasch.

While learning how to be effective readers, the fifth-graders are working on intonation, comprehension, and prediction — some of the same skills they must master to do well on CMTs.

"We teach them how to ask connection and open-ended questions and cloze prompts to keep the preschoolers engaged before, during and after reading," explained Drasch.

Students prepare for each visit by selecting and reading a book and completing a checklist which details the title, author, illustrator, main ideas, main characters and a list of unfamiliar words or topics and their meanings.

"They are reading at their own comfort level using books they have selected for their preschool buddies," said Drasch.

Classroom teachers report a high degree of student motivation and commitment. Said one, "whenever there is an unscheduled period, students beg to use the time to practice reading their books aloud to one another and to work on creating extended activities."

Drasch has received numerous requests for information and hopes to see the pilot expand well beyond Connecticut.

For more information on the program you can view a PowerPoint presentation prepared by Donna Drasch. Go to EASTCONN's website at [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org) and click on Publications. Or, contact Donna Drasch at 860-455-0707 or [ddrasch@eastconn.org](mailto:ddrasch@eastconn.org).



Enjoying a great read together at the Head Start site in Willimantic



SWEENEY continued from page 3

challenge, the nation's challenge. And that's the work. It's all about figuring out how to do that and scaling it up."

For more information about the Sweeney School project, contact Jane Cook or Vivian Batterson at 860-455-0707 or by email at [jcook@eastconn.org](mailto:jcook@eastconn.org) or [vbatterson@eastconn.org](mailto:vbatterson@eastconn.org).

# Preschool Assessment Tool Debuts in Connecticut

Training in the use of a new preschool assessment tool tied to the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework will begin rolling out in February.

E.A. Aschenbrenner, EASTCONN staff developer and early childhood expert, was one of the creators of the assessment as well as the curriculum framework upon which it is based.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) contracted with Aschenbrenner, Claudia Shuster, of Central Connecticut State University, and Carlota Schechter, of St. Joseph College, to develop an assessment tool that aligned with the Preschool Curriculum Framework, published in 1999.

One of the major benefits of this preschool assessment tool is that it allows for the analysis of progress over time on a continuum of skills.

"If you know where children are and where they need to be, then you can appropriately target your instruction," said Aschenbrenner.

In creating the assessment tool, the development team was able to build on learning derived from two Goals 2000 grants operating in the EASTCONN region.

These two grants, one in Windham and one Consortium grant with Putnam as recipient, were designed to look at the overlap between the framework and the kindergarten curriculum. In addition, they explored the development of a component to assess what children must know and be able to do, as defined in the preschool framework.

Among the programs participating in the Goals 2000 grant was Killingly's Family Resource Center. They took a close look at curriculum alignment from preschool to third grade and used their assessment data to inform the curriculum and assessment planning process.

"Instead of using thematic unit content as a basis for instruction, we are looking at the Preschool Assessment Framework and the Child Record forms as the foundation for curricula development and instruction," said Lynda Fosco, Director of the Family Resource Center in Killingly.

"Teachers may use a thematic unit as a vehicle for organizing classroom experiences and activities but the skills and concepts outlined in the assessment tool are what is emphasized," said Fosco. "It is a much more difficult way to approach instruction but it truly focuses on what children should know and be able to do within the preschool years."

For more information, contact E. A. Aschenbrenner at 860-455-0707 or [eamaschenbrenner@eastconn.org](mailto:eamaschenbrenner@eastconn.org).

# EASTCONN Welcomes New Director Maureen Crowley



**Maureen Crowley,**  
**EASTCONN's New Director of**  
**Planning & Development**

EASTCONN welcomed Maureen Crowley this fall as Director of Planning and Development.

"We are thrilled to have Maureen on the team," said David Calchera, EASTCONN's Executive Director. "She comes to us with valuable experience in working with learners of all ages and needs, grant-writing in a variety of areas, and successfully building collaborative partnerships among communities and institutions. Her doctoral

thesis in professional development is an added bonus."

Maureen joins EASTCONN after almost 20 years of work in a diverse array of educational settings. Beginning her career in Massachusetts as a high school English teacher, she quickly grew to appreciate the challenge of serving at-risk youth and the value of alternative learning environments.

She has worked in a variety of settings, each requiring coalition building and cooperative resource sharing, and each focusing in some way on increasing and improving opportunities for youth and adult learning.

"If I peel the years back, a common thread emerges," she said, "which is to improve the quality of life in communities through education."

Among her accomplishments is the creation of the first family literacy program in southeastern Massachusetts. She is one of 16 people nationally certified as a systems-change agent for the Bridges Project, a research-based initiative to improve education for adults with learning disabilities, and the design and development of a collaborative adult education service, which was awarded the Governor's Council Model of Excellence.

Her experience with models of adult education services throughout New England inspired her interest in adult learning. As a result, Maureen enrolled full-time at UConn as an educational doctoral student focusing on Adult Learning and Workplace Education.

"Although I had been learning by doing, I wanted an opportunity to step out and reflect about my experiences from a research framework," Maureen said. "I want to do what I've been doing — but to be better at it. Instead of stumbling onto things by trial and error, I want to be able to know at the outset that [educational methods] have a greater chance of succeeding because research exists to support it."

With her course work complete, Maureen is ready to return to work. "Just reading about how other people are solving the problem is not enough. You really miss the 'doing.'"

Contact Maureen Crowley at 860-455-0707 or [mcrowley@eastconn.org](mailto:mcrowley@eastconn.org).



**HEAD START** continued from page 1

one of the authors of Connecticut's Preschool Curriculum Framework, as well as the recently published preschool assessment with which it is aligned. **[Editor's note: See related Preschool Assessment story, page 5.]**

Aschenbrenner applauds the Head Start decision to use a comprehensive approach to assessment.

"This tool recognizes that all areas of development are important to children's academic success and social competence and will allow them to measure progress over time."

"One of the benefits of being housed at EASTCONN is the access to other agency resources and expertise," said Torrence. In addition to the support received from Aschenbrenner, Head Start staff participate in workshops in social-emotional competence provided by Vivian Batterson, coordinator of EASTCONN early literacy and early childhood services. This training focuses on prevention and early intervention strategies and is being offered in local schools as well. **[Editor's note: see related Sweeney School story, page 3.]** A special initiative planned next year for kindergarten teachers in the region will further contribute to the goal of assisting Head Start children in their transition to school.

Head Start program staff participate in Connecticut Charts-a-Course paraprofessional training provided by EASTCONN Staff Developer Debra Stipe through a grant from the Wheeler Clinic.

Two Head Start sites in Willimantic are participating in a Service Learning Project created by Donna Drasch, an EASTCONN staff developer. **[Editor's note: See related Reading Buddies story, page 4.]** Drasch was recently invited to present the Joy of Reading program at a New England Regional Head Start Conference. "What a win-win for everybody," said Torrence. "Fifth-graders are strengthening their reading skills and our kids benefit by having role models that like to read to them."

## Educators Can View Latest Assistive Technology Software

By Carol Magliocco and Mary Jo Chretien, Related Services

EASTCONN's Assistive Technology team has been awarded Preview Center status by a number of major companies which manufacture education software and assistive technology products. Three of the software partners are Inspiration Software, Inc., Don Johnston, Inc., and Crick Software, LTD.

"We're very excited about our association with these innovative companies and the new opportunities they will help provide our districts for hands-on exploration of the latest in assistive technology," said Carol Magliocco, member of the Assistive Technology Team.

Crick Software offers literacy software that is easy for teachers and students to use, including those with disabilities. Inspiration Software has a student version of their graphic organizing software that can be a useful visual tool. Don Johnston, Inc. is a well-established leader in special education software and is offering new features in updated versions of two products, *Write: OutLoud*, a talking word processor, and the *Co:Writer* word prediction program. Training in the use of all of these programs is available from EASTCONN. Links to these company websites can be found at [www.eastconn.org/links](http://www.eastconn.org/links) or at [www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com), [www.cricksoft.com](http://www.cricksoft.com) or [www.donjohnston.com](http://www.donjohnston.com).

In addition to demonstrating new products, EASTCONN staff is available to help districts use their existing technology more efficiently and creatively. Service options include professional development, consultation and evaluation of student needs.

For more information about software previews and training opportunities, or to arrange services for a student, contact Carol Magliocco or Paul Rennick at 860-455-0707, or email [prennick@eastconn.org](mailto:prennick@eastconn.org).



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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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