

CONNECTIONS

Education News From Northeastern Connecticut

volume 28, number 2

www.eastconn.org

January 2008

Educators Collaborate, Create New Science Resource Center

Mirroring a successful California initiative and hoping for the same impressive results for students here, educators in Rhode Island and Connecticut are collaborating to create a new regional science resource center for teachers.

Called the Connecticut Science Resources Collaborative (CSRC), the cooperative aims to help teachers and students improve learning outcomes, successfully conquer new Connecticut Science Curriculum Frameworks, meet new, tougher Science Grade Level Expectations, and prepare for the state's first-ever Science Mastery Tests in March.

The East Bay Educational Collaborative, an educational service agency in Warren, R.I., has joined EASTCONN and members of Connecticut's RESC Alliance as they collaborate with the CSDE to create the new systemic science-initiative resource center.

The CSRC held its first informational meeting in mid-December at EASTCONN's Central Office in Hampton. A second meeting will be held this month.

At its first meeting, the CSRC drew educators from more than 30 Connecticut school districts. They heard the EBEC's Ron DeFronzo and Anita Hennessey speak about the value of creating a systemic science resource center in combination with high-quality professional development for member school districts.

The CSRC will be providing materials management and professional development using a model developed in the El Centro school district in southern California. The model is based on teachers having access to fully stocked, high-quality, inquiry-based science kits aligned with state and national standards, as well as kit-specific professional development.

"Although there is tremendous value in teachers having

See **SCIENCE**, page 4



First Lady Laura Bush presents Stafford fifth-grade teacher Maureen Festi with the coveted, national Preserve America History Teacher of the Year Award during a recent ceremony in NYC.

Stafford 5th-Grade Teacher Wins Prestigious Award

In November, First Lady Laura Bush presented the prestigious, national 2007 Preserve America History Teacher of the Year Award to Stafford fifth-grade teacher Maureen Festi during a ceremony at the Museum of the City of New York.

"I was very surprised and excited when I won the award," said Festi, who said she never expected to win. "It was an incredible honor to receive the award from the First Lady." Festi described Mrs. Bush as "very kind and gracious."

A Connecticut native, Festi said she was inspired to try a new approach to teaching history after participating in EASTCONN's Teaching American History program, led by coordinator and longtime history teacher Dan Coughlin, as well as Tim Weinland, and Bob and Lynn Fulton.

"[They] had a powerful and positive impact on my approach to teaching American history," Festi said. "These people are outstanding teachers and mentors who have modeled and implemented creative, inquiry-based approaches..." she said.

"It was just great to see an excellent teacher recognized,"

See **FESTI**, page 4

In this issue

| | |
|---|---|
| ☼ Events Calendar | 2 |
| ☼ ACT Teacher Accolades | 3 |
| ☼ Upcoming '08 Conferences | 3 |
| ☼ \$97,000 OK'd for Windham's Arts in the Afternoon | 3 |
| ☼ Mystic Seaport Offers Free Programs Thru June | 4 |
| ☼ "Dark Skies" Wins \$27,000 PD Grant..... | 4 |
| ☼ Foldables Workshop Offers New Tools..... | 5 |
| ☼ New School Option Opens at QVCC Next Fall...back page | |

Calendar of EASTCONN Events



JANUARY 2008

- 28 Special Needs: Autism/Sensory Systems
- 29 First Steps in Mathematics (& 2/8, 2/29, & 4th date TBD)

FEBRUARY 2008

- 6 Financial Literacy for Teens
- 6 Microsoft Office Playground (Twilight Series) (also 3/15, 4/2 & 5/7)
- 7 LAS LINKS Training
- 8 & 4/9 ... Apprenticing In Reading
- 8 ConnCASE
- 13 Teaching Text Structures and Author's Craft at the High School Level
- 13 The Wonderful World of Wikis
- 15 Teaching CMT Reading Objectives B2 and B3
- 26 Coordinated Health Approaches to Safe and Drug-Free Schools
- 28 URSA/NASA

MARCH 2008

- 14 ConnCASE
- 19 Enhancing Children's Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Competence
- 19 Regional Staff Development Council
- 20 Technology Council
- 27 URSA/NASA

APRIL 2008

- 1 Teaching Reading in Content Area Classrooms, Grades 6-12
- 2 Math Council
- 3 Examining the Earth Beneath Us: Soils, Rocks & Minerals
- 8 The Potential of Podcasting
- 8 Improving School Climate to Support Student Achievement
- 11 Current Issues in Service Delivery: ASHA Revisited
- 11 ConnCASE
- 22 Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners *with Jane Hill*
- 24 URSA/NASA
- 28 Strategies for Cultivating Respect for Diversity in Preschool and Kindergarten Classrooms
- 29 Digital Storytelling
- 30 Investigating the Nighttime Sky

Note: Workshops fill up quickly. Please reserve seats early. EASTCONN workshops are subject to change. Please e-mail the EASTCONN Conference Office at conferenceoffice@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."

Capitol Theater Arts Academy (CTAA)
presents



Seussical Jr.

A rollicking children's musical, with beloved Dr. Seuss characters like Horton & The Cat in the Hat.

Thurs., Jan. 24 – Sat., Jan 26, at 7 p.m. and Jan. 27 at 2 p.m.

Tickets \$10 Adults \$8 Children under 12, Seniors

Reserve your tickets today! Box Office 860-465-5636

The Capitol Theater, 896 Main Street, Willimantic

www.eastconn.org/capitoltheaterarts



The Capitol Theater Arts Academy (CTAA)

Winter/Spring Session begins Mon., Jan. 28th
For Eastern Connecticut Residents of All Ages

Classes in dance, acting, voice, creative writing, cartooning, audio/video production, piano and more.

Call Adam Friedman at 860-465-5636 for information

www.eastconn.org/capitoltheaterarts



Now recruiting 9th- and 10th-graders with an interest in or a talent for the arts for ACT's full-day arts magnet high school.

Small classes combine rigorous core academics with a quality arts program.

Registration deadline: Friday, Feb. 1, 2008

Contact ACT Dean of Students Tracy Goodell-Pelletier

The Capitol Theater, 860-465-5636

www.eastconn.org/ACT

EASTCONN Administration

Paula M. Colen, Executive Director

EASTCONN Connections

Writer/Editor: Teddie Sleight ~ tsleight@eastconn.org

Assistant: Cindy Laurendeau ~ claurendeau@eastconn.org

Communications Department

Dotty Budnick, Director

EASTCONN, 376 Hartford Turnpike, Hampton, CT 06247
860-455-0707 FAX: 860-455-0691

ACT Teachers Garner Accolades

Two writing teachers at ACT, EASTCONN's arts magnet high school in Willimantic, are having authentic success in the writing field, beyond the doors of the Capitol Theater.



Finishing Line Press recently published a chapbook, *Talking to Trees*, by **Lisa C. Taylor**, who is a poet and writing teacher at ACT. *Talking to Trees* has been nominated for an L.L. Winship/ PEN New England Award. Other poetry works by Taylor have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Taylor is widely published in numerous literary magazines and journals. She is currently working on a full-length collection of poetry and a memoir-style book.



Barbara Pfister Greenbaum, who is a fiction-writing teacher at ACT, has won second place for her short story, "The Breaks," in the 2006 Connecticut Authors and Publishers Association writing contest. Greenbaum is also an Interdistrict Grant coordinator for EASTCONN. Greenbaum is currently working on her first novel and a collection of short stories.



Upcoming '08 Conferences

Two national education conferences — both within easy driving distance of eastern Connecticut — will take place in March and July and highlight cutting-edge strategies, research and world-renowned guest speakers in the fields of science and education technology.

The 56th National Science Teacher's Association (NSTA) National Conference on Science Education will take place at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center from March 27-30. NSTA conferences feature the latest in science content, teaching strategies, and research, in addition to hands-on workshops and guest speakers from around the country. EASTCONN is proud to announce that two of its staff developers and Science Cadre members, Mary Lou Smith and Grace Levin, will present a workshop titled "Improving Science Process Skills Through an Investigation of 'Magic Water'" at the NSTA conference.

The 2008 Building Learning Communities Conference will take place July 14-18 at the Boston Marriott in Newton, Mass. The BLC conference presents hands-on, pre-conference workshops, keynotes and more than 90 main session workshops. Also featured are pioneering thinkers and leaders in the fields of education and education technology from around the world. EASTCONN is happy to report that Donna Drasch and Rebecca Pilver, EASTCONN staff developers, have been invited to present the workshop, "The Best of 2 Worlds: An Environment for 21st-Century Learning," at the BLC Conference.



About 100 students, grades 3-10, will have an opportunity to participate with their families in a new after-school program, Arts in the Afternoon, which will feature an arts curriculum designed to complement regular classroom instruction.

State OKs \$97,000 Grant For Arts-Based, After-School Program at Windham Heights

The state has approved a \$97,000 grant for Arts in the Afternoon, a new after-school program for Windham children and their families, EASTCONN officials have announced.

Funded by the CSDE, Arts in the Afternoon will provide a high-quality arts enrichment and artists-in-residence program for 100 children, grades 3-10, and their families. The program, which will begin in early February, will be offered at the Windham Heights Community Learning Center in Windham.

In the context of the arts, the program's curriculum is designed to complement classroom instruction; improve student achievement in the arts, language arts, math and technology; improve parental engagement; enrich in-home learning activities; and promote youth development in a curriculum focusing on leadership, communication and team-building skills.

Artists-in-residence from both the WindhamARTS Collaborative and the Capitol Theater Arts Academy will help teach the program on a rotating basis. Arts in the Afternoon will also operate full-day summer sessions and a two-week intensive summer institute.

EASTCONN's partners in Arts in the Afternoon include the Lifelong Learning Corporation (a division of VESTA), the WindhamARTS Collaborative, the University of Connecticut Mentor Program, the Capitol Theater Arts Academy and Windham Public Schools.

To learn more, contact Arts in the Afternoon Manager Nancy Vitale at 860-455-0707, or at nvitale@eastconn.org.

Mystic Seaport's Free History/Science Programs Extended Till June '08



Sweeney Elementary School students explore a Mystic Seaport artifact.

Free Mystic Seaport History to Go® and Science to Go outreach programs will be offered to eastern Connecticut schools until June, thanks to the extension of a Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) grant.

Mystic's History-To-Go® outreach initiative brings colorful history and science presentations directly into the classroom at no charge. The initiative is aimed at schools that may lack resources.

Last spring, a number of EASTCONN-region schools took advantage of Mystic's free History-to-Go® programs, including **Sweeney Elementary, Natchaug Elementary, Lebanon Middle School, Eastern Regional Academy, Windham Middle School, Franklin Elementary and Scotland Elementary.**

[Editor's Note: Please see story on Mystic Seaport outreach programs in the *Connections* April 2007 issue.]

To find descriptions of Mystic Seaport programs, visit www.mysticseaport.org. Or, call 860-572-5322 to obtain a brochure. For reservations and information about how to request a CHEFA-grant-funded classroom program, call Mystic's Centralized Reservations at 860-572-5322 or e-mail reservations.desk@mysticseaport.org.



SCIENCE, continued from page 1

these science kits readily available to them, the primary value, in terms of increased student achievement, is in the specially designed professional development," said Mary Lou Smith, EASTCONN's Science Cadre Staff Developer, who has taken a lead role in creating and managing the CSRC.

"The professional development model also integrates literacy and math into hands-on inquiry science, as well as formative assessment," said Jim Huggins, EASTCONN's Director of Teaching, Learning and Technology, who added that he believes the CSRC initiative is doubly exciting because of its potential for broader academic application.

Data from research conducted by Michael Klentschy, former superintendent of schools in El Centro, Calif., showed impressive improvements in student achievement in science, math, and language arts for each year students were taught using the collaborative resources model being adapted by CSRC.

To view results and data from the El Centro schools, see a PowerPoint presentation at <http://www.ebecri.org/media/Welcome.CT-2.ppt>.

For more information, contact EASTCONN's Mary Lou Smith at 860-455-0707, or at msmith@eastconn.org.

"Dark Skies" Optics Program Wins \$27,000 OSAF Grant

The Optical Society of America Foundation (OSAF) has awarded a three-year, \$27,000 grant to support EASTCONN's "Dark Skies" program, an optics and science education initiative intended to engage Connecticut middle-schoolers in studying the effects of light pollution on our world.

OSAF funding will underwrite professional development for "Dark Skies," which means teachers will be able to attend workshops for free.

"We're very fortunate," said Nancy Magnani, the "Dark Skies" coordinator and a member of the EASTCONN Science Cadre.

[Editor's Note: Please see "Starry Skies Tougher to See as Light Pollution Takes Toll" in October 2007 *Connections*.]

Established in 2002, the OSAF is a charitable organization that focuses its efforts on funding programs that advance youth science education.

In early December, fifth-graders from **Coventry, Vernon, and Stafford** began studying "Dark Skies." As part of an ongoing project, they prepared packages of lesson materials for student outreach partners at middle schools in Alaska, Romania and Wales. For the next few months, the fifth-graders will join their outreach student-partners in measuring and comparing the brightness of the nighttime sky in all four regions.

Watch for EASTCONN's spring 2008 Science Cadre brochure, which will list upcoming "Dark Skies" and "Optics in the Classroom!" professional development workshops. Space will be limited.

For more information, contact Nancy Magnani at 860-455-0707, or at nmagnani@eastconn.org.



FESTI, continued from page 1

said Coughlin, who attended the New York City ceremony and described it as "very exciting."

"The thing that is most impressive to me," Coughlin said, "is that Maureen does such a wonderful job of having kids investigate history by taking field trips and using primary source documents, maps and lots of town documents. She asked for a lot of high-level thinking from her fifth-graders...and they loved it and got very involved."

The national Preserve America History Teacher of the Year award is given jointly by Preserve America and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, both of which promote history education and the preservation of our country's heritage.

EASTCONN facilitates the federally funded Teaching American History project with the grant recipient, Windham Public Schools. The Teaching American History project has served more than 60 Connecticut teachers since 2005.

To see a video of the award ceremony and to read the speeches by Bush and Festi, visit <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/student8.html>.

Learn more about EASTCONN's Teaching American History project by contacting Dan Coughlin at 860-455-0707, or at dcoughlin@eastconn.org.

Teachers Tackle Foldables® in Colorful, Busy Workshop

Innovative Classroom Strategy Can Improve Student Learning



Cynthia Huschle, a reading and language arts consultant at Tolland's Parker School, pauses during a Foldables workshop, led by EASTCONN staff developers in early January. Behind Huschle is a bulletin board covered with Foldables.

Under the enthusiastic direction of two EASTCONN staff developers, a roomful of eastern Connecticut teachers recently got hands-on experience creating Foldables, an increasingly popular, highly effective classroom strategy that boosts learning outcomes using a simple, but proven strategy.

By cutting, folding, pasting and manipulating brightly colored pieces of construction paper, which students subsequently fill with notes and concepts, students are better able to learn and retain information.

During a Foldables workshop in early January, teachers got a firsthand look at the seemingly endless possibilities offered by Foldables. EASTCONN's Staff Developers Donna Drasch and Rebecca Pilver ran the Foldables workshop. In attendance were teachers from **Region 19, Windham, Killingly, Tolland, Montville, Scotland, Plainfield and Colchester.**

Foldables are being used to help students grasp math, science, social studies and language arts concepts in ways that are far more kinesthetic and effective than regular worksheets, said Drasch, who, along with Pilver has been trained as a Foldables Level I Dinah Zike Certified District Consultant.

"There is increasing evidence that students who generate visual representations of a concept are better able to understand and recall the concept later on," Pilver said.

As one fifth-grade teacher from Plainfield, Shelley Shabenas, said as she was in the midst of cutting, gluing and folding another Foldables shape, "It's about students taking ownership and being engaged."

"We're so focused on getting ready for the Mastery Tests that we're getting away from creative things in the classroom," said Marie Simoneau, a special education fifth-grade co-teacher from Plainfield. "This is helping bring us back."

"It's not about being artsy-craftsy or obtaining perfection," Drasch said during a break in the workshop. "It's really about helping kids understand concepts. Foldables offers a strategy for returning to the basics."

"You can't physically touch three-dimensional concepts on a computer," continued Drasch, "but Foldables can give kids the three-dimensional thinking and concepts they need. Then they can then apply those to the Web."

Foldables can be used for note-taking, journaling, cause-and-effect, comparing and contrasting, vocabulary development, sequencing, concept mapping, questioning activities, tables, charts, graphics, cumulative study aids, diagrams and as an alternative form of assessment.

To learn more about Foldables or to obtain information on how to get a customized Foldables training for your school or district, contact Donna Drasch (ddrasch@eastconn.org) or Rebecca Pilver (rpilver@eastconn.org) at 860-455-0707.



Killingly teachers concentrate on creating Foldables during the hands-on workshop that introduced them to a wide variety of Foldables constructions, shapes, uses, and concepts.

Future Foldables workshops are being planned.

Save the dates! Registration information to come.

- Using Foldables® for Phonics, Spelling, and Vocabulary Development PreK through Grade 2, **March 13, 2008**
- Increasing Students' Understanding, Engagement, and Motivation in All Content Areas with Foldables®, **April 3, 2008 & repeated on August 13, 2008**
- Using Foldables® in All Content Areas: Part II, **August 14, 2008**

New High School Option For Teens To Open at QVCC Next Fall



Depicted above is the main entrance at Quinebaug Valley Community College, where the Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School will open in August, pending final approval from the State Department of Education.

Pending approval from the Connecticut State Department of Education, EASTCONN and its partners will soon offer a new program that combines high school and college at QVCC for students in grades 10, 11, and 12.

The Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School will open its doors next August at QVCC in Danielson.

EASTCONN will manage the program for a partnership that includes QVCC and the Windham, Thompson, Putnam, Plainfield and Killingly public schools.

The new school option is designed for students who feel disenfranchised from the traditional high school environment, said Maureen Crowley, EASTCONN's Director of Planning and Development.

"The overarching theme of the program is to offer the college experience to high school students who are non-traditional learners, but who are ready for the freedoms and responsibilities of college," said Crowley.

The program design is based on Stanford University's High School Redesign principles.

The Quinebaug Valley Middle College High School will open initially with about 30 students, eventually growing to 125, Crowley said.

Program details are being finalized. Look for more information in upcoming *Connections* newsletters. Contact EASTCONN's Director of Student Services Thomas Cronin at 860-455-0707, or at tcronin@eastconn.org.



376 Hartford Turnpike ~ Hampton, Connecticut 06247
860-455-0707 ~ www.eastconn.org

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.

EASTCONN
376 Hartford Turnpike
Hampton, CT 06247

| |
|---|
| U.S. Postage PAID Non-Profit Permit No. 86 Willimantic, CT 06226 |
|---|