

CONNECTIONS

Education News From Northeastern Connecticut

volume 23, number 4

www.eastconn.org

June 2003

Four Northeast CT Schools Each Win \$120K Blue Chip Technology Grants

By Jim Huggins

Four middle schools in northeast Connecticut are in the early stages of planning and implementing their \$120,000 Blue Chip School grants. Using grant funds from the Enhancing Education Through Technology Grant, middle schools in **Killingly, Lebanon, Mansfield** and **Willington** are seeking to transform learning and teaching through innovative uses of technology.

The goals of the Enhancing Education Through Technology Grant are to assist all students in becoming technologically literate and to encourage the effective integration of technology with teacher training and curriculum development.

While there are some requirements within the grant's guidelines, each school has developed a unique approach to reach the goals.

Each school is required to spend at least 25% of its \$120,000 on professional development for teachers. EASTCONN is working with all four schools to deliver a customized technology professional development solution.

Teachers in each school must also pass the UConn Education Technology Performance Assessments. In addition, each school must participate in the four-day Gates Core Training Institute: *Technology for Leadership and Learning in CT*.

Lebanon is seeking to include technology in all curriculum areas beginning with the language arts. Lebanon is acquiring wireless mobile computer labs and AlphaSmart keyboards and equipping classrooms with SmartBoard technology as they

See **TECHNOLOGY GRANTS**, back page

In this issue

- Blue Chip School Grants 1
- CT's Homegrown Flight Curriculum 1
- Calendar 2
- Options for Returning Students 2
- Three Adults Seek Career Success 3
- 2003 Interdistrict Update Insert

CT Team Brings Love of Flight, History, to New Middle School Curriculum



Gordon Schimmel, Mansfield Superintendent of Schools, and Jon Hand, Mansfield Middle School's eighth-grade science teacher, have created a ground-breaking new curriculum about the history and physics of flight

This December, the world will mark the 100th anniversary of Wilbur and Orville Wright's historic 12-second, engine-powered airplane flight along the dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. And centennial celebrations are already being planned from North Carolina to Dayton, Ohio, the Wright brothers' home and the center of their flight research and development.

At the same time, in hundreds of classrooms across the country, middle school students are already studying about the history and physics of flight using a curriculum developed right here in Connecticut.

The idea was piloted in 1994 when Gordon Schimmel, Superintendent of Schools in Mansfield, brought his love of flying to an enrichment class at Southeast Elementary School. Schimmel quickly realized the potential for teaching the physics and history of flight at the middle school level and began to work with Mansfield Middle School science teacher Jon Hand. Eventually, a new curriculum, *Inventing Flight*, was born.

Schimmel said he has always been fascinated with flight. "I always wanted to put together a good unit on flight," said Schimmel. But Schimmel said there existed no comprehensive, integrated curriculum addressing both the history and science of flight.

See **FLIGHT CURRICULUM**, back page

Calendar of EASTCONN Workshops



JULY 2003

- 9 Art Resources on the Internet
- 16 Technology Tools for Standards-Based Curriculum Development
- 17 Using the TetraData Warehouse
- 21 Beginning Web Searches
- 22, 23 ... iMovie: Lights! Camera! Action!
- 24 School Response in Turbulent Times
- 24, 31 ... Technology and Young Children
- 25 Intermediate Web Searches
- 28, 29 ... Digital Graphics: Arts with Adobe Photoshop, a Scanner and a Digital Camera
- 29 The Principal's Role in the Instructional Process of Literacy
- 30 iCONN: Using the New Digital Library in the Classroom

AUGUST 2003

- 5 Connecticut Mastery Test: Critical Stance
- 5 Literacy and Technology: Using PowerPoint to Create an Electronic Book
- 5, 7 Getting Started! Preparing for the First Two Weeks of School
- 6 Integrating Inspiration in Your Curriculum
- 7 Integrating Comprehension Strategies and "Empowering Writers" into Your Reading Program
- 13 Using Language Arts to Make Science Come Alive
- 14 Differentiated Instruction: An Overview
- 14 Using the TetraData Warehouse
- 12, 13, 14 Vertical Content Area Teams; Addressing NCLB Strategically
- 18, 19 ... Care and Feeding of Digital Images

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 for more information about any of the meetings and workshops listed here. Workshop information is also available on our Website at www.eastconn.org. Click on Workshops.

EASTCONN Administration

David J. Calchera, Executive Director
Paula M. Colen, Deputy Executive Director

EASTCONN Connections

Editor: Teddie Sleight ~ tsleight@eastconn.org
Assistant: Cindy Laurendeau ~ claurendeau@eastconn.org
Photographer: Peggy Roberts ~ proberts@eastconn.org

Communications Department

Dotty Budnick, Director

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

Tailor-Made Options Help Adults Obtain High School Degrees at EASTCONN

Determined adults who want to earn a high school equivalency degree will find that EASTCONN offers three tailor-made options.

"One size definitely does not fit all when it comes to adult learners," said Mary Shinoski, Director of Adult Services at EASTCONN. "Fortunately, EASTCONN offers three alternative routes to attaining a high school credential."

To help determine which program is most appropriate for each individual, EASTCONN crafts an education and employment plan for every adult student, enabling them to choose the most appropriate program.

The General Education Diploma or GED is, perhaps, best known.

"It's [the GED] an excellent choice for many adults," said Shinoski, "particularly if time is limited and the individual is able to demonstrate their abilities in a group testing situation. Another advantage at EASTCONN is the availability of GED testing in Spanish."

"If they have obtained most of their high school credits, then the EASTCONN Credit Diploma is probably the best fit," said Shinoski, citing the second degree option.

The third option is the External Diploma Program, or EDP.

"For those with a lot of life experience and some vocational training, the External Diploma Program is probably the way to go," Shinoski said.

On the next page, *Connections* offers a glimpse into the lives of three recent EASTCONN high school graduates that may clarify each degree program, and show readers how empowering it is to earn a high school equivalency degree.

"Getting to know these students and the amazing stories they bring with them to our classes is a privilege," said Shinoski.

Who is Maria Villaran?

- 1 Salvadoran immigrant
- 2 Grandmother
- 3 Spanish instructor
- 4 GED graduate, Connecticut
- All of the above

How American are you? Are you getting the GED? How do you know what they asked you? -- a high school equivalent degree from America's largest GED center is your best training and job through the Home-Based Program. With the GED diploma, you can prove what you know. With Home-Based Learning, you can make it work for you.

prove yourself.
www.eastconn.org/ged
1.800.62.WE.GED

Indeed, who IS Maria Villaran?

Ms. Villaran, an EASTCONN employee, was recently honored at the state capitol for her academic achievements. She was chosen to appear on this national GED poster (left) promoting seniors' return to school to obtain high school equivalency diplomas.

A Tale of Three Adults and Their Quests For Success

EASTCONN GED Program

By Suzanne Cimochofski



Heather Kropp

When Heather Kropp started the high school completion employability program Roads to Success in the fall of 2001, she had recently moved into her own apartment with her three young children after living in a homeless shelter. She was unemployed at the time but realized that she needed a high school diploma in order to find employment that would allow her to

support her family. Heather worked hard on her academics and passed the GED test in March 2002.

While at EASTCONN, Heather discovered that she loved working on computers, but also had a dream of becoming a registered nurse. Working with her teachers, she came up with a short-term plan to take the Medical Billing and Coding Certification Course at the local community college so she could enter the medical field while pursuing her nursing dream. Heather passed this course with flying colors on May 23, 2002, and obtained employment at Brooklyn Family Medicine. Heather has learned to balance school, work, and family and is earning money to support her family. In appreciation of her achievements, Heather was recognized at the 2003 CAACE Conference.

EASTCONN External Diploma Program

By Ginny Gorin



Johnnie Morris

The EDP, or External Diploma Program, is another way EASTCONN adult education students can earn a diploma. Students must compile a portfolio demonstrating both proficiency in 65 basic and life skill competencies and advanced occupational, vocational, academic, or specialized skills. It is most appropriate for mature, self-directed learners with substantial work experience or verifiable expertise, who have the

patience and persistence to redo their work until it is perfect. Students are expected to meet weekly with EDP staff to assess their week's work. They are assigned their next week's tasks, which they complete on their own. Often, students who have failed previously with the GED's timed, global, multiple-choice questions find success with the EDP. Those working more than one job also welcome its flexible scheduling. Such was the case with Johnnie Morris, a May 2003 Windham Adult Ed EDP graduate.

When Johnnie, 39, registered for last fall's semester, it was his fourth attempt to earn his GED. Each time he'd enroll, his

work schedule would change, and as a family man, Johnnie needed to work as many hours as possible. He never gave up on his desire to earn his diploma, however. "I dropped out at age 16, after falling in with the wrong crowd," he said. With his 10-plus on-and-off years in Adult Ed, Johnnie didn't hesitate when approached this fall with the suggestion he apply to the EDP Program. Once enrolled, he took off quickly, and never missed an appointment or neglected an assignment. As both he and his wife, Brenda, remarked, this time he was determined to get things done and wouldn't give up until he finished. The EDP gave Johnnie the chance to demonstrate what he'd learned both academically and through his considerable life experience, while accommodating his job and family obligations. Now that he's earned his diploma, Johnnie is hoping to use it to advance at his job, and perhaps go on to further schooling or training.

EASTCONN Credit Diploma Program

By Shelley Ratalle

At the end of her senior year when she was told that she was short two credits and would not graduate, Yaraeli "Yara" Aguirre dropped out of high school. Her son was about two months old at the time and she did not want to face summer school or a return to school in the fall. After Yara dropped out, she spent her time at home raising her son.



Yaraeli Aguirre

When a friend referred Yara to Families Together Even Start, she was excited to have the opportunity to continue her education. She came back to school so she could get her diploma and then a good job. Once her transcripts

were evaluated, it was clear that she would best fit in the Credit Diploma program and she began her work.

Yara was a student at Families Together Even Start for two years and she participated enthusiastically in all parts of the program. She was a leader among the students and took advantage of everything offered. Though other adult education students often have attendance difficulties, she only missed one day in the two years with Families Together. She did community work at Douglas Manor and, with her peers, made a presentation about being a young parent to students at the middle school. To complete her diploma, Yara earned credits in employability, computers, math and vocabulary. In addition to working on academics, she got a part time job at a doctor's office and moved into her own apartment. She finished her course work in January, 2003, and will receive her diploma this month.

Yara also began attending classes at Quinebaug Valley Community College. She said she wants to move up in the medical field, give her son a better life, and be a positive role model. She has started working at Families Together as a substitute teacher and has become an important part of the childcare team.

Yara had a word of advice for other adults who want to earn a high school degree.

"I would tell students returning to school to complete their diplomas and work hard to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. Do not give up."

TECHNOLOGY GRANTS continued from page 1

integrate technology into the writing process. Lebanon will provide customized professional development for staff using technology and literacy staff developers from EASTCONN. Data from teacher technology interviews conducted by Rebecca Pilver, EASTCONN Education Technology and Literacy Staff Developer, will provide information for the development of technology and literacy professional development.

Mansfield Middle School has developed a proposal that will provide all students and teachers with PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) in an effort to increase all students' access to digital technology, thereby reducing the "digital divide" that exists in so many communities. Mansfield has already acquired PDAs for its teachers and has started professional development activities.

Willington's grant proposal seeks to provide teachers and students with access to technology across curriculum areas. Through the acquisition of laptop computers for teachers, wireless mobile laptop computer labs for students, and SmartBoard technology in classrooms, Willington teachers and students will have access to the latest technological innovations. Willington will use data from TAGLIT (Taking a Good Look at Instructional Technology), a technology assessment tool. EASTCONN's Technology Services Director John Kalinowski and Education Technology Staff Developer Jim Huggins interviewed each teacher at Hall Memorial School to develop individualized professional development plans. Assessment data will be collected during the grant and entered into the TetraData Regional Data Warehouse for analysis.

Killingly will develop a fifth-grade technology curriculum that will provide students with the skills to gather accurate and timely information from two or more verifiable and reputable Internet sources to address a specific task. The skills include the student's ability to validate reputable Internet sites.

For more information about EASTCONN technology services, contact Jim Huggins at 860-455-0707 or jhuggins@eastconn.org or John Kalinowski at 860-455-0707 or jkalinowski@eastconn.org.

FLIGHT CURRICULUM continued from page 1

"I initially went in and co-taught with Jon. I did the historical part and Jon taught the science. I had a station wagon full of materials that I used to lug around with me —wings, story boards, kites, all kinds of models, my own and other people's, and, frankly, I had so much stuff it wouldn't even fit into a classroom. What I concluded was that all of this could be on videotape. That coincided with the realization that the Wright brothers' celebration was coming up in 2003 and, therefore, why not tie it all together and do a historical presentation in the context of the invention of flight, with science, of course, as the bedrock."

Hand had already been teaching the unit at Mansfield Middle School. "I tried it as a spring unit originally, then I concluded it was so good and so much fun, that it was better to start the year with it," said Hand.

Schimmel and Hand continued to improve the curriculum using the writing support of several science teachers and the aeronautical physics expertise of Art Ellis, Science Curator at the Eli Whitney Museum in New Haven.

"My job was to get the science right," said Ellis. "Just as Wilbur and Orville Wright argued incessantly, Jon [Hand] and I go back and forth on each point – both big and small – making sure that both the science and the pedagogy are 'Wright!'"

The curriculum was endorsed by the Dayton, Ohio Inventing Flight Committee, which is organizing a centennial Wright celebration. AIT (Agency for Instructional Technology), a non-profit developer of education media, produced the curriculum kit, which includes a Teacher's Guide, instructional videos, a DVD resource disk, student worksheets and an interactive Website. The curriculum is activity-based, inquiry-driven and follows national and state educational standards.

The cost is about \$305. Schimmel and his collaborators receive no royalties.

For more information about *Inventing Flight*, contact Gordon Schimmel at mboesupt@mansfieldct.org, Jon Hand at handj@mansfieldct.org, or Art Ellis at ae@eliwhitney.org. Go to www.eastconn.org to find links to the curriculum and the centennial celebrations, including www.inventingflightschools.org and www.ait.net.



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

Interdistrict Programs Update 2003



This pull-out insert gives a brief overview of 2002-03 EASTCONN interdistrict projects.

For the past two years, EASTCONN has been administering nine school-year interdistrict programs funded by the Connecticut Department of Education. The Interdistricts are programs of EASTCONN, an organization dedicated to serving the educational and training needs of schools, organizations, and individuals of all ages in northeast Connecticut. Nancy Vitale, EASTCONN's Interdistrict Program Coordinator, is especially pleased with the collaboration of participating schools. "Interdistrict projects are fine-tuned at the beginning of the school year to ensure they interface with the classroom curricula of all teachers involved," said Vitale. In addition, projects are matched both to Connecticut standards and EASTCONN's Domains of Diversity—standards that allow program staff to measure student growth in the area of diversity.

Each year, culminating activities help demonstrate and celebrate student learning. "The Interdistrict projects allow for the instruction to come alive for all students," said Vitale. "Even more important is the connection that our students make with students from other districts. They learn together, shine together, and gain an understanding of who they are and how all kids are the same in one way or another."

Elementary Connections

(Andover, Bozrah, Hartford, Hebron, Marlborough, Voluntown, and Windham)

This program brought elementary schools together to engage in cooperative activities designed to encourage the development of long-term, meaningful relationships between peers from other communities. Students and teachers worked together on both curriculum-based and team-building activities. More than 440 students in grades three to five from eight schools participated in the program.



Students work together on an Elementary Connections project

For example, one team was engaged in a project in which students could choose to study a culture based on their personal background and interests. As part of their projects, the students learned about where their student pen pals lived by touring other participating school districts. The project evolved into a study of "5 Themes of Geography."

The groups compared similarities and differences based on location, place, interaction, movement and region. Subgroups created sculptures, murals and 3-D photo boards to illustrate the geography themes.

At the end of the project, the groups gave presentations at a Geography Fair in each school.

Expanding Horizons

(Colchester, Coventry, East Hartford, Killingly, Norwich, Plainfield, Putnam, Region 8, Region 11, Region 19, Windham Vocational Technical School)



Young Artists and Writers gather for a picture at the Arts Celebration

This is a multi-age, multi-district, and multi-project program. Approximately 600 students in grades two through 12 participated in a variety of different projects this past year.

For example, more than 180 high school students participated in the *Celebration of Young Artists and Writers* event this spring. Students who attend any high school in the EASTCONN region were invited to submit art or writing for a juried review. A total of one hundred forty-five students from 12 communities submitted their work. A reception was held at the Windham Arts Collaborative in March to honor the winners and to display student submissions. Collaboration between EASTCONN, the Windham Arts Collaborative, Community Arts Alive, the Visual Arts Department at Eastern Connecticut State



Student entries for the Celebration of Young Artists and Writers event



Young Storybook Project Students Pause for a Photo Op

University, and the Windham Regional Arts Council has made this possible for a second year.

In another example, the *Storybook Project* helped enrich students' existing language arts curriculum. Conflict resolution was the theme for student-written and student-illustrated storybooks guided by EASTCONN writer-in-residence, Lisa Taylor, who is described by Ray Grasso,



Ray Grasso, Principal
Coventry Grammar School

Principal of Coventry Grammar School as "a world-class writer and poet." Grasso was especially looking forward to the book celebration, as well as the *Project Adventure Day* culminating activity. "My only regret," said Grasso, "is that we didn't have more days for this program."

Faces of Culture

(Colchester, Coventry, Griswold, Killingly, Lebanon, New London, Norwich, Plainfield, Putnam, Region 8, Region 11, Region 19, Thompson, Tolland, Stafford, Windham and Woodstock)

This project brought together 250-plus high school students from 18 different communities in an interdisciplinary study of culture from several historical periods. The construction and meaning of masks in a variety of cultures was the focus of work by students. Their projects had to be approved by their teachers and connected to the writing curriculum of their school.

Students came together at various times during the year to share their research, construct masks, and visit area museums and artists' studios. Among their guest lecturers were Dr. Bartolo Roccoberton, Director of the University of Connecticut Puppetry Department, and Hau Hau, a

FACES OF CULTURE continued

visiting Chinese puppeteer. This project culminated in a public exhibition of this year's student-constructed masks.

Visit <http://www.eastconn.org/Faces/newfaces2/index.htm> to see an exciting display of student work and to find more information about this project.



Students prepare for Faces of Culture's Rhythms of Culture Symposium

Legacy Explorations

(Ashford, Brooklyn, Griswold, Norwich, Stafford, Thompson, Union and Windham)

This program connected more than 375 students from eight districts. New this year was the Union project, in which every student in the Union School District participated in a series of age-appropriate interdistrict activities.

The *MLK/Writing Project* was an expansion of activities designed two years ago in celebration of the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday. The legacy of discrimination was explored in this project on the content knowledge level, through interdistrict curriculum projects, and on the interpersonal level, through the development of relationships among the diverse group of participating students. Some of the products of this grant included an anthology of student writing, regional exhibits of student performances, and community service project publications.



Legacy Explorations grade 8 students work on constructing a bridge

MAPPs

(Ashford, Hebron, Killingly, Manchester, Scotland, Stafford, Union, Windham)

Now in its sixth year, *MAPPs (Matching Areas & People Project)* provided more than 275 third-grade students with a year-long interdisciplinary project using the concept of a sense of place as the springboard for learning about geography and multiculturalism. Other partners included the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the University of Connecticut Department of Geography and Joshua's Trust. Among the joint student activities was an orienteering experience during which they used newly acquired compass reading skills to navigate through an outdoor education venue.

MOSAIC

(Colchester, East Hartford, H.H. Ellis Regional Technical School, Killingly, Lebanon, Plainfield, Region 11, Region 19, Windham, Windham Vocational Technical School)



Each year more than 150 high school age students come together to participate in this residential diversity training program. Students explore issues of discrimination and disrespect during *MOSAIC* retreats, and learn how to build communities that support diversity, both on the personal and societal level.

A total of five leadership training workshops were held this year. Students who successfully complete training are responsible for facilitating other student groups and presenting their newly acquired skills and knowledge at future conferences.

Some students shared their new insights through poetry: "I am from Asian culture, mango fruit to green tea. Television shows of characters, I always dream to be."

Others shared their thoughts in a final roundtable presentation. Said one student, "I will use my ability to listen to other people and respect their opinions, and what they say." Many students contributed written and graphic work to the Conference Portfolio, which was displayed at the end of the conference.

Successful Journeys

(Coventry, Mansfield, Norwich, Plainfield, Windham, Woodstock)

Recognizing the challenges of transitioning from middle school to high school, this program has provided more than 300 ninth-grade students from six high schools the opportunity to develop the basic skills of goal-setting, teamwork and responsibility along with academic skills like writing in a multicultural context. In addition to participating in joint, full-day field trips, students engage in follow-up and extension activities in their classrooms, continuing their dialogue with other students through E-mail and the Web.

In addition to field trips, each team worked with a writer-in-residence on a series of joint projects including Life Timeline essays and creative writing activities. The culminating activity in May was an adventure education experience at the EASTCONN Adventure Ropes Course located in the Goodwin State Forest Conservation Center.

Student comments from the post-survey reflected the goals of the program: “. . . you met new people who had different ideas and opinions and you had to work with that,” said one student, while another said, “I met new and different people and it made me feel good because it was a great experience, especially when you can keep in touch with them in the future.”

Water, Wildlife & People

(Bozrah, Franklin, Tolland, Voluntown and Windham)

This project was developed through a partnership with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection to address issues of isolation at the middle school level using environmental studies as a facilitating backdrop.

Now finishing its eighth year, **Water, Wildlife and People (WWP)** has over the years engaged approximately 4,500-5,000 students in an interdisciplinary study of the Willimantic Watershed. Students analyze the flow of water, collect and identify invertebrates, and perform water quality tests along the watershed. In collaboration with the Pequot Museum, students have studied the cultural and historical aspects of the watershed, as well. This year, a writer-in-residence also worked with students and teachers to promote inclusiveness in the classroom through writing. A Writer’s Retreat was held in January at UConn in Storrs.

As a diversity grant, the WWP’s goal was to expose students to the concept, importance and value of diversity. The culminating activity this spring was a local aquatic field study of the relationship between people and the environment to better understand the correlation between natural diversity and ecological health. Students developed

an understanding of research skills, as well as gaining experience working with diverse groups of peers and adults

Waves of History

(East Hartford High School, Norwich Regional Vocational Technical School, Plainfield High School, Windham High School and, Windham Vocational Technical School)



Students gathered at Mystic Seaport for a program based on Voyages of America and the Sea

This program is an interdisciplinary study of literature and U.S. History. More than 300 ninth-grade students participated this year. Students began the year by creating bio-poems and collages as a way of getting to know one another. They continued to communicate by E-mail and letters to sustain relationships throughout the year.

For example, students gathered at the University of Connecticut for a day of exploring the issue of diversity. Students examined the issues of prejudice in history and their own ethnic backgrounds and ways to promote tolerance. Students also created posters titled, “What does Diversity Look Like?” Other activities allowed participants to meet students from other schools.

**For more information on
EASTCONN Interdistrict Programs,
contact Nancy Vitale at 860-455-0707
or nvitale@eastconn.org.**