

CONNECTIONS

Education News From Northeastern Connecticut

volume 37, number 1

www.eastconn.org

Fall 2016



NRP Program Director Amy Margelony, far left, posed with NRP students and a staffer during a tour of NRP's new Killingly home.

EASTCONN Clinical Day Treatment Program Moves Into Former Killingly High School

Young voices are filling the spacious halls of Killingly's former high school on Westfield Avenue, thanks to a recent move by EASTCONN's Northeast Regional Program (NRP) that has increased the program's capacity to serve students with special needs.

"This is a really positive step for NRP because it expands our ability to serve more northeastern Connecticut students closer to home," said Heather Cymbala, EASTCONN's Director of Special Education. "The proximity to students' home communities increases both their access to hometown activities and opportunities to transition them to less restrictive environments in their home schools."

Previously located in Putnam, the NRP site was too small to meet the region's demand for clinical day treatment services for students in grades K-12. EASTCONN forged a partnership with Killingly, and the former high school was selected as the new site.

EASTCONN and Killingly staff worked all summer to prepare the building for the first day of class in late August. The freshly painted, refurbished school offered ample room for students and staff, who now have more classroom and learning spaces, updated lighting, a big gym, and access to a playground and playing fields. NRP has grown from 36 to 70 students, with 50 staff.

See **NRP**, back page

EASTCONN, EWIB & American Job Center Partner to Support Windham's Job-Seekers



EASTCONN's Adult Programs has joined the American Job Center at a new site in Willimantic, improving access to employment, training and education services for adults in eastern Connecticut.

EASTCONN's Adult Programs has moved to a new site in Willimantic, co-locating for the first time with American Job Center East to create easy, one-stop access to employment, training and education services for adults across the region.

"EASTCONN, the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board and the American Job Center East are joining forces to help adults realize their education dreams and employment potential," said Rich Tariff, EASTCONN's Director of Adult Programs. "This blending of employment and education resources in the same building is a first in our region."

"EWIB is really pleased with the outcome of the American Job Center planning in Willimantic," said John Beaugard, the Executive Director of the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB).

"It is the result of a longstanding agency partnership between EASTCONN and EWIB, a great community effort to function as a team, and the will, by those involved, to turn it into a positive outcome. The beneficiary will be the greater Windham community and the thousands of regional residents that seek services from the

See **AMERICAN JOB CENTER**, page 2

Center on an annual basis,” Beaugard said.

In 2015, as a cost-saving measure, the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) announced it would close half of its 12 American Job Centers statewide, Willimantic among them. The CTDOL is a close partner of EWIB, which administers the American Job Centers.

“Given the geographic distance to the nearest Job Center and the public transportation challenges, eliminating the Job Center would have been devastating for the community,” Beaugard said. “The Willimantic Job Center traditionally has received more than 14,000 visits annually from job-seekers requesting support for employment searches and/or for building the skills necessary to advance their careers. The Job Center has been vital to the community and their job-seekers.”

American Job Centers provide employment services, a career resource library, job-related workshops and referrals, veteran employment services, computer access, individual guidance and support, as well as connections to human services agencies and on-site recruitment opportunities for businesses.

EASTCONN’s free Adult Program offerings mesh seamlessly with Job Center services, Tariff said, noting that EASTCONN offers free classes in high school completion (like GED and Spanish GED), employment skills and training, and classes in U.S. citizenship and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL), among other support services.

“So many unemployed and under-employed adults in our region lack the basic skills they need to meet the demands of today’s employers, or to obtain the jobs they want,” said Tariff. “This on-site collaboration will make it easier for them to connect with resources that will help them succeed.”

The offices at Tyler Square comprise more than 10,000 square feet, with nine freshly wired, painted and carpeted classrooms that include Internet-enabled computers for adult students and computer stations. There are 20 offices for student-advisor and case management meetings, and plenty of parking, said Kristin Hempel, EASTCONN’s Associate Director of Adult Programs.

“Fortunately for area residents, this goes well beyond a physical co-location and is representative of the integrated workforce development ‘system’ that partners have been working on in eastern Connecticut,” said Beaugard.

“The connection between employment and education has never been more important,” he continued, “and we’ve just made it easier for our residents to access both in the same building.”

Tariff said that the co-location also aligns with the Connecticut MORE Commission’s objective of creating regional partnerships to maximize resources.

“We are merging resources, sharing rent, saving facility costs, and creating easier access to services for adults — and that benefits not only our clients, but state and local taxpayers,” said Tariff. “Everyone wins.”

“The new Willimantic center . . . is fortunate to have such a great partner in EASTCONN, who saw the potential for this new site,” said Beaugard. “EWIB is thankful to CTDOL and EASTCONN for making this happen.”

Learn more about the Tyler Square services by contacting Rich Tariff at rtariff@eastconn.org, or by calling 860-455-1601.

EASTCONN Connections

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

Assistant: Cindy Laurendeau ~ claurendeau@eastconn.org

EASTCONN Administration

Paula M. Colen, Executive Director

EASTCONN, 376 Hartford Turnpike, Hampton, CT 06247

860-455-0707 Fax: 860-455-0691

Educators Invited to Leadership Symposium w/Dr. Drago-Severson



Dr. Drago-Severson

School administrators and teacher-leaders are invited to attend a Leadership Symposium with Columbia University Teachers College professor and author Dr. Ellie Drago-Severson on Tues., Nov. 15, 2016, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at EASTCONN’s Conference Center, 376 Hartford Turnpike (Route 6), Hampton.

Drago-Severson will present “Leading for Adult Development: Effective Strategies for Supporting Capacity-Building in Schools, Districts and Organizations.”

Educators will explore the challenges that practicing and aspiring school leaders and principals face in education today, with a focus on approaches to giving and receiving feedback, as well as building cultures that support individual and group growth, reflection and transformation.

“Research shows that if we support adult learning in authentic ways, student learning will increase,” Drago-Severson said. “The question is, how do we do that? I work with superintendents, principals, assistant principals, teachers and teacher-leaders to transform their systems.”

Drago-Severson is a professor of Education Leadership and Adult Learning and Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University. Learn more about Drago-Severson at <https://dragoseverson.wordpress.com>.

The first 25 people to register will receive a free copy of Drago-Severson’s book, *Leading Adult Learning: Supporting Adult Development in Our Schools*.

Registration fee (\$150) includes breakfast and lunch. Register by Nov. 8, 2016. Individuals register at www.eastconn.org/dragoseverson.

District teams of 3 or more, contact phanlon@eastconn.org, to get a discounted \$99 per-person rate.



400 CT Students Benefit from Summer Employment Program

EASTCONN’s 2016 Summer Youth Employment and Training Program was able to connect 400 Connecticut students with minimum-wage jobs this summer, at 148 work sites in 21 towns up and down the state’s eastern corridor. Although the program ended in August, many students did such a great job that their employers asked them to stay on. Participants were ages 14 to 21. The program was made possible by funding from the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB). Left, one student worked at TJ Maxx, preparing merchandise. Good news! TJ Maxx has asked her to continue her employment with them.

Professional Notes



Dr. Ravit R. Stein

EASTCONN's Director of Psychological and Behavioral Consultation Services, Ravit Stein, Ph.D., BCBA-D, has been named "Model School Psychology Intern Field Supervisor" by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The award recognizes the high quality of Stein's field supervision of psychology interns, and its "significant impact" on the profession.



Adult Programs' Kristin Hempel in D.C. to Advocate for Funding



Kristin Hempel, left, met with Congressman Joe Courtney.

EASTCONN Associate Director of Adult Programs Kristin Hempel recently traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with Connecticut's Congressional representatives and to advocate for adult basic education funding. Hempel, who is a member of the national Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) Public Policy Committee, went to D.C. with 50 COABE colleagues from across the country, who also lobbied their individual state representatives.

Hempel met with Connecticut's Congressional delegation to lobby for adult basic education funding, and, in particular, for full funding of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). WIOA legislation funds adult education programs that provide employment and career pathways for the unemployed and under-employed.

Hempel met with Rep. Joe Courtney and aides of Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Sen. Chris Murphy and Rep. Rosa DeLauro.

"I advocated not only for the full funding of WIOA, but also shared news of the exciting work we are doing in Connecticut at large, and the EASTCONN region in particular," said Hempel. "The meetings were overwhelmingly positive, people were engaged, they asked meaningful questions, and they were eager to continue helping us provide educational and employment training opportunities that help adults find financially sustainable jobs and careers that bring growth to our communities."

Learn more from Kristin Hempel, khempel@eastconn.org.

EASTCONN's Center for Educational Leadership Enters 3rd Year of Supporting School Leaders

Now in its third year of supporting the region's school leaders, EASTCONN's Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) continues to grow as it helps educators coordinate new initiatives, advance their professional practice and improve student outcomes.

EASTCONN established the CEL in 2014, in response to the increasing demands being placed on school leaders. The Center was designed to help them build sustainable, district-wide systems that embed effective, distributed-leadership systems in programs and schools ranging from early childhood to grade 12.

And now, the CEL has named a new Director: Diane Dugas.

"We're very pleased that Diane has joined CEL and the EASTCONN team," said Scott Nierendorf, EASTCONN's Director of Teaching and Learning. "Her knowledge, experience and engaging interpersonal style make her a great choice for advancing the goals of CEL, as we work to support our region's education leaders."

"I'm proud to be part of CEL's mission, and am very excited about working with the region's school leaders," said Dugas, a respected, longtime Connecticut educator. "I look forward to continuing to help them connect, network, learn and share as we collaborate to improve student outcomes."

Backed by years of experience, Dugas's thoughtful coaching style sparks collegial dialogue that moves action plans forward.

"We need to create space for candid exchanges," Dugas said. "That's when we get the work done. Then the challenge of leadership is to work through the forest of initiatives to find what is meaningful and sustainable ... and return to the heart of why we're here in the first place, which is to put students first."

The CEL provides customized, on-site and/or remote access to its professional learning options. CEL-led communities of practice and embedded coaching help school leaders with: aligning their practice through strategic planning; leadership coaching; professional development; educator evaluation; building school philosophy, policy, practice and structures; and with non-instructional needs, like creating strong school-community connections.



The CEL's Diane Dugas

"Diane, who has held a variety of district positions, from superintendent to principal to special education teacher, is perfectly positioned to continue the work of EASTCONN's CEL," said Nierendorf.

Dugas holds a sixth-year and an Executive Leadership Program certificate from UCONN. She also has a master's in special education and a bachelor's in elementary and special education. She's an education consultant for numerous state agencies and organizations.

Other EASTCONN education specialists working with the CEL include Mary Anne Butler, Ray Grasso, Linda Kauffman and EASTCONN's Director of Early Childhood Initiatives, Diane Gozembera. CEL's former director, Amy Drowne, left the CEL in June. "Ultimately, our goal is to help northeastern Connecticut school leaders find joy and satisfaction and inspiration in their work," Dugas said.

Learn more about the work of EASTCONN's CEL by contacting Diane Dugas at ddugas@eastconn.org.

New School Climate Survey Tool Streamlines, Simplifies Process

I learn well when:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No answer
I am working on projects or research	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
The teacher is leading a discussion with the whole class	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
I am working in a small group	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
I am working by myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				

Above, a screen shot of a Safe School Climate Survey question shows the responses from which high school students can choose.

In order to relieve school districts of the burden of setting up, analyzing and reporting the results of state-mandated Safe School Climate Surveys, EASTCONN's Technology Solutions has streamlined an online survey tool that simplifies and speeds up the process.

"We've modified the online Climate Survey engine, which contains state-mandated questions, and made it possible for districts to customize it to their specific needs," said EASTCONN's Linda Brock, EASTCONN's Student Information Specialist.

"We've also improved the lead time for survey set-ups, reducing it from two weeks to one day. The turn-around time, once the survey is administered by the school, has changed from two weeks to a couple of days, depending on the size of the district and when the survey is administered," Brock said. "That's a huge plus for districts."

Once the climate survey is complete, EASTCONN provides automated analysis, along with easy-to-understand graphs, which simplify districts' task of sharing and using survey results, Brock said. EASTCONN also prepares a report that charts the results, along with a basic set of statistics related to the raw data.

"It's a much less cumbersome process now, and, as a result, it's

also less expensive," said EASTCONN's Director of Technology Solutions, Andrew DePalma.

Surveys are designed to be age-appropriate. For example, the parents' and high school surveys answer ranges are more complex than the surveys for grades K-3. Staff surveys are dynamic.

In 2011, Connecticut passed a law requiring schools to adopt Safe School Climate Plans, and administer a School Climate Survey to students, parents and staff to assess "the quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of relationships in the school community between and among students and adults."

Each survey must include specific questions that address, among other things: bullying reports; investigations of complaints and related follow-up; school policies, procedures and strategies; and annual employee training. CSDE reviews and approves the plans.

Connecticut's School Climate Task Force met in September to review the 2011 School Climate legislation, and, among other things, examine other states' school climate policies and bullying laws, and the ways in which they use climate survey results to inform responses and interventions.

For more information about EASTCONN's online Safe School Climate Survey tool, contact Linda Brock at lbrock@eastconn.org.



NRP from page 1

"The partnership with EASTCONN has always been very strong and the professionalism with which they conduct themselves is very welcome," said Fran Lagace, Killingly's Director of Pupil Services. "[EASTCONN's] commitment to getting this project done on time was truly amazing ... we are excited to have begun this long term relationship to benefit our students and students from the region."

NRP Program Director Amy Margelony recently took visitors on a tour of the building. She greeted every student by name, and led surprise visits to a number of classrooms, where students were quietly engaged in activities and learning. "It's a big school, and it's very exciting to be here," Margelony said. "The space is amazing, and it's great for our kids." She described her NRP staff as "awesome."

NRP and two other highly regarded EASTCONN clinical day treatment programs, one in Plainfield (Southeast Regional Program), the other in Columbia (Educational and Vocational Center), serve northeastern Connecticut's K-12 students with social, emotional and behavioral challenges. The schools offer strong academic, vocational and behavioral support structures in traditional school settings.

"EASTCONN's commitment to continual assessment of students and providing them with an individualized learning plan is a great benefit," said Lagace. "This allows the team to support a student in achieving their goals, including transitioning back to their mainstream school. [Another] huge benefit for our students is the vocational programming component. It gets our students out into their own community to gain experience, develop relationships and gain the soft skills they will need to be successful in the next stages of their lives."

Tom Cronin, EASTCONN's Director of Student Services said that Killingly's location may also lower transportation costs for many of the 11 sending districts.

"Moving NRP into our building will have a tremendous impact on our students," said Lagace. "The array of clinical support and related services EASTCONN can provide will be of great benefit to our students. Having these services available will provide seamless supports for students, especially those in crisis."

To learn more about EASTCONN's clinical day treatment programs, contact Heather Cymbala at hcymbala@eastconn.org.