

# CONNECTIONS

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April 2003

## EASTCONN High Schools Share Resources, While Students Learn Life Skills



High school students work with their mentor measuring lumber for the greenhouse remodeling project in Brooklyn, Connecticut

Remodeling a greenhouse from A to Z is just one way EASTCONN's two high schools are converting shared resources, manpower and expertise into valuable life *and* academic experiences for the students involved.

This year, the EASTCONN staff have been meeting and working together on common planning days to strengthen their program of studies, revise written curricula and build on the performance-based instructional activities begun last year. EASTCONN's high schools are PACE Columbia in Columbia, and the Northeast Challenge School in Brooklyn.

"We keep finding more opportunities for faculty and administrators to work together because they share a common

See **SHARING RESOURCES**, page 5

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## Schools Save Big on Fuel: Bulk Buying Power is Key

Thanks to bulk purchasing power and timely price lock-in decisions, EASTCONN's Cooperative Purchasing program is saving Connecticut school districts thousands on fuel, school supplies and food products.

It's been 16 years since the EASTCONN Cooperative Purchasing program was formed. During that time it has grown to 39 members serving 139 schools purchasing over \$12 million in goods last year alone. Cooperative purchases of fuel, food, and supplies are put out to bid to 126 different vendors.

One of the more challenging aspects of managing the Cooperative Purchasing program is timing. Not unlike investing in the stock market, deciding the point at which to lock in oil prices is critical. Given the harsh winter, the strike in Venezuela, and the war in Iraq, EASTCONN's Sue Lewis, who manages the Cooperative Purchasing program, closely monitored the fluctuating price of fuel this winter. She remained in daily contact with regional suppliers.

Then, on Jan. 12, 2003, the price dipped and the decision was made to lock in fuel prices for next winter. On Jan. 12, for

See **BULK BUYING**, back page



## EASTCONN Forges New TetraData Partnership

### User-Friendly Software Handles Complex Tasks

David Calchera, Executive Director of EASTCONN, has announced a statewide partnership between the Connecticut RESC Alliance and TetraData Corporation, a national data-warehousing firm with expertise in managing educational data.

TetraData produces easy-to-use measurement and assessment software.

"Having access to a powerful but cost-effective data management tool has been important for schools for some time," said Calchera. "But with the new accountability requirements under NCLB [No Child Left Behind], it is essential. This may be the most significant statewide collaboration we've forged in the last several years."

See **TETRADATA**, page 4

# Calendar of Regional Activities



## APRIL 2003

- 1 & 8 .. Taking the Mystery Out of Creating Webpages
- 2 & 3 .. CRISS Strategies for Elementary Teachers
- 2 ..... Math Council Meeting
- 3 ..... Snooping & Slowing Down: Finding the Words/  
Telling the Story
- 4 ..... Teaching Algebraic Thinking
- 9 ..... Literacy Strategies to Improve learning in All  
Content Areas, Grades 9-12
- 9 ..... The Administrator Walkthrough
- 10 ..... Developmental Guidance Colloquium
- 10 ..... Regional Staff Development Council Meeting
- 11 ..... Using Templates to Construct Your WebQuest (3-12)
- 11 ..... URSA Meeting
- 15 ..... Literacy Strategies to Improve Comprehension in  
Math, Grades 6-8
- 16 ..... Using Inspiration Software to Create a Web-Based  
Activity
- 23 ..... Microsoft Word: Tips & Templates
- 26 ..... Tired of the Same Old Art Projects?

## MAY 2003

- 1 ..... Using Kidspiration in Your Elementary Classroom
- 1 ..... Facilitating Student Communications and Written  
Work
- 5 ..... Creating Classroom Web Pages in Word 97/2000
- 6 ..... Data-Based Decisionmaking for Improved Student  
Learning
- 6 ..... Tech Council Meeting
- 12 ..... Creating Classroom Web Pages in Word 97/2000
- 13 ..... Charts & Graphics in Microsoft Excel
- 14 ..... Regional Staff Development Council Meeting

**Note: Workshops fill up quickly. Please reserve seats early. EASTCONN workshops are subject to change without notice. Email 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).**

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# “ParaPro” Will Help Paraprofessionals Meet Tough New NCLB Standards

Demanding new academic requirements are facing paraprofessionals across the nation since the federally mandated No Child Left Behind (NCLB) initiative became law. Among those NCLB requirements is a focus on the role and qualifications of paraprofessionals who assist with instruction in Title I programs.

Now EASTCONN is offering a variety of services to help paraprofessionals meet these requirements.

According to Paula Colen, EASTCONN Deputy Executive Director, “Educational Testing Service (E.T.S.), CSDE and 19 other states collaborated in the development of *ParaPro*, an assessment instrument which meets the NCLB requirements for rigorous assessment.”

*ParaPro* is available online and at selected school testing sites. Also, in response to district requests to support paraprofessional candidates who elect the assessment route, the Connecticut Alliance of RESCs has created a menu of available services.

“This menu-approach will enable each individual to determine which service or mix of services best meets his or her individual needs,” said Colen.

The services include:

- A diagnostic test to assess areas of strength and weakness
- Instruction in strategies to overcome test anxiety
- Basic computer skills to prepare those who choose to take the test online
- Instruction in any of the content modules (reading, math, and writing), or combinations of modules
- Practice tests

As for the NCLB requirements, paraprofessionals hired since January 8, 2002, who assist with instruction in Title I programs, must meet the following requirements prior to employment:

- Attained a high school diploma or its equivalent;  
and
- Completed at least 60 credits of study at an institution of higher education; or
- Obtained an associate’s (or higher) degree; or
- Demonstrated through a formal state or local assessment knowledge of, and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics.

Paraprofessionals hired before January 8, 2002 have until 2006 to meet the requirements.

For more information about any of these paraprofessional support services, contact Paula Colen at 860-455-0707 or [pcolen@eastconn.org](mailto:pcolen@eastconn.org).

For more information on NCLB, visit the EASTCONN website at [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org), and click on NCLB in the “Spotlight on” section, for Public Law print of PL 107-110, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

## EASTCONN Collaborates with Region 19, Windham to Apply Technology Grants

EASTCONN's assistive technology team has been collaborating with Region 19 and Windham schools to help them meet goals outlined in their recently awarded assistive technology grants.

Carol Magliocco, a physical therapist and one of EASTCONN's assistive technology specialists, is working with special education staff and students at Region 19's E.O. Smith High School (a regional school comprising Ashford, Mansfield and Willington) to help students use technology to accomplish tasks in their educational plans.

For one E.O. Smith student, the challenge is finding a joystick that will provide both control of her wheelchair and access to her DynaVox, an augmentative communication device. Magliocco is collaborating on this special project with Pam Bridgeford, the EASTCONN physical therapist who provides services to students at E.O. Smith.

In Windham, Magliocco is working with grant coordinator Ann Chuk to develop an in-district interdisciplinary assistive technology team. The team will learn how to apply the SETT framework (Student, Environment, Tasks and Tools), which is national educator and consultant Joy Zabala's protocol for assessing each student's need for assistive technology. According to Chuk, SETT can be used to determine whether assistive technology is a necessary tool for achieving student educational goals. SETT is also useful for evaluating how student needs for assistive technology change over time. Chuk said she hopes to save districts both time and money by training a team to help broaden the knowledge base throughout the district.

A variety of regional training has also been available this year. In early March, Magliocco teamed with speech and language pathologist Maureen McEntee, also a member of EASTCONN's assistive technology team, to teach a workshop on meeting the needs of third- and fourth-graders struggling with print-based curricula. A capacity group of educators and related service personnel got firsthand experience on a variety of products, including *Co: Writer; Write: OutLoud; Kidspiration; Inspiration; and Clicker 4*.

Magliocco and McEntee's next workshop on May 1, 2003 will focus on facilitating communication and written expression. Participants will be able to explore *Boardmaker* and *Speaking Dynamically, Writing with Symbols* and more.

Workshop registration is online at [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org).

For more information about any assistive technology related service, contact Paul T. Rennick, Director of Student Programs, at 860-455-0707 or email at [prennick@eastconn.org](mailto:prennick@eastconn.org).



**Carol Magliocco, physical therapist and member of the EASTCONN assistive technology team**

## YAP Lets Enthusiastic Youth Volunteer at Day Kimball



**Students from the EASTCONN Young Adult Program (YAP) volunteer for work at Day Kimball Hospital one morning a week**

Every Tuesday morning, students from the EASTCONN Young Adult Program (YAP) arrive at Putnam's Day Kimball Hospital ready to work.

As hospital volunteers, they must wear name tags and abide by the hospital dress code. Upon arrival they report to their work area where they receive assignments ranging from clerical tasks to bio-lab work.

YAP serves young adults, ages 18-21, with mild to severe developmental disabilities. Students are assisted in the transition from school to work and the hospital provides an excellent work experience opportunity.

"The volunteer experience provides students with the opportunity to improve their work ethic as well as their production skills," according to Christine Johnston Lessig, who coordinates the YAP program for EASTCONN.

"In addition, students practice social skills and form new friendships."

Mary Rahaim, Director of Volunteer Services at Day Kimball, has been supervising the project since 1998 and believes it provides reciprocal benefits.

"The students are helping the hospital," Rahaim said. "They take projects from four departments and complete them. The time savings allows other staff to provide more patient contact."

Collectively, students and their job coaches provide over 400 hours of volunteer service each year.

"In addition," continued Rahaim, "they are a lot of fun."



**YAP student concentrates on his task at Day Kimball**

# Arts Magnet High School Meets Enrollment Goals

EASTCONN's regional performing arts magnet high school (Arts at the Capitol Theater, or ACT) has met its enrollment goal and will open in September as planned. A total of 72 students have been accepted to date with applications continuing to arrive, according to John Mayer, ACT principal. The school, located on Willimantic's Main Street, originally hoped for 60-80 students.

"I'm delighted with the level of interest and am looking forward to meeting students and their families at regional meetings we are planning for later this spring," said Mayer.

"Now that we know who our students are and what areas of interest they have, we can begin finalizing our program of study," continued Mayer.

All the sending schools have been contacted to begin the scheduling process. Students accepted at ACT are coming from 15 area high schools.

"We will open in September at a temporary location, and in February 2004, move into the Capitol Theater when renovations are scheduled to be completed," said Mayer.

For more information about ACT, contact John Mayer at 860-455-0707, or [jmayer@eastconn.org](mailto:jmayer@eastconn.org) or visit our weblinks at [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org), in the "Spotlight on" section.



Artist's conceptual drawing of a performance area at the Capitol Theater

# Readers Respond to Connections Survey

In February, a survey was sent to a sample of our readers and we were delighted to hear back from 74 of you. Here are the results:

## Who responded:

- 60% - LEA Administrators
- 16% - EASTCONN Employees
- 10% - Board of Education Members
- 8% - Teachers
- 6% - Public Media, Local Elected Officials, Chamber of Commerce, and CSDE

## To what extent do you read *Connections*?

- 18% - Always read
- 42% - Usually read most
- 39% - Scan and read some
- 1% - Don't usually read

## How important to you is the information in *Connections*?

- 7% - Very important
- 39% - Important
- 47% - Somewhat important
- 7% - Not important

## What topics would be of interest to you?

Most of you said that you wanted to see what other districts were doing particularly well, especially regarding educational trends, curricula, new programs, collaborative ventures, professional development, special education, and money-saving initiatives. Some respondents wanted to see more human interest stories about educators, as well as updates on federal and state grant opportunities, mandates and initiatives like NCLB.

## What would improve *Connections*?

Your comments were very encouraging. Some suggestions included making *Connections* a digital production, as well as annually summarizing the previous year's *Connections* online by concept. You wanted more stories featuring educators, the latest technology developments, curricula and program updates, program assessment tools, and opportunities for collaborations, grants, and contact with other districts. One respondent suggested that our Calendar of EASTCONN workshops include the applicable student ages.

If you did not receive a survey and would like to participate, we would love to hear from you. Please visit our website, [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org) and click on "Publications." Your comments will be very useful as we plan future editions of the newsletter.

Our sincere thanks,

Dotty Budnick  
Director of Communications

Teddie Sleight  
*Connections* Editor

## TETRADATA continued from page 1

EASTCONN is one of six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) in the state of Connecticut that make up the RESC Alliance.

"The software is designed to collect real-time data and to perform sophisticated analysis of multivariate data such as student demographics, financial information, test scores, attendance, discipline and more," said Donnie Coggins, a TetraData official. "The software supports analysis over time and cohort tracking as well as online assessments and surveys."

"This software is powerful, yet user-friendly," said Calchera. "In addition to district-wide analysis, users — including classroom teachers — will be able to use it as an instant tool to assess individual student progress. Equally important, it's affordable and the more districts we sign on, the lower the cost will be."

As of now, over 40 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) representing 50,000 students have indicated their desire to go forward with TetraData, including 21 from the EASTCONN region. All of the participating districts will meet this spring to begin the process of defining the statewide warehouse design. The program is expected to be operational by July 1, 2003.

For more information on the TetraData Project, contact David Calchera at 860-455-0707, or [dcalchera@eastconn.org](mailto:dcalchera@eastconn.org).

## SHARING RESOURCES continued from page 1

ground strengthening their core academic program,” said Paul T. Rennick, Director of Student Programs at EASTCONN.

“Like most other high schools in the state of Connecticut, staff at our two high schools are working hard to align academic program, curricula and instruction to meet state standards,” Rennick said.

Nancy Vitale, a staff developer from EASTCONN’s Teaching and Learning Division, began working with the joint faculty a year ago on a professional development initiative focused on project-based instruction.

**[Editor’s Note: View related story in the January 2002 *Connections*, by visiting [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org) and clicking on “Publications.”]**

In one joint project, staff and students from PACE Columbia and the Northeast Challenge School have been working together to remodel a greenhouse on the grounds of the Northeast Challenge School campus. Kevin Segar, science and health teacher, had his eye on the abandoned structure for several years, seeing the potential for hands-on learning. Segar’s dream became a reality when the Builder’s Association of Eastern Connecticut put carpenter Pat McAneeny in touch with the school. McAneeny offered his services at no charge and the project planning began.

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“I’ve learned how to measure, do layout, and work with tools. It’s also teaching me patience: not to get frustrated; not to give up.”

– Troy, on the greenhouse project

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Segar collaborated with colleague Vinny Cassarino, the Tech Ed teacher at PACE Columbia, in the creation of a design-and-build project that would provide students at both schools with real experience planning, estimating, budgeting, and building. In addition, the remodeled and furnished structure will have the potential for many future projects, from plant science experiments to student entrepreneurship opportunities.

McAneeny has committed to working with students every other week until the project is finished. To date, he has put in over 60 hours. McAneeny said that this is his seventh such school project and the most cooperative group yet.

“I enjoy the chance to expose students to the trades,” said McAneeny. “It’s a very good way [for students] to earn a living in an area where severe shortages are projected.”

Troy, one of the EASTCONN students working with McAneeny, was enthusiastic in his description of the project.

“I’ve learned how to measure, do layout, and work with tools,” Troy said. “It’s also teaching me patience: not to get frustrated; not to give up.”

In addition to the construction skills that the students are learning, they have an opportunity to work on teaming and other skills needed to be successful in any job setting. Eric Bryant, School Counselor and Work Study Coordinator, has been using the greenhouse project to help students work on this year’s themes of “working with others” and “dealing with conflict.” Students developed ground rules for working in the greenhouse based on behaviors that they have found to be successful while working at their job sites.

Bryant is also connecting and building on lessons learned in the Adventure Education classes that the students have each week. EASTCONN schools have tapped the expertise of colleagues Dan Rose and Francine Piela from the Teaching and Learning Division to help them turn this weekly class into a physical education course. Both are certified Project Adventure facilitators who provide a variety of experiential education programs for both students and adults. Weather permitting, they hope to try out the EASTCONN Low Ropes Adventure course this spring in the nearby Goodwin State Forest.



Student extracts salmon fry as part of the PACE Dayville Salmon Project sponsored by the Atlantic Salmon Federation

The PACE Dayville Salmon Project is another joint school project taking advantage of shared resources. The Northeast Challenge School has been participating in this project for four years and offered their extra equipment and expertise to help the K-8 students in Dayville get up-and-running.

**[Editor’s Note: For a story about the Northeast Challenge School Salmon Project, see *Connections* Newsletter, March 2001, or go to [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org) and click on “Publications.”]**

The Salmon Project is sponsored by the Atlantic Salmon Federation, a non-profit Canadian organization, dedicated to conservation and proper management of the Wild Atlantic Salmon and its habitat. It provides a service learning opportunity suitable for a variety of ages that combines math, history, geography and life sciences. In an effort to restore the Atlantic salmon runs to the Northeast, the Federation provides participating school sites with 200 salmon eggs. EASTCONN students will oversee the development of the eggs until they are ready for release in the Jeremy River in Hebron in May. The salmon will spend the next six to eight years following migration routes to the North Atlantic Ocean near Greenland before returning to the site of their original release in Hebron to spawn.

For more information about the Northeast Challenge School and PACE Dayville, contact Principal Denise Davis Resonina at 860-779-5613 or [dresonina@eastconn.org](mailto:dresonina@eastconn.org). For more information about PACE Columbia, contact Principal Anne Marie Niedzwiecki at 860-228-4317 or [aniedzwiecki@eastconn.org](mailto:aniedzwiecki@eastconn.org). For more information about the salmon project go to [www.fishfriends.net](http://www.fishfriends.net).

## BULK BUYING continued from page 1

example, #2 heating fuel was contracted at \$.8288 per gallon for 2003-2004. By Jan. 24, 2003, it had risen to \$.98 per gallon. These prices are significantly below retail prices, which were \$1.63 per gallon on Jan. 24. Last year, EASTCONN members purchased nearly 1.3 million gallons of #2 heating oil; 735,800 gallons of diesel fuel, and 102,000 gallons of unleaded gasoline.

### Interesting Fact:

The price of #2 heating fuel for the 1999-2000 school year was \$.4657/gal.

Mal Leichter, Business Manager for Lebanon Public Schools, knows the pressure of trying to provide the best product at the best price.

"I like the one-stop shopping at EASTCONN," said Leichter. "We've improved our pricing significantly. If

we were purchasing oil on our own it would be costing us 11-12 cents per gallon more. In an average winter we use 90,000 - 100,000 gallons and end the season with our tanks full. This year we've used 95,000 so far and we've got a ways to go!"

Leichter also noted the value of the staff support provided by EASTCONN.

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"I like the one-stop shopping at EASTCONN."

- Mal Leichter, Business Manager  
for Lebanon Public Schools

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"When you deal with someone like Sue Lewis, there's a real value. It's very time consuming to prepare and award bids. And when issues arise with vendors, Sue has been there to mediate."

According to Lewis, the food service managers in the cooperative are the most active group. "They probably have more at stake than anybody else. They need to provide a quality service and an appealing, nutritious product at a price that allows them to stay in business."

Ron Bogue, Food Service Director from Griswold, has been a member of the cooperative since its inception.

"Big districts could always get a good deal, but I come from a small school system. Now I have the same buying power as the big districts."

Bogue, like Lewis, attributes much of the success of the food service group to the shared leadership and expertise of the members who meet on a regular basis.

"I have learned so much, from menu-planning to knowing how to leverage vendors," said Bogue. "By maintaining our commitment to the cooperative, we've become a real power in the state. More and more people want to bid each year."

Lewis appreciates the strong commitment that members have to increasing the size of the consortium.

"We're always looking for more members. The more volume we get, the greater the savings we all share," said Lewis.

For more information about Cooperative Purchasing, contact Sue Lewis at 860-465-3160, or [slewis@eastconn.org](mailto:slewis@eastconn.org).



Sue Lewis, Manager of  
EASTCONN's Cooperative  
Purchasing Program



Go to [www.eastconn.org](http://www.eastconn.org) and click on  
No Child Left Behind in the "Spotlight  
on" box for updated information.



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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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