New Website to Help School Teams Address Chronic Absenteeism

EASTCONN’s Psychological and Behavioral Consultation division has created an innovative new website, Implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support to Improve Student Attendance. The site, supported by the RESC Alliance and developed in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines, provides schools with free, research-based resources that can help attendance teams address chronic student absenteeism and school refusal.

“Student absenteeism is a serious problem nationwide,” said EASTCONN Director of Psychological and Behavioral Services Dr. Ravit Stein, who worked with fellow EASTCONN Educational and Behavioral Consultant Dr. Erin Dunn to build content for the new site.

“Research suggests this problem affects between 5-28% of students, with a significant correlation to a host of negative outcomes, including rates of incarceration, drop-outs, poverty and reduced social functioning,” Stein said. “For example, if more

EASTCONN school psychologists Dr. Ravit Stein and Dr. Erin Dunn.

EASTCONN Marks 40th Anniversary in 2020

EASTCONN is proud to announce that 2020 marks its 40th year of serving the education needs of northeastern Connecticut’s schools and communities. Established by state statute under the leadership of its first Executive Director, David Calchera, EASTCONN was formed to create Connecticut’s 6th public, non-profit, Regional Educational Service Center.

EASTCONN’s non-profit mission was – and still is – to initiate, support and facilitate partnerships, collaborations and regional solutions that respond to the needs of all learners through exemplary programs, products and services.

Under Calchera’s leadership, EASTCONN’s collaborative approach and entrepreneurial spirit enabled its staff to provide the quality education programs and services needed by the 33 towns and 36 districts that comprise EASTCONN’s region.

The new agency started out as a $2 million special education cooperative, but grew rapidly as it strove to meet the region’s increasing demand for mandated and educational programming and services. Within a matter of years, EASTCONN had become a well-established, multi-service agency, providing a range of offerings that included: professional learning for educators; special education programs; transportation; early childhood programs and coaching; magnet high schools; technology and assistive technology services; adult education programs; organi-
than 5% of your students are not in your building, you have a Tier 1 issue.”

“A major factor impacting the effectiveness of attendance teams is their ability to identify the needs of their specific school and provide early intervention,” said Dunn.

“Once a student has a multi-year pattern of chronic absenteeism, our likelihood of improving attendance is significantly reduced,” she said. “As a result, one of the resources we provide on our website is a way for schools to streamline PowerSchool reports in order to generate, track and analyze the attendance data most critical to outcomes.”

Stein and her colleagues have focused on early detection data because they believe that schools could employ a systematic approach to connecting with students when they show signs of being at risk for chronic absenteeism.

“Oftentimes, school teams are not looking for patterns in their attendance data,” Stein said.

Dunn added, “We don’t see a broad continuum of interventions between a letter or phone call home and resource-intensive individualized support.”

“Using the research-based approaches and resources on the website, attendance teams can start taking advantage of existing data, which most K-12 schools are already collecting through student information systems like PowerSchool,” said Stein.

“The intervention resources we provide on this site are essentially ‘plug-and-play.’

“Once you use the data to assess the reason for school refusal, we’ve supplied the interventions, step by step, for kids who are at risk, including the materials to train and support staff, the scripts to help counselors talk to each student, and letters that can provide a home-school connection.”

“Using the research-based approaches and resources on the website, attendance teams can start taking advantage of existing data, which most K-12 schools are already collecting...

— Dr. Ravit Stein

“We have a variety of strategies that schools can use across Tiers, but one of the tools many of our partners have found helpful is the Tier 1 Self-Assessment,” said Dunn. “This tool helps schools identify ways they can improve and support attendance for all students, including those at risk.”

“These are effective systems that can be put into place to support students who may be at risk for chronic absenteeism,” Stein said. “It’s our hope that this new website will help schools and students realize better outcomes.”

To learn more, contact Dr. Ravit Stein at rstein@eastconn.org, or Dr. Erin Dunn, at edunn@eastconn.org.

**Student Attendance Website Link:**
https://sites.google.com/view/attendance-resource/home

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Kelly Francis has joined EASTCONN’s Leading and Learning division as a STEM Specialist. Francis comes to EASTCONN from Windham Public Schools, where she served as a school-based and district math coach for three years.

At EASTCONN, Francis will provide district support in a number of STEM specialty areas, including science and math curriculum, instruction, assessment and intervention; project-based learning; rigor and relevance in the classroom; STEM laboratory experiences; structures and systems to support STEM implementation; and instructional coaching.

“My passion has always been teaching STEM subjects, whether in a K-12 classroom or in a professional learning environment with my teaching peers,” said Francis.

Francis will also facilitate EASTCONN’s Science Council, which invites K-12 staff from schools in the EASTCONN region to meet with peers in a collegial, collaborative environment, where they share strategies, discuss new developments in the field and unpack state education mandates. The Science Council is free of charge.

Prior to her work in Windham, Francis taught in Virginia’s Norfolk Public Schools, where she established an innovative curriculum for math, science and history; established multiple SeaPerch Robotic programs; and presented PD for science, math and history, focused around curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Francis earned her B.A. in Elementary Education from the University of New Orleans. She attended James Madison University, where she earned a certificate in Gifted Education. Francis also holds an M.S. in Science Education, with a focus on math and science, and a post-graduate certification in Teacher Leadership. Contact Kelly Francis to learn more at kfrancis@eastconn.org, or reach her at 860-455-1508.

EASTCONN Welcomes New STEM Specialist, Kelly Francis

EASTCONN is pleased to announce that Amy Margelony has been chosen to lead EASTCONN’s K-12 Pupil Services group as its new director. Margelony assumed her new role on January 1. She had served as interim director since the departure of Eric Protulis last summer, and previously served as assistant director.

“Amy brings a rich background in special education, student advocacy and leadership to her new position,” said EASTCONN Executive Director Gary S. Mala. “I’m confident that Amy’s innovative approach, as well as her trademark energy and professionalism will continue to serve our students and staff well.”

As Pupil Services Director, Margelony oversees EASTCONN’s Psychological and Behavioral Services, Related Services (AT, OT, PT, SLP), two K-12 clinical day treatment programs, Regional Transition Services and Woodstock Academy Cooperative.

“I’m excited about having the opportunity to continue supporting our special education schools and programs,” said Margelony. “It is, and always will be, about providing excellent programming for this amazing population of students.”

Margelony joined EASTCONN in April of 2013 as program director for the Northeast Regional Program (NRP) in Danielson, one of EASTCONN’s two Clinical Day Treatment programs.

Prior to joining EASTCONN, Margelony worked in East Hartford as a fourth-grade teacher, and later as an assistant principal at East Hartford Middle School. She also began her own consulting company and worked as a special education advocate.

Margelony earned a bachelor’s in Social Work from CCSU, and both her master’s and a certification in Elementary Education from the University of Hartford. She holds a Sixth Year from UConn.

Contact Amy Margelony to learn more about EASTCONN’s K-12 Pupil Services at amargelony@eastconn.org.

Amy Margelony Named K-12 Pupil Services Director

EASTCONN Wins 7 CABE Awards in School Communications Contest

EASTCONN has won seven awards in the annual Connecticut Association of Boards of Education’s Bonnie B. Carney Awards of Excellence in Education Communications contest. EASTCONN earned first-place awards for its School-Year Calendar 2019-2020; the 2018-2019 Annual Board Update; the 2019-2020 Parent/Student Handbook for ACT, QMC and The LEAP School; the 2019-2020 EASTCONN Programs and Services brochure; and for The LEAP School’s new website at www.eastconn.org/leap.

EASTCONN also earned honorable mentions for its 2019-2020 Connections quarterly newsletter, and for its Adult Programs “Welcome!” videos in English and Spanish on EASTCONN’s website. Statewide winners were displayed at the November 2019 CABE/CAPSS Convention in Mystic, Conn.
Northeastern Connecticut has a new employee health insurance collaborative, established to help smaller school districts and municipalities control their rising insurance costs.

The Connecticut Collaborative Health Insurance Program (CT-CHIP) officially launched in July 2019 with nine members, representing 782 employees and their families (1,500 members, total). CT-CHIP’s founding partners include the boards of education in Bolton, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Columbia and Thompson; and the municipalities of Bolton, Brooklyn, Columbia and Thompson.

“The CT-CHIP collaborative is based on a fully insured, premium-based medical plan whose objective is to maximize members’ health insurance buying power,” said Kristin B. Heckt, who chairs the CT-CHIP executive board and represents Bolton Public Schools. Heckt is also Bolton’s superintendent of schools.

“By becoming part of a large health insurance collaborative, we reduce our administrative costs and derive greater control over our renewal rates,” Heckt said. CT-CHIP members also benefit from a health and wellness component.

“New, smaller towns and school districts are welcome to apply for CT-CHIP membership at any time,” said CT-CHIP Administrator Larisa Carr. She also administers the Eastern Connecticut Health Insurance Program (ECHIP), whose members are self-insured.

CT-CHIP was established as an alternative to ECHIP, the latter of which serves employees in larger Connecticut towns and districts.

ECHIP members include EASTCONN, as well as the schools and municipalities of Tolland, Putnam, Plainfield and Coventry.

Both ECHIP and CT-CHIP were made possible after the State of Connecticut passed enabling legislation in 2010.

EASTCONN’s Marketing and Communications staff worked with ECHIP and CT-CHIP staff to create marketing materials and build their respective web sites. EASTCONN hosts both websites, which are ADA compliant.

To learn more, visit www.ct-chip.org, or contact CT-CHIP Administrator Larisa Carr at lcarr@ct-chip.org.

EASTCONN’s Related Services group, which includes assistive technology, occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech-language pathology professionals, has moved its home base to EASTCONN’s Conference Center and Administrative Offices at 376 Hartford Turnpike (Route 6), Hampton.

Until October, the Related Services group was housed in EASTCONN’s Commerce Drive facility in Columbia.

“We had some great, unused spaces in Hampton that we knew would be perfect for this group of providers and our Assistive Technology (AT) Lending Library,” said Related Services and Assistive Technology Coordinator Carol Magliocco, Ph.D., PT, ATP.

“In addition, Hampton was more centrally located in the EASTCONN region, which makes it easier for district staff to access the Lending Library. It also saves time when we travel to districts that request our services,” she said.

School districts that are members of EASTCONN’s AT and AAC Consortium have full access to the AT Lending Library, which houses a collection of AT and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices. Consortium members may borrow and test a range of assistive devices with their students with special needs, ensuring that the borrowed tools are a good match for their student – before a district purchases them.

Related Services falls under EASTCONN’s K-12 Pupil Services umbrella, the agency’s special education group, which includes the Autism Program in Columbia; two K-12 clinical day treatment programs; a Regional Transition Services program; the Woodstock Academy Cooperative; and Psychological and Behavioral Consultation Services.

To learn more, please contact EASTCONN’s Related Services and Assistive Technology Coordinator Carol Magliocco, Ph.D., PT, ATP, at cmagliocco@eastconn.org. Or, visit www.eastconn.org/at.