

# NEWS FROM THE CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Talent Office

## Welcome from Dr. Sarah Barzee, Chief Talent Officer

On behalf of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Talent Office, I would like to extend a heartfelt welcome back to all of Connecticut’s educators. The beginning of a new school year brings opportunity and promise. In what other profession do you get a fresh new beginning every year? By now, educators and students have returned to their schools refreshed and filled with anticipation of the potential the year ahead brings.

The CSDE Talent Office team also looks to the new year with ongoing commitment to continuous improvement to support Connecticut educators. By providing guidance, information, tools and resources we seek to help all educator to continuously develop their practice and performance.

Last year, we launched the first edition of the Talent Office Newsletter in order to keep teachers and administrators informed about the initiatives from the Talent Office. We are pleased to introduce you to two new members of the Talent Office: Johnna Hunt, a principal from Naugatuck Public Schools, who will serve as a principal-in-residence for the 2014–15 school year, and Christopher Todd, a social studies teacher from Windsor Public Schools, who will serve as a teacher-leader-in-residence for the 2014–15 school year. We also welcome back Christopher Poulos, a world language teacher from Region 9, who will continue in his role as teacher-leader-in-residence for a second year. Engaging practicing educators from the field helps to inform our work by bringing their perspectives and voices to the table as we strive to implement a coherent system for evaluating and supporting all educators. At the same time, teacher and principal leaders in residence have the opportunity to clarify the rationale for various policy initiatives and explain the benefits that they offer to colleagues, students and parents. Read on to learn more about their backgrounds and what they hope to contribute to the Department and to the field over the coming year.

Other features in this issue include an update on professional learning, a TEAM update from the perspective of a teacher, the Implementation Spotlight on Amity Regional School District No. 5 and its success with complementary observers, guidance on the permissive pilot for the evaluation of central office administrators, an update from the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification, and resources and links.

Best wishes for the start to a successful and productive year.

*Sarah Barzee*

## IN THIS ISSUE:

The Talent Office Welcomes Three Educators-in-Residence.....	2
Implementation Spotlight: Amity Regional School District 5 Implements the Use of Complementary Observers.....	3
What’s New in Educator Evaluation and Support .....	5
Professional Learning .....	6
Central Office Administrators and Permissive Pilots.....	7
New Resources for Administrators .....	7
Connecticut Teachers of the Year Explore Educational Opportunities at Mystic Seaport .....	8
Advice from a TEAM Grad — A Welcome Letter .....	10
Certification Alert: Important Statutory Change — New Grade Levels for Elementary Education Endorsement.....	11

## THE TALENT OFFICE WELCOMES THREE EDUCATORS-IN-RESIDENCE TO OUR TEAM



**Christopher Todd**, a finalist for Connecticut's 2014 Teacher of the Year, splits his time between teaching government at Windsor High School and serving as a Teacher-Leader-in-Residence with the Talent Office at the Connecticut Department of Education.

In his 11th year at Windsor High School, Chris has taught a wide variety of social studies courses at multiple levels, including both AP and alternative education.

Chris completed his BA in history and his teacher education program at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and moved back to Connecticut in 2003 to begin his teaching career. He earned his MA in public policy from Trinity College and is currently completing coursework towards his MA in curriculum and instruction through UConn's Neag School of Education. Chris was the 2013 Connecticut James Madison Memorial Fellow and was the 2013 Connecticut DAR (National Society Daughters of the American Revolution) Outstanding Teacher of American History.

Since beginning his career at Windsor, Chris has been an active member of the school community. He has been involved in a wide range of district-level, teacher-leadership opportunities, including curriculum development, coaching swimming and diving, serving on buildingwide and districtwide committees, and assisting the department chair as the social studies department liaison. Chris is actively engaged in new teacher development, working first as a BEST-trained mentor and currently as a TEAM-trained mentor. Chris is a Connecticut Education Association member and an advocate for both public education and the elevation of the teaching profession.

*"No profession has a greater impact on the trajectory of our society than education. I hope that this year I will have the opportunity to bring increased teacher voice and input to CSDE initiatives and policy endeavors and, in turn, find ways to support their efforts to elevate the profession for both practitioners and students across the state."*

— Christopher Todd



**Johnna Hunt** joins the Talent Office as a Principal-in-Residence for the 2014–15 school year. She is the principal of Hillside Intermediate School in Naugatuck and was recently named the 2014 Connecticut Middle School Principal of the

Year. Johnna is a collaborative leader with five years of administrative experience leading successful school change.

Johnna began her administrative career in 2009. At that time, her school was the lowest performing school in Naugatuck. During her tenure, Johnna has worked with faculty and staff to create a professional learning community that encourages an interdependent team approach while focusing on data results, effective teaching strategies, and systematic interventions to increase student learning.

Since becoming principal of Hillside Intermediate School, Johnna and her staff have consistently improved student CMT scores, moving the school from the lowest performing in the district in 2010 to the highest performing school in 2013. In 2011, Hillside Intermediate School was ranked third in the state by CONNCan for performance gains by a middle school. Most recently, Hillside earned the ranking of a Progressive School under Connecticut's new accountability system.

*"I am thrilled to have to opportunity to work this year as a Principal-in-Residence in the State Department of Education's Talent Office. I look forward to learning and growing as an educator, as well as being able to share the principal's voice at the state level. It is my hope that this collaboration will help strengthen the relationship between state- and school-level educators to better serve the needs of all our students."*

— Johnna Hunt

Continued on page 5

## IMPLEMENTATION SPOTLIGHT

### AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5 IMPLEMENTS THE USE OF COMPLEMENTARY OBSERVERS

*“Observing my peers has provided me the opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in my instruction. As peers, the verbal feedback becomes an open dialogue to discuss strengths and weakness in a nonjudgmental setting. Observing high-quality instruction provides professional development that immediately impacts my teaching skills.”*

— Angelo Amato, Secondary Physics Teacher

The Amity Regional School District No. 5 Teacher/Administrator Evaluation Committee took a bold step when the team agreed to include Complementary Observers as a part of their district Teacher Evaluation and Development Model. During this first year of full implementation, the process has gone extremely well. Recently hired Superintendent Charles Dumais along with the entire administrative team fully support the process of Complementary Observers. However, no one has been more complimentary of the process than the Complementary Observers themselves. Once implemented, the informal classroom walk-throughs conducted by Complementary Observers truly has become the shining star of the evaluation process. In a time of many of changes and initiatives, teachers have built a culture of trust and reflection and strengthened their professional relationships.

The Teacher/Administrator Evaluation Committee established the criteria for the selection of Complementary Observers. An Administrative/Supervision certification (092) is not required; however, candidates are required to go through an application and approval process on a per-building basis. Candidates must be certified teachers who have completed five years in the Amity district and have an understanding of the culture, dynamics, and expectations for teaching and learning. All selected candidates are required to go through training provided by Dr. E. Marie McPadden, director of curriculum and staff development for Amity.

Primary evaluators for Amity teachers can be the school principal, assistant principal, and other Amity administrators who are responsible for the overall evaluation process. Primary evaluators have sole responsibility for assigning final summative ratings and must achieve proficiency on the training modules provided. Complementary Observers assist primary evaluators by conducting informal walk-through observations and providing feedback to the teachers. They are compensated at a rate of \$30 per walk-through visit. Although these informal observations are not

planned in advance, the Complementary Observers conduct the process during their unscheduled periods.

For the 2013–14 academic year, the committee decided that there would be four Complementary Observers at both Amity Middle School Orange and Amity Middle School Bethany. Nine Complementary Observers, in addition to the seven department chairs, were selected at Amity Regional High School. At the secondary level, department chairs, as a function of their current job description, are automatically Complementary Observers. A unique aspect of the Amity Regional School District No. 5 Teacher Education and Development Model is that each teacher is able to reject one individual at the middle school or two at the high school (but not a department chair) from the list of potential Complementary Observers. The committee wanted to be sure that the process would be fair and equitable for all teachers.

To ensure that informal observations are conducted with consistency and fidelity, Complementary Observers were trained to follow the Amity walk-through protocol. During the training, Complementary Observers reviewed video clips of lessons, practiced tagging evidence to the appropriate domain and indicators and learned to conduct post-observation conferences. Within two days following an observation, the teacher and the Complementary Observer arrange a time for a brief post-conference. At the post-conference, the Complementary Observer facilitates a discussion based on a reflection question derived from written evidence gathered during the walk-through. Complementary Observers develop carefully crafted reflection questions that are not intended to be evaluative, confrontational or negative. These conversations have become the strength of the process. In his book, *Rethinking Teacher Supervision and Evaluation: How to Work Smart, Build Collaboration, and Close the Achievement Gap*, Kim Marshall indicates that, “Without dialogue and active reflection on the teacher’s part, it’s much less likely that adult learning will take place.”

*Continued on page 4*

## REFLECTIONS FROM AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5 COMPLEMENTARY OBSERVERS

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Sarah Sharkey – *Middle School Social Studies Teacher*

- Serving as a Complementary Observer provides an invaluable opportunity for professional growth, reinvigorates perspectives on teaching and learning, and builds collegiality and a sense of community in a building.

Angelo Amato – *Secondary Physics Teacher*

- Observing my peers has provided me the opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in my instruction. As peers, the verbal feedback becomes an open dialogue to discuss strengths and weakness in a nonjudgmental setting. Observing high-quality instruction provides professional development that immediately impacts my teaching skills.

Jen Bshara – *Middle School Reading Consultant*

- I thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the Complementary Observer process at AMSO. I have always liked this model for professional development purposes; I had the privilege of visiting classrooms to which I normally would not have been able, to observe various teaching styles, and to witness teacher-student interactions in multiple content areas. I thought the CO process was also very non-threatening for both parties involved. The teachers were comfortable with us observing their classes, since we were highlighting good teaching practice rather than critiquing their teaching. For the COs, we did not carry the administrative burden of rating teachers' performances. Rather, we objectively recorded our observations.

Helly Potter – *Secondary Spanish Teacher*

- The Complementary Observer role allows faculty members to engage in organic conversations about teaching and learning best practices, with a focus on improving student achievement.
- The Complementary Observer role facilitates interdepartmental curricular conversations and also strengthens our professional relationships.

Kim Cousin – *Middle School ELA Teacher*

- Complementary observations give teachers the ability to promote collegiality. In addition to administrative feedback, teachers can work together to discuss best practice.

- Participating in teacher walk-throughs has afforded unexpected opportunities. The lessons and strategies observed allow the observer to reflect on her own teaching.

Sheryl Wilder – *Middle School Social Studies Teacher*

- I have enjoyed observing different teaching styles and learning new techniques that I can incorporate in my own classroom.

Lee Ann Browett – *Secondary Social Studies Teacher*

- The Complementary Observer process encourages interdisciplinary sharing and collaboration. As a social studies teacher it was fun to leave a math class (organized in the reverse classroom model) thinking "I would love to try that in my classroom!"

- Being a Complementary Observer has given me the opportunity to see and appreciate Amity High School through a much wider lens. Overall, it has confirmed for me the strength and talent of our teachers. While I hope reflective post-observations conversations have helped me support my colleagues, they have encouraged me to reflect on my own teaching practices as well.

- In addition to sharing ideas and practices among colleagues, the Complementary Observer process allows you to gain a new appreciation for students and what their daily experiences are like as they travel from one teacher to the next.

Faith Miller – *Middle School Library Media Specialist*

- In the beginning of this process, it was imperative to establish a climate of trust between the CO and the teacher. Because this was new, no one really knew what to expect. It was important for teachers to know it wasn't evaluative in any way. I found the conversations after the informal walk-throughs to be the most professional and refreshing conversations I have had with my peers. Although the conversations were designed to be brief, many teachers wanted to continue the dialogue because they were so enthusiastic about their teaching.

**Written and submitted by Marie McPadden**



**Student Learning Goals/Objectives Handbook.** The Student Learning Objectives/Goals Handbook was revised over the summer 2014, as well as the forms for developing student learning goals/objectives. Based on feedback from the field, we reorganized the forms to represent the process as educators develop their student learning goals/objectives. While many districts are using the term SLOs for their goals, this may vary from district to district. Therefore, the

revised handbook is using the term student learning goals/objectives to represent the broader audience of educators in the state.

**Student Learning Goals/Objectives Samples.** Educators across the state were asked to share their goals/objectives with us. We now have a more comprehensive catalog of goals/objectives posted on the website. We will continue to add to these samples as more educators share their goals. If you would like to share your goals with us, please email Claudine Primack at [claudine.primack@ct.gov](mailto:claudine.primack@ct.gov). We will remove all identifying information.

**Evidence Guides.** Educators in Grades Pre-K–12 were invited to participate this summer in workgroups to develop sample evidence in their content/grade areas as a supplement to the *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching 2014*. Additionally, Student and Educator Support Specialists developed similar evidence guides as a supplement to the recently revised *CCT Rubric for Effective Service Delivery 2014*. The evidence guides provide a sampling of what an observer might hear or see in each of the content/grade specific areas. Each guide provides a snapshot of instruction in the content/grade area across a continuum of performance.

All the educators who participated in the workgroups felt that while these guides were developed as a tool to assist observers, they serve a greater purpose. They believe that this activity served as a valuable professional learning opportunity that made them reflect on their own practice. Many of the teachers said they wanted to take this activity back to their districts and facilitate their own groups to develop additional evidence examples.

We hope that the release of these evidence guides will assist observers in examining effective practice and teachers in reflecting on their performance. The guides will be revised and additional evidence will be added over the coming year. If you are using them in your district, let us know how it is going by sending your feedback via email to Claudine Primack at [claudine.primack@ct.gov](mailto:claudine.primack@ct.gov). We welcome your feedback.

## Educators-in-Residence, continued from page 2



**Christopher Poulos**, Connecticut's 2007 Teacher of the Year, is serving a second year as a Teacher-Leader-in-Residence at the Connecticut State Department of Education and teaches half time at Joel Barlow High School in Redding. Chris

is national board certified and teaches all levels of Spanish. He has also played an integral role in the development of Joel Barlow's senior capstone program and has worked as an adjunct professor of Spanish at Fairfield University.

Chris completed the University of Connecticut Administrator Preparation Program in 2007. Prior to this course of study, he attended the University of Richmond, where he had a double minor in Spanish and business administration and received a BA in leadership studies. He also spent a semester abroad through the New York University in Spain program in Madrid. Chris became certified to teach through the State of Connecticut's Alternate Route to Certification Program and

then earned his MA in the teaching of Spanish at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Chris is actively involved as a teacher-leader outside the classroom. Currently, he is a Hope Street Group National Teacher Fellow and also serves as an officer of both the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Council and the National Network of State Teachers of the Year. Chris is an AFT Public Education Advocate and a member of NEA's Expert Teacher Panel. He was a member of the inaugural Teacher-Leader Fellowship hosted by the Aspen Institute. Chris has also been invited to consult with the US Department of Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education as to how policy affects different facets of public education.

*"As a Teacher-Leader in Residence, I am honored to be able to work alongside policy leaders making decisions that impact public education while reflecting on my classroom practice and representing teachers and students at the state level."*

— Chris Poulos

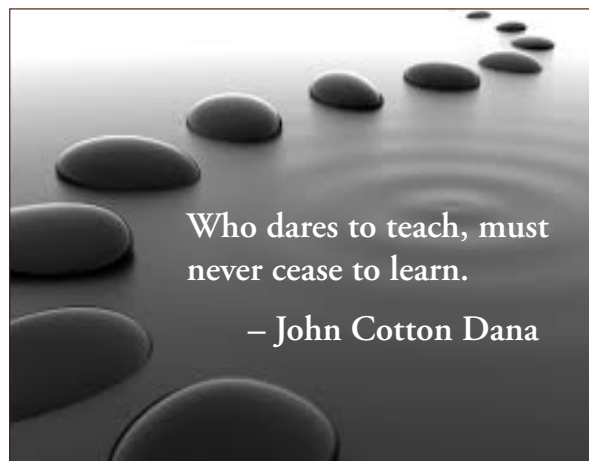
## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Educators inspire students to be lifelong learners, but educators are also lifelong learners. However, amid the busyness of daily schedules and lesson planning, educators often overlook their own professional learning needs. The traditional, one-shot, workshop-based professional development offered by districts can often be ineffective in providing sustained opportunities to learn that support educator practice and ultimately increase student achievement. For professional learning to be meaningful and truly change practices, learning must occur over time and be ongoing. Research shows that effective professional development programs require anywhere from 50 to 80 hours of instruction, practice, and coaching before educators achieve mastery (French, 1997; Banilower, 2002; Yoon et al., 2007). Like students, educators are diverse learners who bring different strengths, interests and needs into their schools and classrooms. Those differences are important to consider in developing a professional learning system that supports each and every educator.

Pursuant to Connecticut state statute 10-148a,

*(a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2013, and each school year thereafter, each certified employee shall participate in a program of professional development. Each local and regional board of education shall make available, annually, at no cost to its certified employees, a program of professional development that is not fewer than eighteen hours in length, of which preponderance is in a small group or individual instructional setting. Such program of professional development shall (1) be a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teacher and administrator effectiveness in increasing student knowledge achievement, (2) focus on refining and improving various effective teaching methods that are shared between and among educators, (3) foster collective responsibility for improved student performance, and (4) be comprised of professional learning that (A) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards, (B) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by principals, coaches, mentors, distinguished educators, as described in section 10-*

*145s, or other appropriate teachers, (C) occurs frequently on an individual basis or among groups of teachers in a job-embedded process of continuous improvement, and (D) includes a repository of best practices for teaching methods developed by educators within each school that is continuously available to such educators for comment and updating. Each program of professional development shall include professional development activities in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section CT Gen Stat § 10-148a (2013).*



To meet these requirements and assist districts in developing their systems of professional learning, it is critical that the CSDE and all educators in Connecticut share a common vision of professional learning. The CSDE, in collaboration with internal and external partners, is coordinating efforts statewide to develop and build a comprehensive professional learning system that promotes a process of ongoing professional learning and continuous improvement of educator practice. The system will build the skills and capacity of key stakeholders who will then assist and support local districts and their professional development and evaluation committees (PDEC) in implementing high quality professional learning that improves teaching and learning for all educators and their students.

As guidance and support is developed throughout the 2014–15 school year to support districts' and schools' effective systems of professional learning, the CSDE and the broad base of stakeholders are committed to focusing on the vision of effective professional learning systems that optimize educator learning and growth.

As educators, we must never stop learning, and it is through the continuous collaboration with stakeholders and educators that the CSDE strives to support effective systems of professional learning to schools and districts across the state.

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After all, professional learning for effective educators is a journey, not a destination. We look forward to developing and improving systems of professional learning to enhance that journey for all Connecticut educators.

## CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS AND PERMISSIVE PILOTS

Pursuant to the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council's (PEAC) flexibility recommendation on January 29, 2014, and the State Board of Education's adoption of the recommendation on February 6, 2014, school districts were granted an additional one year exemption for central office administrators from implementation of the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (2014) in the 2014–15 school year.

In an effort to assist districts in implementing CT's Educator Evaluation and Support system for central office administrators, the CSDE in consultation with various stakeholders has developed three resource documents that district may find helpful: 1) *Recommendations Regarding PERMISSIVE PILOT for Educator Evaluation for Administrators in Central Office Positions*; 2) *Guide to the Application of the Common Core of Leading (CCL): Connecticut School Leadership Standards in the Observation of Practice of Central Office and Other District Administrators*; and 3) *Survey Question Banks by Central Office/District role*.

Districts that are ready to implement this year are encouraged to do so. The CSDE encourages other districts to conduct a permissive pilot for the 2014–15 school year.

To assist districts in conducting permissive pilots, the [Recommendations Regarding PERMISSIVE PILOT for Educator Evaluation for Administrators in Central Office Positions](#) provides proposed recommendations to each of the four components of the evaluation and support system appropriate to the roles of central office administrators. This document can also be found on the CSDE website under [Commissioner's Back to School](#).

While the Common Core of Leading (CCL): Connecticut School Leadership Standards continues to serve as the foundation for the observation of leadership practice, the [Guide for the Application of the Common Core of Leading \(CCL\): Connecticut School Leadership Standards to the Observation of Practice of Central Office and Other District Administrators](#) has been prepared for six central office administrator roles (Special Education Leaders, Curriculum Leaders, Adult Education Leaders, Personnel Leaders, Athletic Leaders, and Business and Operations Leaders) so that the standards can be clarified by practices specific to each role.

In addition to the guide, survey question banks related to central office administrator roles provides sample questions districts might include in the surveys used to acquire stakeholder feedback for specific central office administrators.

The recommendations for the four components of administrator evaluation, the guide to the application of the CCL and the bank of survey questions were developed with input from central office administrators representing six central office roles: Special Education Leaders, Curriculum Leaders, Adult Education Leaders, Personnel Leaders, Athletic Leaders, and Business and Operations Leaders. All three of these documents can be found on the CSDE website under [Commissioner's Back to School](#).

The results of implementation during the permissive pilot in 2014–15 will be reviewed prior to the 2015–16 school year.

### New Resources for Administrators

Several new modules are available on the SEED website for administrators:

- [Administrator Evaluation Orientation](#)  
*This module, developed by The Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) in partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education, focuses on the core requirements for administrator evaluation and provides an in-depth look at each of the four components of the process.*
- [Student Learning Indicators for Administrators](#)  
*This module will address the development and implementation of educational leader-developed Student Learning Indicators.*
- [Management of Teacher-Developed Student Learning Goals/Objectives: Administrator Perspectives](#)  
*This module, developed by The Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) in partnership with the Connecticut State Department of Education, will provide administrators with strategies for managing the teacher goal setting process.*

## CONNECTICUT TEACHERS OF THE YEAR EXPLORE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AT MYSTIC SEAPORT

The Connecticut Teacher of the Year Council in partnership with Mystic Seaport, Mystic Aquarium, Voya Financial Advisors, and Learn-Zillion hosted a summer institute in August for 15 Connecticut Teachers of the Year (TOYs). The teachers participated in three full days of hands-on activities learning about maritime history and science from an interdisciplinary perspective as they explored the vast collection of artifacts in the



vaults, toured the Charles W. Morgan—the last remaining wooden whaling vessel in the world—interacted with the Mystic Seaport historical role-player, and engaged in primary source workshops. The teachers slept aboard the Joseph Conrad, climbed the rigging, learned to sing sea chanties and developed lesson plans using the exhibits as a forum for interdisciplinary investigations. Three of the participants share their experiences below:

### MYSTIC SEAPORT THROUGH THE EYES OF A TEACHER

*By Erin Scholes*

As a non-native New Englander, I had only been to Mystic twice prior to my visit with the Teachers of the Year this past August. I had been once on a family vacation when I was very young and then once the first year I moved out here with my fifth-grade students on a school trip. So I had really only seen Mystic through the eyes of a child. It was a privilege to be at Mystic for three full days and really hear from the professionals about all that Mystic has to share. This time I saw the seaport through the eyes of a historian, a storyteller, a navigator, a captain, a shipmate, and most importantly, an educator.

The staff at Mystic opened their doors to the TOYs and every experience we had not only gave me ideas for my own classroom, but made me feel truly honored as a teacher. We were given a tour of the archives vault and had a chance to work with and explore some of the artifacts in



the collection. Looking at primary sources really helped explore the history of maritime America. After viewing a show at the planetarium and hearing about all the tools the captains would use to navigate, it is clear that they were true mathematicians. Each activity from climbing the riggings, to listening to sea chanties, to having dinner at the aquarium

reminded me that as I teacher I should not just be teaching skills and standards to my students, but rather provide them with experiences to help them explore and grow.

### THE SEAPORT ROLLED OUT THE RED CARPET

*By Mike Cerrato*

This past summer, through the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Program and with the sponsorship of Mystic Seaport, the Museum of America and the Sea, I had the opportunity to attend an incredible three-day professional development workshop. Even after many previous visits to the seaport with my own children, I never realized the extent of what



is offered. Not only did I learn a great deal about what the seaport has to offer, but I also had a great time in the process.

The seaport certainly rolled out the red carpet for all the teachers that were part of this professional development session. The seaport provided lunch, breakfast and lodging aboard the Joseph Conrad, a 19th-century training ship. Our group was given tours of the grounds, building exhibits, and the ships, including the newly renovated Charles W. Morgan, which is the world's only surviving wooden whaling vessel. In addition, we were able to try our hands at wood carving, rowing boats, climbing rigging, and singing songs of the sailors. In addition, the seaport provided valuable presentations on the whaling industry in the United States, a walk-through of available online programs, and a show in the planetarium. I was most impressed with the extent of the Mystic vault, which was packed with anything and everything sea related. Many of these vault items are available online for teaching students the rich history of man's relationship with the sea. At one point we were even given the opportunity to create a museum display using real artifacts.

Finally, we were given time to create lessons for students using materials from the museum. Thanks to the effort of the LearnZillion Company, presenters guided us through the process of creating quality text-based questions and aligning those questions to state and national standards.

I feel very fortunate that I was able to attend this event with some of the best teachers that I have ever met. The hard work and dedication of the Mystic staff and corporate sponsors added to the impact of the week. Mystic Seaport, although so close to home, is often overlooked as a teaching



tool for our students. I hope that educators in our state will start to look into what is available right in our own backyard.

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING, MORE THAN A FIELD TRIP

*By Melissa Brown*

My understanding of what the Mystic Seaport had to offer expanded dramatically after my three-day, two-night stay at the whaling museum. As a high school English teacher, I made the erroneous assumption that the way I would access the resources of the seaport would be through the vehicle of *Moby Dick*. What I realized upon being there was that I was actually engaging in a life-size village of learning manipulatives that would set my imagination on fire. Regardless of our content areas, the education staff planned engaging, rewarding and rigorous activities for us to experience the artifacts housed by the museum. We curated our own exhibits and hunted for the location of items displayed in the village through collaboration and inquiry. We

climbed the riggings of the last functioning whale ship and slept aboard a boat whose primary purpose had once been to train young sailors.

Through a lecture in economics, we learned how the achievements of the whaling world were embedded in the industrial revolution. And, through the actors that researched and role played figures from 1876, we saw creative writing and a reinvigoration of the research process. Even if whaling is not a topic that I can integrate into my English class all year long, I saw how the seaport's campus made experiential learning more than a field trip for enrichment but the grounds for authentic interdisciplinary education for students of all ages.



## SUPPORTING BEGINNING TEACHERS AND MENTORS

### Advice from a TEAM Grad — A Welcome Letter

Hi, and welcome to the new school year! Hopefully, the excitement a new school year brings is starting to settle now that it is October. I certainly love fall and its beautiful shades of color as we move to winter. While soon it may seem dark and gray most days, as educators our year is illuminating — in our own professional growth and learning.

Having completed TEAM this past May, I realized my learning does not end there. TEAM instilled a strong foundation of professional practice that centers on constant learning and reflecting. I've also come to realize the best knowledge lies not only in books, but from my colleagues who shared their best practices and insights.

For those of you currently in TEAM, I offer the following tips as you juggle the demands of teaching and getting started in the program:

As you begin to develop new learning around your module goal, read only what might be relevant to



Elizabeth Misiewicz  
East Ridge Middle School,  
Ridgefield  
Seventh-Grade English

your goal to help maintain your focus. Remember to keep notes about how you developed your learning (e.g., books, journals, colleague conversations) and what you learned (e.g., specific strategies for classroom management, flexible groupings and differentiating instruction).

Consider aligning your TEAM goal with your evaluation work to make more efficient use of time and energy. The new learning you develop as part of the module process can contribute to progress on goals you have developed for both your own professional practice and student learning.

Plan what type of data you will collect to demonstrate how each part of your goal was accomplished. All of this will be helpful when it comes time to write your module reflection paper.

Look for more tips in the next issue of the Talent Office Newsletter.

Happy October!

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*Liz is a third-year, seventh-grade English teacher at East Ridge Middle School in Ridgefield. She is a 2012 graduate of New York University where she earned her MA in English education. Besides working in a variety of roles to promote TEAM and provide perspective on the new teacher experience, Liz most recently served on Governor Malloy's Common Core Implementation Task Force.*

CertAlert

# CERTIFICATION ALERT

Connecticut Educator Certification News from  
The Connecticut State Department of Education



Updated June 2013

## IMPORTANT STATUTORY CHANGE: NEW GRADE LEVELS FOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ENDORSEMENT

In accordance with Public Act 12-63, amended by Public Act 13-122 (Section 11), on or after July 1, 2013, an endorsement for elementary education will be issued for Grades 1–6 only. Therefore, for *most* new applications received on or after July 1, 2013, a new endorsement, #305, authorizing service in Grades 1–6, will be issued upon determination of eligibility. The old endorsement #013, which authorized service in Grades K–6, will no longer be available, except for completers of Connecticut programs, in limited cases. Those who already hold the endorsement will continue to hold it, as long as they do not allow their certificate to lapse.

PLEASE NOTE:

**1. Current students in Connecticut teacher preparation programs:**

Current students in Connecticut teacher preparation programs leading to recommendation for certification in elementary education, who successfully complete the program and are recommended for certification by the Connecticut college or university on or before June 30, 2017, shall be eligible for an elementary certificate for Grades K–6.

**2. Individuals coming into Connecticut from other states:**

Individuals coming into Connecticut from other states, seeking an elementary education endorsement, will receive endorsement for Grades K–6 only if the application is received AND they are determined to have been eligible before July 1, 2013. All out-of-state applications received on or after July 1, 2013, will be evaluated for eligibility for endorsement #305 elementary Grades 1–6.

**3. Connecticut educators seeking to add an endorsement in elementary education:**

Connecticut educators seeking to add an endorsement in elementary education to a valid Connecticut certificate must apply AND meet all requirements prior to July 1, 2013, to be eligible for endorsement #013 elementary Grades K–6. Those who apply and/or complete requirements on or after July 1, 2013, will be evaluated for endorsement #305 elementary Grades 1–6.

If you have questions about your specific circumstances, you may email [teacher.cert@ct.gov](mailto:teacher.cert@ct.gov).