

NEWS FROM THE CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Talent Office

Welcome from Dr. Sarah Barzee, Chief Talent Officer

Celebrating Connecticut's Excellent Educators

"One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child." — Carl Jung

We all know the power of an excellent teacher. As I sat in the audience at the Bushnell at the 2015 Connecticut Teacher of the Year Awards ceremony on December 2, 2014, I could not help but feel that power; the power of passion, commitment, joy, dedication and the love of children filled the room. Over 100 current and past Teachers of the Year from around the state packed the theater; they were joined by their families, friends and colleagues who came to celebrate their accomplishments. These exceptional teachers are passionate about their profession, strive to make learning meaningful and fun, and genuinely care about their students. On a daily basis, they challenge their students to think deeply, to take academic risks, to tackle challenging problems and to pursue their dreams. I felt so honored to share this special evening with them and proud to be an educator in Connecticut.

Governor Dannel P. Malloy, Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor and other honored guests spoke about the contributions, dedication and expertise of these great teachers. Next came Cara Quinn, Connecticut's 2015 Teacher of the Year. She fondly recalled her second-grade teacher who instilled in her a deep love of learning. She told a poignant story about her high school Spanish teacher who challenged her to push herself further when they both knew she was capable of doing more. I turned to see this teacher sitting behind me, beaming with pride as Cara spoke. It was a fitting tribute for this exceptional teacher to recognize the exceptional teachers in her life.

As you think back to your teachers, can you recall those teachers who made a difference in your life? If you were fortunate, you may have had numerous outstanding teachers who inspired you, instilled in you a love of learning and made a difference in your life.

Together we must support and cultivate teachers in each and every school and district in Connecticut.

Each year we watch as actors, actresses, musicians and sports figures are recognized for their accomplishments. Recognizing the excellence of Connecticut educators is vital, not only once a year through programs such as the Teacher of the Year Awards, but on a regular basis. When educators are recognized for their talents, efforts and expertise, it boosts their self-esteem, gives them a renewed sense of pride, inspires confidence in their teaching and also encourages other teachers. Recognizing educators for their outstanding work also brings pride and support from the teachers, students, administration, governing board and general public.

As chief talent officer, I extend heartfelt congratulations not only to Cara Quinn and the 2015 District Teachers of the Year, but also to the thousands of educators in Connecticut who make us proud to be fellow educators. The Talent Office is committed to supporting teacher development from preparation through professional practice.

Sarah Barzee

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CARA QUINN, 2015 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Cara Quinn, a sixth-grade teacher at Sunset Ridge School in East Hartford, has been named Connecticut's 2015 Teacher of the Year. Quinn was chosen from among four finalists, 15 semifinalists, and over 100 district-level Teachers of the Year. A statewide council of former Teachers of the Year and representatives from educational organizations, businesses and the community conducted the rigorous selection process, which includes review of candidate portfolios, interviews, on-site visits and observations of teaching.

Throughout her 11 years in Connecticut schools, Quinn has distinguished herself as a teacher who challenges her students to "shatter their individual glass ceilings" and to make a difference in the world. Quinn says in addition to trying to inspire her students academically, she is equally focused on her students' character development. She has spearheaded initiatives to broaden student horizons regarding college and careers. "In her classroom, Quinn not only teaches the material, she also teaches her students about their community and about their world," Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor said in a press release. "She encourages her students to give back through service and inspires them to make a difference."



Upon being recognized as the 2015 Connecticut Teacher of the Year on October 8, 2014, Quinn remarked, "Whether it be committing 26 acts of kindness to honor the victims of the Sandy Hook School tragedy, responding to current event stories by selling loom bracelets for typhoon victims, or inviting an ostracized classmate to join them at lunch, when my students see someone in need and are compelled to act, these are my proudest moments."

On December 2, 2015, all the 2015 Connecticut Teachers of the Year were honored at a reception and a ceremony at the Bushnell in Hartford.

During the coming year, Quinn will have multiple opportunities to participate in various professional learning events where she will refine her skills as a teacher leader, share her own experiences and expertise, and join other Teachers of the Year from across the country. As the Connecticut representative, Quinn will advocate for educators and engage with policy makers on a local and national level.

See full list of 2015 Connecticut District Teachers of the Year on page 3

BLOOMFIELD PRINCIPAL RECEIVES MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD

On October 9, 2014, Desi Deon Nesmith, principal of Metacomet Elementary School in Bloomfield, thought he was attending an assembly to congratulate students on their reading and writing scores. He was caught by surprise when he learned that the assembly was to present him with a 2014 Milken Educator Award along with a \$25,000 prize. Present at the ceremony were Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education, James Thompson Jr., Bloomfield superintendent, and Dr. Jane Foley, Milken Educator Awards senior vice president. Students, faculty and community members were all on hand to see the award presented to Nesmith.

Nesmith is in his fourth year as Metacomet Elementary School principal and is credited with closing the third-grade achievement gap. Third-grade scores increased by 19 percent, with reading scores currently exceeding the state average by 8.1 percent. Test scores in writing and math



Desi Nesmith, center, is overcome with emotion as he wins the Milken Family Foundation 2014 Educator Award.

are also above the state average. Nesmith attributes this to his team's practice of "developing individualized learning plans for each student and using data to make corrections throughout the year. What are we going to do to make sure every child succeeds? This is not only the mantra that Desi Deon Nesmith uses to motivate his teachers and staff at Metacomet Elementary, but it's also the driving force behind every decision he makes as the school's principal."

The Milken Educator Awards have been given annually since 1987 to exceptional educators who are furthering excellence in the nation's schools. Principals, teachers, and specialists are considered without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each state's department of education. Winners can use the \$25,000 in any way they choose. For more information, visit www.MilkenEducatorAwards.org. Nesmith is the only Connecticut educator to receive the award in 2014.

2015 CONNECTICUT DISTRICT TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

TEACHER OF THE YEAR:

Cara Quinn, East Hartford

FINALISTS:

Edward White, New Fairfield

Justin Scott Taylor, Hartford

Juliane Givoni, Region #9

SEMIFINALISTS:

Deborah Ann S. Sanders, Cromwell

Sandra Maitz Nichols, Glastonbury

Dr. Cheryl Iozzo, Greenwich

Beth A. Horler, Groton

Mary E. Nelson, Hamden

Lara L. Garber, Norwich

Sarah Kathleen Walkup, Region #15

David W. Griffith, Ridgefield

Jennifer Errico Paul, Southington

Kristina Kiely, Wallingford

DISTRICT TEACHERS OF THE YEAR:

Yvette Bailey, Ansonia

Carissa C. Lockett, ACES

Maureen Elaine Connolly, Ashford

Karen Signor Pappas, Berlin

Kerrie Payne, Bethany

Jennifer Michelle Neal, M.Ed,
Bloomfield

Daniel Matthew Ayer, Bolton

Sharon Schnare, Bozrah

Lucille Ann McFarland-Overby,
Bridgeport

Sharon Lorraine Campolo, Bristol

Lisa Marie McCormack, Brooklyn

Michelle Denise Ott, Canton

Lynn Esposti LeClaire, Cheshire

Joanne Virginia Cozzolino, Clinton

M. Lynne McCune, Colchester

Steven James Piro, Columbia

Stacey Lynn Cronk, CES

Diane Laura Blake, CTHSS

Paul L. Riley, Danbury

Christina Guerra, Derby

Gina Marie Palmbach, East Granby

Steven Peter Pernal, East Haddam

Sarah Ann Towle, East Windsor

Mary Kathryn Almeida, Enfield

Carl Shugart, Farmington

Margaret A. Bastiaanse, Granby

Nadine Gail Keane, Griswold

Kerri Michelle Angelo, Killingly

Jonathan Trumbull Foster, LEARN

Heather Lyon, Lebanon

Amanda L. Romatnick, Madison

Evan John Chekas, Manchester

Erika N. LaBella, Mansfield

Laurie Ann Labato-DiTomasso,
Meriden

Jessica Shaw Kuropat, Milford

Christine Michele Scarpati, Monroe

Robin L. Tamburrino, Montville

Andrea Foligno, New Britain

Tim F. Shortt, New Haven

Jessyca M. Campbell, New London

Connie S. Williams, New Milford

Paul M. Salonia, Newington

Heidi Prestash, North Branford

Patrick Michael Kirker,
Norwich Free Academy

William L. Rood Jr., Plainfield

Kenneth M. Fusco, Plainville

Alex Maslak, Plymouth

Patricia George, Putnam

Lisa Marie Lassen, Region #5

Darren Wyatt Ranft, Region #6

Susan Geissler, Region #10

Nina E Jeannotte, Region #11

Rebecca Evert Sinusas, Region #13

Joelle Kilcourse, Region #16

Mary Bergin Bradford, Region #18

Patricia Florence Baruzzi, Region #19

Angela D. Jones, Rocky Hill

Brian George Cleveland, Seymour

Bernadette Gonsalves Linero, Sherman

Georgia Ganem Austin, Simsbury

Lisa Reilly, Somers

Jesse Wilkinson, South Windsor

Jolene Piscetello, LCSW, Stafford

James Joseph Sapia, Stamford

Lisa A Allen, Stonington

Stacey Galasso, Stratford

Kris Remington Pryce, Suffield

Scott Howard Minnerly,
The Gilbert School

Kathleen Joyce Zitnay, Thomaston

Anthea Grotton, Tolland

Dawn Maureen Pollutro, Torrington

Susanna Lavorgna Lye, Trumbull

Nickko K Checoves,
Unified School District #1

Sean, Ryan Dudley,
Unified School District #2

Maureen Kearney, Vernon

Patricia M. Williams, Waterbury

Judy Ann White, Watertown

Brittney A. Zieller, West Hartford

Heather Pierce, Westbrook

Allison L. Pregman, Weston

Lisa Maria Almeida, Westport

Kevin Kobelski, Wethersfield

Joseph P. Tomanelli, Windham

Kathleen Sorbo Furie, Windsor

Janet Troland Discepolo, Wolcott

Shannon Sanders, Woodbridge

Valerie Jean May,
Woodstock Academy

Aaron Murray, Woodstock

*The CSDE Talent Office staff extends
their congratulations to all the 2015
Teachers of the Year.*

COMMISSIONER PRYOR MEETS QUARTERLY WITH CONNECTICUT TEACHERS

Forward by Christopher Poulos, Spanish Teacher at Joel Barlow High School, Teacher Leader in Residence, CSDE

Over the past three years, Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education, has committed to engaging teachers to discuss how the CSDE can best support educators in implementing statewide education initiatives. At these interactive, solution-oriented gatherings, Teachers of the Year from 20 different districts meet quarterly with the Commissioner, his chief officers and CSDE consultants to share their experiences and perspectives related to the various education policies and discuss the impact on their classrooms.

Following, are reflections from two of the Connecticut Teachers of the Year: Corey Nagle participated during the 2013–14 academic year, and Sarah Kate Walkup, a recently named Teacher of the Year, will participate during the 2014–15 academic year.



FINDING A VOICE AND AN EAR: FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

By Corey E. Nagle

As a teacher, I often hear the lament that teachers need more of a voice in the decisions impacting education in the classroom. While connections to legislators, boards of education and the CSDE may seem distant or tenuous, the CSDE is working diligently to make sure that teachers have a voice! Throughout the past year, I was privileged to participate in one such opportunity. As a 2013 semifinalist for state Teacher of the Year, I was able to network with other teachers and communicate directly with the Commissioner of Education and his staff during quarterly meetings designed to help the CSDE hear directly from voices in the classrooms.

These quarterly meetings are an ongoing effort to bring together the Commissioner of Education, teachers and various members of the CSDE. The meetings establish an honest dialogue between all attendees, allowing the CSDE to hear what Commissioner Pryor has called the “good, bad, and ugly” of educational efforts and initiatives and their implementation in the classroom. The effect of this open communication and dialogue, which was established in the quarterly meetings, is evident throughout our profession.

We all know that the 2013–14 school year brought much change for schools and districts across the state. In response to the changes educators faced, the quarterly meetings gave us the opportunity to discuss many of these new initiatives



REFLECTIONS ON ENGAGEMENT

By Sarah Kate Walkup

Representing my district as the Teacher of the Year and being recognized as a Connecticut semifinalist has been a tremendous honor and a humbling experience.

This distinction allows me the privilege of serving as an ambassador for those who work tirelessly to educate, inspire and care for our young people. I am grateful for the opportunity to represent and speak on behalf of the educators of Connecticut: individuals who have the heart and courage to teach.

I believe meaningful change is possible when all stakeholders listen actively and respectfully to one another. New educational policies and practices can drive positive change when the voice of those on the front lines is sought after and heard. As teachers, we have faced many challenges in recent years; however, we cannot let these shifts in practice diminish the heart we had upon entering our profession. We must seek opportunities to share our beliefs, experiences and the vision we have for our educational system and the students we teach.

When I attended the first quarterly meeting for the 2014 Connecticut semifinalists and finalists, I was eager to meet and listen to the reflections and experiences of extraordinary teachers. I was encouraged to also meet many leaders within the CSDE who were eager to gather feedback from teachers about policies and initiatives that are presently in draft form. The discourse between us was rich, purposeful and reflected student-centered thinking. I value the opportunity to share my ideas and to listen to the perspectives of other professionals in the field.

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ReVISION LEARNING PARTNERSHIP'S COLLEGIAL CALIBRATIONS

The Bureau of Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning within the CSDE Talent Office is pleased to collaborate with ReVision Learning Partnership (RVL) and the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) to support 26 school districts, including 15 Alliance Districts, in participating in RVL's Collegial Calibrations process during the 2014–15 academic year. As part of the educator evaluation and support process, Collegial Calibrations is designed to engage administrators in the ongoing calibration of evaluating educator practice. Calibration of evaluators is essential in order to strengthen their skills in the observation and analysis of educator practice so that the evaluation system produces accurate, consistent, fair and reliable results and ultimately leads to student growth.

In November 2014, 36 administrators, engaged in a three-day Train-the-Trainer Institute designed to prepare them to be a Collegial Calibrations Facilitator in their districts. The training focused on strengthening understanding of the strategic use of classroom observation and recording approaches, understanding the role of formative and summative feedback, and how to use facilitative processes to help evaluators hone their skills in collecting and analyzing evidence of educator practice. Each participant has been paired with a trained RVL/CAS coach who will support their facilitation of the Collegial Calibrations process in their respective districts.

Throughout the school year, three Communities of Practice sessions will provide targeted training for up to 100 administrators from the 26 participating districts in coaching for feedback, engaging in difficult conversations, understanding one's leadership and communication styles, and building supervisory relationships that support growth. RVL and CAS will also provide training in these districts to support data reviews, including a districtwide analysis of data available within the district's local talent management system.

The initial feedback from participants is encouraging. Many of the participants believe that the Collegial Calibrations model will provide evaluators of teachers and administrators with the support, skills and strategies they need to continue to support and enhance teaching and learning in their schools.

If you would like more information about the Collegial Calibrations process, please contact Sharon Fuller (sharon.fuller@ct.gov), Patrick Flynn (pflynn@revisionlearning.com) or Everett Lyons (elyons@casciac.org).

Responses from participants about the training:

"Improved leadership/supervisory practices will impact student achievement."

"The Supervisory continuum allows me to gauge my performance as an evaluator to identify the areas that I need to develop further."

"This definitely has helped me to reflect on myself as an evaluator."

Finding a Voice and an Ear, continued from page 4

and the impact they are having on teachers and students. We were also invited to participate in defining literacy instruction across all curricular areas, developing and reviewing resources related to the implementation of the Connecticut Core Standards, revising the CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching 2014 and giving feedback on the CT Evidence Guides.

In each discussion, Commissioner Pryor and his staff respected our perspectives and the CSDE consultants responded to our concerns, helping to clarify our understandings. For example, the CSDE education consultant for the arts clarified the definition of literacy related to education in the arts. Another example of how the CSDE responded to our feedback is the creation of this Talent Office Newsletter.

Connecticut's commitment to implementing high standards was also evident by the resources we reviewed online at www.ctcorestandards.org and by the Connecticut Dream Team that convened teachers from across the state last spring as a direct result of previous suggestions by teachers. The Connecticut Dream Team continues to have an impact on teachers and administrators across the state by offering quality learning experiences for all students.

There are many opportunities open to all teachers across the state. This experience has shown me that the CSDE is willing to listen to teachers, encourages communication and is working to expand opportunities for educator involvement that range from being involved in quarterly meetings, serving on committees and focus groups to contributing to the compilation of resources. Each stakeholder in education does have a voice. Becoming involved and engaging with the CSDE is a rewarding experience that allows for personal growth and the ability to influence education for students across Connecticut.

Reflections on Engagement, continued from page 4

Through these sessions, I hope we will each recognize the power of our own voice and the understandings we gain as we listen to and respect the beliefs and ideas of others. I hope leaders of the CSDE will use the feedback provided to fine tune the policies and initiatives shared. Most importantly, I hope we can model the active listening and mutual respect needed to effect meaningful change and progress in Connecticut schools.

IMPLEMENTATION SPOTLIGHT

JOEL BARLOW HIGH SCHOOL IMPLEMENTS PEER PRACTICE COACHES



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

By Angela Staron

For the past eight years, I have been in a book club with five other teachers from different school districts across Connecticut. We read and write, but mostly we talk about ideas over a good meal: food for thought,

body and soul. These collegial conversations often have immediate value for tomorrow's lesson, and they pay dividends by informing our ever-evolving educational philosophies. So, when the Easton-Redding-Region 9 tri-district developed a peer-coaching model as part of the new teacher evaluation plan, I recognized the opportunity for collegial conversations in our school community. The peer-coaching model is now in its second year. Peer practice coaches interview annually for the stipended position. Through our regional educational service center (RESC), our district provides training sessions to the district peer-coaches about adult learning and the importance of keeping a coaching model fluid, organic, timely, relevant and practical. At the heart of a coaching model is individual choice and voice.

Our tri-district offers teachers the opportunity to collaborate through peer review sessions structured around open-ended questions that emerge directly from the faculty. For instance, several colleagues expressed concerns about learners who struggle to sit still in the secondary setting. As adults, we have more freedom to get up and walk around during our day, but students don't always have those opportunities. Perhaps they need it more than we think. And perhaps some need to move in order to think. So I brought this topic to the other peer-coaches, and we posed the question to the faculty: are you interested in designing lessons that incorporate physical movement to increase student engagement? Twenty teachers expressed an interest in attending a peer review session.

The coaches discussed how best to organize a peer review of practice given the variation of disciplines, expertise and levels of experience. Given our topic, a PowerPoint and lecture would not be an appropriate format, and we agreed that form should mirror function. We found an article written by Eric Jensen, "Moving with the Brain in Mind" published in *Educational Leadership* (November 2000), and a post from Grant Wiggins' blog "Granted, and..." in which his daughter, Alexa, shadowed a student for two days and acknowledged the lack of physical movement in a student's day. We divided the articles into eleven excerpts and developed questions, which we set up as stations around the room. As the teachers arrived, they self-selected into groups, stopping at the stations that interested them, and discussed the issues. As they moved from station to station, they wrote down their ideas and questions along with practical strategies.

The review focused on both philosophy and practicality and raised our awareness about an important topic. Moreover, teachers said they enjoyed the opportunity to "just talk to each other." Equally important were the conversations that continued over the following days. Teachers shared ways they were incorporating movement into their lesson. One teacher was now beginning his health class with a morning stretch, another teacher moved the "front" of the room to the "back" of the room by turning the tables around, and a world language teacher posted QR codes on the walls to direct student learning. The session generated a lot of good discussion.

The guiding principle is to listen to the faculty and to provide opportunities for focused collegial conversation in whatever form that may take. I am looking forward to our next session: What do grades really mean?

Angela Staron is an English teacher/peer practice coach at Joel Barlow High School in Redding, CT



CCT Rubric for Effective Service Delivery 2014 — The CSDE, in partnership with Student and Educator Support Specialists (SESS) from around the state, revised the CCT Rubric for Effective Service Delivery 2014 for use with some SESS educators/service providers. In early October 2014, this new and improved rubric was released for districts to consider for use in the observation of service providers. This rubric was purposefully developed as a companion to the CCT

Rubric for Effective Teaching 2014 and parallels its structure and format to illustrate the common characteristics of effective practice across a variety of educators in the service of children.

SESS educators/service providers are those individuals who, by the nature of their job description, do not have traditional classroom assignments, but serve a “caseload” of students, staff and/or families. The CCT Rubric for Effective Service Delivery 2014 is available as an option for all districts to consider as part of a district’s evaluation and support plan. The established district Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) could consider the rubric as part of the discussion about educator roles and responsibilities and appropriate observation frameworks.

Specifically, school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, school social workers and comprehensive school counselors may find this version most appropriate. However, it may be appropriate to consider this rubric for other educators in a school that have unique assignments and responsibilities (e.g., Board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA), home-school family liaison, etc.).

CT Evidence Guides — Educators can find the newly developed CT Evidence Guides on the CT Educator Evaluation and Support website for the following content/service areas: English language arts, math, social studies, science, library media, art, music, school counselors, school psychologists, social workers and speech and language pathologists. An in-person introduction to the CT Evidence Guides was offered by each RESC in November and December. An online module on the evidence guides will be available later this month. We are very interested in feedback on the evidence guides and how they are being used. Please use this link to let us know your thoughts and how people are using these guides: [Feedback on CT Evidence Guides](#).



EMPOWERED TO LEAD SYMPOSIUM

Grow the Profession: Cultivating Collective Capacity

Wednesday, March 18, 2015
8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Crowne Plaza, Cromwell, CT

This one-day event, sponsored by the CT Teacher of the Year Council, is designed to provide an opportunity for teacher-leaders, administrators and other educators to harness the power of educational leadership in our schools, districts, state and nation. The symposium will include interactive morning sessions focused on nurturing our internal capacity to grow our profession and empower ourselves as educational leaders. A series of solution-oriented roundtable discussions focused on leadership development, advocacy and professional learning will conclude this exciting and transformative event.

Detailed information and a link to the event registration website can be found at:
<http://empowered.ctserc.com>.

USING YOUR DATA MANAGEMENT PLATFORM TO INFORM PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

There are multiple ways for educators to use their own data from the educator evaluation and support process to inform a professional learning plan that is personalized and based on individual needs and growth. According to section 3.4 of the Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation, each local education agency (LEA)-approved educator evaluation and support plan must articulate how the LEA plans to provide professional learning opportunities for educators. Throughout the year, the data gathered from student learning results, observations of performance and practice, and the results of stakeholder feedback are a rich source of information that can be used for goal-setting, self-assessment and summative review, and that can clearly inform personal and/or group professional learning and growth opportunities.

How does an educator begin to create a professional learning plan using the data management platform resources based on personal or shared goals and performance and practice data?

The types of professional development resources available through most data management platforms are specifically designed to streamline the data teachers have already provided and collect throughout the year. In most cases, using the data management platform allows educators to create an electronic portfolio of individualized professional development resources that can be used to inform their professional learning and growth opportunities.

While there are many data management platforms being used throughout the state, below is an overview of a sample of professional development resources from three of the data management platforms used in Connecticut: **BloomBoard**, **My Learning Plan** and **Teachscape**. The brief descriptions that follow explain specific professional development resources for each of these data management platforms and include information on how to use and/or obtain more detailed information within the specific data management platform. Keep in mind that some of the data management systems allow for customized services depending on the LEA, so be sure to touch base with your LEA data manager to inquire about and confirm the availability of specific resources.

THE BLOOMBOARD RESOURCE LIBRARY



There are two ways to log into the BloomBoard platform depending on whether your LEA is using the *Resource Library* exclusively or the *Observation Tools*. Users in LEAs that use only the BloomBoard *Resource Library* and do not use the Observation Tools will access the library by logging into the BloomBoard application. Please use the [sign in to BloomBoard page](#) for directions on how to sign in if your LEA has access to the BloomBoard *Resource Library* only.

The majority of Connecticut BloomBoard educators are using both the *Observation Tools* and the *Resource Library*. The *Resource Library* can be accessed by simply selecting the *Recommended Learning Opportunities* link at the top right section of the home screen after logging in through the BloomBoard login page (see Figure 1).

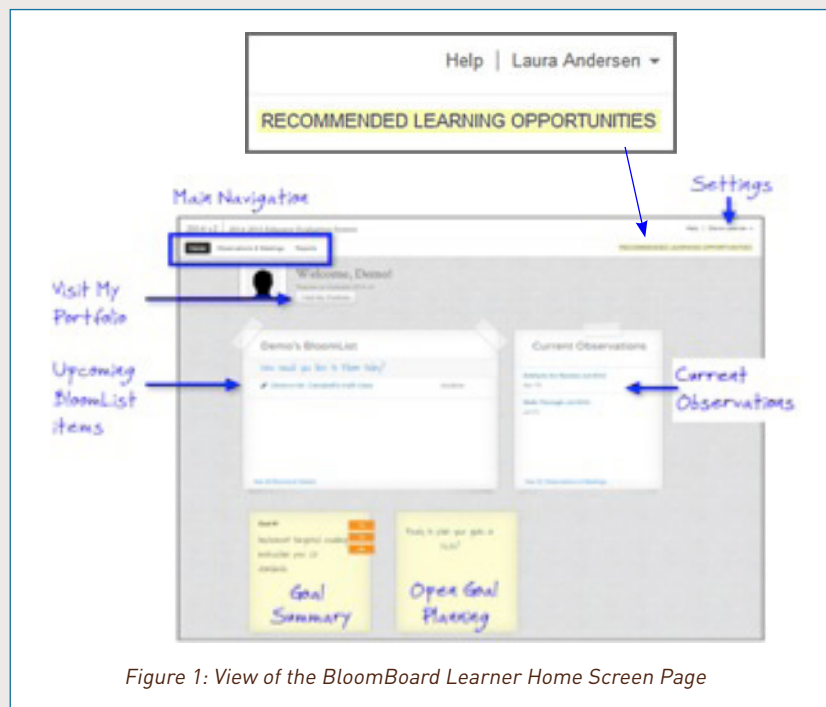


Figure 1: View of the BloomBoard Learner Home Screen Page

After logging in to the **Resource Library**, a landing page opens, displaying a recommended resource to get you started. Click the blue *Explore BloomBoard Resources* button in the upper right corner to continue to the library (see Figure 2).

The BloomBoard *Resource Library* opens in its own tab, giving the user access to resources in a variety of media. To begin browsing the content, scroll through the pages. You can maximize your results by using the search tools. For information about using more advanced searching and filtering options, visit the [BloomBoard Support page](#) on how to search for *Professional Learning Resources*. In addition, if you would like to explore sug-

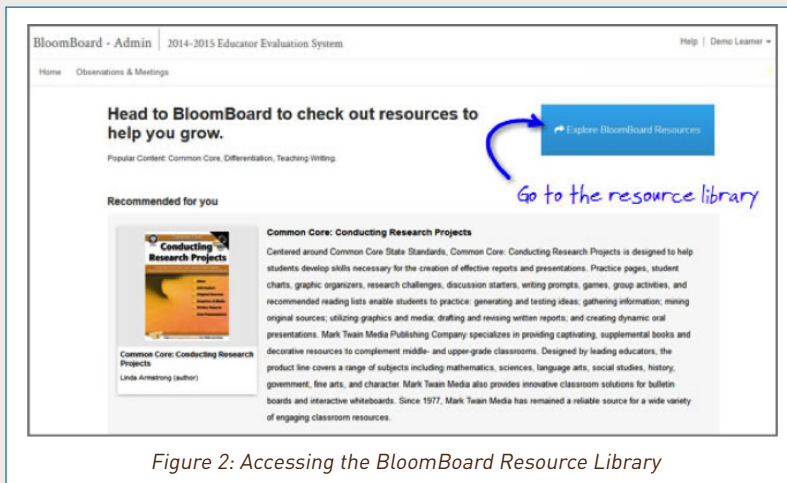


Figure 2: Accessing the BloomBoard Resource Library

gestions for using the *Resource Library* to support shared and/or team goals, take a look at the following document entitled [5 Ways to Use the Resource Library to Support Professional Learning](#). Use this document as a guide for staff meetings or other gatherings aimed at looking at the data generated from the educator evaluation and support process of professional development credits.

MY LEARNING PLAN, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



MyLearningPlan Professional Development Management System (MLPPDMS) is part of MyLearningPlan Enterprise Solution. MLPPDMS is a web-based professional learning (PL) management platform for planning, tracking, and assessing the impact of professional learning activities, and it is fully integrated with MLPOASYS, an educator evaluation data platform used in some Connecticut districts.

Educators log in and create individual growth plans and search the catalog of professional learning opportunities aligned to district, building and/or personal goals. Educators can directly enroll in activities from a myriad of sources, request approval, if needed, engage in team-based or individual learning, and manage their portfolios, transcripts, and certification requirements online.

Educators log in and create individual growth plans and search the catalog of professional learning opportunities aligned to district, building and/or personal goals. Educators can directly enroll in activities from a myriad of sources, request approval, if needed, engage in team-based or individual learning, and manage their portfolios, transcripts, and certification requirements online.

When MLPPDMS is integrated with MLPOASYS, the Learning Loop feature enables educators to browse specifically recommended PL opportunities, based on the individual's performance evaluation results. The activities include online modules or videos from a variety of vendors, internal district/LEA workshops, team learning, partner-based or independent activities, such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), coaching and mentoring or book studies, as well as external activities, such as graduate courses and conferences, and activities offered by regional providers or other

agencies. All of this professional learning is tracked, managed and evaluated with MLPPDMS.

Leaders may generate LEA PL plans to establish the district or school's primary professional learning initiatives (e.g., differentiating instruction, elementary mathematics, etc.) Each PL plan includes baseline student data, educator learning goals and student goals. The plan includes the learning experiences offered and the measures that will be used to analyze results. Aligned learning opportunities are posted to the online catalog.

Increased educator knowledge is captured via online reflection forms, logs and application and impact forms. This formative feedback helps educators to modify learning opportunities and supports plan refinement. Additionally, groups of educators may collaborate via online TeamRooms. With these tools, developed in collaboration with leaders at Learning Forward, educators record how they are applying new knowledge and skills in their practice and document evidence of student impact. To learn more, connect with your district's MLP contact person or visit the MLP product overview page.



Figure 3: Accessing My LearningPlans' Professional Development Management System

TEACHSCAPE, LEARN AND THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SUITE



As with BloomBoard and MyLearningPlan, Teachscape Learn is designed to help educators digitally customize and manage their professional learning by engaging educators in self-paced learning that incorporates educator evaluation data into a facilitated individualized learning

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SUPPORTING BEGINNING TEACHERS AND MENTORS

Advice from a TEAM Grad

*For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice...
And to make an end is to make a beginning.*

— T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

These words, borrowed from Eliot's poem, resonate with me considering the opportunities and possibilities a new year brings, but also in our work as we advance through TEAM. Congratulations to those who successfully submitted a reflection paper and are about to begin the next module. If you are currently adding a few last touches to your paper in preparation to submit, good luck!

Once you receive the results from your reflection paper, take time to read the feedback. Whether you met the criteria or need to consider revisions to meet the criteria, the feedback can help as you approach the next module. Here are some possible ways to let this feedback guide you:

- If you met all three criteria, recognize that you provided the necessary evidence to be successful. Use this understanding to direct you toward success for the next module. Consider building on your good work by adding more variety to your new learning. Think about signing up for a conference, participating in an online learning module, observing a colleague in action, or asking a faculty member to observe you.
- If you did not meet all three criteria, do not get discouraged! Reach out to your mentor, master mentor (if your district has one) or your district facilitator — remember they are there to help you and want to help you! Highlight the areas in need of improvement, using the feedback provided, and



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

discuss possible revisions with your mentor. You have time to revisit the module process and respond to the feedback with additional evidence. You may need to elaborate on how you developed new learning, what you took away from your new learning to shift your practice and/or how shifts in your practice have had a positive impact on students. Remember to be specific!

Despite where you might be at this point in your module, January marks a midpoint in our year as educators and the onset of mid-year conferences. When determining a goal to pursue for your next TEAM module, think about connecting it to your student learning goals/objectives for the year. TEAM affords us many opportunities to contribute to the

attainment of goals established as part of our district's evaluation and support system.

Thinking back to Eliot's words, a successful reflection paper not only signals you are ready to move on, but this end does bring you to the beginning of another module with a new voice. You go into this next module a more seasoned educator having discovered novel teaching strategies through your work in TEAM.

Let this work have a rippling effect and permeate other areas of your work in the district to help enhance student learning whether at department meetings or professional development workshops. Share your new knowledge, share your new voice.

Happy 2015!

TRANSFORMING EDUCATOR PREPARATION

Connecticut is committed to a vision for education in which every student is college- or career-ready and is prepared to compete globally. For all our students to achieve this, every classroom must have an effective teacher and every school must have an effective leader. There is general consensus, supported by research, that good teaching is the single most important school-level factor impacting and improving student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). A similar consensus supports the link between effective school leadership and improved student achievement, second only to the influence of classroom instruction on student learning (Wallace Foundation, 2013; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

Connecticut is not where we need to be in ensuring a high-quality school experience for each and every student in the state. Therefore, at the request of Governor Malloy and in response to Special Act 12-3, An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation, the formation of the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) was proposed by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) in order to study issues and make recommendations concerning educator preparation. EPAC was intended to bring together key representatives of the education community to study and recommend standards and processes for a seamless system to ensure effectiveness across the educator continuum from pre-service to career.

EPAC's charge is to advise the Connecticut State Board of Education about developing a system for the approval, quality, regulation and oversight of preparation programs – including, but not limited to, measures of performance in the classroom as determined by indicators such as educator evaluations; retention, turnover and dismissal rates; preparation for work in high-need districts; efficacy of recruitment of a diversity of candidates with strong qualifications and in shortage areas; and structured feedback from school districts on the readiness and effectiveness of preparation program graduates.

EPAC developed six principles to guide their work; these principles are:

1. Program entry standards
2. Staffing and support of clinical experiences
3. Clinical experience requirements for educator candidates
4. District-program partnerships, structured and shared responsibility
5. Program completion and candidate assessment standards
6. Program effectiveness and accountability

In 2013, Connecticut applied for and was awarded two national grants to assist with the reform of educator preparation; Connecticut was the only state to receive both grants and has served as a forerunner in this arena of preparation reform work. The Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP) grant has allowed the EPAC group to learn about reform from six other grant partner states and work to implement change in the reform areas identified in the Chief State School Officers' paper, "Our Responsibility, Our Promise." Additionally, the CSDE was awarded a grant from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) to assist states with integrating specialized instruction in inclusive settings to enable students with disabilities to achieve college and career-ready standards. Both of these grants have leveraged change both at the policy level and individual higher education institution level.

EPAC and four identified subcommittees continue to meet and have made significant progress toward changing state policy regarding the approval of educator preparation programs and the accountability for producing "learner ready teachers on day one" so that every child in Connecticut will have a chance to learn and thrive. For more information about EPAC, please visit <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2760&Q=334636>

Using Your Data Management Platform to Inform Professional Learning, continued from page 9

program. In addition, educators are able to set goals for professional learning and track in-progress learning while collaborating with peers and coaches in online communities.

Educators are able to search and register for online, in-person, or blended professional development opportunities. The offerings through the Professional Learning Suite are grounded in research and contain material from a content library from approximately 160 courses including more than 1,500 videos and featured experts in educator evaluation.

The offerings through the Professional Learning Suite content libraries are categorized by series titles. The specific titles and headings appear in the content library brochure. Educators are able to engage in online discussion forums centered on a common interest

through communities in Learn. They can also participate in learning communities by searching for and joining communities associated with a topic, grade level, course or school. To learn more, visit the Teachscape systems highlight page.

In summary, most data management platforms enable educators to create professional learning plans using a variety of resources such as a content library, access to an online professional learning community and the ability to electronically track and record participation in professional development activities. Overall, the digital resources within Teachscape Learn are essential tools for maximizing the use of the data generated from the educator evaluation and support process and that are clearly connected and linked to personal and/or group professional learning and growth opportunities.