

BILL SB NO. 175 – Respectfully submitted by Nancy Vitale, EASTCONN, Grants Manager

I would like to thank you for your continued support of the EASTCONN Interdistrict Grants for the Northeast corner of the state. Our education community is still very concerned that the Interdistrict funding will be cut further and/or eliminated in the new funding configuration being proposed. We believe that the Interdistrict Grants are a significant component of Sheff funding for **ALL** children in Connecticut not just the Hartford Region.

EASTCONN uses the **Results Based Accountability (RBA)** for our Interdistrict Grants providing us with the answers to 1) How much did we do?, 2) How well did we do it? 3) And what difference...impact...benefit did it have on those it was intended to serve?

For the 2015/2016 grant cycle, EASTCONN was awarded 10 grants, 15 less grants than the 2014/2015 grant cycle due to funding cuts. There have been over 2,500 students served from urban and rural districts in the EASTCONN region in addition to collaborating with Hartford. Classroom lessons are provided to Interdistrict teams setting the stage for new learning and for students to begin to work with their peers from different towns and districts (urban and rural). **96%** of the students and teachers participated in project-based, field experiences that have become an integrated part of their classroom curriculum. **95%** of students were active members of EASTCONN Adventure which incorporates low ropes and high ropes, team building, leadership development, conflict resolution, bullying, healthy life styles, and tolerance and acceptance of different peoples and their views.

The **two goals of the Interdistrict Grants** are 1) To reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation and 2) high academic achievement for all students. Below are examples of the impact the EASTCONN Interdistrict Grants have had on students:

- **89%** of students participating in EASTCONN Interdistrict Grants showed an increase in their understanding of bullying and acceptance/respect of others, and demonstrated an appreciation of diverse cultures, traditions and each other.
- **82%** of students participating in EASTCONN Interdistrict Grants demonstrated an increase in content knowledge specific to the academic area of the grant in which they were involved.

Teacher/administrator comments - 1)...my students would never have had the opportunity to work with diverse peers if it weren't for these grants thus expanding their global world view; the project based learning has made some difficult concepts come alive allowing for real world applications; 2)...having a "purpose to write" and then to have feedback from others their age is invaluable. Their letter writing ability has grown tremendously. 3)...the opportunities to explore science topics deeply was exciting, especially with the new science standards. The science lesson, working with their Interdistrict team members, using owl pellets is still talked about and will be part of their school memories forever.

- **98%** of school staff involved in the grants reported that they saw an increase in knowledge, attitudes/opinions and acceptance of others by their student who were involved in the EASTCONN Interdistrict Grants.

Given the above results, EASTCONN asks that Interdistrict Grants receive high priority when funding is discussed and that they not be forgotten given the impact they are providing in educating the children of Connecticut.