

Inspire. Imagine. Innovate.

ECA SPOTLIGHT Volume 6

February 2026



aces ECA
Educational Center for the Arts

February at ECA:

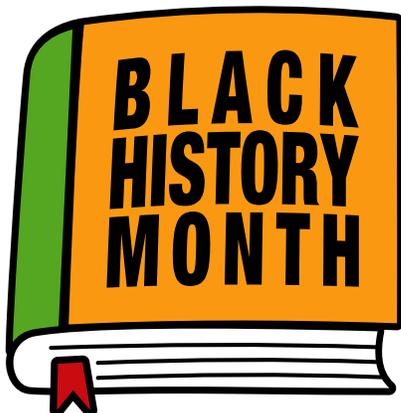
Stefanie Savo, Principal
Amy Christman, Assistant Principal
Julie Massaro, School Counselor
Marsha Guglielmino, School Nurse
Seth Harris, Technical Director
Ashley Hernandez, Secretary
Nazorine Paglia, Dance Interim
Ingrid Schaeffer, Theatre
Saul Fussiner, Creative Writing
Johanna Bresnick, Visual Arts
Amy Christman, Music

As we move into February, we're proud to reflect on a wonderful first month of 2026 at ECA. January was filled with creativity, collaboration, and inspiring moments across our studios, classrooms, and performance spaces as an energizing and meaningful start to the year ahead.

During the month of February, we pause as a community to reflect, honor, and celebrate Black History Month, recognizing the invaluable contributions of Black individuals throughout history and the profound impact Black culture continues to have on the arts and our society.

Throughout February and beyond, ECA will highlight Black artists whose voices, creativity, and leadership have shaped cultural landscapes and informed creative thinking. This month invites us to broaden our perspectives, celebrate diversity, and engage in meaningful reflection through artistic expression, with the hope that these conversations continue well beyond February.

With appreciation,
Stefanie

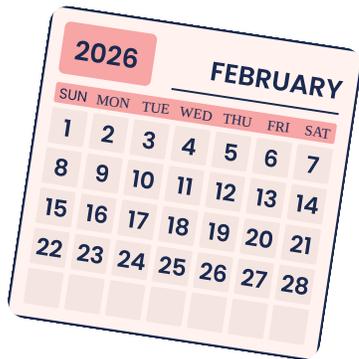


February Highlights

ECA school wide assembly Wednesday February 4 for all students and staff

ECA/IRIS team of volunteers are developing workshops for (2/10, 3/10, & 3/31); we are always looking for more students to get involved! See or message Amy for details

Coffeehouse is Thursday, 2/5 5:00 - 7:00 pm
see poster below



Join Us For ECA Coffee House!

Sign Up
To
Perform!

Thursday, February 5th From 5-7pm
Location: Arts Hall
FREE ADMISSION!



ATTENDANCE & DISMISSAL REMINDERS

A few quick housekeeping notes as we move into November!

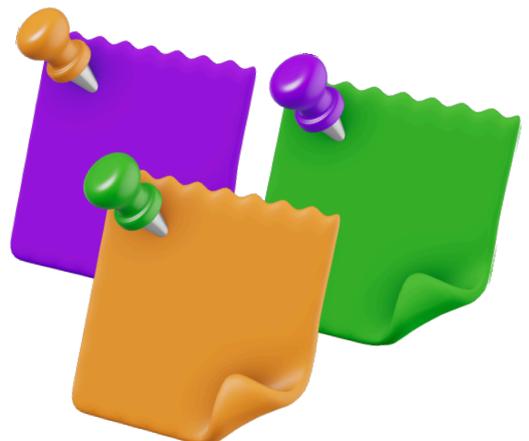
If your student will be absent, arriving late, or leaving early, please call or email the ECA Main Office as early as possible that day. This helps us track attendance accurately and communicate with teachers quickly.

We kindly ask that any dismissal changes or early pick-up requests be made no later than 3:15 PM. Our staff, classes, and students are often spread across multiple locations at that time, and therefore we need adequate notice to locate students and minimize classroom interruptions.

When home districts have days off and transportation is not provided, students are still welcome and encouraged to attend ECA. If transportation challenges prevent attendance, the absence will be excused for that day.

Thank you for helping us keep our afternoons safe, and organized for our staff and students!

Your ECA Office Team



The ECA 2026 Student Advisory Committee

Our Student Advisory Committee provides a space for student voice, leadership, and collaboration to help shape the experiences, culture, and community at ECA.

Music



Jason
SR



Claudia
JR



Gabi
SR



Matthew
JRt

Visual Arts

Dance



Christine
SR



Isabella
JR

Theatre

Creative Writing



Rowan
SR



Kara
JR



Simon
SR



Grayson
JR

From Our School Counselor

ECA is looking for presenters for our Career Day on April 1st 2026. Our parents are great resources and many of you are in Careers that showcase the skills that our students are acquiring at ECA. If you are interested in sharing a window into your career path please consider filling this form out [Volunteer Presenter Form](#) or call me to discuss further! In addition, if you know someone who may be a good fit, please pass along. -Julie Massaro



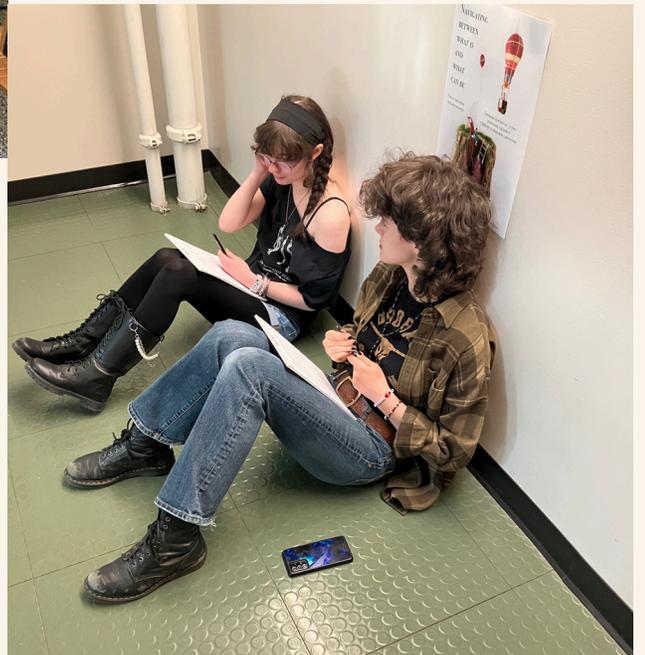
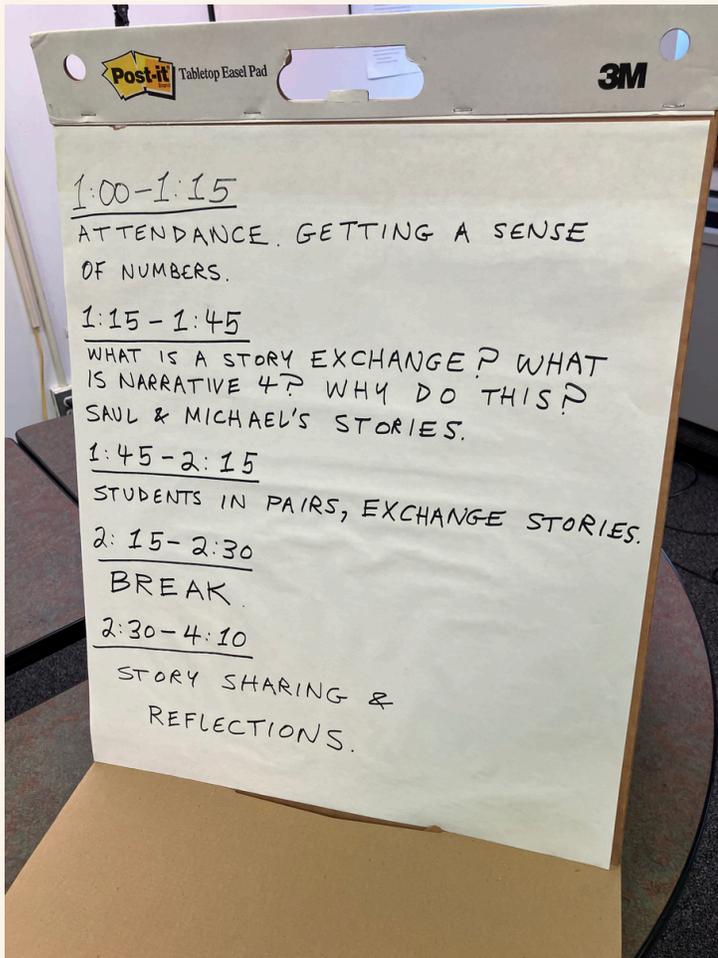
Creative Writing News

On January 15th, the Collaboration class presented the Dance/Music/Writing performance CONJOINED. These collaborations are great for "thinking outside the box" and for interaction with the greater community at ECA.

Then on January 22nd, the department presented the WINTER READINGS, in which students read some of their best work in front of student and then friends and family audiences. Both presentations were smashing successes. Students shared their work with pride, and with strong performance skills.

On January 27th, we kicked off semester 2 with a story exchange. Story exchanges, as developed by the story and empathy organization Narrative 4, help build community through the learning and sharing of one another's personal experiences. Students learn the story of another, and then present that story first person in front of the group. The stories were sometimes touching, sometimes funny, and always filled with personality. Students were universally supportive of one another as we came together as a complete community before breaking back up into individual classes on the 28th.





Music News

The ECA music department was busy through the month of January! All students shared solo performances in their 2nd Quarter Reviews, which allows students to share performance with peers and faculty alike, and receive detailed, constructive feedback for continued growth. We are incredibly proud of students work toward these quarterly reviews and notice significant developments across a breadth of musical skills and capacities.

23 music department students performed in the CMEA Southern Region Festival ensembles on Saturday, January 17. Congratulations to all on this achievement, and on pursuing this opportunity to deepen your studies alongside young musicians from across our region. These students are now preparing to audition for the All-State Festival. Auditions will be held on Saturday, February 7.

On Thursday, January 15, students in one of our two music Chamber Ensembles performed in collaboration with dance and creative writing students in the 4th iteration of an arts collaboration course. This performance showcased some of the work which had been developed over the course of the fall semester in weekly joint class sessions. Students generated creative gestures and phrases in exploratory workshops and then developed these in collaboration with one another and through their work with Polina, Laura, and Saul.

On January 28, despite the snowstorm and cold temps, the music department shared a fantastic PRISM concert which presented the performances by our chamber, vocal, jazz, and contemporary ensembles, led by Oliver, Polina, Gretchen, Will, and Amy. Congratulations to all students, and especially those who performed on the Arts Hall stage for the first time! Many, many thanks to Seth Harris, who designed lighting specific to each ensemble's performance, enhancing the artistic presentation of this work, and elevating our capacity to present these performances as part of a cohesive concert.

Many congratulations to Scarlett Wyrzten (ECA'26) for being selected as one of only 5 vocalists nationwide to compete live as a Solo Jazz Vocalist at the National Jazz Festival in Philadelphia, on April 18, 2026.

Looking ahead, the music department schedule is filled with many new initiatives and guest artist visits. These include

- A visit with composer & pianist Courtney Bryan, Composer in Residence with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra (Tuesday, 2/3)
- Sanctuary Studios - a series of workshops from February - April with vocal artist and ECA alum Surrenity Williams designed to cultivate artistry and skill in a vocal jazz setting
- 2/26 & 3/5 - a 2-part seminar on composing music for film with composer & guitarist Eric Phillips, embedded as part of our music theory curriculum
- A department-wide study on the Art & Science of Practice



Theatre News

Theatre Department Happenings!

We are thrilled to share the many exciting accomplishments and experiences from our Theatre Department this month. On Thursday, January 22, we proudly hosted our ECA Shakespeare Competition, with 14 talented students participating. Every student performed at an exceptionally high level, making for an inspiring and competitive afternoon. Our distinguished panel of professional judges from regional theatre institutions deliberated for 45 minutes before announcing the results: Third Place – Vivian Smith; Second Place – Rowan Simonelli; First Place – Kara Starkey. Congratulations to all our performers! Kara Starkey and Rowan Simonelli will advance to the English-Speaking Union State Competition on Wednesday, March 4 in Greenwich, CT. Special thanks go to our in-house Shakespeare expert, Benjamin Curns, for his outstanding preparation of the students. Kara and Rowan will continue their coaching with Carolyn Ladd, Benjamin Curns, and myself as they prepare to compete in Greenwich.

This past Wednesday, January 28, the Theatre Department took a walking field trip to Yale Repertory Theatre to experience Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha, an innovative and interactive clown performance by Estonian artist Julia Masli. The production invited audience members to share real-life problems, which Masli transformed into moments of absurdity, humor, and connection—blending comedy, improvisation, and elements of group therapy. Each performance is uniquely shaped by its audience; many members of our ECA community, including faculty and students, found themselves on stage as part of the performance, offering students a powerful example of contemporary performance and communal storytelling.

We also launched our second semester on Tuesday, January 27, with an exciting slate of new classes and projects. Tuesday offerings include Stage Combat, Movement I, and Commedia, alongside ambitious semester-long projects such as A Devised Musical, The Tolstoy Story Project, and two First-Year Projects. In addition, three seniors are pursuing independent studies under the mentorship of Professor Elise Morrison of Yale University, further deepening our partnership with the professional theatre community.

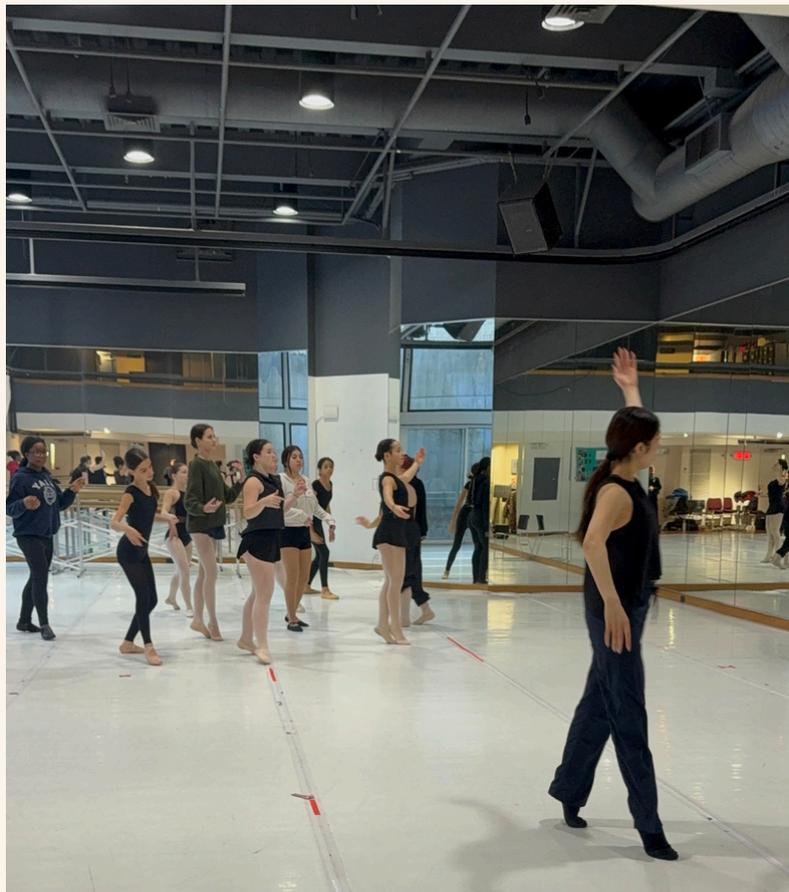
As we move forward into the semester, we are energized by our students' creativity, curiosity, and commitment to the art of theatre. We look forward to continuing these bold explorations, fostering collaboration, and celebrating the remarkable work our students bring to life both on and off the stage.



Dance News

The Dance Department proudly hosted the MLK Day of Dance, marking a successful return of this meaningful event. Students from several schools came together to celebrate diversity in the arts, capped off by a powerful and beautiful performance from a professional guest artist.

As we move into the second quarter, we are excited to introduce two new classes to the curriculum: Contact Improvisation and Improvisation. Students are also hard at work rehearsing for the upcoming Faculty Repertory Performance, which will take place on March 11 and 12 at 6:30 p.m. in the Arts Hall. We look forward to sharing this work with our community!



Visual Arts News

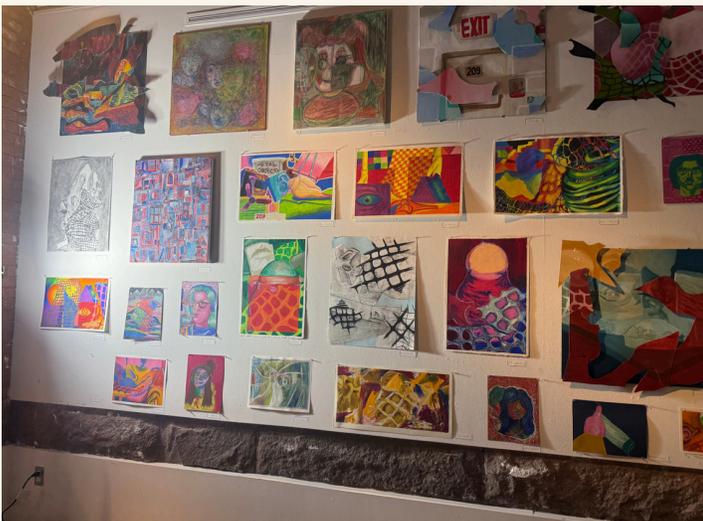
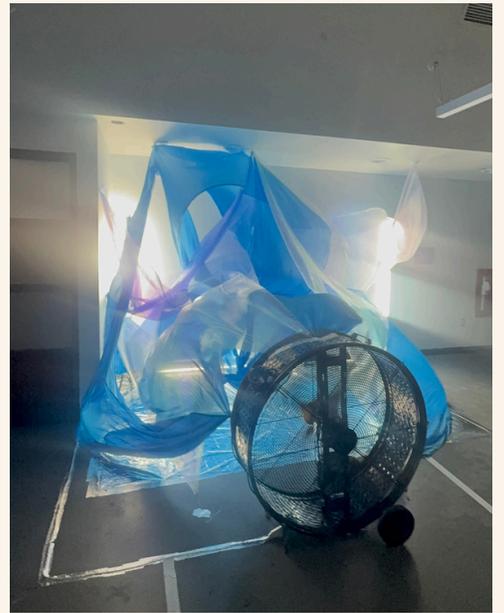
Thank you for celebrating with us at our 2nd quarter show! Students have been documenting and archiving their work, and helping turn over the studios for their 3rd quarter classes. 3rd quarter classes will begin this week.

Especially for Juniors: Summer Art & Design Pre-College Programs

Alumni and current students have enjoyed a variety of summer programs to deepen their skills and explore new artistic experiences.

We encourage you to explore these opportunities. Many offer scholarships:

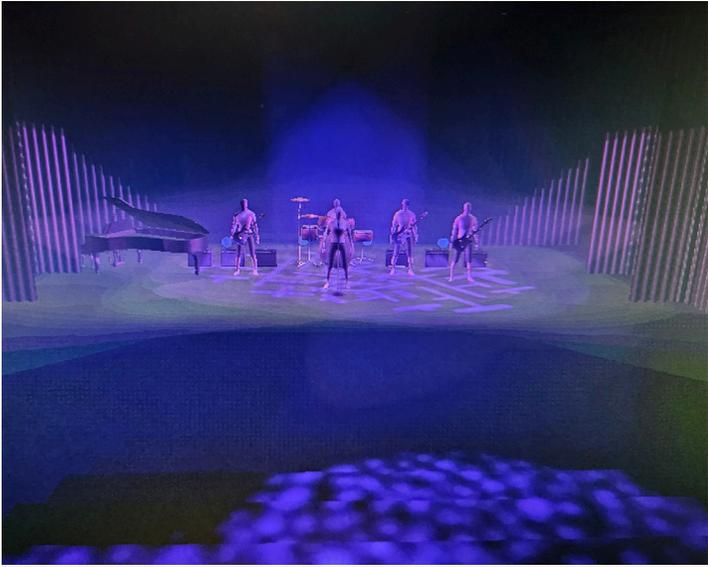
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- **<https://www.interlochen.org/art-summer-camp/high-school>**
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- **<https://www.ringling.edu/academics/precollege/ext>**
- **<https://www.saic.edu/high-school-programs/early-college-program-summer-institute>**
- **<https://www.socapa.org/locations/nyc-camps/>**
- **<https://www.purchase.edu/academics/youth-and-precollege-programs/>**
- **<https://asapct.org/programs/summer-photography-intensive/>**



Tech News

This past month the ECA production team had the pleasure of providing lighting, audio, and projection support for the interdepartmental collaboration “Conjoined,” the Creative Writing Department’s Winter Reading, the Theatre’s Department’s Peter Loffredo Night at the Improv, the Dance Department’s MLK Day of Dance, and the Music Department’s Winter Prism Concert.

Below are a few behind-the-scenes photos of our lighting and audio work on the Prism Concert.



Winter PRISM Concert*

Cue	Int Up	Int Down	Focus	Color	Beam	Dur	M	B	A	P	A	W	R	Flt/Hg	Link	Label	FX	Proportional
11	1		1	1	1	1	+									Top	101	
12	2					2	R	b						FB		Guitar - 0:12	101	
>13	2					2		b						HO		AUTO - Pre Vocals		
>13.5	0.75		0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	M	b		D						Vocals - 0:21		
14	2		2	2	2	2	+									BUMP - 0:30		
15	0					0	R							HO.1		BUMP - 0:33		
>15.5	0.1		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	x									BUMP - 0:35		
16	0					0	R							HO.1		BUMP - 0:38		
>16.5	0.1		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	x									BUMP - 0:38		
17	0					0	R							HO.1		BUMP - 0:38		
>17.5	0.1		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	M									BUMP - 0:38		
18	0					0	R							HO.1		BUMP - 0:38		
>18.5	0.1		0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	M									BUMP - 0:38		
19	1					1	R									Swirl - 0:40		
20	0		1	0	1	0.5	R			L						"Choosing to be here" - 0:50	12	
21	0.5					0.5	R									"This body" - 0:59	101 106	
22	0					0	R									Drums - 1:36	11 101 102 103	

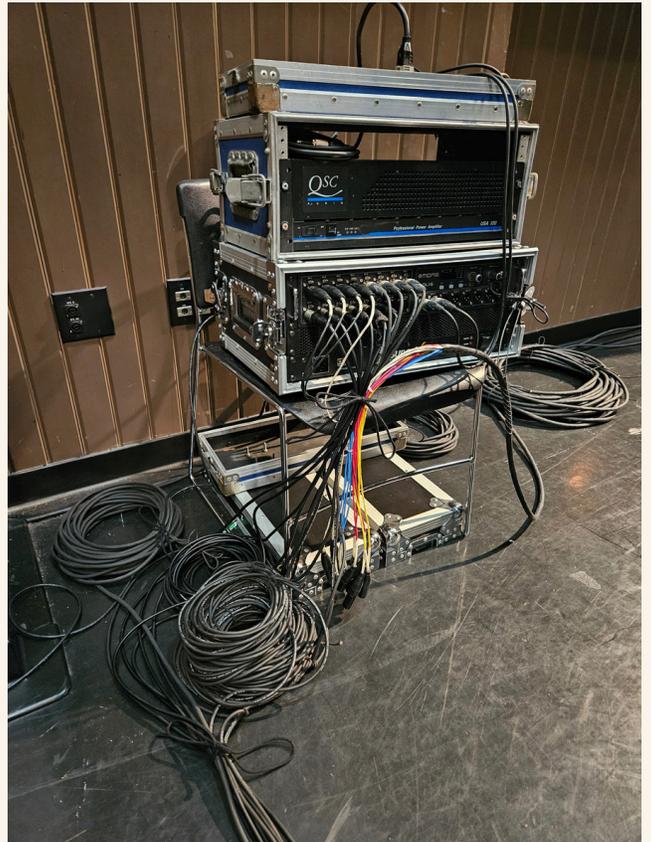
Master: List 2: Parabola 100%

1 11

2.5 PSD List 2 "Parabola" +

Winter PRISM Concert* 10:00:00 12/20/18

LIVE Cue 2/1:





PACE (Parents for Arts Centered Education) is gearing up for The Great Give, our biggest fundraiser of the year – and we could really use your help! Whether you can spare an hour, join a small planning task, or offer support on the day of the event, every bit makes a meaningful difference for our students. The funds we raise directly support field trips, senior celebrations, classroom needs, performances, yearbook expenses, prom, and so much more.

There are also plenty of ways to get involved throughout the year – from teacher appreciation efforts to helping at performances to joining our fun, welcoming board. No pressure, no judgment – just a community of parents coming together to lift-up our young artists. If you're interested in joining us, please reach out anytime: Ppace.eca@gmail.com.

Ali & Amy, PACE Co-Presidents

 [PACE Website](#)

 [PACE on Facebook](#)

 **Upcoming Tuesday Meeting Dates and zoom link : [Click Here To Join!](#)**

- **February 10, 2026**
- **March 10, 2026**
- **April 14, 2026**
- **May 12, 2026**
- **June 9, 2026**

Please join us online on Tuesday, February 10, at 6:00 PM for our next parent Zoom meeting!

Brown Girls Bloom Empowerment Program



What is Brown Girls Bloom?

Brown Girl Bloom is a 12-week empowering mentoring, mental health, and wellness program for Black and Brown girls in Connecticut. It is designed to nurture identity development, emotional healing, and personal empowerment motivating each girl to discover her strength, embrace her voice, and blossom into her fullest potential.

Girls are grouped by age for developmentally appropriate care:

- Blossoming Roots: Ages 12-14
- Rising Bloom: Ages 15-16
- Full Bloom: Ages 17-18

Programs include:

- Weekly 60-minute sessions, all held in person.
- Creative expression, identity mapping, and vision

Who can refer youth?

- Schools
- DCF
- Court/Probation Programs
- Community-Based Organizations

Contact us

+1(475)302-1557

Shatteringglassceilings94@gmail.com



Valerie Quarles, PhD, LCSW
Tonya Irby-Langley, MSW, LMSW



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Family-centered | Integrative | Responsive | Culturally Sensitive

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Trauma Treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healing from trauma • CBT • DBT • TF-CBT • Mindfulness | Play & Art Therapy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healing through creativity • Art Therapy • Play Therapy • Expressive Art | Individual Therapy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized healing • CBT • DBT • Mindfulness | Family/Couples Therapy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healing together • Systemic Therapy • Conflict resolution | Yoga <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming soon • Mindful movement • Strong bodies calm minds |
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Who We Are:

HBH is a trauma-focused behavioral health practice committed to providing holistic and compassionate care for children, teens, and adults. We provide trauma treatment, art & play, individual, and family therapies, children's yoga, and a variety of ongoing free support groups. At HBH, we strive to create a safe, supportive, and confidential environment where healing and growth are possible.

Accepted Insurance:

- Medicaid
- Anthem BCBS
- Magellan
- Cigna
- UHC (GEHA & Aetna Providers Express)

Getting Started:

- Provider referral via email or FAX
- Family contacts HBH via phone, email or FAX

Holistic Behavioral Health LLC,
2558 Whitney Ave, Suite 201
Hamden, CT 06518

203-604-9009 ext. 402
egonzalez@holisticbhwc.org
kcordero@holisticbhwc.org



Gender Affirming Care: Overview and Recommendations for Providers

This webinar is designed to equip healthcare professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide supportive and inclusive care for transgender and non-binary individuals. The training takes a comprehensive approach, emphasizing foundational gender identity and expression terminology, the use of respectful communication practices, and the incorporation of proper pronoun usage and inclusive language.

Objectives:

- define foundational gender identity and expression terminology while demonstrating respectful, affirming, communication practices with trans and gender diverse clients
- identify common experiences and barriers faced by transgender and nonbinary individuals in healthcare and mental health settings, including stigma, discrimination, and minority stress
- develop action steps and practical strategies for integrating best practices into clinical work

Your Presenter:



Robin P. McHaalen, MSW is the founder and former Executive Director of True Colors, Inc. The recipient of numerous State and National awards, Robin has co-authored two books, a book chapter, several articles on LGBTQ+ youth and is considered a nationally recognized thought leader. She has provided interactive, universally well-received training to more than 30,000 teachers, administrators, child welfare professionals, health care providers, corporations, and various non-profit organizations over the past 25 years. She is an adjunct professor at Central Connecticut State University, teaching Intergroup Communications, Human Sexuality and Social Work with LGBTQ+ Clients. She is an appointed member of Connecticut's Hate Crimes Commission and is Secretary of the LGBTQ Justice and Opportunity Network.

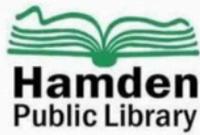
For additional information, please contact:
Amanda.Kriz@carelon.com or stbh@carelon.com



REGISTER HERE

Tuesday,
December 16th 2025
1 pm - 3 pm
Virtual, Webex

This event is pending approval for two (2) CT BHP continuing education credits (CECs). Carelon Behavioral Health is an approved trainer for the Connecticut Certification Board (CCB).



TAKE WHAT YOU NEED LEAVE WHAT YOU CAN

Little Free Pantries available at all Hamden Libraries

Little Free Pantries

All three Hamden Library branches are now home to Little Free Pantries! Please feel free to visit and help yourself to anything you need or leave any non-perishable items you are willing to donate.

Spread the word and visit any of our branches to donate to or use a Little Free Pantry.

hamdenlibrary.org



Clifford Beers sponsored training. Limited space available.

CO-CREATING COMMUNITY

12 Approved CE Credits!

In-person,
1253 Whitney Ave, Hamden
February 25 - 26th
9am-4pm

To sign up, please contact
Gabrielle Bynum
(gbynum@cliffordbeers.org)

Using a restorative justice framework, community-building circles purposefully capitalize on the natural human need to be in community. This two-day workshop to co-create a community is focused on the needs and values of all community members and uses circle narratives to enhance interpersonal understanding and cultural humility.



Questions? Contact us
Gabrielle Bynum gbynum@cliffordbeers.org
Yohanna Cifuentes ycifuentes@cliffordbeers.org



Adult Partial Hospital Program



Our short-term, intensive day program is designed for autistic adults ages 18-25 who may be:

- Unable to participate conventional programs
- At risk of requiring, or transitioning from inpatient care
- Experiencing challenges in community settings

Our clinical team supports individuals who may display:

- Property destruction
- Refusal
- Mild self-injury (SIB) or aggression

REFER
www.hfsc.org
Phone: 860-612-6312

Partial Hospital Program Manager
Jamie Kayser MS, OTR/L
jkayser@hfsc.org



SAFE ALTERNATIVE TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM

MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR AGES 4-18

In the absence of a parent/guardian, schools can address student mental health/behavioral crises by sending the youth to the Urgent Crisis Center or by calling Mobile Crisis Intervention Service via 211.

Mobile Crisis Intervention Services:

- We come to you!
- Call 211 (Infoline) and press option 1 and then option 1 again to connect to a 211 staff person. They will connect you with a Wellmore clinician.
 - Call the parent/guardian to let them know that you have asked for this assistance.
 - A clinician will arrive at your school as soon as possible, but no later than 45 minutes.
 - We will do follow up calls or home visits with the family to support the family after we leave.
 - We will coordinate with current providers and provide referrals if additional support is needed.

Urgent Crisis Center for Youth

- You come to us!
- We are located at 141 East Main Street in Waterbury (across from Palace & next to UConn Waterbury).
 - Our phone number is 203-580-4298.
 - Families do not need an appointment—they can just show up when they need immediate access to mental health support.
 - A parent/guardian must be present with the youth and participate in the assessment (a parent can give consent verbally if there is a trusted adult present and involved).
 - We will coordinate with existing providers during our assessment (when possible) and make clinical and supportive referrals as indicated.

If a child is behaviorally escalated or out of control at school and you need to call 911, it is now possible to have the youth transported to the Urgent Crisis Center instead of the Emergency Room.