

# Inspire. Imagine. Innovate.

ECA SPOTLIGHT Volume 7

March 2026



**aces ECA**  
Educational Center for the Arts

## March 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 welcome March, we can't help but reflect on what felt like a very short February at ECA. Between vacation week and three snow days (which we are hopefully DONE with!), the month seemed to fly by in a flash. Despite the interruptions, our community continued to demonstrate creativity, resilience, and collaboration across our studios, classrooms, and performance spaces.

February also gave us the opportunity to pause and honor Black History Month recognizing the invaluable contributions of Black individuals throughout history and celebrating the profound and lasting impact Black culture continues to have on the arts and our society.

We held a beautiful schoolwide assembly on February 4 where we honored Bob Parker and celebrated the initiation of the Bob Parker Foundation. It was a meaningful and inspiring moment for our community. Bringing Javier Colon to ECA made the afternoon unforgettable with his artistry, authenticity, and connection with our students which created a powerful and lasting impression. It was a beautiful reminder of the transformative impact of the arts and the importance of mentorship and legacy within our creative community.

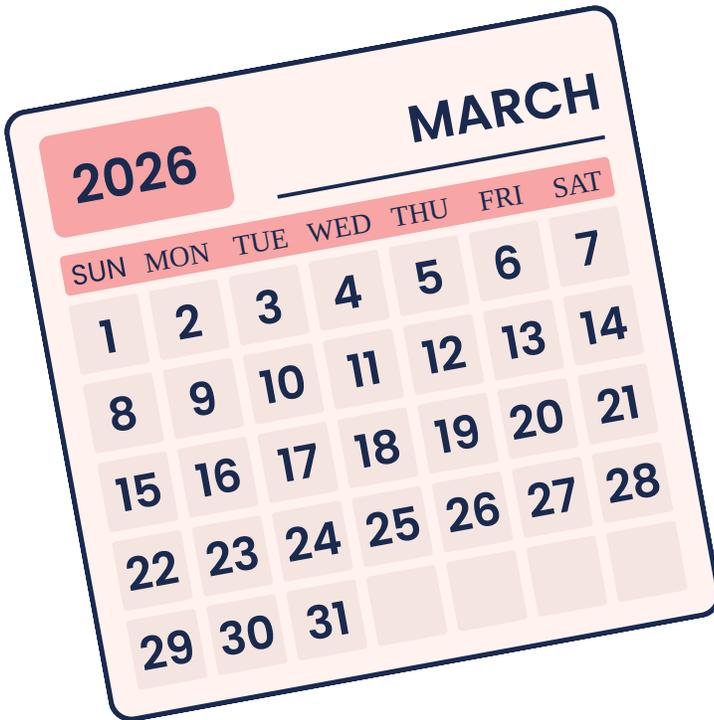
Now, as we step into March, we look forward to the energy, excitement, and "March madness" ahead filled with performances, creative breakthroughs, and (hopefully!) warmer days.

With gratitude (and officially manifesting warmer weather),  
Stefanie



# March Highlights

MARCH			
Wednesday, March 4	MUSIC: <i>New Music New Sounds XIX</i>	Arts Hall	6:30 pm
Thursday, March 26	VISUAL ART: <i>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Gallery Opening</i>	55 Audubon	5:00 – 7:00 pm





## **ATTENDANCE & DISMISSAL REMINDERS**

A few quick housekeeping notes as we move into November!

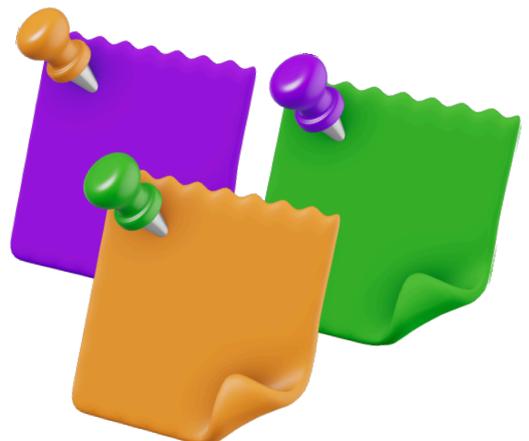
If your student will be absent, arriving late, or leaving early, please call or email the ECA Main Office as early as possible that day. This helps us track attendance accurately and communicate with teachers quickly.

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





## From Our School Counselor

ECA is looking for presenters for our Career Day on April 1<sup>st</sup> 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



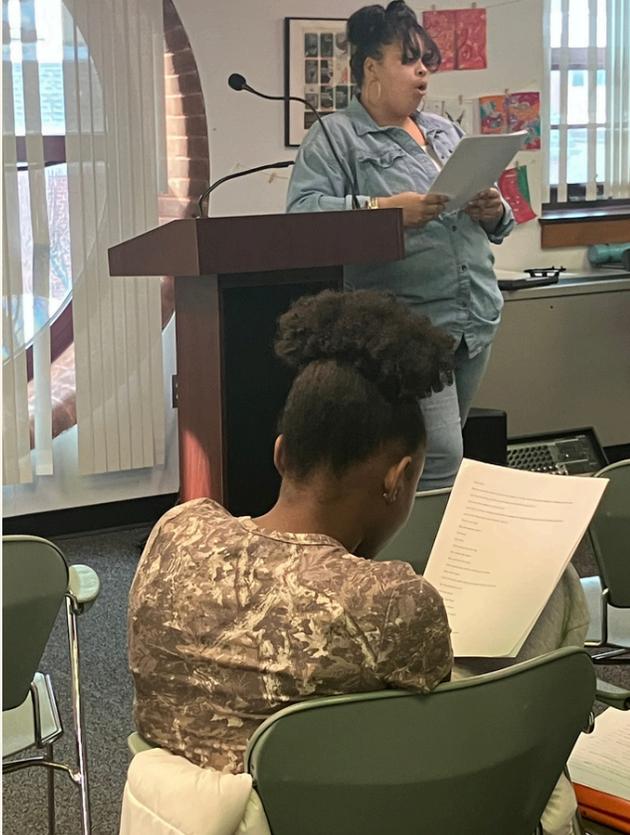
# Creative Writing News

The Creative Writing department is pleased to welcome several visiting writers during the third quarter, to share their work and to lead workshops and writing exercises.

On February 26th, we were joined by New Haven poet laureate Yexandra Diaz.

On March 11th, we will be joined by ECA alum and poet Steve Barichko and 2026 Stonewall Book Prize and New York Public Library Best Books of 2025 winner Mick Powell.





# Music News

The music department has been abuzz with guest artists, performances, festivals, and gigs this February and moving into March.

On February 3, students enjoyed a thrilling conversation with NHSO Composer in Residence Courtney Bryan. Courtney shared details of her musical journey, noting her intentional efforts to bring all of her musical influences, experiences, and ideas to life through her music. Courtney astounded us all with a brilliant, creative performance and encouraged students to continually listen and collaborate.

Our Tri-M chapter hosted the second Coffee House of the year. The Arts Hall was packed with students, families, alumni, and friends, who cheered on performers from every department. A special highlight was CJ Nixon's yo-yo performance!

Our Vocal Jazz Ensemble shared in their first workshop with Surrenity Williams, as part of Sanctuary Studios, an opportunity for singers to develop their unique, authentic voice and to perform with confidence, creativity, and style. Surrenity, who has performed with Esperanza Spaulding, Stevie Wonder, & Coldplay among many others; who has worked in the recording studio and on live shows including the BET awards and late-night talk shows; and who has studied and shared insight into the essential business mindset performers need to cultivate, worked with students to be mindful, to listen, and to be intentional in their musical choices.

Seven ECA musicians were accepted into the 2026 CT All-State Festival. This include Ben Sachar (jazz drums), Linus Tsang (Jazz piano), Claudia Persinger (Orchestra, double bass), Ciaran Borné-Brennan (Band, Alto Saxophone), Matiya Kouassi (choir), June Lanpher (choir), & Genesis Torrealba (choir).

The ECA Jazz Collective was recently selected to perform as a Showcase Ensemble at the CT Music Educators' annual In-Service Conference, on Friday, March 27. This quartet will also be featured at the LEAP Year-Fundraising Gala (February 26, Q-House) & the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen Fundraising Gala (March 7, Schwarzmann Center). Congratulations to Claudia, Ben, Dontae, & Linus as well as their director, Will Cleary.

March will begin with three major events; film composition workshops with guest artist Eric Phillips, a New Music recital on March 4, and a department-wide project exploring the art and science of practice.

We look forward to seeing many of you at our recital this week!



# Theatre News

## Spotlight on Theatre: How Deep Artistic Study Builds Skills for Life

With an unusual stretch of vacation days and snow closures behind us, this month offers a perfect moment to highlight why theatre education is such a powerful part of the ECA experience. At ECA, every arts discipline offers students a powerful space to grow as thinkers, creators, and collaborators. Here is what students gain specifically from immersing themselves in theatre—though many of these benefits, if not all, intersect meaningfully with the other art forms our school so proudly offers.

### Why Theatre Education Matters

Students in the Theatre Department devote their full artistic study to theatre, allowing them to immerse deeply in the craft and develop skills that serve them well no matter what path they pursue after graduation.

### Theatre Builds Exceptional Communicators

Theatre strengthens both verbal and nonverbal communication. Students learn to express ideas clearly, listen actively, interpret tone and gesture, and collaborate with diverse groups—skills essential in any profession centered on human interaction.

### Theatre Students Become Strong Problem Solvers

Every rehearsal is a problem-solving environment. Students analyze challenges, test solutions, adapt quickly, and think creatively—abilities that support success in fields from STEM to business to leadership roles.

### Theatre Strengthens Social and Emotional Skills

Theatre fosters empathy, emotional awareness, and perspective-taking. Students learn to understand others' experiences and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, building the foundation for strong relationships and effective teamwork.

### Theatre Enhances Academic Engagement

Participation in theatre is linked to improved attendance, motivation, and overall engagement with school. When students feel connected and confident, their academic work benefits across the board.

### Theatre Helps Students Understand Themselves

Theatre integrates creative, technical, and analytical thinking, giving students a multidimensional way to explore who they are and how they contribute to a community—insight that is valuable in every stage of life.

### The ECA Difference

At ECA, these benefits are amplified by the environment we intentionally cultivate. Small class sizes ensure that every student receives individual attention and feels valued and heard. Many of our projects, including our new devised musical, are created entirely by the students themselves, giving them ownership of their artistry while engaging with the most current methods used in post-secondary theatre programs.

Our emphasis on skill and technique, on process as much as product, and on a wide range of specialized content sets our program apart. Students study with a group of teachers who hold terminal degrees and are practicing professional artists, providing training that mirrors the rigor of college-level work and often places our graduates well ahead of their peers. Just as important, our students find themselves in a place where they belong—a sacred space that has fostered an extraordinary legacy since ECA opened its doors in 1974.

We are proud of the young artists who fill our studios each day, and we look forward to all they will continue to create, discover, and become.



# Dance News

**This quarter, we are excited to share several wonderful events happening in the Dance Department. Our Faculty Repertory performance has been rescheduled to Wednesday, April 22nd, and Thursday, April 23rd at 6:30 PM. We hope you will join us in supporting our students and faculty during these special evenings.**

**On March 19th, the educational program from The Joyce Theater will send teaching artist Susan Thomasson to lead a residency with our students in preparation for their March 26th trip to New York City. While there, students will attend a performance by Hubbard Street Dance Chicago at The Joyce Theater. As part of this experience, they will participate in a choreography breakdown to deepen their understanding of the company's artistic process and professional standards.**

**In addition, our seniors will hold auditions for their Senior Projects on March 9th, with rehearsals beginning on March 10th. This marks an exciting milestone in their final year, as they begin developing and preparing their culminating creative work.**

**Thank you, as always, for your continued support of our Dance Department and our students.**

# Visual Arts News

**Students in the Visual Arts Department are back to work in their 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter classes, immersing themselves in the final round of creative exploration of media, techniques, and concepts before their end-of-quarter show on March 26th. Not to be missed- students in Video will be creating a large-scale media installation in the Arts Hall on view for one night only, and students in the Sound class will be performing live. Please be sure to join our students in celebrating!**

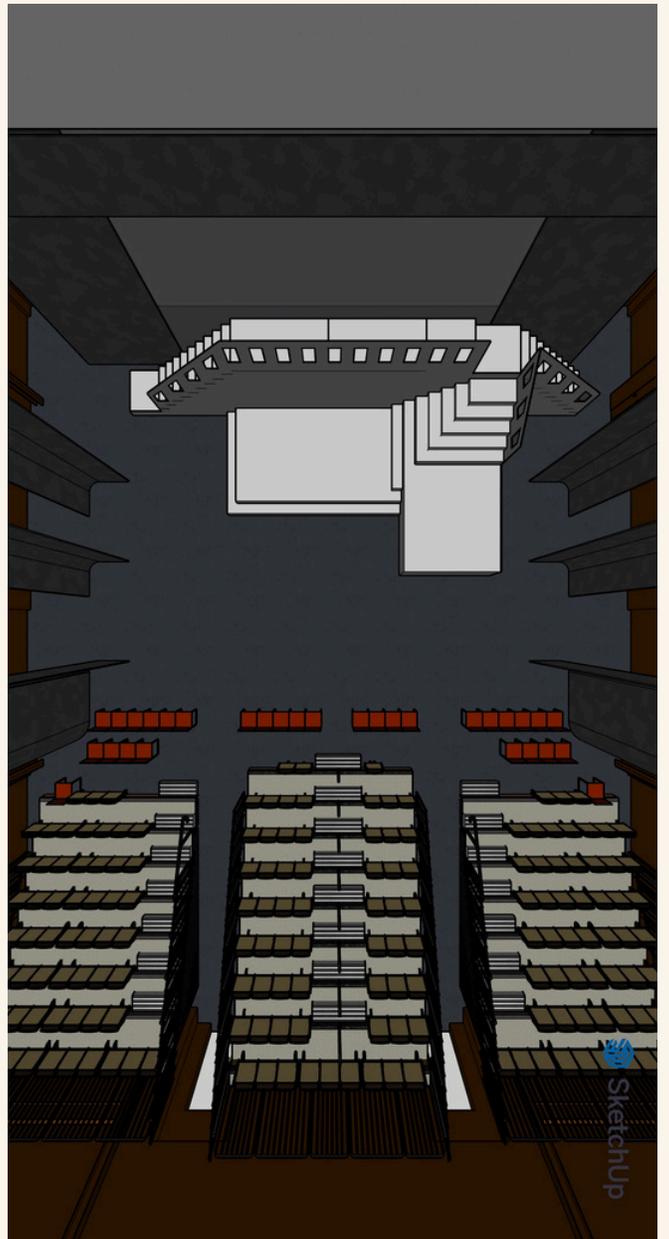
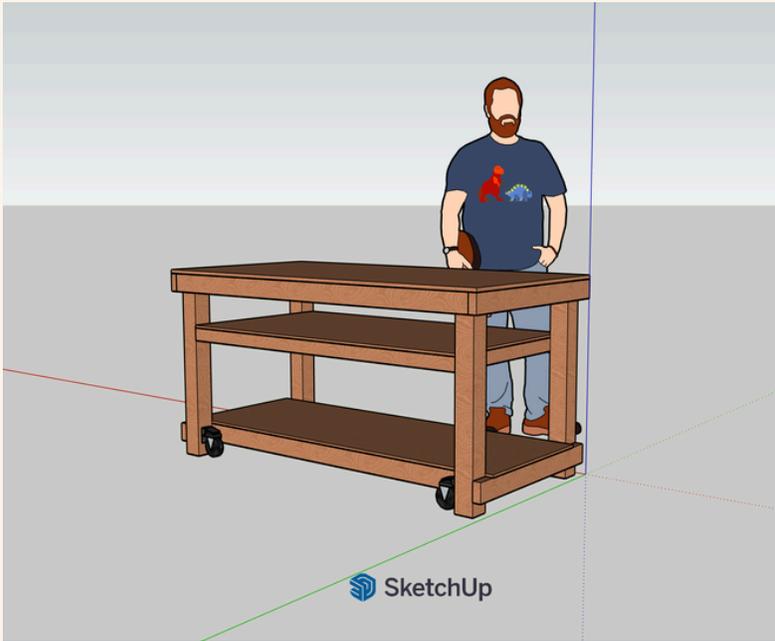
**For a closer look at what students are working on this quarter, click**



**here.**

# Tech News

**The ECA production team spent the last month hard at work on scenic design and planning for our second semester productions. When we weren't designing sets (or shoveling snow) we undertook classroom infrastructure projects to support the incredible teaching and learning that happens in our school's classrooms every day. We look forward to getting back into the tech booth to support the New Music Concert, Visual Arts Opening, and Theatre Department 10th grade production coming up in the month of March.**



# Enjoy these two beautiful articles on Bob Parker and Javier Colon from our School-wide Assembly held on February 4, 2026.



## With New Fund, ECA Family Remembers Bob Parker

In his first years as principal at ACES Educational Center for the Arts (ECA), Bob Parker had a daily ritual.

[newhavenarts.org](https://newhavenarts.org) / Feb 9



## Bob Parker Community in the Arts Fund

Est. 2025

[The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven](https://www.cfnh.org)





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!](#)**

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

Please join us online on Tuesday, March 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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## Trauma Treatment

- Healing from trauma
- CBT
- DBT
- TF-CBT
- Mindfulness

## Play & Art Therapy

- Healing through creativity
- Art Therapy
- Play Therapy
- Expressive Art

## Individual Therapy

- Personalized healing
- CBT
- DBT
- Mindfulness

## Family/Couples Therapy

- Healing together
- Systemic Therapy
- Conflict resolution

## Yoga

- Coming soon
- Mindful movement
- Strong bodies calm minds

## 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



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](http://hamdenlibrary.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](http://www.hfsc.org)  
 Phone: 860-612-6312

### Partial Hospital Program Manager

Jamie Kayser MS, OTR/L  
[jkayser@hfsc.org](mailto: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.*