

The New England Center for Children Timeline

August 11, 1975

- Vinnie Strully, Dudley Orr, and John Pangburn found the Efficacy Research Institute (ERI) on the grounds of the Taunton State Hospital. The school starts with six students. Kathy Foster is hired.

1978

- Dr. Paul Touchette establishes the research program.

1979

- ERI expands to serve 20 students. The need for effective autism education programs grows.

1980

- Vinnie Strully is featured in *Parade Magazine*.
- ERI takes over Spear Education Center in Framingham. ERI in Taunton becomes ERIT, managed by Kathy Foster. Spear Education Center becomes ERIF and is managed by Vinnie Strully.

1982

- The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum screens "The Autistic Child - A Behavioral Approach," produced by ERIF.

1985

- Dr. Paul Touchette, Dr. Rebecca MacDonald, and Susan Langer publish our first professional research article in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*: "A Scatter plot for identifying stimulus control of problem behavior."

1986

- ERIT and ERIF merge to become The New England Center for Autism (NECA) and move to our present location in Southborough, MA.

1987

- NECA opens its first residential home, in Westborough. Over four years, 11 more residential homes open in the Metrowest area.
- Dr. Murray Sidman, Professor Emeritus, Northeastern University, joins NECA as Senior Research Associate and establishes an on-site research lab to continue his work on stimulus equivalence.

1991

- NECA establishes a center-based preschool program serving young children with autism and PDD. The program provides intensive behavioral instruction and opportunities for integration with typically developing peers, leading to systematic transition into the public schools

1992

- The master's in applied behavior analysis (ABA) program through Northeastern University is established.
- NECA partners with Simmons College to provide a master's degree in education and licensure in severe special needs.
- NECA holds its first annual Field Day for students.

1993

- Dr. Gina Green is appointed NECA's first Director of Research. Under her leadership, NECA strengthens its research program and begins to publish work regularly in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

1994

- NECA hosts The Summer Institute: "Studies in Educating Students with Autism," sponsored jointly with the Shriver Center University Affiliated Program under a U.S. Department of Education training grant.
- The Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center lab opens at NECA.

1996

- NECA becomes The New England Center for Children (NECC), emphasizing its mission in providing best-in-class educational services for children with autism, PDD, and related disabilities.
- NECC opens the Staff Intensive Unit (SIU) - a unique residential complex for children with severely challenging behaviors. Today the SIU is known as the Intensive Treatment Team (ITT).
- Dr. Rebecca MacDonald and Renée Mansfield start NECC's home-based program to serve children with autism under the age of 3.

1997

- NECC's Student Council is formed.
- NECC's first Golf Classic is held, kicking off the start of successful fundraising efforts.
- A private program is established in Abu Dhabi, bringing NECC's services to the United Arab Emirates.
- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Consulting division is established. The GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

1998

- NECC receives The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism, Inc. grant for the development of the Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia®.
- The Golf Classic becomes the Carlos Placido-Dunkin' Donuts Golf Classic for Autism.
- NECC opens its Professional Development Center. This additional space allows NECC to expand its program for professional development by providing additional classrooms for NECC trainings as well as affiliated graduate study programs

1999

- Hamilton College and NECC develop a Cooperative Learning Program to provide students with hands-on practical experience and full semester academic credit. The program is modeled after traditional "term abroad" programs and was developed according to rigorous academic standards.
- NECC's Public School Services division establishes the first Partner Program Classroom in Ashburnham/Westminster public school. This sets the foundation for ongoing collaborations with many other public schools in the future.

2000

- NECC receives the National Award for Model Professional Development from the U.S. Department of Education.
- Dr. William Ahearn, Dr. Dan Gould, Richard Graff, Dr. Gina Green, Cammarie Johnson, Allen Karsina, Susan Langer, Dr. Myrna Libby, and Dr. Rebecca MacDonald become NECC's first Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs).

- The organization's 25th Anniversary celebration is held at Boston's World Trade Center.

2001

- NECC parents start the "Night of Music" gala, held at Mechanics Hall in Worcester, to support the fundraising efforts of the organization. Today the event is known as the Children of Promise Gala.

2002

- NECC opens a new, state-of-the-art preschool and early childhood center at its Southborough site.

2003

- The first lesson is published to the Autism Curriculum Encyclopedia[®] (ACE[®]).

2005

- NECC receives the Award for Enduring Programmatic Contributions in Behavior Analysis from the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis (SABA). The award represents meaningful acknowledgement from our peers for our work in ABA.

2006

- The ACE[®] software expands beyond NECC classrooms and moves into public schools in New England.
- NECC receives a Kresge Foundation Challenge Grant to build the Michael S. Dukakis Aquatic Center. This kicks off NECC's first Capital Campaign, led by NECC's first Chief Development Officer, RoseAnn Lovely.

2007

- The first NECC 5K Walk/Run for Autism in Southborough is held, bringing together runners, walkers, and supporters from the community to promote autism understanding and provide financial support for NECC.
- NECC opens a school in Abu Dhabi, as a directive of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.
- Vinnie Strully wins the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award.
- NECC opens a school in Abu Dhabi, as a directive of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

2008

- NECC and Western New England College establish a PhD program on-site at NECC.
- The Michael S. Dukakis Aquatic Center opens after a successful Capital Campaign. The Dukakis Aquatic Center will become a favorite location for students, many of whom find great joy in the freedom that swimming and water activities provide.

2009

- The ACE[®] software reaches 1,000 lessons spanning three lesson formats (Discrete Trial, Task Analysis and Incidental Teaching).
- Vinnie Strully receives an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Western New England University.
- The ACE[®] software makes its way to New York City, which launches a pilot program to integrate the ACE[®] software into public school classrooms.
- The annual Dr. Myrna Libby Award is established. The award is presented to two NECC teachers earning graduate degrees from our programs, who exemplify Myrna's vision that research guide the education and treatment of individuals with autism and so improves their lives. Dr. Libby was a Director at NECC for 20 years before she passed away in 2008.

2010

- The journal article "Stereotypy in young children with autism and typically developing children" is distinguished as one of the "Top 10 most-cited articles" by the journal *Research in Developmental Disabilities*. The article was authored by NECC staff members Dr. Rebecca MacDonald, Renée Mansfield, Amy Geckeler, Nicole Gardenier, Dr. William Holcomb, June Sanchez; Dr. Gina Green and Jen Anderson.

2011

- A new Capital Campaign begins to support the development of a research institute and new student space. NECC receives its first million dollar donation.
- NECC students vote on the first NECC mascot - The Knight.

2012

- The Michael F. Downey Center for Childhood Development opens to provide care for children of staff. Mike was the financial architect of NECC and served 36 years, 16 as CFO. His work ensured that NECC could grow to become what it is today.

2013

- NECC-AD moves to a state-of-the-art facility location in Mohammed Bin Zayed City, Abu Dhabi.

2014

- The NECC Student Chorus is established. Today, the Student Chorus enjoys practicing in the music room in the Alex Dangel Music Center in the Dillon Arledge Student Center.

2015

- NECC receives the New England Innovation Award from the Small Business Association of New England (SBANE). The award recognizes the groundbreaking work NECC has completed on the ACE[®] software.
- Simmons College graduates its 1,000th master's level special education teacher from its partnership with NECC.

2016

- The John and Diane Kim Autism Institute opens in October, marking the biggest expansion of the NECC campus to date. The Kim Autism Institute is home to 33,00 SF of office, graduate classroom, and research space.
- The Maria Felix Lonergan Memorial Award is established to honor Maria, who was a dedicated professional during her 20-year tenure at NECC. The Award is presented annually to an individual for outstanding contributions in three areas of Maria's lifework: mentorship, advocacy of effective education, and professionalism.

2017

- NECC receives the Award for International Dissemination of Behavior Analysis from the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis. The award recognizes NECC's global reach.
- The Dillon Arledge Student Center opens, including the David Slatkin Student Library, Alex Dangel Music Center, and Daniel Smigel Career Development Center featuring the Kiki Niedermeyer School Store.
- Vincent Strully is named Business Leader of the Year by the *Worcester Business Journal*.

2018

- NECC introduces ABAPLUS[®], an online learning platform for professionals.
- NECC's vocational program is featured in The New York Times.
- NECC's 50th Partner Program Classroom opens, in New Hampshire.

2019

- Simmons University and NECC announce Autism Specialization in MEd program.
- NECC graduates its 1,500th master's level staff from its on-site graduate training partnerships.
- Renée Mansfield, Executive Director of the ACE[®] software, is honored with a memorial garden space in the Kim Autism Institute. Renée was instrumental in bringing the ACE software to market.
- NECC-Clinic in Dubai Healthcare City, UAE opens.