

## April 2009 E-Newsletter

*Dear Colleague,*

*April is a busy month! Not only do we celebrate Earth Day. April is also National Financial Literacy Month, National Poetry Month and National Celebrate Jazz Month! Click on Worthwhile Websites below to find websites from Thinkfinity to celebrate all of April's bountiful offerings. Please share this e-newsletter with your peers and invite them to subscribe by e-mailing us at [teacher\\_center@wsboces.org](mailto:teacher_center@wsboces.org) with their names and e-mail addresses.*

*Jane, Carol and Elyse*

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### **Announcements**

**Deadline April 30. NYSUT call for proposal.** It is not too late! You can still submit a very brief proposal to write an article for NYSUT's professional journal, Educator's Voice, Vol. III. NYSUT's journal Educator's Voice Vol. II is now available for downloading at [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org). Vol. II focuses on instructional strategies to increase students' literacy skills from grades 4-8. We are now seeking proposals to write an article for Educator's Voice Vol. III which will focus on strategies to build literacy skills in all content areas in secondary classes, grades 7-12. Attached you will find the proposal forms which are due April 30, 2009. The proposal is a brief description of the article you propose to write. If selected by the editorial board completed articles will be due on August 30, 2009. [vol III app and ed guidelines081219\\_edvoice\\_forms\[1\].pdf](#)

**May 1 Deadline. Rod Serling Video Contest.** The Rod Serling Video Festival competition, sponsored by the Binghamton City School District, is open to students K-12 throughout New York State. All students need is access to a camcorder and "a desire to holler these magic words:

Lights! Camera! Action!" Honors and awards will be given for various categories, including Best of Show, Best Directing, Best Use of Comedy, and more. Prizes will be awarded. To learn more, click on <http://rodserlingvideofest.com/index.html>.

**May 1 Deadline. ASCD Requests Session Proposals.** The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is now accepting concurrent session proposals for the 2010 Annual Conference & Exhibit Show in Texas, March 6-8.

[http://www.ascd.org/conferences/Annual\\_Conference/Presenters/AC10\\_Proposal.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/conferences/Annual_Conference/Presenters/AC10_Proposal.aspx)

**The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has a unique camp program for youth ages 12 to 17.** DEC operates four residential environmental education camps across the state. These camps focus on conservation education, immersing campers in outdoor activities and games that teach the wise use of natural resources. Highly qualified staff ensure that campers enjoy their week-long outdoor adventure. All four camps—Colby and Pack Forest in the Adirondacks, DeBruce in the Catskills and Rushford in Western New York—serve children aged 12 to 14. In addition, DEC offers week-long Ecology Workshops for teens aged 15 to 17 at Pack Forest during the first five sessions of camp. Eight sessions, each one week long, run from **June 28 through August 22**. A week at one of these exceptional camps costs just \$325 per camper. Many campers are sponsored by local civic groups, garden and sportsmen clubs. Spaces are still available most weeks. Full information, including registration forms, detailed program descriptions and a recipe for s'mores, is available at [www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html) or by writing to NYSDEC Camps, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4500. You may also e-mail the camps at [edcamps@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:edcamps@gw.dec.state.ny.us), or call them at 518-402-8014.

**For free school wellness resources** and materials to promote wellness: school food environment, children's physical activities guidelines, strength training for kids, healthier fundraising choices, assessing your school wellness policy and more go to [www.dannon-institute.org](http://www.dannon-institute.org).

Plan ahead for summer **TI-Nspire™ Technology Professional Development**. There are four sites in the NYC/LI area: Bronx, Staten Island, Great Neck and Huntington Station, NY. For additional information or to sign-up, check the link below. <http://www.tinspire2009.com/>

**Need Training but can't Travel?** Set-up live, interactive online training—all you need is an internet connection and phone. To schedule training for your teachers, contact Terri at [tviana@ti.com](mailto:tviana@ti.com).

### **Courses and Workshops**

**Application deadline Monday, May 4. Workshops in Contemporary Art for Art Educators.** <http://beta.art21.org/> Are you interested in contemporary art? Are you a K-12 art and/or media teacher? Art21 Educators is a year-long professional development initiative designed to cultivate and support K-12 art educators interested in bringing contemporary art, artists, and themes into their classrooms. Join a national group of educators to explore, discuss, design, and document curriculum around the art of our times. We'll kick off the year with a free **5-day workshop in NYC** (July 15-21) and continue via virtual meetings each month using online technologies and city-specific field trips. Art21 is looking for art and media teachers in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City to start. The initiative will expand to include additional cities and subject areas in future years. Art21 Educators begins with an opportunity to work with Art21 staff, visiting artists, and

guest presenters to develop a familiarity with contemporary art and artists as well as learn strategies for integrating related themes and working processes into the classroom. Using Art21 films and educational materials along with museum and studio visits, participants will return to their schools with units of study designed for implementation during the subsequent academic year. For more information or to download an application, please go to [http://beta.art21.org/doc/3539/art21\\_educators/](http://beta.art21.org/doc/3539/art21_educators/).

**May 5th from 4-8 PM.** MESTRACT is offering a special workshop. **Leading Instruction with the Brain in Mind.** A National Staff Development Council presenter, Dr. Armstrong shows how current brain research is opening up new ways for us to reach our students. This special 4 hour workshop provides each participant with a copy of Dr. Armstrong's book, *Teaching Smarter with the Brain in Focus*, published by Scholastic. Learn how to apply the current research to your classroom practice and have hundreds of "use tomorrow" strategies that will engage students and increase their understanding of any curricular area. Registration fee of \$15.00 includes book. Professional hours are recommended for this workshop. Suitable for Grades K-12. Please register online at [www.mesttract.org](http://www.mesttract.org). Location: Courtyard by Marriott in Ronkonkoma, right off exit 60 on the LIE. Please call 631-345-3461 for any additional information.

**May 7, 8:30AM - 3PM. A Service Learning Conference Featuring Cathryn Berger Kaye.**

Cathryn, an international service learning expert, will offer a highly interactive workshop to provide you with the ability to bring service learning to your school or youth serving organization.

- Learn the Foundations of Service Learning
- See vivid academic connections
- Discover how students of all ages and abilities can be engaged and thrive
- Understand why service learning is growing all over the globe!

Service Learning can be an answer to a myriad of questions:

- How can we connect classroom lessons to something meaningful?
- What kind of community partners are available?
- What brings learning to life?

Location: Adelphi University Alumni House, 156 Cambridge Avenue, Garden City, NY 11530. Don't miss this FREE conference. To register, contact Nassau TRACT at 516.877.4353, Fax 516.877.4055 or [info@nassautract.org](mailto:info@nassautract.org), [www.nassautract.org](http://www.nassautract.org).

**May 13 at 4 - 5:30 pm ET. Webinar - Building Parent Involvement in Schools Through the Arts.**

<http://eo2.commpartners.com/users/afta/session.php?id=1999>. If schools are to succeed in reaching every child academically, they need the support of parents or primary caregivers. This session will explore the body of research that demonstrates how the arts can engage families in schools and discuss key strategies that are currently working in both public and charter schools. Presenters will share research on parent engagement as well as several research-based programs that exemplify success engaging families in education, through the arts. The webinar will use text as well as images to teach successful methods. Speakers include: Michael Sikes, Senior Associate for Research and Policy, Arts Education Partnership, Washington D.C. and author of "Building Parent Involvement through the Arts;" Sarah Ogeto, Program Coordinator, Illinois Parent Information Resource Center at Columbia College Chicago; Joanne Vena, Director of School Partnerships, Center

for Community Arts Partnerships, Columbia College Chicago; Angela Fowler, PIRC Program Manager, Harris Center For Early Childhood Education, Columbia College Chicago.

**July 7-July 11, 2009. Greater Capital Region Teacherhostel.**

Celebrate the Quadri-centennial in the Greater Capital Region of the Empire State. Immerse yourself in an interdisciplinary program covering the art, history, literature, and ecology of the region. Tour the homes, walk the grounds, see the exhibits, meet the curators, take home the curriculum material and ideas to energize your classes and stimulate minds. The program covers from Dutch settlement to the Erie Canal to the Underground Railroad to the Rockefeller years including behind the scene tours of museum labs, and sunset walks in the ravines of a cemetery. Experience every time period in the state standards all in one small region.

Locations: Albany, Cohoes, Troy, Waterford

Contact Hours: 50

Cost: \$375 (includes 2 lunches and 4 dinners)

Registration Cutoff Date: June 7

To register go to: [http://www.ihare.org/programs\\_teacher2009.html](http://www.ihare.org/programs_teacher2009.html)

No group reservation has been made for lodging. There are numerous places in Albany and along I-87 which can be used including Days Inn, Microtel, Red Roof Inn, and Super8.

**Summer Schedule**

**June 29-July 3** The American Revolution: The Benedict Arnold Story, United States Military Academy

**July 7-11** The Greater Capital Region Experience, Albany, Cohoes, Troy, Waterford covering every time period in the standards

**July 13-17** The Rivertown Experience (Westchester), Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington, Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown

**July 18-19** The Rockefeller Legacy in the Hudson Valley, New York, America, and the World, Kykuit (participants are required to stay at Kykuit)

**July 20-24** A Corner of Connecticut: The Pequot to Mystic Pizza, New London Historical Society, Stonington Historical Society, Groton Bank Historical Association, Mystic Seaport, Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center

**July 27-31** The Mid-Hudson Experience, includes Teaching Hudson Valley Conference, Beacon, Fishkill, and Poughkeepsie

**August 3-7** Forts of the Empire State, Fort Ticonderoga, Fort William Henry, Fort Edward, Crown Point, lake cruises

**July 22-26, 2009, The New York State Outdoor Education Association is presenting a 5 day "summer camp for teachers", at Sharpe Reservation in Fishkill, NY (mid Hudson Valley).** There will be a secondary group and an elementary group to provide age appropriate activities and maximize your benefit. Benefits include Hands-on lessons in the field, Cross-curricular classroom materials, Meets NYS Learning Standards, In-service credit. Study subjects and activities include paddling the Hudson River, astronomy. project WILD, birds, forest, field, and pond exploration, children's nature literature, plants, owl ecology including owl pellet dissection, insect study, orienteering, earth measurement, nature writing, making and using dichotomous keys and much more.

Accommodations in are cabins with two rooms each sleeping 4 people in lower bunks. Bring your own sheets and blankets or sleeping bag, pillow, and towel. Meals are prepared by kitchen staff, served buffet style in the dining room. Click on [www.dec.ny.gov/education/1831.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1831.html) to learn about Rogers Environmental Center. For more information and registration, contact Fred von Mechow, Program Coordinator, Rogers Environmental Education Center 2721 State Hwy 80, Sherburne NY 13460, [fhvonmec@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:fhvonmec@gw.dec.state.ny.us) , 607 674 4017 ext 625. **Please register by June 19.** Limited to the first 40 applicants.

## **Events**

**April 27 - May 8, 2009, Second Annual Student Art Exhibit, Featuring VSAarts of New York City 'Murals Program' & NYS Alliance for Arts Education 'Side by Side Program.'**, Empire State Plaza - South Annex East Wall, Albany, NY. **Opening Reception: April 29, 2009, 1:00 - 3:00 PM.** VSAarts is proud to present this Collaborative Exhibit highlighting the artwork created by students in the NYC 'Murals on Parade' and 'Side by Side' programs. Questions or comments about the exhibit or the two programs described? Please contact: [bbvsanyc@msn.com](mailto:bbvsanyc@msn.com) (Murals Program) [sharon@nysaae.org](mailto:sharon@nysaae.org) (Side by Side)

**Thursday May 7, 2009, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Making smART Connections: Artist/Educator Collaborations.** A day-long conference for educators and teaching artists. The High Peaks Resort, Lake Placid, NY. *The New York State Alliance for Arts Education*, in conjunction with the *Adirondack Arts in Education Partnership*, *Champlain Valley Educational Services* and the *North Country Teacher Resource Center* is proud to present a day-long Arts-in-Education (AIE) conference. This conference is designed for all educators: general classroom teachers, sequential arts & music teachers, school administrators, teaching artists, cultural organization education coordinators, school librarians, and interested parents. Participants will gain insight and strategies on bringing the arts into the classroom and infusing and enriching the curriculum in all subject areas through the arts. \*Included in your registration is a "meet and eat" with conference attendees and session presenters at the [Lake Placid Center for the Arts](#) on May 6th 2009 at 6pm. Don't let this opportunity pass you by!

**WORKSHOPS | SPEAKERS | REGISTER** Registration Deadline April 30th 2009.

## **Sharing Success Research**

Please [click here](#) to access research information on:

- **Expanding School Time to Expand School Learning [K-12]**
- **Recess [Elem]**
- **Preparing Middle School Students for the Transition to 9th Grade [Secondary]**
- **Promising Practices for Reducing Dropout Rate [HS]**

Please click on the link to access research information.  
Elementary, MS and HS

- [Using Data to Guide Instructional Decisions](#)

## **Worthwhile Websites**

Check out the new **New York State Geometry website**. Find activities specifically aligned to the New York Standards. [NY Geometry](#) has activities for the TI-83 Plus and TI-84 Plus family of calculators and the new TI-Nspire™ Technology.

### **Think Green with Earth Day Resources.**

Thinkfinity has pulled together a package of [Earth Day activities, videos, interactive tools and lessons](#) about conserving energy, recycling and finding innovative ways to solve environmental challenges. Here's a look at 4 of the 90 resources in the package!

Featured Resources

- [Science NetLinks Earth Day Feature](#) (35 resources!)
- [National Geographic Environment Video Library](#)
- [National Geographic Channel's Preserve our Planet](#)
- [National Geographic Channel's Human Footprint](#)

### **National Financial Literacy Month. Make it Count for Your Students**

[Focus on Finance](#) from [EconEdLink](#) . A collection of [hundreds of resources](#) for teaching personal finance themes such as earning an income, saving and investing, credit and spending, and money management.

[The Cost of Being Late](#) from [Illuminations](#). Students work through a credit card scenario with a teaser rate, minimum payments, fees and a rate change for being late. [Don't be late, check it out now!](#)

[Making Change](#) from [Illuminations](#) . Children model prices mentioned in a children's book, then make change from a given amount by counting on from the price. Count on this to challenge your preK-2 class!

[Invest in Your Education](#) from [Illuminations](#). Students purchase common items used in their math classroom such as desks, chairs, calculators, etc. Students get a budget plus coupons to use when making their purchases. The goal of the lesson is to have fun applying the concepts of discount and percent. [See how it all adds up!](#)

### **Pen a Poem for National Poetry Month**

You can't go wrong with these top picks for National Poetry Month - try them today!

[Interactive Poetry Tools](#) from [ReadWriteThink](#) . Your students can use Interactive Poetry Tools to learn about and write [Shape](#), [Acrostic](#) and [Diamante](#) poems. Check out the [lesson plans](#) for you! from [Illuminations](#) . Math folks have poetry resources, too! The [Shapes and Poetry](#) lesson lets students explore geometric figures and positional words using the poem "Shapes" from *A Light in the Attic*, by Shel Silverstein. [Check it out!](#)

[More Poetry, Please!](#) Thinkfiity has hundreds of Poetry lessons, activities, tip sheets, tools and resources on poets. [Check them out!](#)

[Participate in Poem in Your Pocket Day](#) from [ReadWriteThink](#) . Use this ReadWriteThink lesson to help your students celebrate Poem in Your Pocket Day on April 29, sponsored by the Academy of American Poets. [Write on!](#)

### **National Jazz Appreciation Month. Get Your Class Jazzed.**

Don't miss a beat - check out these resources for Jazz Appreciation Month!

[Romare Bearden's \*The Dove--a Meeting of Vision and Sound\*](#) from [EDSITEment](#)

Go upbeat in Jazz History month with a combined art and music lesson. [Don't miss a beat! Groovin' to Jazz](#) from [Smithsonian's History Explorer](#). Students will learn how to listen to and appreciate authentic jazz recordings by listening to recordings by jazz greats and reading introductions that discuss the relevance of the songs as well as how to listen to them. [Get groovin'!](#)

[Jazz, Dance & Music](#) from [ARTSEdge](#). Students will be introduced to jazz dance and jazz music. They will explore basic jazz dance movements and create a cinquain poem inspired by jazz music

## **NCTE Inbox**

### **News**

**The Other Kind of Smart.** Beyond subject matter, even beyond critical thinking, social and emotional learning are part of what makes us educated and ready for life. [The Boston Globe, April 5, 2009](#)

**With Finance Disgraced, Which Career Will Be King?** Rather than focusing on six-figure salaries, individuals will look toward future careers in professions that will help repair the nation. [The New York Times, April 11, 2009](#)

**Report Envisions Shortage of Teachers as Retirements Escalate.** A [new report](#) notes that over 1/3 of American teachers will retire within the next four years and we need to develop a workforce strategy to keep experienced teachers in the classroom and to work with inexperienced teachers. [The New York Times, April 7, 2009](#)

**Duncan Does the Math with \$100 Billion to Fix the Public Schools.** Watch a video of a Q & A with Education Secretary Arne Duncan about his ideas for school reform. [The Washington Post, April 1, 2009](#)

### **. . . On Education Policy and Innovation**

"Obama Echoes Bush on Education Ideas": [Education Week, April 6, 2009](#)

"Education Secretary Says Kids Need More School": [KUSA-TV \(Denver\)/The Associated Press, April 8, 2009](#)

"Online Charter School Rings Bell With Parents, Students": [The Chicago Tribune, April 8, 2009](#)

### **. . . On the Recession and Education**

"Recession Stalls State-Financed Pre-Kindergarten, but Federal Money May Help": [The New York Times, April 8, 2009](#)

"After Layoffs, Many Workers Go Back to School": [USA Today, April 8, 2009](#)

"Schools' 'Money Is Falling Off the Truck'": [The Washington Post, April 13, 2009](#)

**Where There's a Will.** . . . While Shakespearians met at a conference last week, talk of the bard was replaced by talk of the economy. [Inside Higher Ed, April 13, 2009](#)

### . . . More on the Stimulus Package for Schools

"Schools to Begin Receiving Economic Stimulus Money": [Associated Press, April 1, 2009](#)

"U.S. Ties New Funds to Schools' Data": [The Wall Street Journal, April 2, 2009](#)

"City Schools to Use Stimulus Funds for Literacy Programs": [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, April 6, 2009](#)

### Ideas

**Happy Birthday to William Shakespeare!** On April 23, 1564, [William Shakespeare was born](#) in Stratford-on-Avon. Celebrate the bard with the strategies outlined in these resources from NCTE.

["Voices from Shakespeare's Day"](#) (E)

After a number of rich experiences with the world of storytelling, third-grade students study William Shakespeare and learn from this timeless master and teller of stories in this *Primary Voices* article.

["Creative Drama through Scaffolded Plays in the Language Arts Classroom"](#) (E)

This *Primary Voices* article chronicles how the author first used creative drama in a summer reading program, and then over the years developed a much broader understanding of how drama is an important teaching tool.

["Where There's a Will, There's a Play"](#) (M)

This article from *Voices from the Middle* describes a popular yearly activity at one middle school in which a production of a Shakespearean comedy becomes the centerpiece of an interdisciplinary unit on the Elizabethan Period.

[Analyzing Advice as an Introduction to Shakespeare](#) (M)

Popular culture provides an introduction to Shakespeare's poetic devices in this ReadWriteThink.org lesson, which asks students to explore an excerpt from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

[Teaching Romeo and Juliet: A Differentiated Approach](#) (M-S)

The [sample chapter](#) from this book provides an overview of an approach to *Romeo and Juliet* that takes student interests and learning styles into account, maximizing engagement and success with the play.

[Constructing New Understanding through Choral Readings of Shakespeare](#) (S)

After reading *The Tempest* or another play by William Shakespeare, students in this lesson from ReadWriteThink.org work in small groups to plan, compose, and perform a choral reading based on a character or theme. A [video student sample](#) is included.

[Performance Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare](#) (S-C)

The online excerpt from this book provides a sampling of a wide array of concepts and practices to encourage students to explore specific performances, as well as the performance potentials, of a Shakespeare text.

For more ideas for teaching Shakespeare, see the [ReadWriteThink.org calendar entry](#) (E-M-S), which includes links to additional articles, lesson plans, and other resources.

**Celebrate Earth Day!** Capitalize on students' interest in environmental issues and the timeliness of Earth Day -- April 22 -- to engage students in authentic literacy learning experiences. These resources from NCTE, ranging from lesson plans on earth worms to articles about philosophies tied to the environmental movement, can get you started with meaningful learning this Earth Day.

["Inquiry at the Window: The Year of the Birds"](#) (E)

The authors of this *Language Arts* article explain how inviting students to observe, comment on, and question the things that they see in the world around them leads to significant inquiry learning. The



article outlines four ways that a fourth-grade classroom's observation and experimentation based on birds that visited a birdfeeder outside their classroom window lead to learning.

[Digging Up Details on Worms: Using the Language of Science in an Inquiry Study](#) (E)

This interdisciplinary inquiry lesson from ReadWriteThink.org invites students to research worms in order to create a classroom habitat. Students conduct research, learn new vocabulary, and participate in further scientific exploration, observation, and experimentation.

[How Does My Garden Grow? Writing in Science Field Journals](#) (E)

This lesson plan from ReadWriteThink.org invites young students to observe and explore their environment as they work together to plant a garden and study its growth, keeping a field journal of their observations.

["Charcoal Clouds and Weather Writing: Inviting Science to a Middle School Language Arts Classroom"](#) (M)

Invite middle school students to explore the natural phenomena of weather, using this *Language Arts* article as a guide. Students observe and write about weather, and represent their findings through artwork.

[Persuasive Essay: Environmental Issues](#) (M)

In this lesson from ReadWriteThink.org, students explore environmental issues that are relevant to their own lives, self-select topics, and gather information to write persuasive essays.

["Multigenre, Multiple Intelligences, and Transcendentalism"](#) (S)

Integrate a study of environmental issues, the transcendental belief in the importance of nature, and visual and musical arts using the ideas from this *English Journal* article.

[Examining Transcendentalism through Popular Culture](#) (S)

This ReadWriteThink.org lesson plan, based on the article above, provides even more practical ideas for bringing one of the philosophies behind Earth Day into the classroom in creative and engaging ways.

[Composition and Sustainability: Teaching for a Threatened Generation](#) (C)

This [sample chapter](#) provides an overview of the argument that, in light of worsening environmental crises and accelerating social injustices, educators need to use sustainability as a way to structure courses and curricula, and that composition studies can play a key role in giving sustainability a central place in students' thinking and in the curriculum as a whole.

**Get Ready for Poem In Your Pocket Day! April 30 is [Poem In Your Pocket Day](#), a day that encourages you to select a poem and carry it with you in your pocket, sharing the poem and the fun of [National Poetry Month](#) wherever you go. Use this collection of [ReadWriteThink calendar](#) entries that commemorate the birth of noted poets to get your students started on their quest for the poem they'll share on April 30.**

[Maya Angelou](#)

[William Blake](#)

[Gwendolyn Brooks](#)

[Robert Burns](#)

[Lewis Carroll](#)

[Emily Dickinson](#)

[Robert Frost](#)

[Nikki Giovanni](#)

[Seamus Heaney](#)

[Karen Hesse](#)

[Langston Hughes](#)

[Yusef Komunyakaa](#)

[John Lennon](#)

[Pat Mora](#)

[Gary Soto](#)

[William Shakespeare](#)

[Ernest Thayer](#)

[Walt Whitman](#)

You might also find inspiration in activities highlighted on the day that Edgar Allan Poe's "[The Raven](#)" was published or the day that Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* first hit bookstores. Or take a look at the online resources celebrating [Black Poetry Day](#), [World Poetry Day](#), or the day that the [Poet Laureateship of the United States](#) was established. No matter what you choose, you'll quickly find that there are plenty of resources for sharing the love of poetry with students!

## **In the News**

### **Eye on Curriculum**

**Obama's election adds new dimension to Civil War lessons.** Educators and historians say President Barack Obama's historic election means students can have more open conversations about the causes and aftermath of the Civil War. "This doesn't mean the subject will be any less controversial," said Randall Miller, a history professor at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, "but it does mean that we are again talking about issues such as slavery, freedom, race and fundamental identities." [The Washington Post](#) (4/20)

**Report: Black, white students draw closer in achievement.** An Education Trust report shows that Louisiana has improved the achievement gap between black and white students in reading and math. Louisiana was the only state to make improvements in that area, according to the report. [The Times-Picayune \(New Orleans\)/The Associated Press](#) (4/20)

**Report: Writing exercises built confidence, improved grades.** Struggling seventh-grade students who wrote about personal values got confidence boosts that translated into academic improvements, according to researchers. "This exercise, called a self-affirmation, allows a student to reaffirm that he or she is a good and competent person," said Geoffrey Cohen, an associate professor in the University of Colorado at Boulder's psychology department. "This helps reduce stress by allowing the student to think about all the things that matter to them, for example their family or their religion. It makes the possibility of failure less dire." [The New York Times](#) (4/16), [ScienceDaily](#) (4/16)

**Students work together to build "green" model home.** Students at the Arlington Career Center in Virginia have spent seven months building a scale model of an environmentally friendly house that can be used to teach community members. The project is part of a national trend toward teaching sustainability lessons in schools. [The Washington Post](#) (4/16)

**Individualized plans aim to personalize education for all.** A New Jersey pilot program will allow some sixth- and ninth-graders to develop individualized education plans even though they are not enrolled in special education. The plan is part of the state's efforts to revise its middle and high schools and eventually may spread to all the state's districts. [The Gloucester County Times \(Woodbury, N.J.\)](#) (4/13)

**Report: 1 in 15 U.S. students has illegal immigrants for parents.** Children born in the U.S. to illegal immigrants are twice as likely to grow up in poverty as the children of U.S.-born parents are, according to a Pew Hispanic Center report. Illegal immigrants also are more likely to be spread across the nation than concentrated on the coasts as they were 20 years ago., [The New York Times](#) (4/14), [USA TODAY](#) (4/15)

### Professional Leadership

**Veterans should become teacher-leaders rather than retiring.** Veteran teachers have a lot to offer but too often retire when they should be promoted to leadership roles, writes Susan Graham, 58, a nationally certified teacher of family and consumer science. Creating mentorships would help older teachers give back to their schools, and would create more support for younger teachers who give up the profession out of frustration, she writes. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of Edweek.org\)/A Place at the Table blog](#) (4/15)

**Revised NCLB may focus on teacher quality, academic rigor.** President Barack Obama's planned changes to No Child Left Behind are likely to result in higher standards for teacher quality and academic excellence, say some observers. While testing benchmarks could be altered under Obama, some say NCLB will not be changed drastically. [The New York Times](#) (4/14)

### Technology

**Legislators tackle "sexting" punishments.** Some state legislators are hoping to stop police from charging students with child pornography for sending or receiving sexually explicit photos on their cell phones. Such charges may result in being listed on sex-offender registries. The Vermont bill would allow prosecutors to file other charges; the Ohio bill would make "sexting" a first-degree misdemeanor for juveniles. [eSchool News](#) (4/17)

**Research: Facebook users report lower GPAs, less study time.** Students who use Facebook, a social-networking Web site, have lower grade-point averages than their peers, according to a study of college students. Researchers say their data do not show that Facebook causes lower grades, but perhaps suggest a common trait among users, such as procrastination or a short attention span. [TIME](#) (4/14)

**Teachers use iPods to supplement classroom lessons.** Some Florida elementary-school teachers are using iPods to enhance student learning. In some cases, students listen to podcasts that contain their assignments, allowing them to rewind and work at their own pace. Teachers say they have more time to work individually with students, who say the iPods help them retain the information and make learning fun. [Sun-Sentinel \(Fort Lauderdale, Fla.\)](#) (4/11)

### Learning and Teaching

**Does project-based learning motivate students?** Teaching students 21st-century skills will be useful only if they learn to apply those skills, according to this blog post. An approach known as project learning reinforces lessons learned in one class in students' other classes while offering an outlet for creative expression that helps motivate students. [Edutopia Spiral Notebook Blog](#) (4/9)

## Policy Watch

**California leaders call for education reforms.** As California began receiving \$3.1 billion in education stimulus funds, the state's top education officials announced plans to use the money to drive reform. "If we are going to do right by our kids and take advantage of this wave of change, then everything must be on the table, and we need to bring both teachers and management to that table to come up with creative solutions that benefit all students," said state Superintendent Jack O'Connell. [Los Angeles Times](#) (4/18)

**Supreme Court to weigh English-language-learner programs.** The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to hear a case today that could determine what schools must do to ensure that students are taught English as a second language effectively. Some Arizona parents sued the state for not doing enough to teach English to students who are not native speakers, thus violating a federal law, the parents said. [National Public Radio](#) (4/20)

**Student sues S.C. over stance on education stimulus funds.** An 18-year-old high-school senior has sued South Carolina and is asking the state's Supreme Court to give the Legislature authority to overturn Gov. Mark Sanford's threat to reject \$700 million in federal economic-stimulus funds for schools. Casey Edwards said she sued as a means to ensure that younger students receive a quality education. [The Post and Courier \(Charleston, S.C.\)](#) (free registration) (4/17)

**Columbine lessons help educators prevent other shootings.** In the almost 10 years since the shootings at Colorado's Columbine High School, school leaders have been working to head off school violence. Student relationships with school staff are key, as are anti-bullying efforts and safe avenues for students to report potential danger, said Jeff Daniels, a West Virginia University counseling psychologist who has studied schools that have prevented student violence. [USA TODAY](#) (4/13) , [USA TODAY](#) (4/13)

**Obamas aim to inspire D.C. students with White House visits.** Since Barack Obama became president, he and first lady Michelle Obama have been inviting students from Washington, D.C., schools to White House events. "I've been here long enough to know this doesn't happen every day," said D.C. high-school Principal Anita Berger about the presidential attention. "It's really been amazing." [The Boston Globe/The Associated Press](#) (4/13)

## NCLB

**Half of Indiana schools falling short of NCLB standards.** More than 50% of Indiana schools failed to make adequate yearly progress under NCLB after state standards for passage increased nearly 7 percentage points this year, according to test results released this week. More suburban schools failed to make the grade as well. "No Child Left Behind is exactly the right thing to do, and it's done exactly the wrong way," said Jim Mervilde, a district superintendent. [The Indianapolis Star](#) (4/16)

**Revised NCLB may focus on teacher quality, academic rigor.** President Barack Obama's planned changes to No Child Left Behind are likely to result in higher standards for teacher quality and

academic excellence, say some observers. While testing benchmarks could be altered under Obama, some say NCLB will not be changed drastically. [The New York Times](#) (4/14)

## **In the Field**

**Families eye finances when making college decisions.** As high-school seniors receive college-acceptance letters, many families are weighing financial aid packages, tuition and travel expenses more heavily than in the past. This year, nearly 20% more families than last year have applied for financial aid by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, and some are appealing decisions after learning of layoffs or asset losses. [San Jose Mercury News \(Calif.\)](#) (4/20)

**Are the SAT's days numbered?** More colleges are making standardized entrance exams such as the SAT or ACT optional for students, but it remains uncertain whether the trend will fizzle or gain momentum. "I don't know if you can tell a tipping point until after it's happened, but it's very close," said Bob Schaeffer, a critic of such tests. [The New York Times/The Associated Press](#) (4/19)

**Report: Too few Californians are earning college degrees.** Four-year degrees are likely to be needed for 41% of California jobs by 2025, but at current rates, just 35% of adults are expected to hold such credentials by then, according to a report from the Public Policy Institute of California. Only 56% of California high-school graduates immediately go on to college, and many who begin in community colleges never transfer to four-year universities. Only about half of those who enroll in the California State University system earn a four-year degree within six years, researchers said. [Los Angeles Times](#) (free registration) (4/16), [San Jose Mercury News \(Calif.\)/Bay Area News Group \(Calif.\)](#) (4/17)

**Do wealthy students have an unfair advantage in college admissions?** Teens from well-off families have a decided advantage in college applications, some educators say, with extra courses to prepare for entrance exams, private counselors to smooth the application process and the funds to afford application fees to 10 or more colleges. "It is nothing even remotely like a level playing field," said William Fitzsimmons, Harvard University's dean of admissions and financial aid. [The Washington Post](#) (4/12)

## **A Light Touch**

### **Political Truisms**

1. In my many years I have come to a conclusion that one useless man is a shame, two is a law firm and three or more is a congress. -- John Adams
2. If you don't read the newspaper you are uninformed, if you do read the newspaper you are misinformed. -- Mark Twain
3. Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But then I repeat myself.  
-- Mark Twain
4. I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle. -- Winston Churchill

5. A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul.  
-- George Bernard Shaw
6. A liberal is someone who feels a great debt to his fellow man, which debt he proposes to pay off with your money. -- G. Gordon Liddy
7. Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.  
-- James Bovard, *Civil Libertarian* (1994)
8. Foreign aid might be defined as a transfer of money from poor people in rich countries to rich people in poor countries. -- Douglas Casey, *Classmate of Bill Clinton at Georgetown University*
9. Giving money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys.  
-- P.J. O'Rourke, *Civil Libertarian*
10. Government is the great fiction, through which everybody endeavors to live at the expense of everybody else. -- Frederic Bastiat, *French Economist* (1801-1850)
11. Government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it. -- Ronald Reagan (1986)
12. I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts. -- Will Rogers
13. If you think health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when it's free!  
-- P.J. O'Rourke
14. In general, the art of government consists of taking as much money as possible from one party of the citizens to give to the other. -- Voltaire (1764)
15. Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you! -- Pericles (430 B.C.)
16. No man's life, liberty, or property is safe while the legislature is in session. -- Mark Twain (1866)
17. Talk is cheap...except when Congress does it. -- Anonymous
18. The government is like a baby's alimentary canal, with a happy appetite at one end and no responsibility at the other. -- Ronald Reagan
19. The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of the blessings. The inherent blessing of socialism is the equal sharing of misery. -- Winston Churchill
20. The only difference between a tax man and a taxidermist is that the taxidermist leaves the skin.  
-- Mark Twain
21. The ultimate result of shielding men from the effects of folly is to fill the world with fools.  
-- Herbert Spencer, *English Philosopher* (1820-1903)
22. There is no distinctly native American criminal class...save Congress. -- Mark Twain
23. What this country needs are more unemployed politicians. -- Edward Langley, *Artist* (1928-1995)
24. A government big enough to give you everything you want is strong enough to take everything you have. -- Thomas Jefferson
25. We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office. --Aesop

*"You can only be young once. But you can always be immature."*

--[Dave Barry](#), American author and Pulitzer Prize-winning humorist