

## April 2008 E- Newsletter

*Dear Colleague,*

*Please scroll down to [FYI](#) to access information about the upcoming SETC-sponsored conference, **Meeting the Challenge, Success for the Special Needs Learner**. 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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### [A Light Touch](#)

**Exercises for seniors.** I came across this exercise suggested for seniors, to build muscle strength in the arms and shoulders. The article suggested doing it three days a week. It seemed so easy, so I thought I'd pass it on.

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side. With a 5-lb. potato sack in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides, and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax. Each day, you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

After a couple of weeks, move up to 10-lb. potato sacks. Then to 50-lb. potato sacks, and then eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100-lb. potato sack in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute.

Once you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each sack.

**Attorneys and witnesses gone wild.** These are from a book called Disorder in the American Courts, and are things people actually said in court, word for word, taken down and now published by court reporters who experienced the torment of remaining calm while these exchanges were actually taking place.

ATTORNEY: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?

WITNESS: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

ATTORNEY: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: And in what ways does it affect your memory?

WITNESS: I forget.

ATTORNEY: You forget? Can you give us an example of something you forgot?

ATTORNEY: Do you know if your daughter has ever been involved in voodoo?

WITNESS: We both do.

ATTORNEY: Voodoo?

WITNESS: We do.

ATTORNEY: You do?

WITNESS: Yes, voodoo

ATTORNEY: Now doctor isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

WITNESS: Did you actually pass the bar exam?

ATTORNEY: The youngest son, the twenty-year-old, how old is he?

WITNESS: Uh, let me think, he's twenty.

ATTORNEY: Were you present when your picture was taken?

WITNESS: Are you kidding me?

ATTORNEY: How was your first marriage terminated?

WITNESS: By death.

ATTORNEY: And by whose death was it terminated?

WITNESS: Now whose death do you suppose terminated it?

ATTORNEY: Can you describe the individual?

WITNESS: He was about medium height and had a beard.

ATTORNEY: Was this a male or a female?

WITNESS: Guess.

And the best for last:

ATTORNEY: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for blood pressure?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for breathing?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: How can you be so sure, Doctor?

WITNESS: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

ATTORNEY: I see, but could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?

WITNESS: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law.

## FYI

### Courses and Workshops

**MAY 31, 2008, 9AM-5PM. Teacher As Researcher: Action Research in the Classroom,** The Great Neck Teacher Center is offering a workshop on Action Research for staff developers and teacher center directors. There is no fee. You'll receive  $\frac{1}{2}$  inservice credit. Instructors: Dr. Bruce Torff and Katherine Byrnes. Learn how to conduct a Teacher Research Project, increase student achievement and improve your teaching through Teacher Research. As you examine and reflect on your own practice in the classroom you will explore the concept of Action Research. Participants will engage in conversations about student learning and discover the value of teacher research. Materials will be provided. To register, please E-mail to [tc@greatneck.k12.ny.us](mailto:tc@greatneck.k12.ny.us) or phone 516-773-1763.

**May 31-June 1, 2008: The Battle of Saratoga Teacherhostel,** Saratoga Springs and vicinity. Spend a weekend immersed in one of the most critical battles of the American Revolution. Participants will be exposed to multiple perspectives involving the battle. Join with scholars, the National Park Service, and re-enactors to learn about the event. Contact Hours: 18, Cost: \$175 (includes two lunches and one dinner), Cutoff Date: April 30, To register, go to: [http://www.ihare.org/programs\\_teacher2008.html](http://www.ihare.org/programs_teacher2008.html).

**July 21-25, 2008, The Hudson River Teacherhostel: The Westchester Experience,** Sleepy Hollow to Hastings-on Hudson, Contact Hours: 40, Cost: \$245 (includes five lunches and one dinner),

**Enrollment Cutoff Date: June 21, 2008.** Experience the Hudson River from colonial times to the present. Meet the authors, scholars, and curators who preserve its legacy and tell its story. Learn about the Dutch, slavery, Washington Irving, Hudson River art, the Gilded Age, and the Rockefellers. See how the ecology changed over the centuries and learn about the plans and ideas for the future. Debate the challenges of the new construction. The program combines art, archaeology, ecology, history, literature and provides a testament to the efforts of small river towns to maintain their heritage and identity into the 21st century. To register go to:

[http://www.ihare.org/programs\\_teacher2008.html](http://www.ihare.org/programs_teacher2008.html)

**August 4-8, 2008, Forts of the Empire State Teacherhostel,** Fort Edward, Fort William Henry, Fort Ticonderoga, Contact Hours: 40, Cost: \$345, **Enrollment cutoff date: June 26.** Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the French and Indian War in upstate New York. Hear about the British and American perspectives. Tour the forts, stand on the high ground, cruise the lakes, and walk

the shores of the war that became part of American history, literature, and movies. Hear from a range of speakers, receive curriculum materials, leave with a better understanding of the global war that preceded the American Revolution, and bring that excitement and experience back to the classroom. To register for the program go to: [http://www.ihare.org/programs\\_teacher2008forts.html](http://www.ihare.org/programs_teacher2008forts.html).

## **Events**

**Walk on either May 4th or June 1st, 2008. A Walk To Remember**, honoring the memory of the 1.5 million innocent children who perished the Holocaust. For a small admission fee of \$10, you'll receive a butterfly in the name of a Holocaust Child which will be placed on display. Proceeds from this event will help ensure that the Children's Memorial Garden is maintained for future generations to enjoy. Click her for more details on this special event -- [A Walk to Remember](#). For further information on this exciting event, please contact Silvana Gulla, Development Director at [silvanagullo@holocaust-nassau.org](mailto:silvanagullo@holocaust-nassau.org) or 516-571-8040, x-107. [www.holocaust-nassau.org](http://www.holocaust-nassau.org).

**May 7, 2008, 8:30AM-3:30PM:** New York State Alliance for Arts Education, will present a day-long conference on Long Island; **Tools for Success: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning**, The conference will provide strategies for using arts integration as an engaging tool to build the creative thinking skills that are essential for students' success in the 21st Century global workplace. Register a group of three from your school and receive discounted registration. Registration is \$125 for individuals or \$300 for a team of three. To register, download a registration form at [www.nysaae.org/artsedconf.htm](http://www.nysaae.org/artsedconf.htm). For more information, contact the New York State Alliance for Arts Education at [info@nysaae.org](mailto:info@nysaae.org).

**May 12, 2008, 8:15AM to 3PM:** Mid-Hudson Principals' Center *presents The Promise and Practice of Professional Learning Communities featuring Dr. Giselle Martin-Kniep* and the Communities for Learning Staff, Ulster BOCES Conference Center. Spend a day with *Communities for Learning: Leading lasting change*. **Target audience: teams of teachers, administrators and students.** Priority will be given to Principals' Center members. You may register by: The MyLearningPlan.com direct link at <http://www.ulsterboces.org/>; choose the Principals' Center option. Contact Rebecca Rotzler by phone at 845.255.1402, by e-mail at <mailto:rrotzler@mhrnic.org>. Fee: \$50 each day for Principals' Center members, \$125 all others. Light lunch & materials included.

**May 22, 2008, 8:30 AM—2:45 PM: Meeting the Challenge: Success for Special Needs Learners**, Melville Hilton. Don't miss this important conference for all educators, sponsored by the Suffolk's Edge Teacher Center. Keynote speaker, Dr. Paul Yellin will present **Helping Struggling Learners Find Success**. Morning and afternoon workshops include Transitions for Middle and High School, Increasing Social IQ and Social Skills, ABCs of Special Education, Managing Defiant Behavior, and much more.

Conference Fee is \$50.00 for SETC members, \$70 for non-members. Lunch will be served. For more information about this SETC-sponsored conference, go to [www.seteachercenter.org](http://www.seteachercenter.org).

**June 2, 2008:** The OWL Teacher Center in cooperation with Molloy College announces an Information Meeting for all teachers interested in a **Certificate Program in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)**. Secondary Teachers will be able to meet with representatives from Molloy at 3:30 p.m.; Elementary Teachers will meet at 4:15 PM. Site: Lindenhurst Administration Bldg., All-Purpose Room, 350 Daniel St. Lindenhurst, NY 11757. Come and meet the Molloy representatives who will answer all of your questions about the program. Prospective classes to be held in Lindenhurst with a 30% tuition discount. Contact Owl Teacher Center at 631/226-2772 or [www.owlcenter.org](http://www.owlcenter.org)

**June 27-29, 2008. ASCD Summer Conference on Differentiated Instruction, Understanding by Design, and What Works In Schools.** ASCD has gathered experts on these three research-based, classroom-proven approaches to learning and teaching for its summer conference. Attendees will have an opportunity to explore all three approaches or delve more deeply into the one approach they are most interested in. To learn more about the conference contact ASCD's Service Center at 1-800-933-2723 or 1-703-578-9600 and press 2. or go to:

<http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.094e328178c0162abfb3ffdb62108a0c/>

**July 20-23, 2008:** Reserve your seat now for the [NCTE Institute for 21st Century Literacies](#) in Indianapolis, Indiana. The hands-on institute will help you develop and design literacy curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment practices to prepare students for success in the 21st century. The institute is meant for teachers, literacy coaches, department chairs, and district leaders.

**August 11-13, 2008, 9:00AM-3:00PM: First Annual Literacy Coaching Conference: Summer Institute Focused on Enhancing Teaching and Learning Across Content Areas,** Keynote speakers include: Dr. Jim Knight from University of Kansas—Center for Research on Learning, Dr. Cheryl Dozier from University of New York at Albany, Mary Catherine Moran from SUNY Oneonta—Eastern Stream Center, A group of experienced coaches and professional learning providers will provide workshop sessions for demonstrations and modeling. From the State University of New York, Oneonta, Division of Education. For Graduate Credit or Professional Development (one seat hour). For more information, please contact **Jean Yaro at 607-436-3176, Fax: 607-436-2554, E-mail: [yaroje@oneonta.edu](mailto:yaroje@oneonta.edu),** Catskill Regional Teacher Center. Registration fee of \$180 includes continental breakfast and box lunch.

**[Announcements](#)**

Have you seen our website? [www.seteachercenter.org](http://www.seteachercenter.org). There you can find information about our workroom for teachers, low cost graduate programs, in-service credit opportunities, mini-grant applications, Policy Board members, newsletters and e-newsletters, collegial inquiry funding, instructional coaching...and more teacher resources.

**Free professional development experience for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade biology (Living Environment) teachers.** Their participation will also contribute to a 2-year study of the impact of online professional development on teacher effectiveness and student performance. Teachers also receive a stipend of \$200-600 for participation, based on yearly tasks, for each year of participation in the study. The research study is supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and is a partnership effort between the Educational Development Center for Children and Technology and PBS TeacherLine New York. There is also some funding available to districts or organizations that coordinate the participation of multiple teachers from their service area. More information is available at <http://teacherline.nylearns.org/ABENY.asp>.

**The Living History Education Foundation (LHEF) is offering all-expenses paid courses for educators.** Bringing history to life through "hands-on" education, the courses will also allow educators to earn graduate or in-service credits. . All lodging, food and site fees are paid by LHEF. Materials and use of Living History Depots will be provided. The only cost is an in-service fee of \$25 per credit or a graduate credit fee for 3-credit courses (\$945). All educators are eligible. For more information, contact Joe Ryan at 914-739-0136 or e-mail <mailto:livinghistory@optonline.net>.

**April 18<sup>th</sup> deadline. Attention Teachers:** Please help us find our "Student of the Year - Hero for Tolerance." The Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center needs your help! This award will promote tolerance in your school and community by publicly recognizing a student who is a leader against prejudice and a role model for justice. The "Student of the Year - Hero for Tolerance" award will be ceremoniously presented on **May 7, 2008** at the **Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center's** annual Tolerance Benefit. Contact Sarah at [sarahcushman@holocaust-nassau.org](mailto:sarahcushman@holocaust-nassau.org) or **516-571-8040** for a nomination form.

**Make Your Plans for Poem in Your Pocket Day!** Invite students and colleagues to choose a favorite poem and carry it in their pockets to celebrate the first national [Poem in Your Pocket Day](#) on **April 17**, sponsored by the Academy of American Poets. During the day, encourage readers to unfold and read their pocketed poems in celebration of the visions of poets. To share your ideas or receive more information about Poem in Your Pocket Day, please contact Elaine Bleakney at [ebleakney@poets.org](mailto:ebleakney@poets.org).

**May 7, 2008, Opening date of the new Sports Museum of America in New York City.** The Sports Museum of America is a celebration of sports: the heroes, the teams, the fans, and the triumphs - from the greatest legends to the stars of today. The museum is the proud new home of the legendary Heisman Trophy, college football's top honor, and in partnership with the Women's Sports Foundation, SmA will be home to the new Billie Jean King International Women's Sports Center. The new Sports Museum of America will feature amazing state-of-the-art interactive technologies, dramatic original films and an iconic collection of sports memorabilia. For more information, go to <http://www.sportsmuseum.com/>. For group ticket sales, click on the icon for Sports Museum of America at <http://www.ticketsforgroups.com>. The Sports Museum of America is located at 26 Broadway, just steps from the famous "Charging Bull" statue that sits just north of Bowling Green on Broadway in Lower Manhattan.

**Application deadline - May 9. 2008 Toyota Teacher Program.** Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A. began taking U.S. teachers to Japan on study tours in 1998. After 10 successful years and almost 500 participants, this educational and cultural exchange has exceeded expectations and set a new precedent for Toyota's philanthropic future. **Applications are available now for the 2008 Galapagos Program!** Selected participants will travel from November 2-December 6, 2008 on a fully funded study program that is geared toward international and environmental study. Participants work to create an interdisciplinary lesson that can be implemented in their home schools. Check online at [www.iie.org/toyota](http://www.iie.org/toyota) or e-mail to [toyotateach@iie.org](mailto:toyotateach@iie.org).

## [Sharing Success Research](#)

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

- Reading [MS/HS]
- Mathematics [Elem, MS, HS]
- Arts and Mathematics [Elementary, MS, HS]
- School Leadership Development [Elementary, MS, HS]

## [Worthwhile Websites](#)

### **For teachers**

<http://gelessons.com/lessons/>. This new teacher-created site helps teachers use Google Earth in classrooms. On it you can share lesson plans incorporating the new free [Google Earth software](#). In addition to dozens of lesson plans, the site offers guides to help teachers become more comfortable with the software

<http://www.schooltube.com/>. School tube primarily features videos that students produce for class.

<http://www.teachertube.com/>. This site, created by a superintendent, allows educators to share Classroom-appropriate videos.

### **For students**

**Little Critter**   <http://www.littlecritter.com> Welcome to the world of Critterville, home to popular children's book character Little Critter. Here you can have fun with Little Critter through printables, games, interactive stories, and more. There are even videos of author/illustrator Mercer Mayer reading some of the books. Flash player is needed for many of the interactive elements.

**Little Explorers.**  <http://www.EnchantedLearning.com/Dictionary.html>. Click on a letter of the alphabet and connect to, not one, but many, many pictures of words with that letter and hot links to Web sites about that word.

**Mathslice.com**       <http://www.mathslice.com> Play online math games like Math Wheel (math terms), Jeopardy (addition), and Finding Nemo (direction) or generate custom math worksheets on topics such as telling time, fractions, money, and many more!

**Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood.**   <http://pbs.org/rogers/> Includes activities for kids as well as show-related information for kids and parents.

**Multnomah County (Ore.) Library KidsPage.**       <http://www.multcolib.org/kids/> A Homework Center with more than 500 sites, the Beverly Cleary Sculpture Garden site, and the Library Joke of the Month (usually a groaner).

**My Kids Corner**   <http://www.my-kids-corner.com> Originating from the United Kingdom and filled with a variety of activities for kids, this site will provide hours of fun. Included are stories, rhymes, games, puzzles, and more. There is also a special section of interactive stories that allow kids to enter their own names to become part of the story.

**New York Public Library "On-Lion" for Kids.**       <http://kids.nypl.org/> NYPL's site includes many booklists and an easy-to-use design.

**Nickelodeon Jr.**     <http://www.nickjr.com> From the people who bring you the Nickelodeon Channel, this site is created for younger children and has a variety of games, activities and fun.

**Noggin**   <http://www.noggin.com> From the television station by the same name, this site has activities related to the shows on Noggin. Games, printables, and video provide hours of fun and education for preschoolers. There is also a parent section with information about Noggin.

**Official Disney Web Site.**       <http://www.disney.go.com/home/today/index.html>. Movies, animation—everything Disney!

## [NCTE Inbox](#)

### [News](#)

"Crisis" Graduation Gap Found between Cities, Suburbs. See the [report](#) from America's Promise Alliance that looks at high school graduation rates between public schools in the 50 biggest cities and

the suburbs that surround them. [USA Today, April 1, 2008](#)

**Many Potential Leaders of Tomorrow Reject the Role.** See the [survey](#) by the Girl Scouts of the USA. [The Washington Post, March 27, 2008](#)

**Teacher Suspended Over Book.** Connie Heerman, who was challenged for teaching *Freedom Writers' Diary* against the wishes of the school administration, has been suspended. [CNN, March 26, 2008](#)

**Size Alone Makes Small Classes Better for Kids.** A new report on the effects of smaller class size says that kids do better in smaller classes mostly because of what they feel that they can do rather than because the teacher is teaching differently. [USA Today, March 25, 2008](#)

**"Multiple Intelligences" at 25.** Howard Gardner speaks about multiple intelligences, standardized tests, and the eighth and possible ninth intelligence. [Inside Higher Ed, March 25, 2008](#)

### Reading and Literacy.

**Pottermania Lives on in College Classrooms.** Harry Potter is being taught at colleges across the country. [CNN.com, March 25, 2008](#)

**Graphic Novels.** "Picture This: Teachers Are Using Comics, Now Called 'Graphic Novels,' to Captivate Reluctant Readers": [The Miami-Herald, March 22, 2008](#). "Three Writers Feel the Lure of Comics": [Morning Edition, National Public Radio, March 25, 2008](#).

**Choosing Books for Students.** This collection of four articles on choosing books for students features quotes by NCTE member Teri Lesesne (*The Washington Post*, March 24, 2008):

[Question for the Ages: What Books When?](#)

[Two Pros Offer Tips for Adults to Help Children Choose the Right Stuff to Read](#)

[Most Challenged Books Include \*Beloved\* and \*The Chocolate War\*](#)

[Author Works to Prevent Reading's "Death Spiral"](#)

### Blog....

**Being and Becoming Language Learners.** When all students are positioned as language learners in the classroom, everyone wins. NCTE INBOX blogger Traci Gardner discusses why in [this week's NCTE INBOX Blog](#).

**Online Tools for Poets.** Looking for some fun as you celebrate National Poetry Month? NCTE blogger

Traci Gardner shares links to some of her favorite poetry tools in [this week's NCTE INBOX Blog](#)

### Ideas

**Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners.** English language instruction continues to be a hot topic in the news -- from achievement gaps to funding and professional development for teachers. These resources focus on supporting students' cultural language and identity as they work to learn a second language. For a rich description of a classroom and curriculum that supports English language learners, read the *Language Arts* article "["Seeing the Possibilities': Learning from, with, and about Multilingual Classroom Communities](#)" (E), which examines the lives of four multilingual students, their classmates, and teacher as they use a range of systems to learn from, with, and about one another and their surrounding social worlds. The *Voices from the Middle* article "[Preserving the Cultural Identity of the English Language Learner](#)" (M) urges teachers to celebrate the multiple cultures and languages in their classrooms and offers advice, examples, and resources for maintaining students' cultural identities while they work to learn the English language. Looking for ways to address sentence construction with English language learners? The *English Journal* article "[Phrase and Clause Grammar Tactics for the ESL/ELL Writing Classroom](#)" (S) shows how sentence-combining activities can lead to comprehension of different types of phrases and clauses as well as improved student writing. "[Toward a Writing Pedagogy of Shuttling between Languages: Learning from Multilingual Writers](#)" (C) from *College English* argues that instruction must see the first language and culture as a resource, not a problem, and argues that teachers must seek practices that accommodate diverse literacy traditions -- rather than keep them divided and separate. Check out the [Elementary English Language Learner](#) and [Secondary English Language Learners](#) Teaching Resource Collections for additional resources, including articles and lesson plans.

**Celebrate Poets!** [National Poetry Month](#) is here, but you can celebrate poets all year with the resources included on the [ReadWriteThink calendar](#). Each month, the calendar lists classroom activities and online resources associated with events in literacy and literature. You can find resources listed on the birthdays of poets such as these:

[Maya Angelou](#)

[Langston Hughes](#)

[William Blake](#)

[Yusef Komunyakaa](#)

[Robert Burns](#)

[John Lennon](#)

[Lewis Carroll](#)

[Pat Mora](#)

[Emily Dickinson](#)

[Gary Soto](#)

[Robert Frost](#)

[William Shakespeare](#)

[Seamus Heaney](#)

[Ernest Thayer](#)

[Karen Hesse](#)

[Walt Whitman](#)

You might try 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 lesson plans and 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!

**Experimenting with Poetry Writing.** Plan your [National Poetry Month](#) celebration with the following lesson plans and classroom-ready resources, all of which invite students to write their own poetry.

- [A Bear of a Poem: Composing and Performing Found Poetry](#) (E)
- [Seasonal Haiku: Writing Poems to Celebrate Any Season](#) (E)
- [Writing Poetry with Rebus and Rhyme](#) (E)
- [Polishing Preposition Skills through Poetry and Publication](#) (M)
- [Exploring Change through Allegory and Poetry](#) (M)
- [The ABCs of Poetry](#) (M-S)
- [Finding Poetry in Prose: Reading and Writing Love Poems](#) (S)
- [Put That on the List: Collaboratively Writing a Catalog Poem](#) (S)
- [Discovering Traditional Sonnet Forms](#) (S)

## [In the News](#)

### [Eye on Curriculum](#)

**Prestigious U.S. colleges reject more applicants than ever.** Of the more than 27,000 students who applied to Harvard this year, nearly 93% were rejected, including many of the 5,800 with perfect reading or math SAT scores and more than 3,300 valedictorians. Several other Ivy League colleges set similar records, officials said, as decision letters were mailed this week. "We love the people we admitted, but we also love a very large number of the people who we were not able to admit," said William R. Fitzsimmons, Harvard's dean of admissions and financial aid. [The New York Times](#) (4/1)

**Spellings to propose national graduation-rate formula.** U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings said the federal agency intends to propose rules requiring states to use a standard measure for calculating graduation rates and to make publicly available information on the graduation rates of specific demographics. Spellings made the announcement at an event sponsored by America's Promise Alliance, which Tuesday published a report on dismal urban graduation rates. Although NCLB requires states to publish graduation rates, they are left to their own discretion in deciding what formula to use -- a practice that some critics say can lead to rates being overestimated. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of Edweek.org\)](#) (4/1)

**Long-term teachers increase school's graduation rate.** Just a few years ago, fewer than 40% of students graduated from Clover Park High School in Lakewood, Wash. But after the school assigned students in small groups to the same teachers for all four years of high school, more than 70% of students now graduate. "You've got a relationship that is so tight with those kids that they're willing to share their life with you," said principal John Seaton. "So you can become part of the solution for their problems." [ABC News](#) (4/1)

**High school graduation may mark end to special services.** For students with some disabilities, high school graduation can bring an abrupt end to services they've had access to nearly since birth. As once-common job-training or life-skills courses are given short-shrift as students with special needs take extra classes in reading and math to pass standardized tests, more are feeling unprepared for life as adults. [The Washington Post/Associated Press](#) (3/31), [The Washington Post/Associated Press](#) (3/31)

**Chemistry of cosmetics sparks girls' interest in science.** Nearly a dozen middle-school girls are taking a Saturday course at Boston's Museum of Science that lets the students examine the chemical components of cosmetics and concoct their own lipsticks as a way to increase their interest in science, says biochemist Chi-Ting Huang, who teaches the class. [The New York Times](#) (3/27)

**Robotics competition encourages exploration of science, engineering.** Robot races among competing high-school teams in Michigan are drawing enthusiastic crowds. "The program addresses so many different aspects of science and business," said parent Gina Ure. "We absolutely love it. The whole idea behind it is that the real heroes in life are not in sports and movies, they are professionals and innovators." [Detroit Free Press](#) (3/29)

**Defense contractors scramble for next generation of engineers:** Faced with an aging work force, stiff competition and strict hiring rules, the defense industry is facing a shortage of young scientists and engineers that could affect national security. Such concerns are prompting some defense companies to send math and science tutors into elementary schools and offer reimbursement for college tuition. [The Courier-Journal \(Louisville, Ky.\)/Associated Press](#) (3/31)

### **Professional Leadership**

**N.C. to strip some funding from charters with too few licensed teachers.** Any North Carolina middle or high-school charter where fewer than 50% of teachers are licensed or certified by the state, and charter elementaries where that level is beneath 75%, may have a portion of its state funding withheld under new rules approved by the state's education board Thursday. "We're not raising the standards," said board member Melissa Bartlett. "We're simply helping charter schools to comply with the standards." [The News & Observer \(Raleigh, N.C.\)](#) (4/3)

**Collaboration catapults Chicago-area high school to success.** An Illinois high school that was among the first to adapt teacher collaboration has progressed from being a good school to an outstanding one, achieving several national honors and seeing up to 96% of its students go on to attend college. Together, teachers brainstorm lesson ideas, strategize test questions and help each other improve teaching skills as members of professional learning communities. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of Edweek.org\)](#) (4/1)

## Learning and Teaching

**Classroom visits help principals become instructional leaders.** Principals who observe classrooms regularly can highlight best practices and improve learning in their schools, says Dr. Beth Whitaker, Indiana State University associate professor of elementary education. "It's such a simple concept -- but it makes a huge impact," she said. "I would tell all administrators, 'Be in the classrooms -- immerse yourself in the learning of your building. Make it a priority.'" [Education World](#) (3/31)

**Teacher collaboration makes inclusion work.** An experiment in co-teaching between a regular classroom teacher struggling to assist students in need of remedial help and a special educator working to help her students become proficient for standardized tests, helped both groups of students greatly improve their test scores. Sixth-grade teacher Laurie Wasserman, who is National Board-certified in learning disabilities, explains how they did it. [Teacher Magazine](#) (4/2)

**Parents can be valuable allies.** Educator Danielle M. Mbadu eagerly anticipates parent-teacher conferences as an opportunity not only to talk about students' educational progress, but to cement bonds with parents. Seeing parents as allies in the educational process helps children feel supported, she says, adding, "That means a lot to students, even if they do not freely admit it." [Teacher Magazine](#) (3/26)

## Technology

**Survey: Hispanic adults more likely to use text messages.** More than half of all U.S. adults use their cell phones for more than just telephone calls, according to a Pew Internet & America Life Project survey. Using cell phones to text message is an especially popular trend among Hispanic adults, which means school officials who want to reach out to them about their children are probably going to need to get up to speed on texting in Spanish as well as English, this article says. [eSchool News](#) (3/31)

**Wireless mics help teachers cut through sonic clutter.** Elementary school teachers in Washington, D.C., area suburban schools are among those using infrared microphones as an aid to both project their voices without raising them and to cut through the ambient clutter of children's voices, equipment humming and poor classroom acoustics. [The Washington Post](#) (3/31)

**Adobe puts basic Photoshop ware online for free.** Photo bugs can access a basic version of [Adobe Systems'](#) Photoshop online and pay nothing to use the software. The company, which put the freebie up at its site today, said the goal was to enhance its brand recognition among younger people who edit, store and share their pictures over the Internet. [The Wall Street Journal/Associated Press](#) (subscription required) (3/27), [Pocket-lint.co.uk](#) (3/27)

## Policy Watch

**Ranks of public school students thin out in Washington, D.C.** For the seventh year in a row, D.C. public schools have lost students, with enrollment dipping below 50,000 for the current school year. A total of 49,400 students are now enrolled in D.C.'s public schools versus more than 55,000 last year. Separately, charter school enrollment in the District topped 20,000 for the first time. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of Edweek.org\)/Associated Press](#) (4/3)

**Report: State spending per pupil.** While U.S. schools spent an average \$9,138 educating each student in 2006, Utah spent less than \$5,500 per student while New York paid nearly \$15,000, according to a new [U.S. Census Bureau school survey](#). The report said state governments in 2006 contributed the lion's share of public school funding, followed closely by localities, with the federal government a distant third in terms of its fiscal contribution. [Tulsa World \(Okla.\)](#) (4/2), [Central Valley Business Times](#) (4/1), [The Palm Beach Post](#) (4/2)

**Should Texas Bible course be governed by statewide standards?** A controversial Texas public school Bible course approved by state lawmakers last year is generating more rancor as lawmakers now debate whether schools that adopt the course should teach a standard curriculum. Some members of the state's board of education say existing curriculum standards for Bible courses currently being taught in several Texas school districts are sufficient guidance. [Houston Chronicle](#) (3/28)

### **NCLB**

**Arizona House votes on NCLB withdrawal.** If the Arizona legislature can find \$600 million to replace federal funding that could be forfeited as a result, the state would opt out of NCLB by mid-2010 under a state House bill approved 46-11 Tuesday; the bill now goes to the state Senate for consideration. "No Child Left Behind is pretty much the biggest unfunded mandate of our education system in history," said Rep. David Schapira, a Tempe Democrat who sponsored the bill. "The federal government essentially holds our tax dollars as ransom and tells us what to do in our classrooms in Arizona." [The Arizona Republic \(Phoenix\)/Associated Press](#) (4/1)

### **In the Field**

**Diverse home-schoolers find common foe in California ruling.** California's 166,000 home-schooled children are educated by their parents in many ways and reasons, but their families are banding together to oppose a February ruling requiring them to have teaching credentials. Some say they'd move out-of-state if the decision is not overturned in appeals court. [Los Angeles Times](#).

**Home-schoolers rally to oppose N.H. bill mandating curriculum planning:** New Hampshire home-school parents are protesting a state House bill that would make them submit a curriculum to their school district prior to embarking on their children's at-home lessons, even though the district would have no veto power over the lesson plans. Supporters of the measure say it would ensure parents establish a plan of action before pulling their children out of public schools, but critics say it infringes on parents' rights and may scare off prospective home-schoolers. [The Keene \(N.H.\) Sentinel/Concord Monitor](#) (4/3)

**Report: Children worse off in some U.S. states.** Children born in the 10 lowest-ranking U.S. states are twice as likely to live in poverty, become teenage parents, be incarcerated, or die as children or teens, according to a new Every Child Matters [report](#). "The state American children live in should not adversely affect life chances, but they do," said report author Michael R. Petit, founder of Every Child Matters. "How is it that a poor child in Vermont lives in a completely different world from a similarly impoverished child in Louisiana?" [Forbes/HealthDay News](#) (4/2)

**Chicago students rally to remember shooting victims.** Busloads of Chicago students skipped school to attend a gun-control rally Tuesday to acknowledge the 20 district students killed by guns so far this school year. Chicago schools chief Arne Duncan personally excused their absences, saying it's not right that some children talk about "if" they grow up rather than "when." "We just value our right to bear arms more than we value our children, and our priorities are fundamentally backwards," he said. [Google/Associated Press](#) (4/1)

*"Forever is composed of nows."*

-- Emily Dickinson, American poet