

## February 2008 E-newsletter

*Dear Colleague,  
Click on "NCTE Inbox" below and scroll down to "Ideas" to challenge your students to question and explore social issues and to move beyond rudimentary explorations of democracy.*

*Please share this e-newsletter with your peers and invite them to subscribe by e-mailing [teacher\\_center@wsboces.org](mailto:teacher_center@wsboces.org) with their names and e-mail addresses.*

*Jane, Carol and Elyse*

### In this Issue

[A Light Touch](#)

[FYI](#)

[Sharing Success Research](#)

[Worthwhile Websites](#)

[NCTE Inbox](#)

[In the News](#)

### A Light Touch

#### **Short & Funny**

I dialed a number and got the following recording: "I am not available right now, but thank you for caring enough to call. I am making some changes in my life. Please leave a message after the beep. If I do not return your call, you are one of the changes."

~~~~~

My wife and I had words, but I didn't get to use mine.

~~~~~

Frustration is trying to find your glasses without your glasses.

~~~~~

God made man before woman so as to give him time to think of an answer for her first question.

~~~~~

Every morning is the dawn of a new error.

### **It Makes Sense**

1. "If a woman has to choose between catching a fly ball and saving an infant's life, she will choose to save the infant's life without even considering if there is a man on base." --Dave Barry
2. "My Mom said she learned how to swim when someone took her out in the lake and threw her off the boat. I said, 'Mom, they weren't trying to teach you how to swim.'" --Paula Poundstone
3. "A study in the Washington Post says that women have better verbal skills than men. I just want to say to the authors of that study: "Duh." --Conan O'Brien
4. "I think that's how Chicago got started. Bunch of people in New York said, 'Gee, I'm enjoying the crime and the poverty, but it just isn't cold enough. Let's go west.'" --Richard Jeni
5. "If life were fair, Elvis would be alive and all the impersonators would be dead." --Johnny Carson
6. "Sometimes I think war is God's way of teaching us geography." --Paul Rodriguez
7. "My parents didn't want to move to Florida, but they turned sixty and that's the law." --Jerry Seinfeld
8. "Bigamy is having one wife/husband too many. Monogamy is the same." --Oscar Wilde
9. "Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself."  
--Mark Twain
10. "Our bombs are smarter than the average high school student. At least they can find Afghanistan."  
--A. Whitney Brown
11. "You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, 'My God, you're right! I never would've thought of that!'" --Dave Barry
12. "Everybody's got to believe in something. I believe I'll have another beer." - W. C. Fields

### **First-graders proverbs**

A first grade school teacher gave each child in her classroom the first half of a well-known proverb and asked them to complete it.

1. Don't change horses ...until they stop running.
2. Strike while the...bug is close.
3. It's always darkest before...Daylight Saving Time.
4. Never underestimate the power of...termites.
5. You can lead a horse to water but...how?
6. Don't bite the hand that...looks dirty.
7. No news is...impossible.
8. You can't teach an old dog new...math.
9. The pen is mightier than the...pigs.
10. A penny saved is....not much.
11. Don't put off till tomorrow what ...you put on to go to bed.
12. There are none so blind as...Stevie

Wonder. 13. Children should be seen and not...spanked or grounded. 14. If at first you don't succeed...get new batteries. 15. You get out of something only what you...see in the picture on the box.

## FYI

### Courses and Workshops

#### **NYS Teacher Center Online Academy**

The Online Academy can be found at the Rockland Teacher Center website at <http://www.rockteach.org/>. Click on Online Courses, then Online Academy Catalog and follow the directions. Be sure to check with your district for course approval.

### Events

**Winter Recess, Feb. 16 - 23, 2008. There's a special event in Ithaca and you're the guest of honor!** Ithaca celebrates New York's public school teachers and district employees with entertainment, family activities and discounts throughout the community. Last year, more than 1,300 educators and their families took part in the festivities, creating America's first citywide festival of state teachers! This year's celebration will be even better. Lodging, dining, events, activities—we've put the whole city on sale, just for you. For more information visit [IthacaLovesTeachers.com](http://IthacaLovesTeachers.com), or contact the Ithaca Convention and Visitors Bureau, (800) 284-8422. Thank you, teachers! Ithaca loves you!

**February 27, 2008, Collaborating for the Success of English Language Learners:** A Conference in Collaboration with NYSUT, NYSTESOL, Questar III BETAC, and the Greater Capital Region Teacher Center will be held at NYSUT Headquarters - Al Shanker Conference Center, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, New York. This conference is for middle and high school content area teachers, English as Second Language teachers and bilingual teachers. The conference is designed to share research and effective strategies to improve English language learners' language acquisition skills. Effective strategies for teacher collaboration will also be shared. Participants will have an opportunity to attend two interactive sessions. Please register through NYSUT's on-line meeting registration system link at: <http://www.nysut.org/eReg/ELLCON>

**March 15 - 17, ASCD 2008 Annual Conference: Courageous Leadership for Positive Change.** Devastated by Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans citizens and Americans across the nation have worked hard to rebuild the Big Easy and provide an appropriate school environment for students who are returning. ASCD will contribute to that industrious spirit by holding the 2008 Annual Conference in New Orleans. The ASCD Homepage highlights this event and offers information on sessions, becoming a conference volunteer, the DonorsChoose Challenge and more. [View the ASCD Homepage](#)

**April 2 - 5, [2008 CCCC Convention](#)**, New Orleans. Did you know that you can plan your 2008 CCCC Convention experience online? The [Online Program](#) is your guide to the hundreds of sessions, workshops, technological offerings, and innovations in educational materials available during this year's Convention. The Online Program lets you search by: speaker name, speaker state, day, session time period, keyword(s), focus, area cluster, level of emphasis, type of session, interest of emphasis. [Register online](#) today. Don't miss a great professional development experience that you'll never forget! See you in New Orleans!

**May 31 - June 1, 2008, The Battle of Saratoga Teacherhostel**, Saratoga Springs and vicinity. Spend a weekend immersing yourself in one of the most critical battles of the American Revolution. Participants will be exposed to multiple perspectives involving the battle including the British plans before and reaction afterward, the battlefield from land and from the water, and the effort to preserve the battlefield for future generations. 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)

**May 12, 2008, 8:15 AM to 3 PM**, 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.*<sup>™</sup>

- Explore a unique framework that develops lasting learning communities that learn & lead
- Discover the practices and behaviors that support professional learning communities
- Engage in activities that enable you to maximize what you know and can do in your school or district
- Discuss how Communities for Learning can help you and your school or district build that capacity to create and sustain innovations and improve learning for everyone

**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:rrrotzler@mhrhc.org>

Fee: \$50 each day for Principals' Center members, \$125 all others. Light lunch & materials included.

Please make checks payable to: Ulster BOCES Treasurer. For program status call 845.255.1402, X 4000.

### [Announcements](#)

**March 1, 2008 - Submission deadline for 2008 Promising Researcher Award.** The [2008 NCTE](#)

[Promising Researcher Award Competition](#) is open to individuals who have completed dissertations, theses, or initial, independent studies post-dissertation between December 1, 2005, and January 31, 2008

**Help ASCD Support Louisiana students.** ASCD's "*The Next Chapter: Books Bash and Beyond*," a service project and celebration to support revitalization in New Orleans schools, will kick off the 2008 ASCD Annual Conference & Exhibit Show, on Friday, March 14, in New Orleans, La. Conference attendees are invited to bring a new children's book to the Bash, which ASCD will donate to New Orleans public schools. **Anyone who is interested in supporting Louisiana students, whether attending the conference or not,** can help fund critical education resources by visiting ASCD's DonorsChoose Challenge Page. View ASCD's [DonorsChoose Challenge Page](#)

## Sharing Success Research

**You Asked -- We Answered. Sample requests for research that we received from NYS educators:**

I would like information on finding more time for instruction? [K-12](#)

Software and programs that target Math and Reading skills. Looking for a program that would be acceptable for the response to intervention model (RTI) and would target skill areas and provide activities to build skills in the targeted areas. Looking for a safety net per say that could be used with classroom instruction to assist students. Reading, math, phonics builder etc., what is the best out there? [K-12](#)

Input from our community about how we're doing and what could be improved. How can we engage more of our families? [K-12](#)

## Worthwhile Websites

<http://www.thinkfinity.org/parent.aspx>. Often, parents contact teachers for resources that they can use at home when working with their children. Verizon's Thinkfinity (formerly MarcoPoloNY) has put together a collection of resources for parents to utilize in order to help their children with homework, skill building, or to enrich their child's understanding. Feel free to recommend these worthwhile resources to the parents of your students. Include the links on your website or in your newsletter. Thanks for helping to "spread the word" on this ever-growing collection of resources.

<http://desktop.google.com/> Google Desktop was originally introduced in October, 2004 to bring Google web search technology to the desktop. Today you can use Google Desktop to locate your files, emails, past IM chats, web pages you've viewed and more. By making your entire computer searchable, Google Desktop puts your information easily within your reach and frees you from having to manually organize

your files, emails and bookmarks.

## 12 great websites for Elementary and Middle School Students

**Harlem: 1900-1940.**  <http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem>. Based on an exhibit at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, this site features photographs, commentary, a timeline and resources.

**Harry Potter.**  <http://www.scholastic.com/harrypotter/home.asp>. Scholastic has created a fun-filled site for Harry Potter fans of all ages. Click on this site and find a trivia game, a pronunciation guide, owl posts and more.

**Hercules: Greece's Greatest Hero.**  <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/Hercules/>. This is part of the scholarly Perseus Project at Tufts University, but useful to grasp the place of Hercules in myth and history.

**Hiroshima Archive.**  <http://www.lclark.edu/~history/HIROSHIMA/>. The Hiroshima Archive was originally set up to join the online effort made by many people all over the world to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombing. This archive is intended to serve as a research and educational guide to those who want to gain and expand their knowledge of the atomic bombing.

**How Stuff Works.**  <http://www.howstuffworks.com>. Learn how everything works. From digital cameras to identity theft, this site is a treasure trove of useful and searchable information.

**Hubble Site.**  <http://hubblesite.org>. Learn about new Hubble discoveries, view photographs of stars and galaxies, and find out facts about this remarkable telescope.

**Human Anatomy Online.**  <http://www.InnerBody.com/htm/body.html> Welcome to Human Anatomy Online, the place for fun, interactive, and educational views of the human body. This program contains more than 100 illustrations of the human body with animations and thousands of descriptive links. Java enhanced.

**Human Genome Project.**  [http://www.ornl.gov/TechResources/Human\\_Genome/home.html](http://www.ornl.gov/TechResources/Human_Genome/home.html). Explore this site for answers about the U.S. Human Genome Project. Useful to older children who have projects in this area.

**Hurricane Hunters.**  <http://www.hurricanehunters.com/>. Photos and information from the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, known as the Hurricane Hunters of the Air Force Reserve. Especially cool is the Cyberflight into the Eye.

**Ice Treasures of the Inca.**  <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/96/mummy/>. This offers an interactive journey with climber Johan Reinhard to find the great treasures of the Inca. You can follow the step-by-step journey of discovery.

[Idealist.org: Kids and Teens.](http://www.idealists.org/kt)  <http://www.idealists.org/kt> .Learn all about nonprofit organizations and the activities and issues they pursue. Includes information about organizations started by kids as well as suggestions for getting started on your own.

[Science Activities](http://www.smm.org/explorescience/websites/)  <http://www.smm.org/explorescience/websites/> .The Science Museum of Minnesota highlights objects from the collection monthly that allow visitors to use science sleuthing skills to guess the mystery object as well as find out about other objects. Links are provided to the Playful Invention and Exploration Network, Thinking Fountain, and seven of the greatest geographical places on earth.

## NCTE Inbox

### News

**Arts Education Touted as Key to U.S. Innovation Agenda.** The Arts Education Partnership has released "[Imagine Nation](#)," a survey of 1,000 potential voters across the country, which found that respondents believe it to be very important for schools to help students develop their imaginations so they can be innovators in the 21st century. [Education Week, January 24, 2008](#)

**Good Grades Pay Off - Literally.** In more than a dozen states, students are being "paid" for good grades. [USA Today, January 28, 2008](#)

. . . **On Literacy Education.** "After School Tutoring Program Puts Kids on the Writing Path": The original tutoring program, 826 Valencia, won [NCTE's Literacy Award](#) in 2003. [The Boston Globe, January 20, 2008](#)

"Adults Reading to Kids Helps": [The Powell River Peak, January 24, 2008](#)

"A Philadelphia School That Really Works": [The Philadelphia Inquirer, January 23, 2008](#)

"Why Our Kids' Love for Reading Fades": [The Oregonian, January 27, 2008](#)

"UI Composition Class Forsaking Paper, Turning to Video, Blogs": [The News-Gazette, January 28, 2008](#)

"Rethinking Remedial Education": [Inside Higher Ed, January 29, 2008](#)

. . **Reading.** "Graphic Novels Bring Comics New Popularity": [The Kansas City Star, January 15, 2008](#)

"Stephen King: Books with Batteries -- Why Not?": [Entertainment Weekly website](#)

. . **Technology and Schools.** "It's a Mac! It's a PC! It's . . . Both?" [Inside Higher Ed, January 22,](#)

[2008](#), "One Laptop Per Child Project Extends to American Students": [The Washington Post, January](#)

[13, 2008](#), "Schools Engage Students with Electronic Whiteboards": [Rochester Democrat & Chronicle,](#)

[January 16, 2008](#) , "Downloading by Students Overstated": [Inside Higher Ed, January 23, 2008](#)

. . . **English Language Learners.** "All Illinois Students Will Take Same Assessments": [Daily Herald,](#)

[January 18, 2008](#) , "Transition to Bilingualism": [Inside Higher Ed, January 22, 2008](#)

### Views

**Adults Are Key to the Reading and Writing Equation.** [Family Literacy Week](#) reminds us to recognize the powerful influence families and adults have on the long-term literacy development of children. The following NCTE guidelines suggest ways adults can help children develop reading and writing abilities:

- "[Read Together: Parents and Educators Working Together for Literacy](#)"
- "[How to Help Your Child Become a Better Writer](#)"
- "[Tips for Parents from the National Council of Teachers of English: Helping Your Teenager to Write Better](#)"

**Serving the English Language Learners in Our Schools.** "[All Illinois Students Will Take Same Assessments](#)" and "[Transition to Bilingualism](#)," two articles in this week's News, point to different ways one state and one school are working with the English language learners (ELLs) in their classrooms. This growing U.S. population of K-12 students reached over five million during the 2004-2005 school year, an increase of 65% in ten years ([The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition](#)). Along with the increasing numbers of English language learners in our schools, policies on how to serve ELLs in our educational system continue to be developed at the local, state, and federal levels. The [NCTE Policy Collection on English Language Learners](#) provides an overview of these policies as well as research on teaching English language learners.

### Ideas

**Advocating the Best for Education.** In last night's State of the Union address, President Bush urged for NCLB renewal and a new program to provide "Pell Grants for Kids" -- do you and your students support these ideas or wish for something else? Either way, this week's resources can begin conversations that lead to social action from teachers and students!

Move beyond rote explorations of democracy by challenging elementary students to question and explore social issues. The *Language Arts* article "[Using Picture Books to Teach for Democracy](#)" (E) suggests specific texts and strategies to get started.

Use the ideas in the *Voices from the Middle* article "[Writing to Think Critically: The Seeds of Social Action](#)" (M) to invite middle school students to explore personal experiences and observations in ways that expose underlying issues such as justice, power, fairness, and respect.

The *English Journal* article "[A Practical Guide to Political Action: Grassroots and English Teaching](#)" (S) provides teachers with a list of practical steps for "intentional political action" at the grassroots level.

The *College Composition and Communication* article "[Toward a Civic Rhetoric for Technologically and Scientifically Complex Places: Invention, Performance, and Participation](#)" (C) establishes criteria for a civic rhetoric and outlines ways teachers can help students use invention and performance to be effective participants in the public discussion and debate.

The *English Leadership Quarterly* article "[If You Think Language Is Neutral, Think Again!](#)" (TE)

describes how pre-service teachers used critical language tools to interrogate and explore the use of language and ideological power in news articles on NCLB.

Improving Instruction for ELL/ESL Students. Finding the best materials for teaching students who are learning to speak, read, and write the English language is a challenge for school districts across the nation. These resources provide strategies that can be applied to the English language learners at your school.

The *Language Arts* article "[Reclaiming Recess: Learning the Language of Persuasion](#)" (E) describes how a teacher uses the tools of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to teach her fifth-grade English language learners how to use academic language to challenge school policies regarding recess.

For strategies that teach all students about the connections between languages while highlighting the special expertise that bilingual students can add to such a conversation, check out the *Voices from the Middle* article "[Working under Lucky Stars: Language Lessons for Multilingual Classrooms](#)" (M), which includes practical activities and word lists.

"[Multilingual Students and Language Acquisition: Engaging Activities for Diversity Training](#)" (S), from *English Journal*, presents valuable activities that teachers can use to "build communities of respect, tolerance, and acceptance" for language diversity in schools. Many of the activities are directed toward helping native English speakers empathize with and better understand English language learners' experiences with language acquisition.

Develop ESL students' sense of efficacy, their literacy, and their critical thinking skills with the techniques outlined in the *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* article "[Building ESL Students' Linguistic and Academic Literacy through Content-Based Interclass Collaboration](#)" (C).

From the February issue of *English Leadership Quarterly*, read "[Discomfort, Deficiency, Dedication: Preservice Teachers Voice Their ELL-Related Concerns](#)" (TE) which highlights the concerns and assumptions that 12 pre-service English teachers revealed as they participated in a course that had been revised to pay particular attention to theories and practices that facilitate success for ELLs in schools.

## In the News

### Eye on Curriculum

**Competitive college admissions drive middle-school preparation.** Having scored a 35 out of 36 on the ACT, earned a near-perfect GPA in college-level classes, and founded an organization dedicated to peace, Arianna Pattek at one time would have had her pick of Ivy League schools -- but no more: Increasingly intense competition means that getting into one's school of choice is no longer a sure thing, even for students with stellar qualifications, which has the parents of some middle-school children already mapping out college plans. [The Palm Beach Post](#) (1/31)

[http://www.palmbeachpost.com/accent/content/accent/epaper/2008/01/31/a1e\\_collegemain\\_0131.htm](http://www.palmbeachpost.com/accent/content/accent/epaper/2008/01/31/a1e_collegemain_0131.htm)  
!

**Educator: Focusing on low-performing students has hurt national scores.** Australia's focus on improving the scores of struggling students rather than helping the best students rise even higher has caused the country to fall behind recently in international reading scores, according to professor Barry McGaw, chairman of the country's National Curriculum Board. Educators and government officials should work to improve the performance of students at all levels, he said, adding, "The debate should not be constructed around the notion that you can only do one thing at a time." <http://www.theage.com.au/news/education-news/stop-holding-back-top-students-curriculum-chief/2008/01/31/1201714153287.html> The Age (Melbourne) Australia (2/1)

**Opinion: Arts vital to collaboration, creative thinking.** The decline of arts education limits children's development, collaborative work experiences and appreciation of differences, writes Stephanie Perrin, head of one of the oldest U.S. secondary schools for the arts. Most U.S. schools are still designed for a 19th-century economy, not the 21st-century world that requires risk-taking and creative thinking. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/30/21perrin.h27.html?tmp=1971269633> Education Week (1/29)

**Making politics personal for students.** Helping students understand the real-world impact that election outcomes have on their lives, affecting such things as standardized testing, military recruiting and the future of Social Security, can spark their interest in the political process, says Jay Lowe, a middle-school U.S. history teacher. [http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/palmbeach/sfl-fpschoolvote0128pnjan28\\_0\\_5357082.story](http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/palmbeach/sfl-fpschoolvote0128pnjan28_0_5357082.story) Sun Sentinel (Fla.)(1/28)

**Author breathes life into science texts.** Author Joy Hakim's "Story of Science" series is drawing acclaim for humanizing science by exploring the lives of scientists who made great discoveries. "I've been in science education for almost 40 years, and I've never been as impressed with a series of literature," said Juliana Texley of the National Science Teachers Association. "Joy's text is clear, fun to read, understandable and very, very accurate. After decades of teaching the material, I felt I finally understood the methodology." The Washington Post (1/28) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/27/AR2008012702032.html>

**Opinion: Cash incentives may offer extra motivation.** Affluent parents often motivate their children to do well in school using allowances as well as verbal support, writes Baltimore schools math tutor Michele Shropshire, so why should a proposal to encourage low-income students using cash as an incentive be dismissed by some as outlandish? Tangible rewards could help such students focus on the importance of doing well. The Sun (Baltimore) (free registration) (1/28) [http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bal-op.alonso28jan28\\_0\\_4922366.story](http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bal-op.alonso28jan28_0_4922366.story)

### Professional Leadership

**New Florida county plan ranks teachers based on student grades.** Under a Polk County schools plan, teachers are less likely to be rated poorly if their students earn A's, B's or C's. Since performance-based pay is tied to such ratings, that could make it tempting for some educators to give students undeserved good grades, this article says. Critics of the plan say educators of learners with special

needs or from low-income backgrounds would fare poorly under this system. <http://www.theledger.com/article/20080203/NEWS/802030453/1039> The Ledger (Lakeland, Fla.) (2/3)

**School nurses face a host of student-health issues.** Diabetes, seizures, cystic fibrosis, heart conditions, kidney disease, cancer and mental disorders are among the growing number of severe health issues the seven nurses in a Missouri school district are confronting. A health services department report recommends a full-time nurse be at each building, but some of the district's seven nurses split their time among schools. Washington Missourian (1/29)  
[http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19243868&BRD=1409&PAG=461&dept\\_id=33071&rfi=6](http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19243868&BRD=1409&PAG=461&dept_id=33071&rfi=6)

**Arizona district saves \$200,000 by retiring, rehiring teachers.** A program being implemented in Scottsdale, Ariz., allows teachers to retire, collect their pensions and then return to their former jobs, only as employees of a private company without tenure or benefits and earning less than 83% of their former salary. Eighteen teachers participated last year, and the school board is considering expanding the program. <http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/0128sr-smartschools0129-ON.html> The Arizona Republic (1/28)

### Learning and Teaching

**Study: Students who explain concepts score better.** Four- and five-year-olds who explain new concepts to themselves or their mothers score much higher on tests than those who do not, according to a new Vanderbilt University study. Education Week  
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/30/21report-1.h27.html?tmp=79572056> (1/29)

### Technology Solutions

**States take closer look at virtual schools.** With around 500,000 children in the U.S. attending online classes, including some 90,000 who attend virtual charter schools full-time, states are taking a second look at the funding and oversight of such programs. "After some inquiry most states have said, 'Yes, we like online learning, but these are such new ways of teaching children that we'll need to change some regulations and get some more oversight,'" said Colorado consultant John Watson, who surveys online schools annually. The New York Times (2/1)

**Student teams search schools for energy savings.** Armed with light meters and infrared temperature guns, student-staffed Green Teams are patrolling Maryland school buildings in a quest to find ways to conserve energy. "The youth of today can really help make a difference in their small grass-roots efforts," said senior Neeti Goel. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/30/AR2008013001763.html> The Washington Post (1/31)

**Popular technology can be adapted for the classroom.** Blogs, social networks, wikis and online learning communities are largely untapped by educators, but can be shaped into powerful classroom tools, writes Jeffrey Yan, who teaches a Rhode Island School of Design course on incorporating technology into classwork. Students can publish class portfolios on blogs or social-networking sites and brainstorm or share ideas via wikis or school-based learning communities, he writes. RedOrbit/Connection (1/29)

[http://www.redorbit.com/news/education/1233658/social\\_technology\\_as\\_a\\_new\\_medium\\_in\\_the\\_classroom/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/education/1233658/social_technology_as_a_new_medium_in_the_classroom/)

### Policy Watch

**Bush proposes keeping Education Department funding essentially flat.** President George W. Bush has asked Congress to increase special-education services by about \$330 million, restore \$600 million cut by lawmakers from the Reading First program and to dedicate \$300 million to vouchers and \$100 million more to merit-pay plans. The budget also calls for the eliminating 47 education programs -- including arts and mental-health services-- in an effort to save \$3.3 about billion. [San Diego Union-Tribune/Associated Press](#) (2/1)

**School budgets tighten as real-estate markets slow.** The cooling real-estate market is beginning to affect D.C.-area schools as dropping property values lead to unexpected budget shortfalls. That's forcing some systems to implement cost-cutting measures such as deferring teacher raises and limiting or delaying certain academic programs. [The Washington Post](#) (1/30)

**Lawmakers weigh new penalties for abusive teachers.** Leaders in at least 15 states are weighing greater oversight and tougher punishments for teachers found to have engaged in sexual misconduct with students. Many of the proposals seek to tighten legal loopholes that allow such teachers to move from one school district or state to another. [The Boston Globe/Associated Press](#) (1/28)

### NCLB

**Spellings to ask federal appeals court to reconsider ruling.** The U.S. Department of Education will ask the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals to reconsider a ruling by a panel of three judges that NCLB places an unfair cost burden on states and local districts. "We think we have a very strong case," said U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings. "We don't believe No Child Left Behind is an unfunded mandate." [The New York Times](#) (2/2), [The Examiner/Associated Press](#) (2/1)

**Bush calls for \$300 million voucher program.** In his State of the Union address delivered Monday, President George W. Bush called for \$300 million to be granted to low-income parents who want to send their children to private or religious schools -- a move some critics said highlights the failure of NCLB. "On top of a \$70 billion shortfall in funding for his own education reforms, he again proposed to siphon scarce resources from our public schools to create new voucher programs," said Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., chairman of the Senate's education committee. [The New York Times](#) (1/29)

**Court Revives Lawsuit against No Child Left Behind Law.** In a 2-to-1 ruling, the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit cited a section of the Constitution that requires the federal government to provide clear notice to states of their financial liabilities when accepting federal money. [The New York Times, January 8, 2008](#)

#### **. . . More on NCLB**

"Chicago's Mixed Record on School Reform": [The Christian Science Monitor, January 9, 2008](#)

"Spellings Pushes On Her Own to Keep No Child Law Alive": [USA Today, January 9, 2008](#)

"'Dashboards' Provide Data On Schools": [The Washington Post, January 14, 2008](#)

"Teachers Feel Left Behind": [Yakima Herald-Republic, January 13, 2008](#)

"School Officials Applaud Appeals Court Ruling": [The Edmond Sun, January 14, 2008](#)

### In the Field

**Teens rank civil-rights leaders at top of famous Americans list.** Asked to name the 10 most famous people in American history other than U.S. presidents and first ladies, high school students named The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and Harriet Tubman as their top three. [USA TODAY](#) (2/4)

**Study: Early nutrition may play key role in future earnings.** Poor children offered nutritious foods in their first two years of life may earn far better wages as adults than their low-income peers who live in nearly identical circumstances but are less well-nourished, according to a new study. [Yahoo!/Agence France-Presse](#)

**Limited budgets keep cafeterias from offering healthier foods:** Outdated federal nutrition requirements coupled with low budgets for school meals often thwart schools in their efforts to offer fresh, high-quality foods, instead forcing them to rely on cheaper, processed foods. "It's a question of economics," said dietitian Nancy Becker. "There is not adequate money to purchase super-high-quality food." [The Oregonian \(Portland\)](#) (2/3)

[Amid obesity epidemic, USDA tells schools to serve up higher-calorie meals.](#) The Miami Herald (1/30)

*"Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it!"*

*-- Lewis Carroll,  
English author*