

## E-newsletter January 2007

*Dear Colleague,*

*Global warming is an issue that has growing importance for all of us. Click on [Worthwhile Websites](#) to find great ideas for "going green." Please share this e-newsletter with your colleagues 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. We will promptly add them to our subscription list.*

*Jane, Carol and Elyse*

### Contents

[A Light Touch](#)

[FYI](#)

[Sharing Success Research](#)

[Worthwhile Websites](#)

[NCTE Inbox](#)

[In the News](#)

### A Light Touch

**Subject: Do You Know???**

In the 1400's a law was set forth in England that a man was allowed to beat his wife with a stick no thicker than his thumb. Hence we have "*the rule of thumb*".

Many years ago in Scotland , a new game was invented. It was ruled "Gentlemen Only...Ladies Forbidden"...and thus the word GOLF entered into the English language.

The first couple to be shown in bed together on prime time TV were Fred and Wilma Flintstone.

Every day more money is printed for Monopoly than the U.S. Treasury.

Men can read smaller print than women can; women can hear better.

Coca-Cola was originally green.

The State with the highest percentage of people who walk to work: Alaska.

The percentage of Africa that is wilderness: 28% (now get this...)

The percentage of North America that is wilderness: 38%

The cost of raising a medium-size dog to the age of eleven: \$ 16,400

The average number of people airborne over the U.S. in any given hour: 61,000

The first novel ever written on a typewriter: Tom Sawyer.

The San Francisco Cable cars are the only mobile National Monuments.

Each king in a deck of playing cards represents a great king from history:

Spades - King David

Hearts - Charlemagne

Clubs - Alexander, the Great

Diamonds - Julius Caesar

$111,111,111 \times 111,111,111 = 12,345,678,987,654,321$

If a statue in the park of a person on a horse has both front legs in the air, the person died in battle. If the horse has one front leg in the air the person died as a result of wounds received in battle. If the horse has all four legs on the ground, the person died of natural causes.

Only two people signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, John Hancock and Charles Thomson. Most of the rest signed on August 2, but the last signature wasn't added until 5 years later.

Q. Half of all Americans live within 50 miles of what? A. Their birthplace

Q. Most boat owners name their boats. What is the most popular boat name requested?

A. Obsession

Q. If you were to spell out numbers, how far would you have to go until you would find the letter "A"? A. One thousand

Q. What do bulletproof vests, fire escapes, windshield wipers, and laser printers all have in common? A. All were invented by women.

Q. Which day are there more collect calls than any other day of the year? A. Father's Day

In Shakespeare's time, mattresses were secured on bed frames by ropes. When you pulled on the ropes the mattress tightened, making the bed firmer to sleep on. Hence the phrase..... *"goodnight, sleep tight."*

It was the accepted practice in Babylon 4,000 years ago that for a month after the wedding, the bride's father would supply his son-in-law with all the mead he could drink. Mead is a honey beer and because their calendar was lunar based, this period was called the honey month, which we know today as the *honeymoon*.

In English pubs, ale is ordered by pints and quarts... So in old England, when customers got unruly, the bartender would yell at them "Mind your pints and quarts, and settle down."

It's where we get the phrase "*mind your P's and Q's*"

Many years ago in England, pub frequenters had a whistle baked into the rim, or handle, of their ceramic cups. When they needed a refill, they used the whistle to get some service.

"*Wet your whistle*" is the phrase inspired by this practice.

## FYI

### Dates

**February 1, 2007.** Deadline date for nominations for the 2007 CEL Exemplary Leadership Award. The [CEL Award for Exemplary Leadership](#) is given annually to an NCTE member who is an outstanding English language arts educator and leader. Please nominate an exceptional leader who has had an impact on the profession.

<http://www.ncte.org/groups/cel/awards/107413.htm>

**February 4-5 2007; African American Read-In.** Join over a million readers in the 18th National African American Read-In. for more information, visit

<http://www.ncte.org/prog/readin/107901.htm>

**February 15, 2007.** Deadline Date for summer seminar applications At Gilder Lehrman Institute. To apply online or download an application form, visit:

<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/seminars1.html>

Below are the **late winter and spring programs** for professional development credit being offered by the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Education (IHARE). Unless otherwise indicated, these are weekend programs. Non-teachers are welcome to participate as well. The programs and registration are on the IHARE website [www.ihare.org](http://www.ihare.org).

**February 17-18:** Washington's Headquarters, Newburgh

**February 24-25:** Underground Railroad Conference, Albany

**February 28:** Teaching Ancient Egypt, Albany Institute of Art (after school)

**March 31:** Amarna and King Tut Symposium, University of Pennsylvania Museum and Franklin Institute, Philadelphia.

**April 14-15:** Harvard Semitic Museum and Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The New World Order: Assyrian Imperialism and Israel, Judah, Egypt, and Nubia.

**May 5-6:** King Tut and the Amarna Period, University of Pennsylvania Museum and Franklin Institute, Philadelphia.

**May 19-20:** Hudson River Art Symposium and Tour, Olana and Thomas Cole. The annual Hudson River Art conference is tentatively scheduled for Sunday.

**June 9:** New York and the Civil War, Fenimore Museum, Cooperstown.  
Find out more at <http://www.ihare.org/>

Course: **Teacher Leader Skills for Professional Development,**  
**Tuesdays, Feb. 27; Mar. 6, 13, 20, 27 (Part 1)**

**April 17, 24; May 1, 8, 15 (Part 2) Time: 4-7 pm, Part 1: *How to Construct a Course:***  
Learn what current research tells us about effective staff development while creating a workshop/course around your area of expertise.

**Part 2: *Facilitating Study Groups & Professional Conversations:*** Facilitation skills will be presented, discussed and modeled, as will development of probing questions, icebreakers, and activities based upon the elements of adult learning theory.

***Instructor: Charlotte Galluccio***

**Site:** Lindenhurst Administration Bldg, OWL Teacher Center

**Fee:** \$70            30 hours, 2 ins. credits            K-12

To register, contact OWL Teacher Center 350 Daniel St. Room 107 Lindenhurst, NY 11757. Phone: 631-226-2772, e-mail [owlcenter@optonline.net](mailto:owlcenter@optonline.net)

**March 21-24, 2007 CCCC Convention.** For more information on the 2007 Annual Convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, taking place, in New York City, check out the [Convention Preview](#), which includes information on featured [speakers](#) and [sessions](#), [workshops](#), and the [keynote address](#).

**May 2-4, 2007. NYS Staff Development Conference at the Rochester Hyatt Regency.** Keynote speakers include; Kim Oliver, Teacher of the Year, Stephanie Hirsch, Executive Director of National Staff Development Council and Manuel Rivera, Superintendent, Rochester City Schools For conference registration information visit their website [www.nyssdc.org](http://www.nyssdc.org) . [NYSSDC Conference RFP 2007.pdf](#)

**May 3,4,5, 2007. Powerful Partnerships for Success**, a conference presented by the School Library Media Section (SLMS) of the NY Library Association. The Wyndham, Syracuse, NY. Join visionaries to share ideas, learn from practitioners, connect with vendors, and equip yourself with tools to improve your program. Keynote Speaker: Toni Buzzeo. "Collaborating to Meet Standards: Beyond the Basics to Advocacy." For information go to [http://www.nyla.org/index.php?page\\_id=52](http://www.nyla.org/index.php?page_id=52)

### Announcements

**Deadline January 26<sup>th</sup>. Promising Young Writer Entries.** [Brochures and entry forms](#) for the Promising Young Writers program for 8th-grade students. Achievement Awards in Writing program for 11th-grade students (deadline **February 2, 2007**), and the Program to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines (deadline **July 2, 2007**) are now available.

**Deadline February 6<sup>th</sup>. Submit Artwork for the Legislative Art Exhibit.** There is still time to submit student artwork for the annual NYSATA Legislative Art Exhibit. This event, co sponsored by NYSAAE, showcases student art from across the state. The reception draws New York State's decision-makers, as well as hundreds of students and their families. Moreover, the exhibit highlights the importance of arts education and gives educators an opportunity to advocate face-to-face with legislative decision-makers for strong arts programs in schools. This year's Legislative Art Exhibit will be held at the Legislative Office Building in Albany, NY beginning **May 1st**. This is a terrific opportunity to highlight your school's art program, as well as emphasize the importance of the arts in New York State's school curriculum. The deadline for work submission is February 6th. For more information and an entry form, visit <http://nysata.org/legexhibit.php>. Send any additional questions to Joan Davidson at [ArtJoanD@aol.com](mailto:ArtJoanD@aol.com).

**Deadline Feb 9<sup>th</sup>. National Symphony Orchestra Summer Music Institute.** The Kennedy Center and National Symphony Orchestra co-sponsor a summer music festival for talented young musicians, called the Summer Music Institute (SMI), in Washington, DC. In this program, talented young musicians stay in Washington, DC for one month, receiving intensive lessons and training sessions. Students also perform in a series of Kennedy Center Millennium Stage concerts with the National Symphony Orchestra. SMI dates are **July 2-29, 2007**. Eligibility is for students in high school (grades 9-12) and rising freshman and sophomore college students. The deadline for student to submit applications is February 9,

2007. Visit <http://www.kennedy-center.org/nso/nsoed/smi> or contact NYSAAE at [lainy@nysaae.org](mailto:lainy@nysaae.org) for more information.

**Deadline February 16<sup>th</sup>.** Better Beginnings Award for Elementary Teachers: The Better Beginnings program annually offers a \$1,000 award for excellence to a New York State elementary school teachers. The application form, due Feb. 16, is available at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/kiap/TEACHING/BBA/bbaindex.htm>.

**Call for Information on the State of Contemporary Art in Classrooms.** NAEA and Art21, Inc. are interested in teacher use of contemporary art in diverse classrooms and schools nationwide. What resources are being used? What technology is available? What are professional development needs? This needs assessment allows teachers and administrators to express their opinions and interests related to teaching with contemporary art. Five respondents will be selected to receive visual resources for the classroom including books, DVDs and visual images to support classroom instruction. Learn more at [http://beta.art21.org/doc/2433/contemporary\\_art\\_in\\_the\\_classroom/](http://beta.art21.org/doc/2433/contemporary_art_in_the_classroom/).

**Free Tickets and Equipment to Increase Access to the Arts.** YSAAE has been awarded a national grant from *VSAarts*, a non-profit organization that creates learning opportunities through the arts for people with disabilities. We are looking to collaborate with cultural institutions across New York State to implement a free or reduced rate ticket program. The goal of this program is to increase attendance by and access to performances for student pre-K through 16 and adults with special needs. As part of the same program, NYSAAE has funds that will enable cultural organization to improve their existing listening systems for those audience members with hearing impairments. For more information on collaborating on these projects, please contact Ginger Hardeman at [ginger@nysaae.org](mailto:ginger@nysaae.org) or call (518) 473-0823.

**The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History** is pleased to present the tenth issue of HISTORY NOW, a quarterly online journal for history teachers and students, available at [www.historynow.org](http://www.historynow.org). This issue looks at the technology that catapulted America into modernity in the 1800s, including the transcontinental railroad, photography, medical advances and electric light. As always, HISTORY NOW accompanies these scholarly essays with imaginative and accessible supporting material and lesson plans. HISTORY NOW also has collaborated with the National Museum of American History to create an interactive timeline of images of nineteenth century inventions, as well as a historical overview from

the Museum's director.

**NYS Summer School of the Arts** runs a summer program. The website has audition information, application forms etc. [www.emsc.nysed.gov/nysssa/](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nysssa/).

## Worthwhile Websites

### **It's Easy Being Green**

<http://www.kidsgardening.com/> Kids learn to plant pollinator gardens to preserve birds and bees.

<http://www.localharvest.org/> Eat your veggies! Meat production is energy-inefficient and uses up natural resources.

<http://www.stopglobalwarming.org/default.asp> Use recycled paper and save a tree. The paper industry is the third largest contributor to global warming.

<http://www.cristina.org/> Recycle your old electronics. The national Christina Foundation will hook you up with a nonprofit organization that can use them.

<http://www.eartheasy.com/> Household chemicals contribute to both indoor and outdoor pollution. Here are some great tips on green cleaning.

<http://www.energystar.gov/> Increase your energy efficiency by trading in your incandescent for fluorescent lights which use about 70 % less energy and last 10 times longer.

<http://www.stopthejunkmail.com/index.cfm?affiliate=65> For a dime a day restore our forests and your sanity. This site stops your junk mail for a small fee.

### **More useful sites**

<http://www.artstor.org>. **Free resources for teaching the arts.** Teachers are invited to use ARTstor, a not-for-profit initiative founded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with a mission to use digital technology to enhance scholarship, teaching and learning in the arts and associated fields. The ARTstor Digital Library Charter Collection is a repository of hundreds of thousands of digital images and related data, featured along with the tools to actively use those images.

<http://www.curriki.org> The Web site provides an **online community** where teachers can share materials and ideas worldwide. Teachers are urged to write entries about lessons or special projects and continually edit and update them. A great idea!

[www.freecycle.com](http://www.freecycle.com) Check out this unique website for free "anything"!

[www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com). Find a cure. ✓ Support your school. ✓ Help kids. ✓ Provide disaster relief. ✓ Protect our environment. ✓ Help animals. Conduct your web searches on this site and money goes to your favorite charities.

## Sharing Success Research

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

- Improving High School Student Achievement and Graduation [HS]
- Data-Driven Decision Making [K-12]
- Elementary School Math [Elementary]
- Most Effective Method for Teaching Reading [Elementary]

Spotlight: [Team-Teaching Helps Close Language Gap](#)

- You Asked -- We Answered -Sample Research Requests
- 

Is there research regarding parents rewarding good grades with cash or other incentives? [K-12](#)

I need research that provides some evidence related to student achievement with split span schools K-2nd and 3rd-5th versus a K-5th grade school. Which model shows that students achieve best? [Elementary](#)

Do you have research on Alternative Education Grades 7-10? [MS/HS](#)

## NCTE Inbox

### News

**"No Child" Law Called "Beyond Repair".** A former Bush Administration official, who was a major supporter of the No Child Left Behind Act, has withdrawn support for the measure. Michael Petrilli helped promote the law, but now he says NCLB is "fundamentally flawed and probably beyond repair." [The Salt Lake Tribune, January 9, 2007](#)

**IM Shorthand Slips Off Computer Screens and Into Schoolwork.** English teachers and professors are finding that high technology shorthand is appearing in students' writing. NCTE Past President Leila Christenbury, Virginia Commonwealth University, views shorthand as an opportunity for teachers. [The Washington Post, December 25, 2006](#)



**Hello, Grisham -- So Long, Hemingway?** Public libraries in Fairfax, Virginia, are removing books that have not been checked out in 24 months, and replacing those books with newer, more popular titles. [The Washington Post, January 2, 2007](#)

**Reading Law Fails to Bring Innovations.** Five years after the multi-billion dollar Reading First program was unveiled, it appears it has not provided expanded materials for reading instruction. [Education Week, December 13, 2006](#)

## **Ideas**

**Help To Make Literacy a Significant Part of Black History Month.** Join over a million readers in the [Eighteenth National African American Read-In](#) on Sunday, February 4, and Monday, February 5. These resources can get you started and provide classroom ideas and strategies as your students read and explore the works of these African American writers. <http://www.ncte.org/second/ideas/126360.htm>

- "[Jacqueline Woodson: Real Characters, Real Voices](#)" (E-M-S), from *Language Arts*, explores the people and experiences that influence the writing of Jacqueline Woodson.
- Christopher Paul Curtis' *The Watsons Go To Birmingham—1963* is the focus of the ReadWriteThink lesson plan [Graphing Plot and Character in a Novel](#) (E), which invites students to graph the journey of the family while exploring the plot and character development in the novel.
- Nikki Giovanni's poetry is the focus of [Childhood Remembrances: Life and Art Intersect in Nikki Giovanni's "Nikki-Rosa"](#) (M-S-C), from ReadWriteThink. The lesson is based on an activity described in the NCTE title [Nikki Giovanni in the Classroom: "the same ol' danger but a brand new pleasure"](#) (S) by Carol Jago.
- Nikki Grimes stresses the power of poetry in her article "[The Common Denominator](#)" (E-M-S) from *English Journal*.
- "[Charles Johnson's Middle Passage as Historiographic Metafiction](#)" (C), from *College English*, outlines techniques for using Johnson's postmodern novel in the literature studies.
- Alice Walker, bell hooks, and Nikki Giovanni -- all are explored in "[Becoming a Writerly Self: College Writers Engaging Black Feminist Essays](#)" (C), from *College Composition and Communication*, which asserts that personal essays by black feminist writers can be used to teach writers how to connect their personal and social identities.

For more lists of suggested books by African Americans and for a Report Card to use to submit your Read-In results, see the [African American Read-In website](#). For examples of how others have organized their Read-Ins, see

- [Clemson University, South Carolina](#)
- [Rockford Public Library, Illinois](#)
- [University of Minnesota](#)
- [San Francisco, California, School Volunteers](#)
- [The Dallas Community College District](#)

**Top Ideas for 2006.** According to the Web data, these were the top resources from the Ideas section that teachers were interested in for 2006.

<http://www.ncte.org/elem/content/126257.htm>

- "[Creating Space for Teaching Writing and for Test](#)" from *Language Arts* (E)
- "[What's the Gist? Summary Writings for Struggling Adolescent Writers](#)" from *Voices from the Middle* (M)
- "[Fifty Alternatives to the Book Report](#)" from *English Journal* (S)
- "[Teaching: First Impressions First, or Choosing Atmosphere over Method and Management](#)" from *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* (C)
- ReadWriteThink Lessons
  - [Composing Cinquain Poems with Basic Parts of Speech](#) (E)
  - [Alliteration in Headline Poems](#) (M)
  - [Teaching Plot Structure through Short Stories](#) (S)

## In the News

### Eye on Curriculum

**Professor: Educate with video games.** David Williamson Shaffer, an education science professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and author of the book, "How Computer Games Help Children Learn," says schools should use games to prepare children to compete in the work force, because handling different technologies at once is a daily professional requirement. [CNET/Reuters](#) (1/11)

**California approves new vocational ed guidelines.** The new framework for vocational education in California, approved unanimously by the state Board of Education, will build

training around 15 major industries, such as child development, construction and entertainment. The new curriculum frameworks will guide the way middle and high schools across California teach job skills. [The Sacramento Bee \(Calif.\)](#) (free registration) (1/11)

**Children learn multiple languages in globalized world.** U.S. children are being pushed through foreign-language programs at ages as young as 6 months, as parents try to ready them for a globalized society. Children who are exposed to multiple languages at a young age are more likely to do better academically and be more open to diversity, according to Francois Thibaut, who runs The Language Workshop for Children. [USA TODAY](#) (1/10)

**Maryland eyes changing math curriculum to teach fewer concepts.** A report from the National Council of Teachers of Math has prompted Maryland to consider decreasing the number of math concepts it teaches to give students the chance to focus more deeply on a few basic areas, but the plan has drawn criticism in the ongoing debate over reform math. [The Sun \(Baltimore\)](#) (free registration) (1/2)

### **Professional Leadership**

**Number of male teachers dwindling.** Tampa teacher Nick Holtvluwer says he can relate to kids because he feels like one at heart, but, as a male teacher, Holtvluwer is a rare breed there and across the country. Although principals say they provide a needed role model, the percentage of male teachers is at a 40-year low, according to the National Education Association. [St. Petersburg Times \(Fla.\)](#) (1/11)

**Governor: N.C. has more board-certified teachers than any other state.** Twelve percent of North Carolina's 11,325 teachers have reached National Board Certification, making it the tops in the nation in that respect, according to the governor's office. [American City Business Journals/Charlotte, N.C.](#) (free registration) (1/10)

**Teachers visit businesses to pick up skills.** About 40 educators from across four districts in southern Indiana will visit local manufacturing businesses to get a taste of life outside school and, in the end, learn what reading, math and science skills students need in the workplace. One district also wants to bring a National Academy of Finance high school business program to the region. [The Courier-Journal \(Louisville, Ky.\)](#) (12/29)

### **Technology Solutions**

**Opinion: Technological literacy important.** Ioannis Miaoulis, president and director of Boston's Museum of Science, says it's important that students study and are tested on engineering and technology subjects. She suggests area tech companies and colleges finance high school training in the applied sciences. [The Boston Globe](#) (1/11)

**Utah company taps into hand-held games for lessons.** Utah company Pocket Direct LLC is marketing a new cartridge to fit [Nintendo](#)'s GameBoy that can help children study an array of subjects, from math to chemistry or even take SAT preparation. The invention, called KwikNotes, is the company's attempt to expand its product focus beyond gaming. [The Deseret News \(Salt Lake City, Utah\)](#) (1/9)

**Downloadable language lessons can replace pricey textbooks.** Language programs offered through sites such as [www.chinesepod.com](#) are opening up new worlds to people with MP3 players or just old-fashioned computers. Apple's iTunes Store has more than 100 free language programs available. [Houston Chronicle/St. Petersburg Times](#) (1/7)

**Online database shines light on teacher workload.** The National Council on Teacher Quality launched a [Web site](#) Thursday that lists details of collective-bargaining agreements and state policies for the nation's 50 largest school districts. The group hopes to expand the listings to the top 100 districts by the end of the year. [USA TODAY](#) (1/4)

### **Policy Watch**

**Spanking bill proposed in Kansas.** A Kansas state senator plans to introduce a bill that would shield school systems that allow spankings from law suits, if the school board adopted a policy on corporal punishment. Phil Journey, a Republican, says sometimes kids need a swat, and Kansas wouldn't be the first. Nine other states have similar policies, according to the Center for Effective Discipline. [The Kansas City Star \(Mo.\)](#) (free registration) (1/12)

**R.I. officials propose to track illness via absentee excuses.** Officials in Rhode Island are looking into adopting a mechanism for collecting information about the illnesses keeping children out of school. State health and education officials hope such a system would allow them to track infectious diseases and prevent widespread health scares. [The Providence Journal \(R.I.\)](#) (free registration) (1/8)

**New York sees increase in number of certified teachers.** More fully certified teachers are working in New York's classrooms, namely in New York City, Albany officials reported.

There are 16,000 fewer uncertified teachers in the state than there were in 2003, with 13,000 of those being cut in recent years and school districts stepping up their efforts to license teachers. [Newsday \(Long Island, N.Y.\)](#) (1/9)

**Solutions to middle-school woes not easy.** Systems across New York and the nation are struggling to remedy faltering middle schools by grouping students into academies, reconfiguring grade clusters and revamping how students are taught subjects. One New York principal, Barry M. Fein, says clamoring for quick answers doesn't always help, and research shows children have more to worry about than academics. [The New York Times](#) (free registration) (1/2)

### **NCLB**

**Educators urge changes to No Child Left Behind.** Local and national educators on Monday called the five-year-old law flawed, saying unclear interpretations, an overemphasis on testing and financial restrictions make its goals difficult to achieve. Several educators also say No Child Left Behind makes overly broad demands while failing to provide the resources needed for success. [The Plain Dealer \(Cleveland\)](#) (1/9)

**Analysis: NCLB reauthorization unlikely in 2007, insiders say.** The No Child Left Behind law is up for reauthorization this year and some say the major effect it has had is to jumpstart a conversation about changing schools and overlooked students. An informal poll of Washington, D.C., insiders by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation found that none believed the law would be reauthorized this year, but rather taken up after the 2008 presidential election. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (1/7)

**Bush to meet with lawmakers about NCLB.** President George W. Bush plans to meet with lawmakers Monday -- the day he's set to commemorate the No Child Left Behind Act's fifth anniversary -- about reauthorizing the law. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings told The Associated Press that the administration would not agree alter the law's 2014 reading and math proficiency deadline. [Contra Costa Times \(Walnut Creek, Calif.\)/Associated Press](#) (free registration) (1/4)

### **In the Field**

**Census: Students on track.** A U.S. Census report says most of the country's students are academically "on track" and reports improvements for schoolchildren ages 12 through 17. [Chicago Sun-Times](#) (1/11)

**Analysis: Progressive N.Y. school faces challenges.** Many students, including those with learning disabilities or from poor homes, found success through New York's Crossroads Middle School, but the innovative school in recent years has faced severe staffing and program difficulties. The school was created 16 years ago as an "unorthodox public alternative" to junior high schools in the Upper West Side, and its difficulties show the fragility of unconventional schools, The New York Times reports. [The New York Times](#) (free registration) (1/9)

**Preteen girls at special risk for obesity.** A report in The Journal of Pediatrics found that girls are more likely to gain weight in their preteen years than when they are teenagers. Researchers tracked the weight of more than 2,300 black and white girls starting at age 9 and through their early 20s. [USA TODAY/Associated Press](#) (1/8)

**Analysis: Female education has many benefits.** Talk show host Oprah Winfrey's new school for girls in South Africa is putting the spotlight on female education, which is a good thing because studies have shown that when girls get a strong education it helps their countries in many different ways, The Christian Science Monitor reports in this analysis. Better education for girls tends to have such varied benefits as lower infant mortality, improved crop yields and lower HIV infection rates. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (1/5)

"If toast always lands butter-side down, and cats always land on their feet, what happens if you strap toast on the back of a cat and drop it?"  
--[Steven Wright](#), comedian, actor