

E-newsletter *March 2007*

Dear Colleague,

Would you like this summer to be a learning summer? Click on [FYI](#) below for summer courses and workshops to attend. Please share this e-newsletter with your peers and invite them to subscribe by e-mailing us at teacher_center@wsboces.org with their names and e-mail addresses. We will promptly add them to our subscription list.

Jane, Carol and Elyse

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For those who love the philosophy of ambiguity...

1. Don't sweat the petty things and don't pet the sweaty things.
2. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.
3. I went to a bookstore and asked the saleswoman, "Where's the Self-help section?" She said if she told me, it would defeat the purpose.
4. What if there were no hypothetical questions?
5. If a deaf person swears, does his mother wash his hands with soap?
6. Is there another word for synonym?
7. Where do forest rangers go to "get away from it all?"
8. What do you do when you see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant?
9. If a parsley farmer is sued, can they garnish his wages?

10. Why do they lock gas station bathrooms? Are they afraid someone will clean them?
11. If a turtle doesn't have a shell, is he homeless or naked?
12. If the police arrest a mime, do they tell him he has the right to remain silent?
13. How do they get deer to cross the road only at those yellow road signs?
14. What was the best thing before sliced bread?
15. One nice thing about egotists: They don't talk about other people.
16. Does the Little Mermaid wear an algebra?
17. How is it possible to have a civil war?
18. If one synchronized swimmer drowns, do the rest drown too?
19. If you ate both pasta and antipasto, would you still be hungry?
20. If you try to fail, and succeed, which have you done?
21. Whose cruel idea was it for the word "Lisp" to have "S" in it?
22. Why is it called tourist season if we can't shoot at them?
23. Why is there an expiration date on sour cream?
24. If you spin an oriental man in a circle three times does he become disoriented?
25. Can an atheist get insurance against acts of God?

Did I read that sign right?

In a London department store:

Bargain basement upstairs.

In an office:

Would the person who took the step ladder yesterday please bring it back or further steps will be taken.

In an office:

After tea break staff should empty the teapot and stand upside down on the draining board.

Outside a secondhand shop:

We exchange anything - Bicycles, washing machines, etc. Why not bring your wife along and get a wonderful bargain?

In a Laundromat:

Automatic washing machines: Please remove all your clothes when the light goes out.

Notice in health food shop window:

Closed due to illness.

Spotted in a safari park:

Elephants please stay in your car.

Seen during a conference:

For anyone who has children and doesn't know it, there is a day care on the 1st floor.

Notice in a farmer's field:

The farmer allows walkers to cross the field for free, bur the bull charges.

Message on a leaflet: If you cannot read, this leaflet will tell you how to get lessons.

FYI

Spring-Summer Courses and Workshops at Home and Abroad

May 19-20, 2007, Hudson River Art Teacherhostel ® Art, Ecology, Geology, History, Law. Experience Hudson River Art in all its facets. The program will take place at Cedar Grove, the home of Thomas Cole, and Olana, the home of Frederic Church. There will be a bus ride to the sites where the Hudson River painters painted. Participants will hear from an eyewitness to the court case to preserve the scenic view while enjoying a sunset dinner at the very view that was saved. Participants will observe the new Durand exhibit at Cedar Grove and hear from experts about the artists and the art. **Location: Catskill and Hudson, NY, Cost : \$125, Contact Hours: 15, Application cutoff Date: May 15,** Teacherhostel is a Registered Trademark of IHARE. For further information contact Dr. Peter Feinman at the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Education at 914-933-0440 or email to: feinmanp@ihare.org The programs and registration forms are available on the IHARE website www.ihare.org.

Continuing & Community Education Advanced Placement Summer Institute. Niagara University is delighted to offer their annual College Board endorsed Advanced Placement Summer Institute (APSI) for teachers who would like to prepare themselves for AP teaching or advanced their skills in AP courses. The APSI will offer intensive courses that will provide in depth preparation for teaching AP subject matter. It will also serve as a forum for exchanging ideas and information about the course and examination. Participants will have the opportunity to design or modify a course outline and curriculum that is organized around selected topics, concepts and themes.

Session I June 25-29, 2007, Psychology, Statistics

Session II July 16-20, 2007, Italian Language and Culture

Session III July 23-27, 2007, Biology, English Literature, Calculus AB, European History, Economics, US History

30 hours of professional development credit. Early Bird Registration fee: \$795 (registration postmarked by May 24), Regular Fee: \$895

For more information or to register, contact Niagara University at (716) 286-8181 or at www.niagara.edu/cce Registration Forms can be emailed, faxed or mailed to you if you contact the office.

July 8-15, 2007, New York Geographic Alliance Summer Geography Institute, Grand Experience 2007 - On the Erie Canal. Choose from two starting points: Buffalo (traveling east) or New Paltz (traveling west), meeting in Syracuse. For one week, you will travel along the canal (bus & canal boat) experiencing its sights and sounds, as well as developing and evaluating curricula highlighting the canal as a landmark of American history and geography. Along the canal route, and at canal ports, you will learn about and experience elements of the canal (including museum tours, presentations by content specialists, and re-enactors).

For an application, contact Curriculum/Publications Chairperson, Jean Stennett at

Jstennett1@nycap.rr.com. Applications must be postmarked no later than April 30, 2007. Accepted applications will be notified by May 11, 2007.

July 9-12, 2007, from The Hudson River Teacherhostel®: **The Rivertown Experience**. Experience the Hudson River from colonial times to the present. Meet the curators of the historic sites. Try seining, paddling, and boating on the river. Learn about the Dutch, slavery, Washington Irving, and the Rockefellers. See how the ecology was changed over the centuries, learn about the plans to restore much of what has been buried or destroyed and hear what they have to say about the challenges posed by new construction. The program combines art, history, ecology, and literature and is fun. **Location: Yonkers to Sleepy Hollow, Cost: \$195, Application cut-off date: June 9, Contact Hours: 30.** Teacherhostel is a Registered Trademark of IHARE. For further information contact Dr. Peter Feinman at the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Education at 914-933-0440 or email to: feinmanp@ihare.org . The programs and registration forms are available on the IHARE website www.ihare.org.

National Board Certification Resource Center at Greater Capital Region Teacher Center offers these opportunities for interested teachers.

July 6, 2007, 10AM - 4 PM, Invitation to Explore National Board Certification. For Pre-candidates. Discover why 93% of teachers believe National Board Certification is the best professional development experience they have been involved in., Teacher Center at Rensselaerville. Fee \$10.

July 6, 7, 8, 2007, Summer Institute for National Board Candidates. Open only to Candidates and Pre-Candidates. Join your colleagues for thoughtful and reflective discussion about National Board Certification in a collegial setting. Teacher Center at Rensselaerville. Registration required/No fee. (Underwritten by State Farm Foundation)

January 17, 18, 19, 2008, Writing Retreat for National Board Candidates and Advanced Candidates, This retreat was created to give time for writing in a collegial environment. Working independently, with partners, or in writing groups, candidates read, write, review and reflect in congenial and supportive surroundings. Teacher Center at Rensselaerville. Registration required/No fee. **For more information and/or registration forms, please contact Ellen Sullivan. Phone 518-479-4083, email Ellen@teachercenter.org.**

July 30-August 3, 2007. College Board Advanced Placement Program Summer Institute 2007 at the Teacher Center at Rensselaerville. Institute subjects are Biology, Environmental science, Art, Spanish Language, English Literature and Composition , Calculculus AB, US Government and Politics, Chinese Language and Culture, Economics, US History, Statistics, Physics. All participants will receive a certificate of attendance that

indicates the contact hours (30) and subject. Registration Fee \$500, Lodging and meals: \$495. Teachers interested in enrolling can receive registration forms via fax, mail or email by contacting 518-384-1718 or abertino@nycap.rr.com.

Attention Stony Brook students in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program.

(MA/LS)! This August you will be eligible to study abroad in Florence, Italy! Students who wish to be part of this amazing opportunity will be registered for CEH 595 - Contemporary Italy. The 3 graduate credits earned through the course will be applied to your degree cluster area. Interested students, please contact, Lucinda Acquaye, Study Abroad Advisor, International Academic Programs, Phone 631-632-7030, Email lucinda.acquaye@stonybrook.edu.

NYS Summer School of the Arts runs a summer program. The website has audition information, application forms etc. www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyssa/

Events

June 24-26, 2007 Make plans now to attend the [Literacy Leaders Institute](#), in Charleston, South Carolina, and join a community of learners and nationally acclaimed literacy leaders in an interactive institute for English district supervisors, literacy coaches, and department chairs focused on effective literacy instruction.

Announcements

April 23-29, 2007, TV Turnoff Week Empowering people to take control of technology and not letting technology take control of them so they can live healthier lives. If you have children...you're going to want to listen to this message from Center for Screen-Time Awareness to see what you can do. <http://www.screentime.org/>

Travel and learn in Ireland! Special Education in Ireland Conference, **June 2-June 10, 2007**, Activities include, the Annual Conference, visits to special education facilities' administrative and teaching staff conversations. Eligible participants will receive three undergraduate credits. For further information and applications, contact asmith@brockport.edu, or go to www.brockport.edu/studyabroad.

Humanitarian Opportunity - Summer Trip to Cuba! The U.S. government has issued a license to the *Bringing Hope Foundation* to bring volunteers to Cuba to participate in a humanitarian project. This project is the delivery of humanitarian supplies to an independent charity in Cuba, our charity is Carit as- the Latin American division of Catholic Charities. This program has been developed specifically for educators with seminars and

educational events to enhance the program and your knowledge of Cuba's history, people and society, educational system, culture and the state of U.S. - Cuban relations during this rewarding humanitarian effort.

The program will take you to Havana (once called the Paris of the Caribbean), the pristine Cuban countryside in Pinar del Río and on to the colonial centers of Cienfuegos and Trinidad de Cuba on Cuba's southern or Caribbean coast. We invite you to contact us for more information and to learn about our special incentive offer for group leaders. **Tony Ransola, Bringing Hope Foundation, Miami Beach, FL, 305.868.9597, tonyransola@yahoo.com.**

The New York State Writers Institute invites talented creative writers in grades 8-12 to apply to participate in the annual New York State Summer Young Writers Institute. The program, which offers workshops in poetry, prose and screenwriting, is open to both public and private school students who reside anywhere in New York State. The cost, including room, board and materials is \$450 plus \$15 application fee. This year's session meets from **July 1-7, 2007. Applications must be postmarked by April 15, 2007.** More information and an application are available at <http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst/nyssywi.html>.

Internship programs

The New York State Military Museum is actively looking for **student interns** throughout the state. We have begun collecting burial information on NY men and women who are veterans. Interns would have to visit cemeteries in their area, locate markers that indicate that the person buried there was in the military and collect information. Interested students can contact Jim Gandy, Assistant Librarian / Archivist, email jgandy@nysmm.org, <http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/mil-hist.htm>

The King Manor Museum offers **three high school internships** throughout the year: February-June; July-August; September-December. The interns participate in the program through providing tours of the museum on weekends from 12:30pm-4:30pm. A monetary stipend is awarded at the completion of the program. For more information, contact the King Manor Museum, Mailing Address: 90-04 161st St., Ste. 704, Jamaica, NY 11432; 718-206-0545; Email: KingManor3@earthlink.net; Website: www.KingManor.org.

[Worthwhile Websites](#)

Peer Coaching websites Interested in learning more about starting peer coaching in your school? Here are several websites that will be of help.

<http://webserver3.ascd.org/ossd/peercoaching.html> New professional development

survey to assess your school/district's PD needs.

http://buildingblocks.org/cfm_User/pg_strategyHome.cfm?strategyID=93 Using the Collaborative Coaching and Learning professional development model to transform teaching.

<http://www.teachersnetwork.org/tnpi/research/growth/becker.htm>

Peer coaching for the improvement of teaching and learning.

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/schoolimprovement/development/howto/peercoaching> How to begin a Peer Coaching program.

Information from Google Education Outreach...

www.google.com/educators Here at Google, we've been spending a lot of time meeting with teachers, administrators and students, and using their feedback to make important changes to our site, Google for Educators. Visit us at and you'll see what we mean.

<http://groups.google.com/group/google-for-educators> In response to feedback from teachers, we've created the Google for Educators discussion group and invite you to join this community today.

<http://www.google.com/educators/activities.html> You asked for more content created by teachers, for teachers. We sponsor a blog produced by our friends at WestEd called the Infinite Thinking Machine, and we've started to include some of the content from that blog on our front page. You can view the full blog, at <http://www.infinitethinking.org>. We've also included some of the projects submitted by you in the classroom activities section of our site.

<http://www.google.com/educators/tools.html>. Many of you wrote to thank us for giving you access to specific Google tools via our site, as well as ideas about how to use those tools in the classroom. You've let us know that you use other Google products such as Google Page Creator, Google News, and Google Groups. We've now added them to the "Tools for your classroom" section of our site.

<http://www.google.com/educators/gta.html> Since we started our educators initiative, we've conducted two Google Teacher Academies, one in the Bay Area and one in New York. Although we don't have a solid date for the next Google Teacher Academy, we plan on hosting one soon -- possibly in a region near you -- so please check the Google for Educators site often.

Seventeen great websites for elementary and middle school students

[ASPCA'S Animaland](http://www.animaland.org)  <http://www.animaland.org> This entertaining and educational site is loaded with information about animals, pet care, careers in animal care, animal issues, and plenty of fun and games. Sponsored by The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty

to Animals (ASPCA).

Atlapeia Online.  <http://www.atlapeia.com/> Atlapeia Online contains key information on every country of the world. Each country profile provides facts and data on geography, climate, people, religion, language, history, and economy, making it ideal for personal or family education and for students of all ages.

Avi's Home Page  <http://www.avi-writer.com/> Avi, author of such stories as *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, *Nothing But the Truth*, and *The Fighting Ground*, answers questions and talks about his books.

Baby-Sitters' Club Page.  <http://www.scholastic.com/anmartin/bsc/index.htm> What's happening at the Baby-Sitters' Club? Visit this site to learn about the characters and adventures.

Backyard Nature  <http://www.backyardnature.net> Naturalist Jim Conrad provides a broad range of nature activities and information, from the basics of observing nature to classifying plants and creatures.

Haemi Balgassi  <http://www.haemibalgassi.com/> She is the author of *Peacebound Trains* and *Tao's Sonata*.

Baltimore County (Md.) Library Kid's Page.  <http://www.bcplonline.org/kidspage/kidspage.html> A clear, colorful design invites young people to access a collection of online stories, a book discussion group, and "Ms. Spider's" guided tour of the Internet for families.

BAM! Body and Mind.  <http://www.bam.gov> Maintained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this site helps to answer kids' questions on health issues and recommend ways to make their bodies and minds healthier, stronger and safer. Games, quizzes and health tips add up to an appealing site.

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids.  <http://bensguide.gpo.gov> Children and YAs from Kindergarten through grade 12 will find a variety of information about basic aspects of the United States and its government, such as how a bill becomes law.

Berenstain Bears.  <http://www.berenstainbears.com> The official Berenstain Bears site, includes activities and lists of books.

Betsy Ross Homepage.  <http://www.ushistory.org/betsy/> Why Ross was selected to make the flag, how she cut a five-point star, and directions of cutting your own five-point star. Works great in classroom discussions!

Between the Lions.  <http://pbskids.org/lions/> This early literacy site, for children ages 4-7, is a tie-in for the award-winning television program. Appealing characters, terrific songs and fun games combine to offer great on-line experiences.

Bible Gateway.  <http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?> This is an excellent site to search

the Christian Bible, in one of seven languages, textually as well as by specific categories, phrases, or terms.

[Bill Nye the Science Guy.](http://www.billnye.com)  <http://www.billnye.com> Nye applies his entertaining approach to science to the Web, with a Demo of the Day, highlights from the day's television episode, and a chance to e-mail your own query. Requires Macromedia Shockwave Plug-in.

[Black History.](http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/BHM/AfroAm.html)  <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/BHM/AfroAm.html> This outstanding Black History site offers a full range of activities and was created to support students as they explore topic related to Black History and African American issues. Try the Black History treasure hunt.

[Judy Blume Official Site](http://www.judyblume.com)  <http://www.judyblume.com> This site offers information about the books and life of author, Judy Blume.

Thirteen more great websites ideal for middle school students

[Archiving Early America: Historic Documents from 18th Century America.](http://earlyamerica.com/)  <http://earlyamerica.com/> The main focus is primary source material displayed digitally. A unique array of original newspapers, maps, and writings come to life on your screen just as they appeared to our forebears more than 200 years ago. There is information about the documents as well.

[Biography A & E Page.](http://www.biography.com/)  <http://www.biography.com/> Has a searchable online database containing 15,000 international names, past and present. This is a commercial site for the Biography television show.

[BIOLUMINESCENCE.](http://www.biolum.org)  <http://www.biolum.org> Living lights inhabit earth's oceans. The Bioluminescence web page explores, through photos and text, some of what scientists have learned.

[Black Baseball's Negro League.](http://www.blackbaseball.com/)  <http://www.blackbaseball.com/> Learn about the origins of the Negro Baseball League: what they were, why they were founded, and why they no longer exist.

[British History 4Kids.](http://www.britainusa.org/4kids)  <http://www.britainusa.org/4kids> From the dawn of time through today you can learn all about Great Britain's history and culture.

[Bugs in the News!](http://people.ku.edu/~jbrown/bugs.html)  <http://people.ku.edu/~jbrown/bugs.html> A site to answer questions about bacteria, antibodies, E-coli, and DNA "Bugs."

[Building a School Website.](http://www.wigglebits.com)  <http://www.wigglebits.com> Let Wanda Wigglebits help you design your own web site—step by step.

[Canadian Government Information.](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/8/4/r4-201-e.html#canadian)  <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/8/4/r4-201-e.html#canadian> Detailed information on all aspects of Canadian government, including information on all of the provinces.

[Care for Animals.](http://www.avma.org/careforanimals/default.asp)   <http://www.avma.org/careforanimals/default.asp> Learn about pets and the people who care for them at this site from the American Veterinary Medical Association.

[Cats.](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/cats/)  <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/cats/> Opportunity to design the perfect feline predator with guides to the internal structure of a cat.

[Cells Alive!](http://www.cellsalive.com)  <http://www.cellsalive.com> What do disease, sourdough bread, biological weapons, and gold mines have in common?

[Chess Is Fun.](http://www.princeton.edu/~jedwards/cif/intro.html)  <http://www.princeton.edu/~jedwards/cif/intro.html> Want to learn how to play chess? Want to learn how to play a bit better? Here are some fairly easy "lessons."

[Chess Kids.](http://www.chesskids.com)  <http://www.chesskids.com> Learn to play chess with interactive lessons, quizzes, games, and puzzles.

Sharing Success

Please [click here](#) to access research information on the following topics.

- Arts Education Planning [K-12]
- Differentiating Instruction [K-12]
- Rethinking How Schools Use Time [K-12]
- Comprehensive School Counseling Programs [K-12]

Please [click here](#) to access research information on the following topics.

- School Culture: "The Hidden Curriculum" [K-12]
- Legally Enrolled Students [K-12]
- Five Powerful Strategies for Connecting Boys to Schools [Elementary]
- Oregon's Response to Intervention [K-12]

You Asked -- We Answered Sample Research Requests

Do you have research on K-12 Reading Literacy and Writing in the content areas? [K-12](#)
What are some best practices for transitioning students from school to school. [K-12](#)

Please send me research on "bullying. [K-12](#)

When should acceleration in math begin? What are the best methods for identifying students for acceleration? What is the impact of early acceleration for later acceleration?

What about timing, screening and later consequences for acceleration? [Grades 5-12](#)

Do you have research on "emotional intelligence" relative to grades 7 & 8? Who is the guru out there? [MS](#)

[NCTE Inbox](#)

[News](#)

Oversight Is Set for Beleaguered U.S. Reading Program. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has announced that an outside advisory committee will oversee the Reading First program, after a federal audit last year uncovered mismanagement and conflicts of interest. [The New York Times, March 14, 2007](#)

Closing the "Degree Gap". A new report released by the [Making Opportunity Affordable](#) project tries to quantify the number of college degrees needed to be awarded to students in the United States in order to keep up with international competitors. The report concludes that the United States needs to have an additional 15.6 million degrees by 2025. [Inside Higher Ed, March 7, 2007](#)

Teens Buying Books at Fastest Rate in Decades. Teens are currently devouring books that are geared to their interests. Industry analysts say not only are sales booming but the quality of YA literature is soaring. [Seattle Post-Intelligencer, March 7, 2007.](#)

Group to Offer AP Exam Extra Credit: \$250. A group of education leaders and business executives are offering cash incentives to students and teachers in selected school districts for passing AP math, science, and English tests. The plan has sparked debate over the merits of cash rewards for student achievement. [The Washington Post, March 9, 2007](#)

Lesson in Poetry Gets a Teacher in Trouble. A language arts teacher in Florida has been put on paid administrative leave after some parents complained that her poetry lesson contained inappropriate material. [The Gainesville Sun, March 8, 2007](#)

With One Word, Children's Book Sets Off Uproar. *The Higher Power of Lucky* by Susan Patron is this year's winner of the Newbery Medal. However, one word on the first page of

the book is causing some school librarians to say they will pull the book from the shelves.

[The New York Times, February 18, 2007](#)

Bill to Ban Political Opinions in Classes. An Arizona House committee has approved legislation that would prohibit any public school educator or college professor from advocating for or against a political candidate in class, or advocating for a social, political, or cultural issue that is part of a partisan debate. Supporters say the measure would allow students to disagree with an instructor without fear of retribution. However, students and instructors say the measure would stifle classroom discussion. [The Arizona Republic, February 16, 2007](#)

Companies Mine Growth of MP3 Homework. MP3 is no longer used by students just to listen to their favorite music. Students are using audio software to download books, texts, and other study materials. More and more companies are making educational materials that can be downloaded to audio software. [USA Today, February 6, 2007](#)

Ideas

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

- [Color Poems—Using the Five Senses to Guide Prewriting](#) (E)
- [Letter Poems Deliver: Experimenting with Line Breaks in Poetry Writing](#) (E)
- [What Am I? Teaching Poetry through Riddles](#) (M)
- [Found Poems/Parallel Poems](#) (M)
- [A Poem of Possibilities: Thinking about the Future](#) (S); Connect to March Madness!
- [Walt Whitman as a Model Poet: "I Hear My School Singing"](#) (S)
- ["Sestinas and Villanelles from the Inner City"](#) (C)
- ["Writing Across and Against the Curriculum"](#) (C)
- ["Making Mistakes, Creating Metaphors"](#) (TE)
- ["Re-Form-ing Reflection \(and Action\) in English Education"](#) (TE)

Visit the [Academy of American Poets](#) site to see [resources for highlighting poetry in the classroom](#) and to request your [free National Poetry Month poster](#).

For more ideas for teaching poetry, see the [Poetry Teacher Resource Collection](#), which includes links to additional articles, lesson plans, and other resources.

Focusing on Censorship in the Classroom. Calls for censorship, like the recent dispute over a poetry lesson in Levy County, Florida frequently communicate the tensions between differing cultural and philosophical perspectives.

"[When Values Clash: Learning from Controversy](#)" (E) from *Language Arts* explores how such conflicts can become opportunities for communities to help students become literate, socially responsible, culturally aware, and contributing citizens.

The *Voices from the Middle* article "[Censorship: The Mind You Close May Be Your Own](#)" (M-S) reviews several young adult books that directly address censorship, including *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Year They Burned the Books*. The article also includes an interview with author Chris Crutcher on his novel *The Sledding Hill*.

The activities described in the *English Journal* article "[Introducing Censorship: One Teacher's Approach](#)" (M-S) focus on the ways books and speech are censored by supplementing a study of *Inherit the Wind* with a range of other banned topics.

The *College English* article "['Hiding Our Snickers': Weekly Mail Journalists' Indirect Resistance in Apartheid South Africa](#)" (C) tells the stories of journalists who battled the government censors on a weekly basis to convey essential information about the struggle against apartheid.

Explore how preservice teachers respond to important social issues in the classroom without censoring subjects in the *English Education* article "[Walking Our Talk: Between Response and Responsibility in the Literature Classroom](#)" (TE).

Facing a Text Challenge Yourself?

For advice, rationales, and other help with challenges to literary works, films and videos, drama productions, or teaching methods, visit the [NCTE Anti-Censorship Center](#).

Producing and Innovating with Technology. Last week's release of a new draft of technology standards by the International Society for Technology in Education (see the News story above) highlights the need to move beyond teaching simple competence with technology to encouraging students to produce and innovate with technologies. These resources provide sophisticated ways students can interact with technology in the classroom.

The ReadWriteThink lesson [What's the Difference? Beginning Writers Compare E-mail with Letter Writing](#) (E) outlines opportunities for investigating the genre of e-mail in the classroom. Follow up with the ReadWriteThink lesson [Write Right Back: Recognizing Readers' Needs and Expectations for E-mail Replies](#) (E), which explores the content and format readers expect in e-mail replies.

The intersection of film and sound are the focus of the ReadWriteThink lesson [On a Musical Note: Exploring Reading Strategies by Creating a Soundtrack](#) (M). Students create a soundtrack for a novel that they have read, engaging in traditional reading strategies as predicting, visualizing, and questioning in addition to film and sound.

The ReadWriteThink lesson [Star-Crossed Lovers Online: Romeo and Juliet for a Digital Age](#) (S-C) invites students to use their modern experiences with technology to make active meaning of an older text by creating their own modern interpretation of events in the drama.

In the News

Eye on Curriculum

Biology teacher fired for anti-evolution lesson. Part-time high school biology teacher Kris Helphinstine handed out materials from a prominent creationist that included biblical references and gave a PowerPoint presentation with slides of Nazi death camps linking them to evolution and Planned Parenthood. After parents complained, the central Oregon school board promptly fired him for deviating from state policy on evolution curriculum; Helphinstine said he only meant to inspire critical thinking. [The Oregonian \(Portland\)](#) (3/21), [CNN/Associated Press](#) (3/21)

Studies: Homework value uncertain; little change in dropout rate. A new [Center for Public Education review](#) of homework research says there is no conclusive evidence that homework "increases student achievement across the board." A new [National Center for Education Statistics analysis](#) found the dropout rate stood at about 4.7% in 2004, down from 6.1% in 1972, but that the rate has remained relatively steady since 1990. [The Washington Post](#) (3/19)

Healthy shopping tour aims to improve nutrition. Lessons in nutrition begin in the produce section of a supermarket a few miles from Trenton Central High School in New Jersey. Teem Esteem, a three-year-old program that aims to teach good nutrition, also offers options to standard physical education classes, including circuit training, cardio dance and karate in addition to instruction on cooking and nutrition. [The Boston Globe/Associated Press](#) (3/19)

Creating rap lyrics inspires young history students. Teacher Scott Sayre thought rapping on history might give his Los Angeles sixth-graders an unconventional way to learn their reading material. Creating lyrics inspired students to learn more about the likes of Gandhi, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X and Jesse Jackson, students said. "It made me want to read more history so I could rap about it," said 11-year-old Shellie Robinson. [The Boston Globe/Los Angeles Times](#) (3/18)

Vo-tech students in high demand. New Jersey sophomores are providing free technical work on other schools' computers as part of a class at the Warren County Vocational-Technical School. When their instructor determines their technical level is sufficient, he sends them out to learn job skills and help the school system. [NJ.com](#) (3/18)

Study: Bilingual classes improve understanding. Bilingual children allowed to use both their family's native language and English in class have a deeper understanding of key mathematical and language concepts, a new University of London study finds. Lead researcher, Dr. Charmian Kenner, said bilingual children can access their lessons via both languages. [BBC](#) (3/15)

Column: Recognizing top high schools. Newsweek's annual list of top U.S. high schools based on college-prep tests is a good start, but Jay Mathews plans to look deeper in coming weeks into what makes for a quality school. [The Washington Post](#) (3/13)

Algebra classes for eighth-graders take wing. Experts say the trend toward early algebra is driven by a desire to open the door for higher learning in math and science. Nationally, more than 42% of eighth-graders now take algebra or more advanced math, up from 27% in 2000, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. [The Washington Post](#) (3/12)

Older teens flock to young-adult literature. Teen readers are buying books and crowding libraries in unprecedented quantities, driving a new marketplace of increasingly well-written young-adult literature. [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#) (3/7)

Learning and Teaching

Column: Teachers seek uninterrupted learning. Colleen Dippel disconnected the loudspeaker; Jason Kamras, the 2005 national teacher of the year, limited assembly time; Jaime Escalante, of "Stand and Deliver" fame, avoided faculty meetings. A [recent Education](#)

[Sector study](#) found each minute of the 6.5-hour school day is precious. [The Washington Post](#) (3/6)

Professional Leadership

New center will study teacher merit pay. Using a \$10 million Education Department grant, researchers at Vanderbilt University will soon be putting Texas and Nashville pay-for-performance programs under the microscope. The newly established National Center on Performance Incentives aims to shed light on whether teachers behave differently when bonuses are offered and whether student achievement improves as a result. [Education Week \(free to SmartBrief subscribers\)](#) (3/19)

New York State, L.I. district duke it out over deficit. A troubled Long Island district placed under state oversight in 1995 has a budget deficit of as much as \$12.3 million, the New York comptroller says. Roosevelt school system officials say the deficit is closer to \$9.8 million and contend the district is making strides in its turnaround effort. [The New York Times](#) (3/7)

Technology Solutions

MySpace establishes election hub for young voters. [MySpace.com](#), the popular social-networking site, launched an information hub this week dedicated to the 2008 presidential election. MySpace users will be able to read candidate blogs, see photos and videos, link, if they choose, their favorite candidate to their friends list or put a candidate's ad on their own pages. [Seattle Post-Intelligencer/Associated Press](#) (3/19)

Italy says no to cell phones in schools. Citing the use of camera phones to share video of attacks on students and teachers, the Italian government has banned the use of mobile phones on school grounds. Under the new law, students using cell phones at school could risk everything from having their phone confiscated to being prevented from taking exams. [cellular-news \(U.K.\)](#) (3/19)

Interactivity, continuous action may bring video games into classrooms. Integrating educational video games into school curriculum may inspire student interest and improve problem-solving, proponents say. The MacArthur Foundation is investing \$50 million to investigate whether video games can promote learning. [Reuters](#) (3/16)

Online math competition breaks records. Students from some 2,000 schools in 97 countries logged on Wednesday to [VmathLive](#), an online math program, to answer math questions and compete against one another in celebration of World Math Day. Project organizers hoped students worldwide would answer a record-breaking 10 million math questions correctly; the actual total was nearly 39 million. [eSchool News](#) (free registration) (3/14)

Policy Watch

Nine NYC schools at risk of closing. Eight New York City middle schools and one high school were identified as being in danger of being shuttered because of academic failure. These developments come two years after Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg announced \$40 million in additional funding for the middle grades. [The New York Times](#) (3/16)

NCLB

Dozens of Republicans turn against NCLB in congressional debate. More than 50 Republicans in the House and Senate -- including a House leader who supported NCLB's original passage -- introduced legislation today that could severely undercut the education law, by allowing states to opt out of its testing mandates. According to critics of the law, many voters in affluent suburban and exurban districts think their once-innovative public schools have increasingly become captive to federal testing mandates. [The Washington Post](#)

Few schools improve scores in initial NCLB restructuring. Even though the No Child Left Behind law requires schools that fail to meet benchmarks to institute reforms, more study needs to be done to figure out which reform approaches work best. "What we're finding is that school districts that implement a variety of changes are more likely to improve their test scores than those that implement only one change," says Center on Education Policy CEO Jack Jennings. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (3/1)

In the Field

English schools allowed to ban Muslim veils. Schools in England will allow head teachers to decide whether to ban students from wearing face-covering Muslim veils, government officials said. "If they feel any garment imposes on a child's ability to learn or is a safety or security issue they could be banned," said a spokesman for the Department for Education and Skills. [Reuters](#) (3/20)

Singapore ends anti-obesity program that led to teasing. Singapore will scrap its in-school diet regimen, after parents complained that overweight children were being singled out for teasing. The 15-year-old "Trim and Fit" campaign will be replaced by a holistic program for all students rather than just students with weight issues, the Singapore Education Ministry said. [International Herald Tribune/Associated Press](#) (3/20)

Just 15 minutes of daily exercise may slim kids down. Fifteen minutes of daily exercise might be enough to keep children from becoming obese, according to British and U.S. researchers. Children who performed short bursts of intense activity were 50% less likely than inactive children to be obese, the researchers reported. [Reuters](#) (3/19)

Survey: Online bullying affects 40% of teens. More than four in 10 teens have been taunted or threatened via social network Web sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, instant messages and text messages from cell phones, a new National Crime Prevention Council survey says. One in eight reported feeling scared or upset enough by the cyberbullying to stay home. [San Francisco Chronicle](#) (3/17)

Study links television to poor diet. The amount of time preschoolers spend in front of the TV correlates to the quality of their diets, a new Harvard Medical School study reveals. Each additional viewing hour above the average 1.7 hours translated into greater consumption per week of calories, sugar and trans fats. [The Tennessean \(Nashville\)/HealthDay News](#) (3/15)

What's the price for "world-class" public education? Giving Ohio students a "world-class" education would cost an additional \$2.4 billion to \$4.8 billion in new money, or up to \$12,000 per pupil, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation found. To get an adequate education in Rhode Island, a new report found that state must increase spending by \$94 million, to an average \$9,500 per pupil. [Akron Beacon Journal \(Ohio\)](#) (free registration) (3/6).

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”
Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC)