

## May 2008 E-Newsletter

Dear Colleague,

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

Jane, Carol and Elyse

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### A Light Touch

#### Those Wacky Signs!

In a podiatrist's office: "Time wounds all heels."

On a septic tank truck: Yesterday's Meals on Wheels

On a plumber's truck: "We repair what your husband fixed."

On another plumber's truck: "Don't sleep with a drip. Call your plumber !"

On a church's billboard: "7 days without God makes one weak."

At a tire shop in Milwaukee: "Invite us to your next blowout."

At a towing company: "We don't charge an arm and a leg. We want tows."

On an electrician's truck: "Let us remove your shorts!!"

In a Nonsmoking Area: "If we see smoke, we will assume you are on fire and take appropriate action."

On a maternity room door: "Push. Push. Push."

At an optometrist's office : "If you don't see what you're looking for, you've come to the right place."

On a Taxidermist's window: "We really know our stuff."

On a Fence: "Salesmen welcome! Dog food is expensive!"

At a Car Dealership: "The best way to get back on your feet - miss a car payment."

Outside a Muffler Shop: "No appointment necessary. We hear you coming."

In a veterinarian's waiting room: "Be back in 5 minutes. Sit! Stay!"

At the Electric Company: "We would be delighted if you send in your payment. However, if you don't, you will be."

In a Restaurant window: "Don't stand there and be hungry, Come on in and get fed up."  
In the front yard of a funeral home, "Drive carefully. We'll wait."  
At a propane filling Station, "Thank heaven for little grills."  
And don't forget the sign at a Chicago radiator shop: "Best place in town to take a leak."

### Interesting Quotes

"I had a rose named after me and I was very flattered. But I was not pleased to read the description in the catalog: "No good in a bed, but fine against a wall." -- Eleanor Roosevelt

"Last week, I stated this woman was the ugliest woman I had ever seen. I have since been visited by her sister, and now wish to withdraw that statement." -- Mark Twain

"The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible." -- George Burns

"Santa Claus has the right idea. Visit people only once a year." -- Victor Borge

"Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint."-- Mark Twain

"By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you'll become happy; if you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher."-- Socrates

"I was married by a judge. I should have asked for a jury." -- Groucho Marx

"Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups: alcohol, caffeine, sugar and fat." -- Alex Levine

"I don't feel old. I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap." -- Bob Hope

"I never drink water because of the disgusting things that fish do in it."-- W.C. Fields

"We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress." -- Will Rogers

"Don't worry about avoiding temptation as you grow older, it will avoid you."-- Winston Churchill

"By the time a man is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere."-- Billy Crystal

The cardiologist's diet: "If it tastes good, spit it out."

*F4?*

### Courses and Workshops

Back by popular demand, textbooks are now included in the tuition for all NYSUT Education and Learning Trust (ELT) summer graduate courses, nearby and online! 2008 Special Promotion - 3 credit courses for just \$645, including books! For more information, go to:

<http://nysut.org/elt/teachers.html>

**May 31-June 1, 2008: The Battle of Saratoga Teacherhostel**, Saratoga Springs and vicinity. Spend a weekend immersed in one of the most critical battles of the American Revolution. Participants will be

exposed to multiple perspectives involving the battle. Join with scholars, the National Park Service, and re-enactors to learn about the event. Contact Hours: 18, Cost: \$175 (includes two lunches and one dinner), Cutoff Date: April 30, To register, go to: [http://www.ihare.org/programs\\_teacher2008.html](http://www.ihare.org/programs_teacher2008.html).

**July 7-14, 2008.** Lincoln Center Institute's "Explore Imagination in Education" workshop will help educators discover how to elicit new ideas in students, stimulate creativity, and prepare conceptual thinkers for the world beyond the classroom. This workshop is offered at both introductory and advanced levels. For more information, please visit [www.lcinstitute.org](http://www.lcinstitute.org).

**July 21-25, 2008, The Hudson River Teacherhostel: The Westchester Experience,** Sleepy Hollow to Hastings-on Hudson, Contact Hours: 40, Cost: \$245 (includes five lunches and one dinner), **Enrollment Cutoff Date: June 21, 2008.** Experience the Hudson River from colonial times to the present. Learn about the Dutch, slavery, Washington Irving, Hudson River art, the Gilded Age, and the Rockefellers. The program combines art, archaeology, ecology, history, literature and provides a testament to the efforts of small river towns to maintain their heritage and identity into the 21st century. To register go to: [http://www.ihare.org/programs\\_teacher2008.html](http://www.ihare.org/programs_teacher2008.html)

**August 4-8, 2008, Forts of the Empire State Teacherhostel,** Fort Edward, Fort William Henry, Fort Ticonderoga, Contact Hours: 40, Cost: \$345, **Enrollment cutoff date: June 26.** Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the French and Indian War in upstate New York. Tour the forts, stand on the high ground, cruise the lakes, and walk the shores of the war that became part of American history, literature, and movies. Leave with a better understanding of the global war that preceded the American Revolution, and bring that excitement and experience back to the classroom. To register for the program go to: [http://www.ihare.org/programs\\_teacher2008forts.html](http://www.ihare.org/programs_teacher2008forts.html).

### Events

**May 22, 2008, 8:30 AM—2:45 PM: Meeting the Challenge: Success for Special Needs Learners,** Melville Hilton. Don't miss this important conference for all educators, sponsored by the Suffolk's Edge Teacher Center. Keynote speaker, Dr. Paul Yellin will present **Helping Struggling Learners Find Success.** Morning and afternoon workshops include Transitions for Middle and High School, Increasing Social IQ and Social Skills, ABCs of Special Education, Managing Defiant Behavior, and much more. Conference Fee is \$50.00 for SETC members, \$70 for non-members. Lunch will be served. For more information about this SETC-sponsored conference, go to [www.seteachercenter.org](http://www.seteachercenter.org).

**June 27-29, 2008. ASCD Summer Conference on Differentiated Instruction, Understanding by Design and What Works In Schools.** ASCD has gathered experts on these three research-based,

classroom-proven approaches to learning and teaching for its summer conference. Attendees will have an opportunity to explore all three approaches or delve more deeply into the one approach they are most interested in. To learn more about the conference contact ASCD's Service Center at 1-800-933-2723 or 1-703-578-9600 and press 2, or go to:

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

**July 17-20, 2008. Literate Life: A Human Right.** [Reserve your room](#) for the [Whole Language Umbrella's Literacies for All Summer Institute](#), which takes place in Tucson, Arizona. Sessions will focus on such areas as critical reflection and holistic classroom practices, culturally responsive curriculum, and multiple and multimodal literacies. [Featured speakers](#) include Carole Edelsky, Monica Brown, Kathy G. Short, and Bob Wortman.

**July 20-23, 2008. Design Your Literacy Curriculum with the Help of Key Experts at the NCTE Institute for 21st Century Literacies.** Join [featured speakers](#) Kathleen Blake Yancey, Kylene Beers, Patsy Hall, Sandy Hayes, William Kist, Ernest Morrell, Fran Sharer, Sara Kajder, Helen Barrett, Elizabeth Beagle, and Michael Neal for the [NCTE Institute for 21st Century Literacies](#), in Indianapolis, Indiana. The hands-on institute will help teachers, literacy coaches, department chairs, and district leaders develop and design literacy curricula, instructional strategies, and assessment practices to prepare students for success in the 21st century. Check out the [schedule](#) for the event, and [register today to reserve your seat!](#)

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

### **Announcements**

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

**May 6 2008 letter from Google.** Hello and Happy National Teacher Day,

In 1953, Eleanor Roosevelt persuaded the 81st Congress to recognize teachers with a celebratory day all their own. Since then, the date of National Teacher Day has bounced around a bit until 1985, when the National Education Association declared the first week of May National Teacher Appreciation Week and the first Tuesday of that month National Teacher Day.

On that note, we'd like to invite you to come celebrate and learn with us at the next Google Teacher Academy, scheduled to take place at the Googleplex in Mountain View on **June 25th, 2008**. The Google Teacher Academy is a FREE professional development experience designed to help K-12 educators get the most from innovative technologies. Each GTA is an intensive, one-day event where participants get hands-on experience with Google's free products and other technologies, learn about interesting and new instructional strategies, receive resources to share with colleagues, and immerse themselves in an innovative corporate environment. Upon completion, GTA participants become Google Certified Teachers, who share what they learn with other K-12 educators in their local region. This time around, we've listened to your feedback and opened up the application to all teachers everywhere. As long as you are willing and able to get yourself to the Googleplex, we'd love to have you. For more information about the GTA, please check out our full information and requirements page:

<http://www.google.com/educators/gta.html>

The team of people thinking more about teachers everyday is growing here at Google. As such, we're introducing a new section of the Google for Educators site - dedicated to using our popular Geo Products. Here you will find information about using Google Earth, Maps, Sky, and SketchUp in your K-12 classroom. Along with some of the great classroom activities we've collected over the years, we've also included starter kits which feature "cool and easy things you can do" with each product in your classroom. Check it out here: <http://www.google.com/educators/geo.html>

Lastly, but never leastly, a few months back, we asked you to share stories about using Google Docs with your students. You told us about the power of introducing collaborative writing to your kids, you mentioned using our presentation software in class, keeping students engaged with the "chat" feature, and you told us how much you like to be able to drive success throughout the writing process, instead of just grading the final product. [http://www.google.com/educators/p\\_docs.html](http://www.google.com/educators/p_docs.html)

While we were reviewing your stories, we realized that Docs may be a bit intimidating to the uninitiated so we developed a "getting started" guide - with step-by-step instructions for creating accounts, sharing and collaborating, editing and organizing your work. Give Google Docs a try:

[http://docs.google.com/View?docid=dcdn7mjq\\_72nh25vq](http://docs.google.com/View?docid=dcdn7mjq_72nh25vq)

We hope today is a true celebration of your vocation - and we're wishing that all of those who are thankful for your hard work take this time to express it. I know I speak for everyone at Google when I say that none of us would be where we are without the amazing men and women who dedicated their lives to teaching us much of what we know today. On behalf of Google, I'd like to say thank you - to

each and every teacher - for all that you do every day.

Cheers,

Cristin Frodella, Google K-12 Education Outreach, <http://www.google.com/educators>.

**May 15, 2008: Application due date. Want to receive Free Hands-on Energy Curricula for your Classroom?** Participate in a Research Project! Researchers at Clarkson University's Center for the Environment, in Potsdam, NY are inviting grade 7 through 12 teachers to participate in a study funded by the National Science Foundation that looks at Energy Literacy and Energy Education in K-12 schools. The researchers, together with a panel of energy- and energy-education experts and roughly 1400 middle and high school students in New York, have developed a written survey that contains 60 questions about energy-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The survey can be completed within one class period and is considered to be a valid, reliable measure of energy literacy for middle and high school students.

The next step is to use this survey in a study that looks at the relationship between education and energy literacy. All data will be confidential, no student or teacher names will be used while analyzing or reporting results. Teachers who are selected to participate in the study will receive detailed, confidential feedback about the energy literacy of their students, as well as free energy related curricular materials developed for use in schools as part of the Clarkson and St. Lawrence University's Project-based Learning Partnership Program. For additional information, including application and materials, go to the project's web page at [www.clarkson.edu/energyliteracy](http://www.clarkson.edu/energyliteracy) or contact Jan DeWaters at [dewaters@clarkson.edu](mailto:dewaters@clarkson.edu) or by phone (315-268-2001).

**The New York State Education Department and the Evaluation Systems group of Pearson seek NYS educators to participate in test review conferences for the NYS Teacher Certification Examinations (NYSTCE).** Since the implementation of the NYSTCE, the New York State Education Department has periodically reviewed and redeveloped the tests to ensure that they are current and consistent with significant emerging state and national standards. Currently, additional items are being developed in the following NYSTCE tests:

*Blind and Visually Impaired Content Specialty Test (CST), Cantonese CST, Educational Technology Specialist CST, Elementary Assessment of Teaching Skills—Written (ATS—W), Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST), Mandarin CST, Russian CST, Secondary Assessment of Teaching Skills—Written (ATS—W).* You may be considered for participation if you are: a permanently certified NYS educator who is currently teaching in an appropriate field, or a college educator who prepares prospective teachers (teacher education faculty and arts and sciences faculty). Participants will:

- receive substitute reimbursement for their school district if they are public school teachers.
- participate in one- or two-day meetings.

- be reimbursed for their travel and meal expenses.
- be provided with hotel accommodations if necessary.

For more information or to apply, visit <http://www.nyrecruit.nesinc.com/>.

**Have you ever considered a Liberty Science Center Membership?** With a membership, you'll enjoy unlimited FREE admission, so you can come as often as you want and stay as long as you like. But that's only the start. **Sign up today** to enjoy all that Liberty Science Center has to offer, including unlimited FREE admission for one year, free admission to over 270 **Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC)** around the world, Discounts on IMAX® Dome Theater and J. D. Williams Theater tickets, exclusive member nights, special invitations for children, FREE one-year subscription to *Popular Mechanics* magazine. **Join now online!**

## *Sharing Success Research*

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

### [Gifted and Talented Students](#)

## *Worthwhile Websites*

### **For teachers**

[www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/civics.html](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/civics.html) Visit a toolkit that promotes a standards-based, interdisciplinary focus for civics education. It includes a rationale for teachers, curriculum supervisors, and school district administrators with responsibilities for planning a standards-based instructional program that infuses civics education across content areas; definitions and frequently-asked questions about civics education; and strategies and online resources for strengthening civics education in local school districts.

[www.publicschoolinsights.org/stories/?storyId=10362](http://www.publicschoolinsights.org/stories/?storyId=10362). Public School Insights, a website by the Learning First Alliance, highlights successes in public schools across the country. The national conversation includes contributions from educators, parents and policymakers. As you'll see, the arts work for students!

### **For students**

<http://icue.com/>. NBC News launches interactive site for students aged 13-17 that offers news, games, community and video, in an environment that will be policed for profanities, bullying and exchanges of personal information, according to a news report. Go to [RBR.com](http://RBR.com) for a report.

**Official Eric Carle Web Site**  <http://www.eric-carle.com/>. For fans of the famous author/illustrator and his books such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Do You Want to Be My Friend*, and *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me*.

**OH! Kids**  <http://www.oplin.org/ohkids/> Children's section of the Ohio Public Library Information Network. It is notable for its directory of links by age, particularly its "WebTots" section. Searchable. Heavy graphic site with animations.

**Peep and the Big Wide World**  <http://www.peepandthebigwideworld.com> This web companion to the Canadian TV production shown on The Learning Channel and Discovery Kids' channel presents a baby chick and friends who invite preschoolers into the wonderful world of science.

**Play Kids Games**  <http://www.playkidsgames.com>. Check out math, alphabet and logic games designed for younger children and their parents.

**Playhouse Disney**  <http://disney.go.com/playhouse/today/index.html>. Games, songs and activities feature characters from the Disney network.

**Professor Garfield**  <http://www.professorgarfield.org> Professor Garfield is an interactive learning portal full of educational games and activities for children. It was designed to by teachers to enhance and support classroom learning in new and innovative ways.

**Snoopy.com**  <http://www.snoopy.com> Visit with a favorite character. Personality profiles of the characters and Schulz's thoughts on why they behave the way they do!

**Reading Rockets**  <http://www.readingrockets.org> This site, prepared by WETA public television, presents strategies, activities, and lessons designed to help young children learn to read.

**Ready at Five Partnership**  <http://www.readyatfive.org/index.html> Ready at Five is a statewide, public/private partnership committed to ensuring that all Maryland children enter school ready to succeed. Provides resources in both Spanish and English. Online resources include activities, monthly newsletters and parenting tips, how-to guides, featured articles, and other parent resources. Parenting tips are archived monthly from August 2004 to the present.

**San Francisco Symphony for Kids**  <http://www.sfskids.org> This site provides information about instruments, a music basics tutorial and a listing of family programs and activities at the San Francisco Symphony.

## ***NCTE Inbox***

### **News**

**Despite 25 Years of Reform, U.S. Schools Still Fall Short.** Twenty-five years after *A Nation at Risk* and after much school reform, U.S. schools lag behind other countries. Two of the biggest issues, according to Linda Darling-Hammond in [a new report by The Forum for Education and Democracy](#), are

funding inequities and teaching quality. [The Christian Science Monitor, April 24, 2008](#)

**Mr. Weatherbee, Don't Blow Your Top.** Comic books are coming back, this time as legitimate fare in classrooms. NCTE member James, is quoted. [Instructor Magazine Website, April 2008](#)

**Bedtime Stories Now Available on Children's iPods.** With one-third of children ages 6-10 using iPods, why not bring them stories through that medium? [Associated Press, April 29, 2008](#)

**Validation for RateMyProfessors.com?** A study of the website finds its ratings correlate with those used by [IDEA](#), a formal evaluation system used by 270+ institutions. [Inside Higher Ed, April 25, 2008.](#)

**A Snapshot of Student Reading Habits over Two Decades.** [Three surveys](#) of students conducted in 1987, 1997, and 2007 chronicle students' reading preferences. [UC Berkeley News, April 21, 2008](#)

### [Connecting to Books...](#)

"Finding a Familiar Loneliness in *The Yearling*": [All Things Considered, National Public Radio, April 10, 2008](#)

"Dads 'Don't Read Bedtime Stories'": [BBC News, April 10, 2008](#)

"Student Sees Political Bias in High School Text": [MSNBC, April 8, 2008](#)

"Me Llamo Dora: An Explorer in Modern America": [Morning Edition, National Public Radio, April 14, 2008](#)

### [Blog....](#)

**Teacher Learning and Professional Development: The Real Stuff.** It's a fact: teachers make the most difference in student learning. Now, as the school year draws to a close and we begin to plan for next year, is a good time to think about our own learning and the professional development that will help us best help our students, explains Millie Davis in [this week's NCTE INBOX blog](#).

### [Ideas](#)

**Plan Now for Summer Reading.** May is [Get Caught Reading Month](#) (G), and it's time to start making your plans to encourage students to keep reading once classes are over. Try these resources to get your students involved in independent reading all summer long.

Introduce book clubs to your students now with the ReadWriteThink lesson plan [Book Clubs: Reading for Fun](#) (E) -- then encourage your students to meet and read during the summer months. The *English Journal* article "[Reading Adolescents: Book Clubs for YA Readers](#)" (S-TE) examines what happened when college students in an adolescent literature class met young readers encountering young adult literature in a book club setting.

To learn more about the ways book groups can create for faculty and students an informal space to connect meaningfully through reflective discussion of texts, read the *English Journal* article "[Facilitating a Summer Reading Book Group Program](#)" (S). For another take on book clubs with older

students, check out "[Watch Out, Oprah! A Book Club Assignment for Literature Courses](#)" (C) from *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*. If face-to-face meetings aren't possible, suggest online discussion of the books students read.

To structure independent reading and support summer reading, have students complete a reading plan, a simple wish list of books they hope to read in the future. The ReadWriteThink lesson [Developing Reading Plans to Support Independent Reading](#) (M) invites students to reflect on the texts that they have read and then compile lists of books they want to read next. To prepare older students, invite them to create brochures and fliers that suggest books and genres to explore over the summer months with the ReadWriteThink lesson [Authentic Persuasive Writing to Promote Real Summer Reading](#) (S).

**Summer Activities to Keep Kids Learning.** Share learning activities and resources with families, tutors, summer school teachers, and other literacy volunteers to help keep kids learning all summer long. ReadWriteThink's [Learning Beyond the Classroom section](#) provides summer activities that educators can complete with their own children or share with families looking for ways to support summer learning. Don't miss the site's new features, including [new podcasts and videos!](#)

- [Acting Out with Mother Goose](#) (E)  
After reading a favorite story or nursery rhyme, urge families to act it out. Suggest that children and family adults take turns, create props, and invite others to a performance. Don't miss [the related video](#) that demonstrates the activity!
- [Read All about It: Neighborhood News](#) (E)  
After exploring newspapers, families can help children publish one of their own with the news of the neighborhood.
- [A Trip to the Museum](#) (M)  
Whether children visit a museum or art gallery in person or online, families can explore ways that children and teens find inspiration for storytelling from paintings or other works of art.
- [Writing a First Resume](#) (S-C)  
Using a variety of online resources, family adults can help teens through the process of compiling personal information and shaping a resume. Teens then revise the resume to match the needs of a specific job posting.

To share these and other resources from the [Learning Beyond the Classroom](#) site, visit the [Why Summer Reading?](#) page for a link to a printable flyer you can send home with students and share with others in your educational community.

*[In the News](#)*

[Eye on Curriculum](#)

**Rumored threats can spur mass absenteeism.** Students using text messaging to alert others of rumored school threats has put some schools in the position of dealing with incidences of mass absenteeism. The Web site for National School Safety and Security Services lists 28 instances this school year where rumors caused major drops in attendance, with nearly all of the threats turning out to be unfounded, according to the organization's president. [USA TODAY](#) (5/5)

**Report: Opportunities to build creativity elude many students.** Many employers value workers with creative skills, yet new research suggests most high schools provide the problem-solving or artistic endeavors believed to foster creativity only on an elective basis. "The findings ... present an opportunity for school systems and business leaders to further engage in a dialogue about how best to foster creativity among students, not only to produce a competitive workforce, but also to help all students succeed in life," said Paul D. Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators. [eSchool News](#) (5/2)

**Reading First does not improve reading scores.** Reading First doesn't help students read any better than their peers at schools that don't participate in the federal program, according to an interim report released by the U.S. Education Department's Institute of Education Sciences, the agency's research arm. U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, who recently likened the reading initiative to "a cure for cancer," had no comment on the report Thursday, although a department official said Spellings would examine the study "to inform our efforts" and await the final report; meanwhile, U.S. Rep. David R. Obey, D-Wis., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, declared the program a "failure." [The Washington Post](#) (5/2), [The New York Times](#)

**Colleges increasingly offer classes in entrepreneurship.** Colleges and universities across the U.S. increasingly are offering courses on how to start and run small businesses. More than 2,000 now offer at least one class in entrepreneurship, up from just 253 in 1985, according to the Kauffman Foundation. [The New York Times](#) (5/1)

**New Orleans schools launch radical transformation.** With a new superintendent and up to 17% of educators that are newly recruited idealists from across the country, New Orleans schools are reporting some promising signs of transformation, according to this article. Superintendent Paul G. Vallas is experimenting with new methods in his bid to reform the district that was troubled long before Hurricane Katrina struck. [The New York Times](#) (4/30)

**Complex memory exercises may help boost IQ scores.** Cognitive training may boost "fluid intelligence" in healthy young adults, and may be applicable to students with learning disabilities or ADHD, according to a study published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA. Nearly three dozen students who were trained in a complicated memory task with simultaneous auditory and visual cues increased their IQ scores, challenging the long-held theory that intelligence is an inherent characteristic that can't be modified. [Scientific American](#) (4/29)

**Bush administration official fields questions from immigrant teens.** Alfonso Aguilar, chief of the U.S. Office of Citizenship, fielded tough questions on immigration, voting rights, education and other matters from 30 immigrant high school students, as part of a program designed to encourage immigrants to become more involved in U.S. politics. [The Washington Post](#) (4/30)

## Professional Leadership

**Country's top teacher honored in Rose Garden ceremony.** Michael Geisen, 35, who left a career in forestry to become a seventh-grade science teacher, on Wednesday was named the 2008 national teacher of the year, in part for his own creative approach to teaching and his capacity for fostering that same quality in his students. "Children have this tremendous creative capacity and this natural curiosity about the world," Geisen said. "We squander the entrepreneurial spirit of children because we place such a high value on being right all the time." [Google/Associated Press](#) (4/30)

**District focuses on principals as a way to improve student achievement.** A committee of principals has developed a set of seven standards meant to embody good building leadership that, starting this year, will be used to evaluate how well Pittsburgh's principles are performing and contributing to student progress. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of Edweek.org\)](#) (4/29)

**Education administrator pushes research-based teaching.** Former psychology and pediatrics professor Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst is at the heart of the U.S. Education Department's drive to place scientific education research at the heart of teaching. As head of the department's Institute of Education Sciences, Whitehurst's duties include overseeing funding of research studies on reading, math and teacher-incentive programs, among other areas. [The Washington Post](#) (4/28)

## Technology

**Online delivery may revolutionize U.S. education.** By 2019, half of all high school classes will be taught online, predicts Harvard University business professor Clayton M. Christensen and his co-authors, in a new book, "Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns." "It's going to be very provocative and probably a little controversial, in that it will force people to get out of the box to look at solutions," said Paul D. Houston, the executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, who hasn't yet seen the book, but is versed in Christensen's work. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of Edweek.org\)](#) (5/5)

**Online tracking may increase student stress.** Online systems that allow parents to track their children's daily progress are winning praise for increasing parental involvement, but some parents and students fear such systems may increase stress on the children and fuel family squabbles. [The New York Times](#) (5/4)

**New Virginia classes aim to help students stay safe online.** Learning that online predators only need a birth date, ZIP code and name to track children was enough to convince Alan Portillo, 15, to remove some of that information from his MySpace page. "Kids have this sense of immortality and can do some remarkably dangerous things, putting themselves at risk," said Ernie Allen, CEO for the National Center for Exploited and Missing Children. "We know schools have a lot to do, but it's hard to imagine something that is more important and can have greater impact right now." [The Washington Post](#) (5/3)

**Teachers' risque Facebook pages are under scrutiny.** Many young D.C.-area teachers have Facebook pages with sexual, alcoholic or other content that many might find inappropriate, including one special-educator whose page features a "bumper sticker" that may be viewed as derogatory toward students

with disabilities. Several young teachers were unaware their pages were public, while others felt their jobs should not change their social lives. [The Washington Post](#) (4/28)

**Blogging may help students understand value of writing.** Teens who blog write more -- not only online but offline -- and may be gleaning more practical writing tips than they are via the SAT-style exercises used in many classrooms, according to a recent Pew Internet and American Life Project survey. "Blogging and other forms of virtual debate actually foster the very types of intellectual exchange, analysis and argumentative writing that universities value," said Bradley A. Hammer, an instructor in Duke University's writing program. [eSchool News](#) (4/30)

### Policy Watch

**U.N. convention aims to protect all persons with disabilities.** A new U.N. treaty that promises equal rights for those with disabilities went into effect Saturday. "Persons with disabilities have routinely suffered discrimination in the job market, in schools and in receiving public services," said Akiko Ito, a U.N. official specializing in the issue. "This convention will make sure that these people will no longer be ignored." [Forbes/Reuters](#)

**Vancouver elementary school is a study in green.** Transforming a Vancouver, British Columbia, elementary school into the province's first green school was not an easy task, but when it finally opens on May 22, the school will serve as a model for future green school construction. The school features a rooftop teaching garden that students can help manage themselves, among various other green features. [The Globe and Mail \(Toronto\)](#) (5/2)

**Cambodian school food program faces suspension.** Soaring global food prices are endangering a World Food Program initiative that supplies free breakfast to 450,000 Cambodian children at more than 1,300 schools across the country. In just under a month, the schools' rice stocks will be gone and the breakfast program suspended indefinitely. [The New York Times](#) (4/30)

**Critics: Bill would inject intelligent design into science instruction.** The Florida House has voted along party lines to allow teachers to offer a "critical analysis" of evolution, a measure critics fear is a way of injecting conservative religious objections to the scientific theory into the curriculum. The legislation was unveiled not long after the state's board of education voted to adopt new standards for science education, including a requirement that students be instructed that evolution is a "fundamental concept" that undergirds all biology. [Orlando Sentinel \(Fla.\)](#) (4/29)

### NCLB

**Florida applies for NCLB pilot that punishes good schools less.** Florida schools want to become part of a federal pilot program to require less stringent corrective steps for schools that miss adequate yearly progress by a small margin. Some schools that earn A's under the state's system are among the two-thirds of Florida schools still failing to meet federal standards. [The Miami Herald/Associated Press](#) (5/5)

**Appeals court to reconsider NCLB case.** All 14 judges sitting on the Cincinnati-based 6th Circuit federal appeals court will rehear a lawsuit filed by nine school districts claiming that NCLB is an

unfunded federal mandate. A three-judge panel of that court on Jan. 7 ruled on behalf of the districts, but the Bush administration pushed for a rehearing on the grounds that the ruling would have "immediate and irreparable" consequences. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of Edweek.org\)](#) (5/1)

**Education Dept. lauds judge's dismissal of Connecticut's NCLB lawsuit.** A federal judge has ruled against Connecticut in the remaining claims contained in its 2005 lawsuit, in which the stated labeled NCLB as an illegal unfunded mandate and said the U.S. Department of Education unfairly denied testing-change waivers for special-education and ELL students. The judge said Connecticut had not proved that the federal funding it received was insufficient. [The Boston Globe/Associated Press](#) (4/28)

### In the Field

**Rising food prices limit cafeteria options.** With limited funds and rapidly rising food prices, some U.S. school districts are pinching pennies and eliminating some higher-cost meals from their weekly lineup and abandoning some efforts to provide more healthful foods. "You're watching literally every napkin and every spork," said Penny Parham, food and nutrition director for Miami-Dade County, Fla., schools. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of Edweek.org\)](#) (5/2)

**Classic children's books still popular.** U.S. children still read books by classic authors like Dr. Seuss, E.B. White and Judy Blume more than any others, including J.K. Rowling, according to a [new Renaissance Learning](#) report tracking some 78.5 million books read by 3 million children. [The Washington Post](#) (5/5)

**Educators prepare for new influx of refugees.** A wave of refugees from the Himalayan nation of Bhutan are expected to settle in the U.S. in the next five years, which means educators are facing some new challenges. The immigrants speak Nepalese, a language most districts are unfamiliar with, although about a third reportedly have learned some English during stays in refugee camps. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of Edweek.org\)](#) (4/28)

**C-SPAN invites students to sound off on their political priorities.** C-SPAN, the cable network that has been serving up gavel-to-gavel coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate for nearly 30 years, has been moving outside the nation's Capitol lately. As the race for president has heated up, specially designed C-SPAN political buses are being used for a "listening tour," visiting schools, universities and other facilities, where students and others can voice their opinions about pressing issues of the day. [Broadcasting & Cable](#) (4/28)

*"You must do the thing you think you cannot do."*

--[Eleanor Roosevelt](#),  
former first lady