

## E-newsletter September 2006

*Dear Colleague,*

*We love this saying: "For teachers, June is a month of Fridays, July is a month of Saturdays and August is a month of Sundays." The summer flew by, as fast as a weekend does. Welcome back!*

*We look forward to sharing news and information with you every month this year. We would like reader input. If you have a suggestion for a "column" or change in content or format, please e-mail your ideas to [teacher\\_center@wsboces.org](mailto:teacher_center@wsboces.org) and we'll give serious consideration to them. We wish you a successful school year.*

*Jane, Carol and Elyse*

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### A Light Touch

*Word play: This says it for me!*

My first job was working in an orange juice factory, but I got canned ... couldn't concentrate. Then I worked in the woods as a lumberjack, but I just couldn't hack it, so they gave me the axe. After that I tried to be a tailor, but I just wasn't suited for it ... mainly because it was a so-so job. Next I tried working in a muffler factory but that was too exhausting. Then I tried to be a chef -- figured it would add a little spice to my life but I just didn't have the thyme. I attempted to be a deli worker, but any way I sliced it, I couldn't cut the mustard.

My best job was being a musician, but eventually I found I wasn't noteworthy. I studied a long time to become a doctor, but I didn't have any patience. Next was a job in a shoe

factory; I tried but I just didn't fit in. I became a professional fisherman, but discovered that I couldn't live on my net income. I managed to get a good job working for a pool maintenance company, but the work was just too draining. So then I got a job in a workout center, but they said I wasn't fit for the job. After many years of trying to find steady work I finally got a job as a historian until I realized there was no future in it. My last job was working at Starbucks, but I had to quit because it was always the same old grind.

*Very punny....*

1. He who jumps off a bridge in Paris is in Seine.
2. A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking.
3. Dijon vu - the same mustard as before.
4. A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat.
5. Shotgun wedding: A case of wife or death.
6. Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.
7. A hangover is the wrath of grapes.
8. Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.
9. Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?
10. Once you've seen one shopping centre, you've seen a mall.
11. Reading while sunbathing makes you well red.
12. When two egoists meet, it's an I for an I.
13. A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two tired.
14. Definition of a will: A dead give away.
15. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
16. In democracy your vote counts. In feudalism your count votes.
17. She was engaged to a boyfriend with a wooden leg but broke it off.
18. A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.
19. If you don't pay your exorcist, do you get repossessed?
20. With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.
21. When a clock is hungry, it goes back four seconds.
22. The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered.
23. Acupuncture is a jab well done.
24. A midget fortune-teller who escapes from prison is a small medium at large.
25. Every calendar's days are numbered.
26. A lot of money is tainted - It taint yours and it taint mine.



## Events

**Sept. 29-Oct. 1. NYS Theatre Education Association's Annual Conference.** NYSTEA will conduct its Annual Educator's Conference at the NYU campus in conjunction with the University's Educational Theatre Department. It will feature workshops geared specifically towards theatre educators, guest speaker Hal Prince, and networking opportunities that will reflect the conference's theme, *Mind, Body and Soul - A Healthy Approach*. For more information or to register, visit <http://www.nystea.org/ed-conf.html>.

**Oct. 19-20. "Words--Purveyors of Hope,"** Albany. New York State English Council. <http://www.nysecteach.org/Conference06/Conference.htm>

**Oct. 19, 20, and 21.** Niagara Falls is the destination of the **2006 New York State Middle School Association's Annual Conference**. The conference will be held at the brand-new convention center. Set the dates aside on your calendar now!

<http://nysmsa.org/displayconvention.cfm>

**November 16-21.** Mark your calendar today for "The Compleat Teacher: Bringing Together Knowledge, Experience, and Research," the **2006 NCTE Annual Convention!** The Convention will be held, in Nashville, Tennessee. To register online, visit

<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/conv/annual/124264.htm>

**November 19-21.** **CEL's Annual Conference** in Nashville. Plan today to attend the Conference on English Leadership 38th Annual Conference! The Conference will be held after the NCTE Convention, November 19-21, 2006, in Nashville.

<http://www.ncte.org/groups/cel/featured/124307.htm>

#### **Announcements**

**Mid - September Deadline for admission.** SETC has been approached with a notice from Ann Schiano (NYSED) regarding research that is being done on the impact of video on teaching and learning. This research is being led by Hezel Associates and should complement rather than compete with, teachers' existing classroom instruction. The study targets instruction among 4th and 5th graders. The studies' activities are outlined at [www.hezel.com/vital](http://www.hezel.com/vital). The study takes place during the 2006-2007 year. There will be a treatment and a comparison group. Instructors will receive financial compensation for their participation. Treatment instructors will be required to attend a 4 hour staff development presentation that will be hosted by MESTRACT. **The professional development will take place the week of October 23rd with a catered dinner, most likely at Longwood High School.** This appears to be a vital effort to assess how integrating technology may impact student learning. For more information please visit [www.hezel.com/vital](http://www.hezel.com/vital).

**September 28, closing date for applications. Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad Program .**

Teachers, librarians, curriculum specialists, and administrators in fields related to humanities, languages, and area studies are encouraged to apply for this study and travel program. Ten seminars are being offered in non-western European countries in 2007 with 16 positions per seminar, subject to the availability of funds.

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpssap/index.html>

**Deadline October 16, 2006. Youth Service America and State Farm Good Neighbor**

**Learning Grant.** These grants of up to \$1,000 each support youth (ages 5-25), teachers, or school-based service-learning coordinators in implementing service-learning projects. Projects can address any number of themes including, but not limited to, the environment, teen issues, education, interfaith dialogue, intergenerational relationships, and literacy. For more information, visit [www.ysa.org/awards](http://www.ysa.org/awards).

**Deadline November 1, 2006. Nominate Your School Board for the Annual School Board Recognition Award.** The New York State Alliance for Arts Education is seeking nominations for the Annual School Board Recognition Awards, a recognition program of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN), the National School Boards Association (NSBA), and the New York State Alliance for Arts Education. *The School Board Recognition Award recognizes a school board that has done an outstanding job of making the arts essential to the education of their district's students.* The award provides an important opportunity to honor school boards and the role they play in providing a creative learning environment for outstanding student achievement. NYSAAE will select one school to represent New York State in the national competition. The winners selected by KCAAEN will receive a \$10,000 honorarium to support their programs, a plaque for display, and national recognition by NYSAAE, KCAAEN and NSBA at the annual School Boards Association's Conference. For more information on the School Board Award or to request an application, call Lainy Snyder at 518-473-0823 or e-mail [exec@nysaae.org](mailto:exec@nysaae.org).

**Apply Now for Professional Development Grants** The NEA Foundation Learning and Leading grants are provided to individuals to fund participation in high-quality professional development experiences, such as summer institutes or action research, and to groups to fund collegial study, including study groups, action research, lesson study, or mentoring experiences for faculty or staff new to an assignment. For details about this funding program, see

<http://www.neafoundation.org/programs/Guidelines%20Learning&Leadership.htm>

For information about other current grant competitions for the English language arts, visit <http://www.ncte.org/about/grants/comp>

## **Worthwhile Websites**

<http://www.latimes.com/news/education/la-fi-technopolis24aug24,1,792509.column?coll=la-news-learning&ctrack=1&cset=true> *Great site for kids and teachers!* Here's a tech item you can use free: a list of websites on a

variety of academic topics. Most include links for exploring subjects in detail. Cut the article out and tape it up in your dorm room, your apartment, your Mom's basement or wherever you do your studying.

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/strategy/strategy003.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/strategy/strategy003.shtml). Students love routine. Use that fact to your advantage by offering "Every Day" Activities in one or more of your curriculum areas. These daily activities offer reinforcement and practice, ensure retention, and improve end-of-year test results.

[http://www.educationworld.com/tools\\_templates/index.shtml#backToSchool](http://www.educationworld.com/tools_templates/index.shtml#backToSchool) The templates below can be downloaded from our site, saved to your hard drive, edited as necessary, and then printed. Or they can be downloaded, printed, and used as is.

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/archives/dailylp.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/archives/dailylp.shtml) View our recent Lesson Plans of the Day.

<http://webblog.nyit.edu/eezblog/> Welcome to the EEZ Blog connecting classes for collaboration! Find a class to collaborate with your class by posting a request or a reply! Would you like some more information about the Educational Enterprise Zone (EEZ)? Email us at [eez@nyit.edu](mailto:eez@nyit.edu) or call at 631-348-3317.

<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/online/index.html> The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History collections, exhibits, etc. for anyone interested in any aspect of American history. Founded in 1994, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History promotes the study and love of American history. Increasingly national and international in scope, the Institute targets audiences ranging from students to scholars to the general public.

## NCTE Inbox

### News

**Ed. Dept. Eases Teacher Quality Rule (*The Washington Post*, September 7, 2006)**

**(free registration required)** The United States Department of Education will allow states to count teachers as highly qualified under the states' own standards. That means states can rate teachers as highly qualified using factors such as job evaluations, teaching awards, or service on school committees.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/07/AR2006090701319.html>

**Literacy Educators and the Public Deeply Concerned about NCLB** (*The Council Chronicle Online, September 6, 2006*) A National Council of Teachers of English study this spring shows that 76% of those literacy educators surveyed believe the federal No Child Left Behind Act has had a negative influence on teaching and learning in English/reading classrooms. The study confirms the findings of a recent public opinion poll.  
<http://www.ncte.org/pubs/chron/highlights/125383.htm>

**The New First Grade: Too Much Too Soon?** (*Newsweek, September 11, 2006*) With the pressures of NCLB, students in first grade are facing intensive reading and math instruction. This *Newsweek* article asks the question if first graders are being taught too much too soon. <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/14638573/site/newsweek>

**Saying No to School Laptops** (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, August 31, 2006*) There's a growing backlash toward programs that provide students with laptop computers for classes. Some parents say the students use those computers to play games and send instant messages, instead of using the computers for learning, while educators are re-evaluating the cost of such programs. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/06243/717868-96.stm>

## Ideas

### **Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month!**

Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15, the independence days of five Hispanic countries -- Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Mexico achieved independence on September 16, and Chile on September 18. Get started on your own celebration by checking out the classroom activities, lesson plans, and Web links available on the [ReadWriteThink calendar entry for Hispanic Heritage Month](#). For resources on specific Latino/a authors, illustrators, and themes, tap the following resources.

Read biographical details on an NCTE Annual Convention speaker in "[Profile: Pat Mora, Fiction/Nonfiction Writer and Poet](#)" (E) from *Language Arts*. The article explores how Mora's works are topics drawn from her life experience and discusses her advocacy for cultural and linguistic diversity, and for more Latinos in all phases of children's book publishing.

For options to read Gary Soto's "Seventh Grade" with students, read [Helping ELLs Look at Stories through Literary Lenses](#) (M) from *Voices from the Middle*, which outlines pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading activities for the short story. The article focuses

on English Language Learners, but the techniques can be used with any middle-level students.

Read strategies for teaching reflective writing using Puerto Rican author Judith Ortiz Cofer's *Call Me María* and other texts in "[Reading at Risk](#)" (S), an excerpt from NCTE's new title [Judith Ortiz Cofer in the Classroom: A Woman in Front of the Sun](#) (S).

After reading Richard Rodriguez's literacy narrative *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*, try the activities in "[The Literacy Narrative as Production Pedagogy in the Composition Classroom](#)" (C), from *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, to invite students to explore their own literacy experiences. The article outlines procedures and includes a heuristic for the project.

### **Building Your Professional Development Community**

A *USA Today* article focuses on the ways that teachers work on professional development year round. Key to many of these experiences is the teacher-to-teacher method -- teachers sharing their successes and challenges with one another to build a network of support. This collection of resources suggests ways that you can build a supporting community among your colleagues to help ensure a successful (and less stressful) school year.

"[When Teachers Have Time to Talk: The Value of Curricular Conversations](#)" (E) from *Language Arts* chronicles the evolution of a collaborative teacher study group program and provides an analysis of the curricular conversations that took place.

Online teacher support groups can also be a great resource. "[Building Bridges: Creating an Online Conversation Community for Preservice Teachers](#)" (G) from *English Education* explores the role of an online forum in helping student teachers find peer and faculty mentors. Through the listserv, student teachers tell their own stories to make meanings of their experience and to define themselves as education professionals. Online resources can help teachers at all levels. To check out the online communities offered by NCTE, visit the [NCTE Listserv Subscription Page](#).

Literacy Coaching provides teacher support and development while simultaneously increasing students' literacy skills. For resources supporting a coaching program at your school, check out the [Literacy Coaching Teacher Resource Collection](#) (G), which includes numerous articles and links to additional materials.

At the college level, mentoring can make all the difference for new teachers. "[Diving for Pearls: Mentoring as Cultural and Activist Practice among Academics of Color](#)" (C) from *College Composition and Communication* explores how senior scholars of color and their protégés gain some understanding of the complexities and costs of building a multiethnic/multiracial professoriate in our discipline.

## In the News

### Eye on Curriculum

**Math group urges major overhaul of K-8 math instruction.** In a significant shift away from its 1989 stance on the teaching of math, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics yesterday issued a report recommending students in each K-8 grade master only three basic skills, rather than study dozens of math topics, as most states' curriculums now demand. The group stopped short of advocating the memorization of basic math facts and recommending a national math curriculum. [The New York Times](#) (free registration) (9/13)

**Value of excessive homework questioned.** Nightly homework offers very limited academic benefits for elementary students and none at all for older students, once it exceeds 1 1/2 hours for middle-schoolers and two hours for high school students, contends Duke University professor Harris Cooper. Although Cooper doesn't agree with those who say homework should be scrapped altogether, he notes that many teachers don't know how to craft assignments that promote learning. [The Washington Post](#) (free registration) (9/12)

**Young children feel pressure to achieve early.** Some child-development experts worry that the academic pressures on children in kindergarten and first grade to read and learn math will lead to early burnout. Some parents and school boards are deliberately slowing down the pace to ensure youngsters not only pass tests but experience the joy of hands-on learning. [Newsweek](#) (9/11)

**Sept. 11 affects writing, teaching of U.S. history.** The events of Sept. 11 are leading some historians to revise their views about trends in American history, particularly when it comes to terrorism, international cultural conflicts and the relationship between the U.S. and the rest of the world. [The New York Times](#) (free registration) (9/6)

**The push for a national testing system.** The gap between states' student-proficiency rates and the lower results those same children have posted on the National Assessment of Educational Progress has led many observers to call for creation of a national testing system. Some experts say a slowly phased-in system of national tests, starting at the high school level, could overcome the public's traditional reluctance to cede local control of education. [The Washington Post](#) (free registration) (9/3)



**Report: States' academic standards are mediocre.** Even though most states have updated their academic standards in at least one core subject over the last six years, the national average for such standards is still only a C-, the same as it was in 2000, according to a new [report](#) from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. California, Indiana and Massachusetts were the only states to win "A" grades in the five subject areas assessed, while more than half the states earned a "D" or "F" grade overall, Fordham reviewers found. [Stateline.org](#) (8/31)

**New SAT scores show sharp decline.** The average scores on the reading and math sections for the revised SAT showed the biggest decline in 31 years, reported the College Board yesterday. Women outperformed men on the new essay section by 11 points, but continued to trail in math and reading. Officials blamed the decline on a drop in the number of students retaking the test rather than on fatigue stemming from the revamped exam's extra 45 minutes in length. [The New York Times](#) (free registration) (8/29), [The Washington Post](#) (free registration) (8/30)

**Study: Holding back children hurts more than helps.** Repeating a grade offers little academic benefit and makes students 20 to 50% more likely to drop out, concludes a Deakin University survey of dozens of Australian and American studies on retention. Researcher Helen McGrath says that rather than simply promote struggling students, schools should instead consider tailoring support and instruction to their needs. [The Sydney Morning Herald](#) (8/30)

### [Professional Leadership](#)

**Boston district addresses new-teacher flight** . Faced with an overwhelming workload and other challenges, half of the 550 new teachers in Boston this year likely will quit within four years on the job, the Boston Teachers Union says. Efforts by the district's Office of Human Resources to expand training and mentoring, however, have raised new-teacher retention rates from 77% in 2002-03 to 84% in 2005-06. [Boston Herald](#) (9/5)

**Teachers spend their own cash on school supplies.** As school begins in the Washington, D.C., area, many teachers are reaching into their own pockets to buy their own supplies. In a nationwide survey last school year, teachers estimated they would spend \$552 of their own funds on classroom needs during the course of the school year. [The Washington Post](#) (free registration) (8/31)

## Technology Solutions

**Facebook to expand membership.** Social networking site Facebook, once the exclusive domain of college students, military personnel and corporations, is planning to eventually open membership to all Internet users. The expansion will allow the company to maintain a longer relationship with its members, one analyst notes. [San Francisco Chronicle](#) (9/12)

**Some experts view technology as a mixed blessing.** Technology has enhanced young people's ability to multitask and research, but it has also hurt the quality of student papers by making it too easy to cut and paste in text, some experts say. Other observers, however, argue that technology has made learning more exciting. [Chicago Tribune](#) (free registration) (9/11)

**New study aims to boost poor students' Internet literacy.** Researchers will teach disadvantaged students in Connecticut and South Carolina how to read information on the Internet and evaluate its effectiveness, as part of a joint project designed to boost such children's Internet literacy. Lead researcher Donald Leu hopes students will ultimately achieve higher reading scores, as well as improve their math, science and English grades, as a result of their increased engagement in school. [eSchool News](#) (free registration) (9/7)

**Teacher blogs keep parents in the loop.** Tech-savvy Massachusetts teachers are using blogs to keep parents informed about what's happening in their children's classrooms. Many educators are carefully monitoring the sites, however, to protect students' privacy and ensure pupils' posted responses are civil. [The Boston Globe](#) (9/7)

**Healing Katrina's pain through digital storytelling.** About 500 Gulf Coast middle-schoolers attending filmmaking summer camps run by the Pearson Foundation and Nokia this summer produced more than 150 videos chronicling the impact of Hurricane Katrina on their lives and their communities. Besides serving as a therapeutic outlet for the students, the films will form an important historical record of the catastrophe. [eSchool News](#) (free registration)

**New Google service indexes print media.** Thanks to new partnerships with a number of publishers, Google has announced a new [service](#) offering Internet users access to newspaper, magazine and other publications' archives. Some databases will be completely free, while others will require that users pay a monthly subscription rate or a per-article

fee to view more than just the headline and the first few sentences of a document. [The New York Times](#) (free registration) (9/6)

**Google offers classics for free.** [Google](#) launched a new [service](#) Wednesday allowing readers to search for classics in the public domain and download them free of charge. [The Times \(London\)](#) (8/31)

### **Policy Watch**

**Commentary: Spellings should make example of L.A. district.** Many districts have dragged their feet in promoting NCLB's transfer option, writes Clint Bolick, President of the Alliance for School Choice. He says U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings could signal to districts nationwide to take that mandate seriously by following through on her threat to withhold federal funding from Los Angeles Unified School District for its noncompliance. [The Wall Street Journal \(free content\)](#) (9/7)

**Spellings: NCLB needs only minor tweaks.** Now that NCLB has put in place the right infrastructure, it's time for states to accomplish the law's proficiency goals, U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings said Wednesday. She downplayed a study released last week that showed fourth-graders in public schools were outperforming peers in charter schools by noting that the two types of schools vary in governance, rather than in instruction methods or curriculum. [The Washington Post](#) (free registration) (8/31)

**Analysis: NCLB may join "woeful record" of U.S. school reform.** Like other problematic public-policy initiatives, NCLB exhibits several traits that challenge its ability to overcome the "idiosyncrasies" of the political system and structural disincentives, suggests strategic consulting firm Oxford Analytical. Traditional distaste for federal involvement in local education will also hamper the law's successful implementation, the group predicts. [Forbes](#) (free registration) (8/29)

**Accountability at the heart of NCLB.** In the second part of a weeklong series on public schools, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette explores the impact of NCLB on the educational landscape. While supporters contend the law has brought a new emphasis on the performance of minority and poor students, critics question whether NCLB has actually helped shrink the achievement gap. [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#) (8/28)

**Editorial: Best reform strategy stresses teacher quality:** In this editorial, The New York Times urges Congress, when it takes up NCLB for reauthorization next year, to ignore that part of the law promoting charters as a school reform tool and instead focus on teacher training and preparation, which, the newspaper argues, are key to boosting student achievement. [The New York Times](#) (free registration) (8/27)

**Poll: Many believe NCLB harms or has no effect.** Fifty-eight percent of Americans say the No Child Left Behind act has harmed or had no effect on schools, while slightly more than 25% believe it has been beneficial, according to a new Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll. Some analysts have criticized the poll's methodology, but others say the survey reflects the public's frustration with the NCLB program. [U.S. News & World Report](#) (8/23)

### Learning and Teaching

**Study: Multitasking may impair learning.** Multitasking causes young adults' brains to use a region not suited for long-term memory and understanding, reports a UCLA study. Experts say more study is needed to determine whether passively listening to music or playing TV in the background helps or hurts teens when they are trying to study. [The Washington Post](#) (free registration) (9/5)

**Study: Power of suggestion can shrink gender gap in math.** Although women score lower than men on standardized math tests, new research suggests the differential has more to do with a confidence gap than an ability gap. A recent Lafayette College study found that women scored better on a spatial-abilities test linked to math performance when they were subtly prompted to think about how smart they were. [The Washington Post](#) (free registration) (8/31)

### In the Field

**Study: Offering more veggies doesn't boost consumption.** Offering more fruits and vegetables in school prompted older children to eat more fruit, but not more vegetables, and actually made fifth-graders less willing to eat both kinds of produce, according to a government study of five Mississippi schools. One University of North Carolina nutrition professor says presenting food creatively is the secret to getting children to eat their veggies. [The Kansas City Star \(Mo.\) /Associated Press](#) (free registration) (9/7)

**Australia a world leader in school design.** Rooftop gardens, movable walls and buildings that monitor their own lighting and temperature are among the features cutting-edge Australian schools incorporate to enhance student learning. Some designers predict that as schools become more integrated in community life, stand-alone campuses could, in the future, disappear altogether. [The Age \(Melbourne, Australia\)](#) (free registration) (8/28)

**Surge in student numbers strains U.S. schools.** The biggest and most diverse school population in American history is fueling a massive construction and teacher hiring effort in many districts around the nation. In Loudoun County, Va., one of the fastest-growing districts in the country, a new elementary school that opened last year already has enrolled almost 200 more students than it was designed to accommodate. [The New York Times](#) (free registration) (8/27)

*"The chains of habit are generally too small to be felt until they are too strong to be broken."*

--[Samuel Johnson](#),  
English writer