

January 2010 E-Newsletter

Dear Colleague,

Happy New Year! After a four-month hiatus due to budget constraints, we are reinstating our e-newsletter. We wish our retired director, Jane Lombardo, the very best and we welcome our new director, Angelique Johnson-Dingle. This is the first of four issues you will receive for the remainder of the school year. We hope you will gain some helpful information and share the e-newsletter with your peers. Please invite them to subscribe by e-mailing us at teacher_center@wsboces.org with their names and e-mail addresses.

Angelique, Carol and Elyse

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FYI

Announcements

January 31, 2010 Deadline for Postgraduate Training Scholarship. The NCTE [Edwyna Wheadon Postgraduate Training Scholarships](#) provide funding for professional development experiences for English language arts teachers in public educational institutions.

February 5, 2010 Deadline. Call for Student Artwork: "All Kids Can... CREATE!" -In partnership with VSA arts and CVS Caremark All Kids Can, Artsonia invites children ages 5-15 to submit student artwork to the "2009-2010 All Kids Can... CREATE!" call for children's art. This year's theme is "State of the Art" and asks students to think about their local environment and what makes it unique and different from other places around the United States. You can find more information about this opportunity by clicking [here](#).

February 24, 2010. Attention Arts Advocates - [NYSArts](#) will host its annual [Arts Day in Albany](#) on Wednesday, (note the date change) - your voice is needed as we speak out to defend the tiny piece of the NY State budget that goes to the Arts.

April 15, 2010 Deadline. 2010 VSA arts Playwright Discovery Call for Scripts. The VSA arts Playwright Discovery Program invites middle and high school students to take a closer look at the world around them, examine how disability affects their lives and the lives of others, and express their views through the art of playwriting. The winning playwright receives \$2,000 and a trip to Washington to see their play performed. To learn more, click [here](#).

Courses and Workshops

March 1, 2010, 8AM-2PM. National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) One-Day Training Seminar sponsored by teachers Federal Credit Union. Open to all teachers, administrators, or other professionals who provide financial education to students. Prepare a new generation to make smart financial decisions. Teach students to use credit wisely and develop consistent savings habits. Receive a certificate for completing 6-hours of continuing education credits. Presenter Sue Gubing is an experienced NEFE Financial Planning Program educator.

Where: Western Suffolk BOCES, 31 Lee Avenue, Wheatley Heights, N.Y. 11798. **** Breakfast and Lunch is provided by TFCU**** For information and to register, contact SETC at 631-254-0107 or Western Suffolk BOCES Instructional Support Services at 631-595-6815 or register online below.

Web Registration Instructions

For My Learning Plan Member Districts: If you are a member of MLP, you will be given a user name and password by your district. To see courses and to register, log onto www.mylearningplan.com, and click on the Western Suffolk BOCES Catalog link. If your district does not have a link to the WS BOCES catalog, go to <http://www.wsboces.org/WebReg>. Select the course you'd like to enroll in and click the "Click to Enroll" button. Click MLP Users, and log in. Enter personal registration information, select payment method, and click the "next" button. Click "Terms and Conditions", and print your confirming enrollment form. You will receive an email when you are registered.

For Non-My Learning Plan Districts: Click on this link to see the WS BOCES catalog: <http://www.wsboces.org/WebReg>

Highlight the program you'd like to search workshops in and "search catalog". Workshops will be listed in date order. Click the "click to enroll" button.

Registered Users: click "I'm a registered user", and log in. Click "update and continue".

New Users: Click on "I'm a new user" and complete the form. When finished, click the "Create Account" button.

Enter personal registration information. Select payment method and click the "next" button. Click "Terms and Conditions" button and print the confirming enrollment form.

Once you receive the administrative signature, please fax it to Western Suffolk BOCES at **631-623-4915**. You will receive an email when you are registered.

National Humanities Online Professional Development: only \$35 for history and literature teachers. Find out more at [Online Professional Development](#).

Graduate Programs. Stony Brook University and Dowling College in conjunction with BOCES and SETC offer these graduate programs. The program offered with Stony Brook University's School of Professional Development is [Educational Leader](#). The program offered with Dowling College is: [M.S. in Literacy](#).

Mark your calendar for the informational meetings listed below.

**Stony Brook University Educational District Leader (formerly School District Leader)
Informational Meeting: Wednesday, January 27, 2010, 4PM**
WS BOCES Computer Lab, 31 Lee Avenue, Wheatley Heights

Stony Brook University, Grade 5-6 Extension

Teachers currently certified in Adolescence Education in any content areas now have the opportunity to complete two courses that will add a grade 5-6 extension to their teaching licenses.

Informational Meeting: Thursday, January 28, 2010, 4 PM

WS BOCES Computer Lab, 31 Lee Avenue, Wheatley Heights

For program inquiries or reservations, please contact Suffolk's Edge Teacher Center at 631-254-0107 or teacher_center@wsboces.org.

Events

February. Celebrate the 21st National African American Read-In throughout the Month of February! Join over a million readers in the 21st [National African American Read-In](#). Hosting a Read-In can be as simple as gathering with family and friends to share books, or as elaborate as arranging large audiences to hear professional writers read their work.

March 4-6, 2010: NYSCSS & NYS4A 72nd Annual Social Studies Conference, Engaging the Past to Transform Our Future, Rye Town Hilton, Rye Brook, NY. Go to <http://www.nyscss.org/> for information and registration forms.

March 6-8, 2010: ASCD's Annual Conference and Exhibit Show: Critical Transformations. San Antonio, Texas. With over 500 sessions to choose from, come join your colleagues in San Antonio to explore the best in what committed educators are doing in response to today's challenges. For more information and to register, go to: http://www.ascd.org/conferences/annual_conference/2010.aspx

March 17-20, 2010, Register Online for the [2010 CCCC Convention](#), to be held in Louisville, Kentucky. This year's Convention, "The Remix: Revisit, Rethink, Revise, Renew," will include sessions, forums, and social events on the topics that are important to you. Featured speakers include Mark Anthony Neal, Nelly Rosario, Sofia Quintero, JLove Calderon, and DuEwa Frazier. [Register online today.](#)

March 24-26, 2010. [CommonGround 2010](#) Registration Now OPEN! [Crowne Plaza Hotel](#), Albany, NY. CommonGround is the annual New York State arts-in-education conference that brings over 150 administrators, teachers, teaching artists, and community members together for three days of policy setting, planning, exchange of skills and inspirational speakers. This gathering contributes to fresh curriculum design, school reform and new models for

classroom learning. Did you know there is a discount fare code to take Amtrak to CommonGround? Click [here](#) for details.

[Sharing Success Research Articles](#)

Math

[\[K-12\]Mathematics Specialists and Mathematics Coaches: What Does the Research Say?](#)

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, March 2009

ELA

[Intervention: Headsprout Early Reading™ \[Pre-K\]](#)

Internet-based supplemental early literacy curriculum.

U.S. Dept. of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, October 2009

NYS Programs that Work

[Youth and Child Development \[K-12\]](#)

Summaries of programs and practices that are proven to improve outcomes for children.

Promising Practices Network

After school programs/bullying

[How to Assess Bullying and Peer Conflict and Promote Positive Conflict Resolution \[K-12\]](#)

Suggestions to identify peer conflict and bullying and promote positive peer conflict resolution techniques. *Child Trends, November 2009*

English Language Learners

[Succeeding With English Language Learners: Lessons Learned from the Great City Schools](#)

[3rd-4th Grd] Best practices to improve achievement among English learners.

The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2009

Math

[Soft Drinks, Mind Reading, and Number Theory \[High School\]](#)

Ready algebra students for more rigorous thinking.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Inc., November 2009

Math [Middle school]. [Quantitative Literacy](#)

The National Science Digital Library (NSDL) Wiki

[Resources for Teachers \[High School\]](#)

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Inc.

Departmentalizing Elementary Schools

Departmentalizing. ["Platooning" Instruction \[Elementary\]](#)

Pros and cons of departmentalizing elementary schools. *Harvard Education Letter*

Technology

Integrating Technology [K-12]. [Students as Contributors: The Digital Learning Farm](#)

Practical ideas for all ages. *Dr. Alan November*

Principal Walk Through [K-12]

[Leadership by Walking Around: Walkthroughs and Instructional Improvement](#)


Guidelines for effective visits to classrooms for the purpose of observing instruction and the needs of staff and students in the school.

[Worthwhile Websites](#)



www.sitesforteachers.com/. A listing of hundreds of educational websites rated by popularity. Lesson Plans, worksheets, activities, clip art and more.

<http://www.assortedstuff.com/top101/> The top 101 teaching and learning sites assembled by [Tim Stahmer](#), an Instructional Technology Specialist for the [Fairfax County Public Schools](#), in its fourteenth year of publication.


Eleven great websites for elementary and middle school students


[United States Fencing Association.](#)  <http://www.USFencing.org> Enormous amounts of information on a sport that is not as well known as some of the highly popular professional sports. Easily navigated by using the multiple subject tabs on the site.


[United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.](#)  <http://www.ushmm.org/> The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America's national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country's memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust. Includes online exhibits of art and photos.


[University of California Museum of Paleontology, Berkeley.](#)   <http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/> If you like paleontology, you'll enjoy the online exhibits here.


[USA Today Weather.](#)   <http://www.usatoday.com/weather/wfront.htm> Weather by USA Today news.


[USA Track and Field.](#)  <http://www.usatf.org> This is a rich site of the United States Track & Field Organization; filled with information and statistics and includes sections on juniors and the Olympics.

[Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War.](#)  <http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/> This is the gateway into the story of the Civil War as seen by the people of two communities in the Great Valley of the United States: Franklin County, Pennsylvania, and Augusta County, Virginia. This project weaves together the histories of these two places, separated by a few hundred miles and the Mason-Dixon Line.

[Chris Van Allsburg](http://www.chrisvanallsburg.com)  <http://www.chrisvanallsburg.com> Join Fritz the little white dog to find out more about the award-winning author of Jumanji and The Polar Express. An amazing interactive site with many book-related activities, games, video clips, and a scavenger hunt!

[Views of the Solar System.](http://www.solarviews.com/)  <http://www.solarviews.com/> Presents a vivid multimedia adventure unfolding the splendor of the sun, planets, moons, comets, asteroids, and more. Discover the latest scientific information, or study the history of space exploration, rocketry, early astronauts, space missions, and spacecraft through a vast archive of photographs, scientific facts, text, graphics, and videos. Available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and German.

[Voices of Youth.](http://www.unicef.org/voy/)  <http://www.unicef.org/voy/> Children across the world have their say on current events on this site sponsored by UNICEF with a fine section on "Children and Work."

[Walking with Dinosaurs](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/prehistoric_life/dinosaurs/)  http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/prehistoric_life/dinosaurs/ A comprehensive, easy-to-navigate site about the rise and fall of dinosaurs, fossils, and sea monsters. Site is sponsored by the BBC in conjunction with their television series "Walking with Dinosaurs."

[Ways of Knowing Trail.](http://www.brookfieldzoo.org/pagegen/wok/ways_index.html)  http://www.brookfieldzoo.org/pagegen/wok/ways_index.html Take an environmental adventure with four local children through the Ituri Forest in central Africa.

NCTE Inbox

News

What Makes a Great Teacher? According to Teach for America data, great teachers constantly reevaluate what they are doing; they avidly recruit students and their families into the process; they maintain focus, ensuring that everything they do contributes to student learning; they plan exhaustively and purposefully -- for the next day or the year ahead -- by working backward from the desired outcome; and they work relentlessly, refusing to surrender to the combined menaces of poverty, bureaucracy, and budgetary shortfalls. [The Atlantic, January/February 2010](#)

More on Teachers

"Colorado Classrooms See a Trend of Young Teachers": [The Denver Post, January 11, 2010](#)

"Behind the Classroom Door": A [new study](#) describes the great variety in kinds of skills and content taught from classroom to classroom even in the same subject and in schools with mandated curricula. [Harvard Education Letter, November/December 2009](#)

Study Questions Learning-Style Research

Researchers for the Association for Psychological Science say that while many studies show that students should be taught according to their various learning styles, no research has shown that students actually learn better when taught in their own learning style. [eSchool News, January 8, 2010](#)

Teaching and Technology

"[Survey: Teachers' Digital Media Use on the Rise](#)": [eSchool News, January 5, 2010](#)
"Whiteboards' Impact on Teaching Seen as Uneven": [Education Week, January 8, 2010](#)
"Teachers Shake Up Shakespeare with Digital Media": [Edutopia, February 2010](#)
"Woman Who Helped Hide Anne Frank Dies at 100": [Morning Edition, NPR, January 12, 2010](#)

Issues in Schools

"In Suburban Schools, an Alternative to A.P.": [The New York Times, January 8, 2010](#)
"State Board of Education Discourages So-Called Tracking in Schools": [The Hartford Courant, January 7, 2010](#)

Higher Education Shorts

"A Community-College Professor Finds Inspiration at Harvard": [The Chronicle of Higher Education, January 10, 2010](#)
"Textbooks for Rent . . . Everywhere": [Inside Higher Ed, January 12, 2010](#)
"At Language Scholars' Convention, Social Media Amplify the Discourse": [The Chronicle of Higher Education, January 10, 2010](#)

Educators Await Obama's Mark on No Child Left Behind

A proposal for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or ESEA (most recently known as NCLB) is expected this year. [The Washington Post, January 9, 2010](#)

Focus on Instruction Turns around Chicago Schools

Strategic Initiative's successful work in the Chicago Public Schools focuses on helping those already working in the schools to improve. The initiative uses a "Focused Instruction Process" with four main components: shared leadership, targeted professional development, continuous improvement, and parent engagement. [Education Week, January 6, 2010](#)

States Embrace Student-Data Tracking, with Prodding from White House

At least 45 states are keeping some sort of records on college students. [The Chronicle of Higher Education, January 3, 2010](#)

Reading Aloud to Teens Gains Favor among Teachers

One technique teachers of all subjects use to improve adolescent literacy is to read aloud to their students. NCTE members Lettie Albright and Debra Schneider are mentioned. [Education Week, January 4, 2010](#)

Views

Writing Her Heart. The NPR story "[Woman Who Helped Hide Anne Frank Dies at 100](#)" (*Morning Edition*, NPR, January 12, 2010) on Miep Gies's death and, particularly, on Anne Frank's diary, is a reminder of what we know about writing and what is stated in the [NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing](#).

Ideas

Bringing the National Gallery of Writing to the Classroom

The [National Gallery of Writing](#) was unveiled on October 20, 2009, on the [National Day on Writing](#). Many teachers and students, as well as thousands of others, have [submitted a piece](#) to the Gallery. With all of those submissions, the Gallery is a goldmine to use in the classroom and with students -- as examples of different genres of writing or pieces to use to create class rubrics.

The *Language Arts* article "[About Writing: A Letter to Stacie](#)" (E) provides an overview of what makes a good writing workshop through a grandmother's wishes for her own grandchild and, by implication, for all children. For more examples of letters, visit the [Sierra Vista Gallery of Writing](#). Here, students shared the letters they wrote to an author or character of a story. These can be used as models for an activity in your classroom.

Sandy Hayes, in the *Voices from the Middle* article "[Technology Toolkit: I Hear America Writing: NCTE's National Day on Writing](#)" (M), provides ideas for the many forms that writing in the Gallery might take, as well as a list of resources to help make writing for the Gallery a unique experience for each writer. To see how these ideas played out, visit the [Minnesota Writing Quilt Gallery](#), which is curated by Hayes.

In the *English Journal* article "[Researching Writing: The Unfamiliar-Genre Research Project](#)" (S) Sarah Andrew-Vaughan and Cathy Fleischer ask their students to investigate a genre of writing that they find challenging or unfamiliar, recognize the characteristics that define the genre, and then write an original piece in the genre. Explore the [Eastern Michigan University Writes Gallery](#) to see sample pieces with many different genres.

The *College Composition and Communication* article "[Service Learning and Social Change: The Case for Materialist Rhetoric](#)" (C) states that materialist rhetoric in service learning is needed to teach students how to discover the arguments that already exist in the communities they wish to serve; analyze the effectiveness of those arguments; collaboratively produce viable alternatives with community partners; and assess the impact of their interventions. The gallery [A Collection of Social Justice Essays](#) can provide examples of writings about social change.

[In the News](#)

SmartBlogs

Ideas for addressing the earthquake in Haiti in the classroom. Having students create written responses to news photos of the Haitian earthquake and its aftermath or tackling the science behind the natural disaster are two ways educators might address this recent event in the classroom, according to suggestions outlined in this blog post. The writers offer links to background materials on the history of Haiti and relief organizations that provide aid to those affected by such events. [The New York Times/The Learning Network blog](#) (1/14)

Teacher: Reading outside of school is tied to academic success. Students who do not read outside of school consistently perform poorly on standardized tests, according to educator Dan Brown. In this blog post, Brown cites a book by Clark Atlanta University professor Veda Jairrels as further evidence of his own experience in the classroom. Students who do not engage in voluntary

reading from an early age often fall behind and exhibit a significant achievement deficit by the time they reach higher grades, he writes. [Teacher Leaders Network/Get in the Fracas blog](#) (1/8)

Eye on Curriculum

Annual report grades states on education. In ranking key education indicators, the publication Education Week gave Massachusetts the only A on its Chance-for-Success Index, while Connecticut, New Hampshire and New Jersey each earned an A-minus. The country as a whole earned a C-plus in the same category. Mississippi, Nevada and New Mexico each received a D-plus. The annual Quality Counts [report](#) looks at data from a number of key areas and grades states on their education policies and performance in four areas: the Chance-for-Success Index; standards, testing and accountability; teachers; and education finance. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org\)](#) (1/14)

Experts: Science instruction should begin in preschool. Some academic experts are recommending that science be taught to students beginning in preschool, and a recent push to promote science, technology, engineering, and math education in schools is adding urgency to their cause. Efforts to improve science teaching in preschools include specialized training for teachers and a "Young Scientist" curriculum developed with help from the National Science Foundation that helps teach preschoolers physical-science concepts by building structures and playing with water. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org\)](#) (1/13)

Experts say states often lower standards in the face of exit exams. Twenty-six states require high-school students to pass exit exams to graduate, but critics say standards have been relaxed to ensure students receive a diploma. "The real pattern in states has been that the standards are lowered so much that the exams end up not benefiting students who pass them while still hurting the students who fail them," one expert said. However, teachers say in surveys that the exams have helped focus school curriculum, and others say students take the exams more seriously. [The New York Times \(free registration\)](#) (1/11)

Civic involvement incorporated into environmental education. A number of schools across the country are taking environmental education to the next level, incorporating a focus on civic involvement in environmental issues into the curriculum or offering courses to prepare students for environmental careers. At the Green School in Brooklyn, N.Y., students learn about environmental concerns that directly affect their community. "You can't have a kid in a violent neighborhood and say, 'Let's talk about the polar bear,'" one of the school's co-directors said. [The New York Times \(free registration\)](#) (1/10)

Professional Leadership

Dismissal policy based on testing wins support of Houston school board. School board members in Houston gave preliminary approval to a policy giving administrators the authority to dismiss teachers whose students consistently perform poorly on standardized tests. Officials said the goal of the policy is not to fire more teachers, but to help improve teacher effectiveness as well as student achievement. "Quite frankly, if we were that good, why do 100,000 of our kids read below grade level?" district Superintendent Terry Grier said. [Houston Chronicle](#) (1/14)

Pennsylvania teachers unions agree to back state on reforms. Pennsylvania's largest teachers union -- representing 483 of 500 districts -- is encouraging its membership to support the state's bid for up to \$400 million in Race to the Top funds by agreeing to adopt education reforms such as turnaround strategies for struggling schools and tying teacher evaluations to student performance. "These funds can help provide our students with the kinds of opportunities that suburban students already enjoy," said Jerry Jordan, the president of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, which is also supporting the bid. "Such programs can help close the achievement gap and increase the graduation rate." [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) (1/13)

Union leader endorses using test scores as part of teacher evaluations. American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten is proposing an overhaul of teacher evaluations that includes assessing teachers based in part on student test scores, according to a [speech](#) to be delivered today. Weingarten said the AFT supports "a fair, transparent and expedient process to identify and deal with ineffective teachers. But [we] know we won't have that if we don't have an evaluation system that is comprehensive and robust and really tells us who is or is not an effective teacher." She also will propose a plan to more quickly resolve disciplinary cases against teachers. [The Washington Post](#) (1/12), [USA TODAY](#) (1/11), [The Washington Post/Class Struggle blog](#) (1/11)

Teachers sue Detroit schools, union over contract's loan provision. A group of Detroit teachers has filed a class action lawsuit against their union and the school district, questioning the legality of a provision in their new contract that allows the district to borrow \$10,000 from each salaried teacher. The teachers, who have also filed a labor complaint, say the contract violates Michigan law precluding employers from requiring gifts from workers as a condition of employment. Under the Termination Incentive Plan, the district will return the money without interest when teachers leave the district. [The Detroit News](#) (1/11)

Principal's collaborative culture is credited for school's success. Principal Greg Alexander is credited with changing the culture of Idaho's Sacajawea Elementary School from established protocol to collaboration and outside-the-box thinking. The formerly struggling school was named one of three Idaho Distinguished Schools in 2009. "He has virtually eliminated the achievement gap," the district's superintendent said. "He's exceptionally good at building meaningful relationships, and that's the foundation of leadership." [The Idaho Statesman \(Boise\)](#) (1/11)

Learning and Teaching

Teacher offers tips on positivity as a classroom-management strategy. A shift toward recognizing positive student behaviors -- rather than focusing on disruptive behaviors -- vastly improved the culture in educator Marti Schwartz's classroom. Schwartz, who is the creator and co-facilitator of Brown University's Novice and Experienced Teachers Working Together program, recounts her attitude-changing experience in both looking for and finding more positive behaviors to reward. [Teacher Magazine \(free registration\)](#) (1/13)

Students learn Shakespeare through performance and technology. Some educators are teaching students about the writings of William Shakespeare by having them perform scenes from the author's plays and enhancing the lessons with the latest audio and video tools, a method that's generating enthusiasm among students. High-school English and film-studies teacher Joshua Cabat

helps his students learn Shakespeare by filming each other acting out short scenes from plays or filming their own revisions of scenes from Shakespeare movies. "They have to work with the words and the subtext, getting to the emotional core of the scene," he said. [Edutopia magazine](#) (2/2010)

Technology

Creative-writing lessons can be boosted by multimedia technology. Teachers can inspire students' creativity and improve their writing by incorporating multimedia and technology into writing lessons, writes a fifth-grade teacher. Show students vivid photos and video clips and play instrumental music that relates to the scenery to spur student writing. Dave Somoza recommends teachers inspire students with digital tools such as [TrekEarth](#), [Microsoft Photo Story 3](#) or [Soundslides](#). [Edutopia magazine](#) (2/2010)

Are whiteboards important learning tools or glorified chalkboards? The popularity of interactive whiteboards in the classroom continues to grow, but some educators say the devices -- which cost as much as \$5,000 apiece -- are just an expensive version of the tried-and-true chalkboard, especially when teachers do not receive adequate training or choose not to use the devices' advanced features. "What makes it worthwhile are the interactive features and getting the kids at the board to connect with the material, because on the whiteboard you can present it in a way you cannot do with a chalkboard or overhead projector," one teacher said. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org\)](#) (1/8)

iPod Touch tested as tool for improving fluency, comprehension skills. Third-graders at a California elementary school are taking part in a pilot program to use iPod Touch devices for math and reading lessons to help them improve their English comprehension and fluency. Students listen to a book recording on the devices, focusing on pauses and intonation in the audio, then record themselves reading the same book, with the recordings archived to monitor progress. Students also use the devices in math lessons, where they are challenged to solve a series of problems as quickly as they can. [San Gabriel Valley Tribune \(San Gabriel, Calif.\)](#) (1/10)

New York fifth-graders using smart phones for core-subject lessons. Fifth-graders in a New York state school are part of a pilot program to use smart phones -- which are linked to the Internet but cannot be used to make calls or send text messages -- as mini-computers to find and share information throughout their core-subject classes. During a recent science lesson, students demonstrated their knowledge of the properties of light by creating digital drawings of transparent, translucent and opaque objects, which were then uploaded to the teacher's computer for review. [The Saratogian \(Saratoga Springs, N.Y.\)](#) (1/8)

Policy Watch

States take varied approaches to Race to the Top as deadline nears. The first deadline to apply for federal Race to the Top funds is Tuesday, and states are taking different approaches in competing for the funding. California lawmakers have approved the use of student test scores to evaluate teachers and authorized other reforms, while Texas Gov. Rick Perry has taken his state out of the running, saying the program would tie the state to costly national standards without providing enough funding to make needed changes. [The Washington Post](#) (1/17)

Many philanthropies planned to give less to education in 2009. Survey data show that charitable giving for education was expected to decline in 2009, according to a [report](#) by the nonprofit group Grantmakers for Education, although some donors planned to maintain giving at 2008 levels or even increase their donations. Education philanthropists are increasingly interested in collaborating with other donors and are targeting donations toward innovation, public policy and advocacy in schools, the report says. [Education Week \(premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org\)](#) (1/13)

Officials say revision of NCLB is expected in 2010. Department of Education officials say they expect a rewrite of the 8-year-old No Child Left Behind law this year, but an exact date is not known. Education Secretary Arne Duncan and other Obama administration officials have promised reform but have focused on encouraging school reform through Race to the Top grants. "In many ways, [No Child Left Behind] is a compact disc in an iPod world," said Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education. "It's still around, but it is in desperate need of an upgrade." [The Washington Post](#) (1/9)

New York governor proposes reforms to qualify for Race to the Top. New York Gov. David Paterson called for the removal of a cap on charter schools as part of an education-reform bill designed to help the state win federal Race to the Top funds. The bill, which includes many proposals opposed by teachers unions, also would repeal a statute banning the use of student test scores in determining teacher tenure, allow the state take over struggling schools and provide funding for charter-school construction. Lawmakers must approve the bill by Thursday to meet the Race to the Top application deadline, Paterson said. [The New York Times \(free registration\)](#) (1/7)

In the Field

Competition is tight for applicants to public colleges, universities. Would-be college students are facing a difficult year for acceptance at many public universities and colleges as they limit enrollment because of budget cuts. More people are also seeking admission to four-year schools as well as community colleges. The effect is stiffer competition for fewer spots and an increased likelihood that applicants will be turned away, forced into more expensive private schools or unable to take classes. [USA TODAY/The Associated Press](#) (1/14)

Students take recycling project into art classroom. Students at a New York state middle school are stepping up efforts to make a positive impact on their environment by composting, recycling and using recycled materials in their art classroom. "Teachers are incorporating recycling into their lesson and curriculum planning," said the school's art teacher and head of the cafeteria recycling project. "Best of all, the students get it -- they are really into it!" [The Times Herald-Record \(Middletown, N.Y.\)](#) (1/13)

Program promotes self-confidence as pathway to success. *Go For It!* Institute founder Judy Zerafa sought tips from top self-made business and community leaders to develop a program promoting academics and success among students. Zerafa's organization works with school districts to encourage self-confidence among students as a path to success. "As an educator, if we give students the skills and teach them how to be positive and to creatively think and believe they can do anything, they can," said the principal of a school that participated in the program. [The Denver Post](#) (1/11)

A Light Touch

Glorious insults from history

The exchange between Lady Astor & Winston Churchill: She told him: "If you were my husband I'd give you poison." He replied, "If you were my wife, I'd drink it."

Another exchange between Lady Astor & Winston Churchill at a formal dinner: She said: "You, Sir, are thoroughly drunk!" He replied, "Yes, Madam, but in the morning I will be sober and you will still be ugly!"

Asked the difference between a disaster and a catastrophe, The Great Gladstone, British Prime Minister explained: "If Benjamin Disraeli fell into the Thames that would be a disaster; if someone pulled him out, that would be a catastrophe."

"Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without any address on it?" - Mark Twain

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go." - Oscar Wilde

"He has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire." - Winston Churchill

"He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary." - William Faulkner (about Ernest Hemingway)

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it." - Moses Hadas

"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it." - Mark Twain

"He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends." - Oscar Wilde

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend.... if you have one." George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill. "Cannot possibly attend first night; will attend second... if there is one." Winston Churchill, in response

"I feel so miserable without you; it's almost like having you here." - Stephen Bishop

"I've just learned about his illness. Let's hope it's nothing trivial." - Irvin S. Cobb

"He is not only dull himself; he is the cause of dullness in others." - Samuel Johnson

"He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lamp-posts, for support rather than illumination." - Andrew Lang

"He has Van Gogh's ear for music." - Billy Wilder

"I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But this wasn't it." - Groucho Marx

