

# EDUCATION UPDATE

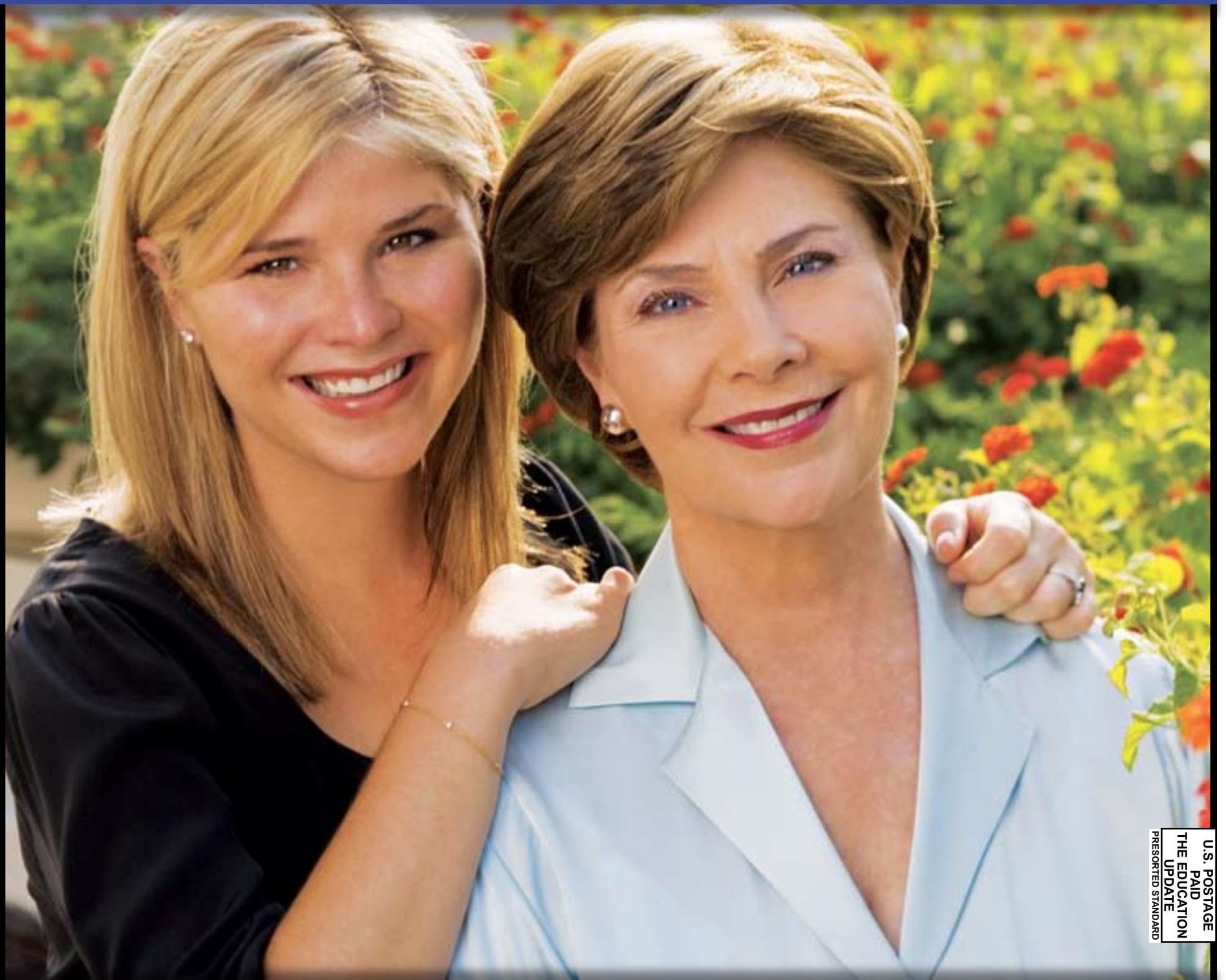
EDUCATION NEWS TODAY FOR A BETTER WORLD TOMORROW



Volume XIII, No. 9 • New York City • May 2008  
FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS & STUDENTS

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## NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHORS



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## FIRST LADY LAURA BUSH & JENNA BUSH

## GUEST EDITORIAL

*The Power of Educating Women and Girls Across the Globe*

By RUTH MESSINGER

I recently visited a refugee camp in Chad, now home to tens of thousands of displaced Darfuris seeking sanctuary from the violence in their own country. In Chad, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is funding teachers in refugee camps where children have nothing to do all day. Each of the girls I spoke with in Chad told me about the impact this project is having on their lives, confirming the voices and stories I've heard wherever I've traveled around the world. Education is an inherent right of all people; for the women and girls who are most often excluded from whatever learning is available, education has the power to liberate all who access it.

Education is at the heart of the values that inspire AJWS and its grassroots partners working in 36 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas. Education is a vital tool in the global struggle to liberate people from suffering and to secure the dignity and welfare of all human beings, especially women and girls.

Education is an integral building block to lasting social justice. Education and literacy help people take control of their own lives: find employment, take responsibility for their health, use technology and become active in political and



civic life. Such resources are particularly important for women and girls, because the gender gap is glaring. Two-thirds of the world's children who have never attended school are female.

When a girl is denied her basic right to an education, it sets in motion a series of challenges that will likely impact her for the rest of her life. When she does not go to school, it is much more difficult for her to access information about health, leaving her unable to defend her right to

safe sex. This puts her at a substantially higher risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. When a woman is illiterate, she faces obstacles to fully participating in the civic life of her society, and very often cannot vote or participate in the political process. When a woman does not have a basic education, it is much more difficult to obtain a job, preventing her from earning her own livelihood and becoming an independent decision-maker in her community. Over time these challenges render a woman voiceless, dependent and disempowered.

AJWS is committed to ending this cycle. Through grants to local organizations in the developing world, AJWS supports grassroots groups promoting education, both formal and informal for girls, women and other marginalized populations. In 2007 alone, AJWS committed one million to supporting 50 grantees addressing the education of women and girls. Programs like the one in Chad are defending a woman's right to an education and working to make such opportunities available to everyone.

To learn more about how you can help, please visit the AJWS Web site at [www.ajws.org](http://www.ajws.org).

*Ruth Messinger is President, American Jewish World Service.*

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## NEW YORK

*SUNY/MSU Partnership*

## To the Editor:

I just wanted to write today to thank your reporter Dorothy Davis for taking the time to write such a great article on our Center in Moscow. We really appreciate your having made this effort. You captured what we are trying to do perfectly. Small though the Center is in size, it is but the tip of a large effort to bring people together, faculty and students, in the belief that their personal interactions will be meaningful in both directions. There are perhaps no two countries on earth with such a great capacity to misunderstand

each other on a political plane, but this makes it so very important that we do everything we can to help people understand and appreciate each other on a human plane.

*Amb. Robert Gosende  
Associate Vice Chancellor,  
Office of International Programs,  
State University of New York*

## SUTTON, MA

*"Autism Everyday" Gives A Glimpse Into Life In The Shadows Of Autism*

## To the Editor:

Is the entire documentary available for public

viewing? If so, how do I get a copy or where can it be viewed? I have a son, 19 years old with autism, and am very interested in watching this.

*Joy  
Sutton, MA*

## CHARLOTTE, NC

*The Bard College Prison Initiative*

## To the Editor:

I am interested in starting a prison education program, but don't know where to begin. Can anyone offer any advice?

*Anabella Christiansan  
Charlotte, NC*

## SPRING LAKE HEIGHTS, NJ

*Landmark College*

## To the Editor:

I have executive function issues, so I was pleased and interested to read about your program. I was able to earn a BA in Education, and an MS in Special Education; I struggled with the frustrations that characterize EF issues. However, I really wish I had had the type of support you offer to your students! It would be most interesting to have an opportunity to learn more about the program at Landmark College.

*Madonna T. Kelly  
Spring Lake Heights, NJ*

## EDUCATION UPDATE

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Dr. Pola Rosen

# Congratulations to JOHN MATTESON

Associate Professor of English  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
The City University of New York

**Winner of 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Biography**

“Eden’s Outcasts:  
The Story of Louisa May Alcott and her Father”



The Newest Member of CUNY’s Literary Faculty Winners Circle

## PROMINENT EXAMPLES OF CUNY’S LITERARY FACULTY WINNERS CIRCLE INCLUDE:

**Michael Cunningham**  
1999 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction  
**Brooklyn College**

**Mike Wallace**  
1999 Pulitzer Prize for History  
**John Jay College  
of Criminal Justice,  
CUNY Graduate Center**

**Edwin G. Burrows**  
1999 Pulitzer Prize for History  
**Brooklyn College**

**Tina Howe**  
1984 and 1997 Pulitzer Prize  
for Drama finalist  
**Hunter College**

**Meena Alexander**  
2008 Guggenheim Fellowship  
for Poetry  
**Hunter College,  
CUNY Graduate Center**

**Blanche Wiesen Cook**  
1992 Los Angeles Times Book  
Prize for Biography  
**John Jay College  
of Criminal Justice,  
CUNY Graduate Center**

**Kimiko Hahn**  
2008 PEN/Voelcker Award for  
Poetry, 2007 Shelley Memorial  
Award/Poetry Society of America  
**Queens College**

**Gregory L. Rabassa**  
2006 National Medal of Arts  
**Queens College,  
CUNY Graduate Center**

**Jeffery Renard Allen**  
2000 Chicago Tribune  
Heartland Prize for Fiction  
**Queens College**

**Nicole Cooley**  
1995 Walt Whitman Award  
for Poetry  
**Queens College**

**Cate Marvin**  
2007 Whiting Writers’ Award  
**College of Staten Island**

**David S. Reynolds**  
1996 Bancroft Prize  
**Baruch College,  
CUNY Graduate Center**

**Beth Baron**  
2007 Carnegie Scholar  
**City College  
CUNY Graduate Center**

**Edouard Glissant**  
2004 Laureate ad Honorem  
de l’Université de Bologne  
en Langues et Littératures  
Étrangères  
**CUNY Graduate Center**

**David Nasaw**  
2001 Bancroft Prize,  
2007 New-York Historical  
Society American History  
Book Prize  
**CUNY Graduate Center**

**Emily Raboteau**  
2006 NEA Creative Writing  
Fellowship  
**City College**

**Eva Bellin**  
2006 Carnegie Scholar  
**Hunter College**

**Isaac Goldemberg**  
2007 P.E.N. Club of Peru  
Literature Award  
**Hostos Community College**

**Elizabeth Nunez**  
2001 American Book Award  
**Medgar Evers College**

**Grace Schulman**  
2002 Aiken Taylor Award  
in Modern American Poetry  
**Baruch College**

**Emily Braun**  
2005 National Jewish Book  
Award  
**Hunter College**

**Marilyn Hacker**  
2004 American Academy of  
Arts and Letters Award for  
Literature  
**City College,  
CUNY Graduate Center**

**James Oakes**  
2008 Lincoln Prize  
**CUNY Graduate Center**


**Charles Simic**  
2008 U.S. Poet Laureate  
**Visiting Professor at  
Baruch College**

**Peter Carey**  
1988 and 2001 Booker Prize,  
1998 Commonwealth Writers  
Prize  
**Hunter College**

**Gerardo Piña-Rosales**  
2006 Ayuntamiento and  
Casino de Lorca Prize  
**Lehman College,  
CUNY Graduate Center**

**Tom Sleigh**  
2008 Kingsley Tufts  
\$100,000 Poetry Award  
**Hunter College**

**Billy Collins**  
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U.S. Poet Laureate  
**Lehman College**

  
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## PROFILES IN EDUCATION

## St. Francis College President & 1960 Alum Frank J. Macchiarola Going Strong

By JOAN BAUM, Ph.D.

It's the day before the St. Francis College Birthday Party for Frank J. Macchiarola, the man who has been at the helm of St. Francis College for the last twelve years, and when he is told that it is also the birthday of William Wordsworth, he shoots back without missing a beat that it's also the day when OTB was introduced in New York. The fast response captures the essence of a man who has had an extraordinary career in and out of St. Francis College. His resume boasts, among numerous prestigious positions, being Dean of Yeshiva University/Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, Chairman of the New York City Charter Revision Commission and faculty member at CUNY. Dr. Macchiarola is leaving office at the end of June but will be assisting the incoming president, now chairman of the Board of Trustees, Brendan J. Dugan ('68), with fundraising.

Under the leadership of President Macchiarola, the Brooklyn "Small College of Big Dreams," a private, independent co-educational liberal arts college, has distinguished itself in several ways, not least of which includes thriving for 150 years as an educational institution dedicated to serving students of the city's poor and working class. Founded by the Franciscan Brothers in 1859, and dedicated to the principles of St. Francis of Assisi, the college offered him, Dr. Macchiarola says, not only an opportunity to receive a first-class education, but affiliation with a community that encouraged and still encourages giving back. He points with pride to the fact that he, himself, has funded full-tuition scholarships for every one of the teachers who influenced him when he was a student there—not to mention also endowing scholarships in perpetuity named for members of his and his wife's family. "People want to remember good people," he adds, and he hopes, indeed he feels confident, that his Birthday Party / Charter Award dinner, to which over 600 people attended, will yield even more largesse.

Although colleges with missions similar to St. Francis' claim to be special, Dr. Macchiarola indicates that data support his declaration: a steadily increasing graduation rate—60 percent, after six years (with almost no gap between white (58%), African-American (56%) and Hispanic (51%) graduation rates); a small, caring institution that has managed to keep class size down to 21 (only a handful of classrooms for more than 35); a motivational requirement to declare a major immediately, even if it's changed later on (as Yogi Berra said, Dr. Macchiarola recalls, "you come to a fork in the road, take it!"); a 75 percent retention rate; a 16-1 student to faculty ratio—



"we know who our kids are," we track them, we give them midterm exams, we follow up, with scholarship incentives and tutoring help, especially for "Project Access Students,"

provisional admits who guidance counselors say hold promise. He visits classes, challenges the students and is "in their face" in the best sense of the phrase, knowing them by name, their performance records, their potential. And, until this last semester, he has been in front of them also as a teacher, introducing Business Law (the favorite major), Latin American Political Institutions (his doctoral specialties at Columbia), and Philosophy."

Who goes to St. Francis? Still, first-generation and immigrant populations (more than 80 countries), most of whom, he reports, hear of the college through word of mouth. Though most students hail from Brooklyn and have "limited experience" of life outside the borough, President Macchiarola delights in noting how he greets freshmen by stating that "they may think they live in Brooklyn, but they now live in New York City." He would open up "the world" to them. Of course, he also delights in anecdotes that show how attached some freshmen can become. One young man who could not yet qualify for NYU went to St. Francis with the idea of bringing up his grades and transferring. He did supremely well, an English major who worked on the student newspaper, and when he was offered free tuition to NYU, he decided instead to stay at St. Francis, where he was subsequently awarded a full-tuition scholarship.

Of the 2007 freshmen class of 481, 257 came from Catholic schools and other private high schools. What distinguishes the college from like institutions? No hesitation here. Dr. Macchiarola is justifiably proud of the college's extraordinary endowment. Noting that a sister institution in Manhattan has \$15 million to serve a population of a little over 2000, he points to St. Francis' endowment of \$78 million to serve a similar number. This astonishing donor generosity translates into low tuition and an unusually high number of scholarships for students with exceptional GPAs, not to mention support for those who qualify for TAP and Pell grants. And, of course, the endowment ensures that all students receive ancillary services, that the college's over 40 clubs and activities are well funded, and that students and faculty alike enjoy the benefits of state-of-the-art classrooms.

Frank J. Macchiarola retiring? In fact, yes; in spirit, hardly! #

## THE DEAN'S COLUMN

## The Fabulous Fibonacci Numbers



By ALFRED S. POSAMENTIER, Ph.D.

There aren't many themes in mathematics that permeate more branches of mathematics than the Fibonacci numbers. They come to us from one of the most important books in Western history. This book, *Liber Abaci*, written in 1202 by Leonardo of Pisa, more popularly known as Fibonacci (1180-1250), or son of Bonacci, is the first European publication using the Hindu-Arabic numerals that are the basis for our base-10 number system.

Fibonacci was not a clergyman, as might be expected of early scientists; rather he was a merchant who traveled extensively throughout the Islamic world and took advantage of reading all he could of the Arabic mathematical writings. He was the first to introduce the Hindu-Arabic numerals to the Christian world in his *Liber abaci* (1202 and revised in 1228), which first circulated widely in manuscript form and was first published in 1857 as *Scritti di Leonardo Pisano* (Rome: B. Buoncompagni). The book is a collection of business mathematics including linear and quadratic equations, square roots and cube roots, and other new topics, seen from the European viewpoint. He begins the book with the sentence: "these are the nine figures of the Indians 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1. With these nine figures, and with the sign 0, which in Arabic is called *zephirum*, any number can be written, as will be demonstrated below. From here on he introduces the decimal position system for the first time in Europe. (Note: the word "zephirum" evolves from the Arabic word *as-sifr*; which comes from the Sanskrit word, used in India as early as the fifth century), "sunya," referring to *empty*.)

This alone would qualify it as a landmark book. However, it also contains a "harmless" problem about the regeneration of rabbits. It is the solution of that problem that produces the Fibonacci numbers.

You might have your students try to set up a chart and solve the problem independently before progressing further. It is from this problem that the famous *Fibonacci sequence* emerged. The problem may be stated as follows:

*How many pairs of rabbits will be produced in a year, beginning with a single pair, if in every month each pair bears a new pair, which becomes productive from the second month on?*

If we assume that a pair of baby (*B*) rabbits matures in one month to become offspring-producing adults (*A*), then we can set up the following chart: (See Chart I Below)

The number of pairs of mature rabbits (Adults) living each month determines the Fibonacci sequence (column of A):

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, 233, 377, ...

If we let  $f_n$  be the  $n^{\text{th}}$  term of the Fibonacci sequence, then

$$f_1 = 1$$

$$f_2 = 1$$

$$f_3 = f_2 + f_1 = 1 + 1 = 2$$

$$f_4 = f_3 + f_2 = 2 + 1 = 3$$

$$f_5 = f_4 + f_3 = 3 + 2 = 5$$

$$\vdots$$

$$f_n = f_{n-1} + f_{n-2}, \text{ for } n \text{ an integer } \geq 3$$

That is, each term after the first two terms is the sum of the two preceding terms.

Your students may (rightly) ask at this point, what makes this sequence of number so spectacular. You can fortify yourself by preparing some of the many applications of the Fibonacci numbers in nature, architecture, economics, art, and, of course, other branches of mathematics! It would be artificially modest of me not to suggest my book to you as a rather comprehensive source to find out more about this magnificent ubiquitous numbers. This book is readily available in book shops or on-line: *The Fabulous Fibonacci Numbers*, by Alfred S. Posamentier and Ingmar Lehmann (Prometheus Books, 2007).

For one, there is a direct relationship (believe it or not) between the Fibonacci numbers and the Golden Section! Consider successive quotients of the Fibonacci numbers:

$\frac{f_{n+1}}{f_n}$
$\frac{1}{1} = 1.000000000$
$\frac{2}{1} = 2.000000000$
$\frac{3}{2} = 1.500000000$
$\frac{5}{3} = 1.666666667$
$\frac{8}{5} = 1.600000000$
$\frac{13}{8} = 1.625000000$
$\frac{21}{13} = 1.615384$
$\frac{34}{21} = 1.619047$
$\frac{55}{34} = 1.61764705882352941$
$\frac{89}{55} = 1.618$
$\frac{144}{89} = 1.61797752808988764044943820224719101123595505$
$\frac{233}{144} = 1.61805$
$\frac{377}{233} = 1.6180257510729613733905579399142...$
$\frac{610}{377} = 1.6180371352785145888594164456233...$
$\frac{987}{610} = 1.6180327868852459016393442622951...$

N.B. the bar above some of the numbers above means that these repeat indefinitely.

The golden section has an approximate value of 1.6180339887498948482045868343656..., which is gradually being approached by successive quotients of successive Fibonacci Numbers. As you read more about these endlessly charming numbers, you will get a better feeling for the beauty of mathematics!

*Dr. Alfred S. Posamentier is Dean of the School of Education at City College of NY, author of over 40 Mathematics books including: "Math Wonders to Inspire Teachers and Students" (ASCD, 2003) and "The Fabulous Fibonacci Numbers" (Prometheus, 2007), and member of the NYS Mathematics Standards Committee.*

CHART I

Month	PAIRS	No. of Pairs of Adults (A)	No. of Pairs of Babies (B)	Total Pairs
Jan. 1	A	1	0	1
Feb. 1	A B	1	1	2
Mar. 1	A B A B	2	1	3
Apr. 1	A B A B A B	3	2	5
May 1	A B A B A B A B	5	3	8
June 1	A B A B A B A B A B	8	5	13
July 1		13	8	21
Aug. 1		21	13	34
Sept. 1		34	21	55
Oct. 1		55	34	89
Nov. 1		89	55	144
Dec. 1		144	89	233
Jan. 1		233	144	377

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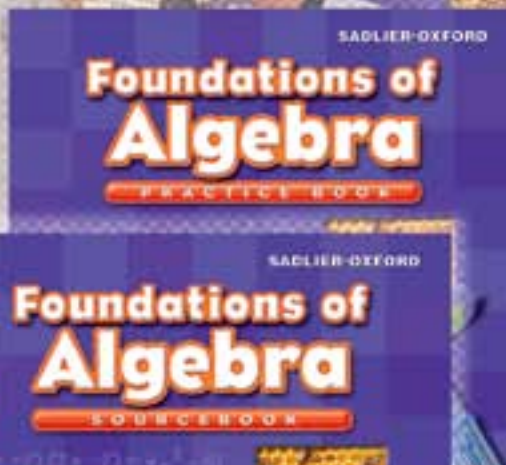
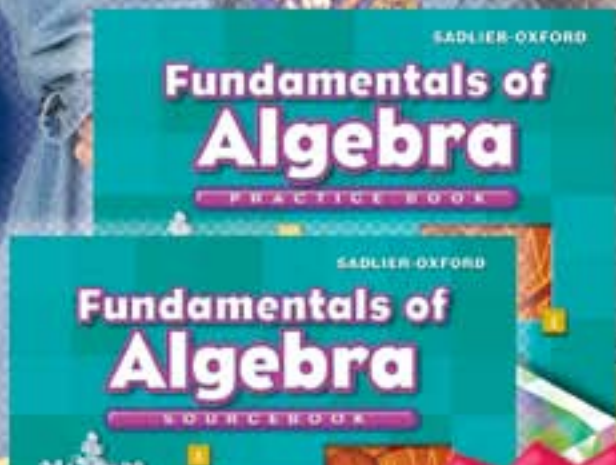
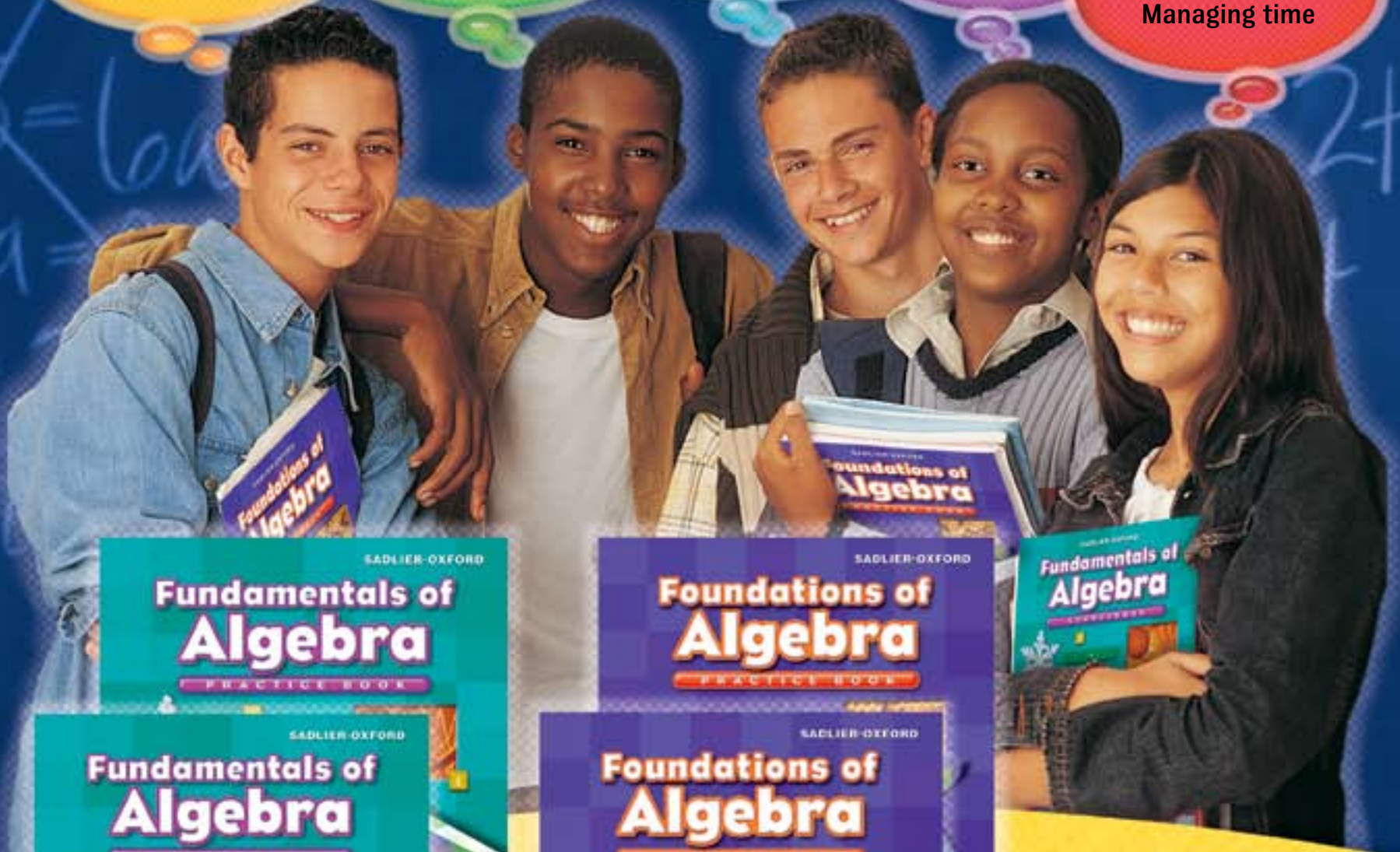
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## EXPERTS ON EDUCATION

## THE NY BOTANICAL GARDENS

## NEW CURRICULUM TURNS MIDDLE SCHOOLERS INTO ETHNOBOTANY "FBI" AGENTS

By CHRISTINA COLÓN, Ph.D.

The New York Botanical Garden has published an innovative new ethnobotany curriculum that enables students in grades six through nine to delve into the relationships of plants and people.

*Forensic Botany Investigations: Become an Agent of F.B.I.* is a classroom resource designed to help teachers improve their students' science literacy and interest in plants through hands-on and engaging lessons and activities that integrate learning with role play, games, simulations, and student assessments. Students are presented with fun and challenging scenarios and investigations and work in teams to solve mysteries while learning about plant science, ecology, and conservation. Lessons such as "Fruit Autopsy," "The Case of the Vanishing Stingless Bee," and "Rice Crop Rescue" teach students how plants and their habitats are affected by environmental changes and how this, in turn, affects people who rely on such plants for their livelihood.

*Forensic Botany Investigations* explores real life issues that relate to social studies, nutrition, genetics, math, economics, and environmental studies. A documentary-style video component of the program on an accompanying DVD features Botanical Garden scientists talking about their work. Anthropologist Christine Padoch, Ph.D., shares her research on traditional rice farming in Southeast Asia, which explores the genetic diversity and traditional uses of the world's most important food crop. Additional profiles include Ecologist Chuck Peters, Ph.D., and palm specialist Andrew Henderson, Ph.D., describe their work on a recent expedition to Myanmar to study the sustainable harvest of rattan, exploring the delicate balance between the needs of humans and wildlife.

Funded with a grant from Bristol-Myers Squibb, the lessons were created in collaboration with curriculum developer Education Development Center and employ leading-edge approaches to

education such as concept mapping and group learning. Middle school science teachers from around the country who piloted the lessons commented, in questionnaires by the evaluation team at The Goodman Group, commented that the unit employed a "good, hands-on approach" with lessons that were "easy to prepare and implement" and topics that were "easy to relate to real-life issues" and activities that students not only "loved" but that provided "excellent opportunities for student group work, inquiry learning, and hands-on scientific research."

The curriculum was introduced at the 2008 National Science Teachers Association Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, attended by 25,000 classroom teachers, school administrators, and informal educators.

The Botanical Garden's Children's Education department is a leader in the field of inquiry-based science resources for teachers. It recently published the elementary curriculum series SEEDS (Science Exploration and Education Discovery Series) with leading science curricula publisher Kendall/Hunt. A curriculum on ethnobotany for high school students similar to *Forensic Botany Investigations* is slated for publication later this year. Also under way is an on-line virtual exploration of the rain forest and desert galleries of the Garden's Enid A. Haupt Conservatory.

*Forensic Botany Investigations* is being distributed in partnership with Glencoe, the science education division of McGraw-Hill, a leading provider of K-12 curricula. It retails for \$19.98 and can be purchased on-line at [www.glencoe.com](http://www.glencoe.com), by phone at 1-800-334-7344, or at Shop in the Garden on site at the Botanical Garden or on-line at [www.nybgshop.org](http://www.nybgshop.org)

Christina Colón, Ph.D., Curator of Curriculum Development and Evaluation at The New York Botanical Garden, spearheaded the development of *Forensic Botany Investigations*.#

an outstanding principal. To the Fellows he said, "When I visit your schools I walk out and say, this is magic...this is one of the most exciting things I have done in my life." Krista Dunbar, director of the program, hopes to make "more of a systemic impact" and broadly strengthen the New York City system as Fellows share their experiences with larger groups of professionals. Now in its fifth year, the program has enough alumni for a strong network that continues to share and support best practices.#

## Teachers College

continued from page 16

Leadership Academy, a major Department of Education initiative that trains aspiring principals.

Seven years ago, Charles (Chuck) Cahn, founder and president of the program, looked at the education world from his place in the investment world and decided he wanted to get involved. He quickly saw that "Great leadership matters enormously." To do well, a school has to have

## THE CENTER FOR ARTS IN EDUCATION

## THE ARTS: A VITAL PART OF EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD

By RICHARD KESSLER



New York City is the cultural capital of the world and as such, the arts play a critical role in how we define ourselves as a city and as a people. It would be difficult, if not impossible to imagine New York City without the arts.

The arts are inherent to all human beings. The arts are part of our DNA. Each child has the gift of the arts within them and should be provided with sustained pathways for learning in and through the arts all along the continuum of human development, especially from pre-kindergarten through the end of high school. Arts education is a right of our children, not a privilege.

Based on our own estimation and the expressed opinions of parents, teachers, school administrators, and others, CAE believes that we are witnessing the gathering of a perfect storm for our city's public schools. A storm that is poised to damage access to arts education in ways not experienced since the fiscal crisis of the mid-1970s.

What we are seeing today in the city's public schools is a profound shift away from the arts and the other elements of a well-rounded education, including subjects such as history, foreign language, physical education—all content deemed expendable for test preparation. This is to the detriment of the city's school children and ultimately to all New Yorkers.

Under the new system of accountability the School Progress Report drives the rewards and consequences for each and every principal. In the elementary and middle schools 85% of the Progress Report is based on standardized tests in reading and math. In high school, graduation rates and regents diplomas are a major factor. A principal may receive a bonus or risk losing their jobs based on the School Progress Report. For all practical purposes the arts are non-existent within the Progress Report.

Adding fuel to the fire, Project Arts, the only guaranteed budget line for the arts and the major factor behind the improvements in arts education over the past decade, has been eliminated. Many schools and arts educators depended on this fund-

ing to keep the arts alive in their classrooms.

Combine its elimination with what will be a nearly 10% cut to the schools budget including this and next year and a system where principals have no practical supervision and you begin to see the storm gathering. The arts have always been cut disproportionately during periods of budget reductions. History has taught us this all too well.

The gathering storm is also well understood within key, alarming statistics provided by the NYC DOE over the past year: 32% of parents surveyed by the NYC DOE indicate that their children receive zero arts education; only 29% of all middle school students are provided with the minimum state requirements; only 4% of all elementary schools surveyed are even in a position to provide the minimum state requirement by offering all four art forms in each grade; 20% of schools have no arts specialists whatsoever; the ratio of arts teachers to students is alarming, with one theater teacher to every 13,000 students.

Most of this data comes directly from the NYC DOE's recent Arts in the Schools Report. Let us also consider that few principals are prepared to effectively administer arts education in their schools, having had little to no arts education in their training as teachers and little to no arts education in their training as principals. The positive correlation between arts offerings and graduation rates is compelling and warrants increased attention by school decision-makers, especially given the overall dismal graduation rates at many New York City high schools.

In the arts capital of the world, it is imperative that education officials and decision-makers work together to ensure that the requirements are being met and that all students are being provided a well-rounded education that includes the arts. These standards can be met and we must all be held accountable to ensuring this.#

This article is adapted from testimony delivered by Richard Kessler, Executive Director of The Center for Arts Education, on April 8, 2008 at an oversight hearing of the New York City Council on the state of arts education in New York City Public Schools.

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## Dean Mary Brabeck Presents Award to Frank McCourt at NYU

### McCOURT ADVISES TEACHERS: BE PASSIONATE!



By LISA K. WINKLER

Frank McCourt's advice for teachers is simple: "Find what you love and do it. If kids see your passion, they'll be with you." He elaborated: "Grab their (students) attention with a hook, understand the nature of adolescents, be seductive, be agile, be patient, and have a sense of humor or you are f--ked," his gentle Irish brogue softening the expletive into poetry.

McCourt, this year's recipient of the American Place Theatre's Literature to Life Award, shared his insights about teaching and writing in an interview with *Education Update* prior to the APT award benefit April 29. APT selected McCourt's *Teacher Man*, his account of his 30-year career in education, for its most recent adaptation of a novel or biography for dramatic presentations to school groups.

At 78, McCourt admitted he misses the classroom, but makes up for it by constantly talking to universities around the country. He exhibited a balanced blend of cynicism and optimism about the state of education. While the emphasis on testing has become "the assassin of education," he's encouraged about the country's diverse culture that welcomes experimentation and innovation. "Sitting under a tree and staring at the sky" is more productive than watching television, he claimed, because television kills all thinking," he said, deepening his voice for emphasis.

To engage students, McCourt recalled how he would use children's literature, reciting nursery rhymes and fairy tales and showing the connections between them and students' lives. "Practically half the students could relate to a step-mother," he said. He'd use reverse psychology, or a negative approach, to introduce classics such as Shakespeare. "I'd read parts aloud and then say, 'Isn't this awful? Do you understand it?' They would say, 'Wait a minute, isn't Shakespeare supposed to be famous? Why is this teacher bad-mouthing Shakespeare?' Then they'd realize I was leading them up the garden path to the glories of his words," he said.

Yet McCourt, who grew up poor and without books, embraces all forms of literature now. Whether it's graphic novels, comic books, or magazines, he's an advocate for giving students what they'll read. "Any kind of book in a kid's hands is a triumph," he said.

He suggested using newspapers to teach reading and writing. "I'd tell students if they wrote like a reporter, their writing would be compressed, detailed, focused and organized," he said. Yet McCourt, whose autobiography *Angela's Ashes* won a Pulitzer Prize, said he learned how to write from being a teacher. Now working on a novel set in Brooklyn in the 1970's, he encouraged aspiring writers to "scribble, not write. Don't think about it, just write, write, write. Like a sculptor hacking away at a block of granite, something emerges."

McCourt was thrilled to receive the award from APT, and to see his book adapted by APT co-founder and artistic director Wynn Handman and performed by Michael McMonagle. "Bringing stories to life helps students tell their stories," he said.#

### NYU STEINHARDT SCHOOL & APT FORGE PARTNERSHIP

Frank McCourt received the American Place Theatre's (APT) Literature to Life Award April 29 at a benefit for the theatre. McCourt's *Teacher Man*, (Scribner, 2005) was selected by APT for its latest adaptation into a dramatic presentation. Dean Mary Brabeck, of New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, presented the award to McCourt and also announced a partnership between NYU and APT to enhance teacher education. "We are proud of Frank McCourt's contribution to the arts and his tie to the American Place Theater. NYU has a growing collaboration with American Place Theater to bring drama/education even more into the teacher education curriculum," she said.

The American Place Theatre's "Literature to Life" program presents an actor playing multiple roles, and delivers verbatim adaptations of the writers' works. "As a cultural partner to schools, it is our charge to help teachers and students find their own voice, both in the classroom and in life," said David Kener, APT executive director. "Frank McCourt found a remarkable and distinctive voice in both settings; he's recognized the power of storytelling to motivate students and, as a writer, to influence millions of readers.

As part of the gala benefit, 200 teachers and pre-service teachers were invited to the event. In addition to the award for McCourt, APT actors presented excerpts from some of its adaptations, including *Teacher Man*, *Secret Life of Bees*, *The Kite Runner*, and an original work by poet Lemon Anderson called *The Beautiful Struggle*.

Proceeds from the event benefit APT's Literature to Life program, which brings the written word to life for school groups, ranging from middle school through university, across the country. The APT also works with school districts providing staff development workshops, study guides, and artists-in residence. Presentations also include pre- and post performance discussions between students and actors.

For information about "Literature to Life", go to [www.literaturetolife.org](http://www.literaturetolife.org) #

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## UNION PRESIDENT SPEAKS

ERNEST LOGAN — CSA

## THE VALUE OF QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By ERNEST LOGAN

All good leaders know there are many factors that aid in their success. However, there are two factors that play a major role in how successful a school leader will be. The first is the leader's ability to stay relevant in an ever changing world. The second is a highly qualified, dedicated and reliable staff. School leaders in particular must continue to develop their craft. They must stay up-to-date on technological advances and the latest improvements in teaching, learning and instruction.

The world of supervision as we know it is changing before our very eyes. Principals, assistant principals and other supervisors, now, more so than before are asked to be accountants, data analysts, human resource managers, mediators and psychologists, in addition to being educators. Instructional leaders who are working everyday to make a difference know they must adapt in-order to provide the highest quality education. Great school leaders know that the learning process never ends and understand the value of continued professional development.

At CSA, we also understand the value of quality professional development and training. That's why we established the Executive Leadership Institute. ELI, a not-for-profit organization established on 2001 has been offering practical, relevant and essential professional development for New York City school leaders for six years. The intent of the various programs is to support and provide standards-based, high quality, results-driven leadership opportunities.

The Executive Leadership Institute provides nuts and bolts workshops for first year assistant principals, as well as refresher courses for



experienced assistant principals, principals, day care directors and assistant directors. At ELI, we believe that you're never too experienced to learn something new, and we encourage all participants to move up to the next level of leadership. To date, ELI has provided professional development support of 3,786 assistant principals, of whom 460 have continued on to be principals.

I say all of this to encourage you to keep learning. Continued professional development allows school leaders to refine their skills, interact with colleagues and exchange ideas and experiences with administrators from around the city. It is also important that you as school leaders encourage your staff to attend professional development. A well-rounded staff with up-to-date knowledge of curriculum, technology and instruction can take their students and school beyond borders.#



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Winning curriculum will become the property of The Cotton's Journey Educational Program.



## TEACHING FROM THE HEART

BY ENNIS WILLIAM COSBY

What got me involved in the educational field was my experience student teaching for a year at Dean Rusk Elementary School. Three days a week, I was assigned to teach, as an assistant, 24 third graders. I felt that this experience would be rewarding because a true test for a healer is to heal people who need it most. After two weeks of working at the school, the teacher, who was female, brought to my attention that the young black males in the class who had no fathers would do better academically when I was in the classroom than on the days I was absent. That is what convinced me that I was needed in the academic field.

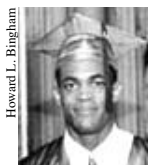
It amazed me that academic performance by children could be altered by a simple motivational factor like a direct role model. I was aware of the statistical dominance of female teachers in the academic field, and I felt that as a male I would have a lot of influence on children who had no fathers or on children who had dyslexia. Of course, the group of students I imagined would look at me as a direct role model would be black males who have dyslexia.

I got so involved with the elementary school that I began to go to the special education classes and offer my services to the teacher. I really bonded with the kids in the special education class. I was teaching from the heart, and the kids' biggest needs seemed to be a teacher who cared about them and their individual needs. The greatest reward for me was working with a child who began to read his first words after just three weeks.

Just like being a therapist, I feel that educating children is a form of healing. Working at this school was a confidence booster because if I could relate to these kids and get positive results, I knew I could teach anywhere. The measure of a great teacher is working with the most raw, unrefined students and making a change. It just seems too easy measuring a teacher's ability when that teacher is already working with students who are successful in school.

In the middle of my last year in college, I knew that I wanted to work with children who had learning disabilities. I wanted to go to a graduate program that would be the best at providing me with the newest information. There were two events in my life that were extremely important. The first was graduating from college. The second was accomplishing the goal of getting into graduate school even though I am dyslexic.

Since leaving Atlanta, I have not taught in the classroom. I have no real experience as a teacher, but I do have some natural attributes that I feel may help me become an elite teacher. First, I have a natural love for children, and children get along with me very well. It is one of those nonobserv-



Howard L. Bingham

able variables that exists between me and children. I am far from being perfect, but I get along well with most children.

Second, I believe in chances, so I do not give up on people or children. I know that if I have a class full of kids, I would want all of them to be success-

ful students. I believe in finding solutions to any and every problem. I don't believe in quitting because of all my academic experiences. With all the chances I was given, I am going to give all of my students as many chances as they need to find themselves as students.

Third, I believe teachers need to bond with students. When I reflect on my favorite teachers in my life, they were teachers who were my friends, too. I see teachers wearing many titles besides TEACHER. I see psychologist, mother, father, friend, and adviser. I believe students react to my behavior. The more I give of myself, the more they will give back to me.

Fourth, I believe in a saying one of my favorite teachers told me: "Whatever you teach a child, it will not be digested completely by that student until he leaves your classroom." I feel that learning is a slow process, and patience is a very crucial quality to have as a teacher.

Lastly, my best quality is I am very personal with all students. I work with kids and try to make them feel that I understand them. I am very stern on good morals and manners. I am not old fashioned. I just believe in respect, honesty, and truthfulness. I feel that children will be better students if they become better people. I will teach things that are not in the books. For instance, I believe that children will be better students if they like each other better or if they like themselves better. I believe that stability starts inside and then reflects out of a person. So, my tactics would involve molding the student completely. I feel this is how I would get the most out of my students. What makes me believe in my system is the fact that my favorite teachers had the same type of philosophies as I do.

How will my experiences influence change in the school system? I am soon to be a teacher who can influence change by my experiences as a victim of the system. I believe that if more teachers are aware of the signs of dyslexia and learning disabilities in the class, then less students like me will slip through the cracks of the system. I also feel that the special education programs need to be changed. From my personal experiences, I feel that special education needs to be a combination of one on one and group teaching.

I believe in fairness within the system. I just want all students to have an equal opportunity. I have a lifetime to devote to making the school system more balanced in any way I can.

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**Is the American School Accredited?** Yes, the American School is accredited by The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) and, also recognized by the Illinois State Board of Education as a secondary school.

**What are the graduation requirements?** The American School offers two high school programs—the College Preparatory Course and the General Course. In each program the student is required to complete 18 units of credit. At least four and a half (4 1/2) credits must be completed with the American School to receive our diploma.

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## The Ennis William Cosby Foundation Provides New Beginnings for Students

By JOAN BAUM, Ph.D.

"Passionate" is more than a word to Carolyn Olivier, who runs the 11-year-old Cosby Foundation, a teacher training program for student scholars committed to carrying on the work of Ennis Cosby, the son of Bill and Camille Cosby, who was tragically killed in an accident in California over a decade ago, but who had been himself a child with learning difficulties who became an ardent, "passionate" teacher of children with LD (Learning Differences). "He was such a positive, optimistic, passionate person," Olivier says. He wrote beautifully—a *New York Times* editorial, "Teaching from the Heart" attracted a lot of attention when it appeared several years ago—and recalling his dedication, always makes her feel kind of "spiritual" about their common cause: supporting teacher training programs that honor the values and skills by which he himself learned. "Ennis knew what it felt like to be left out as a student." And he revealed in what he achieved when he took charge of his life.

Specifically, Olivier cites three main components in the Cosby Scholars program: an extended supervised tutorial practicum (two days a week, from early fall through May); a course on language development as central to learning; and learning how to use, not just do, diagnosis and assessment. There is still debate about the value of tutoring, she notes, and is frankly "stunned and surprised" by those who downplay its importance, saying that it is a "crutch." But from a student perspective a well-run tutorial is always an "opportunity to learn." Youngsters will not spend time with "crutches." Learning—whether academic or athletic—has always involved tutoring, mentoring. And if only one tutee presents a teacher with a puzzle to solve, learning "in a wonderful way" has taken place—for both the student and the Cosby Scholar, who gets feedback for the next time. Olivier points to mentors in her own life who made a difference when she studied for her Masters at Harvard and then interned at the Learning Disorder Center of Children's Hospital in Boston, names familiar to many in the LD field: Dr. Charles Drake, for whom she did testing; Dr. Jeanne Chall, author of *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*; and Dr. Martha Bridge Denckla, who convinced her and demonstrated that "children are born to learn."

In New York the Cosby Scholars Program



Carolyn Olivier

is headed by Dr. Joanna Uhry, Professor of Education at Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus. Students are full-time teachers in high needs schools, "some of the toughest" in the city, Olivier says. Since the Cosby Foundation Scholars Program was initiated, more than 20,000 at-risk for reading children have been taught and tutored by Cosby Scholars in over 100 city schools. In a field with a typically high attrition rate, Cosby Scholars have an enviably high retention rate. Yes, some scholars may express discouragement at first, but when they see what children can do when they are given power and are engaged, they are "amazed" at what can be accomplished.

Future Foundation work for Olivier includes, she says, not only continuing to write RFPs for the Foundation but to ensure that a school works "systematically," for "multiplicative effect"—having teachers, parents, administrators plan together for "a coherent environment." She is also exploring "blended programs," those that will incorporate online and face-to-face teacher training. And she is also interested in bridging the language gap that often exists between professional research findings and the general public. The challenge is great, but the spirit of those chosen as Cosby Scholars undeniable. Olivier notes that more information about the Foundation and its work can be found at a website called "Hello Friend," so named because Ennis Cosby called everyone that, whether he knew someone for a few minutes or several years. He had a dream. He went on to Morehouse and then Teachers College at Columbia, and never lost the joy of learning. Not infrequently she would get a call: "Miz O, I got to talk to you..." And they did.#

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## FROM THE NYU CHILD STUDY CENTER: ASK THE EXPERT



### *It's the End of the School Year. But, Watch Out for Kids Gone Wild!*

By GLENN S. HIRSCH, M.D.

For most teenagers, the end of the school year is approaching. This is a time to relax, enjoy evenings free from homework, and hold celebrations. Most kids handle this time in a healthy, risk-free fashion. However, with the excitement and stimulation of graduation, proms, and other parties, many kids get themselves into trouble and face major negative consequences. So while our teens are enjoying themselves, you and I as parents need to be more vigilant. To get help, I turned to Dr. Richard Gallagher, Director of the Parenting Institute at NYU Child Study Center. He offers the following words of caution and practical advice.

Partying and driving during this time of year is a major concern. The number of drivers on the road increases in the late spring and summer. Teens spend nearly 1.5 more hours driving during a typical summer week than they do during the school year. There's a corresponding increase in accidents and in teens driving while under the influence of alcohol and other substances. Statistics collected over two-year periods find that 180 to 260 people are killed in car accidents each weekend during peak times for proms and graduations. Over half to 60% of those deaths are associated with alcohol use.

Parents in urban areas also have to watch out. Kids may be traveling late at night and early in the morning on public transportation and in parts

of town where there are clubs and action, but also slightly more danger. They can be targeted for robbery, pick-pocketing or snatching purses and jewelry.

As if car accidents and crime are not enough to worry about, other accidents happen more often during this time too; in particular, drowning increases. Pool parties, trips to the beach and other swimming spots can also be a problem if not handled carefully.

So for parents, these times of celebration are times for preparation. Give teenagers some advice, some guidelines, and help make sure that they have the appropriate supervision. Letting them loose for long periods with no check-in and no caring adult contact (even by phone) can be risky. Make your expectations clear and have a schedule for contact so you know that your teens are safe and healthy. Teenagers can have some freedom and some privacy, but remember they're still not quite adult in their thinking and judgment.

In regard to sexual activity, discuss your expectations and how you want your teens to manage their sexual maturity. Adhering to family values and maintaining safe sex practices should be stressed, especially at times of celebration. Some kids feel pressure to keep up with the crowd, but those who choose the option of holding off should also feel comfortable. Helping teens make

*continued on page 17*

## LANDMARK COLLEGE GRADS SHARE SUCCESS STORIES

### *John Chiantera*

I attended the University of North Carolina at Greensboro before attending Landmark College.

I began having difficulties throughout my schooling but was able to work around them in the earlier grades. When I entered high school that was when I really began having difficulties. I was working very hard and putting time into my course work but not getting the results that I was hoping.

I was diagnosed with a mild learning disability in the areas of reading comprehension and ST/LT memory.

Landmark college gave me the tools and resources to help me learn the way I need to learn. Furthermore, the college enabled me to regain the confidence in myself that I had lost in high school. The students were very helpful. Many of the students were going through the same emotions/problems I had been going through. It was nice to know I wasn't the only one. I made some very good friends while at Landmark.

I left Landmark after about 1 1/2 years. I applied to other 4 year colleges and universities. I attended Lehigh University in Bethlehem PA and received a Bachelors of Science in Finance. I have always had an interest in the finance so I interviewed with finance companies in the Boston area.

All my memories at Landmark were great. I would recommend Landmark College to prospective students. Landmark has given me the tools and resources to help me succeed in school and my career.

I do feel satisfied, but it is important to always keep striving and wanting more.

I plan to apply attend school full-time for my Master in Business Administration starting

in September 2009. After graduation I would like to work in the fields of business consulting or venture capital/private equity.

### *Katherine Kandravay*

I attended Landmark College for the Summer Skills Development Program the summer of 1989. At that time, I had completed my sophomore year at Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts. I returned to Wheaton following the summer program and graduated in 1991.

I was diagnosed with Dyslexia at the age of 5, much earlier than many I got to know at Landmark. My mother had noticed that I was having difficulties with letters and words and chose to have me evaluated. Although I had been tutored during my schooling up through high school, college was the first time that I didn't have the designated support system in place. The summer at Landmark was the first time that I was in an environment with other students with similar difficulties. It was helpful learning what other students were doing to succeed in school. I found both the students and the faculty to be extremely helpful. I would recommend Landmark to other students.

Following my graduation from Wheaton College, I worked at Alpine Learning Group, a small school in NJ for children with Autism. I worked there for two years, and then went to the University of Pennsylvania, where I received a Master in Social Work degree in 1995.

I currently work as a Staff Therapist in the Asperger's Related Services Department at West Bergen Mental Healthcare, a Community Mental Health Center in Northern NJ. My job is very satisfying to me and I plan to continue in the field, working with individuals with Autism Spectrum disorders and their families.#

## *Mind and Body in Autism Sheds Light on Spectrum Disorders at Teachers College*

BY JUDITH AQUINO

After spending years feeling that something was "off", Karl Wittig was almost relieved when he was diagnosed with a mild case of Asperger's syndrome at age 44. Asperger's syndrome is one of several Autism Spectrum Disorders and is characterized by obsessive behavior, an impaired ability to interact socially, and often an average or very high IQ. "When I was a kid I was obsessed with taking things apart to see how they worked and I would repeat things constantly," said Wittig. "Being diagnosed helped me understand myself better... Autism is not a label, it's an explanation."

As a panelist at the 2-day conference, Mind and Body in Autism, hosted by Teachers College and College of Physicians and Surgeons in Columbia University, Wittig added his voice to the voices of others promoting a greater awareness of the Autism Spectrum Disorders. Together with an interdisciplinary panel of experts including educators, psychologists, pediatricians, child psychiatrists, and pediatric neurologists, they also encouraged the development of strategies for addressing the challenges facing individuals with autism and their families.

The first day was dedicated to understanding and addressing the educationally relevant characteristics of autism. The second day focused on the role of genetics in the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders, approaches to the pediatric office screening and evaluation of autism, and ongoing issues in research studies and clinical research.

In a breakout session, "Bridging the Gap from Research to Practice", Dr. Harriet Golden from AHRC - New York City discussed several teaching strategies for students on the Autism spectrum. She covered a range of methods (e.g., Applied Behavioral Analysis, Picture Exchange Communication System, and Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-Handicapped Children) that are



**Prof. Linda Hickson, Co-organizer of the Conference, Dir., Center for Opportunities & Outcomes for People with Disabilities**

effective in helping autistic students grasp new concepts. She later pointed out that more research is still needed to understand the distinctions between learning disabilities in order to identify the right educational approach. "This conference was the first time I had ever heard that Fragile X, Retts, and Prader Willi were part of the spectrum disorders. In every textbook they are still listed as disabilities under the umbrella of cognitive disabilities and mental retardation," commented Golden.

Parents whose children are on the Autism spectrum often feel that they learn something new about their children every day. Lisa Dille, Young Seh Bae, Susan McCormick, and Tim Woodward joined Karl Wittig in a panel discussion to describe their experiences in raising children with autism. Tim Woodward explained that seeking educational assistance for his twin sons who both have an autism spectrum disorder has taught him the importance of being insistent. "It is remarkable what education can do today but we have to be vocal to ensure that our children get the help they need," he said. In response to an audience member's question of what can he do as a teacher, Lisa Dille's response was simply "Listen."#

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## FIRST LADY LAURA BUSH AND JENNA BUSH READ ALL ABOUT IT!



Laura Bush



Jenna Bush

By JUDITH AQUINO

Recently, the First Lady and her daughter, Jenna Bush, made an appearance at the 92nd Street Y to promote their book, *Read All About It!*, a picture book for children published by HarperCollins. Mrs. Bush and her daughter took turns reading their tale out loud about a boy who thinks books are boring until storybook characters come alive in his classroom. Julia Reed, a contributing editor at Newsweek and Vogue, spoke with the Bushes about the importance of literacy and education and their collaboration on the book.

Stemming from their experiences as teachers and their passion for reading, the First Lady and Jenna Bush are strong advocates for literacy and education. An Honorary Ambassador for the UN Literary Decade, Mrs. Bush hosted the first White House Conference on Global Literacy in 2006 to highlight successful literacy programs and encourage sustained global and country-level efforts to promote literacy. In 2001 she helped the Library of Congress launch the first National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. She also founded the statewide Texas Book Festival in 1995. Mrs. Bush taught in public schools in Dallas, Houston, and Austin. Jenna Bush shares her mother's love of reading and teaching. Jenna taught elementary school in Washington, D.C. after graduating from the University of Texas at Austin in 2004 with a degree in English. She has also written a book, *Ana's Story: A Journey of Hope*, about a 17-year-old single mother in Panama living with HIV.

Mrs. Bush explained that the idea behind *Read All About It!* was partly inspired by the reaction of her fourth grade class to *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White. After reading the book to her students, they became so engaged in the story they claimed a spider in the closet was the famous Charlotte. "That was so much fun; I loved having the chance to teach children about literature," exclaimed Mrs. Bush. Over the past year, Jenna and her mother developed the idea of capturing children's imaginations with characters that literally jump out of a page. "The great thing...is that very few people get the opportunity to work creatively with their parents. I was constantly inspired by her ideas," commented Jenna.

For Mrs. Bush, writing the book with her daughter was an early Mother's Day gift. "Having the chance to write this book with Jenna was a very special time for me since we're also planning her wedding...It reminded me of all the books we read together when she and her sister were little girls," she explained.

The final question that Julia Reed posed to the Bushes came from the audience: what are their favorite books? Mrs. Bush listed Mark Twain's *Huck Finn*, *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson and *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer. Jenna Bush named *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee and *The History of Love* by Nicole Kraus as some of her favorite books.

*Read All About It!* is available at major bookstores and the HarperCollins website: [#](http://www.harpercollins.com)

## THE CHRISTOPHER AWARDS FOR BEST CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The 59th annual Christopher Awards recognize films, broadcast TV and cable programs and books for both young people and adults that represent the power to make a positive influence on our world.

Several of the Christopher Award Winners were asked the following questions. We share their responses with you.

1. Who were your mentors in choosing a career in writing?
2. What are some of your favorite children's books?
3. What are you currently reading?
4. What is the greatest challenge in writing a children's book?

**CAROLINE COONEY:** Caroline B. Cooney was inspired to write *Diamonds In The Shadow* when her Connecticut church sponsored war refugee families. What makes this novel so touching is that it neither sensationalizes nor does it sugarcoat the experiences of the family that comes to America to find safety, carrying the burden of a dangerous secret. The story unfolds through alternating voices from two very different sets of youths—the American teens in a host family, and teens that are the African refugees.

**Mentors:** I had a wonderful sixth grade teacher. His name was Mr. Albert. All the girls wanted to grow up fast and marry him. All the boys wanted to be just like him. We did a lot of writing in that class. He would pass out covers of old New Yorker Magazines (detailed colorful cartoons) and you had to write a short story explaining the illustration. He would set a timer. Maybe you would have twelve minutes. He introduced us to history. He loved to draw with colored chalk on our blackboard, and I still remember the drawing of Mesopotamia, with the rivers of the Fertile Crescent, the Tigris and the Euphrates. He left me with a lifelong passion for writing and for ancient history, and I still set a timer, reminding myself for hard tasks that I can do anything for twelve minutes.

**Favorite Children's Books:** Now that my granddaughters are reading chapter books, I'm having fun locating the books I loved. I just sent them all the fantasies by Edgar Eager, wonderful time-travel books, where four children stumble into magic situations. The first is *Magic by the Lake*. I've always meant to have a house on a lake, in honor of this book. I did manage a house on a river, but it's not the same.

**Current Readings:** Right now, I'm travel-reading. In a few weeks, my concert choir (I'm a soprano; I know lots of soprano jokes) is going to Germany, and I'm reading histories of Germany. Next year, I'm going to Africa. So I have a big pile of fiction and nonfiction about Africa. But I also teach a Bible class, so I have a really big pile of books for that. We're going to do Joseph next, so we need to know about ancient slavery (Joseph is sold into slavery) and ancient prisons (Joseph is framed and sent to prison).

**Greatest Challenge:** Each book I write has a different challenge. The challenges are the best part. *Code Orange* is about the threat of smallpox, so the challenge was how to wedge in enough details about this horrific disease and its history in America without slowing down the excitement of the story. *Diamonds in the Shadow* is about two families coming together, so there are eight characters, and that's a lot of people to keep straight. The challenge was being sure the reader always knows who's who. I just finished a book (my first book out of 75) written in the present tense, and that's a huge challenge.

**MARGARET MCNAMARA:** The book that proves BIG things sometimes come in SMALL packages.

This is the lesson learned in Margaret McNamara's children's book, *How Many Seeds In A Pumpkin*, which provides an endearing reminder to children not to judge by appearances. At the same time, this beautifully illustrated and cleverly written storybook serves as a lesson in skip counting by 2's, 5's, and 10's.

**Mentors:** They were not so much living, breathing mentors as they were inspirations: Shakespeare, Milton, and the Bible. Keats and Yeats. Emily Dickinson. Jane Austen. Archibald Macleish. Schwartz & Wade. And my wonderful English teachers: Miss Hancock in 9th grade; and Professor Phyllis Manocchi and the late John Minzer and R. Mark Benbow at Colby College in Maine.

**Favorite children's books:** *The Runaway Bunny*, by Margaret Wise Brown and Clement Hurd. *Out of the Dust*, by Karen Hesse. *True Believer*, by Virginia Euwer Wolff. *Anything* by Hilary McKay. *In the Small, Small Pond*, by Denise Fleming. *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, by Arnold Lobel. *Knuffle Bunny, Too*, by Mo Willems.

**Current Readings:** *Moab Is My Washpot*, by Stephen Fry, which I picked up partly because of its absurd yet Biblical title and partly because I am devoted to Stephen Fry; *Spanking Shakespeare*, by Jake Wizner, because the first two pages are convulsively funny; and *Maakies with the Wrinkled Knees*, by Tony Millionaire.

**Greatest challenge:** Thinking it through is the hardest thing. Then making the writing clear and direct. And keeping it honest.

Other winners were Scott Menchin, writer/artist of *Taking a Bath with the Dog and Other Things that Make Me Happy*,

*The Wild Girls* is Pat Murphy's first children's novel. It takes place in the early 1970s, when twelve-year-old Joan's family moves from Connecticut to California, much to her dissatisfaction. In California, Joan meets an unusual friend named Sarah, who lives in the woods with her father. Bonded by their feelings of isolation and difficult family situations the girls start writing their own stories together, and end up winning first place in a student contest.#



## ALICE BELGRAY, CHAIR, BANK STREET BOOK COMMITTEE GIVES ANNUAL AWARDS

The Children's Book Committee at Bank Street College of Education recently honored these five books and authors.

**The 2008 Josette Frank Award**  
Fiction

This award is given each year to honor a book or books of outstanding literary merit in which children or young people deal in a positive and realistic way with difficulties in their world and

grow emotionally and morally. The prize to the author of the award books has been generously provided by The Florence L. Miller Memorial Fund.

*Home of the Brave* by Katherine Applegate, (Feiwel and Friends)

**The 2008 Flora Stieglitz Straus Award**  
Nonfiction

This award is given for a nonfiction book or

books that serves as an inspiration to young readers.

*Ballerina Dreams* by Lauren Thompson, photos by James Estrin, (Feiwel and Friends)

*Who Was First? Discovering the Americas* by Russell Freedman, (Clarion Books)

**The 2008 Claudia Lewis Award**  
Poetry

This award is given for the best poetry book or

books of the year for young readers.

*Here's a Little Poem: A Very First Book of Poetry* collected by Jane Yolen and Andrew Fusek Peters, illustrated by Polly Dunbar, (Candlewick Press)

*This Is Just to Say: Poems of Apology and Forgiveness* by Joyce Sidman, illustrated by Pamela Zagarenski, (Houghton Mifflin)

## INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY DAZZLES MANHATTAN

By EMILY SHERWOOD, Ph.D.

For those few skeptics who still question whether photography is an art form, one does not need to travel any further than Manhattan's International Center of Photography (ICP), a thriving museum, school and research center on the intersection of 43rd and Sixth Avenue, to answer a definitive "yes". Founded in 1974 by Life staff photographer Cornell Capa, brother of photojournalist Robert Capa who was killed by a landmine while covering the Vietnam War, ICP offers powerful testimony to photography's transformative role in contemporary culture, boasting a permanent collection of more than 100,000 photographs which reflect important historical and contemporary images as well as exhibitions of such household names as Annie Leibovitz and Man Ray.

Under the current stewardship of Willis (Buzz) Hartshorn, a photographer, curator and author who took over the directorship in 1994, ICP has grown into one of the most extensive and best-equipped schools of photography in the country. "People have recognized that one of the great strengths of photography is that it is completely democratic. Nobody who goes into the Met and sees a sculpture by Rodin or a painting by Cezanne says, 'I can do that.' But when we go to a photography exhibition or see pictures in a magazine, we realize that we all have cameras, and we all can make pictures," explains Hartshorn. So while the age-old question of whether photography is an art form has long since been answered affirmatively, Hartshorn believes that there has been a shift in his field to visual literacy: "The most important question that needs to be asked now is, how do pictures create meaning, and how do we understand what it is that we're looking at? How do we use pictures to communicate ourselves, and how do we receive pictures for communication and for learning?" he elaborates. As a case in point, Hartshorn points out that photojournalism has created powerful images that have become iconic, haunting metaphors of our time: still photographs portraying the terrorism of 9/11 or detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib dramatically evoke feelings in the viewer akin to those felt by the reader of poetry.

In part because technology has made photog-

raphy a democratic art form, ICP's school has skyrocketed in popularity, now serving more than 5,000 adult learners each year ranging from amateurs seeking to brush up on their Photo Shop skills to more sophisticated students of light, color and imagery. For college students, the school offers two-year certificate programs in either general studies or documentary photography and photojournalism, along with a two-year joint graduate program with Bard leading to a master of fine arts degree. Many surrounding colleges such as NYU and Barnard allow their degree students to take courses at ICP for credit. And a rapidly growing Teen Academy offers after-school courses for some 250 children in all boroughs of the city, some of them supported by full scholarships. "We're trying to build a sense of community with these kids and to help them with their self-esteem," explains Hartshorn. "And we're trying to build visual literacy. Some of these kids really get hooked and they want to get involved at another level." For these dedicated students, ICP has developed an internship program whereby they work as mentors with the younger teens. Last year, ten such interns went on to study photography with full scholarships in college, thanks to extensive behind-the-scenes support from ICP. "We teach them how to create their resumes, how to interview, how to dress properly, how to act socially...It's a very layered process," adds Hartshorn.

While photography is still a young art compared with the centuries of Great Masters, it is clear that Hartshorn and ICP are fast changing that landscape for new generations of museum-goers who will increasingly find stirring international imagery by photojournalists like James Nachtwey and Sebastiao Salgado down the hall from traditional pictures by Monet and Cezanne. Nachtwey, who has traveled from Afghanistan to Rwanda to bare the truth of war and pillage, has risen to national prominence because of his uncanny ability to bring about social change through the lens of his camera, and it is this artistic but brutal candor that makes his artistry so unforgettable. Nachtwey's own words speak volumes: "I have been a witness, and these pictures are my testimony. The events I have recorded should not be forgotten and must not be repeated."#



**Polar Bear**

Photograph by David Rhodes, Pres., School of Visual Arts



**Baha'i Gardens, Haifa**

Photograph by Baruch Young, M.D.



**Grand Central**

Photograph by Marcus Reidenberg, M.D.



**Storm King Scene**

Photograph by Herman Rosen, M.D.



**Hibiscus**

Photograph by Adam Sugerman, Pres., Palmiche Press



## Hunter College Offers Free Summer Program for 7th – 12th Graders to Learn Chinese Language & Culture

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\* Fun activities such as calligraphy, field trips, skits, games, pop songs will be integrated into

language learning.

\* Students will be assigned a language partner in Beijing to conduct a language and culture project in each other's target language to increase mutual understanding via the online virtual community.

\* 11th and 12th graders can earn 3 to 6 college credits.#

More information is available at: <http://hunter.cuny.edu/classics/chinese>, e-mail [Chinesesummer@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:Chinesesummer@hunter.cuny.edu) or call 212-772-4965.#

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## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S SEAT



### TEACHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

By DR. CAROLE G. HANKIN

All children deserve the opportunity to excel to their fullest potential. Advances made in the field of special education during the past thirty years make this a well-founded statement so all children can excel. Special education services affect students with a broad range of disabilities and create the framework from which meaningful school experiences happen for every student.

Every child can learn. I believe that. In our school district and many across the country, children with learning disabilities and children who are physically challenged are achieving at unprecedented levels. And the majority of these students are doing so within the regular classroom, alongside students without special learning needs.

We did not always live in a society that was aware of disabled children and how to assist

them. In the early 1900s children with disabilities were not given the same opportunities as children without disabilities. In 1975, Congress passed landmark legislation named the Education for All Handicapped Children Act requiring schools to provide students with disabilities an appropriate education.

As families became more cognizant of the services children with special needs were entitled to, schools, parents and students began working together to create positive educational experiences. Students with special needs flourished!

If a parent or teacher has any concern that a child may have a disability, they should be referred to the appropriate committee.

Educating children with learning or physical challenges alongside their non-disabled peers fosters an understanding and acceptance among both groups, which I believe better prepares all our children for the world beyond school.#

*Dr. Carole G. Hankin is the Superintendent of Schools, Syosset Central School District.*

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## VIOLENCE IN THE WORLD

## Columbia Law School Seeks Solutions to Violence on Campus

In an effort to further the dialogue on a topic that has been sweeping across school campuses, the Program in Health, Law, and Society of Columbia Law School recently hosted an interdisciplinary conference, "Violence on Campus: Prediction, Prevention, and Response". The conference addressed the complex issue of violence on university and college campuses from psychological and legal perspectives to promote the sharing of ideas on practical approaches to the prevention of violence and reduction of liability risk. Scholars, researchers, and policy makers from various fields led the discussions. Invited to the conference were school administrators, counseling center directors and staff, off-campus clinicians, educators in mental health, law, and policy, and students.

The days are gone when reports of campus violence could be dismissed as isolated incidents that bear no effect on other universities and colleges. It is becoming increasingly common for educators to take part in meetings about school violence. "This is the second meeting I've been to about this topic and it reinforces the importance of doing the right thing," commented a clinical counselor who asked that her name be withheld.

Having to know the right thing to do in a situation that is complicated by safety concerns, the fear of liability and other legal issues leaves many educators feeling as if their hands are tied. A particularly thorny topic is interpreting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a law that protects the privacy of student educa-



**Dr. Richard Eichler**

tion records and also gives parents certain rights in regard to their children's records. School administrators and clinicians have criticized the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services for not providing clear guidelines on how much personal information can be shared with a third party under FERPA. Not knowing the answer makes it difficult for schools to implement emergency mental health policies.

In a discussion on legal issues, Anne Hubbard, JD, Professor of Law at the University of Cincinnati bemoaned what she described as "a FERPA phobia." "There is a distorted view of what can be accomplished under FERPA. It is not as restrictive as it is being read," she stated. In determining what can be done legally, Hubbard suggested developing a list of ideas before approaching a lawyer. "Don't ask the lawyer to develop a plan for you, figure out what you want to do first."

Richard Eichler, Ph.D. Director of Psychological Counseling Services at Columbia University emphasized the importance of communication and reaching out to the community. He also stressed the need for accessible counseling centers but warned against developing an overly professional atmosphere. "Nothing can substitute a caring community. Sometimes one needs to remember to just be a person."

Other areas that were analyzed include the prediction of violence, understanding and preventing campus suicide, and the media coverage of campus violence.#

## Mayors Against Illegal Guns Coalition: Working Together to Make Our Country Safer

By MAYOR MICHAEL BLOOMBERG

April 16 marked the one-year anniversary of the Virginia Tech shootings, the terrible day when one student killed 32 people and then himself. The pain and shock of that tragedy echoed throughout our entire nation. But the saddest truth is, across the country about 34 Americans are murdered with guns every single day—and most of those guns were purchased illegally. Illegal guns are raising the level of violence in our cities, and more and more Americans are starting to ask: Why is it so easy for criminals to get their hands on guns? That's certainly not what our forefathers had in mind when they drafted the Second Amendment.

Despite these grim realities, we have reason to feel hope. The Mayors Against Illegal Guns coalition that I founded with Boston Mayor Tom Menino two years ago is gaining momentum. Our membership has expanded to include more than 320 mayors who represent more than 55 million Americans. Recently, we met in Washington D.C. for our second national summit. It was a productive conference, capped by a groundbreaking agreement with Wal-Mart, the largest seller of firearms in the nation.

Wal-Mart has joined with our coalition of mayors to create "The Responsible Firearms Retailer Partnership": a 10-point code to help ensure that guns don't fall into the wrong hands. This pioneering set of guidelines includes running background checks for employees to make sure that the people selling guns aren't criminals... videotaping sales to deter illegal purchases... and creating logs to alert salespeople of customers with suspicious sales histories. As the biggest private employer in the world and the biggest

gun-seller in America, Wal-Mart has set a new standard for gun retailers across the country. We want all law-abiding citizens who purchase guns to ask: Does this dealer follow the responsible firearm standard? And if not, why not?

Although we still have a ways to go in the fight against illegal guns, this agreement was a big win for safe streets and for our democracy. It showed that we don't have to wait for Congress to act to effect real change. In the absence of national leadership, private businesses are teaming up with local law enforcement to give the American people what we want: stronger protections... safer streets... and the freedom to send our kids off to school without fearing for their security.

This is my vision for cities like New York. It's one shared by many Americans—and I hope by our three presidential candidates, too. Recently we unveiled a TV commercial—now airing nationwide—that features past statements from all three candidates in support of closing the "gun show loophole." This loophole allows people to sell guns at shows without performing background checks. The candidates all say they want to close the loophole—and you can see that for yourselves by watching the commercial on our website at [www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org](http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org).

Now we need our leaders to back up their words with actions, because the gun show sales are just part of the problem. We also need a law that prohibits anyone on the terrorist watch list from purchasing a gun. This should be a no-brainer! But in Washington, it isn't. That's why in the weeks and months ahead our coalition will continue pushing Congress to act.

As New Yorkers, even though we live in the

## School Days Filled With Violence

By DR. POLA ROSEN

School is difficult enough with academic and social challenges. In far too many cases, bullying wreaks havoc on a school child's psyche. In the case of some students, there is another source of fear and dread. Imagine what it would be like to live with explosives landing indiscriminately at home, in school, and all over the surrounding area? How can students study, take exams, go outside, and have a sense of normalcy when one minute, they are performing their daily activities and the next moment, a siren shrills to take cover in a shelter waiting for a dreaded explosion and a feeling of the ground shaking beneath their feet? How do they plan for a future that may never happen because they might not survive? How would they feel about losing friends or family?

Those answers were shared with me by a small group of students who long for peace and protection but are besieged by violence day and night. They are visiting New York from Sderot, a small town in Israel on the Gaza border, their trip paid for by Dr. Charlotte Frank, Senior VP, McGraw-Hill and Chair of the AIFL Executive Committee, who is committed to helping others and making a difference in students' lives. These students are teenagers attending Sha'ar HaNegev High School or Sapir College with dreams of studying psychology, cinema, communications or film making. They are the America Israel Friendship League ([www.aifl.org](http://www.aifl.org)) Youth Ambassadors, Dr. Charlotte K. Frank Fellows.

Elan states, "some kids run, others don't because we're so used to hearing rockets. One day, rockets fell in the schoolyard and all the windows were shaking. Three teachers were wounded."

Hanna lives in a kibbutz nearby and told about the 20 missiles that fell there one day. "A rocket fell a few feet behind my father. One minute I have a father; another minute I may not."

Yamit said that "rockets fell many times in her neighborhood. Two babies were killed. I was in the yard with my little brother when it happened."

"Who plans and sends these Qassam rockets filled with explosives?" I asked. The students immediately responded "Hamas." The missiles can fly up to 10 kilometers and have no navigation system. The people who launch Qassams fire them indiscriminately, disregarding the civilian population.

Ariel, who worked as a photographer, had to run with children to a shelter. The attacks are getting more frequent, about 30-40 per day. Red alerts are

safest big city in the nation, we understand the tragic consequences of gun violence. We shared the grief felt by the Virginia Tech community last year, and they'll be in our prayers again this weekend, during what is a very sacred time for our city. Tens of thousands of New Yorkers gathered in Yankee Stadium for an historic mass



**Jacqueline Duenias, Teacher**



**Yamit Cohen, student, Sapir College**



**Elan Siegel, Sha'ar HaNegev HS**



**Hanna Dana Gat, Sha'ar HaNegev HS**



**Ariel Tamir, student, Sapir College**

called so many times a day and are so exhaustively covered by the media that they have become mundane. The government and people in other parts of Israel barely show concern. Ariel would like to move, but his family lives there. "I don't feel safe because there aren't enough shelters," he says sadly.

Their teacher, Jacqueline who has accompanied them from Israel to share their stories with the American people, says staunchly, "I will not move. We send all our children to the army; the role of the army is to protect us. The army is failing to do that in Sderot."

One important question is why there aren't enough shelters in Sderot. Fomer Ambassador from Israel to Turkey, Uri Bar-Ner who attended our gathering stated that it is the responsibility of the government to build shelters. "In the Golan Heights we had shelters. There is enough money and we must continue to remind the government that we need shelters."

Hanna and Elan will not move away despite the daily barrage. "This danger bonds us to the community; we have to go through this together."

All the students expressed their strong desire for peace. "But since we don't have it," they said, "we must have shelters."

"Our education is being disrupted. Our relatives don't come to visit because they are afraid. For two months last year, we didn't go to school. We didn't have math so this year we doubled up."

What recourse do these students have? What would you do if you were living there? What advice would you give them? Stefan, a student at Lehman High School in the Bronx who hosted the delegation from Sderot, was on the phone with them when they returned home. A red alert went off and he heard them screaming and running. "I really hope that there is something we can do about this. I know, me being one person is rather insignificant but if there is anyway I can help the situation please let me know."

In addition to visiting Lehman High School, the AIFL/Dr. Charlotte K. Frank Fellows saw the highlights of NYC including a visit and chat with City Council members, the UN, the Statue of Liberty, Central Park and then on to the Philadelphia Liberty Bell.

The program sponsored by AIFL and Dr. Frank reminds me of something anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "It only takes a few committed individuals to change society."#

led by Pope Benedict. At the same time, nearly two million Jewish New Yorkers observed the festival of Passover. This was a perfect occasion to celebrate our religious freedoms, count our blessings, and rededicate ourselves to making New York an even better, safer, and more tolerant city.#



## Gail Noppe-Brandon: The Art & Power of Successful Student Communication

By MARISA SUESCUN

There are moments in *Listening With Their Eyes*—a documentary about 11 teenagers who participate in a 10-week communication workshop with educator Gail Noppe-Brandon—that quietly break your heart, revealing a potential in young people both enormous and untapped. One is when Natasha—who almost quits the program when presented with the challenge of reading through a monologue she would eventually need to memorize—comes back to the next class and performs the first paragraph cleanly. Her smile upon achieving that success is beautiful, proud, tentatively amazed even. Natasha goes on to complete the program, ultimately writing her own two-person play, and performing in another student's play.

*Listening With Their Eyes*, which screened recently to a standing-room only audience of about 75 at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, documented the progress of the class, with a focus on a handful of student's stories. Interspersed between the footage of the workshop are screens revealing startling education-related facts, such as, "Only 30% of NYC 8th graders are proficient in writing" and "50% of NYC students drop out of high school."

Periodically Noppe-Brandon, also the film's director, comments on her educational approach in voiceover. Like Noppe-Brandon herself, who introduces herself to her students as one who "listens with her eyes," the camera lingers attentively on the students, primarily in close-ups, capturing their responses to each other, to Noppe-Brandon's instruction, and to their own self-revelation.

Noppe-Brandon first developed Find Your Voice, her experiential approach to education—in which she has trained hundreds of NYC teachers—around 20 years ago, when she taught a freshman English class while in graduate school for English and Writing at NYU. The students she was teaching, placed in a program called the General Studies division, were "very bright and in some way had underachieved in high school or earlier," Noppe-Brandon said. "Most did not enjoy reading or writing; they disengaged from that process."

Noppe-Brandon took a creative approach, helping them learn the formal skills of reading and written communication through a "user-friendly" approach. The first exercise involved students looking at an Andrew Wyeth painting of an empty room, done from the perspective on one

looking out the window with curtains blowing. She asked her students to write about what was happening or about to happen in that moment. "They didn't want to stop," she said.

From there, Noppe-Brandon, who at the time was also coaching actors and directing plays, developed an approach that ultimately formally incorporated acting and playwrighting.

J.B. Liu and Natasha Toloram reflected on how their 10-week experience in Find Your Voice impacted them.

"At that time, I couldn't speak well in English," said Liu, who is from the Dominican Republic. He still uses the exercises Noppe-Brandon introduced him to that allowed him to manage stress and communicate more clearly.

"Gail was pushing us, demanding a lot," said Liu, who is at Brooklyn College studying to be a math teacher. "She had high standards and high expectations; she was also encouraging, and that gave me a lot of motivation."

"The transformation you can see in the film from the beginning to the end, in such a short time is really powerful," said Susan Petersmeyer, a board member of the Petersmeyer Family Foundation, which helped underwrite the film. "Other teachers can see it and think that they can do this."

Noppe-Brandon, a mother of two young children, hopes the film will help educators see not what can be done in just 60 workshop hours, but what could be done if this coaching approach were used with students from an early age. "This is not an elixir—it isn't take this and you'll be fine in the morning," she said. "This is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that needs to come in much sooner than the tail end of high school."

Though she still works directly with students of all ages, Noppe-Brandon's focus is now on teacher training. She wrote a book about the methodology, *Find Your Voice*, (Heinemann Press) in 2004, a methodology manual of sorts for teachers. Her upcoming teacher training workshops include an intensive week-long training in July at NYU, in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education (see [www.findyourvoice.us](http://www.findyourvoice.us) for information). She is working to affect the system from the top, and have the change trickle down through the entire system.

"The cure is not remediation," she said. "The cure is to educate them properly right at the beginning."#

## Memorial Sloan-Kettering's Department of Radiology Celebrates 5th Annual Radiology High School Program

By ALBERTO CEPEDA

The Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center's Department of Radiology hosted the fifth annual "Radiology: Giving Back to New York", high school program. The event took place at the Rockefeller Research Laboratories in midtown Manhattan in affiliation with the New York City Department of Education and the New York Roentgen Society.

The event allows dozens of New York City public high school students to be exposed to different careers in the field of radiology. It also allows them to experience hands on workshops and hear lectures from several professionals in the field of radiology. In order to be invited to the event, students had to take part in an essay contest in which they had to answer the topic, "Why does the radiology field interest you and how do you see yourself helping patients?"

Dr. Hedvig Hricak, Chairman, Department of Radiology at MSKCC and Florence Jackson, Advisory Council for Careers & Technical Education, New York City Department of Education praised the staff at MSKCC stating, "Their faith and determination allow our students exposure to careers in this field which is just amazing."

Dr. Robert Novelline, Professor of Radiology, Harvard Medical School then explained to the students the origins of radiology. He presented a short movie showing the various diagnostic imaging techniques used by radiologist such



(L-R) Dr. Hedvig Hricak & Florence Jackson

as a Fluoroscopy, CT Scan, Angiography and a MR Scan. The movie also explained the education and training needed for different careers in Radiology.

Following Dr. Novelline's presentation, students took part in an ultrasound workshop. Three different workstations were set up with medical sonographic instrument and an ultrasound technician was on hand to demonstrate to the students how

to use the equipment and answer any questions they had about the profession. The students were allowed to perform an ultrasonography on a turkey breast using ultrasound transmission gel and a linear array transducer.

The event culminated with the award presentation with Dr. Hricak and Ms. Jackson announcing the winners of the of the essay contest.

Illan Osei from the Bronx High School for Medical Science and Scott Christensen from Tottenville High School received the second and third prize respectively; the first place winner was Nanayaa Serwaa from Far Rockaway High School who, in her acceptance speech stated, "First of all I want to thank God and all my teachers for making this award possible. I couldn't have done this without them."

Every student who participated in the event was a winner. It was an opportunity for them to meet and interact with different professionals in the field of radiology and opened their options to careers in radiology.#



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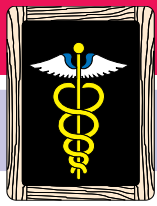
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# MEDICAL UPDATE



New York City • May 2008  
FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS & STUDENTS

• 15

EDUCATION UPDATE IS PROUD TO WELCOME THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL TO THE PAGES OF OUR NEWSPAPER

## U.S. SURGEON GENERAL'S PERSPECTIVES

### Childhood Overweight And Obesity Prevention

By **RADM STEVEN K. GALSON, MD, MPH**

Our children are our future; let's help make their future healthy through efforts to prevent overweight and obesity. Between 1980 and 2002, the number of overweight children has tripled in the United States, making this a very serious public health epidemic. Data show that 13% of our nation's 2- to 5-year olds and 18% of 6- to 11-year olds were overweight in 2003-2004, and the prevalence of overweight adolescents aged 12-19 years increased from 5% in 1980 to 17% in 2004. This trend is alarming because overweight children are at increased risk for multiple health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. Equally disturbing health risks for overweight children include poor self-esteem and depression due to social discrimination. Because of this rising prevalence of overweight children, it is imperative that we promote a healthy lifestyle change for our youth.

The increase in childhood obesity is partly attributable to an increasingly sedentary lifestyle and poor nutrition. Sedentary behaviors such as television viewing, computer use, and video game playing often replace vigorous physical activity in children. At the same time, more fast foods, convenience store snacks, and sweetened beverages are available now than in past generations. Our youth's lack of physical activity and poor eating choices need to be addressed by everyone so that we can combat this major public health dilemma.

There are many ways parents, teachers, and community leaders can get involved to mitigate this epidemic and prevent childhood obesity. First and foremost, we need to make sure that an adequate amount of physical activity is introduced into a child's everyday life, with at least 60 minutes of physical activity recommended per day as well as 30 minutes of vigorous activity three times per week. Parents, other caregivers, and community members can impact the physical activity tendencies of children in a positive way by promoting outdoor family activities that

meet these recommendations, as well as limiting the amount of time children spend in front of the television or computer, or playing video games. Teachers can also play an important role in encouraging children to be physically active by incorporating health-oriented messages into their lesson plans. Increasing the amount of physical activity at school each day can lay the foundation for children to have a positive view on physical fitness.

It is also vital to make sure children maintain healthful eating patterns. Parents should refer to nutritional food labels to help select foods that are low in calories and saturated fat. It is also important to limit the intake of sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, sports drinks, and fruit juices, whose consumption has skyrocketed during the same time period that obesity has spiraled out of control. We must encourage children to limit the size of the meals they eat and include at least five servings of fruits and vegetables in their diet each day. Furthermore, school administrators and teachers should establish a plan to increase the nutritional value of school meals and limit the number of nutritionally inferior food choices that tempt children. By putting forth a conscious effort to evaluate the food our children are presented with at school each day, we will favorably impact child health.

As part of this renewed focus on prevention of childhood overweight and obesity, Michael O. Leavitt, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, has asked me to chair a council of senior leaders across the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to identify and assess evidence-based programs for local communities that demonstrate promise in combating this serious health crisis. The Childhood Overweight and Obesity Prevention Council will focus on bringing the many different DHHS programs together to engage in an effective collaborative effort. The council will identify ways for the numerous DHHS programs to exchange ideas about how to more effectively address childhood obesity. Some of the programs include

the President's Council for Physical Fitness and Sports, which encourages all Americans to be physically active in their everyday lives, and the Food and Drug Administration's program, Using the Nutrition Fact Label to Make Healthy Food Choices—Spot the Block, Get Your Food Facts First—which helps children identify nutrition fact labels on food to help them make healthful food choices. Using the integration of these programs and advice garnered through the new council, I hope that all Americans will work together to reduce the prevalence of overweight children in the U.S. To learn more about DHHS childhood obesity prevention programs and what you can do, please visit <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/obesityprevention.html>.

As parents, caregivers, teachers, mentors, public health leaders, and other concerned citizens, it is our responsibility to take immediate action to mitigate this serious and growing public health epidemic. We can and must work collaboratively, using available science and evidence of effective



Acting Surgeon General Steven Galson

programs to ensure that our children receive encouragement and guidance to make healthful choices for physical activity and good nutrition. Optimally, we act as role models, with our own health behaviors promoting a healthful lifestyle by example. This will result in a public health movement that will not only help reduce the burden of childhood overweight and obesity, but also lessen the occurrence of other chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. #

### Sandip Kapur Appointed Chief of Transplant Surgery at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell

A leading pioneer of advanced techniques in transplantation surgery, Dr. Sandip Kapur has been appointed chief of the Division of Transplantation Surgery at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell and its medical partner The Rogosin Institute have nearly tripled the annual number of transplants performed over the last two and half years, with a total of 210 performed in 2007. This feat was made possible through advances like kidney swaps and blood type-incompatible procedures that have revolutionized live-organ-donor transplantations. According to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), New York-Presbyterian Hospital has the largest transplantation program in the United States, including the highest volume of kidney and heart transplants.

Currently, Dr. Kapur, along with Dr. Manikkam Suthanthiran, is co-leading the first-ever clinical

trial of a novel molecular test that can help predict organ rejection and may eventually free organ recipients from having to take the drugs for the rest of their lives.

Recently, he helped lead one of the first successful "kidney chain" or NEAD (never-ending altruistic donor) kidney transplant procedures. A California woman donated her kidney to a stranger in New York City, resulting in life-saving kidney transplantations for three patients. Going forward, the innovative arrangement will potentially benefit hundreds of the 70,000 kidney patients on the national transplantation waiting list.

"An immensely talented surgeon, inspirational leader and teacher, Dr. Kapur is uniquely qualified to be chief of transplantation surgery. We look forward to continued innovation in our transplant program," says Dr. Fabrizio Michelassi, surgeon-in-chief at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center.#

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## UNA-USA Helps Today's Student Become Tomorrow's Global Citizen

By JUDITH AQUINO

On a recent Saturday morning, over 1,000 students gave up their regular weekend activities to emulate United Nations delegates. Hailing from 56 schools from various U.S. states, as well as Ghana, Italy, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates, they gathered at the United Nations to participate in the New York City Middle School Model UN Conference. Their mission: to represent a foreign country and debate topics such as global warming, the eradication of poverty, the illicit trade of light weapons, and other pressing global issues.

Sponsored by the United Nations Association of the USA, in partnership with Merrill Lynch, the Middle School Model UN Conference is unique as the largest international conference of its kind. Its purpose is to engage students in knowledge- and skill-building exercises that will foster their development as informed, global citizens. "It's not just about the UN, it's about communication and being able to tackle issues from another perspective," explained Amy E. Ruggiero, Global Classrooms® Manager of External Relations in describing the benefits of the program.

Prior to attending the Model UN conference, students spend months researching their assigned country and learning about their country's stance on an issue. Teachers praise the conference for its emphasis on problem-solving, analytical thinking, and social studies. "One of my students is very passionate about the environment and when he represented the Czech Republic, he had a hard time defending his country's viewpoint that environmental issues are a myth. This is a great program because it challenges kids to consider other views and put themselves in someone else's

shoes," said Kim Kay Holt, Founder and Co-Director of Arlington Enrichment Collaborative, a middle school in Massachusetts.

As social studies classes take a backseat to standardized tests, oftentimes students and teachers must meet after school to take advantage of the Global Classrooms® curriculum. Needless to say, it also requires dedication to overcome the challenges of meeting outside of regular school hours. "I have no problems raising funds, but having the time to teach after school is not easy," commented Mary Susan Heath, a language arts teacher from Eastern Wayne Middle School in New Jersey.

Despite the obstacles to forming a class, more schools continue to take part in the conference, which has grown from about 200 student participants in its first year to over 1,000 students. "It is becoming more like a movement each year," noted Liza Rojas-Alford, Global Classrooms National Manager. "It is important that we reach out to students who aren't exposed to ideas outside of their towns or what their parents say and give them an opportunity to think for themselves."

Convincing middle school students to grapple with global issues may seem overly ambitious, but students are eager to reap the benefits of Global Classrooms®. "Now I can talk about things that my parents are talking about," explained Ian Freed, an eighth grader from the World Journalism Preparatory School in New York City who represented Thailand in a debate on Malaria, TB, and Infections Diseases. "The more research we do, the more we want to know how we can help," added Alexandra Karras, who is also an eighth grader from World Journalism Preparatory School.

## Great Principals Make a Difference at Teachers College

By SYBIL MAIMIN

They are the crème de la crème—24 principals of public schools in New York City who have been chosen for the prestigious Cahn Fellows Program because of outstanding job performances. Many of the Fellows have turned failing schools around, established successful new schools, or created exciting, innovative programs. Cahn Fellows continue to work as principals but, during a fifteen-month period, come together for leadership enrichment sessions with faculty at Teachers College (TC) at Columbia University, overseer of the initiative. Drawing upon their experiences, participants teach and learn from each other, sharing best practices and mentoring incoming principals (known as "allies"). During the year, they each identify and take on a "challenge project," a difficult problem in their school that needs fixing, and discuss the results at a public forum attended by Fellows as well as interested education practitioners and policy makers. A key feature of the program, a summer institute, provides unique learning and bonding opportunities. In addition to intensive sessions at TC, Fellows learn about various approaches to leadership from speakers on specially designed field trips, this year to Philadelphia and Gettysburg National Military Park. Last year's cohort visited West Point and brought back advice about leadership and discipline from high-ranking army officers.

At a recent welcome reception for this year's Fellows, members of the Cahn class of 2007 offered congratulations, advice, and encouragement. Shimon Waronker, a Spanish-speaking, Lubavitch Hasidic ultra-Orthodox Jew, seemingly a poor match for the job, dramatically changed the academic performance and culture of one of the twelve most violent schools in the city, Middle

School 22 in the Bronx. He had enthusiastic praise for the Cahn initiative. "You can have an impact," he exclaimed. "This is a very powerful program and a tremendous opportunity." A colleague in 2007, Mary McDonald, reported Waronker trained her in a much-needed time management system for her office that allowed her more time with students. She spoke of the optimistic spirit that defines the program. "I feel renewed and re-energized every time I come back from a Cahn session." Bill Moore, 2007, found networking to be "The nicest part of my cohort...everybody was willing to share their best stuff." Jay Heubert of TC, an advisor to the group, explained that he "deeply respects and values the experience and wisdom of the principals" and sees his role as supporting them and helping them bring their schools to "the next level." Echoing those sentiments, Carmen Farina, former deputy chancellor, applauded the talent in the group and advised, "I hope you take advantage of each other as resources."

The 24 principals in the 2008 Cahn class bring a wide range of histories and accomplishments to their jobs. Sheldon Bernardo, a professional crossword puzzle constructor, is leading the school he once attended. Donna Finn, who was educated as an artist, helped found the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, which she heads. Nick Marinacci began with Teach for America. Fred Walsh worked as an actor before coming to the School for International Studies, which has been removed, from the SURR and the SINI lists under his leadership. James Waslawski taught bee keeping in the Central African Republic as a Peace Corps volunteer prior to teaching in the States. Eight of the Fellows were part of the first class of the New York City

*continued on page 6*

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## City College Awards Honorary Doctorate to Elie Wiesel

By SYBIL MAIMIN

"We must fight hatred or it wins," warned Elie Wiesel, the conscience of the Holocaust, after being awarded the honorary degree Doctor of Letters in the magnificent Great Hall at City College. Speaking about "Confronting Fanaticism: Building Moral Unity in a Diverse Society," he described today's fanaticism as "a perversion of religion" that offers the "luxury of never asking questions" because it claims to know all the answers. He recalled the hope, after World War II, of "Never Again," and the disappointment he feels so many years later knowing that human beings are still capable of unspeakable cruelty, and that poverty, misery, violence, and disease are rampant. "We are all threatened," he warned, as the racial fanaticism exemplified by the Nazis is replaced by religious fanaticism. "What do we do about it? What must we do?" he asked. "Are we to give up on humanity?" Recalling his harrowing experiences in the concentration camps during the war, he advised, "Even on the edge of the abyss, it is possible to have hope." We must choose between perpetual warfare between adults and the right of children to grow up without fear. We must fight hatred with education, recognizing it may take many years for lessons to bear fruit.

Born in Rumania, Wiesel was deported to Auschwitz at age fifteen, taking in his bag a shirt and a Torah (the sacred book of Jewish law and tradition). Commenting on how he went on



despite his experiences, he confessed that in France after the war, "I studied and studied and studied. This passion for study saved my sanity." He went to refugee camps "collecting tears and tales...I didn't understand a word they were saying but I understood every word." He believes whatever happened in the past remains in the present and we can "do something" with memories. Saying he believes in language even though it is sometimes corrupted and poisoned, Wiesel maintained, "We decide whether to turn words into arrows or peace offerings." He repeated his oft-said observation, "The opposite of love is not hate but indifference...The opposite of life is not death but indifference to life."

Elie Wiesel has won the Nobel Peace Prize (1986), the United States Congressional Gold Medal (1985), and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1992). He has established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity to advance the cause of human rights and peace throughout the world. Currently, he is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University. Wiesel taught at City College in the 1970's and has "very good memories" of his time there. Appropriately, following his address an announcement was made of a gift of \$10 million from alumnus and television writer/producer Michael Ross to establish a Center for Jewish Studies and a Chair in Hebrew and Yiddish at City College.#

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## Russia's New President, Dr. Dmitry Medvedev Speaks at Moscow State U.

By DOROTHY DAVIS

Some predictions are easy. By the time you read this, unless something wildly unexpected occurs Dr. Dmitry Medvedev (pron. Myed-vyed-yev) who was Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of Gazprom, the huge State run natural gas monopoly and President Vladimir Putin's chosen successor, will have been elected President of Russia on March 2, 2008 with about 80% of the vote. During his "campaign" he won't have debated the other candidates—the three weak ones the State let run after barring former PM Mikhail Kasyanov, the State controlled media will have carried only positive stories about him, and outside election observers will have been restricted. Putin is very popular, however, because he brought stability and greater prosperity after the severe economic hardships of Glasnost and Perestroika, so even in a free election Medvedev would have been a shoo-in.

The 42-year old Medvedev seems different from Putin even though he's been on the former KGB agent's team for 17 years. An able administrator, he's a mild-mannered moderate with a Ph.D. in private law from Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) State University. From a family of educators—his father an engineering professor, his mother a language instructor and later a museum guide—he was an assistant professor at his alma mater for 9 years, and authored textbooks. He's married to his childhood sweetheart, has an 11-year old son. Distancing himself from the former KGB agents in Putin's office, he's worked on nation-



al projects affecting average citizens—improvements in agriculture, health, housing, education—especially pre-school, and on efforts to help foster families and increase the birthrate. A hard rock fan, he doesn't like labels or ideology, belongs to no political party. Recently he pledged to continue Russia's economic renewal and also institute

social reforms. He considers himself a democrat, saying "no non-democratic state has ever become truly prosperous, for one simple reason: freedom is better than non-freedom."

What will Medvedev's presidency be like? Will Putin, whom he'll appoint to the lesser post of Prime Minister, who will probably also become Gazprom chairman, actually be the one in charge? Will there be a continuation of "The New Cold War" (see Canadian journalist Mark MacKinnon's fascinating book by this title). Yes, according to most observers. But will Medvedev make Russia freer and implement reforms, and could he rival Putin in 2012 when Putin can legally run for President again? The only easy prediction about what's next for Russia is—it will be interesting to watch. Once again Kremlinologists are needed to read the Russian chai leaves.

On January 25, 2008, St. Tatiana's Day, the holiday for Russian students, future President Medvedev—handsome, impeccably dressed, serious, with a commanding stride and presence—gave a brief opening address to an invitation only university audience at Moscow State, Russia's pre-eminent university. *Education Update* was there.#

## NYU Child Study

*continued from page 9*

decisions about whether or not to be involved in sexual activity is difficult, but helps them make comfortable, informed choices that stand up to peer pressure or the pressure of strong sexual urges. If your children are considering being sexually active, the discussions should include a check on their knowledge of safe sex practices.

Have frequent, brief talks with your kids about avoiding substance use during times of celebration. Make sure they are familiar with the effect of substances on their coordination, their thinking, and their judgment. Help them understand how rapidly they can get stumbling drunk or high if they have had no previous exposure. And, make sure that they do not accept rides from people under the influence. Over 65% of teens say that they have ridden with a driver that they know had been drinking or using drugs. Motor vehicle accidents, drowning, fights, and unwanted or unsafe sex usually double in frequency when kids are under the influence.

Supply transportation to parties. Teens have a really hard time being the designated driver when everyone else is partaking of substances. A trusted and responsible adult or a professional driver or bus may be the best way to go. However, make sure that the teens know that having a hired driver does not give them license to use substances.

Do not supply the substances. Some parents may think that it is safer to make sure that they control the party and supply alcohol and, sometimes, even drugs to kids while they supervise the activities. However, teens and substances are not a good mix because substances are not handled very well by the adolescent brain. Teens get drunk and high much more quickly than adults.

Consider your teen's risk for substance use. For example, children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and other impulse control problems are especially prone to temptation and use. Anxious kids who experience some distress in social situations may be tempted to use substances to feel more comfortable.

Of course, everyone should strive to have fun

during this time of year. Parents need to keep informed of important risks. Taking a relatively short amount of time to talk to your teens to provide advice, listen to questions, and give guidance on what actions are expected can make certain that these celebrations are full of joy. Follow this advice and you will find your summer more enjoyable.#

*This monthly column provides educators, parents, and families with important information about child and adolescent mental health issues. Please submit questions for ASK THE EXPERT to Glenn S. Hirsch, M.D., Medical Director at NYU Child Study Center, at [glenn.hirsch@nyumc.org](mailto:glenn.hirsch@nyumc.org). For more information about NYU Child Study Center, visit [www.AboutOurKids.org](http://www.AboutOurKids.org) or call (212) 263-6622.*

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## WHO ARE OUR CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS & WHAT DO THEY DO?

### City Council Education Chair Jackson Critiques Current System

By SYBIL MAIMIN

Robert Jackson, New York City Council member since 2001 and chair of its Committee on Education, is not happy with the current education picture in New York City. As *Education Update* sat in his uptown office Jackson shared his frank opinions. "Since the state legislature gave the mayor control over education, the only constant has been change. The structure has been in flux," moving unsteadily from decentralization to centralization. He describes a prior system based on a central board working with community school boards until the community boards were eliminated and replaced with community education councils. The 32 community school districts governed by superintendents were scrapped for 10 regional bodies. Because a law suit noted state statute mandates 32 school districts and superintendents, the districts and superintendents were restored but with greatly diminished powers. According to Jackson, "The schools are actually running themselves." Principals have dominant power and, with the help of the support network they buy into under the new model and, according to Jackson, a watered down School Leadership Team, "They can decide almost anything." He describes the frustration of parents. "How do you evaluate a system that's constantly changing?" Saying his goals of improved test scores, smaller classes, and quality education are the same as those of Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel I. Klein, he nevertheless reasons, "To change a system with 1.1 million students and 3.3 million employees is an enormous task that is not done easily." He believes the state legislature gave the mayor too much authority leading to "purging many people who had institutional knowledge" and replac-



ing them with mostly younger people who "weren't going to resist their changes." Jackson predicts mayoral control as presently constituted will end in June 2009 when it comes up for renewal. He reports several groups are grappling behind the scenes with ways to eliminate or reduce the mayor's role. The Education Committee chair says, "I was not in favor of mayoral control from the beginning. Local community control is best."

Councilman Jackson, who represents Morningside Heights, West Harlem, Inwood, Hamilton Heights, and parts of Washington Heights, takes pride in the part he played as lead plaintiff in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. Explaining he has always been an organizer and activist, he became aware of inadequate funding for city schools as Parents Association president and then as a District 6 community school board member and president. In 1992, he turned for help to Michael Rebell, District 6 school board lawyer, saying, "You are our attorney. Find a way to get it done." Working with a team of pro bono lawyers from a top firm, Rebell ("a cracker jack, ace litigator" exclaims Jackson) took the class action law suit against the state through various courts, arguing at first that the city did not get a fair share of funds and then that students were not receiving an adequate education, until 1999 when, on appeal, the State Supreme Court agreed that the school funding system violated the state constitution and the Civil Rights Reform Act of 1964. Jackson, whose term in office ends in 2009 under term limits, believes students are entitled to "an excellent education, not just a minimum adequate, sound one." According to him, "right now, the opportunity is not being provided."#

### PART III

#### HELEN DIANE FOSTER

District 16

City Council Member Helen Diane Foster is the younger of two daughters born to the former Council Member Rev. Wendell Foster and Mrs. Helen Foster. She is a graduate of Howard University and City University of New York School of Law. Council Member Foster is the first African American woman to be elected to the New York City Council from Bronx County.

Council Member Helen Diane Foster serves as the Chairperson for the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation and as Co-Chair of the Women's Caucus. She has served as the Co-Chairperson of the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus. Presently, Council Member Helen Diane Foster serves on the Aging, Education, General Welfare, Health, Lower Manhattan Redevelopment and Public Safety Committees. #

#### MIGUEL MARTINEZ

District 10



Council Member Miguel Martinez has represented the 10th Council District since January 1, 2002. As Chair of the Fire and Criminal Justice Services Committee, Council Member Martinez has jurisdiction over the Fire Department, EMS (non health related issues), Department of Probation, Department of Correction and Legal Aid.

Before entering the Council, Martinez was a member of the local Community Planning Board. He served on the Board's Executive Committee and as Chairman of the Parks & Environmental Committee, in which he presented several resolutions addressing the environmental health conditions affecting the Northern Manhattan Community. He served as an appointee of the Honorable Eliot Spitzer on the Attorney

General's Crime Victim Advisory Board. He has published several articles addressing the high asthma rates in the Northern Manhattan Community and the environmental conditions affecting its residents.

Martinez was elected Democratic District Leader in the Inwood Community. In that role, he became a firm voice on environmental and quality-of-life issues in his neighborhood. He helped organize block associations, tenants associations, street clean-up campaigns, and community forums. He has been a strong advocate for increased participation in the local community Police Council, so that the police, working along with civic leaders, can better address the quality-of-life and public safety issues throughout Washington Heights and Inwood. Martinez was the President of the Northern Manhattan Democrats for Change. As President, he organized voter registration drives and voter education workshops. He was instrumental in organizing the membership and local community groups during the rent-control battle in 1997. He was the Director of the Victim Services Childcare Domestic Violence Network, servicing mothers who are victims of domestic violence and their children. He dedicated 6 years as a teacher in local community school district 6, where he worked as a Bilingual Teacher.

Martinez is committed to fighting for more effective discharge planning and alternatives-to-incarceration services, better educational opportunities for all children, greater access to health care, more affordable housing, greater economic development, more efficient public transportation, safer streets and a cleaner environment.

#### General Information

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Current Term Expires: 12/31/2009

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## First Muslim Woman To Win Nobel Peace Prize Speaks at Barnard College

By JOY RESMOVITS

Barnard College President Judith Shapiro found occasion to speak Farsi on Tuesday night, at an event she later said—in English—that upheld “the utmost importance, given the times, to future female leaders.”

Shirin Ebadi, the first Iranian and Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, spoke at Barnard about the way democracy and women’s rights grow together, stressing the need for America to leave Iran’s troubles to the Iranian people.

Ebadi said Iran’s feminist movement is the strongest of all its human rights movements because both men and women hold strong values of democracy, and the movement has no single leader. “Women in Iran will not stop until they arrive at full guarantees that their rights are equally respected,” Ebadi said through a Farsi translator.

Ebadi, a lawyer and human rights activist, won the Peace Prize in 2003 for groundbreaking work in women’s and children’s rights. Ebadi served as president of the city court of Tehran, earning her place as one of the country’s first female judges. In court, Ebadi represented families of intellectuals who were victims of serial murders, and helped expose the actors behind the 1999 attack on students, finding herself imprisoned several times.

As Ebadi made her way towards Barnard Hall’s Held Auditorium, security guards closed off tunnels, since Ebadi visited Columbia about one week after Iran President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ordered the country’s police chief to secure her safety due to intensifying death threats.

The event was organized by students Shirin Soufian and Natasha Sarraf, two Barnard seniors.

Shapiro introduced Ebadi as a “particular role model for Barnard women.” Soufian introduced Ebadi as “my personal hero,” and said that events as momentous as this one are the reason why “dreams do come true at Barnard.” Ebadi spoke on “The Role of Women in World Peace,” an event attended by University President Lee Bollinger.

In Iran, over 65% of university students are female. Ebadi said one of Ahmadinejad’s Vice Presidents is female, showing that “women have even infiltrated the radical forces of Iran, and radicals can no longer ignore the capabilities of Iranian women.” Women in Iran achieved voting rights even before Switzerland.

Still, after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, discriminatory laws were passed against women. “In my country, a woman’s life is equal to half of a man’s life,” Ebadi said. “That means if two people, one man and one woman, are killed in a taxi accident, the woman’s life is only worth half of the man’s. Can you imagine?” Further, in Iran, a man can have up to four wives, and it is very difficult for women to seek divorce.

Ebadi said that some leaders mistakenly attribute religion as the source of discriminatory laws to religion, but “what leads to this discrimination is the patriarchal culture” that spans the Muslim world. “I’m not referring to men, but rather a long culture that basically finds the equality of genders unacceptable.” Patriarchal culture oppresses men and women, “because it does not believe in democracy.” This culture is carried by women, who pass it on to their sons by blood, Ebadi said, like hemophilia. After all, “every tyrant man was raised by a woman.” As such, women’s rights and democracy are two sides of the same coin, and are intertwined.

Ebadi criticized aspects of Iran’s government,

## CSI Researcher Receives \$179K Grant from U.S. National Academies

Shuiqin Zhou, Professor of Chemistry at the College of Staten Island, has received a three-year grant from the U.S. National Academies, which comprise the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine, and the National Research Council.

The grant, in the amount of \$178,645 and part of the Pakistan-U.S. Science and Technology Cooperative Program, will help to fund Zhou’s research, “Synthesis and Characterization of Smart Polymer Microgels for Biomedical Applications,” which she is conducting with Dr. Muhammad Siddiq of Pakistan’s Quaid-i-Azam University.

In response to her receipt of the award, Zhou notes, “I’m very excited,” adding, “This pro-

gram tries to strengthen cooperation and linkages between scientists from Pakistan and the U.S.”

Zhou explains that smart polymer microgels are useful in biomedical applications because they can be very responsive to environmental stimuli such as changes in temperature, pH, and glucose concentration. It’s this last change, in glucose level, that allows these polymers, according to Zhou, to be potentially useful in the early detection of diabetes and “the treatment of the disease through the self-regulation of insulin delivery.”

Besides funding the research, the grant money will allow Zhou to hire a research assistant and it will give a Pakistani student the opportunity to receive hands-on research experience with Zhou in her laboratory on the CSI campus. #

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and said the people of Iran are unhappy with increased prices on commodities. Yet “improvement of the situation of Iran is the responsibility of the people in Iran and has nothing to do with the stationing of foreign troops in our country.” Ebadi said that foreign attacks and threats on the Iranian government can only harm human rights efforts, since the government would take license of “national security” to suppress “those who are seeking more freedom in the country.”

Ebadi ended on a positive note, saying that Iranians

flourish in America. “So let us forget our governments and continue our friendship,” she concluded.

After the lecture, Ebadi faced tumultuous applause. Audience members proceeded to a reception with food and drink, where they could meet the woman who simultaneously inspires Iranian women to press for their rights, and a radical president to insist on Ebadi’s security.

*Joy Resmovits is a Barnard College student and a Columbia Spectator senior staff writer who contributes regularly to Education Update. #*

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