

PECONIC TEACHER CENTER

CENTERLINE FALL 2008-WINTER 2009

Issue #1 Fall 2008 - Winter 2009

Message from the Director:

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased that we have had such a terrific fall with respect to professional development. Our courses, workshops and special events have kept PTC busy and have provided some very necessary scientifically-based, researched strategies to teachers and administrators in our consortium. Our commitment to provide quality staff development continues to be a driving force in the decisions the Policy Board makes regarding programs and activities. As we get set to celebrate our 25th year as a teacher center, we face a fiscal crisis in New York State that threatens to eliminate the funding of teacher centers for 2009-2010. Through our network of teacher center associates, we will be asking for your help in sending the word to our legislators that eliminating funding for teacher centers, the Mentor-Intern program, and other state funded programs will be detrimental to the strides educators in New York State have made in meeting the state standards, in working with special populations, in keeping up with the latest research in teaching and learning, and in addressing unfunded state mandates on the district level as RTI, PDP, APPR etc. In addition, teacher centers have been at the forefront of technology education, providing such resources as *Thinkfinity*, *Intel Teach Program*, *Educational Enterprise Zone* and the *New York State Teacher Center Online Academy*: all initiatives that are partnerships with Business and Industry and NYSED. We will be providing you more information in the coming weeks. Thank you for your continued support.

Larrilee Jemiola

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Response to Intervention RTI Helps Teachers Put Data to Work, Researchers Says

Ann Casey

Few terms can seem as vague or even mysterious as response to intervention. But at its heart, the concept is quite simple, according to Ann Casey, director of the Minnesota RTI Center.


RTI, she says, is about collecting data not just for data's sake, but to inform practice.

"We've collected lots of data in schools [and] many schools have tried to put in place good supports for kids that are struggling, but we haven't put those two systems together," she said.

Part of the problem, Casey said, is that frontline teachers have not always had access to the data that schools collect. And so teachers were working hard on the front lines, implementing various instructional strategies. But they may not have known whether those strategies were working, especially for all students.

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PTC Hours



**Monday-Thursday
8:30 - 4:30**

**Friday
8:00 - 4:00**

Harry's Girls: Harry Potter and the Discourse of Gender

Meredith Cherland

Like millions of readers, I'm just wild about Harry. I enjoy the escape the Harry Potter novels offer a tired teacher, one who is sick of the world as it exists today, one who worries about her students and their future. I'd love to wave my wand and create a peaceful, healthy world where everything is possible for *all* our children. But that is fantasy. I can teach toward a better world, perhaps, but I know it will be very hard work indeed.

Lately I have found something that sustains my efforts to teach for social justice. Feminist post structural theory offers me some new approaches to teaching critical literacies, ways of reading, writing, and thinking that un-settle our common sense notions of how the world works and that can lead us to challenge our ideas of what is "normal." In this article I speak to literacy teachers who work with teenagers about unsettling their students' collective views of the world and their sense of life's inevitability, about teaching their students to better understand how they came to be the people they are and where their power to act on the world resides, about equipping their students with concepts and strategies for a liberated life, and about challenging the status quo and teaching critical literacies for social justice.

In what follows, I hope to explain some concepts from feminist post structural theory to illustrate their usefulness in analyzing Harry Potter novels and other artifacts of popular culture and propose that critical reading informed by feminist post structural theory can offer secondary students and their teachers hope for a better future and power to act for change in the world. To provide a focus for my analysis and a theme for my examples and illustrations, I have chosen an area of intense interest to young adults (and to me): gender.

Humanism and Common Sense

Many teenagers want to know: Why is the world the way it is, and why is it so difficult to change? There is no easy answer to those questions, but the young people we teach may be interested in this idea. "The world" is in part a social construction, a set of beliefs about reality that people share. Humanism is a system of beliefs, a centuries-old philosophy, a body of thought and practice articulated during the eighteenth century (the Enlightenment) for a time very different from our own. Humanism has become our common sense, characterized by these ideas (and others) that we now accept as natural and normal:

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"Response to Intervention"

"That's the appeal of RTI, that people really see now a relationship between whether kids are progressing or not and talking, very seriously, about developing supports for them," said Casey, who helped develop a precursor to RTI called the Problem-Solving Model when she worked for the Minneapolis Public Schools.

By the same token, even the best of supports must be evaluated in terms of how they work for individual children, Casey said.

For example, a teacher might be using a first-rate intervention and doing so with fidelity, meaning she followed the instructions exactly, Casey said. It might even be paying off for most students, "just like it was supposed to, but it doesn't happen to work for these two or three kids—but you don't know that unless you're looking at the data," she said.

NCLB has accelerated this drive to find out—and find out early—how all students are doing, Casey said.

For example, if students with disabilities or English language learners do not do well on high-stakes tests, school officials know their school may be identified as in need of improvement, with all the consequences that entails under NCLB.

And so, a set of techniques for screening, monitoring and assisting students that has its roots in special education, where the success of each student has long been paramount, has spread to the general ed universe, Casey said.

"It's no longer OK for your school on average to be doing well," she said. "You also have to have all your subgroups doing well...and so people have had to pay attention like never before" to how each student or group of students is doing.

RTI is actually more flexible than special ed, according to Judy Elliott, who has just been appointed chief academic officer for the Los Angeles Unified School District after serving as Chief of Teaching and Learning for Portland (Ore.) Public Schools.

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“Response to Intervention”

Children who are receiving Tier 3 services, for example, are getting intensive support, but “it’s not a life sentence,” Elliott said. “The hope is that you get what you need and make enough growth and go back into Tier 2 or Tier 1.”

ED Center Will Create Network of Research, Support on Early RTI

Judith J. Carta

A new national center with the aim of adapting response to intervention for the early childhood set will launch in July thanks to a recent \$10 million, 5-year grant awarded by the Education Department.

The Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood will focus on developing literacy and language interventions for pre-schoolers at Tiers 2 and 3 and assessing their efficacy in high-quality early childhood settings. Project collaborators also hope to foster a national network where early childhood researchers, educators and policymakers can brainstorm effective approaches to identify and support children who may struggle with reading before they start school.

“We know that if we wait until children get to first grade, they’ll just have a larger gap to make up,” said Judith J. Carta, principal investigator and senior scientist for the Juniper Gardens Children’s Project at the University of Kansas.

KU will share the grant with the University of Minnesota, Ohio State University, and the Dynamic Measurement Group, which develops educational assessment tools.

The project’s interventions will largely target children who have had little exposure to early literacy-and language-building experiences, Carta said. These children, whose parents may speak minimal English or have little education show need in the areas of phonemic awareness, oral language and vocabulary, and alphabetic knowledge and comprehension.

Source: *The Special Educator, Vol. 24, Issue 1, June 20, 2008, 2008 LRP Publications*



The Year’s Best New Read Alouds for Intermediate and Middle School Readers

Franki Sibberson

I am always on the lookout for new books to read aloud to my students. I like to read new, “hot-off-the-press” books for several reasons. First of all, I don’t have to worry about whether students have already read the book in past years. But more importantly, reading aloud new books helps my students feel “in-the-know” about reading and books. They like the idea that they are experiencing a book that is new, that not many people know about. They love to spread the word about the new book.

2008 was a great year for new books for intermediate and middle school readers, especially for reading aloud. When I am thinking about possible read alouds, I am looking for books with good plots and characters, but I also want a certain amount of depth to the book - layers of meaning that are accessible to kids. I want to choose books that meet my students’ needs. For those who are still working to follow the plot over the course of the book, I want them to be able to jump in that way. For students who are thinking about the themes in a book, I want them to be accessible to them. I want characters who change. I want students to have a lot to talk about while reading the book. Over the course of the year, I want to share a variety of books with students. In 2008, these were my favorites - books that I think would make great read alouds for older students.

Bird Lake Moon by Kevin Henkes

In this story, two boys become friends and each is dealing with his own family issues. Henkes alternates back and forth between the characters and you come to like and understand both characters well. You learn about the stresses they are dealing with and you understand the choices that they make - both good and bad. Both boys are growing up and learning to deal with pain.

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“Thinkfinity”

Thinkfinity.org is the cornerstone of Verizon Foundation's Literacy, Education and Technology initiatives. Thinkfinity's goal is to improve student achievement in traditional classroom settings and beyond by providing high-quality content and extensive professional development training. This free, comprehensive digital learning platform is built upon the merger of two acclaimed programs: Verizon MarcoPolo and the Thinkfinity Literacy Network. The New York State Teacher Centers and the New York Institute of Technology are responsible for the rollout of Thinkfinity in New York State. The goals of Thinkfinity NY include communicating information about Thinkfinity, arranging trainings, tracking quality and progress against goals, and aligning Thinkfinity content with New York State Learning Standards. To date, over 22,000 NYS teachers have been trained in the use of the Thinkfinity resources and 3,000+ lessons and resources have been aligned to New York State Learning Standards. Go to <http://www.Thinkfinity.org> If you would like to be a Thinkfinity trainer for Peconic Teacher Center, please contact us @ 591-4629.

PTC Gets Set to CELEBRATE its 25th year! ***A SOURCE FOR TEACHERS.....A PROMISE FOR STUDENTS***

In 1984, in a new initiative of the New York State Education Department, Southampton School District was awarded one of forty-four grants across the state to establish a teacher center. From 1984-1986, Southampton was a single district teacher center. In 1986, Hampton Bays UFSD petitioned Southampton to become a part of the center, making it a consortium: The Southampton-Hampton Bays Teacher Center. In 1992, the Teacher Center approved the inclusion of a number of new districts. These new districts included Amagansett, Bridgehampton, East Hampton, Montauk, Sagaponack, Shelter Island, Springs and Wainscott. In addition to these public school districts, the consortium included these private and religious schools: The Hampton Day School, Our Lady of the Hamptons, South Fork Christian School, Stella Maris and the Southampton Montessori School. What was formerly the Southampton-Hampton Bays Teacher Center became the Peconic Teacher Center. Today, PTC serves 12 public school districts and 11 non-public schools. A list of current members appears in this newsletter. Peconic Teacher Center will celebrate its 25th anniversary as a professional development provider to educators on the east end in the 2009-2010 school year. We are proud of the programs and services we offer and hope to be a part of your professional development for another 25 years.



“Lindamood-Bell Comes to PTC”

According to reading research, students who have good comprehension make very detailed and vivid images for the concepts expressed by incoming language; those with poor comprehension have no images, or very vague and unconnected images, and consequently no gestalt for the concepts expressed. To meet this need Lindamood-Bell developed an approach for building concept imagery for both oral and written language called *Visualizing and Verbalizing For Language, Comprehension and Thinking*. (V/V®)



On October 21 and 22, PTC held training for 12 teachers in V/V®. Through a series of instructional steps, students learn to create an imaged gestalt and integrate the imagery with language as a basis for comprehension and thinking. V/V® is a SBRR instructional strategy that helps students comprehend text and can be used in small group instructional settings. Here are some comments from those who attended:

“This is a course offering that develops knowledge that can be applied immediately to instruction at a variety of grade levels and functioning levels regarding comprehension.”

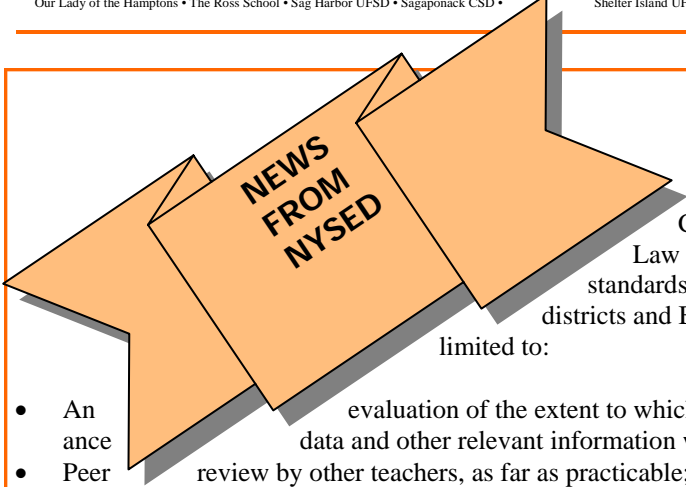
“I found this course to be well paced with valuable information that provides alternative methods for teaching reading comprehension.”



Book and Video Titles WANTED

Peconic Teacher Center’s Professional Library has had a recent facelift with the help of Linda Robins, a PTC Associate from Our Lady of the Hamptons School, who just happens to be its librarian. Books titles older than 1995 were discarded and the current collection was reorganized. In addition, books that are classics such as *Uncommon Sense* by John Mayer, *Horace’s Compromise* by Theodore Sizer and *Summerhill* by A.S.Neill are now shelved in a section called “*OLDIES BUT GOODIES*”.

We are now looking for new titles to add to our professional collection. If you have a recommendation email us at viwilliams@southamptonschools.org. **Please include the title, author and ISBN. If it is a video, please include title and any other pertinent information.**



Changes in Tenure Determination New Law-2007

Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2007, added a new Section 3012-b to Education Law requiring the Board of Regents to develop rules establishing minimum standards and procedures for tenure determination of teachers employed in school districts and BOCES. The tenure determination process must include, but need not be limited to:

- An evaluation of the extent to which the teacher successfully utilized analysis of available student performance data and other relevant information when providing instruction;
- Peer review by other teachers, as far as practicable; and
- An assessment of the teacher's performance by the teacher's building administrator.

These changes apply only to probationary classroom teachers providing instructional services. While other employees of the district and BOCES may be subject to tenure rules and annual performance evaluations, such as teaching assistants or individuals providing pupil personnel services, school districts are not required to evaluate these individuals in accordance with the requirements of Section 3012-b of Education Law

“2008 - Amendments”

Section 3012-b was amended by Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2009. The amendment:

- Changes the effective date of the legislation requiring these new standards and procedures to apply to teachers whose probationary period commences on or after July 1, 2008;
- Prohibits school districts and BOCES from using student test scores to grant or deny tenure; and
- Establishes a two-year sunset on Section 3012-b, which will allow the legislature to revisit this law in 2010.

The law also requires that the Board of Regents Rules and Commissioner's Regulations regarding Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) conform to minimum standards and procedures for making tenure decisions as required by Section 3020-b. Amendments to Part 30 of the Rules of the Board of Regents and Section 100.2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner were adopted by the Regents at their June 2008 meeting, effective July 1, 2008.

*Teachers use of student performance data when providing instruction:

The intent of the law is not to require the evaluation of teachers based on student test scores, but to assess how teachers' use student performance data and other relevant information to inform instruction. School districts must provide teachers with timely and relevant student information. Student performance data should include, but not be limited to, information that is available through the teacher's analysis of teacher developed tests and other formative assessments, observations of student learning, student work, school developed/administered assessments, and state tests. Other relevant information may include, but not be limited to, documented health and nutritional information, attendance data, other student characteristics affecting learning. The school district's Professional Development Plan (PDP) should include professional development for teachers on the use of data analysis in instructional planning.

*Peer review by other teachers, as far as practicable:

Peer review is **an optional method** to assess the performance of teachers in the current APPR regulations. Under Section 3012-b school districts and BOCES may agree to implement a peer review process, as far as practicable. **It is NY-SUT's and the State Education Department's position that “as far as practicable” means that the peer review process would be used to evaluate teachers only if the process is collectively bargained and agreed to by the local union and the school district.**

*Assessment by the Building Administration

Section 3012-b of Education Law required an assessment of the teacher's performance by the teacher's building principal or other building administrator in charge of the school or program. The evaluation of classroom teachers must include, but not limited, to the criteria described in the school districts or BOCES APPR Plan, consistent with the requirements of the Article 14 Civil Service Law. The APPR must also describe how the district or BOCES provides training for staff who perform teacher evaluations.

*PTC is pleased to announce its
new and improved
web site!*

<http://www.peconicteachercenter.org>

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“The Year’s Best New Read Alouds for Intermediate and Middle School Readers”

Knucklehead: Tall Tales and Almost True Stories of Growing Up by Jon Scieszka

I don't read enough “funny books” to my students. I am always going for depth, and often find more serious books to read aloud. But Jon Scieszka's *Knucklehead* is a funny book that is well worth a read aloud. In the book, Jon Scieszka shares many stories from his childhood - growing up in a house with five brothers. The stories are quick and focuses on one event or issues in the Scieszka home, and they are told in the humorous voice that we have come to know so well.

Savvy by Ingrid Law

In Mibs' family, you get your savvy when you are 13 and she is getting ready for her 13th birthday. A savvy is a special thing that you can do-helping define who you are. Mibs is struggling a bit with growing up, and she is also worrying about her father who has been in a car accident. This is a fantasy that reads like realistic fiction. I love books where people are thrown together and good things happen. In *Savvy*, kids and adults meet on a bus ride and the relationships grow as they are together on the bus. We get to know every character well (which is critical for me as a reader) and I ended up seeing the good in each and every one.

The Underneath by Kathi Appelt

This book is one that would be a great read aloud for sophisticated readers, though it's not one I would read early in the year. The book is hard to describe - it's a dog story, a book about good and evil, and a fantasy. But Appelt has woven so much into the story that it is a must read, whether you decide it is right for your students or not.

Shooting the Moon by Frances O'Roak Dowell

Shooting the Moon is about Jamie Dexter and is set during the Vietnam War. Jamie's father is a colonel, and she has grown up with a great love of the military. Now her brother TJ has enlisted and has been sent to Vietnam. While he is there, he sends Jamie film to be developed - pictures that he takes in Vietnam. The pictures began to tell the story of the war of TJ's life there. This is the powerful story of how war affects a family, and how a family deals with a child that is sent to fight. It is also the tale of a young girl growing up and finding herself, and there is amazing thread of photography throughout the book.

Waiting for Normal by Leslie Connor

This is a bittersweet story that reminded me of a children's version of **The Glass Castle**. The lead character is amazingly strong, surviving under hard circumstances. Although her mother has trouble taking care of her, she clearly loves her daughter but just can't handle the responsibilities of parenting. This is a terrific story - it reminds you that there are lots of people in a child's life who matter.

The Gollywopper Games by Jody Feldman

Gil and the other characters are all part of a contest, and are very different from each other. Feldman has somehow incorporated diverse elements like reality TV, codes and puzzles, a great setting (a VERY fun toy story!), video games, a contest, and a believable plot. In her acknowledgments, Feldman mentions that when she was volunteering in the school library, a student returned Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and asked for another like it. Unfortunately, there wasn't another book she could recommend, so it was at that moment that she decided to write one!

The Life and Crimes of Bernetta Wallflower by Helen Frost

This book is a fun read - the plot is completely different from other books for kids this age. Bernetta's best friend Ashley has set her up, and the consequence is that Bernetta won't be able to attend the private school she has attended since kindergarten anymore. Bernetta just doesn't have the \$9000 for tuition. But she comes up with a scheme to make the money, and the adventures begin.

Source: www.choiceliteracy.com



New Reading Award Announced

The new Frances Mottey Beck Middle-School “Ah-Ha” Reading Award recognizes a middle school educator or team of educators who has designed an effective, replicable program for advancing reading/literacy. The US \$2,000 award was established in 2008 in honor of Frances Mottey Beck, former assistant dean of students in the University of Chicago Graduate School of Education and Director of the Reading Clinic at De Paul University. Applications must be received by February 10, 2009. For more information, visit www.pilamda.org/benefits/awards/pdf/Beck%20Reading.pdf.



Partnership Urges Reading to Children

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and the Read It LOUD! Foundation have formed a partnership to encourage parents and other caregivers to read to their children daily. By 2014, the program hopes to have 5 million parents and caregivers reading to children daily. The program will be advertised in shopping malls throughout the United States, through websites, in libraries, and in other locations. For further information, visit www.readitloud.org/mission.cfm.



IES Practice Guide Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices

This guide presents strategies that classroom teachers and specialists can use to increase the reading ability of adolescent students. The recommendations aim to help students gain more from their reading tasks, improve their motivation for and engagement in the learning process, and assist struggling readers who may need intensive and individualized attention. http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/adlit_pg_082608.pdf (pdf)

Paleontology Portal

This portal invites students to discover prehistoric life in the U.S. by state and time period, see famous fossil localities and assemblages, and search fossil images and paleontology collections from participating museums. Find field guides, maps, curricula, and K-12 resources. Learn about careers in paleontology. (University of California Museum of Paleontology, National Science Foundation) http://www.free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=2084

Einstein Fellowship

The Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship is a paid fellowship for K-12 math, science, and technology teachers. As an Einstein Fellow you will spend a school year in Washington, DC sharing your expertise with policy makers, such as Congress, the Department of Energy, NASA, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The goal of the Einstein Fellows program is to provide an opportunity for teachers to inform national policy and improve communication between the K-12 STEM education community and national leaders. The Triangle Coalition administers the program under the direction of the Department of Energy. The application deadline is January 13, 2009. Apply online at <https://applicationlink.labworks.org/applicationlink/default.htm>. For more information about the Einstein Fellows program visit www.trianglecoalition.org/ein.htm

Amagansett School:



Third Grade

On Wednesday, October 8, the third grade class went on a field trip to the Pollock Krasner House. The preservation and development of this site has been undertaken by the Stony Brook Foundation, Inc. The students were given a tour of the house, which was built in 1879. The students were able to view prints created by both artists, the artists' original furniture and the artists' personal library. The class was also given a tour of the studio. It was in this studio that Pollock created his best known works. The floor of the studio is paint-laden, showing the artist's energy and inspiration. The students also viewed a documentary photo essay of Pollock's and Krasner's careers.

On Wednesday, October 8, students in Pre-K went on a field trip to Halsey's Apple Orchard. The students have been busy studying apples. The students read "The Star in the Apple" and constructed apple stamp prints where they could "see" the star in the apple. Using positional words, the students created the book "Where is the Worm?" The students will be able to taste different types of apples at the orchard.

On Wednesday, October 15, students in Grades 2 through 6 began NWEA testing. These adaptive computer based tests allow the school to measure student growth in Reading, Language, and Mathematics over the course of the school year. These tests also allow for a comparison of each child's scores to those of nationally normed samples. The results help the school to plan appropriate instruction based on student strengths and needs.

On Friday, October 17, the Fourth Grade class went on a field trip to the Second House Museum in Montauk. Second House, built 1797, is the oldest and most historic building still standing on Montauk. The students celebrated Samson Occum Day with presentations of traditional dance and styles of regalia, artifacts, and a drum group. In addition, they learned about the Shinnecock and other native people of Long Island.

Students in Kindergarten through Third visited the Milk Pail on Friday, October 17. On their visit, they were given a tour of the farm and learned that the Halsey family is dedicated to preserving the land and their heritage. They were also educated about farming practices and the ups and downs that goes along with farming. Each student was able to pick their own pumpkin to bring home!
Tina Goldsmith



Southampton Intermediate School:

Fifth Grade

10-year-old starts charity to benefit children in need

Southampton Intermediate School fifth-grader William Taylor realized that there are children living around the world, and in his own backyard, who go without the basics that most kids rely on to let their imaginations flow—paper to write and draw on, paint and pencils to create art with—he decided to do something about it.

William set out to start his own charitable foundation, and he has gotten further than might be expected.

William's first big drive and fund-raiser culminates next week when he heads to Little Flower Children and Family Services in Wading River to drop off the books, pens, pencils, and art supplies he and the Student Council collected at school to give to orphaned children for Christmas.

The 10-year-old named his foundation "Kid-too-Kid"—he wanted to name it "Kid-to-Kid," with only one "O," but the URL was taken when he tried to register Kid-to-Kid.com.

William said Monday, when he sat down in a classroom to talk about his plans for the charity, that he expects to have kiddtookid.com online in a matter of weeks.

William also presented his Kid-too-Kid business cards and the binder he keeps with all his ideas, notes and documents, including the mission statement he drafted.

"Our mission is to provide educational and art supplies for underprivileged children in Africa and the United States, so that all children, regardless of their economic situation, are able to learn and explore at home or at school," William wrote. In his statement of the foundation's goals, he wrote that Kid-too-Kid is designed to make sure children have the supplies they need to read, write, draw, paint and experience life as they should be able to.

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Southampton Intermediate School:

Fifth Grade

10-year-old starts charity to benefit children in need

William is seeking non-profit status for Kid-too-Kid and has already received Suffolk County's approval allowing him to operate his organization under a created name.

The idea for starting his own charity came to William two years ago, when he was just 8. He said he was inspired to start a foundation after seeing poverty in Africa on television and visiting a shelter where his mother, Everlette Taylor, worked. "It was a lot different than the way I live now," he said.

David Riley, a Spanish teacher at the Intermediate School who has been spreading the word about Kid-too-Kid, said teachers are also banding together to make donations to the foundation for Christmas.

"Every kid wants to wake up to something under their Christmas tree. I want to, hopefully, make that happen ..." William said. "It's not that much, but, hopefully, it will change something."

If students do not have anything to donate but still want to help, William said they can give their time to help wrap presents or even make a Christmas card for the gift recipients.

William emphasized that Kid-too-Kid is not just a charity for the holidays. "It's year round," he said. "So I'm going to try to help people as long as I can. The whole year, the whole 365 days."

Besides his regular work as a student, William is both a musician and a member of the Student Council. Despite his busy schedule, he said he will always find a way to make time for the foundation.

For now, William's focus is on helping Long Island children. He said his goal is to reach at least 1,000 kids, both locally and in Africa. "I would like to help as many kids as I can," he said. He has also concentrated his focus on children between the ages of 3 and 15.

Donations for Christmas, wrapped or unwrapped, for Kid-too-Kid were dropped off at the main office of the Intermediate School on Leland Lane in Southampton by the end of the school day Monday, December 22. Kid-too-Kid accepted new and slightly-used books and art supplies.



Next Round of Grants

MINI
MAXI
MIXI

due

February 27, 2009

downloadable@

<http://www.peconicteachercenter.org>

Dr. Jean Feldman at Tuckahoe School on January 10, 2009

Totally Reading Workshop

“If we want children to enjoy reading and writing, then we have to provide activities that capture their interest and motivate them.” Dr. Jean



Dr. Jean Feldman presented an all day workshop for early childhood teachers (N to Grade 2) on Saturday, January 10, 2009 at the Tuckahoe School. This event was a collaboration of the Southampton Pre-K program, Peconic Teacher Center and Tuckahoe School and is a result of consortium early childhood teachers identifying the need for professional development around the “5 BIG IDEAS” in reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Jean Feldman has over 35 years experience in education as a classroom teacher, author, and consultant. Dr. Feldman has an M.A. in Early Childhood and a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction. She is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Kindergarten Alliance, and the International Reading Association. Dr. Feldman inspired eighty-two teachers from all over the East End *“to kiss their brains”* with her engaging songs and creative activities that help make teaching and learning FUN!

“Most valuable to encourage enthusiasm for teachers and students.”

“Perfect timing for this workshop. I have new energy for my lesson planning and teaching and new understanding and hope for my struggling readers and my English language learners. Thank you, thank you, thank you!”

“The most amazing conference! I had to pinch myself to believe I was actually here.”

“ Please keep these quality workshops coming!” “By far, the most useful, effective and FUN workshop I have attended.”

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- There is a stable, unified, coherent, and individual human “self.”
- Language is a transparent medium, something you can see right through to the preexisting reality it unveils.
- Reason can provide an objective, reliable, universal foundation of knowledge.
- Knowledge comes through reason. Reason leads to knowledge and truth.

These are dangerous ideas that present life and the world as simple, as certain, and as structured in inevitable ways.

Humanism encourages (even requires) dualistic thinking. It constructs binaries as a way of understanding the world. The language of humanism presents us with these binaries, hierarchical opposites that take their meaning in relation to each other. Binaries like male/female, rational/irrational, mind/body, and good/evil are humanism's “common sense.” Binaries are dangerous because they preserve hierarchies (one term in a binary is marked as normal and better) and because they lead us to oversimplify complicated situations. Humanist binaries allow us to think of U.S. foreign policy, for example, as simple: white against black, the good guys against the bad guys, the Christians against the Muslims. Humanism makes people certain and unable to listen to and learn from others unlike themselves.

Humanism also provides us with cultural story lines (Davies, 2000) about how the world works. The Cinderella story (good people who suffer will be rescued), the Horatio Alger story (hard work leads to success), even “Puss in Boots” (anyone can succeed) are examples of cultural story lines into which we can insert our “selves.” Collectively, these humanist story lines convince us that the world works in reasonable ways. Collectively, these story lines keep us from wanting to change the world. Through binaries and story lines, humanism supports the existence of social structures like patriarchy, racism, homophobia, ageism, and other hierarchies that depend upon its premises. Humanist beliefs are harmful to women and other groups of people because they make invisible the structures that subjugate them. Humanist beliefs go unquestioned, as “common sense.”

“Humanism is the air we breathe, the language we speak, . . . the map that locates us on the earth, the futures we can imagine, the limits of our pleasures” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 478). But it is possible to challenge and interrogate what humanism takes for granted (St. Pierre, 2000). Post structural theory helps us do that.

Post structuralism is a response to humanism. After World War II, after the Holocaust, humanist beliefs about right and reason, about knowledge and truth, came dramatically into question. But post structuralism has not replaced humanism—far from it. Humanism and post structuralism coexist. This makes for uncomfortable times, a historical moment when what we see as normal, natural common sense is being called into question. Teachers ought not to ignore this. We need to help young adults engage with the uncertainty and the ambiguity of our times so that they are equipped for living *now*.

Concepts From Post Structural Theory and Illustrations From Harry Potter

It is helpful for high school students to understand the premises of humanism and the ways in which post structural theory undermines humanist beliefs. Contrasting the ways in which certain concepts function in humanism and in post structuralism can serve as a strategy for helping students build understanding of both worldviews (Davies, 2000). Looking closely at the following terms (and using popular texts like the Harry Potter novels to illustrate their meanings) is a useful beginning. Language, discourse, subjectivity, desire, agency, positioning, and binaries are the concepts whose post structural meanings provide a contrasting worldview. I will take my illustrations from the last four novels of J.K. Rowling's series, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007)—the novels in which Harry is of high school age.

A Cultural Story Line. Rowling has a classical education, and she knows the story lines and the discourses of Western humanism. They are part of Harry Potter's world. For example, in *Goblet of Fire* Rowling introduces us to the Veela, magical creatures who look like beautiful young women but who have strange and dangerous power over men. We meet them first as the mascots of the Bulgarian team at the Quidditch World Cup, but they are descended from the ancient Greeks. They are, of course, the sirens of the Odyssey. When the sirens sing, men lose all reason. Even the reasonable boy with the ordinary name, Harry Potter, loses himself and his reason when the Veela dance. Watching from the top box at the magical Quidditch stadium, *Harry's mind went completely and blissfully blank. . . . As the Veela danced faster and faster, wild, half-formed thoughts started chasing through Harry's dazed mind. He wanted to do something very impressive, right now. Jumping from the box into the stadium seemed a good idea. . . .* (Rowling, 2000, p. 94)

To be continued in the next issue of Centerline

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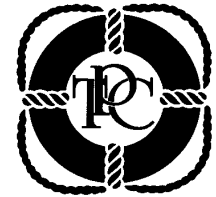
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