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THE NEW WORLD OF LEARNING

# edutopia NEWS™

The electronic newsletter from The George Lucas Educational Foundation

Welcome to Edutopia News, the weekly electronic newsletter from The George Lucas Educational Foundation. Each issue features original stories on K-12 topics and practices, as well as editorial highlights from other news sources.

We'd like to hear from you. Send your comments to [news@edutopia.org](mailto:news@edutopia.org).

Edutopia News is written by Diane Curtis and edited by Roberta Furger.

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## **LEGACIES OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.** by *Diane Curtis*

You could hear a pin drop in the auditorium of the [San Francisco Public Library](#) last Saturday, January 15 -- the day Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. would have turned 76 -- as Claudette Colvin recounted growing up black in the segregated South.



From "Crisis in Little Rock, 1957." © Will Counts

In what was news to many in the standing-room-only audience, Colvin told of refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man on an afternoon in March 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama -- 274 days before Rosa Parks did the same thing in the

same city. The hushed attention made clear that the 64-year-old woman made a strong impression on young (and not-so-young) minds during the presentation, which was just what the sponsor, the international educational and professional-development organization, [Facing History and Ourselves](#), was after.

Colvin's talk was part of a touring multimedia exhibition, *Choosing to Participate: Facing History and Ourselves*, which includes presentations on the Web about the civil rights movement, photographs celebrating local people who made a difference in their community, and artwork by area students that speaks to the theme of becoming an active participant in a democratic society. The multimedia presentation includes a moving story of one black man's qualms about helping a white woman for fear he would be met with disdain or worse, personal stories of integrating Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957, and the efforts of some Montana citizens to battle hate crimes.

Many San Francisco Bay Area students took Colvin's story as a lesson in activism.



"Eye of the Storm" © Jamie Hall

"It was phenomenal. It was exciting to hear what Ms. Colvin had to say," said Jamie, a junior at Menlo High School, in Menlo Park, whose artwork *Eye of the Storm* (pictured left) examines the dangers of indifference and was part of the accompanying exhibit, *pARTicipation: Visions and Voices of Bay Area Students*. On a blue background with an eye in the middle and a face floating in space, *Eye of the Storm* sends the message to "stand up for what you think is right and don't get lost in the eye of the storm, where everything seems calm, but chaos is surrounding you," writes Jamie in the description of her painting. Colvin, Jamie said, "motivated me to stand up for what I believe in."

Such standing up, students said, can take many forms. Alyssa, 14, from Carlmont High School, in Belmont, said Colvin reconfirmed her dedication to picking up trash near the ocean. For "12 3/4"-year-old Matt, of Fremont, it meant speaking out about such issues as teacher pay and the need for the wealthy to pay their fair share. For 11-year-old Bridget, also of Fremont, it meant thinking of ways to bring people together, and considering what she would have done if she had been black and on the bus that day in 1955. "I would have stood up," she said.

"It's very moving when you hear a first-person account [of history] and realize that these are really ordinary people doing extraordinary things," said Nina Moore, a school board member from Fremont who helped bring Facing History and Ourselves to the Fremont Unified School District following the 9/11 attacks in 2001. One of the important aspects of the Facing History program, she noted, is that it "is not an add-on," but rather is integrated into history, English, or other subjects that students are already studying. The Fremont school district has used its curriculum to talk about issues of race in the community, which has the largest Afghan-American community in the United States.

Wendy Garner, a 12th-grade English and social-justice teacher at Amador Valley High School, in

Pleasanton, who has used the Facing History and Ourselves approach for seven years, describes it as "learning how to be more humane," and she says it is the most sought-after program in her district.

"Kids feel it's a relevant, powerful curriculum that gives them a chance to talk about change and the potential to make a difference," said Garner. "It's not just historical dates. It talks about humane behavior." She added that she gets e-mail from former students, now in college, who feel grateful to have tackled some of the "tough topics" such as racism and community division. "They feel very empowered not just about learning the history but also about how they can apply what they learned and how they can be better people," Garner said.

Conversations like the one held on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, said Austin, a junior from James Logan High School, in Union City, make people reflect. "It makes people think about what happened, and it makes them think if they're still following his dream to make the world a better place." (<http://sfpl.lib.ca.us/news/choosing.htm>) ([www.facing.org](http://www.facing.org))

*To read more about how schools are using the Facing History and Ourselves curriculum, visit the Edutopia Web site and search for "Facing History."* ([www.edutopia.org/1212](http://www.edutopia.org/1212))

*Diane Curtis is a longtime education writer.*

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**GOOD READS**

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## **DO AS I DO**

Do schools teach the way children learn? If not, why not? Psychologist Alison Gopnik explores the differences in the way young children learn on their own and the way they are taught in schools and examines the implications of the routinized learning common in many classrooms. What would happen, questions Gopnik, if coaches tried to teach baseball in the manner many teachers educate their students about science? "Schoolchildren would get lectures about the history of the World Series," she writes. "High school students would occasionally reproduce famous plays of the past. Nobody would get in the game themselves until graduate school." Read "[How We Learn](#)" (free registration may be required). ([www.nytimes.com/2005/01/16/education/edlife/EDSCIENCE.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/16/education/edlife/EDSCIENCE.html))

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## **PARTNERING WITH PARENTS**

The research is clear: students whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to do well academically. The Harvard Graduate School of Education's Harvard Family Research Project devotes its winter 2004/2005 newsletter to the critical -- but sometime overlooked -- issue of parent involvement in school.

Language and learning materials in the home affect vocabulary and early school achievement, while nurturing and discipline affect behavior problems, Columbia University professor Jeanne Brooks-Gunn says in an interview. Other articles examine why many school-based family-involvement programs fall short of their goals and discuss effective strategies for engaging parents. Read the latest issues of "[The Evaluation Exchange](#)," which features the topic "Evaluating Family Involvement Programs." ([www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue28](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue28))

*For more ideas about how to increase parent involvement, listen to an [Edutopia Radio Show interview with Rita Oates](#), former technology director for Florida's Miami-Dade County Public Schools, who offers examples from her experience in the fourth-largest school district in the United States.* ([www.edutopia.org/php/radio.php?id=R117](http://www.edutopia.org/php/radio.php?id=R117))

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## **CHILDREN'S AUTHORS HONORED**

The American Library Association (ALA) has announced this year's honorees for children's literature, including the Caldecott and Newbery medal winners and the recipients of the Coretta Scott King awards for authors and illustrators. Among the honored authors is well-known novelist Toni Morrison, who received a Coretta Scott King Award for her book *Remember: The Journey of School Integration*. For a full listing of all the award recipients and their books, visit the [ALA Web site](#).

([www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=News&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=84640](http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=News&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=84640))

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## **CHECKMATE!**

The game of chess is enticing Philadelphia students to get to school on time like no threats, cajoling, or promises can. The urban Pennsylvania school district is expanding the number of chess

clubs at its schools because not only do kids like to play the game, but mastering chess has also been shown to improve academic performance. Read "[Chess Has Unexpected Benefits](#)" on [phillynews.com](#) (free registration may be required).  
([www.philly.com/mld/philly/living/education/10623785.htm?1c](http://www.philly.com/mld/philly/living/education/10623785.htm?1c))

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## OLDER AND WISER TEACHERS



Some Indiana schools are seeing the benefits of hiring teachers who are on their second careers. Real-world experience and commitment to education are just two of the benefits to schools delivered by so-called career-changers. Read "[Second-Career Teachers Shine in Local Schools](#)" in the *South Bend Tribune* (free registration may be required).

([www.southbendtribune.com/stories/2005/01/17/local.20050117-sbt-FULL-A1-](http://www.southbendtribune.com/stories/2005/01/17/local.20050117-sbt-FULL-A1-)

[Second\\_career\\_teachers.sto](#))

*For an example of how one Colorado college trains second-career teachers, see the original GLEF article and video documentary, "Making the Switch to Teaching." ([www.edutopia.org/795](http://www.edutopia.org/795))*

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## A MESSAGE FROM ONE OF OUR SPONSORS



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## OPPORTUNITIES

### WHAT GREAT HIGH SCHOOLS LOOK LIKE

The [Coalition for Essential Schools](http://www.essentialschools.org) (CES) has a new Web site, [ChangeLab](http://www.ceschangelab.org), which offers real-world examples of what successful CES schools look like. The site provides discussions, resources, and visual images for educators, parents, and community members interested in transforming their school. CES also is seeking nominations for schools that exemplify the beliefs and practices of its coalition schools. Staff at selected schools will serve as mentors as part of the CES Small Schools Project. ([www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org)) ([www.ceschangelab.org](http://www.ceschangelab.org))

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### SCHOLARSHIPS PROMOTE VISUAL LEARNING

January 27 is the deadline for teachers to apply for one of the 2005 Inspired Teacher Scholarships for Visual Learning from Inspiration Software™. For the seventh year, Inspiration Software is offering 30 scholarships of \$750 to be used for professional development for teachers "who champion the integration of visual learning and technology into the curriculum." Five Inspired Teacher Scholarship Rookie Awards are targeted to educators new to visual learning. To apply or get more information, go to [www.inspiration.com/scholarship](http://www.inspiration.com/scholarship) or e-mail [tscholarship@inspiration.com](mailto:tscholarship@inspiration.com).

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