

## February 2011 Advocacy Newsletter

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Information gathered by the Education, Environment, Family Engagement, Health and Wellness and Special Education Chairs to assist you in your advocacy efforts.



### Education

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- New and revised lesson plans related to **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics** (STEM) have been added to the New York State Education Department's Virtual Learning System (VLS). These K-12 lesson plans were developed by teachers involved with the St. Lawrence County STEM Partnership. The partnership, between St. Lawrence County School Districts, St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES and Clarkson University, was a funded project of the NCLB Title IIB Mathematics and Science Partnerships program. These new and revised lesson plans, as well as other lesson plans, may be accessed at <http://www.nysvls.org> by choosing a standards area (e.g., MST), selecting a content area (e.g., science), and then by clicking on "Explore Standards Explore Resources." The learning standards, key ideas, performance indicators, and aligned resources can be viewed by clicking on the appropriate links. The lesson plans may also be accessed by using the search engine on the VLS main page at: <http://eservices.nysed.gov/vls/welcome.do>.
- History Education Resource: [Teachinghistory.org](http://Teachinghistory.org) is designed to help K-12 history teachers access resources and materials to improve U.S History education in the classroom.



### Environment

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- **Good News for the Environment:** Start out 2011 with some positive news: <http://www.enviroblog.org/2010/12/ewgs-top-10-good-environmental-news-stories-of-2010.html>.
- **The safety of tap water** is in the news. Listen to this radio broadcast: <http://www.onpointradio.org/2011/01/chemical-water>.
- **The Best and Worst Bottled Water Brands:** <http://shine.yahoo.com/event/green/best-and-worst-bottled-water-brands-2436818/>.
- Thinking of **giving up the bottled water habit?** Here's a short video that supports that decision: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se12y9hSOM0&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se12y9hSOM0&feature=player_embedded).
- **"Friend" Citizens Campaign for the Environment** on Facebook and get Action Alerts and good news about environmental victories in New York.
- While you are on Facebook, **"Friend" Healthy Schools Network**, one of NYS PTA's Cooperating Partners and sign up to get their Newslice in your email inbox. You'll get loads of information in a format that is easy to read and links to guide your advocacy efforts.
- **Grassroots Environmental Education** has a blog and a radio show. Access both here: <http://www.grassrootsinfo.org/blog.html>.
- **School Power Naturally** is a program of NYSERDA that is aimed at educating New Yorkers on the benefits of solar power and its role in providing clean energy to our homes, schools and workplaces. <http://www.powernaturally.org/programs/SchoolPowerNaturally/default.asp?i=9>.

- **Eat Valentine's Day chocolates** and educate yourself and others about the importance of Fair Trade. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to learn more about Fair Trade curricula and the Valentine's Day Action Kit. <http://www.fairtradefederation.org/ht/display/EventDetails/i/3868>.



## Family Engagement

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- The Harvard Family Research Project and the National PTA® have teamed up for the second issue in our series of policy briefs. *Breaking New Ground* cites six case studies from across the country that reveal innovative efforts by early childhood programs and school districts to use student data systems to improve family engagement. Each profile illustrates a segment of a data pathway beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout students' academic careers. <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/breaking-new-ground-data-systems-transform-family-engagement-in-education2>.
- **Special Ed parents!** Find strategies that offer common sense approaches about how to resolve problems early, techniques to create positive parent-school relationships, and tips to help you effectively advocate for your child. <http://www.wrightslaw.com/nltr/11/nl.0125.htm>.



## Health and Wellness

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- **USDA Proposes Stronger Nutrition Standards for NSLP School Meals**

Hold the French fries! In an article written by Nanci Hellmich in USA Today, the government has finally called for dramatic changes in school meals. The proposed rule was released January 13<sup>th</sup>, by the US Department of Agriculture. The nutrition standards for meals will be raised for the first time in 15 Years.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack was quoted saying, the “First major improvement” in the standards that “we’ve seen in generations,” and reflects the seriousness of the issue of obesity.

Schools will see a decrease in the amount of starchy vegetables served, less sodium in meals, and established calorie maximums and minimums for the first time. It will also include the serving of only unflavored 1% milk or fat free flavored and unflavored milk in addition to the increase of fruits and vegetables.

[www.usatoday.com/yourlife/food/diet-nutrition/2011-01-12-schoollunch13\\_st\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/yourlife/food/diet-nutrition/2011-01-12-schoollunch13_st_N.htm)
- **Don't let the cooler weather keep you cooped up in the house.** There are many fitness choices in cold weather as in warm. Consider seasonal sports. In addition, skiing safety tips and helping kids cope with cliques can be found at [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org).



## Special Education

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- The New York State **Education Department has a large list of resources.** The topics include such subjects as testing accommodations, Section 504 as well as a link to the NYS PTA website. To check their resources visit: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/resources.htm>.
- The **National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHY)** provides parents and teachers with a lot of useful information. Their website can be found at: <http://www.nichcy.org>. They have now started a Spanish language website as well. This website can be found at: <http://www.nichcy.org/spanish/Pages/default.aspx>.
- This is the time of the year where school districts begin to hold their annual review meetings. Parents need to be informed about changes to regulations that may have an impact on the services that their

child receives. The changes were effective on December 8, 2010. The **new changes to the Part 200s** can be found at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/amend-mandaterelief-1210.htm>.

- Each year New York State is required to submit an application under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for Federal Fiscal Year 2011. The application includes the identification of **State requirements that are not otherwise required by federal law and regulations** pursuant to IDEA section 608(a)(2). Public comment can be made for 30 calendar days starting January 24, 2011 until February 22, 2011. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/idea/announce-partB-comment.html>.
- As part of the changes to the Part 200s of the Commissioners Regulations, a New Policy Memorandum has been posted on the NYSED website providing the specific procedures for a school district to obtain a **variance to exceed the 12 students with disabilities** in an integrated co-teaching model. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/varianceprocedures-jan2011.htm>.
- A bill (S1272) was introduced into the New York State Senate by Senator Joseph Addabbo (D - District 15). It is intended to amend the education law to direct teachers be trained in the **education of gifted students** and that funds are provided. Currently New York State Education Law does not require schools to provide any services to gifted and talented students. In enacted it would provide \$1,000,000 for training for teachers in this area. The bill has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee. The status of the legislation can be tracked at: <http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi>.