



JEI
EDUCATION
NEWSLETTER

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What's Inside

Editor's Column

- Good Readers, Good Writers

Briefs & Fast Facts

- More Technology, Please!
- Student Debt Being Mismanaged
- Students Don't Read Enough Books

JEI News

- 2014 Essay Contest Winners



*Grand prize winner Audrey Ma (7th grade)
 from JEI Learning Center Montgomery, NJ*

JEI Essay Contest

See all winners of
 the contest on page 4!

New Era of Testing Begins

This coming spring, millions of students in grades 3 and up in more than 30 states will be taking the next-generation assessments. These tests are aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) are state-led consortiums that provide the assessments. Both are computer-based tests and are untimed. The purpose of these tests is to provide accurate information to teachers and educators so that they can improve instructions to help students succeed regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

One of the key advantages of the computer-based testing is that the computer program adjusts the difficulty of questions based on student responses throughout the assessment, like that of the American College Test (ACT). For

example, in the SBAC, when a student answers a question correctly, he/she will receive a more challenging item. But when one gives an incorrect answer, it will generate an easier question. As the student is taking the assessment, the program will adapt to the students' answers and present an individually tailored set of questions and quickly identify which skills students have mastered. This on-going approach is a significant improvement over the traditional paper-and-pencil assessments because they provide more accurate scores for all students. The assessments will allow virtually all students to demonstrate what they know and what they can do.

Another advantage of computerized assessments is that it allows teachers, principals, and parents/guardians to receive results in a matter of weeks instead of months. Teachers can then use the information to improve performances by following up with more targeted

(continued on page 3)

Good Readers Become Good Writers

What does it take to become a good writer? There are, at first, the basics of grammar: nouns, verbs, sentences, tenses, etc. But eventually, the process of writing becomes more complicated. It becomes a matter of style. And not style in the sense of being beautiful, but in terms of sophisticated craftsmanship: concrete and vivid descriptions, figurative language, and effective rhetoric. Can you form a picture in your mind from the written words? Is the argument convincing? These elements of style are what distinguish good writing from the merely grammatically correct. No one becomes a good writer by talent alone. They start first by becoming good readers.

How do you become a good, critical reader? The first thing is to become an avid reader, period. This starts in elementary school. However, while it is tempting to encourage any reading, it is

crucial to the development of critical reading skills that young students be introduced to quality non-fiction books as soon as possible. This is not to say that a good fiction doesn't have its place in a child's reading repertoire, but it does not typically have all of the characteristics necessary to develop practical writing skills useful later in life. So while their favorite fantasy or adventure novel series may contain some excellent descriptive passages, it is unlikely that these books will exhibit any sophisticated rhetoric or complex argumentation. The good news is that quality non-fiction for students of all ages is more widely available now than ever before. This is especially important because of the different interests of each student, boys and girls.

When we look at a house, we might say, "This house is beautiful." We might even list a few features that we find particularly pleasing. But an architect would want to look closer, to see how the house was constructed, what materials



Contributing Writer John Cline

and techniques were necessary for achieving those features. A good, critical reader is like the architect, trying to understand how a written work is constructed. The effect of this kind of engagement is apparent, even in assignments as basic as book reports. Un-critical readers merely summarize the content of what they have read. But critical readers can explain how and why the book achieves its goals. So, becoming a critical reader will make your child a better writer.

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BRIEFS

More Technology, Please!

K-12 students want more technology in their schools. Of particular interest are such areas as gaming simulation and computer troubleshooting, which happen to be great future career opportunities. Among students, boys show more confidence in their technology skills levels than girls. Currently, however, schools are still ill-equipped in this area for financial and logistical reasons.

(www.educationworld.com, 12/2014)

Student Debt is Being Mismanaged

According to several studies, student debt is not only on the rise, but the default rate has all but doubled since 2009. This likely stems from the fact that parents often don't start early enough to save for their child's education. The Obama administration has vowed to help with loan forgiveness programs.

(www.educationsnews.org, 10/2014)

Students Don't Read Enough Books

Students in all grades don't read enough, a major educational report finds. Worse yet, the percentage of non-fiction versus fiction books is way too low (only 13-31 percent of all books read), and the reading level is often times not challenging enough.

The report used data from 9.8 million students in grades 1-12 at nearly 32,000 schools. During the course of the 2013/2014 school year, those students read a total of 330 million books. However, the amount of non-fiction in that total fell far short of the national goal.

The Common Core State Standards has called for an increasing shift to nonfiction reading over time, from 50 percent nonfiction in fourth grade to 70 percent in 12th grade.

(www.thejournal.com, 12/2014)











(A New Era of Testing Begins continued from page 1)

instruction. Of course, there are some issues with implementation. First, schools will need enough desktops or tablets for all students to take the test. Another concern is the fact that the testing will be computer-based, and therefore, students will need to be proficient in typing skills as they will need to type their responses in the writing section.

For the computerized testing, there are mainly three categories of resources to meet the needs of all students. There are embedded and non-embedded tools included in the testing platform. The first category is the set of Universal Accessibility Tools, which includes the digital notepad and scratch paper. The second category is a designated support like that of a pop-up glossary. This support will be made available to students who are in need and where the need has been identified by school personnel who are familiar with each student's needs and testing resources. The last category falls under accommodations for those students who have a documented Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan. These tools include Braille for the blind and closed captioning for the hearing impaired among some other disabilities.

Undoubtedly, education in the future needs to evolve and incorporate the technology for more efficient delivery of contents as well as assessments. Not only will students need to adapt to the new format of adjustments, but also need to master more challenging skills such as critical-thinking, analytical writing, and problem solving – the set of skills required for careers in the 21st century.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN EDUCATION

 Successes	 Challenges
 <p>Safe Environment Some sites allow teachers to control the online community. With monitoring and approving content, the dangers associated with social media can be avoided.</p>	 <p>Lack of knowledge A school's social media account must be managed by someone who understands social media and is passionate about the school. Otherwise, students will feel it isn't authentic.</p>
 <p>Collaboration is encouraged Students can critique and comment on each other's assignments. They can easily work in teams online, asking teachers questions or starting a discussion.</p>	 <p>Lack of features The lack of engagement for students can make them feel as if the school doesn't care. Even a good webpage is useless if there aren't features that include one-on-one connection.</p>
  <p>Invitation to produce content Social media can invite students and faculty to produce content for everyone. This can show the personality of the school. Schools should have a focus and a clear idea on what they want students to see when they google the school.</p>	  <p>More than a presence It's not enough to simply have a profile on a site like Facebook, it requires daily maintenance and interaction with students. Current and potential students will judge the school based on their experiences with the school's social media accounts.</p>

The Winners of the 2014 JEI Essay Contest

Congratulations!

After nearly 300 essays were submitted on November 15, 2014, the judges have chosen the grand prize winner.

The best entry was selected from 2nd to 7th grade students nationwide. Audrey Ma was proficient in all categories (Content & Ideas, Organization, Conventions, Vocabulary, Voice). She will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship along with a brand new Samsung Galaxy Tab. JEI wishes Audrey congratulations on an exceptional job!

First place winners are proud owners of a Samsung Galaxy Tab as well. Second and third places received \$100 and \$50 Barnes & Noble gift cards, respectively.

Please see all winners listed by grade on the right.

Stay tuned for our next contest - the JEI Math Olympiad which will take place in March 2015. As always, amazing prizes will be awarded!

Grand Prize

Audrey Ma (Montgomery, NJ)
7th Grade

2nd Grade

1st Place:

Avery Li (Livingston, NJ)

2nd Place:

Jeffrey Li (Herricks, NY)

3rd Place:

Dylan Kim (LA Koreatown, CA)

3rd Grade

1st Place:

Christopher Shen
(Montgomery, NJ)

2nd Place:

Emelie Kim (Milpitas, CA)

3rd Place:

Eunice Jeon (Bayside, NY)

4th Grade

1st Place:

Miranda Quing (Montgomery, NJ)

2nd Place:

Andrew Kim (Los Angeles, CA)

3rd Place:

Arha Gatram
(Edison-Piscataway, NJ)

5th Grade

1st Place:

Maggie Xia (Marlboro, NJ)

2nd Place:

Joyce E. Kim (Los Angeles, CA)

3rd Place:

Zexi Gui (North Brunswick, NJ)

6th Grade

1st Place:

Deepak Gopalakrishanan
(Marlboro, NJ)

2nd Place:

Ashritha Akam
(Edison-Piscataway, NJ)

3rd Place:

Christina Seo (Chula Vista, CA)

7th Grade:

1st Place:

Timothy Yue (Milpitas, CA)

2nd Place:

Krishi Desai (Paramus, NJ)

3rd Place:

Amy Bao (Milpitas, CA)

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