

**MISSOURI EDUCATION NEWS**  
**September 2006**  
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## **Education News**

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## **Letter to the Editor**

Greetings Mr. Jonathan Kantrowitz,

I am vegetarian (vegan actually) and read about two state senators in my state of Missouri being upset about vegetarian related questions on your test.

How absurd! I encourage you not to change a thing. I know nothing about your tests or the format, but from what I've read there is absolutely nothing wrong with your materials. This should NOT be controversial. Obviously your tests encourage students to think, and nothing in the tests that I read about is incorrect.

Yes, being vegetarian/vegan is healthier, grains should be eaten, meat is more expensive. Also, there is no cure for Mad Cow Disease and eating meat presents a risk. Children should know about this risk and make their own decision.

You are encouraging children to think and you are imparting knowledge. I applaud this. I am very disgusted to hear what you are going through, and you need to know that many people are supporting you. Don't let these pro-meat, pro-animal exploitation folks tell you how to run your business.

I wish you all the best and hope this topic is dropped. I thank you as do many others for not caving in to those with narrow viewpoints.

Sincerely,  
Melinda Rosin

I would love to see some Visual Arts Workbooks. There is such a potential for the Arts to Reinforce what is happening in the core courses. I haven't seen anything and I haven't gotten much feedback from my peer teachers. My funding is constantly being cut for who knows what reason and I am totally left alone to write and create my own curriculum. My own training has taught me the possibilities for cross-curriculum and I am not getting very far in my efforts. I understand the legislature's blind efforts in constantly attempting to improve education but they have been blind in their regards to the Arts and how they can contribute.

Kraig St.Clair Visual Arts Instructor at Richland, Mo. R-IV School District.

## **Missouri One of Only Four States With No Plans for Highly Qualified Teachers**

The U.S. Department of Education has released initial peer review feedback and related information on revised comprehensive state plans for ensuring that all public elementary and secondary school students are taught by highly qualified teachers. Based on the analysis of a 31-member team of experts, the Department determined that the vast majority of states made serious efforts to develop plans for having experienced, well-trained educators in classrooms, particularly in low-performing, disadvantaged schools. A handful of state plans did not address any required elements, and those states will undergo strict monitoring to come into compliance.

The 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico submitted plans as required under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Scored against protocols containing six requirements provided to states in March, the plans outline the bold new steps that states will take to reach the 100 percent highly qualified teacher goal by the end of the 2006-07 school year.

Nine states developed plans that were recognized by the experts as satisfying all six criteria outlined in the guidance provided by the Department. These are New Jersey, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota, Louisiana, New Mexico, Kansas, Maryland and Nevada. Thirty-nine states submitted plans that partially satisfy the six components and will be required to improve these plans and address the peer concerns by Sept. 29, 2006.

However, four states did not address any of the six requirements.

For these four states—Hawaii, Missouri, Utah and Wisconsin—the Department will:

- Provide technical assistance and support to complete their plans by Nov. 1, 2006
- Conduct an audit to ensure that their data is comprehensive and accurate
- Require that they prepare and resubmit revised plans, including specific steps to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught disproportionately by less-qualified teachers, and that their plans address all required components and correct deficiencies identified by peer reviewers
- Expect monthly updates on their progress.

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, all teachers of core academic subjects must hold at least a bachelor's degree, have full state certification, and demonstrate knowledge in the core academic subjects they teach. The law also requires that states develop plans to help teachers in low-performing and disadvantaged schools and districts become highly qualified.

Additional information on the Revised State Highly Qualified Teacher Plans is available at: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherqual/hqtplans/index.html>.

Information on the review process, protocols, and peer reviewers is available at: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/stateplanfacts.html>.

## **Marquette High School Wins \$25,000 in an Economics Competition**

Citibank has announced the winners of \$197,500 in scholarships, awards and grants for the high school teams competing in the final rounds of The Fed Challenge. The Fed Challenge is a national high school economics competition, sponsored by participating Reserve Banks and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, in which teams of high school students from around the country prepare and present analyses of the economy and recommendations for monetary policy in a series of local, regional and national competitions.

This year, teams representing seven of the twelve Federal Reserve districts (Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Kansas City, New York, Richmond, and St. Louis) participated in the national level of The Fed Challenge in Washington, D.C. All seven teams made their recommendations on U.S. monetary policy in the semi-finals. Four teams advanced to the finals.

Citibank awarded \$25,000 to each of national finalist teams and \$10,000 to each of the national semi-finalist teams in the competition. They were:

National Finalists:

- Choate Rosemary Hall from Wallingford, CT representing the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
- Montclair High School from Montclair, NJ representing the Federal Reserve Bank of New York
- Marquette High School from Chesterfield, MO representing the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

## **Missouri Teacher of the Year Jerry Thornton**

### **Recognized by President Bush at White House Ceremony**

When Jerry Thornton had a young girl in his P.E. class who was blind, he prepared a unit in which classmates could simulate her blindness. The girl's peers wore blindfolds and experienced the challenges she faced in the gym such as catching a ball, running with a sighted guide and performing exercises. From then on, many classmates offered to be her sighted guide and reminded the others to help her succeed in the activities.

The lesson – the power of inclusion – is one that Thornton routinely incorporates into his teaching. He instills in his students the value of community and shows them how to support, encourage and include others in their daily interactions.

Thornton, an elementary teacher in the Francis Howell School District, is Missouri Teacher of the Year for 2005-06. "Character education means teaching children to do the right thing even when no one is looking and to encourage other members of the community to do the same," he said.

### **A Visit with the President and First Lady**

President George W. Bush recognized Thornton and the other 2006 state Teachers of the Year at a National Teacher of the Year ceremony in the White House Rose Garden April 26.

After his trip to Washington, D.C., Thornton was featured speaker at the Missouri Teacher of the Year Clinic May 5 in Jefferson City, which was held for new candidates in the program. During the clinic, he discussed his experiences this school year as state Teacher of the Year and showed the video portion of his application. The following excerpt is taken from his video entry for the award.

"What's the Best Thing about Being a Teacher?"

1. "First, I enjoy the challenge. I enjoy the day-to-day work, the challenges of the variety of ages, abilities and attitudes. Every day is a new day, regardless of what I've planned. You're constantly adapting, changing and differentiating your instruction to be most effective. You have to learn to think on your feet. As the children interact, there's conflict. You have to figure out not just how to stop the conflict but how to facilitate their development of strategies, so they can work it out among themselves.

2. Energy. I enjoy the energy when each class enters the classroom — and my classroom is huge [gymnasium at Warren Elementary School]. The anticipation

of movement and excitement sweeps into the room, and it recharges me every time they come in.

3. Sharing. Since I see them just every other day, they want to catch me up on what's happening in their lives: 'I got a new puppy.' 'We're going to the lake this weekend,' or 'Grandpa's been sick.' It's these times and connections that I realize just how big a part we are of each other's lives and how truly special that is.

4. Discovery. I get to be present at that precise moment of discovery – whether it's how to keep the hula hoop up or how to keep three objects up in the air when juggling. Every time I hear, 'Mr. Thornton, I got it!' it takes me back to those firsts that I shared with my own daughter. I get to relive that feeling almost daily. So who wouldn't just love this job?

5. Collaboration. I enjoy the planning, the support, the camaraderie, and the insight of my colleagues.

6. Lastly, what I enjoy best about teaching is the sense of accomplishment. At the end of the day, at the end of the year, I know that I've spent my time in the most worthwhile endeavor that there is."

*This year's state finalists also assisted at the clinic. They are:*

- Paula Berner, Special School District of St. Louis County
- Ross Bullington, Mehlville School District
- Myra Collins, Kirksville School District
- Brad Peck, Independence School District
- Christine Renault, Lee's Summit School District

At the clinic, Thornton explained how he almost lost his opportunity to meet the president. After being nominated by his school district, he had nearly decided not to submit his application, but a colleague encouraged him to turn it in. He told the applicants the process is demanding but well worth the effort.

[NOTE: Candidates for the 2006-07 Teacher of the Year program must submit their application materials by July 21.]

The State Board of Education honored Thornton and the five finalists at a banquet in Jefferson City Nov. 14, 2005. He attended a national conference in January for state Teachers of the Year in Dallas. He addressed the Missouri House of Representatives April 4. His upcoming activities include attending International Space Camp and flying with the Blue Angels, the goodwill ambassadors for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

## **Missouri Educators Win Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics and Science**

Teachers in the Lee's Summit and Francis Howell School Districts were honored recently as Missouri's recipients of the [2005 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching](#).

**Lea Ann Pitcher**, a mathematics teacher at Lee's Summit High School, and **Paula Young**, a science teacher at Francis Howell North High School (St. Charles), are among 100 teachers throughout the nation to win the prestigious award this year.

In a citation given to Pitcher and Young, President Bush commended them "for embodying excellence in teaching, for devotion to the learning needs of the students, and for upholding the high standards that exemplify American education at its finest."

The presidential awards program was established by Congress in 1983. It is administered by the National Science Foundation on behalf of the White House. Each teacher chosen for the award receives a \$10,000 grant from the NSF.

### ***Six "Pioneers in Education" \_Honored***

Six educators have been honored by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as "[Pioneers in Education](#)" for 2006.

*This year's Pioneers in Education are:*

**Jack L. Brumley**, Tuscumbia, who spent 22 years at Cole County R-I, Russellville, as a teacher, coach, principal and superintendent, and was superintendent at Miller County R-III School District, Tuscumbia (1994-96). He also worked in the accreditation office for the Department of Education for 15 years.

**Alberta Everett Douglas Gantt**, St. Louis, who was an educator for 41 years, including more than 20 years as a music consultant for the St. Louis Public Schools.

**Darrell "Jack" Holley**, O'Fallon, who was a school business official in the Pattonville, Special School District of St. Louis County and Mehlville school districts. He helped create and was executive administrator of the Missouri United School Insurance Council (MUSIC), from 1985-97.

**Beverly Tising Meyer**, High Point, who taught music at Green Ridge, Versailles and High Point, and spent 25 years at Cole County R-I School District, Russellville, where she retired in 2000. She currently teaches part time in the Latham R-V School District.

**William "Bill" Ray**, Columbia, who began his career in South Nodaway County and served as superintendent at Trenton School District and president of Trenton Junior College (1966-75). He was assistant executive secretary of the Missouri State Teachers Association (1975-82) and executive secretary of the Missouri Community College Association (1982-89).

**Sandra S. Wiser**, Jefferson City, who began her career as a music teacher at Cole County R-I School District, Russellville, and spent 22 years at the South Callaway R-II School District, Mokane (1977-99), where she continues to teach music part time.

Mrs. Wiser and Mrs. Meyer are sisters.

## **Smithville High School Teacher Chosen Missouri Teacher of the Year**

Darryl Johnson works hard in the classroom to excite and motivate his students. He believes that if he does his best at teaching, his students will do their best at learning. This mutual expectation permeates his classroom and is at the heart of his teaching philosophy.

Mr. Johnson, a communication arts teacher at Smithville High School, is [Missouri's Teacher of the Year](#) for 2006-07, state education officials announced today.

He is revered in Smithville as a high-energy teacher who uses enthusiasm and humor to engage his students and help them achieve. Most importantly, he strives to earn their respect.

The feeling is mutual.

Student McKynlee Westman described Mr. Johnson as "something special." "Every student left his room at the end of the year with a better knowledge of respect, creativity and what they could achieve," she said in a letter of recommendation for the award.

A nine-member selection committee appointed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education interviewed six state-level finalists Aug. 31 to select the new Teacher of the Year. Mr. Johnson automatically becomes Missouri's candidate for the 2007 National Teacher of the Year award.

Mr. Johnson is beginning his 15th year in the profession. He has been in his current position at Smithville High School since 1995 and is presently chair of the English department. His effectiveness as a teacher is based upon establishing and maintaining mutual expectations, using humor to spark and retain interest,

and developing creative assessments.

"The truth about achievement really comes down to teachers and students having *mutually* high expectations of one another," he said in the written nomination form for the award. "Students respect teachers who hold strong convictions but are also empathetic; ones who use humor often without being insensitive or inappropriate; ones who are prepared but flexible. Students want someone who knows their name, acknowledges their presence and establishes a safe environment for them.

"Simply put, good teaching involves humor because it's effective in establishing and maintaining rapport and improving retention. Humor is one of the few things that connect teachers and students. Unpredictable zingers from both teachers and students add liveliness and color to discussion."

### **"An Ambassador for Both Teaching and Learning"**

Mr. Johnson serves on the professional development committee for his district and school. He also serves on the Northwest Missouri State University Advisory Council in Secondary English Methods. His writings have been published in regional and national publications, including the "English Journal," a national publication for high school English teachers.

Six of his lessons have been featured as best practices by Missouri [SuccessLink](#), three of which he won a \$100 stipend. He has been a keynote speaker for various education groups and for three commencement ceremonies.

Before joining the Smithville School District in 1995, he taught at Plattsburg High School in the Clinton County R-III School District (1993-95) and at Northeast Nodaway County R-V High School, Ravenwood (1992-93). He also was an adjunct instructor at Maple Woods Community College from 2002-04.

Mr. Johnson holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in English from Northwest Missouri State University. He earned national certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in 2002.

At Smithville High School, he has been named Teacher of the Year eight years in a row (1998-2006). Superintendent Rob Leachman described Mr. Johnson as a "phenomenal" teacher. "His standards are very high, but he conversely assumes a high level of personal responsibility for assisting his students to meet those high standards.

In the Smithville School District, he is a shining star whose impact upon the literally hundreds of students he has taught over the years has been profound."

The State Board of Education will honor Mr. Johnson and the five finalists in the Teacher of the Year program at a banquet Nov. 15 in Jefferson City. Each teacher will receive cash awards and other prizes.

The five finalists are:

1. Carol Dunn, science teacher, Summit Lakes Middle School, Lee's Summit School District
2. Kevin Hampton, video production teacher, McCluer North High School, Ferguson-Florissant School District
3. Robert Swingler, chorus teacher, Hazelwood East High School, Hazelwood School District
4. Linda Wiederholt, math teacher, Plaza Middle School, Park Hill School District, Kansas City
5. Lario Yerino, chemistry and physics teacher, Oak Park High School, North Kansas City School District

## **Missouri ACT Score Is Steady Even Though Students Post Gains on 3 of 4 Subtests**

Missouri's composite average score on the ACT college-entry exam remained steady this year, even though high school students made slight gains in three out of four subtest scores on test.

Although the state's average score did not change, state education officials already are looking forward to the potential impact of new high school graduation requirements on ACT scores in the future.

"Tougher high school graduation standards take effect for this year's freshman class. Because the members of the Class of 2010 will be required to take more core academic courses, they should earn better marks on the ACT exam," said Commissioner of Education D. Kent King.

The average composite score for Missouri high school graduates this year is 21.6, which equals the state's high mark in 1999 and 2000. The national average rose to 21.1 from 20.9. ([See 10-year trend chart.](#))

Scores for Missouri students increased this year by one-tenth of a point in three out of four subtest areas covered by the ACT exam (English, math and reading). The subtest score in science was unchanged from 2005. The average composite score, however, did not change.

**ACT Subtest Scores (all students)**

**2005    2006**

English	21.4	21.5
Math	20.9	21.0
Reading	21.9	22.0
Science	21.5	21.5
Composite Average (Total)	<b>21.6</b>	<b>21.6</b>

Missouri's statistics are based on the scores of 42,885 students who graduated from public and private high schools in 2006 and who took the ACT exam at least once during their sophomore, junior or senior years.

The number of Missouri students taking the ACT exam reached an all-time high this year, but not by much. The 42,885 students tested this year is 180 more than in 2005 and only 23 more than those tested in 2004.

Overall, 70 percent of all Missouri high school graduates take the ACT exam on a voluntary basis. Just over half of all students (53%) report that they take the "core curriculum" classes that are recommended by the ACT. This includes four years of English and three years each of math, science and social studies.

The new minimum graduation requirements that were adopted by the State Board of Education in October 2005 require all public school graduates to earn at least 24 units of credit (starting in 2010). The 24-unit minimum includes the core academic courses that are recommended by the ACT.

Test results for all 50 states were released today by the ACT, which is based in Iowa City, Iowa. For more information: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

## **Missouri Students Keep Signing Up for More Advanced Placement Classes; Stay Ahead of National SAT Averages**

The number of Missouri students taking "Advanced Placement" (AP) courses during the past year rose to 11,500 – an increase of nearly 10 percent over 2005. Participation in the AP program has been growing at a strong, steady pace for the past decade, a trend which state education officials applaud.

According to statistics released today by [The College Board](http://www.collegeboard.org) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 11,501 members of the Class of 2006 in Missouri took the final exam in at least one "AP" class. Ten years ago, the number of AP students in Missouri was about 4,300.

The Advanced Placement program allows students in public and private high schools to take college-level courses in subjects ranging from calculus to Latin. Students earn credit toward their high school diplomas, and many universities grant college credit based on a student's AP exam scores.

At the end of the year, students may take a final course exam which is published

and scored by the New York-based College Board. The same exam is given to students nationwide.

State education officials noted that the number of African-American students taking AP courses in Missouri increased sharply this year – up 57% to 616.

"Advanced Placement courses offer rigorous academic preparation for high school students, which can help prepare all students for success in college. We need to be preparing and encouraging more students in general, and more minority students in particular, to take advantage of the AP option," said Stan Johnson, assistant commissioner for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

## **Writing Test Debuts in SAT Exam**

The College Board also released state and national results today for the SAT Reasoning Test, a popular college-entry exam. This year, for the first time, the results included a mandatory writing exam for most students.

In Missouri 4,266 member of the Class of 2006 took the SAT, a decline of about three percent from the previous year. Almost 1.5 million students took the test across the nation.

The average score for Missouri students on the math portion of the SAT increased by three points, to 591. The average math score for the nation dropped by two points this year, to 518.

On the "critical reading" subtest (formerly known as the "verbal" section) Missouri's average score declined by one point, to 587. This score, however, is 84 points higher than the national average, which dropped by five points this year.

On the new writing section of the SAT, Missouri students posted an average score of 582 – 85 points higher than the national average of 497.

This year, seven percent of all high school graduates in Missouri took the SAT.

## **Truman High School Receives State Street Dream Field Redesign**

Truman High School is the winner of the State Street Dream Field contest.

The contest was designed to generate community spirit for high school baseball in Kansas City. Schools were first nominated by interested persons in the community who wrote essays to explain why the high school was in need of a baseball field overhaul, as well as why the school was deserving of this project.

The sponsors chose the five finalists (Truman High School, Washington High School, JC Harmon High School, Center High School and Bishop Miege High School) based on need and the compelling reasons offered in the essays. Then the Kansas City metro community could vote for the winner via e-mail. Votes were tabulated from more than 40,000 valid e-mail addresses from May 15 to June 15, with Truman receiving 21,373 votes.

The renovation project of Truman's existing field will include, but are not limited to the following upgrades, excavation and grading of field, soil composition consulting, irrigation, turf upgrade, new covered dugouts, new fence and backstop and landscaping.

### **Sprint Achievement Program Selects 106 Kansas City-Area Educators for 2006 Grants; Program's Three-Year Contribution to Local K-12 Education to Total More Than 1 Million Dollars**

The Sprint Achievement Program is a community program through which Sprint provides annual grants to Greater Kansas City-area K-12 educators.

In 2006, Sprint will provide 106 grants totaling more than \$370,000 and ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 per grant. This year's grants will bring the program's three-year total contribution to more than 1 million dollars.

Grants will be distributed to schools across the Kansas City area.

To view a complete list of this year's recipients, please visit <http://www.sprint.com/community/education>

Created in 2004 by working closely with area superintendents, the Sprint Achievement Program supports classroom-based projects that increase student achievement, provide enriched development opportunities for educators, and encourage family involvement in the student's education.

Sprint recognizes that education isn't "one size fits all" and designed the Sprint Achievement Program with this in mind. Sprint considers area educators the experts when it comes to what will improve achievement in their specific students.

By reviewing and approving grants tailored to individual schools and classrooms, the Sprint Achievement Program is able to directly address areas of need for students, educators and families.

"The Sprint Achievement Program empowers our teachers," said Nicole King, principal at Scuola Vita Nuova, a Kansas City, Mo., charter school that has been awarded Sprint Achievement Program grants in the past and has been selected for 2006 funding as well.

"The program recognizes smart thinking and teaching, and the money goes immediately to the classrooms - rather than getting tied up in a bureaucracy. The program has an immediate impact."

Educators applied for 2006 grants in April, and each grant was reviewed by a third-party committee representing a cross-selection of education stakeholders familiar with current curriculum development and learning resources needs.

The grants will be distributed in August, when most area schools start back in session, and are to be used during the 2006-2007 school year. At the end of the school year, educators are required to provide a results report to be considered for future grants.

The Sprint Achievement Program is directly tied to Sprint's ongoing support of community activities in the Greater Kansas City area. In 2004, Sprint Chief Executive Officer Gary Forsee committed \$20 million dollars to the region, to be given out over a three-year period with nearly a third of the funding (\$6 million dollars) to be used for K-12 education.

To learn more about the Sprint Achievement Program and Sprint's other community initiatives, please visit <http://www.sprint.com/community>

To learn more about Sprint's overall role in the Kansas City community, please visit [www.sprint.com/kansascity](http://www.sprint.com/kansascity)

## **School District of Washington Implements Assessment Tool to Improve Student Achievement**

Missouri's School District of Washington has selected Pearson Benchmark as the Web-based assessment tool to serve its 4,100 students. Teachers and administrators in the district's 11 schools, spanning 250 square miles, will use Pearson Benchmark to measure, manage and maximize student achievement through testing, reporting and analysis of data.

Nick Ginos, deputy superintendent of schools, said Pearson Benchmark "will allow us to monitor student progress and provide better feedback about skills students have mastered and areas needing additional instruction."

Pearson Benchmark allows districts to create tests to take multiple measures of student performance against standards at any time throughout the school year. With the data collected over time, teachers and administrators can monitor student progress against standards, address deficiencies and recheck mastery. The result is more targeted instruction, shorter assessment cycles, more effective teaching delivery and better student results.

Pearson Benchmark provides a new core set of capabilities, including the ability to quickly and accurately assess student progress against standards, use the data to diagnose student learning needs and target instruction to address those needs.

June Wilson, district technology coordinator, said excitement is building as implementation of Pearson Benchmark approaches. "Our principals and teachers are really impressed with how much they'll be able to see," she said.

"We'll be able to drill down to the individual student, as well as compare all our schools to standards, down to a particular question on a test. If students aren't mastering concepts, teachers can intervene early, before those students move to the next grade level or course in a series.

"If we see that one school is performing well in a particular area, we'll be able to share its best practices across the district," she said. "Our students will see great benefits."

This district's long-held focus on achievement has resulted in test scores that consistently exceed state averages in virtually every category. And, for four years running, Washington has held the honor of "accredited with distinction in performance" from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

## **Kansas City, Mo. School District Receives \$250,000 Award**

The Kansas City, Mo. School District (KCMSD) is the 2006 recipient of the \$250,000 Best Buy Teach Award for demonstrating exceptional creative use of interactive technology to help make learning fun for its K-12 students.

The district was selected for the top honor based on the strength of its ROOTS (Reaching Out with Opportunities in Technology for Students) program, a district-wide initiative to deliver more authentic learning experiences for students through use of consumer electronics. The \$250,000 Teach Award will fund the initial implementation of ROOTS at three KCMSD schools.

"We believe technology will empower our students to become lifelong learners and contributing citizens of an ever-changing global society," said Anthony Amato, superintendent, KCMSD. "We're thrilled that Best Buy is helping us achieve this mission in a very big way."

KCMSD was invited to apply for the \$250,000 award after one of its schools, J.S. Chick Elementary, received a \$15,000 Teach Award in January 2006 for "Listen to Our Elders," an oral history classroom project that explores the African American experience through the stories of people in the students' lives.

Through its Teach Awards, the school has incorporated a full spectrum of digital media technologies and recruited both youth and adult volunteer instructors.