



# Tips for Teachers

A Guide for Using *New Youth Connections*  
in the Classroom

May/June 2006

**IN THIS ISSUE:** Here is a rundown on the stories in this issue along with some questions you can use to start discussions.

## Politics and in the News

### Cell Phones in Schools

"Hold the Phone!," p. 8

**Summary:** Ilya Arbit and David Schmutzter examine the controversy around Chancellor Klein's decision to enforce the cell phone ban in city schools.

- Explain to your students who the Chancellor is. Where in the story can they find his reasons for banning cell phones in schools [see second paragraph]? Have your students ever used them to cheat on exams or to take pictures in locker rooms or call friends to get help for a fight? Can they name any emergencies that their cell phones helped them manage? If you teach in a school with permanent metal detectors ask students if they know people who sneak their phones into school.

- Many teachers report that cell phones are a distraction: they ring in class or students play video games or send text messages during class. Have your students noticed this behavior? Should phones be banned because they

interfere with learning? Or are there other ways to deal with that problem?

- What are some students doing to protest the ban [petitioning the Chancellor, threatening to stay out of school]? Are these tactics realistic and will they work? Can students think of other tactics that might be effective?

### Teen Voting

"City Teens Demand the Right to Vote," p. 6

Should the voting age be lowered to 16 for local elections? Some teens are organizing for that right at the City Council, with the support of Councilwoman Gale Brewer. What do your students think?

### Summer Jobs

"Fighting for Summer Jobs," p. 6

The Campaign for Summer Jobs is lobbying the state for more employment slots for young people this summer.

## Health:

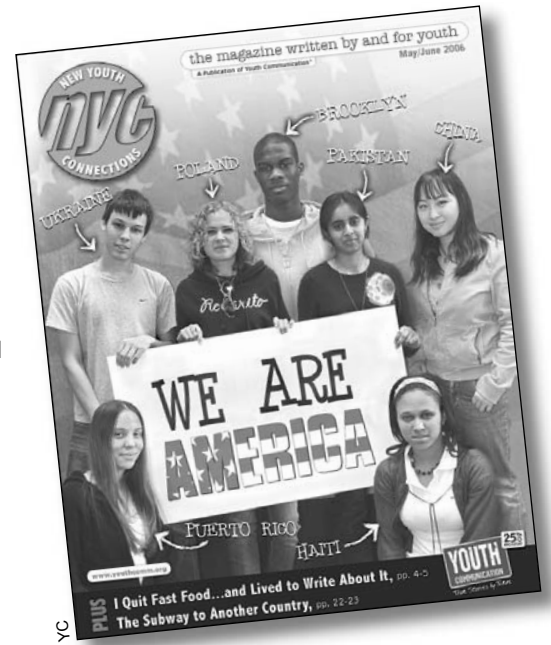
### Nutrition and Fast Food

"How I Quit Fast Food...and Lived to Write About It" pp. 4 and 5

"What's Wrong with Fast Food?" p. 5.

**Summary:** Does fast food equal slow death? Carmen Rios examines her relationship with McDonald's and what changed her mind about eating those Big Mac meals.

**Pre-reading activity #1:** Before you read and discuss this story with your group ask them to name some unhealthy activities. Make a list on the board. You should



expect the list to contain smoking, drug use, unsafe sex, drinking too much, not exercising, and eating fast food. Are there any others? Which ones do your students think are the most and least dangerous? If they had to pick one bad habit to have which one would it be? How many picked fast food consumption? How dangerous do they think eating fast food is?

**Pre-reading activity #2:** Ask your group to make a quick list of the foods they have eaten over the past two days. Which ones would they say are healthy? Unhealthy? How many times did they eat at a fast food restaurant?

### Questions for "How I Quit Fast Food and Lived to Write About It"

- What convinced Carmen to stop eating Big Macs? What about the book struck her the most? Have your students ever read a book or story that persuaded them to start or stop doing something?

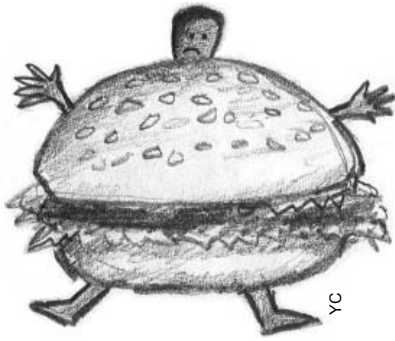
- How often did Carmen eat fast food

**Tips for Teachers** is written for the bulk subscribers to *New Youth Connections* to help them use the magazine more effectively with teens in their classes and programs.

For more information, contact:

**Youth Communication**  
224 W. 29th St., 2nd fl.,  
New York, NY 10001  
212-279-0708 ext.100  
youthcomm.org

Tips for Teachers is also available on our web site at:  
[www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org)



before she gave it up? Do your students think it was lot? Did she eat more than your students?

- Carmen says that it's hard to find healthy food in her neighborhood. Why is that? Is healthy food easy or hard to find in your students' neighborhood? Why?

## Self-esteem: Stories to Use in Advisories

There are two good stories in this issue about how adults can help struggling young people feel more confident about their abilities—especially if the young person is willing to accept help. They also offer good role models of teens being resilient: taking initiative to solve problems, developing good relationships with adults, and having insights into their bad situations. If you know a teen who's been down on herself make sure he or she reads at least one of the stories.

### “Succeeding at South Brooklyn” by Carmen Rios, p. 8

Summary: Carmen describes how

she goes from elementary school honors to middle school disenchantment to high school failure. She transfers to a school designed to keep wandering students on the path to graduation where she recaptures most of her earlier work habits and attitudes. One counselor in particular reminds her of her abilities and past academic achievements, paving the way for her timely graduation.

### “Deciding My Own Worth” by Juelz Long, p. 16

By the time he starts living in his fourth foster home Juelz has spent a lifetime hearing how worthless he is. Not surprisingly, he believes it. He struggles in school and doesn't think he can accomplish the simplest tasks. But his new foster family embraces him completely and when his father praises his lawn mowing job Juelz begins to see that what people said about him in the past is not true.

The questions and activities below relate to both stories:

the entire batch to us. Make sure each student fills out a slip of paper with their name and address. We'll put all of the names in a hat and select the winners at random.

**Freewrite writing activity:** Have students take out pen and paper. Tell them you're going to read a prompt and they have 90 second to write in response to the prompt. They must keep their pen moving at all times. Tell students you won't collect these, and they won't be required to share them (though they will be welcome to read their answers, or part of their answer) to the class if they choose. Note: Students respond better to free writing if you write along with them.

**Prompt 1:** Think of a time when you felt bad about yourself, something you did, etc. What event triggered the feelings? What emotion did you feel (shame, regret, incompetence, etc.)? How did you rebound from feeling bad about yourself?

**Prompt 2** (give students another 90 seconds): Think of a time when you were feeling low and you started to feel better because someone helped you. What were you feeling bad about? Who helped you feel better? What did they do?

Ask students if they would like to read what they've written or share any thoughts or feelings that came up as a result of doing this exercise. Ask students directly who it was who helped them and what they did that helped. (Students can respond to this question without revealing private information.) Ask if it was hard to accept help. If some students did not get help when they felt low, ask them what *would* have helped.

## Self-Esteem Discussion Questions

**Question:** Ask your students, “Is it ever *good* to feel bad about yourself? Why?” If students have a hard time with this, prompt them by pointing out that feeling down about yourself from time to time is normal and even healthy if those feelings spur you to improve yourself (do





Margaret Budzlar

better on the next test, run harder in the next race, be honest with your friends, etc.). Conversely, if you lie or betray your friends, etc., and *don't* feel bad about yourself, there's something wrong.

**Question:** Ask students: "What's the difference between *healthy* self-criticism and *destructive* self-criticism? (A few hints: Healthy self-criticism focuses on the act and not on your core personality. For example, most people who fail a test are not total failures at school. It's the difference between telling yourself, "I really should have studied harder," versus, "I'm a moron. I'll never do well in school." Also, self-criticism becomes harmful when it becomes like a tape playing in your brain that you cannot stop ("I'm stupid," "I'm incompetent," etc.) That tape was running in Juelz' brain about his general competence and in Carmen's about her ability to do well in school. They both started to believe something about themselves that was not true.

**Question:** "What helped Carmen and Juelz feel better about themselves?" [Adults who cared about them told them a "new story" about themselves. Carmen's counselor told her she could achieve. Juelz's foster parents treated him as if he was a worthwhile person, and then rewarded him for a job well done.]

**Question:** "What are some differences between Carmen's situation and Juelz's?" [Carmen's complete rejection of her high achieving past seems a mystery or at least something she doesn't explain outright. As she puts it, "I don't know how Chloe and I sank so low in our first few months of 9<sup>th</sup> grade." Ask your student why they think Carmen "sank so low." Juelz's case is more clear-cut: years of being belittled and branded as useless took their toll.]

**Question:** "Carmen and Juelz both feel much better about themselves by the end of the story. How could these stories

## Resources at youthcomm.org

**Anthologies of teen writing on 70 topics:** Our spring catalog contains 70 anthologies of teen writing you can use in advisories, reading classes, counseling groups, and other settings. You can order straight from the site, [www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org).

**Recent stories:** Looking for stories your students will want to read? Do you

want to know what teens think about school, immigration, dating and dozens of other topics? Youthcomm.org contains stories from recent issues of Youth Communication's two magazines, *New Youth Connections* and *Represent: The Voice of Youth in Foster Care*. Read them, download them, use them with your students.

have gone another way? Could they have ended for the worse instead of the better? Why?" [Help guide students to see that both Carmen and Juelz were open to accepting help from adults who cared about them. Why do they think that is? Why didn't Carmen blow off the counselor? Why didn't Juelz act out with his new foster parents? Do your students detect some inner resolves of strength or resilience, or even humility that enabled them to respond to the help that was offered?]



Qing Zhuang



Rosheed Wellington

focused on discipline and rote learning. Kanwal is delighted to find that in U.S. schools students are expected to think for themselves.

### Travel the World Without Leaving New York, p. 22-23.

In these six short articles, teens visit ethnic neighborhoods around New York (Jamaican, Greek, Indian, and Chinese). They go to cafes, eat ethnic food, and even make Indian bread. Your students will be fascinated to see what our students learned when they visited foreign cultures that are just a subway ride away.

### Immigrant Speakout, p. 12

What do your students think about immigration? Almost everyone we interviewed was in favor of it. Consider playing the Devil's Advocate: If anyone could come to the U.S., would the benefits that attract people quickly disappear? (For example, if the borders were opened tomorrow and 10 million Mexicans, or 50 million Chinese came to the U.S. for a better life, would such a massive influx actually destroy the life they thought they were coming here to achieve? What are reasonable limits to place on immigration? Ask your students to do some serious wrestling with this question.)

## Immigration Stories

**"Lost in the Desert," by Pedro Cruz, p. 3 and "Crossing the Border," by Evelyn, p. 15**

Pedro and Evelyn describe very difficult immigration ordeals. Whether you agree or disagree with illegal immigration, Pedro's story shows the tribulations that undocumented immigrants go through to try to achieve a better life in this country.

**"A Different Kind of Education," by Kanwal Javaid, p. 10**

In her native Pakistan, schools



# 2006 Reader Survey



## How to Enter

1. Fill out the survey. You must answer all the questions to be eligible for the prize money.
2. Write your name, address and phone number (if you have a phone) on the coupon from page 2 or separate piece of paper.
3. Put the survey and the coupon/paper with your name on it in an envelope. (Don't write your name on the survey.) Your name and answers will remain confidential.
4. Mail the envelope to: NYC Survey, 224 West 29th St., 2nd Fl. New York, NY 10001

**DEADLINE: June 30th**

### 1. What grade are you finishing right now?

- Under 7th     7th     8th  
 9th     10th     11th  
 12th     In College  
 Not in school

### 2. What is your sex?

- Female     Male

### 3. What is your race?

- Asian     Black  
 Latino     White  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Where were you born?

- USA  
 Outside USA (which country?) \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. How do you usually get your copy of NYC?

- Teacher/class     School  
 Cafeteria     School Library  
 Public Library     Parent  
 Friend     Counselor  
 College Office     Guidance Office  
 Out-of-School Program  
 COSA Office  
 Other (where?) \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. How many issues of NYC (New Youth Connections) have you read this school year?

- One     Two     Three     Four  
 Five     Six     Seven

### 7. How much of each issue do you usually read?

- Some     Most     All

### 8. What do you usually read in each issue of NYC? [Check ALL that apply.]

- Most of it     Personal stories  
 Reported stories (articles about a topic or event)  
 Street Connections  
 Letters from Readers  
 Contest Winners  
 Sex 411 [Sex Health Advice Column]  
 Wordsearch

### 8. Have you ever done any of the following after reading NYC? [Check ALL that apply.]

- Talk to a friend  
 Talk to your parent(s)  
 Talk to a counselor  
 Do something positive in the community (like volunteer or attend a meeting)  
 Write a letter in response to an NYC story  
 Enter an NYC contest (other than this one)  
 Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

### 9. Have you ever changed a habit or opinion after reading NYC?

- Yes (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

- No

### 10. Who else, besides you, reads your copy of NYC? (Check ALL who do.)

- Just me     Brother/Sister  
 Friend/Classmate  
 Parent     Someone else (who?) \_\_\_\_\_

### 11. How often do your parents read NYC?

- Most issues     Some issues     Never

### 12. Has reading NYC ever helped you better understand people with different life experiences?

- Yes     No

### 13. If you answered yes to question 12, please tell us who.

- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender people  
 People of other races/ethnicities  
 People with different religions  
 Immigrants/People from different countries  
 Teens with different family experiences (like adoption or foster care.)  
 People with disabilities  
 People with mental illness  
 Other (tell us who) \_\_\_\_\_

### 14. What do you like about NYC? [Check ALL that apply.]

- It's written by teens  
 I can relate to the true stories  
 It gives a good impression of teens to adults  
 The artwork/illustrations  
 It gives me information I can't get in other places  
 It helps me figure out my own problems/personal issues  
 Makes me feel more hopeful  
 Makes me feel less alone  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### 15. What would you like to change about NYC?

- I wish it came out more often  
 I wish it had more pages  
 I wish I could find it more easily  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### 16. Overall, how would you rate NYC?

- Excellent     Good  
 Average     Fair  
 Poor

### 17. Do you have Internet access at home?

- Yes     No

### 18. Have you ever visited our website, www.youthcomm.org?

- Never     Once  
 2-3 times     More than 3 times

### 19. What is your favorite website?

### 20. Do you own an MP3 player (like Ipod or Sony Bean)?

- Yes     No

### 22. Do you belong to an online community like MySpace.com or High5.com?

- Yes     No

### 23. Would you like to receive an email newsletter of the latest news, stories and contests when we publish each issue?

- Yes (your email address) \_\_\_\_\_

- No     I don't have e-mail.

You're done! Now write your name, address and phone number on a separate piece of paper. (We'll select three names at random to win the prizes.) Put the paper and the survey in an envelope, and mail it to:

NYC Survey  
224 West 29th St., 2nd Fl.  
New York, NY 10001

**Answer the survey on the web! [www.surveymonkey.com/NYCreader2006](http://www.surveymonkey.com/NYCreader2006)**