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# AAMA Newsletter #10

## November 2009

A RECENT SELECTION OF MEDIA EDUCATION IDEAS, EVENTS, SOURCES AND RESOURCES  
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### AAMA EXECUTIVE MEETINGS & NEWS

• **New Executive Board Elected At AAMA Annual General Meeting** — on May 12, 2009 the following were elected for the 2009 – 2010 AAMA year:

- **President** Rod Gustafson, Journalist/Media Analyst (Calgary)  
Contact Rod at: Rod Gustafson <rod@parentpreviews.com>
- **Vice-President** Kerry Bennett, Journalist/Media Analyst (Calgary)  
Contact Kerry at: Kerry Bennett <kerry@parentpreviews.com>
- **Past President** Wayne Blair, Teacher/media/Tech. Consultant (Edmonton)  
Contact Wayne at: Wayne Blair <wblair@planet.eon.net>
- **Secretary/Treasurer** Henry Johns, Teacher/Librarian (Retired) (Edmonton)  
Contact Henry at: HENRY JOHNS <aama@shaw.ca>
- **Director-At-Large** Nicholas Spillios, Media/Film Consultant (Edmonton)  
Contact Nicholas at: nicholas <nikosharik@gmail.com>



**Calgary — November 7th, 2009 NFB co-presentation with GIRAF Animation**

Time: 2.30 pm: Animation Feast - NFB New Releases Program  
4 pm: Special presentation with Cordell Barker  
Venue: Plaza Theatre 1133 Kensington Road  
Limited seating.

**Calgary — November 8th, 2009 NFB co-presentation with GIRAF Animation**

Time: 1 pm: Family Program – Kids & Youth Program  
Venue: Plaza Theatre 1133 Kensington Road  
Limited seating.

For more info on activities: <http://films.nfb.ca/get-animated>

● **28th Global Visions Film Festival — “Let Your Mind Travel” — November 5-8; 2009,**

**Edmonton, Alberta** — The Global Visions Film Festival (GVFF) is an annual, one of a kind, Edmonton based festival which celebrates the work of passionate, accomplished documentarians from Canada and around the world. Through the work of Canadian and international filmmakers, GVFF celebrates the passion of film and the diversity, joy, and responsibility of being a global citizen. We began 27 years ago as the Edmonton Learners Centre's Third World Film Festival. It became a non-profit society — The Global Visions Festival Society — in 1998 which organizes and runs the Global Visions Film Festival. GVFF draws its strength from enthusiastic, dedicated, grassroots community supporters, patrons and volunteers. Over the years more than 75 thousand people have taken part in this event and the audience continues to grow. Global Visions' mandate is to promote Canadian film and video as catalysts for reflection, discussion, and responsible action towards the social, cultural, economic and ecological well-being of our world. As a Canadian film festival, Canadian stories are emphasized: Canadians want to see themselves, their families, their communities, and their issues on film. Global Visions does this by sourcing out and presenting the best Canadian documentaries available. These stories, shaped and crafted by our exceptional filmmakers allow audience members to reflect upon their role in their city, their country, their world and give them a chance to truly develop their own Global View or Global Vision. To this mix Global Visions adds illuminating documentaries from countries like China, Pakistan, Iran, Kenya, the U.S., Germany and Israel, just to name a few. While Global Visions films often touch on politics and social justice, we are not a political or politically correct film festival. Global Visions is about human experiences and overcoming obstacles. When you leave a screening Global Visions wants you to feel enlightened, challenged, uplifted and most importantly entertained.

More information and tickets at: <http://www.globalvisionsfestival.com/>

● **Educational Media Marketplace (EMM) — November 2-3; 2009 (in Calgary) and**

**November 5-6; 2009 (in Edmonton) 2009** — Canadian educational media distributors are once again collaborating to offer a preview venue for educational purchasers of audiovisual resources. Two locations are offered this year each location features the latest releases from hundreds of the world's best producers. Last year over 15 educational media distributors displayed their audiovisual resources in many different formats — including

CBC/Radio Canada, FilmWest Associates, McNabb Connolly/Weston Woods Canada, National Film Board of Canada, and Ethos.

More information and registration at:

McNabb Connolly — Bea Morton

[Beamorton@mcnabbconnolly.ca](mailto:Beamorton@mcnabbconnolly.ca)

or

CineFete — Sonia Maltais

[soniamaltais@cinefete](mailto:soniamaltais@cinefete)

• **Fourth Annual Canada Media Literacy Week — The theme this year is “Media Literacy in the Digital Age” — November 2-6; 2009** — this annual event is co-lead by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) and Media Awareness Network (MNet). It is expected that this year will be marked by even more participation by teachers, schools and organizations across the country.

To help spread the media literacy word, a number of organizations have officially offered or been invited to lend their support to this initiative. This year's official collaborators include the:

- National Film Board of Canada,
- Association for Media Literacy (Ontario),
- Media Education Project (Guelph University),
- McGill University Faculty of Education,
- Canadian Association for Media Education Organizations (CAMEO),
- Ontario Library Association,
- Pacific Cinémathèque,
- London Public Library,
- Concerned Children's Advertisers,
- Prime Minister's Awards of Teaching Excellence, and
- Simon Fraser University.

MNet and the CTF will:

- Promote and showcase the good work that is being done through our networks, speaking engagements, media releases, and the National Media Education Week web site: <http://www.medialiteracyweek.ca/en/default.htm>
- Try to get press coverage for local events through our sponsors;
- Place articles in educational publications; and
- Promote and share resources through the National Media Education Week web site.

If you would like more information about becoming a collaborator, or where a session near you will be held, please contact MNet Co-Executive Director Jane Tallim at:

[jtallim@media-awareness.ca](mailto:jtallim@media-awareness.ca)

or

Go to the MNet website at: <http://www.medialiteracyweek.ca/en/default.htm>

The following sessions have been announced for Alberta:

• **Get Animated** — National Film Board (NFB) presents a Canada-wide series of free screenings, master classes and activities marking International Animation Day. Watch the NFB's latest animated films on the big screen for free and attend special presentations with Oscar®-winner Chris Landreth (Ryan) and twice Oscar®-nominated Cordell Barker (The Cat

Came Back). You can also enjoy NFB's exclusive online programming. See above for dates, times, locations, etc. in Edmonton (October 24 & 26; 2009) and in Calgary (November 7 & 8; 2009).

- **Media Literacy Resource Workshop, December 2, 2009** — the Media Awareness Network is presenting at the **Digital Citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom** conference hosted by the Alberta Technology Leaders in Education at the Capri Centre, Red Deer. More about the conference at:

<http://atle.memberlodge.org/Default.aspx?pagelid=1845>

Read online about featured educators and youth projects across Canada, such as:

- **Rob Dougherty**, a Grade 7, 8 and 9 teacher at the Tom Baines School, Calgary, Alberta in drama, performing arts and explorations in film at Tom Baines School in Calgary, Alberta, was awarded a 2009 Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence for his outstanding achievements in teaching.

Rob's teaching approach is to value everyone for their creative talents, aptitudes and attitudes and to encourage student leadership and collaborative problem-solving during student-led theatre and film productions. Rob pioneered the integration of information and communications technology into junior high performing arts courses in Calgary, including the use of film in drama classes, employing digital recording and editing techniques. The curricula he developed are now available province-wide.

Under Rob's direction, students created a moving multi-media presentation about Canadian soldiers who died in the Afghanistan campaign for the school's Remembrance Day gathering. He also created a *Star Wars* fan club, one of the school's most popular clubs, where students learn about filmmaking, story telling and acting as well as collect funds for charity.

- **Kym Stewart**, PhD student, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia doctoral work has looked at how to imaginatively engage children in an examination of their media culture and to create lesson plans that are culturally inclusive.

Along with Jude Comeau, a Grade 3 teacher at Armstrong Elementary School in Burnaby, she has developed a media education unit, *Media Detectives-in-Training*, which allows students to take on the role of media detectives to make sense of their media-saturated world. The students are provided with case study situations to hone their detective skills, solving the mysterious case of branding, scoping out obnoxious and sly logos, and tracking down the product-placement culprits.

In addition to this project, in 2007-08 Kym worked with Dr. Mark Fettes and Vonnie Hutchingson on a project that addressed the concerns of the effectiveness of transformative media education in public elementary schools in a primarily First Nations community, Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands. The focus of this project was to develop lessons that were tied to the community in an attempt to merge media literacy with the local land and culture. The unit relied on Haida stories to provide the engaging structure for looking at the world we now live in.

Kym is also a media education consultant for the district of Prince Rupert. Kym, Debbie Leighton-Stephens and several teachers in the district have taken on the challenge to create culturally inclusive media education programming for students as a means of engaging them emotionally and socially.



# PICKS FROM THE 2009 TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

NOTE: Contributed by Nicholas Spillios (AAMA Executive Member) — Nicholas was in Toronto for the Toronto International Film Festival — these are his pick from days of viewing.

Choosing from over 300 films at the Toronto International Film Festival can be daunting and fun. Here are a few of this reviewer's choices which are released for the fall -

**CAPITALISM: A LOVE SORY.** Michael Moore takes another blow against U.S. corporations but in his usual inimitable humorous fashion, documentary style. Looking for explanations, he finds them in interviews with ordinary folk. Satirical, witty, and engaging.

**THE INFORMANT!** An almost unrecognizable paunchy Matt Damon is a corporate whistleblower who works with and against the F.B.I. and at the same time traps himself. Twists and turns in the plot keep our attention.

**WHIP IT.** Canadian Ellen Page of "Juno" fame takes on the roller derby culture fighting her parents who have beauty contest plans for her. Drew Barrymore directs and plays her colleague. This girl bonding film rocks with energy, spirit and verve. Take your children to this one.

**PRECIOUS: BASED ON THE NOVEL 'PUSH' by SAPHIRE.** Precious Jones (Gabourey Sidibe) is an African-American teen-ager who faces overwhelming obstacles. Some of these include living in Harlem, obesity, becoming pregnant by her father twice, being abused by her brutal mother (Mo'Nique) and illiteracy. But she is a dreamer who grabs the opportunity afforded her in an alternative program to escape. Not an upbeat film but one which offers hope and redemption and in turn focusses on our potential to overcome. Winner of the Audience Choice Award at TIFF.

**THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS.** Let's face it, war is illogical, George Clooney who is everyone's favourite takes the war to its ultimate hilarious conclusion. A reporter (Ewan McGregor) depends on the unreliable aid of an inside informant (Clooney) to uncover a secret unit of the United States military assigned to discovering battlefield uses for psychic powers. One of the first films to offer a contrast to ambitious movies about Iraq and the Middle East conflict.

**THE YOUNG VICTORIA.** Covers Victoria's early struggle in inheriting the crown and her early years with Prince Albert. The intrigue which took place before and during her crowning are well developed and fascinating to view. Emily Blunt charms as Victoria with Miranda Richardson as her scheming mother, the Duchess of Kent, whose advisor pushes the young independent princess to accept a Regency. History buffs should relish the details on her crowning and Albert's discomfort as her husband and confidant as he asserts himself with her and her advisors.

**ME AND ORSON WELLES.** The teen-age throb, Zac Efron, is the idealistic actor who is hired to star in Welles' production of "Julius Caesar" in 1937 New York. Before taking the film world by storm, Welles was doing the same on Broadway. His ego, idiosyncrasies and magnetism are

given full treatment by the actor Christian McCoy in a humorous look at backstage Broadway. His dynamic character, explosive temper and personality clashes make for a fascinating study of a driving force of the cinema before his arrival in Hollywood. For the curious film and history buffs.

NOTE: The above reviews were drawn from reviews submitted to "Edmonton Senior" in Edmonton. Acknowledgment to the paper is given.



## **MEDIA RESEARCH, OPINION & SPECULATION**

• **Media Violence and Children — the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Issues Two Policy Statements** — Exposure to media violence through television, movies, music and video games can contribute to a variety of physical and mental health problems for children and adolescents. These include aggressive behavior, nightmares, desensitization to violence, fear and depression. The AAP issued two policy statements in October; 2009, the abstracts are below:

### **AAP Policy Statement — Media Violence, October 19, 2009**

Exposure to violence in media, including television, movies, music, and video games, represents a significant risk to the health of children and adolescents.

Extensive research evidence indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed.

Pediatricians should assess their patients' level of media exposure and intervene on media-related health risks.

Pediatricians and other child health care providers can advocate for a safer media environment for children by encouraging media literacy, more thoughtful and proactive use of media by children and their parents, more responsible portrayal of violence by media producers, and more useful and effective media ratings.

### **AAP Policy Statement — Impact of Music, Music Lyrics, and Music Videos on Children and Youth October 19, 2009**

Music plays an important role in the socialization of children and adolescents. Popular music is present almost everywhere, and it is easily available through the radio, various recordings, the Internet, and new technologies, allowing adolescents to hear it in diverse settings and situations, alone or shared with friends. Parents often are unaware of the lyrics to which their children are listening because of the increasing use of downloaded music and headphones.

Research on popular music has explored its effects on schoolwork, social interactions, mood and affect, and particularly behavior. The effect that popular music has on children's and adolescents' behavior and emotions is of paramount concern. Lyrics have become more explicit in their references to drugs, sex, and violence over the years, particularly in certain genres. A teenager's preference for certain types of music could be correlated or associated with certain behaviors.

As with popular music, the perception and the effect of music-video messages are

important, because research has reported that exposure to violence, sexual messages, sexual stereotypes, and use of substances of abuse in music videos might produce significant changes in behaviors and attitudes of young viewers.

Pediatricians and parents should be aware of this information. Furthermore, with the evidence portrayed in these studies, it is essential for pediatricians and parents to take a stand regarding music lyrics.

The AAP has released the two updated policy statements addressing these issues and are available at:

<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/MediaViolenceLyrics.cfm>

- **“Final Edition — Twilight of the American Newspaper”** — a delightful, entertaining, personal, and nostalgic stroll through the history of the American Newspaper. A must read!!!

Selected quotes follow:

“A scholar I know, a woman who is ninety-six years old, grew up in a tin shack on the American prairie, near the Canadian border. She learned to read from the pages of the *Chicago Tribune* in a one-room schoolhouse. Her teacher, who had no more than an eighth-grade education, had once been to Chicago—had been to the opera! Women in Chicago went to the opera with bare shoulders and long gloves, the teacher imparted to her pupils. Because the teacher had once been to Chicago, she subscribed to the Sunday edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, which came on the train by Tuesday, Wednesday at the latest.”

“Men, usually men, who assumed the sole proprietorships of newspapers in the nineteenth century were the sort of men to be attracted by the way a newspaper could magnify an already fatted ego.”

“The saga of American journalism in the twentieth century became a story of children and grandchildren and lawyers... as families sold off the nineteenth century.”

“In the growling gray light (San Francisco still has foghorns), I collect the *San Francisco Chronicle* from the wet steps. I am so lonely I must subscribe to three papers — the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*. I remark their thinness as I climb the stairs. The three together equal what I remember.”

The article is in the November 2009 issue of *Harper’s Magazine*.

- **Why Summers Matter in the Rich/Poor Achievement Gap** — by Richard Allington & Anne McGill-Franzen, August 24, 2009

**Abstract** — *Summer reading loss accounts for at least 80 percent of the reading achievement gap by 9th grade. Yet almost no federal or state programs or school district initiatives target summers as key to closing the achievement gap. In this paper we report on studies illustrating that much can be done, and be done inexpensively, to address summer reading loss.*

As we all know, the gap in reading achievement between economically disadvantaged students and other students in American schools is substantial and to our dismay, stubbornly persistent. According to the NAEP data for high school seniors, that gap is roughly four years in reading achievement, with poor twelfth graders scoring almost identically to more advantaged eighth graders! And the gap has not diminished across the grades since the

advent of the No Child Left Behind legislation.

The fundamental cause of this achievement gap has been known at least since the 1980s when Hayes and Grether published their analysis of the achievement gap in the New York City schools. More recently, Alexander, Entwisle and Olson (2007) tracked reading achievement from the beginning of school to ninth grade in Baltimore and reported precisely, again, what Hayes and Grether (1983) reported almost 30 years ago – that almost all of the reading achievement gap occurs during the summer when most children are not attending school. Additionally, Cooper, Charlton, and Valentine (2000) provided a meta-analysis demonstrating the very same outcome more than a decade ago. At the same time Borman and Dowling (2006), as well as Paris and his colleagues (2004), and McGill-Franzen and her colleagues (2008) have all demonstrated that when summer school programs are available for poor children their attendance will close this achievement gap. In a similar vein, Allington and McGill-Franzen and their colleagues (2008) along with Kim and his colleagues have both demonstrated that simply supplying poor children with books they can and want to read can close the rich/poor reading achievement gap just as effectively as summer school attendance does.

It is high time we attend to whether children read outside of school, particularly during summers, in addition to whether the quality of reading instruction in school is comparable across communities. Heyns, way back in 1978, 30-plus years ago, noted that poor children rarely read during the summer months in contrast to more advantaged children, and she suggested that it was this lack of reading practice the lies at the bottom of the reading achievement gap.

For us, then, the question is: When will policy address the summer reading setback, a phenomenon that may contribute to as much as 85% of the reading achievement gap?

Recent posts on the ASCD Smartbrief Alerts indicate that summer school programs have been severely impacted by the current economic crisis, that is, summer programs have been trimmed or eliminated in many districts that had previously offered them. Given the current economic constraints schools are facing, cutting summer school programs provides some financial relief to struggling school districts. But what about the struggling readers in the school districts? And what about the press to close the reading achievement gap?

One relatively inexpensive option that school districts should be exploring is ensuring poor students have easy access to books they can and want to read. In our large-scale experimental study, done with the cooperation of 17 high-poverty schools, primary grade students attended spring book fairs to select books they wanted to read. For the book fair we provided a wide selection (over 500 titles) of multilevel books on a variety of topics—books that matched the science or social studies curricula, books that represented diverse ethnic, language, and cultural experiences, popular series books, and books about TV, movie, sports and other media personalities. On the final day of school each child received at least a dozen books he or she had selected at the time of the book fair. These books were free—they belonged to the children. Our final costs to purchase these books averaged about \$45 per child for each of the three years we ran the book fairs.

Our free books effort produced reading growth in the book fair participants (when compared to a control group that received no books from us) that equaled the effect size Cooper and colleagues (2000) reported in their meta-analysis for attending summer school!

And the effect size for the very poorest children was twice as large as going to summer school!

Older children also benefit from easy access to books. Kim (2006) demonstrated that reading just 5 or 6 books over the summer eliminated summer reading setback among middle grade poor students.

The major reason poor children don't read books over the summer is that they simply do not have any. A lack of access to books that they can and want to read precludes any reading activity. When we gave kids such books, and no other support over the summer, their reading achievement improved significantly compared to the control kids who received no books from our project.

How else might schools support summer reading, other than distributing free books to students? We have witnessed a variety of options developed by school staff where funding for free book distribution was not available. Some schools have purchased a supply of paperback books and have distributed those books to children much the same way we did. But rather than allowing children to keep the books, district officials asked that the children return the books to the school in the fall. In other cases, the schools organized book exchanges two or three times during the summer. In these schools, typically, if a child returned, say, five books in July, he could then check out five new books. The same opportunity was offered in August. Other schools have simply opened the school library on Saturdays during the summer months so that popular trade books did not simply sit, unused all summer. In some cases the schools provided a bus run for kids to get to the school to check out summer reading materials. Finally, some schools resurrected an option that was available long ago but has largely disappeared—the bookmobile. Using some of the small school buses that were sitting unused all summer, these schools removed a few rows of seats and filled the buses with bins and crates of children's books. The bookmobiles were then driven to neighborhoods where poor children lived and the books set out for display and for checking out.

The rich/poor reading achievement gap is real and has not gone away even with federal dollars spent on efforts intending to close the gap. Current opinion seems to be that high-poverty schools are inadequate or simply unable to mitigate the effects of high-poverty homes and communities and it is these factors that explain the reading achievement gap. Perhaps there is some truth to this thinking, but the striking evidence about summers and opportunities to read outside of school suggests that summer reading setback is one reason federal programs have not been effective. Virtually no federal initiatives or dollars are focused on what kids are or are not reading during the summer months. A good first step in addressing root causes of the reading achievement gap, in our view, would be for schools, with or without federal dollars, to work hard to ensure that every child, both rich and poor, has easy access all summer long to books they can and want to read.

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**Cite This Article as:** *Teachers College Record*, Date Published: August 24, 2009  
<http://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 15757, Date Accessed: 10/16/2009 1:04:55 PM



## **AAMA MEMBERSHIP & NEWSLETTER INFORMATION**

**The AAMA Newsletter** is sent to all AAMA Members as a service and source of recent AAMA Executive news, and a selection of media education ideas, events, sources and resources. In addition, the Newsletter is a service to all Albertans, past AAMA Newsletters are available free about four to five months after initial distribution to members. Previous Newsletters are archived on the AAMA Website — <http://www.aama.ca>.

Please pass AAMA Newsletters on to others who may be interested in information on media literacy/education/awareness.

Join AAMA and the media awareness/literacy/education conversation, discussion, and action — join, support and contribute to the programs and work of the Alberta Association for Media Awareness (AAMA).

For information and/or membership and/or Newsletter contributions, please contact Wayne Blair, Editor of the AAMA Newsletter at:

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