

President's Message

Dear NLP Friends and Supporters,

The intensely contested presidential primaries present an opportunity to reflect upon one of the enduring impacts of NLP on our students: connecting them to the wider world.

We see this in the bonds that our journalist fellows forge with students, in the feedback and comments of educators and in our assessment data, which show that students who complete an NLP unit say they are more likely to become civically engaged — including voting in elections.

Our [Spotlight](#) feature explores some of the ways that this connection manifests itself: in knowledge of world events, consumption of news, family discussions at home and career aspirations. A veteran NLP teacher says that, for her students, we are creating “a deeper understanding of the world that they are in than any textbook lesson.” In short, as one NLP journalist fellow put it, “We are changing the behavior of kids.”

Our [Profile](#) focuses on Father Joseph Parkes, the dynamic founding president of Cristo Rey New York High School, one of NLP’s exceptional educational partners. Parkes also notes that NLP is giving students the skills to become engaged and informed citizens of the world — skills “that can remain with them forever.”

In [NLP News](#), we share a Teachable Moments blog item about the importance of fact-checking in the presidential race, a core NLP value that we emphasize with our students. We also recognize two funders whose grants will help us reach more young people, both in our classroom program in Chicago and everywhere through a mobile app, and a third who made a gift in connection with the film “Spotlight.”

As the nation moves deeper into this election campaign, we hope you’ll consider how vital it is that young people have the tools to know what information to believe and act on when their time comes to enter the voting booth. In the meantime, we thank all of our outstanding participants and supporters who are helping us give more and more students the ability to do so.

All the best,

AlanAlan C. Miller
President/CEO

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NLP Turns Eight!



The News Literacy Project celebrated two milestones on Feb. 2 — [the eighth anniversary of its founding and the seventh anniversary of its classroom program](#), which kicked off with an event in Brooklyn featuring journalist and NLP founding board member Soledad O’Brien.

Share Our Newsletter

As friends of NLP, you've been able to stay up to date with all of our latest news. Help your friends stay informed, too. Please use the '**Forward to a friend**' link at the bottom of this newsletter or [share this link](#) so they can sign up for our newsletter and never miss an NLP update!

NLP News

A Timely Teachable Moment Item, Two Grants and a 'Spotlight' on NLP

So far, the 2016 presidential campaign has served to underscore the need to give the next generation of American voters the ability to see through the blizzard of spin, political ads and false statements that permeate each election season.

In his latest [Teachable Moments blog item](#), retired Associated Press reporter Larry Margasak asks whether fact-checking remains relevant amid the latest onslaught of political misinformation. His conclusion: It's more vital than ever.

We are pleased to announce two new grants to support our efforts to give young people the tools to become well-informed, responsible citizens — and, eventually, voters. The [American Press Institute](#) has awarded NLP \$15,000 to develop a mobile app to support or supplement our CHECKOLOGY™ e-learning platform, which will be launched in May. These funds will augment an earlier \$35,000 grant from AT&T.

The [Chicago Tribune Foundation](#) has provided \$5,000 to support a classroom program for a school in the Little Village Lawndale High School Campus in Chicago during the current school year.

Finally, Open Road Films, the lead producer of the movie "[Spotlight](#)," has donated \$2,500 to NLP in honor of Martin Baron. Baron, a friend of NLP, was the editor of The Boston Globe during the paper's investigation of the sexual abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church that is the focus of the film. He is now executive editor of The Washington Post, one of NLP's participating news organizations.



Janae Atchison, a senior at Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School in Washington, tries on studio headphones during an NLP field trip to NPR headquarters in December. Photo by Maureen Freeman

NLP Spotlight

Opening a Window on the World



Middle school students from De La Salle Academy meet with Marc Lacey (right), associate managing editor for weekends at The New York Times, during a field trip to the Times' office near Times Square. Photo by Elis Estrada

At KIPP NYC College Prep, a group of high school seniors did not know that Osama bin Laden had been killed more than a year earlier until they learned about it in their News Literacy Project unit. By the time their unit was done, they were following world events as avid readers of The New York Times.

In Chicago, as a result of their experience with NLP, middle school students in the Marquette Park neighborhood began to read and watch the news for the first time and to discuss the day's events each evening with their families.

"I have begun to closely monitor where I get my news and the quality of news I take in," 10th-grade student Hermela Mengesha wrote after completing an NLP unit at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Md., last October. "I also understand the importance of being socially and politically aware."

For the past seven years, the News Literacy Project has been opening a window on the world for students by sparking an interest in the news. In the process, young people, particularly those from underserved communities, are gaining the

tools to become lifelong learners through the news media.

"The News Literacy Project allows an opportunity for my students to experience worlds and ideas that are so different from the lives that they lead on their blocks," said teacher Carol Moran, who has included NLP units in her high school English classes at Chicago Military Academy since 2010. NLP "creates a deeper understanding of the world that they are in than any textbook lesson."

As an example, she cited a recent class when students were discussing the role of the press as a watchdog during the Iraq war and a student recalled an NLP lesson delivered via Skype by Nancy Youssef, a correspondent with The Daily Beast in Washington. "That a student can connect what we are doing now to what they experienced last year is an extraordinary learning outcome," Moran said.

Moreover, students who complete NLP units say they are more likely to become civically engaged. They are more inclined to create blog posts, correct a mistake they find online and vote in elections when they are old enough to do so, NLP assessment data show.

"We are changing the behavior of kids," said Karen Toulon, executive editor for special projects at Bloomberg's New York City headquarters and a leader of NLP's partnership with Bloomberg and PS/MS 57 James Weldon Johnson Leadership Academy in East Harlem. "To see them blossom and become engaged is really remarkable."

Beyond its classroom, after-school and digital programs, NLP is bringing students to news organizations on field trips. Such experiences can shape future aspirations.

During their visit to The New York Times last year, middle school students from De La Salle Academy had the opportunity to sit in on an editorial meeting with the associate managing editor for weekends, Marc Lacey, and the weekend staff. Lacey, an NLP journalist fellow, invited the students to weigh in on which stories and photos to play most prominently on Sunday's front page.

"The experience made me feel honored to be in the building and to actually be in the meeting for the Sunday newspaper," said student Jaymi Choi. "The experience made me want to work for The New York Times."

NLP Profile



Father Parkes (left) talks with Cristo Rey English teacher Stephanie Pham, whose 12th-grade class includes a News Literacy Project unit. Photo by Elis Estrada

Father Joseph Parkes: 'Making Our Students Citizens of the World'

Staying informed and engaged is something that Father Joseph Parkes, S.J., the founding president of Cristo Rey New York High School, takes quite seriously.

"I look at the New York Post, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and The Washington Post every day," Parkes said. "I email the papers a lot, too, and I've written to the public editor of The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and others."

According to Parkes, students often lack this kind of critical thinking and civic engagement when they arrive at Cristo Rey, a Roman Catholic college preparatory school in East Harlem.

"They are so inundated with information that I don't think they have time to figure out what's nonsense, what's propaganda and what's true," he said. "How do you build up a critical mind?"

Parkes, a warm, energetic man who has served as president of three Catholic high schools during the past 27 years, recognized the need to provide students with the know-how to be smart, active news consumers and better-informed citizens. He welcomed a collaboration with NLP when its president, Alan Miller, approached him in 2011.

"It's one of the most important needs in the country," Parkes said. "If you really want to be an active citizen, you have an obligation to begin to inform yourself about what's going on."

The collaboration has evolved into one of NLP's strongest partnerships. Dozens of students, who come from low-income communities throughout New York City and pay tuition through a work-study program, are taught NLP's core curriculum each year in their senior English class. Moreover, news literacy now informs many elements of the school's senior English course.

"They are skills that can remain with them forever. They learn how to critically read a news article or a television news story," Parkes said, "and that's a huge plus."

NLP units include lessons delivered by journalist fellows — including David Gonzalez and Andrea Elliott of The New York Times, Ron Claiborne of ABC News and Lisa Fleisher of The Wall Street Journal — who Parkes believes inspire students.

"If someone comes in from The New York Times or The Wall Street Journal to speak to them, they consider that an honor," Parkes said. "That's important to them."

As a board member of Cristo Rey's national network of 30 schools, Parkes has helped introduce NLP to Cristo Rey schools in Takoma Park, Md., and Houston. He has also participated in events to promote NLP's mission in New York and elsewhere, including the national News Literacy Summit 2014 in Chicago.

In the process, he has become an ardent advocate for news literacy education. "It's invaluable in making our students citizens of the world," he said.

The News Literacy Project (NLP) is an innovative national education program that equips middle school and high school students with the tools to be smart, active consumers of news and information and engaged, informed citizens.

Click [here](#) to learn more about NLP and visit [NLP's YouTube channel](#).

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to support NLP, you can do so [here](#).

NLP thanks its major funders and all those whose support makes our program possible.



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