

**“Conversation” on Education for Democracy:
What Works in Preparing an Active and Well-Educated Citizenry**

May 3, 2010

PARTICIPANT BIOS

Randi Weingarten, *Chair of the Meeting; President, American Federation of Teachers and Albert Shanker Institute*



In July, 2008, Randi Weingarten was elected president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which represents more than 1.4-million-member teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel; higher education faculty and staff; nurses and other healthcare professionals; and local, state and federal employees. Prior to becoming AFT president, Weingarten served for more than ten years as president of the AFT’s largest affiliate, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). The UFT represents 110,000 non-supervisory educators in the New York City public school system, as well as home child care providers and other workers in health, law and education. Weingarten sees her role as an advocate for students as well as union members. She has built a reputation as a leader in school reform who is willing to take risks and break new ground on behalf of improved schools as well as for hospitals and public institutions for children, families, and their communities. A teacher of history and civics at Clara Barton High School in Brooklyn's Crown Heights from 1991 to 1997, Weingarten helped her students win several state and national awards debating constitutional issues. She holds degrees from Cornell University School of Industrial Relations and the Cardozo School of Law, and is a member of the Democratic National Committee and numerous professional, civic, and philanthropic organizations.

Lee Arbetman, *Executive Director, Street Law*



Lee is a graduate of Grinnell College, the University of Massachusetts (M. Ed.) and George Washington University's National Law Center (J.D.). He is co-author of the organization's flagship textbook, *Street Law: A Course in Practical Law*, now in its eighth edition. He developed the Corporate Legal Diversity Pipeline Program and is implementing it with corporate legal departments and urban school systems throughout the country. He is the director of Street Law’s Supreme Court institutes and seminars, professional development programs for teachers delivered in collaboration with the Supreme Court Historical Society. Lee has been an active member and former chair of the citizenship committee of the National Council for the Social Studies. He is a former winner of the Isidore Starr award from the American Bar Association and was an adjunct professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center.

Leo Casey, *Vice President of Academic High Schools, United Federation of Teachers*



Leo Casey is a New York City native and the son of two New York City public school teachers. He attended Antioch College in Ohio, the University of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania and the University of Toronto in Canada, where he earned a Ph.D. in Political Philosophy. After a stint in political organizing, Leo began his teaching career in 1984 at Clara Barton HS, where he taught classes in civics, American history, African-American studies, ethical issues in medicine and political science for 15 years. For 10 years in a row, his classes—comprised entirely of students of color, largely immigrant and largely female—won the New York City championship of the national “We The People” civics competition, while winning the New York State championship four times and placing fourth in the nation twice. Leo’s union activism at Clara Barton began in 1987 when he led an effort to have the school building closed to clean up major asbestos contamination. He served as UFT chapter leader at Clara Barton for 10 years. He has a long history of union involvement including work as a United Farm Workers’ organizer and participation in the first unionization drive of graduate teaching assistants in Canada. He

has also worked with teacher unions and teachers in Russia, Tanzania and China on the development of civics education. In 1999, Leo became a full-time UFT special representative and was elected to his present position in October 2007. He continues to teach a class in global studies every day at Bard HS Early College in Manhattan. Leo has won several awards for his teaching, including national Social Studies Teacher of the Year for the 1992 American Teacher Awards. He led the design team for the UFT's Secondary Charter School serving as the liaison between the Board of Trustees and the school.

Sam Chaltain, *National Director, Forum for Education and Democracy*



Sam Chaltain is the first national director of the Forum for Education and Democracy, a DC-based education advocacy organization devoted to restoring the public purpose of public education. He is also the founding director of the Five Freedoms Project, a national program that helps K-12 principals create more democratic learning communities. Previously, he spent five years at the First Amendment Center as the co-director of the First Amendment Schools program. Sam came to the Center from the public school system of New York City, where he taught high school English and history, after four years teaching the same subjects at a private school in Brooklyn. His first teaching experience was in Beijing, China, where he joined the faculty of the foreign languages department at Beijing Normal University as a visiting lecturer. His writings about his work have appeared in both magazines and newspapers, including the *Washington Post*, *Education Week* and *USA Today*. A periodic contributor to CNN, Sam is also the author or co-author of four books: *The First Amendment in Schools* (ASCD, 2003), *First Freedoms: A Documentary History of First Amendment Rights* (Oxford University Press, 2006), *American Schools: The Art of Creating a Democratic Learning Community* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), and *We Must Not Be Afraid to be Free: Selected Stories About Free Expression in America* (Oxford, 2010).

Antonia Cortese, *Secretary-Treasurer, American Federation of Teachers and Albert Shanker Institute*



Antonia Cortese is the secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, elected at the union's national convention in 2008. Before that, Cortese served as AFT executive vice president from 2004 to 2008, and as an AFT vice president from 1974 to 2004. As AFT executive vice president, Cortese oversaw the union's education policy, which included chairing the AFT task force on the No Child Left Behind Act. She also co-chaired the task force that produced "Building a Profession: Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Induction," a report of the K-16 Teacher Education Task Force. From 1973 to 2004, Cortese was a leader of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). She previously was vice president of the New York State AFL-CIO and a vice president of NYSUT's predecessor, the New York State Teachers Association. Among her many professional activities, Cortese—with New York University professor Diane Ravitch—co-chairs Common Core, a group promoting a rich liberal arts education for all students. She serves on the board of the Learning First Alliance, a national coalition of major education organizations; co-chairs the Child Labor Coalition; and serves on the board of trustees of Freedom House. She recently was elected to the United Way of America board of trustees. Cortese is a task force member of Strategic Management of Human Capital in Public Education and most recently, Cortese was appointed treasurer of the AFL-CIO's Department for Professional Employees and a board member of Union Privilege. In 2002, she was a recipient of the Union Label Award of Merit. Previously, Cortese served on the executive committee of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. She also was an appointee of the U.S. Department of Education to the National Assessment Governing Board.



Bob Edwards, *host, The Bob Edwards Show, Sirius XM Radio; First Vice President, American Federation of Television and Radio Artists; Board Member, Albert Shanker Institute*

Bob Edwards, host of a talk show on satellite radio channel XM 133, was the founding host of National Public Radio's daily radio newsmagazine *Morning Edition*. Under his almost 25 years of leadership, *Morning Edition* became the most popular program on public radio, boasting 13 million listeners each week. Over its long history, Edwards and *Morning Edition* earned many accolades, most recently a 1999 George Foster Peabody Award, which described him as "a man who embodies the essence of excellence in

radio.” A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Edwards earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Louisville and began his career at a small radio station in New Albany, Indiana. Edwards also serves as a national vice president of AFTRA, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

Mickey Edwards, *Director, Aspen Institute-Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership*



Mickey Edwards is director of the Aspen Institute-Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership and lecturer at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He was a Republican member of Congress from Oklahoma for 16 years (1977-92). During that time he was a member of the House Republican leadership and served on the House Budget and Appropriations committees. Since leaving the Congress he has taught at Harvard, Georgetown, and Princeton universities and has chaired various task forces for the Constitution Project, the Brookings Institution, and the Council on Foreign Relations. In addition, he was an advisor to the U.S. Department of State and a member of the Princeton Project on National Security. His book, *Reclaiming Conservatism* (Oxford University Press), was published in March 2008. The Aspen-Rodel fellowships feature a combination of bipartisan retreats, overseas travel, leadership skills training, study, and hands-on involvement with contemporary issues. Every year, a new group of political leaders are selected to take part in the two-year fellowship program.

William Galston, *Ezra K. Zilkha Chair in Governance Studies and Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution*



William Galston is the Ezra K. Zilkha Chair in Governance Studies and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Formerly the Saul Stern Professor and Dean at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland, Dr. Galston specializes in issues of American public philosophy and political institutions. After serving as a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps and then receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1973, Galston taught for nearly a decade in the Department of Government at the University of Texas. From 1998 until 2005 he was professor of public policy at the University of Maryland. In the 1990s, he served as deputy assistant for domestic policy to President Clinton, and later as executive director for the National Commission on Civic Renewal. Dr. Galston was the director of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, an organization he founded with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, and also director of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, both located at the University of Maryland. He is the author of eight books and more than one hundred articles on questions of political and moral philosophy, American politics and public policy. His most recent book is *Public Matters: Politics, Policy, and Religion in the 21st Century* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005). Galston is also a co-author of *Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation and What We Can Do About It*, published by the Brookings Press.

Curtis B. Gans, *Director, Committee for the Study of the of the American Electorate*



Curtis B. Gans is presently and for the past 25 years, has been the director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate. As director of the Committee, Gans is the acknowledged ranking expert on voter turnout and participation. On matters of voting, he has become the primary source of information for most newspapers, wire services, news magazines and columnists. His writings have appeared in a number of major publications, and he has appeared on various talk shows and has spoken in various capacities on more than 200 college campuses and before political and trade associations. For six years he wrote a self-syndicated column that appeared in more than 20 newspapers in major urban centers. In a career that straddles both politics and journalism, Gans is also well known for leading the effort against the re-election of President Lyndon Johnson in 1967 and serving as staff director of the Presidential campaign of Senator Eugene J. McCarthy the following year. He is former member of the Democratic National Policy Council and its Foreign Policy Subcommittee. He has also been a newsman for the *Miami News* and United Press International and has written numerous articles and reviews for such publications as *The Atlantic*, *Public Opinion*, *The Washington Monthly*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Social Policy*, *The National Observer*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Book World*, and the opinion pages and sections of many newspapers. He has also contributed to many books and anthologies.

Ernest G. Green, *Co-Founder of Madison Asset Management Group; Board Member, Albert Shanker Institute*



Ernest G. Green is the co-founder of Madison Asset Management Group, an institutional asset manager. As the former chairman of the African Development Foundation, he will be using his international contacts to assist international leaders with their needs, particularly in the area of infrastructure. Mr. Green was appointed to chair the African Development Foundation by President Clinton. He was also appointed by former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley to serve as chairman of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Capital Financing Advisory Board. Previously, Green was the Managing Director of Public Finance for Lehman Brothers' (now Barclays Capital) Washington, D.C. office. Prior to joining Lehman Brothers, Mr. Green was president of Ernest Green & Associates, a minority consulting firm that provided technical assistance in marketing, financial management and economic forecasting. Mr. Green served as Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training during the Carter Administration. Prior to that appointment, Mr. Green served as executive director of the Recruitment and Training Program, Inc. (RTP, Inc.), an organization that recruits minorities for apprenticeship programs in the building trades. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, September 22, 1941, Mr. Green and eight other black students were the first to integrate Little Rock Central High School following the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that declared segregation illegal. They later would become known as the "Little Rock Nine." Hundreds of organizations have honored Mr. Green during his career, and he is the recipient of the highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, for his outstanding bravery during the integration of Central High in 1957.

Joy Hakim, *author, A History of US*



Joy Hakim is the author of a ten-volume U.S. history for children: *A History of US*, published by Oxford University Press (and now in a third revised edition). In testimony before the U.S. Senate Education Committee, David McCullough described the series as "superb." *People Magazine* called Hakim "the J.K. Rowling of the history world." With these books Hakim is trying to get educators to rethink school books—to set literary standards. She says, "If we want our students to exult in reading and love history and science, we need to give them real books to read in school. The commercial textbook is an elephant in the closet, a major cause of the decline in achievement in recent decades. There's no reason not to have good books as teaching tools in classrooms, but mostly they aren't there." Hakim's series titled *The Story of Science*, jointly published by Smithsonian Books and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), focuses on the quest to understand the universe, taking young readers from ancient Greek thinkers to black hole theorists. Hakim is currently working on two books that put evolutionary biology into a narrative framework. *Freedom: A History of US* is the companion to a 16-part PBS series of the same name, narrated by Katie Couric that spawned a teacher/student website: (www.pbs.org/wnet/historyofus) (not to be confused with the current History Channel offering: *A Story of US*). Hakim was an associate editor, editorial writer, and business writer for *The Virginian-Pilot* and a reporter on the staff of *The Norfolk Ledger-Star*. As assistant editor of World News, a foreign news service at McGraw-Hill, she worked for publications such as *Business Week* and *Aviation Week*. Her freelance writing includes articles for *The American Educator*, *Education Week*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Hakim has taught elementary school (Omaha, NE), high school English (Virginia Beach, VA), special education in a middle school (Syracuse, NY), and American literature, at a community college (Virginia Beach). For three years she worked with a group of history teachers in Los Angeles as scholar in residence under a Teaching American History grant.

E. D. Hirsch Jr., *author; Emeritus Professor of Education and Humanities, University of Virginia; Founder, Core Knowledge Foundation; Board Member, Albert Shanker Institute*



E.D. Hirsch, an emeritus professor of education and humanities at the University of Virginia, is the author of numerous books, including the best-seller *Cultural Literacy*; his more recent work, *The Making of Americans: Democracy and Our Schools*; *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*; and a preschool through sixth-grade series beginning with *What Your Preschooler Needs to Know*. Hirsch founded the Core Knowledge Foundation in

1986 to promote excellence and fairness in early education. The foundation conducts research on curricula, develops books and other materials for parents and teachers, offers workshops for teachers, and serves as the hub of a growing network of Core Knowledge schools. Hirsch is an elected member of both the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the International Academy of Education. He has served on the Research Advisory Board of the U.S. Department of Education and, in 1997, received the Biennial Quest Award for Outstanding Contribution to Education from the American Federation of Teachers.

Clifford Janey, *Superintendent, Newark Public Schools; Board Member, Albert Shanker Institute*



Dr. Clifford B. Janey was appointed as the fourteenth superintendent of New Jersey’s largest school district in July 2008. Previously, he served as the superintendent of schools and the chief state officer in the District of Columbia from 2004 to 2007. He brought to the position a strong and proven record of leadership in urban education and the improvement of student achievement. During his tenure in Washington, DC he successfully pioneered national reforms for the 78,000 students enrolled in public education, including charter schools. In short measure, the District of Columbia Public Schools reversed the negative trend line of student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress and Advanced Placement

Tests. Given his diverse experiences involving a variety of leadership and management positions in the public and private sector, Dr. Janey has a unique understanding of organizing systems and preparing people to perform at high levels. His own preparation includes a Bachelor’s degree in sociology, a Master’s degree in Education with a double major—Reading and Elementary Education and a Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Policy with a minor in Health Policy and Administration from the school of management. Prior to serving as numerous national, state and local boards including most recently the Commission that produced “Tough Times Tough Choices”, Dr. Janey earned a certificate in labor relations from Cornell University. His landmark reforms with unions, the business/high education community as well as social service and health provide context for the numerous presentations and publications. He contends that no jurisdiction should feel comfortable with current student performance data given the context of education in a global economy that is defined by knowledge and powered by innovation.

Eugenia Kemble, *Executive Director, Albert Shanker Institute*



Eugenia Kemble is executive director of the Albert Shanker Institute, a non-profit organization endowed by the American Federation of Teachers and dedicated to publishing reports and fostering candid exchange on education, labor, and democracy issues.

Beginning as a staff reporter for the newspaper of the United Federation of Teachers, the AFT’s New York City local, she moved to the American Federation of Teachers as special assistant to Albert Shanker when he was first elected as AFT president 1974. In 1983,

Kemble was named as the AFL-CIO’s representative to the Democracy Program, a coalition effort including the Republican Party, Democratic Party, U.S. Chambers of Commerce, and AFL-CIO, that recommended the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The coalition worked to explain the NED idea as its funding was guided through Congress. In 1984 Ms. Kemble was named the Executive Director of the AFL-CIO’s Free Trade Union Institute, which supported unions struggling for democracy around the world, most notably Solidarity in Poland. Returning to the AFT in 1989, she directed and helped to expand the AFT’s Educational Issues Department as Mr. Shanker’s Special Assistant for Educational Issues. In 1998-99 she organized the start-up of the Albert Shanker Institute.

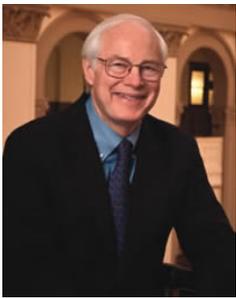
Charlene Lake, *Senior Vice President, Public Affairs and Chief Sustainability Officer, AT&T*



Charlene Lake, AT&T’s senior vice president public affairs, and chief sustainability officer, is responsible for leading the corporation’s philanthropic and volunteerism endeavors, third-party advocacy program and public affairs functional support as well as coordinating signature initiatives that connect social needs with business objectives. Ms. Lake began her career at Southwestern Bell Telephone in 1986 in Topeka, Kansas, and served in management roles in financial communications, media relations and employee communications. She assumed

leadership over SBC's corporate advertising and sports marketing department during the mid-1990s, and managed the organizations through the mergers of Pacific Bell, Southern New England Telephone and Ameritech. In 2003, Ms. Lake began developing a public affairs discipline within the SBC External Affairs department, and in 2007 launched the development of AT&T's centralized corporate citizenship and sustainability function. Lake began her professional life as a journalist, working on daily newspapers in Kansas. Ms. Lake serves on the Board of Directors of the Public Affairs Council, a leading international association designed to advance the field of public affairs, and on the Board of Directors of America's Promise Alliance, an organization committed to preparing young people for college, work and life. Ms. Lake sits on the Corporate Advisory Board of Women Impacting Public Policy, a national bipartisan group of 500,000 women business owners who actively engage in the political process. She also serves on the Council of Advisors of the Institute for Economic Empowerment for Women, which among other projects, partnered with the U.S. Department of State to teach women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan and Rwanda about free enterprise and market power. For her demonstration of sustained leadership and excellence in public service, she was honored with the Iron Jawed Angel award in 2008 by The Lugar Excellence in Public Service Series in Washington, D.C.

Jim Leach, *Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities*



Jim Leach is the ninth chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Nominated by President Barack Obama on July 9, 2009, and confirmed by the Senate in early August, Leach began his four-year term as NEH chairman on August 12, 2009. Leach previously served 30 years representing southeastern Iowa in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he chaired the Banking and Financial Services Committee, the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, and founded and co-chaired the Congressional Humanities Caucus. After leaving Congress in 2007, Leach joined the faculty at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, where he was the John L. Weinberg Visiting Professor of Public and International

Affairs until his confirmation as NEH chairman. In September 2007, Leach took a year's leave of absence from Princeton to serve as interim director of the Institute of Politics and lecturer at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Leach graduated from Princeton University, received a Master of Arts degree in Soviet politics from the School of Advanced International Studies at the John Hopkins University, and did additional graduate studies at the London School of Economics. Leach holds eight honorary degrees and has received numerous awards, including the Sidney R. Yates Award for Distinguished Public Service to the Humanities from the National Humanities Alliance; Woodrow Wilson Award from the Johns Hopkins University; Adlai Stevenson Award from the United Nations Association; Edgar Wayburn Award from the Sierra Club; Wayne Morse Integrity in Politics Award; Norman Borlaug Award for Public Service; and Wesley Award for Service to Humanity.

Gail Leftwich Kitch, *Executive Director, By the People, MacNeil/Lehrer Productions*



Gail Kitch is executive director of By the People, an initiative of MacNeil/Lehrer Productions (MLP) which uses public television to encourage and support informed non-contentious citizen dialogue around policy issues. Prior to joining MLP, Ms. Kitch served as president of the Federation of State Humanities Councils, the national membership organization of the state affiliates of the National Endowment for the Humanities, following service as director of Cambridge Forum, in Cambridge, MA, and principal in Strategic Business Consultants (SBC), an international business

consulting organization. She established SBC following her service as associate director of the Program on South Africa at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government from 1992-1994. During the 1990s, Ms. Kitch was also a frequent political commentator on state and national politics on Boston-area television and radio. A lawyer by training, Ms. Kitch practiced for a number of years with large firms in Washington, DC and Boston, MA following graduation from University of Chicago Law School. She is a former chair of the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, and was a Radcliffe College Public Policy Fellow during 1997-1999. Among other activities, Ms. Kitch currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Women's Foreign Policy Group, and is a

member of the Board of Management of the Cosmos Club and the Board of Directors of the National Conference on Citizenship.

Jeffrey Mirel, *David L. Angus Collegiate Chair in Education; Professor of History, University of Michigan*



Jeffrey Mirel is the David L. Angus Collegiate Chair in Education, professor of history, and an associated faculty member in the Center for Russian and East European Studies. His major areas of interest are the history and politics of urban education and the history of school reform, particularly high school curriculum reform. He is the author of the recently published *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants*, and of *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit 1907-8*, which won the 1995 Outstanding Book

Award of the American Educational Research Association and the 1995-96 Outstanding Book Award of the History of Education Society. He is the co-author with David Angus of *The Failed Promise of the American High School, 1890-1995*, which was published in 1999. He is currently working on a book about education and the Americanization of European immigrants in the first half of the 20th century. Mirel received his Ph.D. from UM in 1984. He has been a professor of education at Northern Illinois University and at Emory University where he was also Director of the Division of Educational Studies.

Rita Foy Moss, *Education Program Analyst in the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS), U.S. Department of Education.*



Rita Foy Moss is an education program analyst in the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) at the U.S. Department of Education. She is responsible for oversight and management of the civic education program which supports both domestic and international activities. In addition, she serves on the OSDFS school climate team, which designs and develops programs related to keeping schools safe, supportive, and healthy for student success. She has served as a COR for a contract that provided technical assistance and data analysis, reporting, and training to grantees (Center for Character Education and Civic Engagement). In her previous federal service with the Department of Education, Rita has

served as monitor of national research and development centers funded under the research arm of the Department, and projects that support the improvement of education. Prior to joining the federal government workforce, Rita taught history and government in an urban high school.

Pedro Noguera, *Professor, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, New York University*



Pedro Noguera, PhD, is a professor in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University. He is also the executive director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education and the co-director of the Institute for the study of Globalization and Education in Metropolitan Settings (IGEMS). An urban sociologist, Noguera's scholarship and research focuses on the ways in which schools are influenced by social and economic conditions in the urban environment. Noguera has served as an advisor and engaged in collaborative research with several large urban school districts throughout the United States. He has also done research on issues related to education and economic and social development in the Caribbean, Latin America and several other countries throughout

the world. Between 2000 and 2003, Noguera served as the Judith K. Dimon professor of communities and schools at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. From 1990 to 2000, he was a professor in social and cultural studies at the Graduate School of Education and the director of the Institute for the Study of Social Change at the University of California, Berkeley.



Patty Quinzi, *Legislative Counsel, Texas AFT*

Patty Quinzi serves as the legislative counsel for Texas AFT, the 64,000-member Texas branch of the American Federation of Teachers, where her duties include monitoring the State Board of Education. She has testified several times before the board and closely follows the curriculum revision process. Patty received a joint degree, Master of Public Affairs and Juris Doctorate, from the University of Texas at Austin and is licensed to practice law in Texas. Her previous work experience includes serving as an education budget and policy analyst for the Legislative Budget Board, as well as an analyst for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Patty is a member of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement.

Valerie Strauss, *Columnist, Washington Post*



Valerie Strauss is an education reporter with *The Washington Post* and author of the *Post* blog, *The Answer Sheet: A School Survival Guide for Parents (And Everyone Else)*. Valerie, a 20+ year *Post* veteran, is one of the premier education writers. She and Jay Mathews have shared responsibility for writing for the Schools and Learning page. Her strength is finding and reporting stories that get readers into classrooms and into the lives of students and their parents. Previously Valerie covered Washington, DC schools, and before that she was an editor on the foreign page. She covered the unrest at American University in fall 2005 and broke the news that the university was looking into the spending of then-president Benjamin Ladner, beginning a process that led to his resignation. She was born and raised in Miami. She earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Miami and a Masters degree at Northwestern University. Her hands-on education experience includes one child in middle school, another in high school in Washington, DC.

John Tarka, *President, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers*



John Tarka, long-time leader in the Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers, has been President of the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers since May 2005. For fifteen years, Tarka taught English and Speech at Pittsburgh's Westinghouse High School, where he also coached football and track and served as a PFT Building Representative. In 1982, he was selected as one of ten finalists from over 450 applicants in Pennsylvania's Teacher of the Year competition. In 1983 he was recruited to and taught at the Schenley High School Teacher Center, where he headed the English Department. Tarka has been a member of the PFT's Executive Board for 30 years. He also serves on the Professionalism and Education Partnership Steering Committee of the PFT and the School District. He has been a member of PFT negotiating teams and participates on various committees within the PFT. He also serves as co-chair of the AFT's PreK-12 Teachers Program and Policy Council.

John Thompson, *history teacher, Oklahoma Centennial High School; contributor, This Week in Education*



John Thompson earned a doctorate in history at Rutgers University, and his first book, *Closing the Frontier*, received the Western Historical Association's Athearn Award for the nation's best 20th century history book written in a two year period. Thompson was a legislative lobbyist for Planned Parenthood of Central Oklahoma, and he was completing a manuscript on corporate crime, when crack and gangs hit his neighborhood. Becoming attached to the at-risk kids in the neighborhood, Thompson switched careers and became an environmental educator. He then taught government, world history, Black history, and multiculturalism for 18 years in some of the state's most challenging secondary schools. Thompson has been named the Oklahoma City Public School System's runner-up Teacher of the Year, the Oklahoma Heritage Association Teacher of the Year, and a Public School Foundation's Teacher of the Year. Thompson served on the executive committee of a bipartisan coalition, MAPS for KIDS, that achieved passage the first significant tax increase for the Oklahoma City Public Schools since desegregation in order to rebuild school infrastructure and reform instruction. He has continued to serve in reform and citizen oversight efforts. Thompson blogs regularly at *This Week in Education*.

Ronald Thorpe, Vice President and Director of Education, WNET.org



Ronald Thorpe became vice president and director of education at WNET.ORG in September 2008. In this position he oversees educational activities that enhance and extend the productions and broadcasts of WNET.ORG's media companies, THIRTEEN and WLIW21. Before joining WNET.ORG, Thorpe was vice president and director of education for WNET.ORG's subsidiary Educational Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), beginning in July 2003. At WNET.ORG and at EBC, Thorpe has been responsible for work related to a Ready to Teach grant from the U.S. Department of Education, a variety of new online resources for New York State schools, outreach initiatives connected to all of the station's national productions, and the annual Celebration of Teaching and Learning, a two-day professional development conference serving more than 8,000 teachers and administrators each year. Between 1990 and 2003, Thorpe served at the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation (program officer), the Rhode Island Foundation (senior vice president for program), and the Wallace Foundation (senior program officer). He began his career as a teacher of Latin and Greek and assistant to the headmaster at Phillips Academy (1974-1980) and then as dean of faculty and chief academic officer at Kingswood-Oxford School (1982-1990). Throughout his career, he has focused on professional development of teachers. He is the author of numerous articles and commentaries on education, technology, and philanthropy, and is the editor of *The First Year as Principal* (Heinemann, 1995).

Dennis Van Roekel, President, National Education Association



Dennis Van Roekel, a 23-year teaching veteran and longtime activist and advocate for children and public education, is president of the 3.2 million-member National Education Association. As NEA President, he leads the nation's largest labor union and advocate for quality public schools. A high school math teacher from Paradise Valley High School in Phoenix, Ariz., he served two terms as NEA vice president and NEA secretary-treasurer, and has held key positions in all levels of the Association, including president of the Arizona Education Association and president of the Paradise Valley Education Association. His accomplishments include dramatic increases in membership among teachers and education support professionals while president of the Arizona Education Association and a notable rise in voluntary political action committee contributions during his term. His future career path was sealed in the seventh grade when he decided to become a teacher. And for more than two decades he was able to live his dream: standing in front of high school students teaching math. But while Van Roekel knew it was his job to impart knowledge and a love of learning, he realized early in his teaching career that delivering a quality education to all children and serving the collective needs of all school employees go hand-in-hand. "To me, teaching and being an Association activist are part of the same thing," he says. "As one of my mentors said early on, 'I can't do half a job.' We need to make sure our members understand the connection between what happens in the classroom and what influences decisionmaking," says Van Roekel. "It means listening to public education professionals and parents talk about what they want and then working through political action, lobbying, bargaining, and instructional advocacy to get members and students what they need." Van Roekel's commitment to improving student learning and enhancing the professionalism of education employees is guided by his belief in the NEA mission and vision. "The mission and vision of this organization absolutely define who I am, what I care about, and what I believe in," he says. "What a powerful statement for any organization, to say that the reason we exist is to 'fulfill the promise of public education'—and not just for some, but to prepare every student to succeed. I'm proud of that. And I want to continue that journey."

Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President & CEO, Council on Competitiveness; Board Member, Albert Shanker Institute



Deborah Wince-Smith is the president & CEO of the Council on Competitiveness, the only place where CEOs, university presidents, and labor leaders are working to ensure U.S. prosperity. Founded in 1986, this unique business-labor-academia coalition recommends actionable public policy solutions to make America more competitive in the global marketplace. She is internationally renowned as a leading voice on competitiveness, innovation strategy, science and technology policy, energy, education, economics, and business. As president of the Council, Ms. Wince-Smith

spearheaded the groundbreaking National Innovation Initiative (NII), which played a pivotal role in creating a reinvigorated U.S. competitiveness movement. The NII shaped the bipartisan America COMPETES Act, created state and regional innovation initiatives, and brought a global focus to innovation. Ms. Wince-Smith is a member of the Board of Directors of NASDAQ-OMX, Inc., and serves on the Audit, Compensation, and Finance Committees. She is also a Senate-confirmed member of the Oversight Board of the Internal Revenue Service, responsible for administering the Nation's tax laws, and the U.S. Department of State's Advisory Committee on International Economic Policy. She recently chaired the Secretary of Commerce's Advisory Committee on Strengthening America's Communities. She has served on four Cabinet-level advisory groups, including the Secretary of Energy's Task Forces on the Future of Science and Nuclear Energy. Ms. Wince-Smith serves on the University of Chicago's Board of Governors for Argonne National Laboratory and was a long-standing member of the University of California President's Council on the National Laboratories, providing oversight for Los Alamos, Lawrence Livermore, and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratories. Ms. Wince-Smith also serves on the Board of Directors at the Albert Shanker Institute. During her 17-year tenure in the Federal government, Ms. Wince-Smith held leading positions in the areas of science, technology policy, and international economic affairs. Most notably, Ms. Wince-Smith served as the Nation's first Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Technology Policy in the Administration of George H.W. Bush, overseeing Federal Technology Transfer Policy, implementation of the Bayh-Dole Act, and the White House National Technology Initiative. She was also the first Assistant Director of International Affairs and Competitiveness in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the architect of the landmark Head of Government Science and Technology Agreement with Japan. Ms. Wince-Smith developed President Reagan's Competitiveness Initiative, and led the implementation of Executive Orders and new laws that transformed Federal technology transfer policy for U.S. national laboratories and American industry. She began her career as a program director for the National Science Foundation, where she managed U.S. research programs with Eastern European countries and U.S. universities.