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Zachariah Rubio, 16, was suspended from Endeavor Alternative School in Kansas City, Kan., after speaking Spanish at the school.

► This Week's Focus:

Suspended for Speaking Spanish

In this week's issue, we focus on the case of Zach Rubio, a high school junior suspended for speaking Spanish at school. Was there any basis for the school's action? Should schools require everyone to speak only English? Ask your students to decide. We also take a look at a different type of speech—President Bush's upcoming State of the Union Address. What would your students like to ask him? Finally, David Wallechinsky delivers his annual report on the worst dictators in the world. Should the U.S.—or the U.N.—take action to remove any of them? Why or why not?

Everyday Newspaper Activity

Activity #21: Summarizing. Have students read front-page newspaper articles and write brief summaries of their content. How does the students' work compare with the briefings in the "news summary" section of the paper?

Coming Up Next Week

- Military Shortfalls
- The Super Bowl
- Pudgy Pets

- In the News:
Suspended for Spanish; State of the Union Address p.2
- In PARADE: **The Ten Worst Dictators p.3**
- Skills Sheets:
Presidential Press Conference p.4;
Writing the President p.5

Suspended for Spanish

Curriculum links: Social studies, current events, English, Spanish, civics

Briefing: Last November, Zach Rubio, a junior at Endeavor Alternative School in Kansas City, Kan., was suspended for speaking Spanish at school. Zach, the son of a Mexican immigrant, speaks both English and Spanish very well. The incident occurred outside of class during a bathroom break. A friend asked him a question in Spanish and, without thinking, Zach answered in Spanish. A teacher who heard the exchange sent both boys to the principal. Then Principal Jennifer Watts suspended Zach for a day and a half. "This is not the first time we have asked Zach and others not to speak Spanish at school," she wrote in a disciplinary note. Zach's father protested, asking what written policy Zach had violated. There was none. The school superintendent reinstated Zach and apologized. However, Zach's father is filing suit, charging that Zach's civil rights were violated. The incident reflects a growing conflict over the use of bilingual education in schools. It also illustrates the conflict over whether English should be the official—and only—U.S. language.

Newspaper activity: Look through the paper. Are all the articles and ads in English? Can you find any Spanish words? Any words from other languages?

Resources: Books: Guadalupe San Miguel's *Contested Policy: The Rise and Fall of Federal Bilingual Education in the United States 1960-2001* (Univ. of North Texas Press, 2004). Web sites: Read reports of the incident from the *Washington Post* and others. Learn more about the English-only movement from Wikipedia. Visit a site advocating English-only and one with opposing views.*

Classroom Debates

• **Did the school have the right to suspend a student for speaking Spanish?** Why or why not? What might have motivated the principal to act in this way? Did her action violate Zach's civil rights? Why or why not? What would happen if more schools did this? Should schools require that students speak only English while on the premises? Why or why not? What is the best way for immigrant students to adapt? Through bilingual education? Or by being limited to speaking only English? Explain.

The State of the Union

Curriculum links: Social studies, civics, current events, language arts

Briefing: President George W. Bush will give his State of the Union Address on January 31. Each year our President addresses a joint session of Congress to discuss the past year's victories, as well as the nation's problems and his ideas for solving them. This is his chance to explain his 2005 decisions and talk about new initiatives for 2006. After the address, the Democrats will make their own speech, offering different viewpoints and solutions.

Newspaper activity: The President reveals his opinions on national and international issues in this speech. How can citizens express their opinions? Does the paper's "Letters to the Editor" section affect public policy locally or nationally? Why do people write these letters? Why does the paper print them? Ask students to listen to the State of the Union Address and/or read about it in the paper. Then have them write letters to the editor expressing their views.

Resources: Books: Michael Waldman's *My Fellow Americans: The Most Important Speeches of America's Presidents* (Sourcebooks, 2003). Web sites: Visit the American Presidency Project for State of the Union Addresses from all U.S. Presidents. Let the President know about issues that concern you by calling the White House comment line at 202-456-1111, or write to him. (You'll find the address on the related skills sheet on p. 5.)*

Classroom Debates

• **In this address, the President discusses the state of the nation.** How much time should President Bush devote to the continuing conflict in Iraq? To the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina? How much should he talk about the economy, the environment, domestic spying? What other subjects would you like him to cover? Why? Will the fact that there is a mid-term election affect what he says or does this year? If so, how? What would you say if you were President? What do you see as the nation's most pressing problems?

The Ten Worst Dictators

Curriculum links: Current events, social studies, civics

Briefing: In this week's PARADE, David Wallechinsky gives his fourth annual report on the world's worst dictators. Two of last year's worst, Muammar al-Qaddafi of Libya and Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, have slipped out of the Top 10. Their behavior has not improved, but the dictators who replaced them in the rankings—Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan and Seyed Ali Khamane'i of Iran—have grown worse. The top three worst dictators from last year—Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, Kim Jong-il of North Korea, and Than Shwe of Burma—have kept their places. No. 1 is Omar al-Bashir of Sudan. The good news is that his army and the Janjaweed militia will soon stop burning down villages in Darfur. The bad news, Wallechinsky notes, is the reason: There are no more villages left to burn. Now the army and the Janjaweed are aiming their attacks at refugee camps. Since February 2003, more than 180,000 civilians have been killed, and 2 million people have been driven from their homes in one of the worst human rights catastrophes in history.

Classroom Debates

• **What advantages does a democracy have over a dictatorship?** How would your life be different if you lived in Sudan, North Korea, Burma, Zimbabwe or Uzbekistan? If you lived under a dictatorship, what freedoms would you miss the most? What are the dangers of dictatorship? Should the U.S. government support any dictators? Does it? What would cause the U.S. to back a dictator? Should the U.S. or the U.N. take action to remove any dictators? What, if anything, should the U.S. do about the situation in Sudan? Should the U.N. get involved there? If so, how?

Newspaper activity: Divide students into groups. Have each group track news stories on one of the 10 worst dictators (Sudan's Omar al-Bashir, North Korea's Kim Jong-il, Burma's Than Shwe, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov, China's Hu Jintao, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, Turkmenistan's Saparmurat Niyazov, Iran's Seyed Ali Khamane'i, and Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema).

Resources: Books: David Wallechinsky's *Tyrants: The World's 20 Worst Living Dictators* (Regan, 2004). Learn more about Sudan in Salome Nnoromele's *Sudan* (Lucent, 2004), Judy Walgren's *The Lost Boys of Natinga* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998) and Sonia Levitin's *Dream Freedom* (Silver Whistle, 2000). Web sites: Learn more about al-Bashir at Wikipedia. Read special reports about Sudan from CNN, the BBC and others.*

ASK MARILYN

Brainteaser

Question: What do these words have in common: be, hung, mast, moth, she, wand?

Answer: Add the suffix "-er," and each becomes a new, unrelated word. (Example: hung+er=hunger.)

Interact: Joseph Addison wrote, "He who hesitates is lost." What would you say? Fill in the blank with one or more words: "He who hesitates _____."

Send students' answers to Ask Marilyn, 711 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017, or e-mail them to marilyn@parade.com.

Answer Key:

Presidential Press Conference (p. 4): Answers will vary.

Writing the President (p. 5): Answers will vary.

Presidential Press Conference

During the State of the Union Address, the President addresses Congress. At other times, he holds press conferences where he gives statements and answers questions from reporters. Divide into groups and set up a Presidential press conference, like those held by President Bush. Later, you will present your conference to the class. You can choose any American President, past or present. Then hold a press conference on any issue that was (or is) important in his Administration. Use this worksheet to plan your group's conference. In each group, one person will play the President. Everyone else will play reporters.

1. What President will be questioned in your press conference? Why did you pick this particular President?

2. What event or issue do you want the press conference to address? For President Bush, for example, possibilities include the Iraq War, the environmental or education policies or his tax plans. As a group, research your particular issue and take notes on a separate piece of paper.

3. What points will the President want to make about this issue?

4. What questions will the reporters have about these issues? Make a list.

5. What other information will reporters want? What questions should they ask? How might some reporters want to challenge the President?

6. What replies might a President make if he wants to avoid answering a question? How might he answer it more directly?

Writing the President

You probably have some strong opinions about what the President should—or shouldn't—do. Don't keep your views to yourself. Share them with the man himself. You can write to the President at this address:

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Or you can send an e-mail to him at comments@whitehouse.gov

Before you write your letter, answer the questions on this form. It will help you organize your thoughts.

Who are you? For example, how old are you? Are you a student? How many years will it be until you are old enough to vote? Mention these things upfront. _____

What is the topic of greatest importance to you? Be brief and get right to the point. Mention this topic in the first paragraph. _____

Why is it of such concern to you? _____

Is there a personal angle? Presidents—and politicians in general—have hearts too. Your letter will be more effective if you reach them. For example, if you want to put stricter limitations on tobacco companies because someone close to you died of lung cancer, mention it.

What, specifically, would you like the President to do?
