Marshall Memo 419

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
January 16, 2012

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Someday I'd love to create a journalism course based on covering the uprising in Egypt, now approaching its first anniversary. Lesson No. 1 would be the following: Whenever you see elephants flying, shut up and take notes."

Thomas Friedman in "Watching Elephants Fly" in *The New York Times*, Jan. 8, 2012 http://nyti.ms/yPhel1

"News literacy… is more than just nice-to-have knowledge – it's actually a fundamental 21st century skill that all young people must develop to be engaged, active, and informed citizens."

Willona Sloan (see item #8)

"I teach in a college. Over the last 10 years we have witnessed a dramatic increase in the use of technology among children and teenagers. Despite the ready access to these information-rich tools, our students come to college with weak attention skills and too often an active dislike of sustained reading. Their knowledge base is far less than that of their parents and older siblings who lacked the ready access to technology."

Wendy Turgeon in a letter to *The New York Times*, Jan. 4, 2012 (p. A22)

"Understanding what is in your control and what is not is crucial in managing expectations… It seems as if it is best to have low expectations of things out of our control, realistic expectations of things we can control to some degree, and high expectations of ourselves. And, perhaps the greatest truth of all is: always expect the unexpected."

Alina Tugend in "What Did You Expect? It Makes a Difference" in *The New York Times*, Jan. 14, 2012 (p. B5), http://nyti.ms/yJE1or

1. Can Schools Achieve Excellence *and* Equity?

In this thoughtful *JESPAR* article, Leonidas Kyriakides (University of Cyprus, Cyprus) and Bert Creemers (University of Groningen, The Netherlands) tackle one of the biggest questions in educational research: Can schools compensate for students' unequal entering characteristics and achieve some degree of equity? Kyriakides and Creemers believe that too much attention has been paid to measuring students' absolute learning gains and not enough to whether the gap between the haves and have-nots is closing.

"At the outset of instruction in any topic," they say, "students of any age and in any culture will differ from one another in various intellectual and psychomotor skills, generalized and specialized prior knowledge, interests and motives, socioeconomic background, and personal styles of thought and work during learning." The big question is whether schools can help students who start with disadvantages rise above what Patricia Graham (1984) called, with irony, their "evident and probable destiny."

Kyriakides and Creemers say that *equality* of outcomes – all students achieving at the same level – is neither possible nor desirable. The moral issue, they continue, is "what state or degree of inequality is acceptable. The answer to this question will always be a contested one, fought out in political arenas of all kinds. The grounds of that struggle seem to have shifted in the last 30 years toward reducing the gap in outcomes between the top and bottom by helping those at the bottom move up." For schools, they believe, "a commitment to equity suggests that differences in outcomes should not be attributable to differences in areas such as wealth, income, power, or possessions."

The authors then describe a study they conducted in Cyprus analyzing the absolute and relative learning outcomes of sixth graders in 50 schools. Kyriakides and Creemers found that some schools had impressive overall student achievement but did less well on the equity dimension. Schools that did well on the equity dimension also did well on overall outcomes – but only a small number of schools achieved excellent outcomes *and* narrowed the gap. "Thus," the authors conclude, "promoting one dimension of school effectiveness does not negatively influence the other dimension, but is likely to influence it positively."

What are the characteristics of the small group of high-achieving and equity-increasing schools? Kyriakides and Creemers say more research is needed, but suggest that the answer lies in fine-tuning the following areas, which seem to have the most impact on both excellence and closing the gap:

- School policies on high-quality teaching;

- Actions taken to improve teaching practice;
- Ongoing evaluation of those policies and actions;
- School policies for creating a positive school learning environment;
- Actions taken to improve the learning environment;
- Evaluation of those policies and actions.

"Can Schools Achieve Both Quality and Equity? Investigating the Two Dimensions of Educational Effectiveness" by Leonidas Kyriakides and Bert Creemers in *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, October-December 2011 (Vol. 16, #4, p. 237-254), available for purchase at http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hjsp20/current; Kyriakides can be reached at kyriakid@ucy.ac.cy.

Back to page one

2. Three Books Offer Advice on Turning Around Failing Schools

In this *JESPAR* review, Bradley Carpenter (University of Louisville) notes that the Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG) program aims to turn around America's 5,000 lowest-performing schools by mandating major changes in their operation, governance, staffing, or instructional programs. SIG has given rise to lots of "self-proclaimed school turnaround experts," says Carpenter, "many of whom are marketing quick-fix school improvement strategies to the people who find themselves under the most pressure to meet state and federal definitions of a successful turnaround campus."

A better place to start, he suggests, is by reading three books that provide solid advice on turning around low-performing schools. Here, briefly, is Carpenter's take on each one:

• *The Turnaround Toolkit: Managing Rapid, Sustainable School Improvement* by Lynn Winters and Joan Herman (Corwin, 2010) – The tools in this book aim to help principals develop and manage continuous improvement through "3 Rs": *Realigning* systems to create the structures for turnaround work; *Redesigning* systems in a way that data can be used to create a turnaround plan; and *Refining* systems to evaluate and revise the turnaround plan. These break down to eight steps:

- Develop systems for managing turnaround activities;
- Organize information needed to redesign programs;
- Prepare data summaries and displays;
- Identify the turnaround focus;
- Redesign programs to address the turnaround focus;
- Develop and implement the turnaround plan;
- Design an evaluation of the turnaround plan;
- Analyze evaluation data and revise the program.

This book draws on the effective schools research but does not, says Carpenter, present the theory upon which the turnaround framework is based. Its advice is most helpful for turnaround leaders who have considerable autonomy; many of its checklists and tools may not be compatible with the mandates of SIG or external partners often yoked to school-improvement efforts.

• *Leading School Turnaround: How Successful Leaders Transform Low-Performing Schools* by Kenneth Leithwood, Alma Harris, and Tiiu Strauss (Jossey-Bass, 2010) – This book spends more time on research, the theoretical underpinnings of school failure, and the stages of school turnaround, says Carpenter. Drawing on case studies of improving and turned-around schools in Canada and the U.K., it identifies a "common core of practices" that successful school leaders applied with sensitivity to their own schools:

- Create a widely agreed-on sense of direction and organization;
- Help develop the capacities of colleagues to move the organization in that direction;
- Redesign or restructure the organization to support people's work;
- Manage the "technical core" of the organization.

The downside of the book, says Carpenter, is that its case studies are located in Canada and the U.K. and some of the recommendations don't take into account SIG, No Child Left Behind, and other U.S.-specific realities.

• *Inside School Turnarounds: Urgent Hopes, Unfolding Stories* by Laura Pappano (Harvard Education Press, 2010) – This book is written by a journalist and describes in vivid detail how turnaround leaders in Hartford and Cincinnati navigated their daunting educational challenges, their bureaucracies, and their cities' politics. Carpenter's only concern is that Pappano is uncritical in her descriptions of KIPP schools, Achievement First (a charter management organization), and Teach for America, and a little too critical of teacher unions and traditionally organized schools.

"Book Review: Developing Turnaround Leadership: Pragmatic Guides and Contextually Specific Lessons from the Field" by Bradley Carpenter in *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, October-December 2011 (Vol. 16, #4, p. 292-298), available for purchase at http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hjsp20/current

Back to page one

3. The New Gates Foundation Study on Measuring Teacher Effectiveness

In this *Education Week* article, Stephen Sawchuk reports on "Gathering Feedback for Teaching", the second report from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project. This study used 7,500 videotaped lessons taught by more than 1,300 grade 4-8 teachers to see whether five widely-used teacher evaluation rubrics (Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching; Robert Pianta's Classroom Assessment Scoring System; Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations; Mathematical Quality of Instruction; and UTeach Teacher Observation Protocol) are helpful in identifying the most effective teachers. Here are the findings:

• Students taught by teachers who scored high on the rubrics did better on state tests and more cognitively challenging exams, but the effects were often modest in size.

• Student achievement on a demanding literacy test (with open-ended questions requiring students to explain their thinking in writing) was more sensitive to teacher quality than student achievement on a multiple-choice state test.

• Students taught by high-scoring teachers reported being more emotionally engaged and applying greater effort.

• The reliability of the rubrics improved when classroom observers were well trained.

• Rubric scoring of a teacher was less reliable when based on one observation, but improved when an observer sat in on several lessons.

• Reliability also improved when more than one person observed a classroom.

• The most reliable assessment of a teacher's effectiveness came when three factors were combined: classroom observations, value-added student achievement data, and students' assessments of their teachers.

• Using all three factors did better at predicting teachers' effectiveness than looking at their graduate degrees and years of experience.

• Of the three factors, value-added student-achievement data did the best job of predicting future teacher performance, but this measure fluctuated from year to year. Student assessments of teachers were more stable over time.

• It's unclear how these insights apply to a high-stakes teacher-evaluation, since the study was done in a low-stakes research context.

"Study: Popular Teaching Frameworks Can Help in Identifying 'Good Teachers'" by Stephen Sawchuk in *Education Week*, Jan. 11, 2012 (Vol. 31, #15, p. 12), http://www.edweek.org; the Gates report is available at http://www.metproject.org/reports.php.

Back to page one

4. Value-Added Data and the Long-Range Impact of Good Teaching

In this *New York Times* article, Annie Lowrey reports on a new study from the National Bureau of Economic Research in which three economists analyzed data on one million Americans from fourth grade through adulthood. Major findings: (a) some teachers consistently got value-added gains in their students' test scores, and (b) effective teachers had a lasting impact on their students' futures, including achievement in school, a reduced chance of teen pregnancy, higher college matriculation, living in better neighborhoods, saving more for retirement, and higher lifetime income.

The researchers were initially skeptical that value-added test data could be linked to teacher quality, but when they controlled for other factors – including student background, motivation, and principal selection – they found a strong correlation. They found that when a high value-added teacher joined a school faculty, test scores in his or her grade went up, and when that teacher left, test scores went down.

Although the effect of one year with an average versus a bottom-five-percent teacher on lifetime earnings is relatively modest (about $52,000), the impact of stronger teachers on whole classrooms over time is significant. "If you leave a low value-added teacher in your school for 10 years, rather than replacing him with an average teacher, you are hypothetically talking about $2.5 million in lost income," says John Friedman, one of the authors. "The message is to fire people sooner rather than later." But Raj Chetty, one of the other authors, adds, "Of course

there are going to be mistakes – teachers who get fired who do not deserve to get fired." Nevertheless, he argues that using value-added scores would lead to fewer mistakes, not more.

"Overall, our study shows that great teachers create great value and that test score impacts are helpful in identifying such teachers," say the authors in the executive summary of their study (see link below). "However, more work is needed to determine the best way to use value-added for policy. For example, using value-added in teacher evaluations could induce counterproductive responses that make value-added a poorer measure of teacher quality, such as teaching to the test or cheating."

Jesse Rothstein, a University of California/Berkeley economist, adds (in the *New York Times* article), "We are performing these studies in settings where nobody cares about their ranking – it does not change their pay or job security. But if you start to change that, there is going to be a range of responses."

"Big Study Links Good Teachers to Lasting Gains" by Annie Lowrey in *The New York Times*, Jan. 6, 2012; the study, "The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood" by Raj Chetty, John Friedman, and Jonah Rockoff, is available at http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/value_added.html

Back to page one

5. Some Information on the Upcoming Common Core Assessments

In this *Education Week* article, Catherine Gewertz reports on the two consortia that are designing tests to assess student learning of the Common Core State Standards beginning in 2014-15. "This stuff is a very big deal, and it's a huge departure from the kinds of tests most kids currently take," says Chuck Pack, an Oklahoma teacher who is working on an assessment advisory panel. "As classroom teachers, we're sitting here waiting to know what our kids are going to be expected to do. We have the standards – what they're supposed to know – but now how are they supposed to be able to demonstrate that?" Here is some of what is trickling out:

• PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) – The current blueprint calls for a computer-based end-of-year test in English language arts and math (half the total points) for grades 6-11 (paper-and-pencil for grades 3-5) and a performance-based assessment toward the end of the year (up to half of points), as well as midyear formative assessments (these will be optional for states).

In English language arts, the two-day performance-based assessment will involve a "research simulation" that asks students to read a suite of texts, including an "anchor" text (e.g., a speech by a prominent historical figure), write an essay, and answer questions citing evidence from the text. Another part of the performance-based assessment will require grade 3-5 students to "engage" with literature and grade 6-11 students to conduct literary analysis, using a combination of shorter and longer texts.

The math tests will focus on solving problems in the "major content areas" at each grade level, demonstrating conceptual understanding, fluency, and mathematical reasoning, and applying knowledge to solve real-world problems. The math exams will have three types of questions: (a) "innovative", machine-scorable, computer-based items; (b) items that call for

written arguments or justifications and critiques of mathematical reasoning or proof that students "attended to precision"; and (c) real-world scenarios. In math, the end-of-course assessment will count 50-60 percent of the total score, the performance-based assessment 40-50 percent. In high-school math, schools will be able to choose between a traditional sequence (Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra 2) and a curriculum that integrates those topics.

• SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium has put out a solicitation for 10,000 selected-response and constructed-response items and 420 performance tasks in math and English language arts. These will be pilot-tested and reviewed by teachers in the 2012-13 school year and decisions will be made about which items can be machine scored and which must be scored by hand. SMARTER is also working on guidelines for accessibility and accommodations for ELLs and students with disabilities as well as early-year diagnostic assessments and tests of speaking and listening skills.

"New Details Surface About Common State Assessments" by Catherine Gewertz in *Education Week*, Jan. 11, 2012 (Vol. 31, #15, p. 10), http://www.edweek.org

Back to page one

6. The Importance of Science Readalouds for Young Children

In this article in *Theory Into Practice*, Purdue University professors Panayota Mantzicopoulos and Helen Patrick urge primary-grade teachers to read aloud to their students from science picture books. "Current literacy practices are based, in large part, on the assumption that the story form is fundamental to the construction and organization of meaning and that children learn best when instruction is based on story-like texts," say the authors. "However, there is no clear evidence in support of this position." Science picture books work just as well in readalouds and whet students' appetite for their future studies.

Another reason for reading aloud from science books, say Mantzicopoulos and Patrick, is that these books "have different features, place different demands on children, and support the development of proficiencies that do not necessarily transfer across genres." While fictional narratives have a story line and tend to use everyday vocabulary, science picture books are more analytical in structure and use Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary. Science books can also counteract stereotypes children get from TV, movies, fictional texts, and some adults – that science is arcane and too difficult for most people and is done by white males who work in isolation and are a little odd.

The reason that science books are underutilized in elementary classrooms is that many teachers assume these books are less interesting to children, especially girls, and are more difficult than fictional narratives. In addition, some teachers are uncomfortable with science content and avoid or gloss over technical material when they encounter it. Actually, say Mantzicopoulos and Patrick, boys and girls as young as kindergarten are highly interested in life and physical science – animal movement, dolphin babies, sunlight, machines, levers, and more. When they don't hear much about these subjects from their teachers, they gravitate toward stereotypical interests in their independent reading, with boys grabbing the physical

science books and girls the books about animal babies. This sets a pattern that is amplified through the grades, producing uneven knowledge and achievement in the upper grades.

This is why Mantzicopoulos and Patrick think it's so important for primary-grade teachers to expose all students to science content in readalouds. They say teachers will be surprised how much girls as well as boys enjoy science books, and teachers can build the specific skills necessary for students to become proficient in science and other more technical books down the road. "Informational science texts provide numerous ways for teachers to address both literacy and science standards, while supporting children's learning, engagement, and interest," say the authors. These include building technical vocabulary, making connections between science content and children's everyday lives, and introducing students to the scientific method.

During readalouds, it's important for teachers to use retelling and discussion to get the most possible value from each science picture book. This gives students a chance to explore the content, make connections, and reveal continuing misconceptions that need to be cleared up. "Sustained engagement with science-related informational books also has the potential to fuel children's long-term interest in and motivation for science," conclude Mantzicopoulos and Patrick.

"Reading Picture Books and Learning Science: Engaging Young Children in Informational Text" by Panayota Mantzicopoulos and Helen Patrick in *Theory Into Practice*, Fall 2011 (Vol. 50, #4, p. 269-276), no e-link available; Mantzicopoulos is at mantzi@purdue.edu.

Back to page one

7. A Study of Effective After-School Programs

In this *JESPAR* article, Jenell Holstead (University of Wisconsin/Green Bay) and Mindy Hightower King (Indiana University/Bloomington) report on their study of after-school programs, which serve 8.4 million elementary and secondary students nationally. "Not only do such programs keep children safe during the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, and sex," say Holstead and King, "but schools have turned to after-school programs as a way to provide extra academic support to children who are struggling during the regular school day."

Their study focused on a number of high-quality Indiana after-school programs for grade 3-5 students and found that attending the programs boosted students' achievement compared to similar students who didn't attend. Holstead and King also looked at what distinguished effective from less-effective programs, based on thorough site visits. Here are the specific characteristics of excellent as compared to satisfactory programs in four key areas:

Focus Area 1: Activities are geared toward rigorous academic achievement

• High-quality homework help:

- Maintained an environment conducive to homework without numerous reminders and interacted positively with students;
- Students often sought adult assistance;
- Staff worked on-on-one with students throughout the session as needed;

- Staff were proactive in circulating among students and helping them.

• Learning promoted through activities other than homework help:
  - Included lesson plans that stated the objectives and academic standards for activity;
  - Included ongoing "units" around a central theme or skill-set;
  - Were planned to be age-appropriate;
  - Were clearly linked to Indiana standards and the regular school-day curriculum.

• Individual support:
  - Involved prolonged opportunities for students to work one-on-one or in small groups with a staff member;
  - Staff members who provided one-on-one support had the knowledge and skills to encourage learning, not just the completion of an assignment.

Focus Area 2: Program is linked to the regular school day

• Program staff incorporate school-day curriculum into planning:
  - Academic enrichment activities were designed to complement skills and/or content being taught during the school day;
  - Staff are knowledgeable about school standards and how activities relate to curriculum;
  - Lesson plans are developed that are aligned with school standards.

• Principal strongly supports the program:
  - Principal frequently and directly communicates with the site coordinator;
  - Principal encourages teachers to be involved in the program;
  - Principal helps recruit students into the program;
  - Principal is knowledgeable about the day-to-day activities of the program and how it builds academic capacity;
  - Principal advocates for the program in his or her school.

• School teachers actively involved with the program:
  - Many after-school staff members are teachers who work with students during the regular school day;
  - Other school personnel work directly with students during after-school programming;
  - Teachers advise on the development and/or delivery of activities consistent with school standards;
  - Teachers are highly involved in identifying and referring students who would benefit from the program;
  - Program staff has a list of school substitute teachers they can call on when needed.

Focus Area 3: Program involves highly qualified staff and opportunities for PD

• Program staff are qualified:
  - Included multiple staff members who had both experience working with children and a background in education (e.g., education degrees);
  - Included staff members who were pursuing education degrees;
  - Program staff displayed positive skills in all interactions with students.

• Program provides ongoing professional development:

- Staff members frequently took advantage of PD opportunities through the program and other sources;
- PD opportunities were directly relevant to the delivery of after-school programs (e.g., behavior management, activity design, tutoring practices);
- Site coordinator actively encouraged staff to attend PD opportunities;
- Staff who attended the programs disseminated the learned information to other staff members.

• Site coordinators participate in ongoing PD:

- In addition to frequent attendance at program-sponsored PD events, the site coordinator sought out and attended other opportunities that were relevant to youth development and education;
- Program incorporated lessons learned at PD opportunities.

Focus Area 4: Program builds relationships with community stakeholders

• Program staff actively engage school-day teachers and administrators:

- Site coordinator communicates frequently with the principal, even if the principal is difficult to connect with;
- Site coordinator engages regularly with school teachers, either formally or informally, about the program or specific student needs;
- Program has access to ample school space to run multiple concurrent activities;
- Site coordinator spends at least some time in the school during the regular school day.

• Program staff initiate regular communication with parents:

- Staff use multiple methods to communicate with parents on an ongoing basis – newsletters, phone calls, talking to them at pick-up time, family nights;
- Staff provide opportunities for parent involvement on a regular basis, including having parents volunteer to help deliver programs;
- Staff strategically plan opportunities for parental involvement based on parent needs and availability.

• Program staff actively develop relationships with community partners:

- Program has multiple partners with a variety of community agencies that expand opportunities for students;
- Community partners benefit from collaborations with the after-school program;
- Site coordinator continues to seek new community partners for ongoing or one-time activities.

"High-Quality 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Academic Achievement Among Frequent Participants and Non-Participants" by Jenell Holstead and Mindy Hightower King in *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, October-December 2011 (Vol. 16, #4, p. 255-274), available for purchase at http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hjsp20/current; King can be reached at minking@indiana.edu.

Back to page one

8. A Curriculum to Help Young People Filter and Understand the News

(Originally titled "Believe It or Not")

In this *Education Update* article, Willona Sloan reports on a recent Pew Research Center study finding that 70 percent of Americans feel overwhelmed by the amount of news they receive and 71 percent believe most news sources are biased. No wonder: anyone with an Internet connection can send their two cents' worth into cyberspace. For teens, things are even worse: they have to make sense of a continuous flood of blogs, tweets, rumors, gossip, news, opinion, propaganda, hype, spin, and advertising. "News literacy… is more than just nice-to-have knowledge," says Sloan, "it's actually a fundamental 21st century skill that all young people must develop to be engaged, active, and informed citizens."

Fortunately, the Center for News Literacy at the Stony Brook University School of Journalism has developed an open-source news literacy course. Anyone who wants to teach the course can download lectures, tests, homework, and multimedia at http://www.thenewsliteracyproject.org. "The entire focus of this course is helping citizens find reliable information – actionable information – for their civic life," says Dean Miller, director of the Stony Brook center. "We think these skills are the core competency for citizenship." One feature is The Feed, a weekly update that uses current news to supplement the curriculum's content. To receive it, just e-mail dean.miller@stonybook.edu.

"Believe It or Not" by Willona Sloan in *Education Update*, January 2012 (Vol. 54, #1, p. 4-5), http://www.ascd.org

Back to page one

9. Employment Prospects for Today's Youth

In this *Education Week* article, Caralee Adams reports on a Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce report on the employment prospects of recent high-school and college graduates. Some details:

- Unemployment among high-school dropouts is 31.5 percent;
- Unemployment among high-school diploma-holders is 22.9 percent;
- Unemployment among recent college graduates is 8.9 percent;
- Graduates with these college majors had the lowest unemployment rates:
  - Health-care related – 5.4 percent
  - Education – 5.4 percent
  - Agriculture and Natural Sciences – 7 percent
  - Communication and Journalism – 7.3 percent
  - Psychology and Social Work – 7.3 percent
  - Business – 7.4 percent
  - Engineering – 7.5 percent
  - Life and Physical Sciences – 7.7 percent
- College majors with the highest unemployment rates:
  - Architecture – 13.9 percent
  - Arts – 11.1 percent

- Humanities and Liberal Arts – 9.4 percent
- Social Sciences – 8.9 percent
- Recreation – 8.3 percent
- Computers and Math – 8.2 percent
- Law and Public Policy – 8.1 percent

"Majors Matter in Prospects for College Graduates" by Caralee Adams in *Education Week*, Jan. 11, 2012 (Vol. 31, #15, p. 13); the report is at http://cew.georgetown.edu/unemployment/

Back to page one

10. Levels of Teen Cigarette, Marijuana, and Alcohol Use

According to a December 2011 National Institute on Drug Abuse report summarized in this *Education Week* article by Nirvi Shah, cigarette smoking in a national sample of 46,773 eighth-, tenth-, and twelfth-grade students in public and private schools is at a historic low, but marijuana use has been rising for the last five years. The details:

- 36.4 percent of seniors reported smoking marijuana in the last year;
- 7 percent say they smoke marijuana every day;
- 18.7 percent of seniors report smoking cigarettes within the last month;
- 10.3 percent of seniors say they smoke cigarettes every day;
- 5.5 percent of juniors say they smoke cigarettes every day;
- 2.4 percent of eighth graders say they smoke cigarettes every day;
- 63.5 percent of seniors report drinking alcohol in the last year (down from 74.8 percent in 1997).

"More Teens Turn to Pot; Fewer Smoke Cigarettes" by Nirvi Shah in *Education Week*, Jan. 11, 2012 (Vol. 31, #15, p. 5), no e-link available

Back to page one

11. What Counts Most When Applying to College

This *NewsLeader* article reports on a 2011 Kaplan survey that asked 359 admissions officers from top colleges and universities, "What would you most consider to be an application killer?" Here's what they said:

- A low high-school GPA – 53%
- A low SAT or ACT score – 19%
- Low grades in college-prep courses – 15%
- A light course load – 10%
- Weak letters of recommendation – 2%
- Poorly written essays – 1%
- Lack of extracurricular activities – 0%

"At a Glance: GPA Carries Most Weight in College Admissions" in *NewsLeader*, January 2012 (Vol. 59, #5, p. 1); the study is at http://bit.ly/y7vaOC

Back to page one

12. Short Item:

Teen online resource – This website has information for teens and young adults on sexuality, HIV/AIDS and other infections, and more: http://www.seriouslysexuality.com.

"SIECUS Online Resource for Teens and Young Adults" in *SIECUS Developments*, Summer/ Fall 2011

Back to page one

Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo, please e-mail: kim.marshall48@gmail.com

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 41 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 44 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through more than a hundred articles each week, and selects 5-10 that have the greatest potential to improve teaching, leadership, and learning. He then writes a brief summary of each article, pulls out several striking quotes, provides e-links to full articles when available, and e-mails the Memo to subscribers every Monday evening (with occasional breaks; there are about 50 issues a year).

Subscriptions:

Individual subscriptions are $50 for the school year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and information on paying by check or credit card.

Website:

If you go to http://www.marshallmemo.com you will find detailed information on:

- How to subscribe or renew
- A detailed rationale for the Marshall Memo
- Publications (with a count of articles from each)
- Article selection criteria
- Topics (with a count of articles from each)
- Headlines for all issues
- What readers say
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Marshall Memo subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in PDF or Word format)
- All back issues (also in PDF or Word)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or log-in

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Better Evidence-Based Education
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Language Learner (NABE)
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
New York Times
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
The School Administrator
Theory Into Practice