Marshall Memo 737

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
May 21, 2018

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"For millions of kids, high school – at least the academic part – is too damn boring and pointless. Why are they being told to study calculus? Why is history so dull? What does chemistry or third-year French have to do with their lives?"

Chester Finn, Jr. (see item #1)

"Educators have a particularly tricky relationship with meetings. Teachers, school leaders, and district officials are famously short on time, but they're also often desperate for collaboration and connection, knowing that those partnerships are key to professional growth and wellbeing, as well as to streamlining the services that help students learn and grow."

Leah Shafer (see item #7)

"Sexual harassment is not merely something that young people will need to contend with sometime in their distant future when they are adults in the workforce. Rather, it is something many of them, especially girls, are experiencing right now and right in their schools. Like it or not, schools are formally and informally communicating lessons to their students about expectations for men's and women's sexual conduct."

Lorena Garcia in "It's 2018. It's Time to Update Sex Ed." in *Education Week*, May 8, 2018, https://bit.ly/2KVMDh2; Garcia can be reached at lorena@uic.edu.

"The feedback that struggling students get from writing teachers, while well meaning, is often overwhelming, tries to cover too much at once, and deflates egos."

Selina Ivy and Jim LeBuffe in "Guided Self-Correction: A Positive, Focused Feedback System That Improves Writing" in *ASCD Express*, April 26, 2018 (Vol. 13, #16), http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol13/1316-ivy.aspx

1. Chester Finn, Jr. on Ten Reasons U.S. High Schools Are Flatlining

Why has it been so difficult to bring about meaningful reform in U.S. high schools? asks Chester Finn, Jr. in this article in *Education Gadfly*. He points to these dilemmas, underlying problems, and unresolved principles:

• *Lack of agreement on the end product* – "College and career ready" is a handy slogan, but "[c]ollege readiness and career readiness aren't really the same thing," says Finn, "except at a high level of abstraction." Very few schools are doing a good job at both.

• *Not being able to screen entering students' level of preparation* – "When you have no control over what comes in and you lack clarity about what you're trying to produce," says Finn, "– well, you sort of have a right to be muddled and ineffective."

• *Disagreement on how to gauge progress and success* – Is it course credits and Carnegie units, or is it standards and competencies?

• *Fear of denying diplomas* – Some diplomas are not earned, says Finn. They're awarded for "humanitarian or political reasons (or both)."

• *Too much emphasis on raising graduation rates* – This has led, he says, to "all manner of finagling, fudging, hedging, and downright cheating."

• *Reluctance to "track"* – Other advanced countries achievement-group students in "sophisticated, flexible, and non-discriminatory" ways, says Finn.

• *Ambivalence on career and technical education* – Despite efforts to rebrand voc. ed., he believes many educators still view CTE as inferior to the "college prep" track.

• *Relevance* – "For millions of kids," says Finn, "high school – at least the academic part – is too damn boring and pointless. Why are they being told to study calculus? Why is history so dull? What does chemistry or third-year French have to do with their lives?"

• *A counseling gap* – The social-emotional support students get is often "minimal to useless," says Finn, "generally boiled down to course scheduling and college applications." With many families faltering, whom can students trust with big questions in their lives?

• *Power and accountability* – "Is high schooling really the exclusive property of K-12 districts?" asks Finn. "Why isn't it – and the resources and decision-making that comes with it – shared with employers, union-based apprenticeship programs, community colleges, and more?... [H]ow do we apportion responsibility and keep taxpayers from paying twice?"

"The Gordian Knot of High-School Reform" by Chester Finn, Jr. in *The Education Gadfly*, May 16, 2018 (Vol. 18, #20), https://edexcellence.net/commentary/education-gadfly-weekly

Back to page one

2. Making Grades Fair, Accurate, Specific, and Timely

In this *Phi Delta Kappan* article, author/consultant Ken O'Connor, Lee Ann Jung (San Diego State University), and Douglas Reeves (Creative Leadership Solutions) bemoan the

shortcomings of traditional grading. The focus on mathematical precision, say the authors, "unfortunately leads students – and parents – to fixate on the numbers rather than on the learning." College admissions officers and testing experts increasingly doubt the value of grades, which too often are a mash-up of achievement, behavior, compliance, and test-taking skill. Some colleges, including MIT and Wellesley, are reforming their grading policies, moving toward providing rich feedback, but no letter grades, to first-year students. K-12 schools that rely on points and extrinsic motivators undermine their students' intrinsic motivation and the ultimate goal of producing self-directed, independent learners. The fact that so many high-school graduates end up taking remedial courses and failing courses in their first year of college is a sure sign that K-12 grading needs to be fixed. The ideal: grades that are FAST – fair, accurate, specific, and timely:

• *Fair* – Fairness involves communicating current achievement to everyone who has the need and right to know – especially students – and giving all students equal opportunity to learn and show what they know, understand, and can do. "This means, for example, that the time available on tests and exams must be flexible, not fixed," say O'Connor, Jung, and Reeves, "and that students should almost always have a variety of ways to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills."

• *Accurate* – A key element is separating students' grades on academic achievement from judgments on non-academic behaviors. The frequency of assessment is also important, say O'Connor, Jung, and Reeves: teachers need to find the Goldilocks amount of testing, sampling enough to get a good sense of how students are doing, giving them multiple opportunities to show their stuff but not burdening them with too many assessments (especially those of low quality). Teachers should factor in their own professional judgment when giving final grades; rather than relying on calculating the mean of a semester or year of grades, they should assess students' ultimate level of proficiency. The authors urge school leaders to forbid practices that produce inaccurate grades, such as penalties for late work, academic dishonesty, absences, and inappropriate behavior; extra credit for behaviors that are unrelated to standards; group scores; grading on a curve; zeroes on the 101-point scale; students' level of English proficiency masking math proficiency; and grading homework.

• *Specific* – This means basing grades on standards and learning goals (not assessment methods) and clear descriptions of a limited number of levels (not points and percentages). The worst-case scenario, say O'Connor, Jung, and Reeves, is final grades representing "a mechanical and mindless calculation that reflects not the students' progress, but punishment for every missed homework assignment and wrong answer along the way." The best scenario is lots of specific error-correction and praise along the way, like the kind given by good music teachers and athletic coaches, and then a fair summation of progress and attainment at the end. A growing number of schools are joining the Mastery Transcript Consortium and working toward a radically different transcript that de-emphasizes grades and shows proficiencies developed over students' years in high school (see www.mastery.org).

• *Timely* – This is a key pathway to the ultimate purpose of classroom assessment, say the authors: "to provide information that improves teaching and learning." The more promptly

assessment results are communicated, the sooner teachers and students can do something about learning problems. Grades that are eleventh-hour predictions of failure don't help anyone. But timely feedback is challenging for middle- and high-school teachers with more than a hundred students and elementary teachers juggling multiple subjects. The big question is whether the teacher is measuring what matters. "If we have more checklists, quizzes, and assignments than we have time for," say O'Connor, Jung, and Reeves, "it may be best to reduce the quantity of assessments in order to increase the quality. Thoughtfully assessing students' performance on a single project that showcases their skills authentically across multiple standards may be a better choice than marking many quizzes that provide little fuel for reflection and improvement."

In conclusion, the authors caution against waiting for complete buy-in before making necessary changes in grading. Leaders need to challenge their colleagues to look at the evidence about better approaches and test hypotheses. "Effective change requires a sense of urgency, common ground, and action, but it doesn't necessarily require universal agreement," say O'Connor, Jung, and Reeves. "Change is best achieved through a judicious balance of pressure and support… We must reject the 'pep rally' model that attempts to garner universal excitement for change. Rather, we can use what researchers have called the 'nudge' factor… to create circumstances where the FAST approach is more appealing and easier to implement… Parents, communities, unions, and thought leaders may never agree on a specific grading procedure, but it's probable that they will agree on values, such as the desire to build personal responsibility and preparedness for the world beyond school… Grading practices that have the potential to reduce failure, reduce dropouts, and improve school safety are, indeed, urgent."

"Gearing Up for FAST Grading and Reporting" by Ken O'Connor, Lee Ann Jung, and Douglas Reeves in *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 2018 (Vol. 99, #8, p. 67-71), https://bit.ly/2IVifFo; the authors can be reached at kenoc@aol.com, jung@studentgrowth.org, and douglas.reeves@ChangeLeaders.com.

Back to page one

3. Jennifer Gonzalez on Improving Grading

"Grades are inherently imperfect," says Jennifer Gonzalez in this *Cult of Pedagogy* article. "To truly assess our students' learning, we need to get to know them, observe them, and study a wide sampling of their work over time." But in the real world of classrooms, there's a strong tug to simplify achievement into grades, and that can introduce all manner of distortions: a volcano-building project (with extra credit if the model erupted) where parental resources were a big factor; a student who got a D on a well-crafted essay because it wasn't neat and had some errors; a student who earned extra credit by donating tissues and hand sanitizer to the class; and a student who got half credit for a project turned in a day late under the teacher's "no excuses" late policy. "In all these cases," says Gonzalez, "the grade was not an accurate representation of what a student has learned. This is a problem of design." Parents, students, and teachers act as though grades have some absolute value, but they actually depend on lots of decisions that each teacher makes about assignments, assessment, and grading criteria.

Gonzalez acknowledges the challenge of making grades meaningful and suggests some guiding questions for being "thoughtful and deliberate when we calculate them:"

• *What learning does this task measure?* With her own children, Gonzalez is amazed at how often assignments "have no real connection to what the curriculum says students are learning" – for example, students making a relief map showing geographic features, when the objective is explaining how geography affects culture.

• *Are you teaching what you will measure?* "We often assign points for skills and qualities that students happen to bring with them, but are never taught in class," says Gonzalez. Collaboration skills is an example – we grade on them, but are we systematically teaching them?

• *What will quality work look like on this task?* Sometimes teachers have a vague idea of what the end product should be, but don't know exactly until the work is turned in – too late for students to rise to expectations. "We'll get better work from students and judge it more fairly if we identify and communicate the criteria for success ahead of time," says Gonzalez.

• *How much of the grade depends on outside resources?* Parents' contributions of supplies, access to technology, transportation, and assistance vary from home to home.

• *Can all students do well on this task, regardless of how they learn best?* Assignments shouldn't be designed with only one kind of learner in mind. The Universal Design for Learning framework is helpful in assigning work that is accessible to all students.

• *Should this assignment be called "practice" instead?* Teachers may believe that students will apply themselves only if the work will be graded. But some activities should be practice for a task that will be graded. For example, students might practice long-division problems until they're proficient enough to take the real test. This approach also saves teachers a lot of grading.

• *How should we deal with late work?* "In classes where late work is penalized, a grade is a reflection of the student's time management, or of stress, or perfectionism, or dozens of other possible factors," says Gonzalez. "What it isn't is a reflection of learning."

• *What about extra credit?* Giving credit for work that doesn't directly reflect learning distorts grades, including giving a false impression of mastery. "Students who are doing so well on the regular class work that they finish early don't need extra credit," says Gonzalez; "they need differentiated assignments and more challenge. Students who do poorly on assignments don't need extra credit to make up the missing points; they need opportunities to re-do and improve the work."

• *And what about averaging grades?* Simply adding up grades and dividing by the number of assignments can give an inaccurate picture of what students are actually learning. One alternative is giving more weight to grades later in the learning progression so students' improving level of mastery is reflected in final grades.

"How Accurate Are Your Grades?" by Jennifer Gonzalez in *The Cult of Pedagogy*, April 22, 2018, https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/accurate-grades/

Back to page one

4. Scheduling 101

"Most school schedules operate as uncomfortable compromises between undesirable tradeoffs," says Nathan Levenson (District Management Group) in this article in *School Administrator*. "The difference between an average schedule that meets minimum requirements and a great schedule that supports a multitude of best practices can be significant in terms of student outcomes." Many principals lament the fact that their schedules don't allow enough time for crucial activities, but consider the situation unavoidable.

Time is a precious resource in schools, says Levenson, yet scheduling is often left to building administrators without adequate training and support. Scheduling skill isn't on Robert Marzano's list of 21 key skills for school leaders, and it doesn't get anywhere near the attention lavished on budgeting, even though it's just as important to teaching and learning. Levenson identifies some practices in schools and districts that are doing better:

• *Clarify values and priorities*. "Having a rank-ordered, written list of what matters most helps guide the inevitable tradeoffs," he says. In elementary schools, top billing might go to common planning time for teacher teams, daily intervention, and no pullouts during core instruction. Schedulers also need to be clear about sacred cows that should be reconsidered – for example, maintaining last year's rotation or allowing specials (art, music, physical education) to wag the dog. In secondary schools, he says, *what* is scheduled is much more important than how many periods there are in a day or debating about block scheduling.

• *Work with the central office*. "[O]nly district leaders have the clout to remove some obstacles that prevent school-based staff from building great schedules," says Levenson. "What seems like an insurmountable obstacle at the school level can be overcome easily by the central office." For example, physical education and music teachers who travel to several schools can have their schedules changed with the stroke of an assistant superintendent's pen, allowing a principal to do something that seemed impossible.

• *Take it slow*. Teachers, like most of us, get used to routines, says Levenson. "Big changes, announced on short notice, can lead to huge pushback and the abandonment of promising plans. Sometimes just the fear of pushback leads to principals self-censoring great ideas." A good strategy is to map out an ideal schedule and then introduce it one segment at a time over several years.

• *Use schedules to support effective literacy practices*. Many of the elementary schedules Levenson and his colleagues have analyzed make teachers' work much more difficult by breaking up reading blocks, limiting intervention time, and pulling students out during core instruction. An expert scheduler focused on core instructional values can turn around these situations.

• *Do team scheduling*. Principals who share specialists, or school-based staff who share students, should schedule collectively, at the same time and place, for greater coordination.

• *Optimize the time of counselors, social workers, behaviorists, and psychologists*. In many schools, professionals hired to address students' social-emotional needs create their own schedules and end up spending more than half of each week sitting in meetings or doing paperwork. "By building schedules as a team and helping to streamline meetings and

paperwork," says Levenson, "some staff can double their contact time with students without lengthening their work week."

• *Align high-school schedules to new realities*. It makes no sense to insist on scheduling an online class or an independent study (which can take place anywhere, any time) to a classroom, period, and teacher. Levenson visited a high school that was bumping students into study halls because the online classrooms were "full" (policy required that a teacher be assigned to all credit-bearing courses and students had to be in the classroom of the teacher of record). Another example: a high school's six-day rotation made it impossible for students to show up for regular externships in nine-to-five businesses.

"Making School Scheduling More Strategic" by Nathan Levenson in *School Administrator*, May 2018 (Vol. 75, #5, p. 18-21), https://bit.ly/2IR7Ri3; Levenson can be reached at nlevenson@dmgroupK12.com.

Back to page one

5. Elementary Teacher Teams Discuss Student Data

In this *Teachers College Record* article, Amanda Datnow and Bailey Choi (University of California/San Diego), Vicki Park (San Jose State University), and Elise St. John (American Institutes for Research) report on their observations of grade 4 and 5 teacher team meetings discussing student ELA and math work and data. Their findings:

• *Labeling* – Teachers often spoke of students as "low" (or "struggling"), "middle level," and "high achievers," influenced by the way student scores were reported from state or local assessments. Teachers also spoke of students in terms of the programs to which they were assigned: gifted, special education, English learners, regular education.

• *Moments of mismatch* – Teachers noticed discrepancies between some students' test scores and day-to-day classroom performance, leading them to question whether assessments accurately captured achievement. Some teacher comments: "He's a lot brighter than his reading score." "His scores are a fluke." "I feel bad giving her a 'one' [on a district writing rubric] because she has improved so much." "Sometimes kids don't test well, and we know the kids better because they are more than just numbers…"

• *Going beyond the data* – Team meetings touched on family issues, race, gender, and motivation as students' progress was discussed. "Teachers were typically very respectful and empathetic when talking about family circumstances," say the researchers. On the other hand, "Racial and cultural backgrounds were rarely explicitly discussed in relation to students' achievement or home lives." Teachers talked about how some students were "not trying" or "not putting in the effort" – behaviors that teachers believed were affected by outside factors.

• *Fixed versus growth mindsets* – Occasionally teachers pointed to data on student achievement to support their perceptions about student ability, and some seemed to believe in an inevitable bell curve. One teacher took it a step further: "That's just the way it works out. If you're high in reading, you're usually high in math and you're high in writing." But more often teachers saw ability as malleable, speaking of students coming to school with different "academic backpacks," suggesting that the backpack could change if students' needs were

addressed. One teacher noted that many girls were not showing confidence in math and sought out research that could help her better understand and address the gender achievement gap. When teams focused on various forms of student-achievement data, teachers tended to "move away from discussions of ability and toward discussions of student growth and potential," say the researchers. Whether or not this happened depended on "organizational routines and expectations" in team data meetings.

• *Targeting skills* – Some team discussions got into the nitty-gritty of test results, supplemented by observations of students' classroom work, and this informed decisions on flexible student grouping and individual interventions. The more this happened, the more teachers moved away from traditional ability grouping and a fixed notion of intelligence.

• *The impact of Common Core standards* – Teachers found the new standards more demanding than what they had been accustomed to. One teacher said, "The idea is to go deeper, but that is a challenge when you've got kids who still can't add in a room with kids who are fluently adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing fractions." Some teachers were happy to see that the Common Core's math philosophy opened the door for opportunities for success for a wider range of students in their classes. "I think that with allowing them to attack a problem any way they want to, and not just teaching algorithms and then drill and kill just the algorithm," said one teacher. "I think you see those kids that would maybe not consider themselves good at math attacking problems in very effective ways." Another teacher: "I have a lot of really bright kids that know the algorithm but really can't back it up with any kind of conceptual model to show that they understand what the numbers represent or mean."

[This study did not focus on teams using the details of assessment data to reflect on which instructional techniques in which classrooms were working and which needed to be changed. A forthcoming article will discuss this aspect of the team meetings. K.M.]

"Teacher Talk About Student Ability and Achievement in the Era of Data-Driven Decision Making" by Amanda Datnow, Bailey Choi, Vicki Park, and Elise St. John in *Teachers College Record*, April 2018 (Vol. 120, #4, p. 1-34), https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1162856; Datnow can be reached at adatnow@ucsd.edu.

Back to page one

6. Keys to Getting Things Done

"Execution, or the ability to accomplish goals and plans, is one of the greatest challenges organizations face," say Sean Covey and Lynne Fox (FranklinCovey) in this article in *Principal*. Execution is especially challenging with initiatives that involve changes in human behavior – for example, a school district wanting teachers to build stronger relationships with students. Here is Covey and Fox's four-step strategy:

• *Focus on the wildly important*. Schools can accomplish only two or three big goals with excellence, say the authors. Once decided, these top priorities should be framed in terms of baseline data (where we are now), specific outcomes (where we want to be), and a timeline (by when). A school might set a goal of moving from 60 percent of students reading at or

above grade level to 75 percent by June 2019. This goal would then ripple down (with different percentages) to grade-level teams, classrooms, and individual students.

• *Decide on and implement lead measures*. Which key behaviors will lead to, or leverage, accomplishing the schoolwide goals? Finding the right ones may take experimentation, insight, and time. In the case of improving students' reading proficiency, a school might decide on scheduling an extra guided reading session each week for struggling readers, convening interventions and enrichment groups twice a week, differentiating instruction during reading lessons, and having students read 20 minutes every night and sharing what's read with parents or a reading buddy.

• *Keep a compelling scorecard*. Grade-level teams might keep a data display in a private room tracking progress of all their students toward the goal. Individual teachers and students might keep confidential records or data displays of progress and use the data to motivate effort and modify strategies.

• *Create a cadence of accountability*. The first 15 minutes of grade-level or all-staff meetings might be devoted to reviewing progress toward goals, discussing the most-effective methods, adjusting methods as needed, celebrating growth, and making future commitments. This could ripple down to the individual classroom level, with students checking in with "accountability buddies" and spurring each other on, sharing the best strategies.

"Closing the Execution Gap" by Sean Covey and Lynne Fox in *Principal*, May/June 2018 (Vol. 97, #5, p. 38-41), https://bit.ly/2jvN3OO

Back to page one

7. Ways to Energize Flagging Meetings

"Educators have a particularly tricky relationship with meetings," says Leah Shafer in this *Usable Knowledge* article drawn from *Meeting Wise* by Kathryn Parker Boudett and Elizabeth City (Harvard Education Press, 2014). "Teachers, school leaders, and district officials are famously short on time, but they're also often desperate for collaboration and connection, knowing that those partnerships are key to professional growth and wellbeing, as well as to streamlining the services that help students learn and grow." Here are suggestions for moments when meetings aren't going well:

• A question or idea is met with silence:
- Count to ten. Maybe people just need more time to process.
- Say that silence is okay (unspoken: you're not going to answer the question yourself).
- If neither of those works, ask, "Why is it quiet?" Are people still thinking, confused, or distracted by another issue?
- Write options on an easel sheet or whiteboard (people may be having trouble keeping track of the discussion).

• An activity isn't clicking:
- Have everyone take a 10-minute break and return with suggestions.
- During a break, check in with a colleague for ideas on what's not working.

- Ask the group for help: "We seem to be talking in circles. What could help us all go deeper?"

• You're too much the center of attention:
- Look at specific people, which may encourage them to speak.
- Take notes while people talk, which encourages them to make eye contact with others.
- Rest your chin on your hand or take a drink of water, signaling that you're not going to talk for a bit.
- Ask open-ended questions and wait for responses.
- Be explicit about the need for a collective conversation; encourage people to talk to each other, not you.

• The energy level sags:
- Take a short break (especially if people have been sitting for more than 90 minutes).
- Use a pair-share or small-group activity to get everyone talking.
- Have people get up and post sticky-note ideas around the room, then do a gallery walk.
- Get people talking with someone in the room they haven't spoken with yet.
- Toss a ball for taking turns, play a word game, or do a quick energizer.

"Making Meetings Work" by Leah Shafer in *Usable Knowledge*, May 4, 2018, https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/05/making-meetings-work

Back to page one

8. A California High School's All-Hands-on-Deck Mentoring Program

(Originally titled "Teens Need Mentors")

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (San Diego State University and Health Sciences High and Middle College) describe how their high school posted the names of all 750 students during a PD meeting. Staff members then put a sticky dot by the name of each student with whom they'd had conversations beyond routine classroom interactions. "Then we stood back and gasped," say Fisher and Frey. Some students had lots of dots, some had a few, and some had none at all. Sadly, the anonymous students probably couldn't name anyone – not a family member, neighbor, or community member – they could talk to about a problem or a dream. It was clear the school needed to do something different.

That something different, kicked off in September 2017, was assigning every adult in the school (teachers, administrators, clerical staff, and paraprofessionals) 11 or 12 students to mentor. Everyone's mentee list was drawn from one grade level but otherwise randomly generated. Lists were distributed in a meeting at the beginning of the school year and everyone was given 15 minutes to flag unworkable matches (e.g., a historically strained relationship). Within 30 minutes everyone had their final lists. The expectation was that each mentor would maintain regular contact with mentees, starting with an introductory note and token gift. Going forward, there were phone calls, handwritten notes, lunches in classrooms, and informal conversations. Every month on PD days, people shared effective practices and problem-solved. One approach was to see if a mentor knew the student's aspirations, a special talent, a recent success, or any concerns, fears, or worries. The hope, based on research, is that that mentored

students will have better attendance, be more likely to participate in extracurricular sports and activities, and be more likely to enroll in college.

"Teens Need Mentors" by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in *Educational Leadership*, May 2018 (Vol. 75, #8, p, 83-85), https://bit.ly/2rWT7V8; the authors can be reached at dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu and nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu.

Back to page one

9. Literature Circles That Help Students Appreciate Graphic Novels

In this article in *Language Arts*, David Low (California State University/Fresno) and Katrina Bartow Jacobs (University of Pittsburgh) salute the idea of literature circles of 4-6 students – "small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book." For groups that choose to read graphic novels and manga, Low and Jacobs suggest six assigned roles so students will fully appreciate what makes "graphica" unique and powerful:

• *Image expert* – This student looks for how images, icons, and figures are represented in the text – perspective, angles, close-up and faraway shots, and bird's-eye versus worm's-eye views. Are drawings cartoony, sketchy, or realistic? Do they use visual symbols, clichés, or stereotypes?

• *Gutter dweller* – This student focuses on the layout of pages within the graphic text – the placement of panels and the blank spaces that separate them, transitions including the passage of time and change of venue or perspective.

• *Text maven* – This student comments on the use of thought balloons, expository captions, and sound effects, including text size and fonts.

• *Palette cleanser* – This student considers the role of color and grayscale in conveying narrative tone and characters' state of mind.

• *Synergizer* – "Much of graphica's power comes from its ability to allow simultaneous competing meanings across different modes," say Low and Jacobs. The synergizer's job is to be the gestalt analyst, considering how the relationships among images, words, layout, and other elements work together on the page.

• *Superfan* – This group member puts the graphic text in its larger context. Does it reference other works, in any medium or genre, or real-life or historical events? What kinds of reviews has it received?

"Literature Circle Roles for Discussing Graphica in Language Arts Classrooms" by David Low and Katrina Bartow Jacobs in *Language Arts*, , May 2018 (Vol. 95, #5, p. 322-331), https://bit.ly/2IDmJgD (the article has a number of examples of graphic texts); the authors can be reached at dlow@csufresno.edu and kbjacobs@pitt.edu.

Back to page one

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and other educators very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 48 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, writer, and consultant lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 60 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 50 issues a year). Every week there's a podcast and HTMI version as well.

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Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

All Things PLC
American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
AMLE Magazine
ASCA School Counselor
District Management Journal
Ed. Magazine
Education Digest
Education Next
Education Update
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
English Journal
Essential Teacher
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Harvard Business Review
Harvard Educational Review
Independent School
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Knowledge Quest
Language Arts
Literacy Today
Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Reading Research Quarterly
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
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Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Social Education
Social Studies and the Young Learner
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Education Gadfly
The Journal of the Learning Sciences
The Language Educator
The Learning Professional (formerly Journal of Staff Development)
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time Magazine