Marshall Memo 412

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
November 28, 2011

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Quotes of the Week

"Porn is the model for today's middle-school and high-school students. And none of us is offering an alternative that's even remotely appealing."

New Jersey sex educator Paul Joannides (see item #1)

"Solo librarians are the air traffic controllers of the library world, serving hundreds, if not thousands of students."

Cynthia Karabush and Pam Pleviak (see item #9)

"Many novice teachers enter the field of teaching with wide-eyed optimism, only to have their idealism dashed up on the cold, wet, rocky shoreline of classroom management and organizational realities."

Ray Reutzel and Sarah Clark (see item #6)

"Simply looking briefly into a child's eyes can powerfully send the message, 'I know you know how to do this; now let's see you do it.'"

Kathryn Brady, Mary Beth Forton, and Deborah Porter (see item #5)

"Fluency is reading like you talk, not too fast and not too slow, with expression and no sounding out. It's also important to understand what you read."

One Idaho school's second graders' definition of fluency (see item #7)

1. The Birds and the Bees on Steroids

In this startling cover article in *The New York Times Magazine*, Laurie Abraham profiles Al Vernacchio, a sex education teacher in a private high school outside Philadelphia who is boldly venturing into territory studiously avoided by most schools – pleasure and good sex. The seniors in his elective class trust this 47-year-old teacher with intimate details of their budding relationships, and he answers their questions. "What if kids really believed we wanted them to have great sex?" he asks. The problem with most sex ed, he believes, is that it's one of the few classes where teachers are really *not* preparing students for the future.

Vernacchio has an anonymous question box in his class, and 90 percent of the questions he gets are about love and anxieties: *How do you handle your insecurities in a relationship? How do you stop worrying about being cheated on? How do you know when it's time to break up? How do I talk to my partner about wanting to spend more time together without being annoying?* His detailed answers to these and the more graphic variety of questions seem to get many students rethinking early sexual activity.

New Jersey sex educator Paul Joannides is on the same wavelength: "Porn is the model for today's middle-school and high-school students. And none of us is offering an alternative that's even remotely appealing." One of the big problems with most sex educators, he says, is that they see their mission as being the "messengers of all things that can go wrong with sex." Meanwhile, kids have other things on their minds: "They're worrying if someone special will find them sexually attractive, whether they will be able to do it as well as porn, whether others have the same kind of sexual feelings they do." His basic message, explains Abraham, "is that young people will tune out educators if their real concerns are left in the shadows. And practically speaking, pleasure is so braided through sex that if you can't mention it, you miss chances to teach about safe sex in a way that young people can really use."

"Teaching Good Sex: A Frank, Fearless Approach to the Birds and the Bees" by Laurie Abraham in *The New York Times Magazine*, Nov. 20, 2011, http://nyti.ms/spEp1V

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2. What Our Use of Certain Words Can Reveal

In this intriguing *Harvard Business Review* interview, psychologist James Pennebaker of the University of Texas/Austin discusses his computer analysis of how people use "function" words. These are 500 pronouns, articles, prepositions, conjunctions, and auxiliary verbs that act as the connective tissue of language – for example, the, and, I, to, a, it, of, in, that, with, is, but, was, you, he, me, my, have, for, on.

Function words make up only 0.5% of the average English speaker's vocabulary, but they are 55% of the words we use on a daily basis. They help shape and shortcut what we speak, write, read, and hear; they're like the nails that hold language together. Interestingly, Google's search engine ignores function words, focusing instead on meaning as conveyed in content words. But function words are important – note the difference between saying "a ring" and "that ring."

Function words are processed differently by our brains, and we need social skills to use and understand them. They also reveal a lot. "When we analyze people's use of function words," says Pennebaker, "we can get a sense of their emotional state and personality, and their age and social class." In military transcripts, he was even able to tell a person's rank. They provide insights into people's honesty, stability, and sense of self – a "window to the soul." Here are some specifics:

• Pronouns show where people's attention is focused. Asked about the weather outside, one person says, "It's hot" while another says, "I think it's hot." The second person is more self-focused, says Pennebaker. "Depressed people use the word 'I' much more often than emotionally stable people," he has found. "People who are lower in status use 'I' much more frequently."

• Certain words can signal dishonesty. People who are lying tend to use "we" and avoid first-person pronouns. Rather than saying, "I didn't take your book," a liar might say, "That's not the kind of thing that anyone with integrity would do." Liars also tend to use exclusive words like "but" and "without" and negative words like "no," "none," and "never."

• In a job interview, the pronouns candidates use to describe co-workers can be revealing – do they refer to them as "we" or "they"?

• Pennebaker recorded and analyzed his own speech patterns and was surprised to find that he spoke differently to his 12-year-old son than he did to his wife and daughter. The words he used with his son (who was going through an acting-out phase) were more formal and impersonal – subconscious manifestations of the tension between them. Pennebaker realized that he was "responding by being cool and detached, which males stupidly do when we're annoyed. When I realized this, I tried to become more human, emotional, and honest with him."

• There are gender differences in the use of function words. Women use "I," "me," and "mine" more often, which Pennebaker says reveals that they are more self-attentive and aware of their internal emotional state. Men use more articles like "a," "an," and "the" because they talk more about objects and things. Women tend to use more third-person pronouns like "he," "she," and "they" because they talk more about people and relationships and how to manage them.

"Your Use of Pronouns Reveals Your Personality" – An interview with James Pennebaker in *Harvard Business Review*, December 2011 (Vol. 89, #12, p. 32-33), http://hbr.org/2011/12/your-use-of-pronouns-reveals-your-personality/ar/1

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3. Personalizing Two Missouri High Schools

In this article in *The School Administrator*, former Missouri superintendent Henry Russell describes how high school teachers put cards with the names of each graduating senior on the cafeteria wall and, in the course of a spring professional development day, tried to write the answers to three questions on as many cards as possible:

- What is my plan for next year?
- What is a hobby or outside interest I have?
- What is my dream or lifetime goal?

Between PD sessions and during lunch, staff members scanned the cards and wrote what they knew. At the end of the day, staff members were stunned to see that fully one-third of the cards were blank. How could so many students have attended the school without a single adult knowing such important information about them? "This was a humbling moment for everyone," says Russell. "Yet it also served as an affirmation that change was needed."

The community decided to divide its two 1,700-student high schools into 330-student houses, each spanning the four grade levels and containing a heterogeneous mix of students and staff (they decided against giving each house a theme). Students stayed with their "families" through all four years with the same counselor, assistant principal, and faculty advisor. Each house was led by a respected teacher who was freed up two periods a day to plan professional development and run weekly house meetings for the 20-23 teachers. Each school's house leaders met daily with the small learning communities honcho to share ideas and strategies, coordinate activities, and support each other.

When the houses were formed, teachers filled out a survey on their experience, certifications, extracurricular activities, and colleagues they wanted to work with (or avoid), and teams were formed to provide each house with a mix of experience and expertise. Initial house meetings focused on getting acquainted and forming team bonds, and rooms were assigned so team members were physically close to one another (this involved wholesale relocations from the previous department-based organization; some teachers had been in the same room for 30 years). Parents and community members learned about the plan in 14 meetings in schools, civic clubs, and other locations.

In the spring of the fourth year with the house system, each high school conducted the same exercise of answering three questions on each graduating senior. At the end of the day, not a single card was blank, and three-quarters of the cards had all three questions answered. A survey of high-school students in the community asked, "Is there at least one adult in your school you can go to with a problem?" Ninety-five percent of students said, "Yes."

"Creating Connections Through a House Formation" by Henry Russell in *The School Administrator*, November 2011 (Vol. 68, #10, p. 38-39), http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=20854; Russell can be reached at hrussell@ucmo.edu.

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4. A Superintendent Learns Where the Buck Stops

In this column in *The School Administrator*, Wisconsin superintendent Patricia Neudecker describes her most memorable catastrophe. Before school one beautiful fall day, she heard an urgent loudspeaker announcement in a district elementary school: "We have an emergency on the first floor! Crisis team, please report!" Neudecker wasn't on the crisis team, but she hustled to the scene anyway. "That's what good superintendents do," she said. "After all, I am the superintendent, and they would need me."

Here's what she found. A young doe had run out of the woods and across a field outside the school, pursued by an aggressive buck. The doe crashed through a classroom window with the buck right behind it. Both animals stormed through the classroom, across the hallway, into the classroom on the other side, and through that classroom's window, and disappeared into the woods.

"There was blood, broken glass, and deer hair everywhere," says Neudecker, "not to mention two classrooms in disarray. My heart pounded as I thought about what I should do first." But the crisis team blocked off the area, cleaned up, and had things reasonably shipshape by the time students arrived.

"I did very little, but I learned a lot that day," says Neudecker: (a) Expect the unexpected; and (b) You are only as good as the team of people you work with."

"The Buck Stopped Here" by Patricia Neudecker in *The School Administrator*, November 2011 (Vol. 68, #10, p. 42), http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=20860; Neudecker can be reached at Pat.Neudecker@oasd.k12.wi.us.

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5. Ideas for Reducing Misbehavior

In this thoughtful article in *Responsive Classroom*, Kathryn Brady, Mary Beth Forton, and Deborah Porter spell out their philosophy on dealing with student misbehavior:

- Stop the behavior immediately – don't signal that it's okay and let it escalate;
- Reestablish positive behavior as quickly as possible;
- Maintain children's dignity;
- Develop children's self-control and self-regulation skills;
- Help children recognize and fix any harm caused by their mistakes;
- Show that rules help make the classroom a safe place where all can learn.

"In classrooms where this approach is used," say Brady, Forton, and Porter, "adults respond quickly, firmly, and respectfully when children misbehave. Minor problems are addressed before behavior gets out of control. Children are held accountable for their behavior, with adults guiding their learning so they can make better choices next time."

The authors recommend three strategies for cueing students about incipient problems and dealing with misbehavior when it occurs (this is after positive routines have been explicitly taught and practiced to mastery):

• *Visual and verbal cues* – "Simply looking briefly into a child's eyes can powerfully send the message, 'I know you know how to do this; now let's see you do it,'" say Brady,

Forton, and Porter. A hand gesture miming writing can be a signal to get to work during writers workshop. A finger on the lips can command silence. Brief verbal cues – saying the child's name, perhaps – can be unobtrusive, non-humiliating, and effective. But sometimes a more direct, public intervention is necessary: "Sonya, put the book away now and get out your math materials."

• *Proximity* – Just moving next to a student who is tipping back in his chair can be enough to get him to sit more safely. Having a fidgety, distracted student come sit beside the teacher can get her more focused and involved.

• *Logical consequences* – For example, having a student scrub the desk he's scribbled on is logical; staying in for recess and cleaning all the desks in the classroom are not. Logical consequences differ from punishments in that they are "relevant (directly related to the misbehavior), realistic (something the child can reasonably be expected to do and that the teacher can manage with a reasonable amount of effort), and respectful (communicated kindly and focused on the misbehavior, not the child's character or personality)."

Of course these strategies need to be used appropriately and differentiated for different children at different times. The question is, which strategy will stop misbehavior and restore positive behavior as quickly, simply, and kindly as possible?

"Choice of words, along with a friendly, matter-of-fact tone and a few specific examples, will help get this message across," say the authors. A teacher might say, "We're all working on following our classroom rules, but we all make mistakes sometimes. In our class, when you don't follow a rule, it's my job to help you get back on track, fix any problems you caused, and learn to follow the rule next time. So, for example, if you forget our rule about staying safe and start running and knock down someone's block tower, I might tell you to help them rebuild."

With older children, the teacher might say, "If I see that you are about to break a rule, I may use a signal to help you realize that you are getting out of control. It's not a big deal; it just means you need to check your behavior and get back on track. For instance, I might put my finger on my lips to remind you to be quiet, or I may just say your name and give you a look if I think you know what to do. If I give you a signal like that, I'm giving you a chance to correct your mistake quickly and quietly, without disrupting anyone else's learning."

"Responding to Misbehavior" by Kathryn Brady, Mary Beth Forton, and Deborah Porter in *Responsive Classroom*, November 2011 (Vol. 23, #4, p. 1-4), no e-link available

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6. Helping First-Year Teachers Succeed in Elementary Literacy Classrooms

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, Utah State professors Ray Reutzel and Sarah Clark get right to the point: "Many novice teachers enter the field of teaching with wide-eyed optimism, only to have their idealism dashed up on the cold, wet, rocky shoreline of classroom management and organizational realities." Here are their suggestions for averting this common phenomenon, starting with an important proviso: "Organizing an effective literacy classroom

begins long before the school year begins. Those who wait until the week before school starts are headed for a rough start."

• *Organizing the physical environment* – Reutzel and Clark recommend doing a thorough inventory of supplies, furniture, and space and taking full advantage of most principals' desire to support new teachers – ask for what you need! Among the basics: a rug for whole-class meetings, a U-shaped table for small-group reading, a rolling cart and storage space for materials, and a well-stocked classroom library with tubs for sorting books by level and genre. The authors don't recommend posting materials on the walls at the beginning of the year, since these are best co-produced with students. Once students have arrived, it's important to practice clean-up routines so the library and other spaces are maintained in good shape.

• *Classroom management* – First, clearly state and model expected behaviors on Day One, say Reutzel and Clark: "Don't fall into the trap of asking students to suggest the rules. You are the teacher and are responsible to maintain order and a positive learning environment." The rules should be enforced and shared with parents. Second, manage time and transitions efficiently. "Students are quick to identify activities with little meaning or purpose and often demonstrate this by acting out or being disruptive," say the authors. Third, manage misbehavior calmly and confidently while maintaining the flow of instruction.

• *Starting each day efficiently* – "When children enter the classroom, they should have a series of tasks that are to be accomplished immediately," say Reutzel and Clark. Attendance, the lunch count, checking a morning message, and doing "bell work" can be on automatic pilot, saving precious time and getting past morning routines to instruction as quickly as possible.

• *Collecting and analyzing assessment data* – It's essential to know the screening, progress-monitoring, and summative assessments students will take in the course of the year and then plan a calendar, a database spreadsheet, a system for collecting informal data on students' progress, and assessments to make quick in-class diagnoses on students' performance.

• *Designing an effective literacy block* – Reutzel and Clark recommend at least 120 minutes, divided into: word work (30 minutes), writing (30 minutes), fluency (30 minutes), and vocabulary/comprehension (30 minutes), all using effective components of explicit instruction: explanation of lesson objectives and purpose, teacher modeling, teacher-guided practice, and independent practice.

• *Offering effective Tier 2 instruction* – This is tailored, small-group instruction to students who are not successful in initial Tier 1 instruction. It's not enough for these students to do small-group reading at their instructional reading level, say Reutzel and Clark. "Students need to receive specific instruction focused on identified skills, strategies, and conceptual gaps, along with extensive teacher-guided practice, gradually released over time, and guided application of these skills, strategies and concepts when reading and writing real texts." What does the rest of the class do while the teacher is with Tier 2 groups? One option is whole-class assigned activities; a second is a menu of assigned activities to be completed independently.

• *Planning the first week of reading lessons* – Reutzel and Clark recommend giving students time to settle in and learn classroom routines and then systematically and explicitly beginning to teach the core elements of literacy – always with emergency time fillers for situations where lessons don't go as long or as well as hoped.

• *Effective parent communication and involvement* – Parents should know curriculum topics and units of study, how their children are doing, and what they can do at home to support classroom instruction. It may be possible to recruit some parents to help in the classroom.

• *Growing as a professional* – Reutzel and Clark recommend keeping up with research and policy, getting involved in professional groups, joining online discussions, and reading, reading, reading.

"Organizing Literacy Classrooms for Effective Instruction" by Ray Reutzel and Sarah Clark in *The Reading Teacher*, October 2011 (Vol. 65, #2, p. 96-109), http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/TRTR.01013/abstract; the authors can be reached at ray.reutzel@usu.edu and sarah.clark@usu.edu.

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7. Improving Fluency Without Drudgery

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, Boise State University professors Mary Ann Cahill and Anne Gregory contend that a lot of what elementary teachers do to improve students' reading fluency is "dull and lifeless" and too focused on speed. Cahill and Gregory agree that students should do repeated readings in materials at their reading level and get appropriate coaching and support – but more important, they advocate putting some fun into fluency practice. Students should practice with poetry and rhymes, song lyrics, speeches and notable quotations, jokes and riddles, Readers Theatre scripts, and favorite passages from stories.

Teachers might also want to consider setting up stations around the classroom in which students can do a variety of fluency activities, including:

• Practicing using different voices – cowboy, baby, Donald Duck, British accent, deep tone, whisper;

• Working in pairs with a pretend microphone, with one student playing an announcer and the other an interviewer; after practicing three times, the announcer reads his or her passage as though it was on the radio, and then the interviewer asks the announcer two comprehension questions about the passage;

• Wearing animal face masks and adopting the persona of the animal while reading;

• Whisper-reading to small plastic animals;

• Shining a red-beamed flashlight on books and "chasing" the narrow beam as they read.

• Assessing each other using fluency scales or rubrics. Cahill and Gregory suggest having students come up with a definition of fluency after the teacher models various kinds of non-fluent reading. Here's what a second-grade class in Idaho came up with after watching their teacher read in a variety of dysfunctional ways: "Fluency is reading like you talk, not too fast

and not too slow, with expression and no sounding out. It's also important to understand what you read." From this exercise, the class can come up with a scoring chart with a 1-2-3-4-5 scale for each:

- The reader's voice changed tone.
- The reader gave different voices to different characters.
- The reader's pace was appropriate.
- The reader's volume was appropriate.
- The reader made the story fun to listen to.

And it's a short jump from there to a detailed rubric describing performance at several levels in each domain. Teachers are thrilled when they overhear students saying to each other, "Oh, what great expression!" or "That was a little fast. Remember to read like you talk."

"Putting the Fun Back Into Fluency Instruction" by Mary Ann Cahill and Anne Gregory in *The Reading Teacher*, October 2011 (Vol. 65, #2, p. 127-131), http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/TRTR.01018/abstract; the authors can be reached at marycahill@boisestate.edu and agregory@boisestate.edu.

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8. Teaching Students to "Turn and Talk" More Productively

"Turn and talk" is a common classroom strategy to help children deepen their learning and give teachers a chance to listen in and check for understanding, says Delaware teacher Courtney Fox in this article in *Responsive Classroom*. "Although it may seem like a simple thing, chatting with a partner involves a complex set of skills that many children do not come to school with," she continues. "Listening and speaking in turn, staying on topic, and not monopolizing the conversation, to name just a few." Among the most common problems: children who interrupt constantly (they need to get better at waiting their turn) and children who rarely speak up (they need to become more assertive). "Children who are not skilled in this arena may struggle, academically and socially," says Fox.

So Fox sets aside a few minutes after lunch each day to work on partner chat skills with her first graders. She starts with the basics – sitting knee to knee and looking at one's partner – and then gives students a simple conversation topic: what your partner had for lunch. Kids get better at trading information, and after a few days Fox has them share in the whole-class circle what their partner ate, which increases the incentive to listen. She then has students talk with partners several times a day – during morning meeting, sharing reactions to a read-aloud, and comparing solutions during math.

"By the end of the year, they will become skilled conversationalists," says Fox, "able to engage in rich dialogues with each other, with the older students who are their book buddies, and even with adults."

"Teaching Children How to Converse" by Courtney Fox in *Responsive Classroom*, November 2011 (Vol. 23, #4, p. 13), no e-link available; Fox is blogging about this topic at http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/blog

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9. What Are the Highest Priorities for a School Librarian?

"Solo librarians are the air traffic controllers of the library world, serving hundreds, if not thousands of students," say Illinois school librarians Cynthia Karabush and Pam Pleviak in this *Knowledge Quest* article. "We are responsible for a book budget, technology resources, orientation and research classes, book talks, and reading promotions, as well as professional development for teachers, guiding them in effective integration of all of the above in students' learning."

Given this mind-boggling range of responsibilities, librarians must constantly decide what's most important. For example, which of these three possible activities adds most value?

- Cataloging new books
- Planning a book club meeting
- Attending the weekly department chairs meeting

Librarians tend to get buried in low-level tasks and isolated from their colleagues, say Karabush and Pleviak. It's crucial to delegate clerical tasks as much as possible and attend meetings and professional activities around the school. "When given the choice of a high-impact task vs. an urgent task," they say, "always choose the high-impact task" – especially when colleagues meet to do curriculum unit planning, Response to Intervention, school improvement, and all-faculty sharing.

"Every committee meeting is a potential chance to forge alliances," they say, "to show teachers and administrators how we can help them reach their goals more effectively and make their lives easier… If we know what our teachers need, we will be able to have resources ready for them." The goal is to be the "go-to" person in the building.

For courage and ideas, Karabush and Pleviak urge librarians to reach out to colleagues in other schools, connecting by e-mail, on websites, in regular in-person meetings, and at regional and national conferences. "Once we become comfortable providing professional development within our schools," they say, "we must take a deep breath, gather our courage, and begin presenting to our peers at local and statewide conferences."

Karabush and Pleviak close by asking what school librarians can give students that classroom teachers don't. "Their English teachers encourage them to read and conduct literary analysis," they say. "We, on the other hand, promote recreational reading." Circulation in their own libraries soared when they beefed up their recreational collection and promoted reading for fun in book clubs (some students say the clubs are more fun than lunch). School libraries can also help bridge the digital divide for students who don't have access to computers at home, and can provide online tips, webquest lists, and pathfinders to vetted links for homework help. "In addition, we have become the de facto video-editing experts in our schools," they say.

"Take Me Off the Ledge: Surviving Solo Librarianship" by Cynthia Karabush and Pam Pleviak in *Knowledge Quest*, November/December 2011 (Vol. 40, #2, p. 48-52), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at ckarabush@gmail.com and ppleviak1@yahoo.com.

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10. Online Resources for School Librarians

In this *Knowledge Quest* article, Longwood University (VA) professor Audrey Church suggests some resources for school librarians:

- American Association of School Librarians: http://www.aasl.org
- A worldwide school librarian discussion group: http://lmnet.wordpress.com
- California's listserve for librarians: http://www.calibk12.info
- Michigan's listserve: http://www.mimame.org/membership.html
- Virginia's listserve: http://www.vemaonline.org
- AASL's Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/aasl.ala
- Facebook for Partnerships Advancing Library Media at Florida State University: http://www.facebook.com/PalmCenter
- Diane Chen's blog: http://blog.schoollibraryjournal.com/practicallyparadise
- Kristin Fontichiaro's blog: http://blog.schoollibrarymedia.com
- Carl Harvey's blog: http://carl-harvey.com/libraryties
- Doug Johnson's blog: http://dougjohnson.squarespace.com
- Joyce Valenza's blog: http://blog.schoollibraryjournal.com/neverendingsearch
- Teacher Librarian Ning: http://teacherlibrarian.ning.com
- AASL's national longitudinal survey: http://www.ala.org/aasl/slcsurvey
- National Center for Education Statistics data: http://www.nces.ed.gov

"Definitely NOT Alone! Online Resources and Websites Help Keep School Librarians Connected" by Audrey Church in *Knowledge Quest*, November/December 2011 (Vol. 40, #2, p. 36-39), no e-link available; Church can be reached at churchap@longwood.edu.

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11. Making the Most of Historical Fiction Picturebooks

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, Suzette Youngs (University of Northern Colorado) and Frank Serafini (Arizona State University) offer suggestions for getting students to read historical fiction picturebooks more thoughtfully. Here are their essential questions:

- Is this story true? How much of it is true?
- How can we distinguish fact from fiction?
- How do the authors know?
- How much of it happened like this?
- How can the author's note help to construct meaning?
- What type of historical fiction is this?
- How do the illustrations and text work together?

The authors strongly recommend that teachers read books themselves first. Here are their historical fiction picturebooks:

- *Home of the Brave* by Allen Say
- *Sister Ann's Hands* by Marybeth Lorbiecki
- *More Than Anything Else* by Marie Bradby
- *Home to Medicine Mountain* by Chiori Santiago

- *Moses* by Carole Boston Weatherford
- *The Bracelet* by Yoshiko Uchida
- *Nettie's Trip South and Katie's Trunk* by Ann Turner
- *A Sweet Smell of Roses* by Angela Johnson
- *Erika's Story* by Ruth Vander Zee
- *Rhyolite* by Diane Siebert

"Comprehension Strategies for Reading Historical Fiction Picturebooks" by Suzette Youngs and Frank Serafini in *The Reading Teacher*, October 2011 (Vol. 65, #2, p. 115-124), http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/TRTR.01014/abstract; the authors can be reached at suzette.youngs@unco.edu and fserafini@mac.com.

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12. Short Items:

a. This American Life on middle school kids – This thoughtful one-hour radio program by Ira Glass delves into the drama and foibles of American youth in the middle-school years: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/449/middle-school

"This American Life" with Ira Glass, aired Oct. 28, 2011

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b. Leveled reading website – This amazing site has a selection of books and reading passages from all the Fountas-Pinnell levels: http://www.readinga-z.com.

Spotted in "Putting the Fun Back Into Literacy Instruction" by Mary Ann Cahill and Anne Gregory in *The Reading Teacher* (see item #7)

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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).

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- 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
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Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
New York Times
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
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