# Marshall Memo 353

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
September 27, 2010

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## Quotes of the Week

"We've been taught that once you've got a good idea, and you're convinced it's a good idea, then it's just a matter of presenting it in a clear and logical way, and a reasonable group of people will see it."

John Kotter (see item #1)

"No healthy child should be excluded from or miss school because of head lice, and no-nit policies for return to school should be abandoned."

American Academy of Pediatrics (see item #12a)

"Throwing money at teachers in low-performing schools will not fix a broken system."

Andrea Gabor (see item #7)

"Fidgety, loud, disorganized, hurried, careless, and off-task behavior coupled with messy, incomplete, or missing work are tough challenges in the classroom, even on a good day."

Mary Fowler (see item #1)

"Though I sometimes worry that one day my GPS will go 'bonkers' because I've gotten off track, to date my receiver hasn't lost its cool or showed any irritation. No yelling, no blaming, no shaming, no name calling, no idle threats, no long diatribes. When I miss a turn or get off track – it simply says, 'Recalculating.'"

Mary Fowler on GPS devices as models for working with ADHD students (*ibid.*)

## 1. Managing ADHD Behavior

"ADHD is not easy to manage," says consultant Mary Fowler in this thoughtful *NJEA Review* article. "Yet, it is a highly manageable condition. We can't cure it, but we can enable students to reduce any disabling effects of this condition. We simply have to do what we know."

Fowler empathizes with educators who work with ADHD students: "Fidgety, loud, disorganized, hurried, careless, and off-task behavior coupled with messy, incomplete, or missing work are tough challenges in the classroom, even on a good day," she says. Part of teachers' stress comes from the expectation that ADHD is curable by interventions. "Here's the real deal," says Fowler. "Though the root causes of ADHD are neurobiological, the manifestations of ADHD happen in the day-to-day functioning. They are seldom (if ever) fixed once and for all because these problems often arise from environmental expectations, conditions, and triggers. Thus, these students are highly susceptible to the world around them and the world within them."

Most ADHD problems are "POP" or "point of performance" – that is, the student has difficulty being on task – that is, doing what you are supposed to be doing, when you are supposed to be doing it, in the way you are supposed to do it. "Generally, students with ADHD know what they are supposed to be doing," says Fowler. "But, where the rubber meets the road – at the point of performance – they lose traction and don't do what they know. Distractibility, hating to wait, restlessness, losing materials, or missing pieces of the whole interfere with their best intentions to do what is expected and do it well." It's not a matter of choice – it's a symptom of ADHD and a sign that an intervention is needed.

"Here's the good news," says Fowler. "ADHD point of performance problems can be managed effectively (not to perfection)." Here's what we know:

- Interventions have to happen in the here and now and on an as-needed basis.
- They work when they are used.
- Their use often requires coaxing and coaching from a teacher, parent, peer, visual cues, or technology.
- They may be needed throughout the school day, month, year, or lifespan.

But shouldn't students learn to use the interventions on their own? If students did, says Fowler, they wouldn't have ADHD! "We can provide self-awareness and self-management strategies. Still, these students (and adults) will require coaching to do what they know." For example, Johnny calls out in class. "I didn't see your hand raised. Why are you calling out? Don't you know the rule? *Wait*." Johnny says, "I can't. If I wait, I'll forget." If the teacher relents and lets

Johnny speak "just this one time," his blurting is reinforced and the teacher has not managed his behavior. "In students with ADHD, 'think first' or 'wait' do not enter into the self-control picture," says Fowler.

So what's a better response? Don't try to curb the need to call out. Instead, tell the student to write down the thought, or give a silent signal to wait. Or, with a young student, call on him or her immediately, preempting the blurt. "Where the student is unsure or anxious about what to do, assure the student that individual attention will always be given as soon as everyone else is on track," says Fowler.

Another technique is the two-responder answer method. Students are told up front that you will be asking every question twice, even if the first answer is correct. This encourages students to listen to one another, encourages students to wait, and allows reticent students a chance to get a piece of the action.

Fowler thinks a GPS navigational device is a good role model for teachers dealing with ADHD students. "It doesn't get hung up in the past and the future," she says. "The GPS lives entirely in present time and its aim is to get you to your destination… even if that means charting a new course. Though I sometimes worry that one day my GPS will go 'bonkers' because I've gotten off track, to date my receiver hasn't lost its cool or showed any irritation. No yelling, no blaming, no shaming, no name calling, no idle threats, no long diatribes. When I miss a turn or get off track – it simply says, 'Recalculating'… Most students with ADHD don't require different teachers. They require cool, calm, 'recalculating' teachers who use effective and hands-on approaches."

Fowler believes there are three essential "GPS" components for successful ADHD interventions:

• *The scaffold* – Structures, strategies, supports, and skills the teacher puts in place that enable students to improve performance. We can expect off-task behaviors when tasks are too long, too hard, too boring, have too much repetition, the student doesn't quite know what to do, and the student doesn't have the skills to perform well. We can improve on-task behavior by modifying these conditions. Teachers can anticipate and co-opt fidgeting by having students sit on stability balls, use treadmills, use manipulatives, use color overlays on written material, switch between high-interest and low-interest tasks, and use digital media.

• *Ongoing monitoring* – "In general, ADHD interventions fail because their use isn't monitored or adjustments are not made along the way," says Fowler. "Monitoring behavior guides and directs the performance along the path."

• *Positive feedback* – Three-quarters of the feedback ADHD students receive is negative, says Fowler. When she asked a student what ADD meant, he said, "It's just another way to call a kid 'bad.'" These students desperately need the opposite. "Feedback encourages, appreciates, and supports the person," says Fowler.

Students with ADHD have trouble paying attention. "Once their minds wander, they often can't find their way home," says Fowler, "'home' being where they are supposed to be focusing their attention. 'Home' may be obvious to you, but it is not to them." She suggests:

- Add interest and novelty to tasks.

- Talk less and doing more.
- Use silent signals to redirect attention.
- Use specific directives (*Turn to page 17 of the textbook*).
- Simplify visual presentations.
- Make task structures clear.
- Highlight directions and give them one at a time.
- Micro-size – break down all tasks into manageable parts, monitor each phase, and provide positive feedback.
- Use self-monitoring strategies – track time on task, use timers, graph daily performance.

ADHD students also have trouble retaining information in working memory. It's like the problem we have when we're silently reciting a new phone number we're about to program into our phone and the phone rings – it's lost! "Now imagine that you have ADHD and your attention constantly gets pulled to an internal or external distraction and needs to be redirected," says Fowler. "Now add some impulsivity – the hate to wait, rush through without thinking through – part of ADHD. Couple that with some hyperactivity and shifts in attentional focus… You can tell working memory (or working with memory) has been disrupted when you find yourself saying, 'Now, where was I?'" Here are her suggestions:

- Get students to write things down on dry-erase boards, and use cue cards, posted formulas, and rules.
- Use models, rubrics, timelines, planners, graphic organizers, checklists, daily action plans, and step-by-step guides.
- Use color to attract attention, categorize, distinguish objects, and organize information.
- Design and monitor organizational routines and make time for their use.
- Post the daily schedule.
- Use peer support when appropriate.
- Train students to use mnemonic strategies like POW – plan, organize, write.
- Make and use flash cards.

"Increasing On-Task Performance for Students with ADHD" by Mary Fowler in *NJEA Review*, March 2010 (Vol. 83, p. 8-10), spotted in *Education Digest*, October 2010 (Vol. 76, #10, p. 44-50), no e-link available

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## 2. How to Prevent Good Ideas from Being Shot Down

In this interview with Jeff Kehoe in *Harvard Business Review*, management guru John Kotter describes the way new ideas are often sabotaged, and suggests how to prevent this from happening. "We've been taught that once you've got a good idea, and you're convinced it's a good idea, then it's just a matter of presenting it in a clear and logical way, and a reasonable group of people will see it," he says. Not so! Understanding the sources of resistance and getting buy-in for new ideas is a major life skill that receives far too little attention in colleges

and professional schools. "Dealing with attacks on new ideas is a human challenge that doesn't seem to be sector specific or age specific," says Kotter.

He believes there are four common strategies that resistors use to kill ideas: (a) fear-mongering, (b) death by delay, (c) confusion, and (d) ridicule. Here is how two of these might play out, and Kotter's suggested responses:

• *No one else does this*. The critic says that your "new" idea has already been considered and rejected by others, for example, "Surely if what you're proposing were so good, we'd see others using it. Why is that not the case?" A good response: "Any idea has to be used a first time by somebody. That's common sense. So why not us?" The critic responds, "How do you know it will work? Or that someone isn't using this very idea right now? The world is a big place." You respond, "Are you saying we have no capacity to innovate, to be on the leading edge? I would suggest that we've never meekly followed others; we shouldn't start now."

• *This isn't the right time*. The critic agrees your idea is good but says the timing is bad, for example, "We already have 24 projects, so we can't add a 25th right now." You reply, "You make an excellent point. No one can handle 24 projects well. We need to weed out and cease all the ones that aren't as good as this one. We should do that immediately. The best time to commit to a new venture is always when you have people excited about it. And, for this project, that time is now."

Kotter suggests five ways to respond when there's resistance to a new idea:

• Don't push out the troublemakers; let them in and treat them with respect. In other words, "invite in the lions", embrace them, welcome them into the debate. This often disarms and coopts them, and also creates some drama and focuses other people's attention on your proposal, which can be helpful when everyone is on information overload.

• Communicate simply and clearly, not with half-hour speeches that try to overwhelm people with data and argumentation.

• Don't let it get personal, no matter how much you're tempted to lash out. Take the higher ground, says Kotter.

• Don't get hung up on the one person who's attacking you; watch the whole group. "You're the one who comes off as the statesman," says Kotter. "It puts you in a better position for people to be sympathetic to your idea, to listen to you, to move toward you emotionally as opposed to away."

• Don't wing it. Just a few minutes of preparation or a brainstorming session with allies can make a big difference.

"How to Save Good Ideas" – an interview with John Kotter by Jeff Kehoe in *Harvard Business Review*, October 2010 (Vol. 88, #10, p. 129-132), no e-link available; Kotter's new book (with Lorne Whitehead) is *Buy-In: Saving Your Good Idea from Getting Shot Down* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2010)

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## 3. What Can We Learn from a Pirate Captain's Job Description?

In this *Harvard Business Review* article with intriguing implications for school leaders, Stanford professor Hayagreeva Rao asks us to imagine drawing up a job description for a seventeenth-century pirate captain. There might be two major categories:

- Star tasks – Strategic work like target identification, command during battle, and negotiating alliances to form fleets;
- Guardian tasks – Operational work like allocating weapons, adjudicating conflict, punishing indiscipline, distributing loot, and organizing care for the sick and injured.

Rao says that combining star and guardian tasks in a single job is asking for trouble, because very few people excel in both areas. "Star tasks require risk-taking and entrepreneurship," he says, "whereas guardian tasks require conscientiousness and systematic effort… A brilliant commander might have little patience for dealing with the minutiae of resource allocation. A skilled administrator might dread the thought of leading men into battle."

When people try to do a job that incorporates both areas, Rao continues, they tend to focus on the easier and more controllable ones – thus, a risk-averse pirate captain might spend his time on guardian tasks and fail at pillaging and plundering.

In reality, how did pirate captains deal with this job overload? They delegated guardian tasks to a quartermaster general. This ensured that both tasks got done, and prevented the concentration of too much power in the captain's hands. Ironically, says Rao, many seventeenth-century merchant navy captains didn't do this, spent too much time on guardian task, became petty tyrants, sparked mutinies, and lost sailors to the pirates.

A contemporary example of the same dilemma is the U.S. Department of Interior's Minerals Management Service, which was responsible for the star tasks of allocating oil-well leases in exchange for royalties and the guardian tasks of overseeing safety and sustainability. "The service found the former much easier and more glamorous than the latter," says Rao. "Poor organizational design led to the regulatory failure that characterized the catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico." Since the spill, the department has wisely created separate bureaus for revenue management, safety and enforcement, and sustainable energy development.

The moral of these stories? "Bundle star and guardian tasks at your peril," says Rao.

"What 17th-Century Pirates Can Teach Us About Job Design" by Hayagreeva Rao in *Harvard Business Review*, October 2010 (Vol. 88, #10, p. 44), no e-link available

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## 4. Boosting Middle- and High-School ELLs' Achievement

In this *Principal's Research Review* article, researcher Nancy Protheroe presents recent thinking on teaching English language learners in secondary schools:

• Schools that are most effective with ELLs tend to use a set of effective practices and avoid ineffective practices, including:

- Having a coherent vision and strategy for ELLs;
- Looking at student achievement data to shape the program to benefit all students;
- Making ELLs everyone's responsibility and preventing programmatic isolation;

- Accelerating the pace at which ELLs engage in grade-level content in well-supported, challenging mainstream classes;
- Providing additional grade-level support (versus remediation) for students who need it;
- Avoiding isolating and stigmatizing ELL placements;
- Insisting on lessons that are demanding and enticing;
- Scaffolding students' access to important content and processes;
- Involving students in explaining, comparing, and hypothesizing with other students;
- Providing PD for administrators in being instructional leaders on behalf of ELLs.

• Ensuring that teachers know what good ELL instruction looks like is another crucial element. School leaders need to provide effective professional development, instructional coaches, access to curriculum materials appropriate to ELLs, and a supportive and encouraging professional culture. Specifically:

- Providing professional development on how children learn their first language, how learning a second language differs, and how language skills get transferred from one to the other;
- Helping develop deep content-area knowledge, knowledge of specific methods for different content areas, and knowledge of how to integrate language development activities and explanations with content-area instruction;
- Supporting the best curriculum development and assessment.

• What we know about effective instruction and curriculum for the general population holds true for ELLs, including:

- Clear goals and learning objectives;
- Meaningful, challenging, and motivating contexts;
- A curriculum rich with content;
- Well-designed, clearly structured, and appropriately paced lessons;
- Active student engagement and participation;
- Opportunities to practice, apply, and transfer new learning;
- Appropriate feedback on correct and incorrect responses;
- Periodic review and practice;
- Frequent assessments to gauge progress, with re-teaching as needed;
- Opportunities to interact with other students in motivating and appropriately structured contexts.

• That said, teachers must make modifications for ELLs, differentiating in ways that take into account their language capacities, needs, and limitations. From preliminary research, these appear to be effective practices:

- Teaching students to read in their first language promotes higher levels of reading achievement in English than English-only instruction. Teaching reading in the first language simultaneously with instruction in English, at different times of the day, is also more effective than English-only instruction.
- Giving ELLs opportunities to practice oral English in classroom conversations in ways that draw on students' background knowledge;

- Cooperative learning;
- Explicit instruction in the elements of English literacy;
- The use of graphic organizers to support comprehension;
- Teaching academic vocabulary, especially in science, social studies, history, and math;
- Teaching important words before, not after, reading;
- Teaching ELLs key words for a reading assignment and testing them at the end;
- Teaching as many words as possible before, during, and after reading;
- Teaching simple, everyday words (Tier 1) along with Tier 2 and Tier 3 words;
- Using new words as students read, talk, and write, within the same class period;
- Using tenses, roots, affixes, phrasal and idiomatic uses as strategic learning tools;
- Not sending ELLs to look up words in the dictionary – this is not helpful;
- Not having a peer translate for ELLs – another ineffective practice.

"Supporting English Language Learners" by Nancy Protheroe in *Principal's Research Review*, September 2010 (Vol. 5, #5, p. 1-7), http://www.principals.org/Content/158/prr_sept10.pdf

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## 5. Comparing Middle-School Results in New York City K-8 and 6-8 Schools

In this *Education Next* article, Jonah Rockoff and Benjamin Lockwood of Columbia's Graduate School of Business report on their study of student achievement in New York City in grades 3-8 from 1998 to 2008. They compared the achievement of students who stayed in K-8 schools with students who moved from K-5 and K-6 elementary schools to 6-8 middle schools (controlling for other variables) and found that students who attended middle schools did markedly worse in reading, math, and attendance. What's more, the achievement and attendance got worse with each year they spent in middle school. Students who were doing better than average in elementary schools, including those who stayed in elementary schools through sixth grade, had dramatic drops in achievement when they moved to middle schools. "A particularly distressing finding from our study," say Rockoff and Lockwood, "is that students with lower initial levels of academic achievement fare especially poorly in middle school."

What explains this? It's not a difference in per-pupil expenditure (basically the same between the two types of school) or class size (also similar), say the authors, nor do they think that being the youngest students in a school is a key factor. They speculate that a more likely explanation is that 6-8 schools throw together students from multiple elementary schools in much larger cohorts (over 200 students per grade level) than they experience in elementary schools (100 students) or K-8 schools (75 students). These two factors seem to combine with the normal developmental turmoil of early adolescence to produce lower achievement.

But a decline in achievement in the middle grades is not inevitable, as evidenced by the higher achievement in the upper grades in K-8 schools and parent feedback in the annual surveys taken in New York City in recent years. "There is little perceptible decline in satisfaction among parents in K-8 schools as their children age," say Rockoff and Lockwood,

"a consistency we would not expect if educational quality simply cannot withstand the onslaught of puberty."

"Stuck in the Middle: How and Why Middle Schools Harm Student Achievement" by Jonah Rockoff and Benjamin Lockwood in *Education Next*, Fall 2010 (Vol. 10, #4, p. 68-75) http://educationnext.org/stuck-in-the-middle/

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## 6. What Makes Some Middle-Grade Schools More Effective?

In this 78-page report from EdSource, Trish Williams of EdSource, Michael Kirst and Edward Haertel of Stanford University, and other researchers analyzed 303 California schools covering the middle grades (including 7-8, 6-8, K-8, and other configurations and both traditional public schools and charters) and found that a list of research-based factors fell into three tiers of impact on student achievement:

High predictive strength:

• An intense, school-wide focus on improving academic outcomes. This included the following:

- There is a strong organizational press toward improving student outcomes, with superintendents, principals, and teachers emphasizing and being evaluated based in part on such improvements.
- Educators have a future orientation toward developing curriculum and instruction that will prepare students for a rigorous high-school curriculum, not just for each year's state tests.
- Teachers work collectively as a team and individually in their classrooms on a shared mission to improve student outcomes and prepare students for success in high school.
- There are measurable goals for improving district benchmark scores.
- The principal regularly communicates to faculty the importance of high expectations for the achievement of all students.
- Instructional time in the classroom is protected from unnecessary interruptions.
- The school regularly communicates to students the importance of middle grade achievement to their future and of taking responsibility for their learning, and communicates to parents the importance of their role in setting high expectations for students' academic success.
- The school has requirements or contracts for parent participation.

Next-highest predictive strength:

• Coherent instruction and curricula are aligned with the state's K-12 academic content standards in core subjects.

• There is extensive use of student assessment data to evaluate and improve instruction and student learning.

• A sense of urgency drives educators to quickly identify and intervene with students who are behind, have language barriers, or have learning issues.

• Evaluation and support help teachers continuously improve in a strong, cohesive professional culture.

• Principals provide strong leadership and drive schoolwide efforts to improve achievement.

• The superintendent's leadership and district support help at all levels.

Less predictive strength:

• A positive, safe, engaging school environment

• School organization of time and instruction

• Attention to student transitions

"Gaining Ground in the Middle Grades: Why Some Schools Do Better" by Trish Williams, Michael Kirst, Edward Haertel, et al, EdSource, February 2010, http://www.edsource.org/middle-grades-study.html, spotted in *Education Digest*, October 2010 (Vol. 76, #2, p. 14-18).

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## 7. More Concerns About Individual Merit Pay for Teachers

"The quest for the perfect pay-for-performance plan has been the holy grail of management experts for decades," says Baruch College professor Andrea Gabor in this *Education Week* commentary article. And yet, contrary to popular belief, individual performance pay is used in very few businesses, and where it has been tried, it has failed. This is because "there is virtually no evidence that pay is a driver of long-term good performance in industry," says Gabor. "Indeed, some of the most respected business practitioners and thinkers oppose individualized incentives." In a classic 1968 article, Frederick Herzberg said that money is a "hygiene factor" – not having enough causes distress, but money alone has little to do with job satisfaction or performance. And yet many K-12 policy-makers are considering merit pay as part of ambitious school reform proposals.

"The biggest problem with incentive pay is that it is inevitably seen as unfair," continues Gabor. If the evaluation system is linked to a single metric (like test scores), the system is easily gamed. But more-complex metrics (perhaps including graduation and attendance rates) are seen as too subjective. Some companies that have used individual pay incentives consciously foster a culture of competitiveness – but at the expense of fairness, equity, and collaboration.

Individual merit pay also runs contrary to a systems approach to organizations – getting employees collaborating with optimal efficiency to produce the best possible results. Total Quality Management expert W. Edwards Deming said that merit pay "nourishes short-term performance, annihilates long-term planning, builds fear, demolishes teamwork, nourishes rivalry and politics." Gabor chimes in: "Throwing money at teachers in low-performing schools will not fix a broken system."

To turn around a failing school, collaboration is essential and teachers have to be willing to share the insights that only they have by virtue of working so closely with students and curriculum materials. "But capturing that local knowledge is a big management

challenge," says Gabor. "It requires employees who are unafraid to identify problems and who have been trained to problem-solve and to translate their knowledge and experience to useful organizational purposes. Good teachers and principals know this."

"Why Pay Incentives Are Destined to Fail – And How They Could Undermine School Reform" by Andrea Gabor in *Education Week*, Sept. 22, 2010 (Vol. 30,#4, p. 28, 24)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/09/22/04gabor.h30.html

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## 8. Using Value-Added Data to Evaluate Teachers

In this *Education Gadfly* review of a new study on value-added teacher assessment, http://www.cedr.us/papers/working/CEDR%20WP%202010-3_Bad%20Class%20Stability%20(8-23-10).pdf Amber Winkler notes that a legitimate criticism of using value-added data to evaluate and compensate teachers has been that there are fluctuations in the same teacher's results from year to year because of measurement errors and "statistical noise." This ten-year study by labor economists Dan Goldhaber and Michael Hansen found that some of these fluctuations are also due to ups and downs in the same teacher's performance. "Teachers really do seem to have good and bad years," says Winkler. In other words, "effective" teachers aren't always equally effective.

[This finding reinforces the importance of not using one year's value-added data to judge teachers, and steers us away from the "fixed" mindset about good teaching – once effective, always effective – and toward the "growth" theory – teachers can get better depending on the application of effective effort. K.M.]

"Reviews: Is It Just a Bad Class? Assessing the Stability of Measured Teacher Performance" by Amber Winkler in *The Education Gadfly*, Sept. 23, 2010 (Vol. 10, #35)

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## 9. A Study of Merit Pay in Nashville

This *PEN Weekly NewsBlast* item summarizes a just-released study from Vanderbilt University and the RAND Corporation – the Project on Incentives in Teaching (available at http://www.performanceincentives.org). In the study, half of 300 middle-school math teachers in the metropolitan Nashville area were offered bonuses as high as $15,000 for hitting student test score targets while others were not. After three years, there was no significant difference in the performance of students taught by the two groups of teachers.

"Little Merit in Merit Pay, in This Case" in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, Sept. 24, 2010

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## 10. Wide Variations in New York City High-School Results

This *PEN Weekly NewsBlast* item summarizes a Campaign for Fiscal Equity study (http://www.cfequity.org/home/new_cfe_study_finds_dramatic_differences_in_graduation_rates_1.php)

comparing the achievement of students in more than 300 Big Apple high schools. There were dramatic differences in the number of low- and high-achieving students admitted (30 schools enrolling less than 10% of first-time ninth-graders in 2004 attracted more than half of students scoring at Level 4 on state tests). Looking at similar students, the study found dramatic differences in schools' value added. In those that enrolled the lowest-achieving students, on-time graduation rates ranged from 34.2% to 90.1%, and the Regents Diploma rate ranged from 0% to 83.3%.

"It's Not Where You're From, It's Where You're At (in NYC)" in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, Sept. 24, 2010

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## 11. The Positive Effects of Humor in Classrooms

In this *Education Digest* article, College of Charleston professor Michael Skinner says there is growing evidence of the positive effects of humor in the college classroom. Here are his five reasons for the systematic and spontaneous use of humor:

• Students learn and retain more when humor is used. Retention seems to improve most when it relates directly to course-specific content.

• Humor creates a positive environment for learning. "Classrooms with healthy climates are settings in which students feel valued, emotionally safe, and free to actively participate and experiment," says Skinner.

• Humor maintains students' attention. Skinner believes students' focus is limited during lectures, and he injects humorous or other interludes every ten minutes.

• Humor can be especially effective with difficult subject matter. It reduces anxiety and helps maintain interest.

• The humor, if used well, helps boost a professor's course evaluations.

"All Joking Aside: Five Reasons to Use Humor in the Classroom" by Michael Skinner (with assistance from Robert Fowler) in *Education Digest*, October 2010 (Vol. 76, #2, p. 19-21), no e-link available; Skinner can be reached at skinnerm@cofc.edu.

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## 12. Short Items:

***a. Shift on head lice*** – This *American School Board Journal* item reports on a new American Academy of Pediatrics guidance document published in the August issue of *Pediatrics* saying that schools should no longer exclude students with head lice until they are completely nit-free. "Head lice are not a health hazard or a sign of poor hygiene," says the study, "and, in contrast to body lice, are not responsible for the spread of any disease. No healthy child should be excluded from or miss school because of head lice, and no-nit policies for return to school should be abandoned."

"Pediatricians Say Abandon 'No-Nit' Policies" in "Up Front" in *American School Board Journal*, October 2010 (Vol. 197, #10, p. 10)

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***b. Teen sex and school achievement*** – This *American School Board Journal* item reports on a new study by Bill McCarthy (University of California/Davis) and Eric Grodsky (University of Minnesota) http://www.physorg.com/news201094489.html which found a difference in the academic impact of committed versus casual adolescent sexual relationships. Teens in committed relationships do as well academically as those who abstain, the researchers found. But those who have casual flings get lower grades and have more school-related problems than those who abstain. "Having sex outside of a romantic relationship may exacerbate the stress youth experience," said Grodsky, "contributing to problems in school."

"Does Teens' Sexual Activity Impact School-Work? It Depends" in "Up Front" in *American School Board Journal*, October 2010 (Vol. 197, #10, p. 12)

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***c. Closing the boy-girl spatial ability gap*** – This short item in *Education Week* reports on a study showing that the initial (and common) superiority of boys over girls in spatial ability can be overcome by strategy instruction. David Tzuriel and Gila Egozi of Bar Ilan University in Israel taught 60 first-grade students in 45-minute sessions over a three-month period, asking students to draw and discuss shapes on flashcards. Students in this group and a control group were tested before the lessons and five months later on their ability to visualize objects in a rotated form. Boys in both groups outperformed girls before the lessons, but girls in the training group eliminated the gap in the post-tests.

"Gender and Education" in *Education Week*, Sept. 22, 2010 (Vol. 30, #4, p. 5); the study is titled "Gender Differences in Spatial Ability of Young Children: The Effects of Training and Processing Strategies"

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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.marshall8@verizon.net

# 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 37 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 password

### *Publications covered*

*Those read this week are underlined.*

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Catalyst Chicago
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
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
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools