Marshall Memo 408

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
October 31, 2011

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"A compelling explanation for our increasingly rigid social system is that American public education is failing poor kids… Your ZIP code can be your destiny, because poor neighborhoods tend to have bad schools, and bad schools perpetuate poverty."

Niall Ferguson in "Yes, Wall Street Helps the Poor" in *Newsweek*, Oct. 31, 2011
http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/10/23/yes-wall-street-helps-the-poor.html

"Most children fail in school not because they lack the necessary cognitive skills, but because they feel detached, alienated, and isolated from others and from the educational process."

Shari Farris (see item #3)

"Only dead brains don't learn."

Bruno della Chiesa (see item #6)

"It sounds so simple. If tests measure what a student learned, why can't they also be used to measure what a teacher taught?"

Lisa Galley (see item #2)

"The cheating scandals that rocked school districts from Georgia to Connecticut have sullied school district reputations, ended education careers, and cast an unflattering light on the ugly underbelly of the accountability movement."

David McKay Wilson in "With Cheating on the Rise, Schools Respond" in *Harvard Education Letter*, November/December 2011 (Vol. 27, #6, p. 1-3) www.edletter.org

1. Four Metaphors for Improving Leaders' Performance

In this insightful *Harvard Business Review* article, consultant Peter Fuda and Macquarie Graduate School professor Richard Badham share what they learned in lengthy interviews with CEOs who transformed themselves, their leadership teams, and their organizations and achieved remarkable success. Fuda and Badham developed metaphors for four of the key success factors – Fire (ambition), snowball (mutual accountability), mask (authenticity), and movie (self-reflection) – and have used these metaphors to push hundreds of leaders to improve their performance:

• *Fire* – Fear of failure haunts all leaders and spurs some of them to act, but "burning ambition" is far more important to success, say Fuda and Badham. Leaders need to uncover their sometimes-hidden desire to make a difference in the world and use that energy to get past immediate crises and work toward ambitious long-term goals.

• *Snowball* – The authors describe how an executive who had been overly controlling with his subordinates and was exhausted by the passive culture of his company stood up at an annual meeting, acknowledged his failings, admitted that he didn't have all the answers, and asked for help. "I shared with my team the kind of leader I aspired to be," he said. "I asked every member to hold me accountable to that vision. This set an expectation that each of them would mirror my commitment. Soon we added more layers of leadership to the process, all accountable to one another regardless of our position in the hierarchy. It felt like a massive snowball rolling down the hill, with me… in the middle." This leader's humility and openness inspired his colleagues to follow suit, and as more and more joined the process (and those causing drag were removed), the "snowball" became more and more tightly packed and was impossible to stop.

• *Mask* – Some leaders try to be someone different to cover up perceived inadequacies. One CEO acted like a tough guy, then tried to be a nice guy, and finally realized neither was authentic and subordinates were wasting energy trying to figure out how to handle him. Another executive adopted an aloof, highly intellectual, smartest-guy-in-the-room persona, even though he was warm and humble in private. This discouraged people from committing to him and undermined collaboration in the company. When presented with the mask metaphor, both leaders immediately saw how it applied to them and began to behave more naturally. Their colleagues responded positively, with excellent results.

• *Movie* – "The biggest realization is that if you want to change, you've got to stand outside yourself and look back as if you were seeing yourself replayed on a video," said a German CEO. When he did this, he saw that his efforts to change the entrenched culture of his

company weren't working. In fact, he was falling into the same kind of bullying behavior he was trying to stop. "The movie metaphor," say Fuda and Badham, "encourages leaders to 'view' and 'replay' their behavior, 'edit' their performance, and 'direct' a story that is more in line with their vision." Some of the leaders they were working with "seemed to be acting repetitively and perpetuating their own misery, a bit like Bill Murray in the film *Groundhog Day*. The first step toward change was a commitment to evaluate 'raw footage' after an event or an interaction – on their own, with a coach, or with trusted colleagues – and think about what they could have done differently. Eventually they learned to edit themselves in real time and make a better movie." Another executive used to have the attitude, "If we don't win, we've failed." Using the movie metaphor to reflect on the morale problems and blame games this caused, he made a conscious decision to shift to a new approach: "If we don't win, we have an opportunity to learn." This brought about dramatic improvements in his company.

"Fire, Snowball, Mask, Movie: How Leaders Spark and Sustain Change" by Peter Fuda and Richard Badham in *Harvard Business Review*, November 2011 (Vol. 89, #11, p. 145-148), no free e-link available

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2. Value-Added Evaluation of Teachers – Can It Work?

"It sounds so simple," says Lisa Galley of the New Jersey Education Association in this *NJEA Review* article. "If tests measure what a student learned, why can't they also be used to measure what a teacher taught? Wouldn't this data make it easy to distinguish good teachers from bad? And can't this information be used in teacher retention, tenure, salary, and other decisions?" To many educational policy-makers, measuring test-score value added looks like a magic bullet for judging the quality of classroom teaching.

But when experts convened at a January 2011 symposium at Educational Testing Service to discuss value-added models (VAM), some serious concerns emerged:

• *Current standardized tests aren't good enough to use in value-added scenarios*. For one thing, the distance between students' test scores must have the same value at every place on the score scale and between grades and subjects. Thus, we might be able to compare the test-score gains of students in two sixth-grade teachers' classrooms, but it would be problematic to compare gains between a sixth-grade and an eighth-grade teacher, and between a French class and a physics class. That would be like comparing whether Mozart was a better musician than Babe Ruth was a hitter, says Galley.

• *Most teachers don't work in subject areas or grades with standardized tests*. Only about 20% of teachers' work can be assessed using test-score-based models, says Galley. Creating before-and-after tests for the other 80% of teachers would be a very expensive proposition – and would it be a wise allocation of scarce resources?

• *Using VAM for reading and math would further devalue non-tested subjects*. Studies show that students' general knowledge in the lower grades is a better predictor of future success in reading, math, and science than early reading and math scores, but using tests for

teacher evaluation and compensation will lead many teachers to focus on narrow test preparation in the early grades.

• *Principals are likely to over-interpret value-added scores*. Even if test scores make up only 50% of teachers' evaluations, school leaders may lean more heavily on this numerical data.

• *Value-added scores have little value beyond the classroom and school level*. Students' gains from year to year are valuable information for teachers and principals, but outside the school, those looking at the data don't know local factors that might skew the data – for example, a teacher out on extended leave or a particularly volatile group of students. This is why making value-added data public, as the *Los Angeles Times* did last year, is so problematic.

• *Far more research is required before value-added models are viable*. Right now, there are huge variations in the way teachers are rated when different models are used [and from year to year using the same models].

• *Using value-added models can make it harder to dismiss ineffective teachers*. Experts agree that 3-5 years of data are needed to make a definitive judgment on a teacher's work, whereas direct classroom observation might build the case for dismissal in much less time.

• *Focusing on value-added models might undermine educational and societal reforms*. These include alleviating poverty, getting teachers working in collaborative teams, and improving principals' instructional leadership.

• *Value-added data are always incomplete*. Students move from class to class and from school to school, so year-to-year comparisons are inherently flawed. Teachers may work hard teaching students who leave their classes before the end of the year – and their progress isn't reflected in the statistics.

• *Value-added data can't pinpoint causation*. Were students' gains due to their homeroom teacher? To pullout teachers? To tutors? To the previous years' teachers? To school climate? To other factors? Even the most sophisticated value-added calculations can't answer these questions.

• *The value-added approach undermines teacher collaboration*. "For VAM to work we must maintain the classrooms of today with one teacher and 25 children," says Arthur Wise of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Evaluation. "Any variation from that model, such as team teaching, departmentalization in elementary school, or a mixture of teachers and technology providing instruction, will affect data collection. For VAM to work we'd need to preserve a 19th-century model of schooling."

• *Value-added data may tell principals what they already know*. Some VAM advocates argue that, while flawed, value-added data are better than what we're getting from the current teacher-evaluation process. Sean Corcoran of New York University has his doubts: "I'm somewhat but not very sympathetic to the argument that VAM is simply better than what we have. The best it can currently do is identify those teachers who are systematically very high or very low performing after multiple years of observation. It makes me ask – didn't we already know who these teachers are?"

"The Research vs. the Rhetoric: Reasons Why Experts Urge Caution When Using Student Test Scores to Evaluate Teachers" by Lisa Galley in *NJEA Review*, March 2011 (Vol. 84, p. 10-13), http://www.njea.org/news-and-publications/njea-review/march-2011/the-research-vs-the-rhetoric
spotted in *Education Digest*, November 2011 (Vol. 77, #3, p. 41-46)
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3. A Principal's Insights from Shadowing a Third Grader for a Day

In this thoughtful *Journal of Staff Development* article, Shari Farris describes how she shadowed Yasir, a third-grader in her Spokane (WA) school whose family had recently immigrated from Afghanistan. She did this to get insights on the increasing discipline referrals and disappointing test scores for the 43 ELLs in the school. "I wondered if there was more to Yasir's behavior issues and poor school performance than simply a lack of effort, classroom disruptions, and arguments on the playground," says Farris. "…I decided to immerse myself in his routines, interactions, and relationships throughout a school day." Before shadowing, she checked with Yasir's teacher and with his father, who served as a volunteer in the school (he said that Yasir had been a good student in Afghanistan). Farris hoped she would be almost invisible in Yasir's classroom since she was frequently in and out of classrooms. Here is her chronology:

When students entered the classroom first thing in the morning and got to work on the entry task projected on a screen, Yasir had a different folder, apparently because he was unable to read the instructions on the screen. He spent 15 minutes sharpening his pencil, tying his shoelaces, looking in his desk, peeling paper off crayons, and talking to students around him, and the teacher had to redirect him four times. When the teacher went over the entry task, Yasir was completely disengaged.

During guided reading time, Yasir was at his desk and off-task, even though, when Farris asked him, he was able to read the words in his picture book fluently.

At ten o'clock, Farris followed Yasir to his pullout ELL math class, where he engaged in choral counting with the other students, drew pictures of his family, and poked the boy next to him with a pencil. The teacher had to redirect him twice.

In gym class, Yasir wasn't one of the students who responded when the teacher asked the class what they had eaten for breakfast, but he did smile broadly when he was able to climb a rope at one of the fitness stations.

Back in his homeroom, Yasir spent 45 minutes drawing on his folder, talking with other students, sharpening his pencil, and coloring on his papers. When the teacher had students sit on the rug for a read-aloud, Yasir sat on the outer edge and had to be redirected twice as he tried to attract other students' attention.

At recess, Yasir took part in a game of four square, but appeared angry and frustrated whenever he was eliminated and had to go the back of the line, apparently because he didn't understand the rules.

Reflecting on her day with Yasir, Farris drew a number of conclusions about his experience in the school:

• Throughout the day, Yasir was a student operating outside the academic and peer-group mainstream, and not enough was being done to engage and motivate him. "Allowing Yasir to disengage and receive perimeter instruction in his general-education classroom seemed to exacerbate the problems he was having in school," she says. "I thought that Yasir's lack of achievement and engagement might not be related to his ability to learn, rather to inadequate opportunities to use his strengths, skills, and experiences, and to show success in unique ways."

• Teachers clearly needed a broader repertoire of techniques for engaging their ELLs. "When instruction was ineffective," says Farris, "it was easy to resort to blaming students rather than probing their instructional decisions." For starters, teachers needed to build on children's first language to jump-start proficiency in English. Providing a simple picture book was a weak intervention and may have communicated low expectations.

• Yasir's rudimentary English skills were exacerbated by how few opportunities he had to interact with his teachers and peers. It was striking that his teachers rarely called on him – for example, the physical education teacher let him pass on the question about breakfast food.

• At recess, Yasir clearly needed to be taught the rules of four square – and perhaps be given an opportunity to teach other students the games that Afghan children play at recess.

Farris found her day of shadowing to be far more instructive than standard classroom supervision or analyzing student achievement data. Her single-minded focus on one student led her to an unsettling conclusion: "Most children fail in school not because they lack the necessary cognitive skills, but because they feel detached, alienated, and isolated from others and from the educational process." She concluded that her school's budget problems and inadequate resources weren't the primary barrier in meeting the needs of students like Yasir. Rather, she needed to get smarter about how she structured students' days, pay more attention to students' interactions with teachers, peers, and instructional materials, and ask questions about why students weren't more engaged with instructional materials.

When Farris chatted with Yasir's father about her day of shadowing, he joked, "Perhaps Yasir can shadow you now?" Not a bad idea, she thought, and this was one of a number of recommendations she has for other school leaders considering shadowing students for a day:

- Involve others in shadowing – teachers, students, parents, and visitors.
- Be transparent with teachers about the goals of shadowing – the visitor is there as a learner, not an evaluator.
- Brief family members beforehand, and debrief afterward.
- Decide on the best note-taking method (Farris used a pad of paper).
- Try to follow a student through one day without interruptions; it's better to see the normal flow of a day rather than seeing chunks from several days.
- Share insights from shadowing with other school leaders.

"In Yasir's Shoes: A Principal Gains Insight by Shadowing an English Language Learner Student" by Shari Farris in *Journal of Staff Development*, October 2011 (Vol. 32, #5, p. 20-23, 37), http://www.learningforward.org; Farris is at farris.shari@gmail.com.

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4. Three Texas High Schools Reform Classroom Instruction

This article in *R&D Alert* describes how Alda Walqui, director of Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) at WestEd, worked with three Austin high schools to tune up their work with ELLs. QTEL is based on a constructivist approach of teaching in which students are active, social learners and each lesson has three components:

- Preparing students for the theme to be explored (for example, in a science unit on brain injuries, the teacher starts by asking students if they know anyone who has suffered a brain injury, having them say how the person changed, and discussing the stories as a class);
- Getting students interacting with related texts (the teacher divides students into four groups according to language proficiency and reading levels and has each study and become expert in one of four case studies of brain damage);
- Applying the new concepts (students share insights with peers in small groups, then return to the whole class for more exploration of the topic; there are additional reading and writing assignments that weave together and reinforce academic vocabulary and science knowledge).

"One of the common misconceptions about ELL students is that they need simplified and isolated instruction," says Walqui. "What we see all the time is ELL students filling in worksheets, working individually at their desks." Teachers often speak slowly, enunciating carefully and using simple sentences, provide less complex assignments, and don't expect these students to participate in classroom conversations. All this is well-intentioned, but it reinforces the huge learning gaps between ELLs and mainstream students. "We want to break that pattern so that rich conversations are always part of their learning," says Walqui.

To make this shift, there needs to be a schoolwide vision of what high achievement looks like, a coherent set of classroom practices to get there, and classroom coaching to support teachers as they make the shift. Kyle Olson, one of the Austin teachers, had this to say about the process: "One of the revolutionary moments for me in lesson planning and design was that I used to think that something would be cool to do with kids, so I'd want to use it in class. But was it purposeful? Was I scaffolding their learning? Was it moving them toward the learning goals? Those were the kinds of questions I started asking."

Angela Hinz, an English teacher, totally changed the way she taught *Romeo and Juliet*. She began the unit by getting students reflecting on family conflict, then dipped into sections of the play to engage students in the story of infatuated teenagers caught between feuding families. She then had students design posters defining the main characters' roles, write postcards to friends concisely describing the play's setting and context, and use evidence from the play to justify a character's actions.

Administrators at the three high schools also changed what they did. The principal and assistant principals taught at least one class a day so they would understand the changes their teachers and students were undergoing. They adjusted the schedule to create common planning time with colleagues in their departments. And in their classroom visits, they stopped filling out checklists and started looking for evidence of deep, progressive learning. "We are not

satisfied so quickly now," said Leticia Vega, one of the principals. "Before, classroom observations resulted in an administrator telling teachers what they needed to change. Now conversations are more purposeful and give teachers a voice in explaining what they're doing and why."

"One of the nice surprises for all of us," says Walqui, "has been how willing, how friendly and receptive teachers become when you provide them with targeted support – even though this requires them to significantly change how they are teaching. It is exciting when, through collegial conversations and follow-up, teachers begin to renew their teaching and themselves, and to sense that their work really does matter."

"Language-Rich Approach Boosts English Learner Skills" from *R&D Alert*, WestEd, 2011, http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/feat/221, spotted in *Education Digest*, November 2011 (Vol. 77, #3, p. 56-60); for further information on QTEL, contact Alda Walqui at awalqui@WestEd.org.

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5. How Early-College High Schools Prepare At-Risk Students for College

In this *American Educator* article, Northwestern University professor James Rosenbaum and graduate student Kelly Iwanaga Becker describe the worst-case scenario for a C-minus high-school senior setting off for college with her college counselor's, teachers', and parents' words ringing in her ears: a college degree will get you a good-paying job. "No one has told her that she must pass a college placement test before she can take college classes," say Rosenbaum and Becker. "No one has told her that if she fails, she must pay for remedial courses for which she will receive no credit. No one has told her that she probably lacks the academic preparation to do well in remedial courses, much less college courses. No one has told her that most students like her never earn a college degree."

What can prevent this train wreck? The authors describe what successful early-college high schools are doing to provide preparation through acceleration and get amazingly good results with students who don't seem like "college material." Here are the key ingredients:

• Instead of relying on student choice, early-college high schools show students what content and skills they need for college and provide a package-deal curriculum that leads to mastery of that content and those skills. This includes giving college placement tests early in high school, clear curriculum pathways aligned with college-level coursework, and professional development for teachers to implement the standards.

• Instead of assuming students are motivated (and seeing motivation as a fixed trait), early-college high schools foster motivation by offering incentives and bolstering students' confidence. They structure the curriculum to produce early successes, and reward students with certificates and other credentials that don't take long to earn.

• Instead of student-initiated guidance, early-college high schools keep students on track by providing frequent, mandatory guidance and closely monitoring students' progress. Many students don't know they need guidance, and a voluntary system doesn't meet their needs. A better system includes required weekly (even daily) advisory work and check-ins,

with one adult assigned to monitor each student and provide support and solutions when needed.

• Instead of leaving things to chance, early-college high schools manage the transition from high school to college. "The typical high school-to-college transition is abrupt and unsupervised," say Rosenbaum and Becker. "Even among seniors admitted to four-year colleges, research has found that 20 percent do not show up at any college in the fall."

• Instead of assuming that students have study skills, early-college high schools explicitly teach them how to study and survive in college. This includes critical reading, taking notes in lectures, logic, analysis, verbal and writing skills, time management, self-organization, library research, writing research papers, revising papers, understanding and avoiding plagiarism, and more.

"The Early College Challenge: Navigating Disadvantaged Students' Transition to College" by James Rosenbaum and Kelly Iwanaga Becker in *American Educator*, Fall 2011 (Vol. 35, #3, p. 14-20), http://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/fall2011/EarlyCollege.pdf

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6. Insights on Learning Foreign Languages

In this *Harvard Education Letter* interview with Nancy Walser, researcher Bruno della Chiesa of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) lists some key advantages of learning another language:

- Being able to communicate with people who don't speak your language (as a tourist and in professional settings);
- Increasing one's labor-market competitiveness;
- Improving cognitive power and versatility (so the brain research says);
- Becoming aware of differences in the way other people think (for example, the word *community* has a positive connotation in English, but in French, the opposite is true – people are expected to put their national identity ahead of parochial community values).
- Learning about universal commonalities: "Every language has a way to express the past, present, and future and a way to express happiness and sorrow," says della Chiesa.

There's no one right way to learn a language, he continues. Earlier is easier, but people can learn a language later in life and vocabulary acquisition can happen at any age. True, children who learn a language before puberty will be able to speak without an accent, but "except for spies, who needs to sound like a native speaker anyway?" asks della Chiesa.

"Since a successful learning process crucially depends on motivation," he says, "one of the first duties of our schools should be to make sure that learning is pleasurable for the learners." The boring parts of learning a language need to be accompanied by music, games, YouTube clips, and student-chosen activities. Teachers should also get students to address any negative perceptions they may have about the language they are learning.

There are three common myths about second-language acquisition, according to della Chiesa.

- Some people have a special "gift" for languages. Not true, he says. Good teaching and hard work are more important.
- You can't learn a new language after a certain age. "Only dead brains don't learn," he quips.
- Some languages are easier to learn. It depends on your goal, says della Chiesa. It's possible to acquire basic conversational skills in supposedly difficult languages like Arabic or Japanese in a few days.

"When Learning Languages, Motivation Matters Most: A Conversation with Bruno della Chiesa" by Nancy Walser in *Harvard Education Letter*, November/December 2011 (Vol. 27, #6, p. 1-3) www.edletter.org

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7. The Power of Teachers Watching Classroom Videos Together

In this *Journal of Staff Development* article, Northwestern University professor Miriam Gamoran Sherin and Illinois high-school teacher Katherine Linsenmeier describe how much teachers can learn by watching videotapes of each others' classes. The format they have used is a monthly meeting of teachers within a school, often with a facilitator, in which colleagues watch a video from one class and discuss what they see. Videos don't lie, they say, and can be an excellent way to combat norms of privacy within a school and get teachers talking clinically about their practice.

Here are Sherin and Linsenmeier's suggestions for making such "video clubs" optimally productive:

• *Look at everyday teaching, not superstar performance*. While it's nice to look at videos of exemplary teaching, it's much more instructive to look at everyday practice, warts and all. "These are the moments that stretch one's professional vision," say Sherin and Linsenmeier, "that require one to reflect deeply on what took place in class and why."

• *Focus on what happened rather than what might have been*. One teacher commented, "At first, I kept thinking about how I should have asked a different question or why I didn't give another example. After a while, I saw that it was interesting to look at what I had done and what students had said. My lessons were interesting, if I just took the time to look."

• *Focus on a few details*. "With video, a teacher can ignore certain aspects of instruction and pay attention to the lesson in a more narrow way," say Sherin and Linsenmeier. While they're teaching, teachers have to focus on keeping all the plates spinning; watching a video, it's a rare luxury to zero in on one student's comment or focus, for example, on students' mathematical thinking.

"Pause, Rewind, Reflect: Video Clubs Throw Open Classroom Doors" by Miriam Gamoran Sherin and Katherine Linsenmeier in *Journal of Staff Development*, October 2011 (Vol. 32, #5, p. 38-41), http://www.learningforward.org; Sherin is at msherin@northwestern.edu, Linsenmeier at k-linsenmeier@northwestern.edu.

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8. Guidelines for Educators' Electronic Communication with Students

In this *Illinois School Board Journal* article, Community High School District 128 communications director Mary Todoric presents the Transparent Accessible and Professional (TAP) guidelines her district adopted for acceptable electronic communication with students. The overall goals of the policy were:

- To protect students, staff, and the district;
- To raise awareness of acceptable ways to use electronic communication tools when communicating with students;
- To raise awareness of the positive and negative outcomes that may result in using these tools with students.

Here are the full guidelines (the three bullets are directly quoted):

• All electronic communication between staff and students should be transparent. As a public school district, we are expected to maintain openness, visibility, and accountability with regard to all communication.

• All electronic communication between staff and students should be considered a matter of record, part of the district archives, and/or may be accessible to others.

• All electronic communication from staff to student should be written as a professional representing District 128. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a D128 professional. Always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in manner.

Communication that meets these three standards is acceptable and, in fact, encouraged by the district. Preferred electronic channels include the district's student data management system (PowerSchool), the district e-mail system, school websites, and Moodle. Less acceptable channels include:

- Texting – Teachers and coaches who want to text students must notify parents at the beginning of the semester or season;
- Facebook for student organizations – Fan pages only, with settings that do not allow fans to post comments, photos, videos, or links;
- Personal Facebook pages used by staff members – Privacy settings must be set to "only friends", and staff members should never "friend" students currently enrolled in the district, nor accept "friend" requests. The policy states, "The wall between the role of a public educator and personal friendships with students should always be visible and strongly communicated." With respect to content posted on public pages, staff members are asked to consider how they would feel if the material appeared on the front page of the local newspaper. Any hesitation, don't post it!
- Websites – Parents must be notified if a teacher or coach is using a site to communicate information to a group, as these sites may contain commercial information not endorsed by the district;
- Personal e-mail accounts – never acceptable;
- Online gaming activities (Wii, Xbox, etc.) – never acceptable.

"Guidelines for Acceptable Electronic Communication with Students" by Mary Todoric in *The Illinois School Board Journal*, March/April 2011 (Vol. 79, p. 18-19), http://www.iasb.com/journal/j030411_07.cfm, spotted in *Education Digest*, November 2011 (Vol. 77, #3, p. 47-49)

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9. A Report on Children's TV and Electronics Use

In this *New York Times* article, Tamar Lewin reports on a new study from Common Sense Media on the amount of time children spend with television and electronics. It seems that kids are spending an increasing amount of time with TV, computer games, iPads, and smart phones, and there is an emerging "app gap" – affluent children are more likely to use mobile educational games while lower-income children are more likely to have televisions in their bedrooms. In families with incomes under $30,000, 64 percent of children under eight have TVs in their bedrooms, compared with 20 percent in families with incomes over $75,000.

"The app gap is a big deal and a harbinger of the future," says James Steyer of Common Sense Media. "It's the beginning of an important shift, as parents increasingly are handing their iPhones to their 1-1/2-year old kid as a shut-up toy. And parents who check their e-mail three times on the way to the bus stop are constantly modeling that behavior, so it's only natural the kids want to use mobile devices too."

"Children Watching More Than Ever" by Tamar Lewin in *The New York Times*, Oct. 25, 2011 (p. A16), http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/us/screen-time-higher-than-ever-for-children-study-finds.html

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10. Buyers Beware! Math Textbooks Aren't Yet Aligned with Common Core

In this *American Educator* article, UC Berkeley professor Hung-His Wu has high praise for how much better the Common Core State Mathematics Standards are than what passes for math instruction in almost all textbooks. He gives two examples of the CCSS's thoughtful understanding of math and carefully spaced and sequenced presentation of concepts and skills – adding fractions and multiplying negative numbers.

Wu advises educators to be highly skeptical of publishers' claims that their math textbooks are aligned with CCSS. What he's seen so far are superficial revisions that don't really reflect what the Common Core math standards represent. Publishers have a long way to go, he says.

"Phoenix Rising: Bringing the Common Core State Mathematics Standards to Life" by Hung-His Wu in *American Educator*, Fall 2011 (Vol. 35, #3, p. 3-13), http://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/fall2011/Wu.pdf

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

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

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