Marshall Memo 27

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
March 1, 2004

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Quotes of the Week

"Although politicians would never tell a doctor to treat an inflamed appendix with aspirin, they insist time and again that educators cure deeply ailing schools with bandages."

Deanna Burney (see item #1)

"In effect, each teacher is left to invent his or her own knowledge base – unexamined, untested, idiosyncratic, and potentially at odds with the knowledge from which other teacher may be operating."

Deanna Burney (*ibid.*)

"Teachers must be assured that they will not be blamed for what they do not know, only for what they refuse to learn."

Deanna Burney (*ibid.*)

"Only when they sense the relevance and authenticity of classroom work will most students commit to the very real labor of learning… all students *can* learn – when they are challenged in a way that they accept as authentic."

Terry Roberts and Audrey Trainor (see item #3)

"Faculty collegiality is at the heart of an intelligent school. In a collegial setting, everyone in the building is a learner, children and adults alike…Teachers need to know that the expectation is that they will be growing and learning with their peers, and that part of their role is helping other adults learn."

Thomas Hoerr (see item #5)

"They believe that students learn best by being told. That is ludicrous."

Christine Bertrand, California Science Teachers Association, commenting on a new state board proposal to limit hands-on science teaching (*Education Week*, February 25, 2004, Vol. XXIII, #24, p. 5)

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1. Craft Knowledge – The Road to Transforming Schools

In this important article in the new *Kappan*, Deanna Burney (a former teacher, administrator, and researcher from New Jersey) draws the parallels between education and medicine and calls for the same kind of productive interplay between in-the-trenches "craft knowledge" and academic research. "Only by recognizing and using both sources of knowledge can educators truly transform our schools and turn teaching into a true profession."

Teachers have tremendous amounts of craft knowledge developed from countless situations in classrooms over the years. "They take mental notes: What elements of a lesson are the hardest? What aspects need more time or less? What is being understood? Which students need what kind of help? What explanations seem to work and for whom?" The problem, though, is that much of teachers' craft knowledge is private, confined to isolated classrooms "where individual teachers keep a tight grip on instruction and student learning." The education profession does not help teachers share and aggregate their craft knowledge. Sharing craft knowledge, says Burney, "is the only way we will continuously improve instruction instead of spinning our wheels."

There are a number of factors that have prevented the development of a true knowledge base about teaching, making most schools dysfunctional:

- *Teacher isolation*. Most teachers work apart from their colleagues, inventing their own methods behind closed classroom doors.
- *Collaboration – not so much*. Most teachers have come to regard "autonomy and creativity – not rigorous, shared knowledge – as the badge of professionalism. A great many teachers would be threatened or offended by any suggestion that they should consult, collaborate, observe other teachers' practice, or open their own classrooms to their colleagues. Instead of always working to expand and refine a body of shared knowledge, they keep what they know and what they don't know virtually secret."
- *Uneven quality* – Teacher autonomy and isolation result in "huge variations in teacher quality and effectiveness. In effect, each teacher is left to invent his or her own knowledge base – unexamined, untested, idiosyncratic, and potentially at odds with the knowledge from which other teacher may be operating."

- *Bogus evaluation* – Given the idiosyncratic nature of much teaching and the lack of an agreed-upon knowledge base, it is virtually impossible to hold teachers and principals accountable in any meaningful way.
- *Hapless administrators* – Because of all the above, school leaders lack the means to guide their schools effectively. They tend to spend their time working on public relations and external matters. "Often at a loss as to how to strengthen the people at the heart of the system [teachers and students], they protect them instead, as if they were invalids."

Burney argues that the only way out of this mess is to develop a solid knowledge base about teaching and learning, and the only way to do that is to create a lively two-way symbiosis between academic research and the craft knowledge in teachers' heads – "by energetically connecting ideas with action… The point is to replace isolation with challenging and supportive relationships and fragmentation with a coherent culture organized entirely around instruction. This is a monumental challenge."

To skillfully perform something as complex as teaching guided reading, for example, teachers need to know how to assess students' levels, how to match students to different text levels, how to diagnose each students' learning needs, how to sequence instruction, and how to manage the rest of the classroom. Learning this array of skills "is not a solitary endeavor; rather, it needs to be a highly social one. It depends on continual discussion and demonstration" – watching colleagues and constantly comparing notes.

Burney continues: "This kind of learning involves unlearning some of what teachers already thought they knew. For example, teachers need to understand that a student's failure to learn may reflect a failure of instruction rather than a lack of motivation or ability on the student's part. This is profoundly countercultural."

To develop the profession, educators need to address three factors: capacity, communication, and accountability:

Capacity – This is the business of continuously improving the knowledge base, as medicine has done so successfully over the last 100 years. It will only happen in education if we reach out to our "motivated, if struggling, practitioners… School districts need to invest energy into analyzing, discussing, and replicating successful practices and then disseminating the resulting knowledge as widely as possible." It also means drawing strategically on outside resources to create capacity among those within.

Communication – A lot depends on what is said – and how it is said. "People who are used to being isolated may be deeply reluctant to display their instruction or even talk about it…Secretly, some may suspect that their instruction is weak, and they may fear that they won't measure up to their peers or to their leaders' expectations if they open up their doors, their minds, and their mouths…They can develop their expertise only if they are willing to experiment, make mistakes, and analyze those mistakes – *with* everyone else and *in front of* everyone else… Teachers must be assured that they will not be blamed for what they do not know, only for what they refuse to learn."

Accountability – Doctors hold morbidity conferences to figure out why a patient got sicker or died and what everyone can learn about what should be done differently next time. Schools can adopt parallel processes to examine student learning results and improve practice. "For true accountability, district leaders must be very clear about the expectations for every person in every job. Then they must provide the resources and capacity that empower people to learn and perform their jobs well. Finally, they must specify what constitutes acceptable job performance and hold practitioners accountable for meeting those expectations."

Burney lists some systemic changes necessary to develop the educational knowledge base:

- Standards of practice – True benchmarks of excellent performance.
- Distributed leadership – Spreading responsibility among faculty members.
- Instructional coaching – Delivering expert, close-in classroom support.
- Lesson study – Adopting the Japanese model for group polishing if lessons.
- Visiting other schools – Getting out to see models in action.
- Peer advising – Teachers helping their colleagues.
- Evidence-based practice – Drawing on craft knowledge and learning results.
- Timely assessments – Using formative assessments to improve practice.
- Curriculum tools – Sharing best practices across schools electronically.

Burney concludes: "We must reject – utterly and forever – the idea that teaching is a low-skill occupation. We need to see first-hand and up close that learning is an ongoing and continuous process for teachers and students alike… We need to make sure that everyone in every school district has the same job description – understanding and supporting powerful instruction."

"Craft Knowledge: The Road to Transforming Schools" by Deanna Burney, *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2004 (Vol. 85, #7, p. 526-531), no e-link available.

2. Lessons Learned on "Lesson Study"

The rapid spread of the idea of "lesson study" around the U.S. has brought a host of questions and concerns. This richly-detailed article in *Kappan* anticipates many of the questions that American educators are raising as they consider implementing lesson study in their schools. The questions fall into four categories:

A. Cultural and logistical roadblocks:

• *Lesson study is an exotic idea from Japan, so it can't be done in the U.S.* In fact, lesson study is very basic: teacher teams working together to craft effective lessons, looking at concrete classroom dilemmas, and expanding their professional knowledge.

• *American teachers won't be able to find time to do lesson study*. It is time-consuming, but it is also highly rewarding. Meeting once a week is an attainable level of commitment (scheduling common meeting times helps), and "working smart" is essential to using scarce time well: assigning roles to members, distributing materials for feedback beforehand, etc.

• *We can't justify lesson study without proof that it improves student achievement*. Many administrators demand "scientific research" and quick results. Neither is available yet for lesson study. But lesson study provides teachers with the chance to get at the heart of student achievement issues and collect material that gives a much more nuanced and helpful picture of students' strengths and weaknesses than most available tests. It's a good bet.

• *American teachers don't have the content knowledge to do lesson study*. Content knowledge does not need to be a gatekeeper for participation in lesson study; in fact, lesson study can be the vehicle that improves teachers' knowledge of their subject area. But it is not a trivial enterprise: "Lesson study approaches teaching as intellectually demanding work rather than a set of skills to be implemented."

• *American teachers won't allow others to observe their classrooms*. It's true that most U.S. teachers aren't used to being observed apart from formal evaluations, but these barriers are broken down by the fact that lesson study group members are observing the *lesson*, not the *teacher*, and it is the group's *lesson*, not that of the individual teacher at the front of the room. Moreover, "a study lesson does not have to be executed perfectly in order for it to lead to a fruitful post-lesson discussion; in fact, an imperfect lesson could still yield many rich opportunities to learn."

• *We all teach so differently; how can we create one lesson?* The focus in lesson study is looking at a common instructional problem (e.g., teaching borrowing to

second graders) and coming up with common solutions. The eventual lesson pools best practices from the teachers in the group and from outside sources to best solve the problem and help students learn. Moreover, "the concrete research focus of lesson study should prevent planning discussion from getting bogged down in abstract debates… lesson study is really about exploring different paths to the same goal – greater student learning and teacher efficacy."

B. Misconceptions that crop up during implementation

• *Lesson study is about creating a unique, original, or never-seen-before lesson.* Not true. The ideas for a lesson can come from textbooks, the Internet, colleagues, anyone who has a good idea for solving the instructional problem the group has tackled. The lesson need not be "arbitrarily creative."

• *We need to create a bunch of model lessons*. Wrong. Quality, not quantity, is the key to lesson study. The benefits for teachers and students come from spending quality time on a few lessons and learning the deeper lessons about teaching and learning – which are then applied to all future teaching.

• *Lesson study is about perfecting a single lesson*. Less is more, but the end result of lesson study is the improvement of teachers' entire professional practice. Furthermore, the lesson that's created doesn't have to be perfect!

• *Lesson study is about producing a library of tried-and-true lessons for others to use*. Well, no. The lessons are most helpful for those who create them, and may not be nearly as useful used off the shelf in a different context. "[S]tudy lessons are not meant to be compiled into a single, unified, 'one-size-fits-all' curriculum… Lesson study is more about engaging in the *intellectual process* that fuels its activities than it is about the *isolated products* of these activities." Record keeping is important, so that lesson study groups can capture the thought process they went through to create their lesson.

C. Nuances for advanced lesson study groups

• *The focus on research is an automatic part of lesson study*. Not necessarily. Groups have to keep their eye on their central research question and not let it get swallowed up in the minutiae of planning the lesson.

• *Doing lesson study means adopting Japanese teaching methods*. Not so. The important thing is the process (which happens to have been invented in Japan), but American teachers may use the same process to arrive at quite different teaching approaches.

• *Lesson study naturally leads to rich conversations about practice*. Actually, American teachers tend to be too polite and not candid enough with each other. The key is striking the right balance between civility and candor – not easy for beginners. The authors write, "Our observations of Japanese teachers have revealed that critical honesty can be delivered effectively only with politeness, concrete evidence, and precise language."

D. Planning the journey

Paradoxically, lesson study is "easy to learn but difficult to master." Here are some suggestions as U.S. educators think about embarking on this journey:

• *Get started!* It's easy to get paralyzed in discussion. "The best way to learn about lesson study is simply to do it." But it's important to build in time for reflection so lesson study groups can continually evaluate their own progress.

• *Build bridges between lesson study groups*. It's important to work smart and not labor in isolation. There needs to be a shared professional knowledge base for lesson study in the U.S.

• *Rely on knowledgeable outsiders to inject critical feedback*. It's very difficult to do lesson study alone, but there are not that many Americans who know about lesson study. Find an expert and rely on him or her.

"Challenges to Importing Japanese Lesson Study: Concerns, Misconceptions, and Nuances" by Sonal Chokshi and Clea Fernandez in *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2004 (Vol. 85, #7, p. 520-525), no e-link available.

3. Coached Projects from the Paideia People

After initial successes with their three-way instructional model (whole-group instruction to transmit information, individual or small-group coaching to develop academic skills, and seminar discussions to explore ideas and values), proponents of Paideia began to run into a problem with their students: "Simply put," said one honest teacher, "they don't find what we have to offer all that relevant to their lives. How do you present a sterile, standardized curriculum in a way that students can care about?"

The Paideia response was the Coached Project: "a unit of study that leads to a student production or performance that demonstrates mastery of a subject to an audience outside the classroom…Ideally, the coached project provides both teachers and students the opportunity to produce rigorous, relevant work and to measure the quality of that work against authentic standards." The assumption here (based on

research on the psychology of learning) is that personally relevant work for a real audience (not just the teacher) will get students much more motivated – and contribute to deeper and more lasting learning.

The role of the teacher in Coached Projects is like a master craftsman working in a shop surrounded by apprentices. The teacher is the recognized expert and works closely with the apprentices as they create the product or performance. The teacher is the students' coach rather than their antagonist.

Here are examples of possible projects:

- *Social studies* – Performing historical re-enactments, publishing journals, filming videotapes, , or producing archival materials.
- *Language arts* – Publishing anthologies of creative work and collections of essays; writing and producing a dramatic production.
- *Science* – Designing and carrying out research in the environment around the school.
- *Math* – Writing and publishing collections of open-ended math problems; writing problem-solving strategies and posting them on the Internet; creating student guides to standard textbooks.

Two actual examples: students in an elementary school in Charlotte, North Carolina spent months preparing an adaptation of the Puccini opera, *Turandot* for a standing-room-only audience of parents and community. Students in a middle school in Bridgeton, New Jersey spent four months painting a long hallway with the art history themes of each grade level (Egypt, South America, Greek, Impressionism, Cubism, modern, contemporary, and Asian). In another school, when some teachers questioned whether special needs students could handle the intellectual rigor of a Paideia Coached Project, a special education teacher proved them wrong by leading her students to produce a series of displays on the chapters of *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Teachers involved in working with students on these projects found two major gains:

• *Motivation* – Preparing a challenging product or performance for a real audience brings about quantum increases in students' willingness to work hard.

• *Quality* – Teachers observed a reawakening of students' desire to go "above and beyond the call of daily classroom life to produce exceptional work." They learned to practice strict quality control in order to produce a final project that would

be of highest value to the audience, and each time they worked on a Coached Project, the quality improved.

The articles concludes: "It is our dream that the students in Paideia schools will eventually experience their classrooms as invigorating, even inspiring, environments – places they look forward to going to and places they hate to leave. It is our dream that they will come to know themselves as masters of the various crafts practiced in these classrooms: arts, mathematic, science, social studies, and languages. It is our dream that through the active engagement of Paideia Coached Projects, they will come to love the process of learning itself by connecting it to the world outside of schools and by making it their own."

"Performing for Yourself and Others: The Paideia Coached Project" by Terry Roberts and Audrey Trainor, *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2004 (Vol. 85, #7, p. 413-519), no e-link available.

4. British Thinking on Interim Assessments Crosses the Atlantic

Six years ago, two British researchers wrote *Inside the Black Box*, a study of the effectiveness of formative assessments. The booklet (which was published in *Kappan* in October 1998) became a surprising best seller, and the authors (Dylan Wiliam and Paul Black) have now finished a book expanding their work: *Assessment for Learning: Putting It Into Practice* was published by Open University Press/McGraw Hill Education last month.

Dylan Wiliam has just moved to the United States and will be working at Educational Testing Service. His mission is to focus "much more on assessment to support instruction rather than to simply measure its results." Formative assessments, says Wiliam, range from the questions teachers ask during class to how they mark written assignments. Such during-the-year assessments answer teachers' constant question: *What should I do next?* They provide the feedback teachers need to adjust instruction and target struggling students.

In Britain, Black and Wiliam found that formative assessments had surprisingly positive effects on high-stakes national tests. "Teachers have always said to me, 'I'd love to teach this way, but I have to improve my test scores.'" Wiliam said. "What we showed is that you didn't have to choose."

When teachers used formative assessments, these were some of the practices that showed up more frequently in their classrooms:

- richer questioning;

- marking papers without giving grades;
- sharing their criteria for judging work with students;
- using more peer- and self-assessment by students;
- giving more "wait time" to students after asking a question;
- asking more "big" and "open-ended", versus limited factual questions, to get a better sense of students' level of understanding;
- giving clearer feedback to students on their work and what they need to work on next;
- setting aside more time in class fro students to revise their work based on feedback;
- students using "traffic light" icons to signal their level of understanding of a topic:
    - green = good
    - yellow = partial
    - red = little understanding

Wiliam is critical of some U.S. districts' formative tests, which are given every few months to predict how students will perform on end-of-the-year tests. Such tests don't "help teachers do anything about how to make learning better right now," he said. "I see the major need to…focus on the inside of the classroom" and on much shorter feedback cycles for students.

"ETS Imports 'Formative Assessment' Analyst" by Lynn Olson, *Education Week*, February 25, 2004 (Vol. XXIII, #28, p. 6-7)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=24Wiliam.h23

5. Steps Toward Creating a Collegial School Culture

In this thoughtful *Education Week* commentary piece, Thomas Hoerr, the director of the New City School in St. Louis, urges school leaders to find the Goldilocks happy medium between too little moral direction (as at Enron) and too much (as in micro-managing and doing things by the book). The best mix, he says, is an organization that is "intelligent" – it fosters problem-solving, collaboration, and learning. He bemoans the fact that "[s]chools are remarkably insular, with teachers teaching behind closed doors and administrators making their presence known by memo. Faculty collegiality is at the heart of an intelligent school. In a collegial setting, everyone in the building is a learner, children and adults alike." Here are Hoerr's ideas for reaching this kind of collegiality:

• *Principals must give teacher teams time to meet*. They can do this by creating a schedule that gives teams (grade-level or subject-area) time to meet together during the school day "to talk about what worked and what didn't, to learn from one another, and to plan."

• *Teachers pursue team goals*. "In addition to working toward individual goals, teachers also need to have a team goal." Members of the third-grade team, for example, might reach consensus on how their teaching will improve this year and how students' progress will be monitored – in other words, what constitutes success. Teams should then meet throughout the year to monitor progress, share ideas, and develop strategies.

• *Collegiality should count*. In other words, it should be part of teachers' performance evaluation. "Teachers need to know that the expectation is that they will be growing and learning with their peers, and that part of their role is helping other adults learn. This means freely sharing ideas and willingly seeking help from others.

• *Teachers must know they have the freedom to experiment and take risks*. "If teachers are to grow, they need to feel comfortable in trying new approaches and in learning from their mistakes as well as the mistakes of others…Making old mistakes isn't smart, but making new mistakes and learning from an experience is how we improve."

• *Faculty meetings are a time for learning and celebrating successes*. "The focus should be on student learning and the various avenues to help students achieve… Faculty meetings that consist of one-way communication, information that could easily be shared in writing, are not a good use of anyone's time."

• *Faculty committees are the engines for faculty development*. Such committees need to go beyond standard issues like discipline procedures and logistics and focus on child development, curriculum, and pedagogy. A good starting point might be reading an article or a study or visiting another school.

• *Administrators are learners too*. "Principals need to model the learning that they want from all their teachers and students. They need to be conductors, but they also need to pick up a horn or a cello and be part of the orchestra." This could be serving on a faculty committee, "sitting next to teachers and exploring issues with them."

• *Get the balcony view*. Administrators need to make sure that the staff periodically steps back to reflect, review what has been done, get the big picture, and think about the future.

• *Have fun*. School people should remember that "while congeniality is quite different from collegiality, the former sets the stage for the latter. When teachers like one another and enjoy a good laugh together, they are more likely to take risks in learning together."

"Organizational Intelligence: Lessons from Enron" by Thomas Hoerr, *Education Week*, February 25, 2004 (Vol. XXIII, #28, p. 35-35)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=24hoerr.h23

6. A Classroom Discipline System Based on Student Self-Assessment

After 24 years working outside the classroom (as a counselor and administrator), Marvin Marshall [no kin] returned to middle-school teaching and was horrified by what he found: students were much more defiant and much less compliant than he remembered, and he spent most of his time doing discipline. Ever the thoughtful practitioner, he pulled together key insights from the work of Stephen Covey, Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor (Theory X and Theory Y), William Glasser, and W. Edwards Deming and came up with his own system for managing discipline. In the second segment of this article, Kerry Weisner, an elementary school teacher in British Columbia, describes how Marshall's system rescued her after 20 years of constant headaches with moderately ineffective classroom management.

The first step in implementing Marshall's plan is to explain to students (the first time, Weisner had first graders) a four-level hierarchy:

• *Level A – Anarchy* – Students are noisy, out of control, and unsafe.

• *Level B – Bossing/Bullying* – Students boss, bother, and bully each other, break classroom rules, and need to be bossed by adults to behave.

• *Level C – Cooperation/Conformity* – Students listen, cooperate, and do what is expected, but only because of external punishments or rewards.

• *Level D – Democracy* – Students develop self-discipline, show kindness to others, develop self-reliance, do good because it is the right thing to do. Motivation is internal.

To give an example, if there was trash on the floor of the classroom, Level A students would pick it up and throw it at each other, Level B students might kick it around the room, Level C students would pick it up and throw it away when asked by the teacher, and Level D students would pick up the trash and put it in the barrel without being asked.

The second step in implementing the Raise Responsibility System is to teach students that Level A and B behavior is unacceptable (teacher authority has to be used to keep order), Level C behavior is acceptable, but the motivation is external (to gain approval or avoid punishment), and Level D is the goal – students taking the initiative to do the right, appropriate, or responsible thing.

The third step, when there is misbehavior, is *asking* the student: "On what level was that behavior?" This is quite different from the teacher *telling* the student what level the behavior is on. By focusing on the level rather than the actual behavior, the deed is separated from the doer, and students are less likely to become defensive.

Weisner was astonished by how quickly students were able to self-assess and how readily they accepted responsibility for moving their behavior up from Level 1 or 2 and aiming for Level 4. "I was completely taken by surprise," she writes, "as I immediately began to see positive changes and significant improvements in students' behavior. They began to analyze their actions and take responsibility for their choices. The little girl who nearly drove me crazy by constantly making noises suddenly started to display excellent self-control. The impulsive youngster who often bullied others on the playground started having peaceful noon-hour experiences. The disorganized little boy who could never keep track of his belongings made a commitment to return a special book that he wanted to borrow. Proudly and responsibly, he followed through with his plan! Having experienced the powerful feelings of satisfaction that emerge from being capable and responsible, my students began acting with more empathy and caring toward others."

Behavior improved dramatically, but there were still occasional instances of irresponsibility. At those times, Weisner used the process of "guided choices… giving the student an activity to prompt self-reflection, with the goal of eliciting (rather than imposing) a plan of action." In other words, she used her authority, but without becoming punitive.

After a while, Weisner extended the system into her reading curriculum, asking students to describe their behaviors during silent reading in terms of the four levels. They immediately saw that Level A and B would be faking it, or doing nothing at all, Level C would be reading only to look good in the teacher's eyes or to avoid punishment, and Level D would be reading for personal enjoyment. She then asked students which level would result in developing the best reading skills, and they knew it was Level D. And, as had happened with classroom behavior, most students immediately began to push themselves toward Level D behavior. This included her

most challenged reader, who took his book home and practiced on his own and gained a level of mastery he had never experienced. "The Raise Responsibility System prompted this youngster to learn a powerful lesson that is bound to influence his behavior in the future. He could clearly see the connection between his own choices and the results from them. I could never had bribed him into such a learning experience by offering a sticker or a prize for having read a certain number of pages."

Weisner was a convert. Summing up, she writes, "As a result of *promoting responsibility*, I discovered that obedience followed as a natural by-product. As a result of *teaching a hierarchy*, which inspired students to aim for the highest level, I observed children choosing to be more responsible and becoming willing to put forth the effort needed to learn. As a result of *encouraging self-reflection* in a non-coercive manner, I witnessed students doing what they knew to be appropriate and aiming to fulfill the highest expectations."

"Using a Discipline System to Promote Learning" by Marvin Marshall and Kerry Weisner, *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2004 (Vol. 85, #7, p. 498-507), no e-link available. More information on the Marshall Raise Responsibility System is available at http://www.MarvinMarshall.com

7. Short Items:

• ***Developing critical thinking skills*** – Ira Winn, an emeritus California education professor, fears that most American teachers are shying away from controversial topics, and that this robs students of a venue for developing critical thinking skills that are essential to being thoughtful citizens. Students get lots of practice at looking up answers, recalling information, and listening to the teacher, he says, and very little at evaluating knowledge or developing their intellectual curiosity. "Left as passive (and bored) spectators, with little chance to evaluate the information presented or to make critical judgments, students turn off intellectually and simply go through the motions necessary to complete the course."

Winn urges the development of the following critical thinking capabilities into schools:

- the ability to raise important questions and explore alternatives;
- a sense of what is missing or needed to solve a problem;
- the ability to deal with complexity and to form hypotheses;
- sensitivity to the background of an issue;
- the knack for separating important information from material that is peripheral or less relevant;

- healthy skepticism and a corresponding ability and willingness to test one's theories and explore one's feelings;
- a willingness to challenge and be challenged;
- an ear for what others are saying and an ability to step into another person's shoes.

"The High Cost of Uncritical Teaching" by Ira Winn, *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2004 (Vol. 85, #7, p. 496-497), no e-link available.

• ***A Cheating Culture?*** There are four reasons why cheating has been on the rise in recent years, according to Belle Wheelan, Virginia's Secretary of Education:

- *Competition* – Parents and educators pressure students to care about grades rather than learning, with cheating winked as a survival tool. "Young people seem to be hearing 'just say no' about some temptations – and 'do whatever it takes' about others," says David Callahan, author of *The Cheating Culture*.
- *Poor preparation* – Students who don't have the prerequisite skills to succeed on new material may see cheating as the only way to get good grades. Poor study habits make things worse.
- *Weak moral training* – Many students haven't been told clearly that cheating is wrong, and when they are caught, the consequences aren't serious enough to signal the school's moral indignation.
- *The thrill of not getting caught* – Some students seem to thrive on the excitement of beating the system and getting away with it.

"Cheating Is Pervasive Problem in Education, Forum Participants Say" by Catherine Carroll, *Education Week*, February 25, 2004 (Vol. XXIII, #28, p. 10) http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=24Cheat.h23 For more information about Callahan's book, *The Cheating Culture*, check out http://www.cheatingculture.com

• ***A plagiarism-proof assignment*** – Doug Johnson, a Minnesota educator, suggests ways of making assignments virtually plagiarism-proof. They should have the following characteristics:

- Clear purpose and expectations;
- Give students choices;
- Are relevant to students' lives;
- Ask students to write a narrative rather than an expository style;
- Stress higher-level thinking skills and creativity;

- Answer real questions;
- Involve a variety of information-gathering activities;
- Be hands-on as much as possible;
- Use technology to spur creativity (graphics programs, desktop publishing)
- Use formats that engage multiple senses;
- Be complex but broken down into manageable steps;
- Collaborative with other students;
- Students share the results with people who care and will really respond;'
- Are authentically assessed (using known rubrics)
- Allow learners to reflect, revisit, revise, and improve their final products;
- Are encouraged by adults who believe that, given enough time, resources, and motivation, all students are capable of original work.

"Plagiarism-Proofing Assignments" by Doug Johnson, *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2004 (Vol. 85, #7, p. 549-552), no e-link available.

• ***Are bullies really pariahs?*** The Simpsons cartoon character Kearney conforms to a popular stereotype of the school bully – "a lumbering hulk who empties he victim's pockets and then punches his lights out." But according to research by U.C.L.A. psychologist Jaana Juvonen, this may not be the case. In interviews with 2,000 sixth graders in the Los Angeles area, she and her colleagues found that kids who harass others are popular and have high self-esteem! "Bullies are psychologically strong and very popular among their peers," she says. "This peer status is important in terms of boosting their well-being. It's disturbing to think that bullies are feeling really good about themselves." Norwegian psychologist Dan Aoweus agrees, saying that it's important to dispel the myth that bullies are anxious and insecure. He believes that bullying is self-reinforcing: when it leads to approval from peers, bullies are likely to continue.

What to do? Juvonen thinks that we must deal with the social system that encourages bullies. "No matter how you teach bullies to see their world differently, the rewards of the behavior are still there once they step back into the schoolyard," she said. The key is teaching other children not to applaud bullies by giving them attention. This might change social expectations and norms. "Empowering them to intervene in bullying situations would be by far the most effective strategy," said Juvonen.

"Everyone Loves a Bully" by Elizabeth Svoboda in *Psychology Today*, March/April 2004 (Vol. 37, #2, p. 20), no e-link available

• ***Apartheid in staff development?*** – In an arresting letter to *Kappan*, Dennis Sparks, the executive director of the National Staff Development Council, writes that the U.S. is developing a "two-tiered system of professional learning. In the first tier, the 'haves' (high-performing suburban schools) are moving toward professional learning communities with an emphasis on professional judgment and high-quality collegial relationships. In the second tier, those schools most challenged by poverty and racism seek ways to teacher-proof the complex and context-embedded process of teaching." He quotes Andy Hargreaves as calling this "professional development apartheid."

Dennis Sparks letter to *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2004 (Vol. 85, #7, p. 560-561).

• ***Consumer's guide to history textbooks*** – The Fordham Foundation has just released a consumer guide to a dozen high-school U.S. and World History textbooks. It's at http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/publication/publication.cfm?id=329

from *The Education Gadfly*, February 26, 2004 (Vol. 4, #8)

• ***Gifted education for all*** – In an interview with *Education World*, Joseph Renzulli, director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, advocates for a broader definition of high expectations and for extending those expectations to all students. "The most important thing we can do to raise expectations," says Renzulli, "is to broaden our concept of achievement beyond the rather simplistic notion that it is only what is measured on achievement tests. High expectations should include a broad range of higher level thinking skills and creative and practical thinking, as well as the ability to apply knowledge to real life experiences, engage in problem finding and focusing as well as problem solving, work cooperatively wit others, and learn how to evaluate one's own work in order to make continuous improvements."

"Gifted Education as a Whole School Model" by Ellen Delisio, *Education World*, February 12, 2004 http://www.educationworld.com/a_issues/chat/chat092.shtml (Spotted in PEN Weekly NewsBlast, February 27, 2004)

• ***Information overload*** – There are about 1,100 educational journals on the market, and they collectively publish more than 20,000 research articles every year. Ye gods! It's sobering to think that the Marshall Memo covers only about 30. In this article, three researchers call for a standardized format for articles so it is easier to find information in this mountain of articles.

"Why We Need a Structured Abstract in Education Research" by Frederick Mosteller, Bill Nave, and Edward Miech in *Educational Researcher*, January/Feburary 2004 (Vol. 33, #1, p. 29-34), no e-link available.

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, or if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should be covered, please e-mail: kim.marshall8@verizon.net

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo aims to keep busy principals, teachers, and other educators very well-informed on important research, ideas, and developments in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, a former Boston teacher and administrator, is your "designated reader," searching through a wide range of publications the week they come out, zeroing in on the articles that are most relevant and useful to improving teaching and learning at the school level, and summarizing them in a brief e-mail. Target topics include the following:

• *School leadership* – Building a professional learning community; effective teamwork; effective schools practices; supervision and evaluation of teachers; time management.

• *Effective teaching* – Key variables associated with high student achievement; professional development of teachers; teacher leadership and career ladders; multiple intelligences and brain research.

• *Curriculum* – Alignment and planning with the end in sight; teaching for understanding; new ideas in reading, writing, and math.

• *Assessment* – Aligned formative and summative assessments; using data and student work for continuous improvement; graphic display of student achievement data; standardized testing and the debate on standards.

• *Closing the gap* – Effective strategies to close the racial/economic achievement gap; the innate-ability/intelligence/effective effort debate; safety-net programs.

• *Positive school culture* – Student discipline; social-emotional learning; moral development; parent involvement; and community partnerships.

• *And…* – New areas of research; upcoming television and radio programs on education.

Publications covered:

(those read this week are underlined)

American Education Research Journal
American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD SmartBrief
Atlantic Monthly
Bay State Banner
Boston Globe
Commonwealth Magazine
Curriculum/Education Update (ASCD)
Ed. Magazine (Harvard School of Education)
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Elementary School Journal
Harpers
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Education Review
Middle School Journal
New York Times
New Yorker
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal Magazine
Psychology Today
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Review of Educational Research
Teachers College Record
Teacher Magazine

If one of the summaries is of particular interest, subscribers are encouraged to read the full article. E-links will be provided whenever possible. If you would like to suggest additional publications, please be in touch.

Subscriptions:

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