Marshall Memo 1108

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
October 13, 2025

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Quotes of the Week

"Before disciplining a student, I always ask myself, 'Would I want a teacher to say this to my child in this manner?'"

New Jersey teacher Angel Santiago (quoted in item #1)

"Mindfulness has been a game changer. Helping students regulate themselves and prepare their brains for learning make everything possible. The more students know who they are, what they need, and how they learn, the better they are able to show up for themselves and their education."

New Jersey teacher Stefanie Lachenauer (*ibid*.)

"Whether implemented as part of core literacy instruction or as a supplemental intervention, spelling can be a powerful lever for improving word reading, writing fluency, and overall literacy development. The research supports this. The structure of the English language demands it. And most importantly, students with literacy difficulties need it."

Brennan Chandler, Jessica Toste, and Christina Novelli (see item #5)

"Writing remains a key proxy for learning to make a reasoned argument. When students outsource that process, they lose more than grammar practice – they lose thinking practice."

Sean Garaghty and Mike Goldstein in "Does AI Only Help Motivated Students?" in *Education Gadfly*, October 9, 2025

"The most underused AI move remains simple: *Explain it to me like I'm in third grade*. That command could unlock understanding for many struggling students. It's not dumbing down; it's scaffolding comprehension."

Sean Garaghty and Mike Goldstein (*ibid*.)

"My role is to help others find solutions, not to always give them the answers."

Muriel Wilkins in "The Hidden Beliefs That Hold Leaders Back" in *Harvard Business Review*, November-December 2025

1. Award-Winning New Jersey Teachers on Classroom Management

In this article in *NJEA Review*, five recent New Jersey teachers of the year – Angel Santiago, Theresa Maughan, Christine Girtain, Joe Nappi, and Stefanie Lachenauer – share how they handle their classrooms. Some excerpts:

Before disciplining a student, I always ask myself, "Would I want a teacher to say this to my child in this manner?"

It's almost impossible to develop strong classroom management without begging, borrowing, and stealing from seasoned colleagues. Find a veteran teacher bestie and soak everything in.

It's not about "managing behavior," but about building a community of learners. That's the key to reducing potential classroom conflicts.

I ask students to share the phonetic pronunciation of their names to show respect – because our names are part of our identity.

I have students use Padlet to list positive suggestions for how students should treat each other in class. We review the responses together, and students vote on a final list of expectations.

If it's a situation that warrants immediate detention, the student serves it with me, and I don't just sit silently with them. I talk to them and get to know who they are. When you understand where they're coming from – or when they understand where you're coming from – that line of communication becomes essential. It helps both of us move forward.

Whatever the issue is, it's coming from somewhere. No one is innately bad – especially at that age.

I once had a student who looked miserable in my class. Another teacher said she looked the same way in his class and it was affecting how he interacted with her. But she told me she loved his class; she just had a resting unhappy face. I told him that, and it changed the dynamic; he stopped internalizing her expression. I also encouraged her to be mindful of how she appeared.

Be firm, fair, and follow through… The final F, follow-through, is the most important for novice teachers. If I say something, you better believe I mean it.

Although I set high academic expectations and have established classroom procedures – many of which I "borrowed" from other teachers I've observed over the years – I've added an additional rule and that one is all about respect. That one is nonnegotiable. I keep a framed picture of Aretha Franklin on my classroom shelf and play her song *Respect* for them on the

first day of school. “Aretha is watching!” I tell my students. It doesn’t take long before they’re calling each other out, even making each other apologize to Aretha.

I believe that with fair rules, engaging lessons, and community building, most classroom problems will disappear. When issues persist even in that environment, it’s usually a sign of deeper concerns. These are the kids who make us earn our salaries, and they’re the ones most deeply impacted by how we respond. I know this because I was one of those kids. When you encounter one of them, remember this: sometimes the students who are hardest to love are the ones who need it most.

We hold one another accountable with kindness and grace. It is everyone’s responsibility to create the classroom culture we want.

I don’t love the term “classroom management” because what we’re really talking about is behaviors and connection with students. From the first day, I work with my class to build relationships – with each other and with me. We ask: what do you want this classroom to feel like? What makes you feel safe enough to ask a question? What environment do you need to learn best? These conversations lead to thoughtful agreements that we all sign – students and me – and then post in the classroom.

Students will act out, call out, or argue. That is part of being human. But instead of labelling it as misbehavior, I try to look through the lens of curiosity: what does this student need that they are not getting? Maybe they need to stand while learning, sit closer to the board, or move away from distractions. Sometimes they just need to be seen and heard. Approaching behavior this way helps all of us understand what is missing and then support the student in finding healthier ways to meet that need.

Clear expectations and routines are another foundation of a safe learning environment. I model everything – from communication to assignments – so students know exactly what is expected of them. If I want a project completed in a particular way, I spend time going over it, showing examples and building skills step by step. This alleviates confusion, reduces anxiety and helps students feel confident in their work.

Instead of focusing only on behavior and consequences, restorative practices help the community take responsibility for actions. When something breaks down, we talk about how to repair it. When feelings are hurt, we discuss how to heal the harm. In my classroom, restorative conversations and circles give everyone a voice in restoring trust and strengthening our community.

Mindfulness has been a game changer. Helping students regulate themselves and prepare their brains for learning make everything possible. The more students know who they are, what they need, and how they learn, the better they are able to show up for themselves and their education.

“Classroom Management Practices from New Jersey Teachers of the Year” by Angel Santiago, Theresa Maughan, Christine Girtain, Joe Nappi, and Stefanie Lachenauer in *NJEA Review*, October 2025 (Vol. 99, #3, pp. 24-27)

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2. Leadership That Persuades Good Teachers to Stay

(Originally titled "Want Good Teachers to Stay? Be a Good Boss")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Bryan Goodwin (McREL) says most strategies for dealing with the "leaky bucket" of 6-7 percent teacher attrition each year are failing. What does work? Scanning 14 recent high-quality studies, Goodwin says support and encouragement from the principal is the single most important factor, specifically:

- Clearly communicating the school's vision, operating procedures, and expectations;
- Maintaining a safe and orderly climate so teachers can focus on instruction;
- Listening to teachers' concerns and offering viable solutions;
- Providing PD targeted to teachers' needs;
- Giving teachers a sense of belonging in a professional community;
- Helping teachers have a sense of efficacy for their impact on students;
- In teacher evaluations, appreciating what's working and coaching for improvement.

"Want Good Teachers to Stay? Be a Good Boss" by Bryan Goodwin in *Educational Leadership*, October 2025 (Vol. 83, #2, pp. 6-7); Goodwin is at bgoodwin@mcrel.org.

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3. Supporting Students in Ethical and Effective Use of GenAI

As the use of generative artificial intelligence becomes pervasive, say Joanna Alcruz and Mubina Khan Schroeder (Molloy University) in *Theory Into Practice*, "it is essential to pause and strategize ways to teach students to engage with these tools ethically and effectively and how to use them to support rather than replace their cognitive and creative thinking." GenAI tools have the potential to enhance students' creativity, scholarship, critical thinking, and writing skills by:

- Providing immediate feedback;
- Giving helpful scaffolding;
- Prompting students to engage more deeply with their work.

But teachers have major concerns about:

- Overreliance on AI tools;
- Plagiarism and other ethical problems;
- Shortchanging students' original voice, creativity, and authentic learning.

"This is not just an issue of cheating," say Alcruz and Schroeder; "it is a deeply pedagogical issue. When students offload their cognitive abilities to AI by becoming overly dependent on AI to generate content or ideas, they risk bypassing essential cognitive processes like brainstorming, organizing, revising, and reflecting. These processes are essential and central to becoming effective, critical, and independent writers."

Alcruz and Schroeder suggest that teachers use the cognitive apprenticeship model to address these concerns and promote ethical and effective use of GenAI. Here are the steps:

• *Modeling* how to use GenAI to generate ideas, draft, and revise writing while maintaining a critical perspective – It's helpful to use analogies (for example, GenAI as tutor

or research assistant), connect to students' everyday experiences, and co-construct ethical boundaries.

• *Coaching* students as they use GenAI for a writing project – The teacher asks students questions like: Am I using effective prompts to AI? Am I using AI to generate ideas versus relying on it to do the thinking? Am I using AI to help edit but not replace my thinking and learning? Am I using AI to help accurately cross-reference information and identify reliable sources?

• *Scaffolding* students' practice with GenAI writing tools to build competence – Start students with a simple task and provide structure, feedback, and suggestions. The teacher can also facilitate discussions among student groups as they work with GenAI.

• *Articulating* thought processes, reasoning, and problem-solving around the use of GenAI for writing – The teacher guides students to think through *how, when,* and *why* to use Gen AI tools, and develop a clear understanding – from specific examples – of plagiarism and possible misinformation.

• *Reflecting* on and evaluating the use of GenAI in terms of processes and outcomes – Students compare something they've written with something generated by AI and think about how their own writing and thinking skills were developed (versus being supplanted).

• *Exploring* the use of GenAI tools in new contexts – "The role of the teacher fades," say Alcruz and Schroeder, "and the students can take on independent projects with all the acquired knowledge and skills they have gained through the stages of the cognitive apprenticeship with their teacher." Students analyze how well they're applying the guidelines and principles they've learned.

The authors give examples of ethical and unethical use of a GenAI tool as a student writes an essay:

- Ethical use – The student uses AI to generate a list of potential topics and evaluates them to decide which aligns best with their ideas for further development.

  Unethical use – The student uses AI to generate a complete outline and argument and uses the text without attribution, modification, or additions.
- Ethical use – After creating a draft, the student uses AI to help organize the logical flow of the paper and paragraph structure, then decides which AI suggestions to apply.

  Unethical use – After creating a rough draft of an essay, the student uses AI to generate a fully structured essay with corresponding headings and transitions and submits the essay with few additional revisions.
- Ethical use – After crafting an essay, the student uses AI to identify grammatical errors and improve sentence and paragraph structure, then decides which to apply.

  Unethical use – The student accepts all AI grammatical corrections and sentence rewrites, even though they change the student's original tone or meaning.
- Ethical use – After writing the essay, the student uses AI to verify the facts and dates and applies the suggestions to revise the paper.

  Unethical use – The student uses AI to generate the essay and submits it without doing any research and writing.

- Ethical use – Students working collaboratively use AI to transcribe their brainstorming session and organize their notes, then decide how to develop their ideas, then assign each member a specific part of the project.

  Unethical use – One member of the team generates AI content, presents it to the team, and the group uses it without further input or development.
- Ethical use – The student comes up with several attempts at a thesis statement, uses AI to get feedback on them, and uses the feedback to craft a better thesis statement.

  Unethical use – The student uses AI to generate the thesis statement and supporting arguments without contributing ideas and perspectives, and has AI write the rest of the paper.

"Integrating Generative AI Into Writing Instruction: A Cognitive Apprenticeship Approach to Navigating Technology and Pedagogy" by Joanna Alcruz and Mubina Khan Schroeder in *Theory Into Practice*, Fall 2025 (Vol. 64, #4, pp. 390-406); Alcruz can be reached at jalcruz@molloy.edu.

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4. Not Ignoring Learning Disabilities in Asian-American Students

In this article in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, Soeun Park (California State University/Bakersfield) and Megan Foley Nicpon (University of Iowa/Iowa City) say teachers sometimes don't notice learning disabilities among high-achieving Asian-American students because of "model minority" stereotypes – *excellence expected, needs overlooked*. And for a variety of reasons, Asian-American families tend to under-report mental health needs and under-use mental health services. Park and Nicpon have these recommendations for educators:

• Acknowledge diversity within Asian-American communities. There are major differences, ranging from recent refugees from desperate situations to families with advanced degrees and skills – and students' abilities vary within and among groups. "Acknowledging the heterogeneity of Asian communities," say Park and Nicpon, "would be an important step toward better understanding the multilayered contexts of AA2E [Asian American twice exceptional] students and helping them to embrace the multifaceted and fluid process of self-exploration."

• Learn about students' immigration history and experiences. Families vary from first-generation, second and third generation, and "1.5 generation" – children who immigrated to the U.S. as upper-elementary or adolescent students. Researchers have found that recent immigrants are less likely to take advantage of mental health services because of cultural stigma, compared to their U.S.-born counterparts. Family cohesiveness is also a factor in accessing general health resources, with tightly-knit families less likely to acknowledge a child's learning and mental health needs.

• Consider gaps in socioeconomic status and intersecting identities. There are wide gaps in family income among Asian-American students, and other differences related to nation of origin, religion, language, social class, educational resources, gender, and neighborhood.

Teachers might wrongly assume that a student who is bilingual and can translate for parents couldn't possibly have a learning disability.

• Listen to students' racialized experiences. Stereotypes toward Asian-American students may influence their daily struggles, say Park and Nicpon: "Oversimplifying the group's general parenting style (i.e., harsh and strict Asian parents) or assuming the education-oriented mindset as the default cultural value results in overlooking the systemic discrimination that immigrants must navigate." When other students perceive favored treatment of Asian-American students, bullying and harassment can happen. Students may suffer from the "forever foreigner" mindset among peers and their families, and recent hate crimes against Asian Americans add to the stress felt by many students.

• Provide culturally responsive resources and referrals. "AA2E students may be more vulnerable to school-related stress but may also not seek help if they have internalized the model minority myth," conclude Park and Nicpon. "Asian Americans who internalize the model minority myth may live with unrealistic expectations toward themselves, which may lead to a greater pressure to succeed, psychological stress, low self-esteem, and suicidality." The takeaway: educators need to see beyond stereotypes, be vigilant, and provide additional support and services when they're needed.

"Excellence Expected, Needs Overlooked" by Soeun Park and Megan Foley Nicpon in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, July/August 2025 (Vol. 57, #6, pp. 440-447); Nicpon can be reached at megan-foley-nicpon@uiowa.edu.

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5. Spelling As an Important Lever for Literacy

With the advent of spell-checking and generative AI, spelling instruction is often seen as outmoded and unnecessary, say Brennan Chandler (Georgia State University), Jessica Toste (University of Texas/Austin), and Christina Novelli (University of Georgia) in *The Reading League Journal*. Not so! they say: "Spelling is not a peripheral or outdated skill, but rather a deeply linguistic, highly teachable pathway to better reading and writing," contributing to students' literacy development in seven ways:

- It helps students represent sounds with letters, reinforcing the alphabetic principle.
- It reinforces connections between the way words look, sound, and their meaning.
- Spelling builds precise mental representations of words, which supports fluent reading.
- It enables students to convey ideas so readers can readily understand them.
- Proficient spelling frees up cognitive resources for more-complex writing tasks.
- This is especially important for students with learning disabilities.
- Teachers can use students' spelling to diagnose learning problems.

"Rather than viewing spelling as a static list of words to memorize or as merely a diagnostic reflection of reading ability," say the authors, "we should recognize it as an active, generative process that consolidates word knowledge and supports fluent written expression."

Reading and writing are distinct yet interdependent systems, say Chandler, Toste, and Novelli, placing different cognitive demands on students – and spelling is often more difficult: "Reading involves recognizing and blending phonemes to retrieve a word. while spelling requires producing the correct graphemes to represent those phonemes." Reading the word *beach*, for example, is quite straightforward, but spelling it involves knowing how to make the *e* sound in this word, how to spell the final sound – *ch* or *tch* – and common spelling patterns.

What does the research say about spelling? The authors report on their meta-analysis of recent research and analyze five different approaches to teaching spelling:

• Phonemic:
- What it is – Mapping individual phonemes to graphemes, supports early decoding
- Evidence – Small but consistent gains in spelling and word reading, the strongest transfer to word reading
- Instructional routines – Elkonin boxes, sound-by-sound dictation, high-frequency phoneme-grapheme mapping
- Ideal use case – K-2 developing decoding and encoding accuracy
- Open questions – It's necessary but not sufficient because of irregularities in English.

• Orthographic:
- What it is – Spelling rules, letter position constraints, and patterns beyond phonics
- Evidence – Moderate effects on spelling proficiency
- Instructional routines – Rule-based strategy instruction, e.g., FLOSS, doubling letters
- Ideal use case – Upper elementary, helpful for irregular and multisyllabic words
- Open questions – Which rules are most helpful and how to grade-sequence them

• Morphological:
- What it is – Teaching base words, prefixes, suffixes, and morpheme consistency
- Evidence – Moderate to strong, most helpful with complex, academic vocabulary
- Instructional routines – Affix analysis, morpheme sorting and word study, building word families
- Ideal use case – Grade 3+, students with persistent spelling difficulties, content vocab
- Open questions – More research is needed on when to incorporate in a spelling program

• Whole word:
- What it is – Memorizing entire word spellings through repetition and recall
- Evidence – Best effects on taught word spellings, unclear on transfer to reading
- Instructional routines – Cover-copy-compare, spaced review
- Ideal use case – High-frequency and irregular words, K-8 students needing to secure word-specific representations
- Open questions – Best methods to make words "stick"? Weak transfer to new words

• Integrated:
- What it is – Integrating phonemic, orthographic, and morphological approaches
- Evidence – Moderate, consistent effects, best with a clear scope and sequence
- Instructional routines – Word sorts, cumulative review, rule + morpheme applications
- Ideal use case – Grade 2+, students ready to build durable spelling knowledge

- Open questions – No consensus on how to blend and sequence the different approaches

The best approach, say Chandler, Toste, and Novelli: use an integrated approach with extra emphasis at particular grades – for example, phonemic at the primary level, orthographic and morphological at upper elementary, whole word with selected words.

How much time should be spent on this subject? "Spelling instruction need not take up a large portion of instructional time to be effective," say the authors. Several studies found that 15 minutes a day with the right instructional routines brought about meaningful gains.

"What matters most," conclude Chandler, Toste, and Novelli, "is that instruction is intentional, matched to students' needs, and aligned with a clear instructional goal. Whether implemented as part of core literacy instruction or as a supplemental intervention, spelling can be a powerful lever for improving word reading, writing fluency, and overall literacy development. The research supports this. The structure of the English language demands it. And most importantly, students with literacy difficulties need it."

"The Science of Spelling: Untangling What Evidence Supports and Questions That Remain" by Brennan Chandler, Jessica Toste, and Christina Novelli in *The Reading League Journal*, September/October 2025 (Vol. 6, #3, pp. 41-56); Chandler can be reached at brennanwchandler@gmail.com, Toste at jrtoste@austin.utexas.edu.

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6. An Experiment with Repeated Reading in Fourth Grade

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, Jake Downs and Alycia Cole (Utah State University) and Chase Young (Sam Houston State University) report on their experiment building fourth graders' reading fluency by getting them to engage in the following Read Like Us protocol. Each 30-minute session, conducted by a paraeducator, consisted of repeated reading of a text:

- The instructor read it aloud with appropriate pacing and expression with students following along.
- Students echo-read the passage, repeating each sentence read by the instructor.
- Students read the passage chorally with the instructor.
- Students chorally read the passage with a partner.
- Students stood and the instructor called on individual students to read segments in sequence.

In each session, students read a different text, including short stories with a twist, informational texts, classic poems, folk tales, strange state laws, and funny poetry. A few of the texts (10 percent) were below grade level, the remainder at fourth-grade level and up to eighth grade.

While a control group of fourth graders engaged in business-as-usual reading lessons, the Read Like Us groups implemented the protocol 50 times. The researchers measured students' fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension with a battery of assessments. The results: Read Like Us students made strong gains in fluency across the board, outperforming the

control group in reading speed, accuracy, retelling a passage, vocabulary, and expression (the control group did slightly better in one measure of comprehension). What made a difference?

- Each student had extensive practice reading.
- Students were exposed to diverse and sophisticated content, language, and genres.
- Students had multiple attempts to successfully read challenging texts.
- Repeated exposure to texts reinforced language use and content mastery.
- Students' total reading volume was increased.

The researchers believe the protocol was especially helpful for English language learners.

"Read Like Us is a work in progress," conclude Downs, Young, and Cole. "As presently constituted, it offers one approach for building upper-elementary readers' fluency; however, room exists for improvement and refinement." Some ideas:

- Extracting words from texts and doing explicit pre-teaching on challenging words.
- After the protocol, having students write the gist of the passage.
- Use texts with social studies and science content to build background knowledge.
- Include multicultural literature or dual-language texts so students can draw on their cultural heritage and home language as resources while reading.

"Promoting Fluency Through Challenge: Repeated Reading with Texts of Varying Complexity" by Jake Downs, Chase Young, and Alycia Cole in *The Reading Teacher*, November/December 2025 (Vol. 79, #3, pp. 1-43); Downs is at jake.downs@usu.edu.

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7. Comparing the Quality of Kindergarten Science Materials

In this *Elementary School Journal* article, Blythe Anderson (University of Buffalo), Tanya Wright (University of Michigan), and Amelia Gotwals (Michigan State University) report on their study of a kindergarten teacher introducing new science curriculum units. The researchers were able to compare the efficacy of three types of curriculum materials the teacher was using:

- The SOLID Start science curriculum
- Teachers Pay Teachers material the teacher downloaded from its website
- Magic Science materials purchased from this commercial outfit.

Anderson, Wright, and Gotwals found that the SOLID Start materials were far better at teaching science vocabulary and concepts than Teachers Pay Teachers and Magic Science. The key features in SOLID Start (not present in the other two) were:

- The words targeted for instruction were conceptually related.
- Discussion questions got students involved in deeper processing of the target words as they engaged in science sense-making.
- Callouts focused attention on word learning opportunities.

"Elementary teachers have limited planning time for the many different lessons they teach in a day," say the researchers, "so drawing from curricular materials that require many adaptations results in more work for teachers, poorer quality instruction for students, or both…"

Anderson, Wright, and Gotwals conclude: "Taken together, our findings indicate that, even for an instructor with expertise in science instruction who is engaged in professional learning on promoting science talk, the quality of curricular materials matters."

"Promoting Vocabulary Development in Science Instruction" by Blythe Anderson, Tanya Wright, and Amelia Gotwals in *Elementary School Journal*, September 2025 (Vol. 126, #1, pp 107-137); the authors can be reached at blythean@buffalo.edu, wrightts@umich.edu, and gotwals@msu.edu.

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8. Short Item:

GenAI Explained – This short video/infographic by Grant Sanderson attempts to explain the inner workings of large language models like ChatGPT.

"Large Language Models Explained Briefly" by Grant Sanderson in *3Blue1Brown*, November 20, 2024

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If you have feedback or suggestions, 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 other educators very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 54 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, writer, and consultant lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 60 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through more than a hundred articles each week, and selects 5-10 that have the greatest potential to improve teaching, leadership, and learning. He then writes a brief summary of each article, pulls out several striking quotes, provides e-links to full articles when available, and e-mails the Memo to subscribers early Tuesday (there are 50 issues a year). Every week there's a podcast and HTML version. Artificial intelligence is not used.

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Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

All Things PLC
American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
AMLE Magazine
ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief
Cult of Pedagogy
District Management Journal
Ed Magazine
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
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Elementary School Journal
English Journal
Exceptional Children
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Educational Review
Independent School
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Kappan (Phi Delta Kappan)
Knowledge Quest
Language Arts
Language Magazine
Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance)
Literacy Today (formerly Reading Today)
Mathematics Teacher: Learning & Teaching PK-12
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Reading Research Quarterly
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Social Education
Social Studies and the Young Learner
Teachers College Record
Teaching Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Journal of the Learning Sciences
The Language Educator
The Learning Professional (formerly Journal of Staff Development)
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time
Urban Education