Marshall Memo 106

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
October 10, 2005

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Be kind. Work hard. Get smart."

Student mantra at E. L. Haynes Elementary School, Washington, D.C.

"All of our children can learn. We just need to take the time to work with them."

Eva Garcia, Los Angeles elementary principal (see item #8)

"Students are not going to be able to thrive in college if they graduate from high school doing eighth-grade work."

David Brooks, *New York Times* (see item #3)

"I can remember my mother asking me why I received a certain grade on a paper and honestly being unable to give her an answer – I had no clue why the teacher had graded the paper the way she did."

Patti Kinney, Oregon principal (see item #5)

"Use technology in academic classes only if it allows you to teach what you're supposed to teach better than you could do it without technology."

Alan Warhaftig in *Teacher Magazine*, October 2005 (p. 61)

"We feel certain you'll agree that killing fish in the name of school spirit is unacceptable."

Jennifer O'Connor, an official at PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), commenting on an incident in which two boys in a Washington high school swallowed goldfish in front of an all-school assembly. They had promised to do so if one of them was elected as a class officer. (spotted in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, Oct. 7, 2005)

1. Assessment *for* Learning

This meaty article in the current *Education Week* offers a crisp definition of formative assessments: "frequent, interactive assessments of student understanding and progress to identify learning needs and shape teaching." Participants in a September 12-15 conference on formative assessments in Portland, Oregon reviewed the evidence on the power of during-the-year classroom assessments, harkening back to a 1998 study by British researchers Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, which found that the achievement gains from formative assessments were "among the largest ever reported for educational interventions." Black and Wiliam also found that assessments-for-learning (as they are sometimes called) improve student motivation and are particularly helpful for struggling students.

Researchers at the Portland conference agreed on two key factors that are operating when effective formative assessments are "done right:"

• The results are used to shape and adjust what happens next in classrooms, rather than providing a grade or mark.

• They aim to encourage, not discourage, student effort.

UCLA testing guru James Popham is worried that schools are being distracted from using formative assessments by the current high-stakes testing push: "The big accountability tests are drowning out good classroom assessment," he said at the conference.

But another reason that formative assessments aren't more commonly used in schools is that they represent a radical departure from the way most teachers teach. According to Ruth Sutton, a British educator who consults with schools around the world, "Assessments-for-learning principles are not hard for teachers to grasp but difficult to make work." Sutton believes that shifting to interim formative assessments requires teachers to change deeply engrained habits. It requires:

- Focusing on big, agreed-upon goals;
- Knowing the developmental learning progressions in their subject area;
- Breaking down learning into small steps and focusing on each step;
- Making student thinking and understanding more visible;
- Knowing the thought processes behind students' common misconceptions and how to address them;
- Knowing where each student is on the continuum from novice to expert learner;
- Figuring out how to adjust instruction to facilitate further learning;
- Providing continual feedback;

- Providing collegial support and accountability;
- Recognizing success;
- Persevering.

One of the key missing pieces in making formative assessments work in schools is curriculum clarity. "I really think this is the Achilles' heel in the whole enterprise," said Steven Katz, a University of Toronto cognitive psychologist. Margaret Foster, an Australian research director, agrees: "Many, many teachers do not know what progress in an area looks like." Her organization has been at work to develop "progress maps" – explicit statements of what it means for students to grow and get better within a particular content area.

Another theme at the Portland conference was the importance of involving students in classroom assessments. "We need for people to understand students' role in the assessment process," said Rick Stiggins, president of the Assessment Training Institute Foundation, "because students make decisions [based on assessments] all the time, and they're critical. These decisions range from 'Can I learn this, or am I just too stupid?' to 'Is the learning worth the energy I must expend to attain it?' The only remaining unanswered question is, will teachers be given the opportunity to learn assessments for learning?"

"Classroom Assessments Stir Growing Global Interest" by Lynn Olson in *Education Week*, Oct. 5, 2005 (Vol. 25, #6, p. 8), no e-link available

2. The Power of Common Assessments and Teacher Collaboration

Recently-retired English teacher Dudley Barlow says that his high school in Canton, Michigan has begun working with Richard and Rebecca DuFour to create "professional learning communities." Barlow is sorry he's missing out on this work. He recalls that for most of his career, he "walked into the school in September, picked up an English literature anthology, and went into the isolation chamber in room 207." The textbook was his curriculum, he recalls, and at the end of each unit, he gave a test, recorded the grades, and moved on. "Some students did well, and some didn't; some were wheat, some chaff. The exams did shed some light on how successfully the students had absorbed what I had taught. What the tests did not reveal, though, was why some students did better than others. Nor did they reveal where my instruction had been good, and where faulty."

Barlow says wistfully, "I would have loved to have had the opportunity to meet regularly with other teachers teaching the same subject… Reducing teacher isolation through regularly scheduled collaboration time can help bring about communal benefits…" For example, a school's U.S. History teachers might agree that all students should be able to explain the political and economic forces that led to the Civil War and show their understanding in a common unit test. After teaching the unit and grading students' tests, teachers might notice that one class grasped the political but not the economic forces, while another class understood the economic but not the political forces. This might lead teachers to ask: "Why did your students understand this idea better than mine? Are there things we need to re-teach? What do we do differently next time?"

"This kind of reexamination," says Barlow, "requires a good deal of trust among colleagues. Teachers also need to be assured that administrators will not use test results to evaluate staff. Teachers need to be free to experiment, and they need to know that sometimes they will fail without being punished."

Teacher collaboration around common curriculum and assessments is great, says Barlow, but it does mean that teachers have to give up some of their accustomed autonomy. They can no longer close their doors and make their own way through the subject matter. But Barlow feels strongly that this loss of autonomy is more than offset by a "shared sense of purpose and by opportunities to learn from other teachers' strengths and experiences."

"Does '24th Out of 29' Really Matter?" Dudley Barlow's *The Teachers' Lounge* column in *Education Digest*, October 2005 (Vol. 71, #2, p. 64-67), no e-link available

3. Reducing the Education Gap

Two weeks ago, *New York Times* op-ed columnist David Brooks wrote about the unfairness of American life – the huge divide between the haves and the have-nots. He was inundated by letters and e-mails, and last Thursday, he wrote a follow-up column on the long-term solution: "cultural capital" for less-advantaged students. This consists of four elements:

• *Academic competence* – "Students are not going to be able to thrive in college if they graduate from high school doing eighth-grade work," writes Brooks. It's critical that high-poverty schools offer a tough, intensive curriculum designed to prepare students for the kind of work they will be asked to do in college.

• *Practical competence* – Many disadvantaged youngsters want to go to college but adopt what Brooks calls a "magical worldview," imagining that "success will somehow come to them out of the blue" (for example, they register for SAT tests but don't show up to take them, or they fail to complete college applications). Students like these need one-on-one coaching, mentoring, and nagging to get them through the mundane tasks needed to get into college.

• *Economic confidence* – "Poorer students are risk-averse," writes Brooks. "Overly intimidated by college costs, unwilling to take out student loans, too quick to leave school to get a job, they wind up under-investing in their education." Such students would benefit from federally-financed savings accounts to overcome their fears that they will send their families over an economic precipice.

• *Social confidence* – Poorer students often feel uncomfortable and out of place in elite universities, which, says Brooks, have become "bastions of privilege." (Last year, more students at the University of Michigan came from families earning more than $200,000 than from families earning less than $53,000, the national median.) This discomfort leads many high-achieving students from low-income families to enroll in less-demanding colleges, suggesting a need to create a critical mass of less-advantaged students in elite colleges.

"Pillars of Cultural Capital" by David Brooks, *New York Times*, Oct. 6, 2005, no free e-link

4. Why Educational Research Is Not Changing the World

In this gloomy editorial in the October issue of *Teacher Magazine*, Ronald Wolk, who founded *Education Week* and is chairman of *Teacher*, shares his disappointment that publishing educational research hasn't led to the "promised land of successful schools and high student achievement." Wolk says that the idealism that led him start up these publications is now "tattered," and he cites eight reasons he is now so pessimistic:

• *Research is not physically or intellectually accessible*. Researchers tend to write for other researchers in "academicspeak" and publish their findings in obscure journals.

• *Few school people read research*. Teachers, principals, and superintendents generally don't read academic literature.

• *Contradictory research findings cancel each other out*. "When one study claims small classes boost student achievement," says Wolk, "another insists they don't. One finds social promotion harmful; another says retention hurts kids more. Money matters; no, it doesn't. Vouchers work; no, they don't."

• *Research findings can be expensive to apply*. This is true of good professional development and small classes, among other possible initiatives.

• *Research findings can mobilize powerful interest groups*. For example, research on effective practices in charter schools might stir the ire of teacher unions, who would fight it to a standstill.

• *Good research is sometimes applied ineptly*. One example is California's 1990s decision to reduce primary-grade class sizes statewide. "I've often tried to picture how the governor and his aides reached that decision," writes Wolk. "The only non-cynical explanation I can come up with is that they must have been smoking something. Was there nobody in the room who raised crucial questions, such as 'Are there enough teachers or classrooms available?' or 'Is this the best use of limited resources?'"

• *Research leans too heavily on test scores*. Wolk considers standardized tests an unreliable measure of student learning and would like to assess other traits that schools should be producing, such as good behavior and habits of mind. "After kids leave formal schooling," Wolk says, "they'll be judged for the rest of their lives on the quality of their work and their personal and professional behavior."

• *Research is piecemeal*. This doesn't lend itself to systemic solutions. "Fixing one part of the complex education problem," says Wolk, "may accomplish little if other parts aren't also fixed simultaneously. The education system is something like a combustion engine – unless all the important components are functioning properly, the engine won't perform as it should."

"Plenty of good, impressive research findings are available to those who make the decisions about public education," concludes Wolk. "Indeed, if we wisely apply the knowledge we already have, we could develop the education system that our kids need and deserve. Unfortunately, we don't."

"Use It or Lose It" by Ronald Wolk in *Teacher Magazine*, October 2005 (p. 4), no e-link available

5. Student-Led Parent Conferences

In this article in the October *Principal Leadership*, Oregon principal Patti Kinney offers a glowing testimonial for student-led parent conferences, which her middle school has used for more than a decade. It all started when two teachers from Kinney's school returned from a professional conference excited to try the idea. Their pilot was successful, the idea spread, and soon student-led conferences were being used schoolwide.

What's the problem to which this is the solution? First of all, Kinney's school had low parent turnout for conferences – typically about 45 percent. Parent turnout is now between 92 and 95 percent. Second, Kinney recalls that in traditional conferences, teachers and parents discussed how students needed to take more responsibility for their work, but most of the time their plans failed because "the most important piece of the puzzle was missing – the student was not present." Student-led conferences, says Kinney, put the student at the center of the process: "he or she becomes the one responsible for sharing his or her growth – or lack of growth – as a learner and helps devise a plan for future progress."

Kinney lists five more advantages of student-led conferences:

- Students practice the real-life skills of organization, communication, and leadership.
- Parents who do not speak English are better accommodated.
- Students become self-reflective learners.
- Students learn to make improvement through a goal-setting process.
- Parents get a clearer understanding of expectations for learning.

How do student-led conferences work? A teacher facilitates each conference but is very much in the background. Here are the steps:

• The student makes introductions and reads a previously composed "Dear Parent" letter that gives an overview of the conference.

• The student shares work samples from each of his or her classes, explaining what the assignment was, the knowledge or skills learned, the process that was followed to complete the project, and a reflection on strong and weak points in the work.

• The student and parents set goals for the next grading period (students come to the conference having prepared two tentative goals and then write another one with their parents).

• Conferences typically last for about 30 minutes, but some last more than an hour.

Teaching students to self-evaluate is crucial for conferences to go well. Students need to know the standards against which they are being graded so they understand their status and can explain it to parents. Kinney says this kind of transparency was new to her school – and different from her own school experience: "I can remember my mother asking me why I received a certain grade on a paper and honestly being unable to give her an answer – I had no clue why the teacher had graded the paper the way she did."

In Kinney's school, students are taught to score their work against a state or district rubric, a set of criteria specific to that assignment, or another set of performance standards. Students are guided to reflect on their work and assess themselves as learners, encouraging

honest recognition of strengths, identification of areas that need work, and goal-setting. Teachers have students use various structures to prepare for conferences:

- Writing answers to specific questions;
- Drawing a picture or making a web to show what was learned and what must be done differently next time.
- Writing a letter from the teacher's perspective explaining why the project was graded the way it was;
- Filling out a checklist or a chart;
- Participating in a class discussion or a one-on-one conference;
- Creating a journal entry or responding in learning logs.

Kinney offers the following tips for schools interested in conducting successful student-led parent conferences:

• *Clarify the purpose of conferences.* Are they to look back on the year and celebrate progress, set goals for the coming months, or look forward to next year?

• *Decide who will facilitate the conference*. It might be the advisory teacher, homeroom teacher, principal, etc.

• *Work out a system for scheduling conferences*. How many days, when during the day, how parents can make appointments, how to accommodate parents with more than one child in the school, etc.? Kinney's school blocks out 30 minutes for each conference and another 30-minute block for parents to drop in on individual teachers for follow-up talks.

• *Publish the schedule*. Teachers need to know well in advance so they can finalize grades, assemble material, and get students ready.

• *Prepare students*. Students need to gather material, compose their introductory "Dear Parent" letter, plan exactly what they will say, and do a dry run with a teacher or another student.

"Letting Students Take the Lead" by Patti Kinney in *Principal Leadership* (Middle Level Edition), October 2005 (Vol. 6, #2, p. 33-36), no e-link available but Patti Kinney can be reached at patti.kinney@phoenix.k12.or.us

6. Let Our Seniors Go!

In this opinion piece in the current *Education Week*, Chris Teare, an assistant principal in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, says that high-school seniors are often wasting their time in their last semester before graduation. As early as December, he says, "our once achievement-oriented U.S. seniors start showing up late, leaving early, ditching homework, whining in class, and generally making their teachers long for summer." Seniors are not being irrational, he says: this behavior occurs because the college admissions process is front-loaded. "Final transcripts in June are a formality; in the absence of complete failure, cheating, or scandal on the scale of ax murder. Seniors know that spring doesn't really count."

What's the alternative? Teare makes the case for cutting seniors' academic year in half and sending them out to career-related internships or community-service projects that they

choose: “The months from January to June could help these young people get a clue as to what their best-suited career might be – before they head off to college.” He believes that a semester in the real world might cut down the number of ill-chosen careers later on.

Internships and projects should be carefully chosen, says Teare: “Seniors will need guidance to choose their placements well, and faculty members could shift from hectoring the catatonic to advising the eager on where they should intern.” Of course teachers would need to scout the community for good placements, work with parents and employers, give students writing assignments, visit work sites, check in by phone, troubleshoot problems, debrief students on their experiences, and insist that seniors make presentations on lessons learned. To accommodate students who cherish after-school activities or sports, Teare suggests ending internships at 2:00 or 3:00 p.m.

This idea would cause problems for seniors who are planning to take Advanced Placement exams in May. Teare argues that these should be scheduled for December, the culmination of truly college-like semester courses, giving colleges access to senior AP grades as part of the admissions process.

“With proper coordination and the supervision that teachers freed from dealing with burned-out teenagers could handle,” Teare concludes, “these re-energized seniors would enhance their skills, resumes, and self-knowledge, while sharing their gifts with their communities.”

“Cut Senior Year in Half” by Chris Teare in *Education Week*, Oct. 5, 2005 (Vol. 25, #6, p. 32), no e-link available

7. Turning Around a Troublemaker

“Mr. Watkins was not a teacher to be messed with,” writes James Quinlan, recalling an incident in his tenth-grade math classroom. “Lethargic in movement and thunderous in speech, he was a veteran educator with no tolerance for the inattentive child.” And yet Quinlan, egged on by a friend, made a paper airplane, launched it while Mr. Watkins was factoring an equation at the blackboard, and scored a bulls-eye on the back of the teacher’s head. Quinlan relates what happened next:

“The class was silent. Only George, my buddy who’d provoked me, stifled laughter through his nose. Mr. Watkins remained dead still at the board for about a century before he slowly turned and looked me directly in the eyes. The spotlight was on me. Then, with careful articulation and delivery, he said the two words that I never thought he would say. I was not sent to the principal’s office, nor was I chided in front of my peers. With perfect coolness, Mr. Watkins announced, ‘Nice shot.’ He then turned back around and completed the equation he’d started. All mouths were agape.”

But as Quinlan tried to escape at the end of the class, Mr. Watkins said, “Oh, Mr. Quinlan. A word with you, please?” Reminding him that he was not doing very well in math, or his other subjects, for that matter, Mr. Watkins gave Quinlan an extra-credit project. “Two weeks from now, I want you to teach your classmates about the physics involved in the flight

of a paper airplane. That's your assignment – a 45-miute presentation. You can conduct the lesson any way you want as long as you demonstrate what physical properties are at work when a paper airplane is in the air. Go."

Quinlan was stunned. For a short time he thought he'd gotten off easy, but as he began his research, he realized this was not a simple task. He studied lift, drag, thrust, turbulence, velocity, air resistance, gravity, and aerodynamics. Finally Quinlan taught the class – in the school auditorium to allow more room. He showed a five-minute movie, passed out paper-airplane patterns, and involved the entire class in constructing and flying a variety of paper airplanes to demonstrate the principles of flight they were learning. His classmates loved the lesson – but Mr. Watkins sat at the back reading a dime novel, paying no attention – not even looking up. Later, in the classroom, Quinlan approached his teacher and asked him what he thought. "Not bad," said Mr. Watkins and resumed preparations for his next class. Quinlan was furious – and hurt. "I worked really hard," he sputtered.

Mr. Watkins looked up. A hint of a smile crossed his face. "So do I," he said.

Quinlan got it. "My fury gave way to remorse as I realized that he too prepared feverishly for his classes. He too was excited about every lesson that he taught. He too hoped that his students learned what he felt was important to teach. He too was hurt when they didn't seem to care."

"Thank you," said Quinlan. This incident changed his whole attitude toward school. His grades improved… and he is now an undergraduate secondary education student at the State University of New York at New Paltz.

"Air Apparent" by James Quinlan, Jr. in *Teacher Magazine*, October 2005 (p. 55-56), no e-link available

8. A Principal's Literacy Tactics

Veteran Los Angeles principal Eva Garcia frequently uses books to deal with problem behavior. When a first grader is brought to her for punching another boy (who had allegedly been picking on him), Garcia gives the boy a copy of *Danger! Volcanoes* by Seymour Simon and reads the book aloud, pointing out the words and illustrations. "Now, when you got in that fight with that other boy," she says, "do you see how you were like the volcanoes in the book? You were ready to erupt." The boy lowers his head and begins to cry. Soon he is on his way back to the classroom, ready to apologize to the other boy and get back to work.

When a second-grade girl is sent to the office for making fun of a new girl, Garcia asks her if she has read *Crow Boy* by Taro Yashima. "Uh-huh," nods the girl. Garcia asks how Crow Boy felt when people called him names and made fun of him for being different. "He felt bad," said the girl. Was Crow Boy a bad person? "No," says the girl. "He was just different." What should she do now? The girl says she should apologize and try to be a friend to the new student. Garcia gives her a hug and tells her to make her parents and her teacher proud of her and she is on her way back to the classroom, having spent less than three minutes in the principal's office.

Garcia also works to get parents involved in the school's literacy program. Every month she hosts a "Principal's Book-of-the-Month Club" meeting, luring parents with juice and cookies. She picks a book at the second- or third-grade level (all teachers are given two copies of the featured book in advance), and models how to read the book to children at home. For example, with *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, a book by Patricia Polacco about a dyslexic girl who is teased in school, Garcia dramatizes the various characters with different voices, tones, and gestures, showing parents how to bring the story to life. Garcia gives Spanish-speaking parents a translation of the book and a set of teaching tips. She tells parents, "All of our children can learn. We just need to take the time to work with them."

"Leading with Reading" by Danny Brassell in *Reading Today*, Oct./Nov. 2005 (Vol. 23, #2, p. 37), no e-link available

9. Short Items:

a. Does kindergarten retention work? A new examination of the research on kindergarten retention finds that retention does not improve reading and math achievement among kindergarten students, nor does creating more homogeneous classrooms make teachers more effective. The study says that the disadvantages of students who enter school with a variety of deficits are compounded if their teachers spend less time on reading and literacy instruction, cover lower-level content topics, and expect less of students who seem less academically capable. The study concludes that "rather than forcing these children to restart from the very beginning, exposing them to meaningful intellectual challenges on a continual basis is perhaps developmentally more appropriate."

"Effects of Kindergarten Retention Policy on Children's Cognitive Growth in Reading and Mathematics" by Guanglei Hong, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Fall 2005 (Vol. 27, #3, p. 205-224) http://www.aera.net/newsmedia/?id=889, spotted in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, Oct. 7, 2005

b. Chess in schools – First Move is a program that teaches chess strategy to second and third graders. Created by America's Foundation for Chess, the program has been adopted in Philadelphia, San Diego, Seattle, and the Tampa area. Philadelphia public schools chief Paul Vallas is a believer, citing anecdotal evidence that chess has educational value: "Chess seems to improve problem-solving skills. It improves discipline. It improves memory. It certainly seems to improve mathematical skills." Amy Hicks, a Seattle teacher whose students are using the program, agrees, adding that chess also teaches perseverance, being able to learn something new, and concepts like horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and rank and file. New York City has used the Chess-in-the-Schools program since 1986, reaching more than 30,000 students. Some accomplished students have been steered toward chess scholarships offered by a number of colleges.

"Chess, the Game of Royalty, Is Now the Game of Grade Schoolers, Too" by Dylan Loeb McClain in *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 2005, no free e-link available

c. Web sites on comics and graphic novels – This article in the October/November *Reading Today* lists several websites that support using comics and graphic novels in classrooms at all levels:

• http://www.tascorp.org/mediacenter/media_coverage/061504comic features a classroom project created by Cleveland, Ohio teacher Michael Bitz for his elementary students.

• http://sidekicks.noflyingnotights.com offers a core list that contains the best comics for younger students, a question-and-answer section for teachers and librarians, and several links.

• http://my.voyager.net/~sraiteri/graphicnovels.htm by Steve Raiteri, an Ohio librarian, lists more than 1,000 school-appropriate comics for young adults. The site also suggests where to start with a classroom comic collection and has a section on manga, the popular Japanese comic form.

• www.nyccomicbookmuseum.org/education/education.htm has suggestions for incorporating writing and art activities into comic book units. Check out "Back to the Drawing Board: Once-Banned Comic Books Now a Teaching Tool."

"Using Comics and Graphic Novels to Encourage Reluctant Readers" by Jacquie McTaggart in *Reading Today*, Oct./Nov. 2005 (Vol. 23, #2, p. 46), no e-link available

d. Web sites on differentiated instruction – *Education Digest's* monthly "Caught on the Web" column lists several resources for differentiating instruction and universal design for learning:

• http://rtecexchange.edgateway.net/cs/rtecp/view/rtec_str/11 - Technology Tips for Differentiated Instruction, a partnership of the WestEd Regional Technology in Education Consortium with the Alliance for Technology Access. The website includes tips for identifying various learning problems and strategies for addressing them, video examples, handouts, classroom examples, and a 12-page article.

• http://members.shaw.ca/priscillatheroux/differentiating.html - Enhance Learning with Technology: Differentiating Instruction, in which teacher and trainer Priscilla Theroux shares a huge collection of teacher resources to support technology in the classroom.

• http://www.cast.org/index.html - The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) has research and development in universal design for learning, with multiple ways to gather information, demonstrate learning, and engage students.

• http://www.udlcenter.org - Teaching Every Student is an interactive site that supports learning about and practicing universal design for learning.

• http://necc.dmit.asu.edu/archives/2005/06/dave_edyburn_1.html - The ATOMS Project (Assistive Technology Outcomes Measurement System) comes from a five-year grant and includes Dave Edyburn discussing the convergence of Assistive Technology, Universal Design, and Instructional Design.

• http://www.udeducation.org - Universal Design Education Online has a section on the teaching of universal design and the full text of early writings, model instructional materials, and an annotated bibliography with links to additional resources.

• http://www.accessibletech4all.org/index.cfm - Accessible Technologies for All Students is a new leadership initiative from the Consortium for School Networking on the close collaboration of assistive technology and instructional technology. There are links to recent articles, best practices, additional resources, and presentations.

"Differentiating Instruction and Universal Design for Learning" by Carol Isakson in her "Caught on the Web" column in *Education Digest*, October 2005 (Vol. 71, #2, p. 79-80), no e-link available

e. Test prep horrors – This interview in the October *Teacher Magazine* features Ondine Rarey, who has just released two documentary films on the dark side of standardized testing in New York City: *Testing Mrs. Grube* and *A Different Standard*. The first film tells how Mrs. Grube, a fifth-grade teacher at P.S. 161 in Harlem, is required to spend three hours a day on scripted test prep to prepare her students for the next citywide test. When a buzzer signals that it's time for test prep, Mrs. Grube's students beg her to be allowed to continue reading or doing science activities; the test prep is so *boring*! "I feel like a robot," complains the teacher.

The second film tells how the principal of Central Park East Elementary School in East Harlem spends large amounts of time and energy protecting her innovative staff from testing pressures.

"Screen Test" by Samantha Stainburn in *Teacher Magazine*, October 2005 (p. 16-17), no e-link available. To see clips of the documentaries, go to http://www.teachermagazine.org/harlem (registration required)

Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo, please e-mail: kim.marshall8@verizon.net

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and best practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 35 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 39 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through scores of 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 (with occasional breaks; there were 50 issues in 2003-04).

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Publications covered:

(those read this week are underlined)

American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD SmartBrief
Atlantic Monthly
Bay State Banner
Boston Globe
CommonWealth Magazine
District Administration
Ed. Magazine (Harvard School of Education)
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Update (ASCD)
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Harper's
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
Journal of Staff Development
Middle School Journal
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New Yorker
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal Magazine
Principal Leadership (Middle Level Edition)
Psychology Today
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teacher Magazine
Teachers College Record
Theory Into Practice

E-links will be provided whenever possible.