Marshall Memo 389

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
June 6, 2011

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Academic content is complex and taught layer on layer. The more math students are taught, in general the more math they learn. Changing students' psychology, by contrast, sometimes requires a lighter touch."

David Yeager and Gregory Walton (see item #1)

"[Principals] did not want teachers to assume that a student's fixed gaze was evidence that the student understood the vocabulary, internalized the relationships, or acquired the skills. They refused to equate attending behavior with learning behavior."

Joseph Johnson, Cynthia Uline, and Lynne Perez (see item #2)

"While it may change and shape how we think, communicate, and engage, technology has never diminished our ability to achieve great things or love profoundly and wholly. The question is really one of how we master – and teach our children to master – the technology, rather than allowing it to master us."

Cynthia Green in a letter to the *New York Times Magazine*, June 5, 2011

"Most of us are egotistical and most are self-concerned most of the time, but it's nonetheless true that life comes to a point only in those moments when the self dissolves into some task. The purpose of life is not to find yourself. It's to lose yourself."

David Brooks (see item #4)

"Bilingualism is good for you. It makes brains stronger. It is brain exercise."

Ellen Bialystok (see item #6)

1. Changing Students' Thoughts and Feelings About Achievement

In this profound article in *Review of Educational Research*, David Yeager and Gregory Walton of Stanford University look at several successful social-psychological interventions:

- Middle-school students attended eight sessions teaching them that the brain is like a muscle and grows with effort; the students experienced a sharp increase in math achievement for the rest of the school year, compared to no gains for a control group in which students were taught study skills.
- A one-hour session designed to buttress the sense of social belonging of African-American college students boosted their GPA over the next three years, cutting the black-white achievement gap in half.
- A 15-20-minute writing exercise in which students reflected on their core personal values reduced the gap in grades between African-American and white students by nearly 40 percent at the end of the semester, and these gains persisted (with booster writing assignments) for two years.

Yeager and Walton ask how it's possible that such brief and low-cost interventions can bring about major gains in student achievement. The surprising impact of these programs, which target students' thoughts, feelings and beliefs rather than academic content, has led some to ask, *How can these effects be real?* and dismiss them as snake-oil solutions to complicated problems, unworthy of serious consideration.

Yeager and Walton contend that the effects are real and long-lasting "because they target students' subjective experiences in school, because they use persuasive yet stealthy methods for conveying psychological ideas, and because they tap into recursive processes present in educational environments." The authors urge researchers and educators to get a better understanding of why these interventions work so they can be taken to scale.

To drive home the point about the counterintuitive impact of social-psychological programs, Yeager and Walton suggest an analogy: A passenger jet weighing many tons is speeding down a runway. We know that it has engines, wings, and a pilot, but we wonder how it can possibly get off the ground. The answer is the shape of its wings – they're sculpted to create aerodynamic lift. If they were shaped differently, the plane would never fly.

Similarly, for learning to take place in schools, we need content, teachers, materials, and a community to support learning – but in some cases, these are not enough. Hidden, powerful psychological factors, like the shape of a plane's wings, can provide "lift" for struggling students if they are engineered correctly.

There are four reasons why so many people are skeptical of the social-psychological interventions, say Yeager and Walton:

- It's often hard to see the key forces that are at work. "We do not see air flowing over a wing," they say. "Nor do we directly observe how negative intellectual stereotypes or beliefs about the nature of intelligence affect students. We may see the power of these processes only when they are altered."
- People assume that large problems require large solutions. How could small interventions affect problems as daunting as the racial/economic achievement gap? But, say Yeager and Walton, every attitude and behavior exists within a complex field of forces – a "tension system" – in which some forces promote achievement while others restrain it. By increasing a student's motivation to learn or removing a psychological barrier to learning, a small intervention can have an amazing impact – provided that the basic conditions of learning are there.
- It's difficult to see how brief messages can affect students' beliefs and behavior when they receive so many other messages from adults that don't have much effect. The answer is that the messages contained in social-psychological interventions are heat-seeking missiles that go straight to core student beliefs that drive behavior.
- It seems implausible that a short-term, one-shot intervention can have enduring effects. "[A] key to understanding the long-lasting effects of social-psychological interventions," say Yeager and Walton, "is to understand how they interact with recursive processes already present in schools, such as the quality of students' developing relationships with peers and teachers, their beliefs about their ability, and their acquisition of academic knowledge. It is by affecting self-reinforcing recursive processes that psychological interventions can cause lasting improvements in motivation and achievement even when the original treatment message has faded in salience."

Yeager and Walton go on to give detailed descriptions of four social-psychological interventions that have dramatically improved student achievement. The first two are designed to change students' attributions about academic setbacks, the third and forth to address stereotype threat – students' fear that being a member of a particular gender or racial/ethnic group will lead to low achievement.

• *Intervention #1* – Wilson and Linville developed a brief program to teach entering college students that poor academic performance is normal when starting off in a new school, that it doesn't reflect lack of ability, and that grades typically improve as the student adjusts to the new school. One group of students had the intervention, watching videotapes of upperclassmen talking about how their initial jitters and problems wore off as they settled in. The control group saw videotapes of the same upperclassmen talking about their academic and social interests with no mention of first-year grades. A year later, students in the treatment group had higher GPAs than the control group, and this effect gained strength with each passing year; treated students were 80% less likely to drop out of college. This intervention has been replicated many times with diverse populations, including adolescents.

• *Intervention #2* – Mueller and Dweck gave fifth-grade students a moderately difficult set of logic problems. When students were finished, one group (randomly assigned) was praised for intelligence ("That's a really high score. You must be very smart at these problems") while the other group was praised for effort ("That's a really high score. You must have worked hard on these problems") or received neutral praise ("That's a really high score"). Next, all students were given a much more difficult set of problems, and all students performed poorly. Finally, all students were given another set of problems comparable in difficulty to the first set. Here's what happened:

- Students who had been given neutral praise performed at the same level they had on the first set of problems.
- Students who were praised for intelligence solved 30% fewer problems and asked to do only easy problems from then on.
- Students who were praised for effort did better than they had the first time around and asked for more challenging problems in the future.

Other studies, including an intervention with middle-school students in New York City who were taught to think of their brains as a muscle that can be developed, have shown similar results.

• *Intervention #3* – At the beginning of a school year, Cohen and colleagues had white and black seventh-graders identify two or three values that were personally important and write about why those values mattered to them. A control group of students was asked to identify values that were not important to them and write about why they might matter to someone else. Over the next two years, black students in the treatment group earned significantly higher grades than control-group students, reducing the black-white achievement gap by about 40%. Improvements in students' GPAs persisted for two years. This intervention has been replicated in numerous studies, including with women in science and Latino adolescents.

• *Intervention #4* – Walton and Cohen gave first-year college students information indicating that students of all ethnicities worried at first about whether they belonged, but that these worries dissipated in time. Students in the treatment group participated in activities designed to drive this message home, including writing essays for the next year's incoming students. Black students in the treatment group improved their grades from sophomore through senior year, cutting the black-white achievement gap by 50 percent. Black students' diaries showed that their sense of belonging improved immediately. Similar interventions have had equally strong effects in studies of female undergraduate engineering students and African-American middle-school students.

Yeager and Walton address two questions on how these interventions bring about significant improvements in student performance:

• *How do the interventions change academic outcomes in the short term?* "They do so," say the authors, "by precisely targeting students' experience in school from the student's perspective and by using impactful delivery mechanisms." To a researcher or a teacher, the interventions may not seem like much. "But to a student sitting at a desk in the third row worrying about whether a poor test score means she is stupid or whether others will reduce her

to a negative stereotype, an experience like learning that the brain can grow and form new connections when challenged or being invited to describe personally important values may feel quite 'large'… These strategies can induce deep processing and prepare students to transfer the content to new settings."

Another factor contributing to the success of these interventions is that they are "stealthy" – that is, they are brief and get at students' belief systems indirectly, not through overt preaching. If students perceive that teachers or other adults think they need help, that perception can undo the impact of an intervention. "In this way," say Yeager and Walton, "the teaching of academic content in school is fundamentally different from the delivery of psychological interventions. Academic content is complex and taught layer on layer. The more math students are taught, in general the more math they learn. Changing students' psychology, by contrast, sometimes requires a lighter touch."

• *How do social-psychological interventions affect student outcomes over long periods of time?* By setting in motion self-perpetuating social, psychological, and intellectual processes, say Yeager and Walton. "As students feel more secure in their belonging in school and form better relationships with peers and teachers, these become sources of support that promote feelings of belonging and academic success later. When students achieve success beyond what they thought possible, their beliefs about their potential may change, leading them to invest themselves more in school, further improving performance and reinforcing their belief in their potential for growth." Teachers have higher expectations, students are placed in higher groups, grades improve, and they go from strength to strength.

Yeager and Walton conclude by saying that these interventions can be replicated at scale, but only if they're done right. "There are not quick fixes that can be administered broadly without consideration for local contexts or the meaning students make of them," they say. "When an intervention is taken to scale without the theoretically essential components, it will not have the intended effects." It can't be a worksheet to be handed out or a lesson to "get through." The psychological *experience* needs to be replicated, not the specific activities. A classic example is the Spanish mission project in California schools. One fourth-grade class conducted independent research on a Spanish mission, created a replica of the mission with hand-made adobe bricks, and presented a class report. Other schools got excited about the project, and before long, every fourth grader in California was required to do a mission project. "Soon enough," say Yeager and Walton, "local stores sold premade 'mission kits' with fact sheets on each. What began as a project requiring original research and intensive thinking ended as a trip to an arts and crafts store."

Another way that powerful interventions can end up having no impact is if small changes are made to essential components. For example, if students are told why the schoolwork they're writing about is important rather than generating their own reasons, there's a negative effect on achievement. Teachers have considerable autonomy in their classrooms, and if they make ill-informed changes in a program, it can lose its value – and even backfire. To take these interventions to scale, teachers and administrators have to understand the essential theory and have contextual expertise to implement them successfully with their

students. They have to be able to keep faith with intervention, adapt intelligently, and get their students involved in the emotional experiences that will deliver results. It's also important that teachers have positive relationships with their students. Yeager and Walton suggest that a new role – the "psychological engineer" – may be essential to implement effective interventions.

"Social-Psychological Interventions in Education: They're Not Magic" by David Yeager and Gregory Walton in *Review of Educational Research*, June 2011 (Vol. 81, #2, p. 267-301), http://rer.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/04/19/0034654311405999; the authors can be reached at dyeager@stanford.edu and gwalton@stanford.edu.

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2. What the Best Principals Look for In Classrooms – and What They Get

In this important article in *JESPAR*, Joseph Johnson, Cynthia Uline, and Lynne Perez of San Diego State University report on their study of what principals in 14 of the nation's highest-performing, non-selective urban schools looked for during formal and informal classroom visits. There were striking similarities among the principals, including a common emphasis on student engagement and learning, classroom climate, and teacher actions that seemed to be most effective. Here are the details:

• *Student engagement, learning, and understanding* – "In every interview, principals spoke first, most, and most passionately about noticing the extent to which students were participating, learning, thinking, making sense, and understanding the concepts and skills being taught," report the authors. "Principals discussed the importance of seeing students talking about lesson content, discussing concepts, asking questions, explaining complex ideas, and solving problems."

One principal explained, "When I watch, I look first for *all* students, and I look around the class to make sure that they're all participating. I also walk around and ask kids. I'll take three kids at different areas of the room and if they're doing partner-share, I listen to what they are saying. Is the conversation that they are having related to what the teacher is asking them to participate in? When they're doing independent work, I look at what they're doing and I ask them, 'How do you know how to do this? What are you doing? What are you working on?'

Principals looked not only for lesson objectives but also the level of rigor and cognitive complexity being asked of students as they pursued the objective, and how many were understanding the lesson. "I want to see students thinking, grappling, writing, articulating their thoughts," said one principal. "If all the children are able to answer all of the questions, there is something wrong," said another. "They're not learning new information… I want to see them inquisitive. I want them to be eager. I want to see some eagerness to learn."

All the principals said they looked for whether students were responding to teachers' questions and talking to each other, both as evidence of students' engagement and understanding and also as on-the-spot assessments that helped teachers adjust the lesson content, pacing, and rigor.

• *Climate, tone, and atmosphere* – In the interviews, principals used a number of adjectives to describe the "feel" they expected in classrooms: *warm, nurturing, calm, relaxed,*

respectful, stimulating, flexible, organized, neat. They sought evidence of routines that helped students feel the classroom was predictable and safe. "I look at how they are sitting, how they're reacting, their body language, the feel of the classroom," said one principal. "Is there light laughter? Are there smiles?" Principals also wanted to see high-quality materials and displays of recent student work.

• *Effective teacher actions* – "I look to see if the teacher has been pretty clear about what the intended learning is and how it ties in with [student] interest," said one principal. "Students will engage if the teacher has been clear about where the lesson is going and what the students need to learn and why." Another principal said, "I want to see teachers asking lots of questions and keeping track of who is answering." Others emphasized getting students to explain their thinking, probing, listening carefully to what students say, assessing their understanding, and adjusting questions and instruction accordingly.

"I'm also looking for modeling in the lesson," said another principal. "And that's a critical piece. There's a difference between explaining and actually modeling the thinking. If that's going really well, that makes it a really strong lesson." Another principal looked for thinking maps and students brainstorming their thinking before they were asked to write.

Johnson, Uline, and Perez say their findings dovetail nicely with what teachers say they admire in effective principals: these leaders hold up a mirror to classroom practices and provide another set of eyes, sharing detailed and specific feedback aimed at solving problems, all in an atmosphere of trust and respect.

What are the implications of this study? The authors contrast their findings with the training and advice many principals receive on formal and informal classroom visits. For example, Carolyn Downey et al. (in *The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through*, Corwin, 2004) say that principals should see if "students appear to be attending when you first walk into the room… The goal of this step is to notice whether students appear to be oriented to the work… This is just a quick look to see if attending behavior seems to be in place" (p. 21).

The principals in the Johnson, Uline, and Perez study were not satisfied with this level of student attention. "They believed that it was essential for teachers to obtain evidence that students understood the concepts and skills being taught," say the authors. "They did not want teachers to assume that a student's fixed gaze was evidence that the student understood the vocabulary, internalized the relationships, or acquired the skills. They refused to equate attending behavior with learning behavior."

Furthermore, say the authors, "Downey and colleagues encouraged principals to notice safety and health issues, offering little or no attention to issues of relationships between teachers and students or among students" – or to student learning.

"The distinctions may not be huge," conclude Johnson, Uline, and Perez. "However, might these nuances influence the success of urban principals in promoting excellent and equitable learning? Are principal training programs driving attention and focus to the issues that are most likely to influence the academic success of Black, Latino, and low-income students, or are they oversimplifying the complexities of instructional leadership?"

Intriguingly, during the five years that Johnson, Uline, and Perez observed the 14 schools in their study, they found "substantial congruity between the issues principals claimed to notice and the attributes of classrooms in their schools… So, if 'what principals see' somehow influences 'what principals get', it may be worthwhile to learn more about what principals of high-performing schools notice and how they use this knowledge to influence improvements in teaching and learning."

"Expert Noticing and Principals in High-Performing Urban Schools" by Joseph Johnson, Cynthia Uline, and Lynne Perez in *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, April-June 2011 (Vol. 16, #2, p. 122-136), http://www.schooltransformer.org/docs/Expert-Noticing-JESPAR-1-30-11.pdf; Johnson can be reached at jjohnson@mail.sdsu.edu.

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3. How Three Texas High Schools Got Results

In this *JESPAR* article, a team of Texas A&M and Kent State University researchers report on their study of three large, traditional, urban high schools that made significant gains in math and science achievement. "There are no larger-than-life heroic leaders, no silver-bullet curricula, no startling use of technology, and no highly unusual teachers," say the authors. Rather, success came when "average" educators successfully used three levers of change:

• *Focused, coherent instructional direction* – The shared mandate in these schools was continuous improvement of instruction for all students, minimizing distractions, and avoiding ineffective practices. This came from the district office and the principals. One principal made a point of paying clerical staff for extra time to take paperwork off teachers' desks and let them focus on teaching.

• *Instructional focus* – Same-subject teacher team meetings took place every other day using the SOSA (same objective, same assessment) approach, with teachers diagnosing student learning problems and sharing strategies to reach state and district curriculum targets. Instructional coaches worked with individual teachers in their classrooms and teacher teams in meetings. And there was frequent professional development with an emphasis on seeing implementation at the classroom level.

• *Equity orientation* – "These high schools were places oriented toward the academic success of their students and characterized by respectful, committed, sensitive staff attitudes toward students," say the authors. Key components included: (a) Faculty stability and experience, which helped acculturate new teachers; (b) Faculty diversity in terms of race and international background; (c) An asset (versus a deficit) orientation: "The teachers and administrators believed that the students could learn the curriculum and that the students possessed assets and resources that would make this learning possible," write the authors; (d) Collective efficacy, meaning that the faculty believed in its ability to successfully teach all students the math and science curriculum; and (e) Locus of control, meaning staff members believed they could control events: "All three schools' staff were characterized by an overall sense of 'let's get the job done' professionalism," say the authors. "[T]he locus of control for

what happens in the classroom rested with the teacher – not primarily with the students or with other factors or conditions external to the school."

"Math and Science Academic Success in Three Large, Diverse, Urban High Schools: A Teacher's Story" by Kathryn Bell McKenzie, Linda Skrla, James Joseph Scheurich, Delores Rice, and Daniel Hawes in *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, April-June 2011 (Vol. 16, #2, p. 100-121), http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a937430709~db=all~jumptype=rss; McKenzie can be reached at kmckenzie@tamu.edu.

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4. A Better Message for Today's College Graduates

In this thoughtful *New York Times* column, David Brooks says current college graduates' teen and childhood years were highly structured, scheduled, supervised, tutored, and coached. This ill prepares them for the kind of wide-open world they're entering – delayed marriage, home-owning, and children, diverse job choices, and a dizzying array of lifestyle options. "Most will spend a decade wandering from job to job and clique to clique," says Brooks, "searching for a role."

What's worse, graduates enter adulthood with "the whole baby-boomer theology ringing in their ears." Brooks names three ways in which standard graduation ceremony messages give precisely the wrong message:

• *Follow your passion*. The truth is that successful people don't look inside to plan their lives, says Brooks. "They look outside and find a problem, which summons their life… Most people don't form a self and then lead a life. They are called by a problem, and the self is constructed gradually by their calling."

• *Seek happiness and joy*. In the biographies of admirable people, he says, "it's rarely the things that made them happy that compel your admiration. It's the things they did to court unhappiness – the things they did that were arduous and miserable, which sometimes cost them friends and aroused hatred. It's excellence, not happiness, that we admire most."

• *March to the beat of your own drummer*. In the real world, says Brooks, jobs usually require us to set limits on our personal desires – being part of a team, following the rules of an institution, following time-honored procedures that ensure quality work.

"Fulfillment is a byproduct of how people engage their tasks, and can't be pursued directly," concludes Brooks. "Most of us are egotistical and most are self-concerned most of the time, but it's nonetheless true that life comes to a point only in those moments when the self dissolves into some task. The purpose of life is not to find yourself. It's to lose yourself."

"It's Not About You" by David Brooks in *The New York Times*, May 31, 2011 http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/31/opinion/31brooks.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=%22Its%20Not%20About%20You%22&st=cse

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5. What's a College Degree Worth? It Depends

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Beckie Supiano highlights a 2009 report from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce on the economic value of a bachelor's degree for each of a number of college majors:

- Engineering – Median $75,000, range $55,000-$120,000
- Computers & mathematics – Median $70,000, range $50,000-$98,000
- Business – Median $66,000, range $50,000-$75,000
- Health – Median $65,000, range $40,000-$105,000
- Physical sciences – Median $60,000, range $52,000-$70,000
- Social science – Median $55,000, range $45,000-$70,000
- Agricultural and natural resources – Median $50,000, range $44,000-$65,000
- Biology and life science – Median $50,000, range $42,000-$60,000
- Communications and journalism – Median $50,000, range $45,000-$51,000
- Law and public policy – Median $50,000, range $48,000-$59,000
- Industrial arts and consumer services – Median $50,000, range $40,000-$70,000
- Humanities and liberal arts – Median $48,000, range $38,000-$57,000
- Arts – Median $44,000, range $40,000-$46,000
- Education – Median $42,000, range $36,000-$50,000
- Psychology and social work – Median $42,000, range $29,000-$53,000

"What's a Degree Worth? Report Has Answers, by Major" by Beckie Supiano in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 3, 2011 (Vol. LVII, #38, p. A20); for more detail about each major, see http://chronicle.com/article/Median-Earnings-by-Major-and/127604/

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6. Another Advantage of Being Bilingual

In this *New York Times* interview, Claudia Dreifus asks cognitive neuroscientist Ellen Bialystok about brain differences between bilingual and monolingual children. Bialystok has found that bilinguals were better at paying attention to important information and ignoring less-important information. For example, children were asked if an illogical sentence – *Apples grow on noses* – was grammatically correct. Monolingual children said, "That's silly" and couldn't answer the question. Bilingual children said, "It's silly, but it's grammatically correct."

Why would this be true? Bialystok says it has to do with the brain's executive control system. "If you have two languages and you use them regularly," she says, "the way the brain's networks work is that every time you speak, both languages pop up and the executive control system has to sort through everything and attend to what's relevant in the moment. Therefore the bilinguals use that system more, and it's that regular use that makes that system more efficient." She adds that this is true only for people who use both languages all the time.

Does being bilingual help with multitasking? Yes, because that's handled by the executive control system. Bialystok and her colleagues put headphones on monolingual and bilingual people as they drove a car, introduced additional tasks, and monitored whether

driving was affected. Everyone drove less well, but the decline in attentiveness and efficiency wasn't as bad with bilinguals. Bialystok hastens to add that people shouldn't do this!

She and her colleagues have also found that connections are different in bilingual people's brains. "Their whole brain appears to rewire because of bilingualism," she says – and it operates more efficiently with certain kinds of problems, even nonverbal ones. Being bilingual is definitely an advantage in terms of brain functioning. "Bilingualism is good for you," Bialystok concludes. "It makes brains stronger. It is brain exercise."

"A Conversation with Ellen Bialystok" by Claudia Dreifus in *The New York Times*, May 31, 2011
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/31/science/31conversation.html?scp=1&sq="A%20Conversation%20with%20Ellen%20Bialystok"%20&st=cse

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7. Making Time for Professional Development

In this *Principal's Research Review* article, Nancy Protheroe of Educational Research Service summarizes findings on effective use of resources to improve teaching and learning. A clear vision, well-chosen goals, the best instructional model, mission-driven scheduling, appropriate class size, and effective help for struggling students are all important, she says. Here are Protheroe's recommendations on time:

• *Time is most important resource*. It's vital that time is allocated for grade-level and subject-area teacher teams to collaborate on curriculum unit planning, interim assessment analysis, and professional development. Blocks of 90 minutes are ideal.

• *Devote time to prevention rather than remediation*. An ounce of academic prevention is worth a pound of cure, she suggests.

• *Incorporate professional development into the daily life of the school*. "In order for new knowledge and skills to be transferred to the classroom," says Protheroe, "professional development must provide theory, demonstration, practice, and peer coaching. Peers helping peers, mutual study and problem solving, and observing other professionals work all provide valuable learning experiences and all require teacher time during the school day."

"Effective Resource Use – People, Time, and Money" by Nancy Protheroe in *Principal's Research Review*, May 2011 (Vol. 6, #3), no e-link available

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8. The Impact of Induction and Mentoring for New Teachers

In this *Review of Educational Research* article, Richard Ingersoll of the University of Pennsylvania and Michael Strong of the University of California/Santa Cruz review the research on the impact of induction and mentoring programs for new teachers. In brief, the research shows that two years of induction and mentoring have a positive impact on:

- Teacher retention – This included job satisfaction, commitment, retention/turnover;

- Teacher classroom instructional practices – This included keeping students on task, using effective questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and managing the classroom;
- Achievement – students whose teachers participated in induction and mentoring had higher scores, or gains on academic achievement tests.

"The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research" by Richard Ingersoll and Michael Strong in *Review of Educational Research*, June 2011 (Vol. 81, #2, p. 201-233), http://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/127/; the authors can be reached at rmi@gse.upenn.edu and mastrong@ucsc.edu.

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9. Nudging Boys Toward Nontraditional Careers

Since Title IX passed almost 40 years ago, American schools have done a good job of opening career options for girls, reports Sarah Sparks in this *Education Week* article. But as lots of traditionally male-dominated jobs have disappeared in recent years, schools haven't done as good a job at opening boys' minds to traditionally "female" jobs like nursing and education. "My perception over the last 40 years is we've provided a lot of support and encouragement for girls to try and take on new things," says Thomas Mortenson of the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, "but I've also seen no special effort to encourage boys to take on different subjects."

"Experts Say Boys Need Wider Career Choices" by Sarah Sparks in *Education Week*, May 25, 2011 (Vol. 30, #32, p. 6) http://www.edweek.org

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10. News Flash: Student Attendance Matters

In this *American Journal of Education* study comparing the academic achievement of siblings attending urban schools, Michael Gottfried of the RAND Corporation found that frequent absences make a significant difference. The achievement deficits persist; once children are off on the wrong foot in school, they continue to perform worse than siblings raised in the same household who attend school regularly. The study found that the achievement gap could be ameliorated with weekend classes or summer school.

"The Detrimental Effects of Missing School: Evidence from Urban Siblings" by Michael Gottfried in *American Journal of Education*, February 2011, summarized in *Education Week's* Report Roundup, May 25, 2011

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

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

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 41 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 44 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through more than a hundred articles each week, and selects 5-10 that have the greatest potential to improve teaching, leadership, and learning. He then writes a brief summary of each article, pulls out several striking quotes, provides e-links to full articles when available, and e-mails the Memo to subscribers every Monday evening (with occasional breaks; there are about 50 issues a year).

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Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
Language Learner (NABE)
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
New York Times
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
The School Administrator
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools