Marshall Memo 287

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
May 25, 2009

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"The principal, principal, and then again the principal."

Ron Avi Astor, Rami Benbenishty, and Jose Nuñez Estrada describing the key factor in Israeli schools that successfully create a safe school climate (see item #1)

"In the final analysis, the ultimate test of effective assessment is simple: does it provide teachers and students with the information they need to ensure that all students learn at high levels."

Rick Stiggins and Rick DuFour (see item #3)

"Across the United States, I see schools that are succeeding at making adequate yearly progress but failing our students. Increasingly, there is only one curriculum: test prep."

Tony Wagner (see item #6)

"Yesterday's answers won't solve today's problems."

A business executive quoted in item #6

"In the adult world, everything is a performance assessment."

Patricia Scriffiny in "Seven Reasons for Standards-Based Grading" in *Educational Leadership*, October 2008 (Vol. 66, #2, p. 70-74)
http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/oct08/vol66/num02/toc.aspx

1. How Some Schools in Israel Become Safe Havens in Tough Communities

"[S]chools embedded in communities with high crime and low socioeconomic status are often expected by many scholars and the general public to have higher rates of school violence when compared with schools in lower crime and higher socioeconomic status communities," say researchers Ron Avi Astor, Rami Benbenishty, and Jose Nuñez Estrada in a thoughtful *American Educational Research Journal* article. To test this proposition, they located nine Israeli schools from a national database that had atypically high and atypically low levels of student violence and victimization and conducted an intensive study of the schools' practices – three years of on-site observation, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and picture-taking. The schools were at the primary, middle, and high-school level and included Arab, religious, and secular institutions; one of the middle schools was all girls and one of the high schools was all boys.

Research teams were dispatched without being told what kind of school each one was, but the situation was immediately apparent. The high-violence schools had clear organizational and safety issues, and low-violence schools were "special places" – oases of peace in spite of students' cultural, religious, language, and political differences and high levels of poverty and violence in the surrounding community. The study identified several key factors:

• *The principal, principal, and then again the principal* – "Inspiring principal leadership in the atypically low-violence schools was the most dominant theme that cut through all of the qualitative findings," say the authors. "The principals in these schools were strong leaders who could mobilize staff, students, and parents. They had overarching philosophies of education that connected school safety directly to the organization and mission of their schools. Each had beliefs that the school could change the lives of students and society. Under the leadership of these principals, the atypically low-violence schools aimed beyond mere safety to a goal of creating caring, inclusive, and nurturing environments."

• *A schoolwide awareness of mission, ideology, and procedures* – "Teachers, students, and parents in the peaceful schools understood the societal purpose of education in their school," say Astor, Benbenishty, and Estrada. "This consensus facilitated a naturally occurring collective, whole-school approach to dealing with violence." This kind of consensus did not exist in the high-violence schools.

• *Proactive discipline* – The low-violence schools collectively and systematically prevented problems in all locations and at all times. This included the principal playing with students at recess (making sure they were obeying the rules of the game), scouting out potential trouble-spots (for example, bus stops), and intervening to stop a rumored after-school fight.

High-violence schools neglected certain parts of the school where problems were occurring and didn't actively supervise students at recess, dismissal, and other common times.

• *Warm physical and emotional displays* – Researchers were struck by the positive emotional climate in the low-violence schools, including outward signs of humor, warmth, and social support – students holding hands and hugging, teachers and students laughing together on the playground, principals walking the halls complimenting students by name, joking, and smiling, teachers kneeling to talk to students at eye level, and lots of authentic adult-child contact. "We cannot stress enough how important these images are for creating a positive school climate that feels caring," say the authors. They say this pattern exists in other schools around the world: "Often we notice teachers and principals afraid to touch, laugh, or cajole students either due to policy, fear of liability, or a sense that they may not be seen as professionals." Staff members in the low-violence Israeli schools had none of these fears. "The high-violence schools," say the authors, "had many observable and reported instances of principals and teachers yelling, reprimanding, and unfairly punishing, lecturing, or ignoring students." The principals in these schools seemed more detached, spent most of their time in their offices, and were accused by teachers of favoritism and discrimination.

• *The visible and authentic use of culture* – Low-violence schools drew on cultural traditions to encourage non-violence and peacemaking, including hallway displays and assembly messages – and these messages were in synch with the behavior of staff members. High-violence schools often had displays, but students candidly told researchers that these were there to impress outsiders and didn't reflect what was really going on.

• *Inclusion* – Some of the low-violence schools integrated cerebral-palsy and deaf students in regular classrooms, and there were affectionate exchanges between these students and their classmates and messages about inclusion throughout the school.

• *Care of school grounds* – Researchers found stark differences between low- and high-violence schools' upkeep of classrooms, hallways, drinking fountains, bathrooms, yards, gates, sports areas, and bus stops. The low-violence schools were aesthetically pleasing, decorated by student- and teacher-created materials, and had live vegetation. The high-violence schools "communicated the exact opposite messages with trash, dead vegetation, torn and faded decorations, broken machinery and objects strewn about, peeling paint, unkempt classrooms, and many security devices such as locks and gates." The authors are under no illusion that beautifying a school will make it safe. Rather, they believe a school that is well kept-up manifests a caring schoolwide ethos, leadership, and attention to detail.

"School Violence and Theoretically Atypical Schools: The Principal's Centrality in Orchestrating Safe Schools" by Ron Avi Astor, Rami Benbenishty, and Jose Nuñez Estrada in *American Educational Research Journal*, June 2009 (Vol. 46, #2, p. 423-461); this article can be purchased at http://aer.sagepub.com/cgi/content/full/46/2/423; the authors can be reached at rastor@usc.edu, ramibenben@gmail.com, and jnestrad@usc.edu.

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2. How the Achievement Gap Widens – and How to Close It

In this *Kappan* article, author/consultant Kim Marshall begins with a list of ways that an evil superintendent could *expand* the differences with which five-year-olds enter school so there would be an enormous achievement gap by high-school graduation:

a. Tell principals and teachers that differences in students' classroom performance reflect their innate intelligence, which can't be changed by even the most effective teaching.
b. Mandate tracking, with lower groups getting a slower-paced, basic-skills, test-prep curriculum.
c. Assign the most effective teachers to high-achieving classes and rookies to the most challenged students.
d. Curtail professional development in classroom management.
e. Have teachers keep the criteria for getting good grades secret.
f. Tell teachers it's okay to prepare lessons the night before, in isolation from colleagues.
g. Blame parents when students read below grade level and lack the "core knowledge" to understand the curriculum.
h. Discourage schools from investing time in hands-on learning experiences, extracurricular activities, and field trips.
i. Tell teachers to call only on students who raise their hands, build on correct responses, and maintain a brisk classroom pace.
j. Forbid principals from making unannounced classroom visits, require them to base teacher evaluations on lengthy write-ups of a single lesson, and discourage them from critically evaluating all but the most egregiously incompetent teachers.
k. Require that all classwork and tests be given final A, B, C, D, or F grades with little explanatory feedback.
l. Require teachers to give demanding homework assignments that require the assistance of well-educated parents.
m. Encourage the belief that what parents do with their children at home is none of the school's business.
n. Require teachers to follow a rigidly paced curriculum and forbid them from working beyond the contractual school day.
o. Maximize the length of summer vacations.

What's the point of this depressing fantasy? The point is that many of these practices are all-too common in U.S. schools and each of them harms the learning of disadvantaged and low-achieving students. This is why, as Paul Tough wrote in a 2006 *New York Times Magazine* article, "The evidence is now overwhelming that if you take an average low-income child and put him into an average American public school, he will almost certainly come out poorly educated." [See Marshall Memo 162 for a summary of this article.]

Reading over the list, it's also striking that half of these practices actually *benefit* advantaged and high-achieving students (for example, having the most effective teachers, a more rigorous curriculum, and greater opportunities for class participation) and the rest are neutral or considerably less harmful for advantaged than for disadvantaged students. "Thus,"

says Marshall, "schools that use these practices drive the achievement of these two groups apart, widening the gap every day."

What would be the effect of doing the opposite of each of these 15 gap-widening practices? In a school that consistently implemented the flip-side, ask yourself if all students benefit equally – or would some gain more than others:

a. Students are constantly told that students aren't just born smart, they can get smart through effective effort.
b. Students are grouped heterogeneously and instruction is differentiated while maintaining high expectations for all.
c. Teachers with a demonstrated track record of being the most effective are assigned to the most challenging students and grade levels.
d. Teachers are well trained in classroom management and schoolwide discipline is positive and strong.
e. Learning expectations and the criteria for proficiency are made clear to students and parents.
f. Teacher teams collaboratively map out curriculum units and agree on final assessments.
g. Reading levels are accelerated using "just right" materials, and gaps in students' core knowledge are systematically filled.
h. Teaching caters to different learning styles, teachers maximize active student involvement, and all students are involved in enriching extracurricular activities.
i. Teachers constantly check for understanding during classes and use the feedback to fine-tune instruction and reach all students.
j. Principals make frequent unannounced classroom visits, give teachers prompt face-to-face feedback, refuse to tolerate mediocre or low-quality teaching, and work with teacher teams and instructional coaches to maximize adult and student learning.
k. Students take interim assessments every 5-9 weeks and teacher teams analyze the data and help students with what they don't understand.
l. Teachers assign homework that students can do independently based on in-class learning and resources available to all.
m. Parents are continuously informed of ways they can support their children's learning at home and in school.
n. Struggling students get prompt one-on-one or small-group help targeted to their needs.
o. Academically needy students have expanded learning time during and after school hours, go to summer school, and have the materials and incentives needed to maximize learning outside of school.

Marshall argues that each of these practices benefits disadvantaged and low-performing students the most. "Advantaged students would benefit too, but not as dramatically," he says, "which would cause the achievement gap to gradually close." The article includes a graph of student achievement in the Brazosport, Texas schools showing this kind of gap-closing impact from effective classroom and school practices.

Implementing these 15 initiatives is a daunting challenge, concedes Marshall. Where

should a school begin? He asks us to consider the "moment of truth" in a hypothetical classroom. A teacher finishes a well-taught curriculum unit, gives an assessment, records the grades, and tallies students on a 4-3-2-1 scale, where 3 is proficient and 1 is failure:

4 - ••••
3 - •••••••••
2 - ••••••••
1 - ••••

Only 52% of students are proficient or above, but what usually happens next? Although we know what *should* happen, the reality is that few teachers feel they have the "luxury" to slow down and work with the 48% of students who didn't fully master the material and those who outright failed. There's pressure to cover the rest of the curriculum, and teachers may fear backlash from the parents of higher-achieving students and doubt their ability to change the bell-shaped curve.

"These are powerful reasons," says Marshall. "But let's be blunt: Every time a teacher moves on with this many students below mastery, the achievement gap widens." The students at levels 1 and 2 are probably those who entered with learning disadvantages (in fact, the teacher probably could have predicted their performance before instruction even began). "If the teacher moves on, these students will begin the next unit that much more confused, that much more discouraged, and that much more likely to think they're stupid, adopt a negative attitude, and act out in class," says Marshall. "And so it goes."

Clearly, teachers need to be empowered by the principal to *stop* when they see results like this, meet with grade-level colleagues, compare notes and figure out what went wrong, and reteach the material in a different way, while providing enrichment for already-proficient students. This is what highly effective districts like Brazosport have done. The key ingredients are:

- Clarity around what students should learn;
- On-the-spot assessments to catch as many learning glitches as possible during instruction;
- Common interim assessments every 5-9 weeks;
- Immediate analysis of the results by teacher teams and administrators;
- Effective use of the insights gained to improve teaching and help struggling students.

British researcher Dylan Wiliam sums it up well: "Agile teaching, responsive to student learning minute by minute, day by day, month by month."

Marshall closes by agreeing with Richard Rothstein's argument (2004) that schools can't close the achievement gap on their own. "America needs a full-court press," says Marshall, "with the president, the federal government, state officials, mayors, university professors, doctors, dentists, business leaders, consultants, community groups, religious groups, and advocates working together to alleviate poverty, crime, unemployment, discrimination, health and housing problems, lead-paint poisoning, and other factors that result in some children starting school with such serious handicaps. But as we wait for this mobilization, schools can do a great deal right now. Schools can undertake all 15 of the

interventions listed above without waiting for poverty and crime and racism to be erased. The most basic change – constantly checking to see if students are learning and following up when they aren't – can be implemented in any school tomorrow. If we focus on that key classroom dynamic – the moment of truth where the gap either widens or narrows – we can make a huge difference in the outcomes we care about the most."

"A How-To Plan for Widening the Gap" by Kim Marshall in *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 2009 (Vol. 90, #9, p. 650-655), http://www.marshallmemo.com/about.php (scroll down)

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3. Rick Stiggins and Rick DuFour on Common Interim Assessments

"When teachers work together to create assessments for all students in the same course or grade," write author/consultants Rick Stiggins and Rick DuFour in this *Kappan* article, "the results can be astounding." Here's their list:

- Identifying student understanding in specific areas of the curriculum;
- Clarifying what comes next in their learning;
- Systematically intervening with struggling students;
- Helping individual teachers see where their teaching is effective and where it isn't;
- Creating a forum for teachers to learn from each other;
- Helping students track their own progress;
- Motivating students and building their confidence;
- Fueling continuous improvement across a faculty;
- Driving a school's transformation.

But to build an effective assessment system (which includes on-the-spot checks for understanding and summative tests as well as interim assessments), Stiggins and DuFour believe these conditions must be met:

• *A commitment to getting all students over the bar* – "Without that commitment," say Stiggins and DuFour, "assessments remain merely tools for grading, sorting, selecting, and ranking students, and teachers will have little reason to explore ways of improving their instructional effectiveness."

• *Clear learning targets* – Assessments won't be helpful unless they are based on explicit statements of what students need to know and be able to do that are:

- Focused on the best thinking about the most important learning for the grade or course;
- Stating the specific knowledge and understanding, reasoning proficiencies, performance skills, and product development capabilities students must master;
- Connected to a thoughtful K-12 learning progression aligned with state standards, state assessments, and what teachers at the next grade level expect;
- Developmentally appropriate for students;
- Manageable within the school year;
- Mastered by teachers.

"Deconstructing standards into the scaffolding students will climb to arrive at the intended learning is best done, not by individuals working in isolation but by teams and professional interaction within a professional learning community," say Stiggins and DuFour. Clarifying learning outcomes also helps teams create a common vision.

• *High-quality assessments* – These must be designed to provide good information on students' status with respect to the learning targets, which means:

- Choosing the best method of assessment for each learning target;
- Using quality items, whether multiple-choice, essay prompts, scoring guides, etc.;
- Anticipating and eliminating sources of bias;
- Using enough items to get valid data.

"The team structure provides a powerful format by which teachers can learn how to create high-quality assessments," say the authors.

• *Timely and user-friendly communication of results* – This means teachers and students getting the data promptly, with non-judgmental descriptions of what was learned and not learned and helpful steps to improvement.

• *Involving students* – Stiggins and DuFour believe that the more students are involved in every part of this process, the better the results will be. This includes kid-friendly learning targets, self-assessment, goal-setting, analysis of assessment results, and tracking progress.

"In the final analysis," conclude the authors, "the ultimate test of effective assessment is simple: does it provide teachers and students with the information they need to ensure that all students learn at high levels."

"Maximizing the Power of Formative Assessments" by Rick Stiggins and Rick DuFour in *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 2009 (Vol. 90, #9, p. 640-644); this article can be purchased at http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kappan.htm

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4. Nine Tips for Making Word Study Effective in Grades K-2

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, University of Cincinnati professor Cheri Williams and four teacher colleagues share what they have learned about using word study in kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade classrooms. The authors define word study as "an approach to spelling instruction that moves away from a focus on memorization." They have drawn on two books: *Word Matters* by Pinnell and Fountas (1998) and *Words Their Way* by Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnston (2000). Here are their suggestions:

• *Tip 1: Assess students' word knowledge using multiple assessment tools*. Teachers need to learn up front what students know about the alphabetic, pattern, and meaning layers of writing. The authors used the Primary Spelling Inventory or the Elementary Spelling Inventory to assess word knowledge at the beginning of the year, and continuously monitored students' writing as the year progressed.

• *Tip 2: Use small homogeneous groups*. The teachers found that whole-group instruction didn't work for word study. In kindergarten and first grade, they integrated word study into guided reading groups; in second grade, they used separate word study groups.

• *Tip 3: Carve out time to prepare*. Teachers need to invest time so they can identify the generalizations that students will be exploring and prepare activities for each group. Williams acknowledges that finding the time is a challenge and urges teachers not to reinvent the wheel; available materials can support this process.

• *Tip 4: Teach word knowledge, not just words*. In word study, students learn *about* words – how English words work, consistencies and inconsistencies within our spelling system, useful generalizations, and sight words.

• *Tip 5: Show student how word study can be used during reading and writing*. Students need to be explicitly taught how to use word study insights to improve their writing and reading. Interactive writing is a useful forum for making these links explicit in kindergarten and first grade classes.

• *Tip 6: Teach strategies that support students' use of word study instruction*. Here are ten strategies the authors teach their students:

- Say the word slowly and listen for the sounds you hear: initial sound, middle sound, final sound.
- Say the word slowly and listen for any parts you know (br- in brought).
- Clap the syllables and write letters for each part you hear.
- Use words you know (fun and silly → funny)
- Use names you know (William → will)
- Use a rhyming word (rain → train)
- Use word families to spell related words
- Think about different spelling patterns that can spell the sound you hear (out vs. down)
- Try it on a practice page and see if it looks right.
- Use a resource in the classroom (chart, word wall, book, dictionary, words used).

Williams says that teachers found again and again that students needed explicit instruction to carry the strategies into everyday practice.

• *Tip 7: Make your word wall work*. By this they mean integrating it into instruction and modeling its use so students use it when they are doing their own writing.

• *Tip 8: Have students practice and apply*. Once an orthographic principle has been introduced, students need lots of opportunities to explore and reinforce it in hands-on games and activities, either singly or in pairs. Word sorting is the authors' favorite activity; it helps students look for similarities and differences among words.

• *Tip 9: Engage students in extensive "real" reading and writing*. Students need lots of experience every day with extended, authentic reading and writing on topics of their own choosing. Research shows that sustained reading and writing support spelling development, and spelling knowledge supports reading and writing development.

"Word Study Instruction in the K-2 Classroom" by Cheri Williams with Colleen Phillips-Birdsong, Krissy Hufnagel, Diane Hungler, and Ruth Lundstrom in *The Reading Teacher*, April 2009 (Vol. 62, #7, p. 570-578), no e-link available; Williams can be reached at cheri.williams@uc.edu.

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5. Ten Myths About Schools

In this *American School Board Journal* article, Connecticut superintendent David Sklarz debunks ten urban legends about U.S. schools:

• *Myth #1: Some children just can't achieve*. "This is the saddest and most harmful myth of all," says Sklarz. "We cannot rest until we close the achievement gap."

• *Myth #2: Teachers are born, not made*. Of course, teachers need to love children and have a passion for teaching and a commitment to making a difference. But good teachers are grown through preparation, hard work, and ongoing professional development.

• *Myth #3: Teaching is an art*. "Good teachers have that fine balance of art and science," says Sklarz. Like musicians, singers, and dancers, they continuously fine-tune their craft. And like physicists and mathematicians, they draw on a body of knowledge to improve.

• *Myth #4: Those who can, do; those who can't, teach*. Nonsense, says Sklarz. Teachers are more highly qualified, trained, and prepared than ever.

• *Myth #5: Teachers are overpaid and underworked*. "The public sees the teacher workday, week, and year through the eyes of children," says Sklarz. Unseen are the after-school and vacation hours spent correcting papers, analyzing student work, calling parents, planning instruction, working with colleagues, and attending workshops and courses.

• *Myth #6: Don't smile until the winter break*. "It's unnatural for the joyful and enthusiastic teacher not to show that side to students," says Sklarz. "Smiling and laughter are great ways to relax and relieve the stress of education today while still being serious about our work."

• *Myth #7: Spare the rod and spoil the child*. "Children see enough violence on TV, on the streets, and sometimes at home," says Sklarz. They need to be spared physical or verbal abuse in school and given well-developed programs for developing respect and responsibility.

• *Myth #8: You can't fire a tenured teacher*. "Teachers who fail to meet the contractually agreed-upon standards can be dismissed through due process just like any other employee," says Sklarz. But it takes "strong oversight and effective leadership from the top."

• *Myth #9: Educators are accountable to no one*. No Child Left Behind has changed that, says Sklarz. The challenge is implementing accountability in a way that improves teaching and learning for all children.

• *Myth #10: If you want to know about schools, ask the custodian*. Sure, custodians know a lot, but to get a full picture of a school, you need to visit classrooms and talk to teachers, the secretary, the principal, parents, and neighbors.

"Debunking Education Myths" by David Sklarz in *American School Board J*ournal, June 2009 (Vol. 196, #6, p. 24-25), no e-link available; the author is at David_Sklarz@whps.org.

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6. Seven Skills That Students Need

(Originally titled "Rigor Redefined")

What do students need to succeed in the new global economy – and as citizens, asks

Harvard leadership specialist Tony Wagner in this *Educational Leadership* article. He interviewed leaders in business, nonprofits, philanthropy, the military, and education to get the answer:

• *Critical thinking and problem solving* – "Over and over, executives told me that the heart of critical thinking and problem solving is the ability to ask the right questions," says Wagner. "Yesterday's answers won't solve today's problems," said one executive.

• *Collaboration and leadership* – "All our work is done in teams," said another leader. "You have to know how to work well with others… I want people who can engage in good discussion – who can look me in the eye and have a give and take."

• *Agility and adaptability* – "I can guarantee the job I hire someone to do will change or may not exist in the future," said another executive, "… adaptability and learning skills are more important than technical skills."

• *Initiative and entrepreneurialism* – A Cisco executive: "I say to my employees, if you try five things and get all five of them right, you may be failing. If you try 10 things, and get eight of them right, you're a hero. You'll never be blamed for failing to reach a stretch goal, but you will be blamed for not trying."

• *Effective oral and written communication* – It's essential to write and speak clearly and concisely, with focus, energy, and passion – to articulate your central point in the first 60 seconds. Leaders complain less about poor spelling, grammar, and punctuation than about fuzzy thinking and lack of "voice."

• *Accessing and analyzing information* – Employees are flooded with information and it keeps changing. "[I]f people aren't prepared to process information effectively it almost freezes them in their steps," said an executive.

• *Curiosity and imagination* – Today's leaders place great value on the ability to be inquisitive.

Wagner describes visits he has paid to some of the nation's highest-scoring schools and says 95% of the teaching is weak: "Across the United States, I see schools that are succeeding at making adequate yearly progress but failing our students. Increasingly, there is only one curriculum: test prep." He describes three AP classes with mediocre, undemanding instruction and little student involvement.

Then he describes an Algebra II class in which the teacher challenges students to work in groups of four and use geometry and algebra concepts to come up with two possible solutions to an unfamiliar problem and be prepared to be called on individually to come up and present a solution. As students dive into the challenge, the teacher circulates: "Have you considered…?" "Why did you assume that?" or "Have you asked someone in your group?" Wagner is impressed: the class hit almost all of the seven key skills.

To spread this kind of teaching, says Wagner, we need to redefine excellent instruction. "It is not a checklist of teacher behaviors and a model lesson that covers content standards. It is working with colleagues to ensure that all students master the skills they need to succeed as lifelong learners, workers, and citizens… We need to use academic content to teach the seven

survival skills every day, at every grade level, and in every class." He points to the online College and Work Readiness Assessment as an exemplar (http://www.cae.org).

"Rigor Redefined" by Tony Wagner in *Educational Leadership*, October 2008 (Vol. 66, #2, p. 20-24) http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/oct08/vol66/num02/toc.aspx; the author can be reached at tony_wagner@harvard.edu.

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7. College Readiness Defined

(Originally titled "What Makes a Student College Ready?")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, University of Oregon professor David Conley lists four criteria of college readiness:

• *Cognitive strategies* – Students entering college are more likely to be successful if they can:

- Formulate, investigate, and propose solutions to non-routine problems;
- Understand and analyze conflicting explanations;
- Evaluate the credibility and utility of source material;
- Appropriately integrate material into a paper or project;
- Think analytically and logically, comparing and contrasting differing philosophies, methods and positions;
- Be precise and accurate.

An overarching skill is being able to think about what is learned.

• *Content knowledge* – Several recent reports [see item 8a below] have defined what students need to know to be successful in entry-level college courses. "These reports are remarkably similar in terms of the content knowledge expectations they outline," says Conley. "They all identify a manageable set of big ideas, key concepts, and organizing principles that form the structure of each academic subject area, and they emphasize the importance of students making connections among the big ideas."

• *Self-management skills* – College life requires that students keep track of lots of information, work independently, manage their time, meet multiple deadlines, and get help when they need it.

• *College knowledge* – This includes choosing and applying, financial aid, and adjusting to college life.

Few students master all four of these areas, says Conley. Support is essential, especially for students who are the first in their families to attend college. From visiting a number of exemplary high schools, he compiled this list of key principles:

- Create and maintain a college-going culture. "These high schools send the message that all students should be focusing on college as their goal," he says. They provide academic preparation, counseling, and other supports to make this real.
- Align the core academic program to college readiness standards. This goes beyond meeting state curriculum standards and often involves common performance tasks for all students at a given grade level.

- Teach self-management skills. This includes study skills, note-taking, time management, working in teams, and reflecting on the quality of one's work.
- Prepare students to apply to college. This is a four-year process to help students and their families know what to expect in the application and financial aid process.

"What Makes a Student College Ready?" by David Conley in *Educational Leadership*, October 2008 (Vol. 66, #2, online only); Conley is at david_conley@epiconline.org; for more information, go to http://www.s4s.org/upload/Gates-College%20Readiness.pdf. The article is at http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/oct08/vol66/num02/toc.aspx.

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8. Short Items:

a. College readiness standards and resources – In this *Principal's Research Review* article on college readiness, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) staffers Jacqueline Raphael and Jim Kushman share these resources:

- American Diploma Project Benchmarks for college readiness in K-12 mathematics and 4-12 English language arts: http://www.achieve.org/ADPbenchmarks
- Education Policy Improvement Center college success standards: http://www.epiconline.org
- ACT College Readiness Standards: http://www.act.org/standard
- On Course for Success (ACT and Education Trust syllabi and course descriptions from high-achieving schools): http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/reports/success.html.
- College Board Standards for College Success (middle and high-school progression in six courses): http://professionals.collegeboard.com/k-12/standards

"Predicting Postsecondary Success" by Jacqueline Raphael and Jim Kushman in *Principal's Research Review*, May 2009 (Vol. 4, #3, p. 4)

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b. Math resources website – Check out this Loyola University, Chicago website that uses QuickTime movies to teach math skills: http://countdown.luc.edu/

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c. Facts about religions – This website has an extraordinarily full list of quick facts about all the world's religions: http://www.religionfacts.com/big_religion_chart.htm

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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 37 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).

Subscriptions:

Individual subscriptions are $50 for the school year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and information on paying by check or credit card.

Website:

If you go to http://www.marshallmemo.com you will find detailed information on:

- How to subscribe or renew
- A detailed rationale for the Marshall Memo
- Publications (with a count of articles from each)
- Article selection criteria
- Topics (with a count of articles from each)
- Headlines for all issues
- What readers say
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Marshall Memo subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

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

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Catalyst Chicago
Changing Schools (McREL)
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
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
Teacher Magazine (online)
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Language Educator
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools/The Learning Principal