Marshall Memo 179

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
April 2, 2007

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"We will never – any of us – get to the bottom of our to-do lists in our lifetime."
Julie Morgenstern (see item #9)

"There are issues that are finite and there are issues that are infinite. Don't spend your time trying to do things that you can't do."
Jimmy Dunne, corporate executive (see item #11a)

"E-mail is really nothing but a bunch of interruptions and distractions that appear in your IN box without an invitation."
Julie Morgenstern (see item #9)

"Delete, delay, delegate, or diminish."
Julie Morgenstern's advice on dealing with excess tasks (*ibid.*)

"Middle school is like Scotch. At first you try to get it down. Then you get used to it. Then it's all you order."
JoAnn Rintel Abrea, Brooklyn middle-school teacher (see item #11b)

"There are some people who are born to do it and some who learn to do it, and there are some people who really shouldn't do it."
Jason Levy, Bronx principal, on teaching middle school (*ibid.*)

"One of my most important functions as a school leader is to transform political jargon like 'no child left behind' into a moral imperative that inspires teachers to work toward justice, not mere compliance."
David Koyama, Seattle-area principal (see item #2)

1. Mike Schmoker on Key Levers for Improving Teaching and Learning

Good teaching, says author/consultant Mike Schmoker in this provocative *American School Board Journal* article, has more impact on student learning, college admission, college graduation, and closing the achievement gap than all other factors combined. But there's a problem, he says: "Every close study of actual classroom practice reveals that instruction is typically mediocre, or worse – even in so-called 'good' schools. In most classrooms, there is a massive gap between effective practice and actual practice."

How can this be? Schmoker blames the shortage of first-rate teaching on the fact that most principals do a token job monitoring and supervising teaching. As a result, he says, "good instruction is voluntary – and rare."

Not surprisingly, very few people talk about this brutal reality. "Amidst the din of our perennial plans and programs," Schmoker writes, "this fact works silently to cripple every well-meant improvement initiative, feeding cynicism, starving hope, and denying our children the education they need and deserve."

To change this situation, he says, we need to address "the buffer" – what Richard Elmore calls the "inviolability of the instructional core" – the invisible barrier around classrooms that prevents anyone from taking a close look at what is really going on. Schmoker has visited hundreds of classrooms with other administrators, and what's evident, inside the buffer, is that most daily teaching lacks clarity and focus and doesn't contain the basic elements of good instruction.

Yet Schmoker is remarkably optimistic that the situation can be turned around. The following steps, he says, would dramatically improve student results:

• *Align learning expectations* – This means changing the American tradition of curricular chaos – teachers teaching a "self-selected jumble" of topics and standards with wild variations from classroom to classroom, even in the same school. "If teachers taught to an agreed-upon set of curriculum standards that conform even reasonably well with the best essential state standards," he says, "achievement would skyrocket."

• *Teach reading and writing* – "Almost every audience of educators I have spoken to," says Schmoker, "has admitted that the two activities most likely to be neglected in English or reading classes are reading and writing. Instead, from the earliest grades, students can be found coloring, cutting and pasting, watching movies, and completing worksheets in ratios – I'm not exaggerating here – that overwhelm meaningful reading and writing activities."

• *Supervise teachers* – "What schools call 'supervision' is nothing of the sort," says Schmoker. "It has evolved into routines that eliminate the friction between teachers and administrators and ensure that poor practices predominate year after year, with serious consequences for students."

• *Orchestrate results-oriented teacher teamwork* – The deepest solution to the problem, says Schmoker, is "instituting the most effective, widely recognized structure for guaranteeing effective teaching and coherent curriculum: professional learning communities." This means requiring teachers to work in teams to:

- Select the most important skills and standards that they will hold one another accountable to teach and test during the year, on a roughly common schedule.
- Prepare common interim assessments for students to take at least once a quarter.
- Meet, at least twice a month, for 40-60 minutes, to prepare and refine standards-based units and lessons aligned with the interim assessments.
- Meet at least every quarter to look at the results of the interim assessments, celebrate gains, and plan ways to improve instruction and help students who are not yet successful.
- Meet briefly with the principal or department head after each assessment to report on progress.
- Administrators should follow up on these meetings, says Schmoker: "It is absolutely vital that successful results from effective lessons, units, or quarterly assessments be celebrated at faculty, central office, and school board meetings. We become what we honor and celebrate frequently."

"A Chance for Change" by Mike Schmoker in *American School Board Journal*, April 2007 (Vol. 194, #4, p. 45-46), no e-link available

2. Five Steps to Building a Diverse Learning Community

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, Seattle-based multicultural education expert Gary Howard suggests that as schools become increasingly diverse, they need to go through five phases to be truly attuned to their students:

• *Phase 1: Building trust* – Ninety percent of U.S. public school teachers are white and grew up in schools very different from the ones in which they now teach. The first priority, says Howard, "is to acknowledge this challenge in a positive, inclusive, and honest way." He suggests that school leaders kick off discussions with the following points:

- Most of the inequities in diverse schools don't stem from intentional discrimination.
- Educators of *all* racial and cultural groups need to develop new skills to be successful with today's students.
- "White teachers have their own cultural connections and unique personal narratives that are legitimate aspects of the overall mix of school diversity."

"School leaders," Howard continues, "should also model for their colleagues inclusive and non-judgmental discussion, reflection and engagement strategies that teachers can use to establish positive learning communities in their classrooms."

• *Phase 2: Building educators' cultural competence* – These are the skills that allow teachers to form strong relationships with students despite differences. "Young people, particularly those from historically marginalized groups, have sensitive antennae for authenticity," says Howard. Research on stereotype threat (Aronson and Steele, 2005) has made it clear that students' intellectual performance is quite fragile and can be heavily influenced by how adults talk to them. Key factors include students':

- Feeling of belonging;
- Trust in the people around them;
- Belief that their teachers value their intellectual competence.

Teachers' ability to form trusting relationships and have high expectations is crucial to student achievement.

• *Phase 3: Forging a social-justice mission* – Howard suggests that school people need to come to terms with historical inequities and use them to direct their work. "Any approach to school reform that does not honestly engage issues of power, privilege, and social dominance," he says, "is naïve, ungrounded in history, and unlikely to yield the deep changes needed to make schools more inclusive and equitable… The central purpose of this phase is to construct a compelling narrative of social justice that will inform, inspire, and sustain educators in their work, without falling into the rhetoric of shame and blame." Howard quotes David Koyama, a Seattle-area principal, on the challenge he faces: "One of my most important functions as a school leader is to transform political jargon like 'no child left behind' into a moral imperative that inspires teachers to work toward justice, not mere compliance."

• *Phase 4: Transforming instructional practices* – This means teachers looking at how they teach and the materials they use and constantly assessing whether they are effective for their diverse students. This means making the extra effort to understand why some students have fallen so far behind and find the interventions that will make a difference.

• *Phase 5: Engaging the entire school community* – By this, Howard means helping cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, and others to create a welcoming tone and inclusive climate for all students.

"As Diversity Grows, So Must We" by Gary Howard in *Educational Leadership*, March 2007 (Vol. 64, #6, p. 16-22)
http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.MAXIMIZE/menuitem.459dee008f99653fb85516f762108a0c/?javax.portlet.tpst=d5b9c0fa1a4932266805516f762108a0c_ws_MX&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a4932266805516f762108a0c_journaltypeheaderimage=%2FASCD%2Fimages%2Fmultifiles%2Fpublications%2Felmast.gif&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a4932266805516f762108a0c_viewID=article_view&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a4932266805516f762108a0c_journalmoid=a3b1a7bafb721110VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a4932266805516f762108a0c_articlemoid=bfe1a7bafb721110VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a4932266805516f762108a0c_journalTypePersonalization=ASCD_EL&javax.portlet.begCacheTok=token&javax.portlet.endCacheTok=token

3. Douglas Reeves on Turning School Improvement Plans Into Reality

In his *Educational Leadership* column, author/consultant Douglas Reeves bemoans the fact that, like New Year's resolutions, most school plans never make it out of their three-ring

binders. "We have the goals and the plans," he writes. "The challenge is closing the implementation gap." Here are his suggestions on how school leaders can transform good intentions into real-time action:

• *Create short-term wins*. Annual test scores arrive far too late to provide encouragement and/or redirection to teachers and administrators. People need immediate, continuing reinforcement to sustain meaningful change. Effective leaders tee up quick wins for the opening weeks of school – for example, counselors posting improved behavior data; teachers posting visible evidence of collaborative assignments and student work; teacher teams looking at interim assessments and putting the data right to work. "Consider what happens in music classes every day," says Reeves. "When a student plays a note incorrectly, the music teacher does not record the error in the grade book and inform the student's parents nine weeks later that the student really needs to work on F-sharp." Immediate feedback works in music and can be helpful in all subject areas. "Without short-term wins," says Reeves, "the pain of change often overwhelms the anticipated long-term benefits."

• *Display effective practices throughout the year*. Reeves has worked with Connecticut educators on displays using three-panel boards, with student data on the left panel, teachers' actions in the middle, and inferences and conclusions on the right. Similarly, interim assessment results can be shared, along with what seem to be producing significant gains. One Clark County, Nevada teacher, for example, noticed that students who used the Cornell note-taking approach scored twice as high on a national physics test as students who used other methods.

• *Do the right thing, even if it's unpopular*. "Change inevitably represents risk, loss, and fear," says Reeves, "a triumvirate never associated with popularity." Administrators have to be willing to change students' schedules and take other actions that may rub some people the wrong way to prevent student failure.

• *Make the case for change in terms of moral imperatives, not compliance*. Principals shouldn't cite the need to comply with district or state administrative requirements, says Reeves. They should appeal to people's better angels: "Student literacy is a civil right! Faculty collaboration is the foundation of fairness! Learning communities are the essence of respect!"

"Closing the Implementation Gap" by Douglas Reeves in *Educational Leadership*, March 2007 (Vol. 64, #6, p. 85-86)
http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.MAXIMIZE/menuitem.459dee008f99653fb85516f762108a0c/?javax.portlet.tpst=d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_ws_MX&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_journaltypeheaderimage=%2FASCD%2Fimages%2Fmultifiles%2Fpublications%2Felmast.gif&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_viewID=article_view&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_journalmoid=a3b1a7bafb721110VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_articlemoid=d1d2a7bafb721110VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_journalTypePersonalization=ASCD_EL&javax.portlet.begCacheTok=token&javax.portlet.endCacheTok=token

4. Larry Cuban On the Real Test of a Reform Strategy

In this thoughtful *Education Week* commentary piece, former teacher, superintendent, and Stanford education professor emeritus Larry Cuban says he's seen it all when it comes to urban school reform; he says he now blends "an optimistic heart with a skeptical mind," and poses five questions we should ask to see if a reform effort has truly succeeded.

• *Were the reform strategy's new structures and processes fully implemented?* "Incompletely implemented reform means you never know whether what was invested ever worked, must less touched teachers and students," says Cuban.

• *When implemented, did they change the content and practice of teaching?* It's possible to impose reforms and cause "hardly a ripple of change in what teachers and students do daily," he writes.

• *Did altered classroom content and teaching practice lead to desired student learning?* This requires documentation, says Cuban. "If the answer is no, then dump the reform."

• *Did state tests measure all our priorities?* Some important skills, such as critical thinking, may not be measured by high-stakes tests, in which case it's important to use supplementary assessments.

• *Did students who achieved proficiency go to college, graduate, and enter jobs paying solid salaries?* Gathering downstream data is essential to documenting the real-life impact of educational reform, says Cuban.

"The Never-Ending Quest: Lessons Learned from Urban School Reform" by Larry Cuban in *Education Week*, March 28, 2007 (Vol. 26, # 29, p. 28-29)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/03/28/29cuban.h26.html?qs=Larry+Cuban

5. How Doctors Mess Up – and What It Can Tell Us About Schools

This *New York Times* review of Jerome Groopman's 2007 book, *How Doctors Think*, lists four subtle influences that can skew a doctor's judgment. Most medical mistakes, says Groopman, stem from flawed thinking that can set off "a cascade of cognitive errors" that can have dire consequences for patients. Are there parallels to these in schools?

• *Availability bias* – The tendency to reach for the plausible explanation nearest at hand and ignore competing theories. For example, in an emergency room that sees many alcoholics, a scruffy patient suffering from insulin shock can easily be misdiagnosed as a drunk.

• *Confirmation bias* – Selectively highlighting evidence that supports what we expect to find. "The mind acts like a magnet," writes Groopman, "pulling in the cues from all directions." It tends to pull in cues that fit our preconceived notions.

• *Commission bias* – The urge to act rather than do nothing, even when doing nothing is preferable.

• *Commercial influences* – The influence of drug companies as they use millions of dollars to sell doctors on their products.

A key factor, says Groopman, is how well doctors *listen* to their patients. He cites studies showing that, on average, doctors interrupt 18 seconds after a patient has begun telling his or her story. But not all doctors fall into this trap. Groopman tells the story of a woman who had seen 30 doctors over a period of 15 years for a condition that most had diagnosed as anorexia and bulimia. The woman paid a last-chance visit to a new doctor who put aside her thick folder and listened closely as she retold her story for the umpteenth time. Small details led this doctor to a totally different diagnosis: the woman had celiac disease, an allergy to gluten.

The good news in Groopman's book is that doctors learn from their mistakes and get better at what they do. This is medicine at its best, says Groopman – "a mix of science and the soul."

"Diagnosis As Art, Not Rocket Science" by William Grimes, a review of Jerome Groopman's new book, *How Doctors Think* (Houghton Mifflin, 2007), in *The New York Times*, March 23, 2007

6. Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering on Productive Homework

In this helpful article in *Educational Leadership*, researcher/consultant/writers Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering trace the ups and downs of homework over the years:

- Early 20th century – It was believed that homework helped build disciplined minds;
- 1940s – There was growing concern that homework interfered with other activities;
- Late 1950s – Sputnik sparked a revival of rigorous homework to counter Soviet gains;
- 1980s – Some theorists said homework was detrimental to students' mental health
- Current – There is a raging debate on the value of homework, including three recent anti-homework books.

Marzano and Pickering agree with the critics that inappropriate homework is a waste of everyone's time and may even *decrease* student achievement. They also concede that the research shows that homework produces quite modest gains in the early elementary grades. But they insist that plenty of research backs up the value of the right kind of homework. For one thing, they argue, it extends learning time, which is important given the relatively short amount of time that American students spend in school compared to other countries. What makes the most sense, they argue, is implementing policies that will ensure that teachers assign homework that will produce learning gains.

Marzano and Pickering say that the research doesn't offer very specific guidelines for school people, but they feel comfortable suggesting the following:

• *Assign purposeful homework*. For example: introducing new content; practicing a skill or process that students can do independently but not fluently; elaborating on information addressed in class; and giving students opportunities to explore topics that interest them.

• *Assign homework that's likely to be completed*. This means getting the difficulty and interest level right so that students can do it independently and with a high level of success. Homework that isn't completed has little value.

• *Involve parents in appropriate ways*. Teachers should send home clear guidelines that tell parents the ways they can be most helpful. One best practice is having parents act as a sounding board to help students summarize what they have learned from their homework. Parents should not be expected to act as teachers or to police their children's homework completion.

• *Don't overdo it*. The amount of homework should be appropriate to students' ages and allow time for other home activities. One rule of thumb is that total homework time should equal the child's grade level times 10 (i.e., a sixth grader should be assigned about 60 minutes).

• *Follow up with students.* Homework should be checked and students should get prompt feedback and, if necessary, remediation.

"The Case For and Against Homework" by Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering in *Educational Leadership*, March 2007 (Vol. 64, #6, p. 74-79)
http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.MAXIMIZE/menuitem.459dee008f99653fb85516f762108a0c/?javax.portlet.tpst=d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_ws_MX&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_journaltypeheaderimage=%2FASCD%2Fimages%2Fmultifiles%2Fpublications%2Felmast.gif&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_viewID=article_view&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_journalmoid=a3b1a7bafb721110VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_articlemoid=80a2a7bafb721110VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_journalTypePersonalization=ASCD_EL&javax.portlet.begCacheTok=token&javax.portlet.endCacheTok=token

7. Second Graders Shunning a Classmate: What to Do?

This *New York Times* article describes how Catlin Preston, a second-grade teacher in Hoboken, New Jersey, responded when some of his students formed the Mortal Enemies Club and excluded one particular student whom the club members believed had stolen a ship made of Legos when he was over at one of their houses. The club members had fun spying on the supposed thief as they moved around the classroom; when the boy spoke to any of them, they would quickly walk away without responding.

Preston found out about the club's activities and decided to take a low-key approach, based on his belief that elementary-school children are, at heart, reasonable. To them, he thought, it was quite logical to organize against a "Lego thief" and show their solidarity against him. They were also caught up in the drama of being spies and weren't thinking about how their victim felt.

Preston called together the club members and invited their victim to join the meeting. The teacher asked the boy whether he was aware of the club – yes, he was – and how it made him feel – "It made me feel lousy," he said. Then the boy looked at his tormentors and said, "I didn't steal the ship. I only took it apart. If you had ever asked me, I would have told you."

Preston asked the club members, "What would you do if I told you right now that there was a new club, whose whole point was to keep you out?" The boys were taken aback, and decided on the spot to dissolve their club. "That's all it took," said the teacher. "I knew that they were essentially reasonable even if given to their own manias, as many of us are."

Things were fine for six weeks, at which point a new girl joined the class and was excluded by a newly formed club. Once again, the teacher called a meeting and the club disbanded. Preston concluded that children this age were naturally drawn to creating groups that excluded. But his interventions may have changed that: in the months after these incidents, students in the class formed rock-finding and animal-study clubs, but there were no more enemies.

"Lessons: Changing Exclusion to Inclusion" by Susan Engel in *The New York Times*, March 21, 2007 (p. B7), no free e-link available

8. Warning Adolescents About the "Choking Game"

"I died and came back," says Levi Draher, a 16-year-old Texan who was pronounced

dead after his mother found him hanging from a rope on his bunk bed last October. But this was not a suicide attempt; Draher was playing the "choking game" (also called Space Cowboy and Cloud Nine), which he heard would produce a euphoric rush when his brain was starved of blood and then replenished just before he became unconscious. The problem was that Draher was playing alone and passed out before he could stop the choking. He had a heart attack and lost circulation to his brain for three minutes. Miraculously, doctors revived him and he has made a complete recovery. Draher now speaks to high-school audiences to warn peers of the dangers of this practice and his mother, who had never heard of the game before she discovered him in his bedroom, has become a crusader on the subject.

Asphyxiation games have been around for years, reports this *New York Times* article, but teenagers can now see vivid descriptions on Internet sites like YouTube and some are playing lethal variations like the one Draher used. A number of recent deaths have convinced educators that they need to be more aggressive about warning parents and teenagers about the game.

But what are the best ways to get the message across? "It's not going to work if adults just say it's a bad idea," said Andrew Macnab, a Canadian professor of pediatrics who is doing a survey of the subject in American and Canadian schools. "That tends to make it all the more attractive." And talking about the possibility of dying doesn't work either, says Macnab; that sounds theoretical and abstract to most teenagers. Instead, he advises talking about specific, narrow risks like brain damage, medication, and physical disfigurement. It also helps for kids to hear from a teenager like Draher, who has seen the light.

New information has led health officials to wonder whether some adolescent suicides were really the result of the choking game gone awry. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 779 children between 10 and 19 died by suffocation in 2004, a marked increase from 400-450 a year from the early 1980s through the mid-1990s.

Two websites that feature information on this topic are:
http://www.DeadlyGamesChildrenPlay.com and http://www.GASPINFO.com

"Back From the Dead, Teenager Casts Light on Shadowy Game" by Kirk Johnson in *The New York Times*, March 28, 2007 (p. 1, A14) http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/28/us/28risk.html

9. Time Management 101

In this *Newsweek* article, reporter Samantha Henig summarizes the wisdom of three time management gurus:

• David Allen – *Getting Things Done* – Allen advises compiling all our to-dos into one master list and organizing it by projects and context (phone calls, e-mail, meetings, etc.). As you go through things in your in-box, says Allen, if an item can be done in two minutes or less, *do it now*! "The two-minute rule is magic," he writes.

• Stephen Covey – *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and *First Things First* – Covey's key insight is to distinguish between tasks that feel urgent and those that are truly important, and scheduling those priorities (rather than prioritizing your schedule).

• Julie Morgenstern – *Never Check E-Mail in the Morning* – No matter what strategies we use, says Morgenstern, "we will never – any of us – get to the bottom of our to-do lists in our lifetime." She advises estimating how long each to-do item will take and then deleting, delaying, delegating, or diminishing excess tasks before we get overwhelmed. Morgenstern also says it's best to avoid e-mail in the first hour of each workday: "E-mail is really nothing but a bunch of interruptions and distractions that appear in your IN box without an invitation."

"The Power of Paper" by Samantha Henig in *Newsweek*, March 19, 2007, no e-link available

10. Pointers on Reaching Out to a Corporate Partner

In this *American School Board Journal* article, two experts in school partnerships offer advice on reeling in a corporate partner:

• *Do your homework*. Study the business's website and learn as much as you can about its mission, philosophy, and potential for working with schools.

• *Find someone who has a relationship with the potential partner*. It's helpful to get an introduction from a graduate or a mutual acquaintance. Cold calls are less likely to be productive.

• *Invest time in forging a relationship*. Once you've made contact, don't immediately ask for money or equipment. Talk about your goals for students, the partner's operations, and see if there is a match.

• *Craft a plan articulating the partnership's vision and mission*. But keep the plan flexible so it can be revised as events unfold.

• *Understand that corporate culture is different from that of schools*. "Businesses prize quick responses and brief, to-the-point communication focusing on key concepts and ideas," say the authors.

• *Embrace accountability*. Corporate partners will want to know what difference their partnership made to your school – in measurable terms. They will also be interested in the human side, which might mean doing interviews or convening a focus group.

• *Put a face on the partnership*. Your business partner should have a vivid sense of the students and teachers their resources are benefiting. There should be plenty of face-to-face contact, as well as photos, testimonials, and updates.

• *Focus on common ground*. This means agreeing on shared goals for student achievement, job preparation, and professional growth opportunities for teachers – and avoiding areas where you and your business partner have divergent views.

"Win-Win Partnerships" by Howard Johnston and Lew Armistead in *American School Board Journal*, April 2007 (Vol. 194, #4, p. 42-44), no e-link available

11. Short Items:

a. Starting with what you can do – In this interview in *Newsweek*, Jimmy Dunne, whose company lost 66 of its 171 employees in the World Trade Center, describes how he rebuilt the company since 9/11. Asked what advice he would give a new manager who is in an

overwhelming situation, he said, "Think of it as a complicated math problem, and go to the part you can figure out. So within every algebraic problem, somewhere there's a bracket that says 4 minus 2. OK, that's 2… There are issues that are finite and there are issues that are infinite. Don't spend your time trying to do things that you can't do."

"Rebuilding – and Healing" – An interview with Sandler O'Neill executive Jimmy Dunne by Richard Smith in *Newsweek*, March 19, 2007, no e-link available

b. Wisdom from NYC middle schools – Here are two more bon mots (and the complete citation) from the *New York Times* article from which I quoted in last week's Memo. The article, by reporter Elissa Gootman, was about the difficulty of finding the right teachers for middle schools in New York City.

"There are some people who are born to do it and some who learn to do it, and there are some people who really shouldn't do it." Jason Levy, principal of Intermediate School 339 in the Bronx.

"Middle school is like Scotch. At first you try to get it down. Then you get used to it. Then it's all you order." JoAnn Rintel Abrea, an English and social studies teacher at Seth Low Intermediate School in Brooklyn.

"For Teachers, Middle School Is Test of Wills" by Elissa Gootman in *The New York Times*, March 17, 2007 (p. 1, A14),

c. Thirty ways to celebrate National Poetry Month – Since 1996, April has been designated as the month to celebrate the beauty and power of poetry, our living poets, and our poetic heritage. Here's a link containing a number of ways to celebrate poetry, sponsored by the American Academy of Poets: http://www.poets.org/page.php/prmID/94

Spotted in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, March 30, 2007

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 36 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 (with occasional breaks; there are about 50 issues a year).

Subscriptions:

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- 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 School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs
Atlantic Monthly
Catalyst Chicago
CommonWealth Magazine
Daily EdNews
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
NASSP Bulletin
New York Times
New Yorker
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
Teachers College Record
TESOL Quarterly
Theory Into Practice
Times Educational Supplement, Magazine