Marshall Memo 581

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
April 6, 2015

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"From the very first time you sit in that teeny-tiny chair when they're in pre-school, you never feel more like a parent."

Tamar Smith, a New York City mother, on the ritual of parent-teacher conferences, in "Parents and Teachers Meet in a New York Minute (or 5 if They're Lucky)" by Elizabeth Harris in *The New York Times*, April 4, 2015, http://nyti.ms/1CaXzdE

"When I look out at my room full of 1st- and 2nd-grade students, I see a symphony of colors. I see this as beautiful and invaluable. Yet I realize the world does not always embrace my students' multiracial reality."

Katharine Johnson (see item #2)

"All students, no matter how severe their learning challenges, have their islands of strength. I need to find and use them."

Stephen Brock (see item #6)

"No statistical manipulation can assure fair comparisons of teachers working in very different schools, with very different students, under very different conditions."

Edward Haertel (quoted in item #1)

"For me, happiness has always boiled down to four things. First is productivity at a task that I think helps others – things I can count and that I am responsible for. The other three: learning more about the things that interest me most, having fun, and spending time with those I love. Each of these things takes time. Therefore they all compete for that time. I think it's fair to say that, for me, 'productivity' has won the contest during most of my career. Recently, however, I decided to give more time to the other three."

Dr. Anthony Komaroff on nearing retirement age, in *Harvard Health Letter*, April 2015, www.health.harvard.edu

1. Linda Darling-Hammond on Value-Added Measures of Teachers

"The notion of using VAMs to evaluate educators and schools is intuitively appealing," says Linda Darling-Hammond (Stanford University) in this article in *Educational Researcher*. She was initially enthusiastic about its possibilities, especially given the long-standing problems with the way many districts evaluate teachers. But the key question, Darling-Hammond realized, is whether value-added measures "can accurately identify individual teachers' contributions to student learning and hence offer a credible measure of teacher 'effectiveness.'" For this to occur, she says, three conditions need to be in place:

- The right assessments – Individual students' actual achievement is accurately measured by tests that reflect valuable learning on a vertical scale with equal-interval units.
- Random student assignment – Classroom conditions and group traits don't vary substantially from one classroom to another.
- Ability to tease out the value each educator has added – Teachers' individual contributions can be isolated from other factors that affect student learning.

"Of course, none of these assumptions holds," says Darling-Hammond, "and the degree of error in measuring learning gains and attributing them to a specific teacher depends on the extent to which they are violated, as well as the extent to which statistical methods can remedy these problems. Unfortunately, in the United States, at this moment in history, the violations of these assumptions are considerable." Specifically:

• *Assessments* – Many standardized tests focus mainly on basic skills and, because they are grade-specific, don't accurately measure the achievement of students working above or below grade level. This means that VAMs are particularly inaccurate for teachers working with low- and high-achieving students, English language learners, and students with special needs. The new PARCC and Smarter Balanced tests have vertical scales, but because they are grade-specific, they have the same problems as the previous generation of state tests.

• *Random student assignment* – Darling-Hammond says U.S. schools have "extraordinarily high rates of childhood poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity" and these are not randomly distributed across schools. Teachers working in low-income communities have far more students with educational, psychological, health, and social needs. Add to that the prevalence of tracking and other inequities in the way students are assigned to teachers and "it is clear that the assumption of equivalence among classrooms is far from reality."

• *Isolating teachers' contributions* – Darling-Hammond lists some of the factors affecting student achievement beyond the efforts of the individual teacher:

- Class size;
- Curriculum choices;
- Instructional time;
- Other educators working with students;
- Availability of specialists, tutors, books, computers, science labs, and other resources;
- The quality of prior teaching and school experiences;
- Opportunities for professional learning and collaborative planning with colleagues;
- Peer culture and achievement;
- Differential summer learning experiences;
- Home factors including parents' ability to help with homework, food and housing security, physical and mental support or abuse;
- Individual student needs, health, and attendance.

"Given all of these influences on learning," says Darling-Hammond, "it is not surprising that variation among teachers accounts for only a tiny share of variation in achievement, typically estimated at under 10%."

All these factors, says Darling-Hammond, "pose considerable challenges to deriving accurate estimates of teacher effects" and explain why VAM data are so unstable. In one study, of the teachers who scored in the bottom 20% one year, only a quarter were still there the following year, while 50% scored in the top half. About half of teachers who scored in the top half of the distribution one year moved to the bottom half the next.

Teachers' VAM ratings also fluctuate based on the formula used: 40-55% of Los Angeles teachers got noticeably different scores when researchers used a different model. Ratings also depend on the tests students took: 20-30% of teachers who ranked in the top quartile on one state test ranked in the bottom half when students were given a different test. In New York City's VAM ratings several years ago, the error range was such that a teacher ranked in the 43rd percentile could be scoring anywhere from the 15th to the 71st percentile.

"These are not small differentials," says Darling-Hammond, "and in current high-stakes contexts can mean the difference between a teacher being rewarded with a bonus or being fired." All this, she says, points to the profound difficulties with attaching high stakes to measures that are so volatile and so often inaccurate. Efforts are being made to improve the validity and reliability of VAM measures, but says Darling-Hammond, "Trying to fix VAMs is rather like pushing on a balloon: The effort to correct one problem often creates another one that pops up somewhere else… There is reason to be skeptical that the current prescriptions for using VAMs can ever succeed in measuring teaching contributions well." Darling-Hammond quotes her Stanford colleague, Edward Haertel: "No statistical manipulation can assure fair comparisons of teachers working in very different schools, with very different students, under very different conditions."

Advocates insist that VAM measures will motivate teachers to improve and rid the profession of "incompetent deadwood." But Darling-Hammond believes their high-stakes use may create disincentives to collaborating with colleagues, discourage teachers from working with high-need students and working at certain grade levels, lead some teachers to "cook" their

rosters, demoralize teachers and drive away high-performers, and dissuade talented individuals from going into education. These possibilities are especially likely if principals are unable to explain VAM errors and fluctuations but are asked to square classroom observation data with inscrutable VAM scores or rank-order teachers and dismiss those who score low.

What is to be done? Darling-Hammond has a "modest proposal": policymakers need to acknowledge the serious limitations of VAMs, stop using them for high-stakes personnel decisions, and allow educators "to develop more thoughtful approaches to examining student learning in teacher evaluation" – for example, "a collection of evidence about their students' learning that is appropriate for the curriculum and students being taught and targeted to goals the teacher is pursuing for improvement…" This might consist of beginning- and end-of-year rubric scores on student essays assigned by a grade-level team and scored collectively. Other possibilities: gains in Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) levels, English language proficiency tests, and pre- and post-tests in AP Calculus.

"Evaluation ratings," in Darling-Hammond's scheme, "would combine the evidence from multiple sources in a judgment model, as Massachusetts' plan does, using a matrix to combine and evaluate several pieces of student learning data, and then integrate that rating with those from observations and professional contributions. Teachers receive low or high ratings when multiple indicators point in the same direction… [T]his approach would identify teachers who warrant intervention while enabling pedagogical discussion among teachers and evaluators based on evidence that connects what teachers do with how their students learn. A number of studies suggest that teachers become more effective as they receive feedback from standards-based observations and as they develop ways to evaluate their students' learning in relation to their practice."

"Can Value Added Add Value to Teacher Evaluation?" by Linda Darling-Hammond in *Educational Researcher*, March 2015 (Vol. 44, #2, p. 132-137), http://bit.ly/1FvPTqP; Darling-Hammond can be reached at lindadh@suse.stanford.edu.

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2. Helping Young Students Feel Positively About the Color of Their Skin

"When I look out at my room full of 1st- and 2nd-grade students," says Oregon teacher Katharine Johnson in this article in *Rethinking Schools*, "I see a symphony of colors. I see this as beautiful and invaluable. Yet I realize the world does not always embrace my students' multiracial reality… Young people, like adults, receive countless confusing and negative messages about the implications of skin color… I know that children, even as young as 6, experience racism directed at themselves, their moms, their neighbors, their cousins, the man in front of them in line at the grocery store."

These beliefs and assumptions find their way into Johnson's classroom, and she has found it necessary to step in and correct assumptions about who needs extra help and who gets invited to play with a certain group of girls. After attending a workshop by Katie Kissinger on celebrating skin tone, Johnson decided she would teach a short unit with two goals: first, getting students to understand the science of skin color and see their similarities across the full

range of skin tones; and second, using poetry to practice the art of praising their own skin tones and its positive relationship to their identity. Here's how the lessons unfolded:

• *The science of skin tone* – Johnson read aloud from Kissinger's book, *All the Colors We Are* (Redleaf Press, 2014) to introduce the idea that all people come in shades of brown. "Yes!" exclaimed one white student, "Why do they call me white? I'm not white. I'm pinkish brownish tannish goldish." Listening to this book, and to one by Paul Showers, *Your Skin and Mine* (HarperCollins, 1991), students got an elementary understanding of the genetics of skin color: Skin tone has evolved over time; it's an adaptation that makes it possible for people to survive and thrive in environments with varying degrees of sunlight intensity; and everyone, regardless of how one's 'race' is named, is a shade of brown. Students did several turn-and-talks to process this information, and four new vocabulary words were added to the class word wall: *melanin, tone, genetic, and heritage*.

In the next lesson, Johnson took out dozens of paint chips she had picked up from the local hardware store, gathered her students around her, and talked them through deciding which chip most closely matched the skin on her forearm – this one was too dark, this one too light, this one had too much blue or too little red – finally landing on a good match, Caramel Whip, and writing her name on the back of that chip. Johnson then had students explore the chips she'd spread on the rug, mingle and chat, find a good match, and write their names on the back of their chip. At the end of the lesson, students shared their chips with the class to rounds of applause – Saddle Brown for Jessica, Beach House for Fergus, Coconut Grove for Justin and Tyrone, Liberty for Samantha.

• *The poetry of skin tone* – Johnson kicked off the next lesson by reading Sheila Hamanaka's picture-book poem, *All the Colors of the Earth* (Mulberry Books, 1999). She had students look at the illustrations, pair-share their favorites, and share them with the class: one student liked "the roaring browns of bears and soaring eagles," another talked about "caramel and chocolate and the honey of bees." Johnson was pleased with this extended sharing: "We needed our exploration of skin color to begin with a gentle, welcoming discussion… I wanted students to begin to think like poets." She asked students to recall the things Hamanaka had used as comparisons and recorded what they said on chart paper: bears, eagles, seashells, chocolate. "Sheila Hamanaka chose her comparisons very carefully," she said. "How do you think she feels about skin tone based on the comparisons she chose?" Students saw that Hamanaka's piece was a praise poem that had evoked positive feelings in all of them: strong like eagles and bears, peaceful like whispering grass and the ocean.

"How do you feel about your skin tone?" Johnson asked, a little apprehensive that some students might still have negative feelings or claim they had no feelings at all, and welcomed positive terms like *happy* and *strong*. "What is one thing in the world you can compare your skin to?" she asked, and had students mingle around the room and share their comparisons with as many partners as they could. Johnson walked around listening in and noticed that students of color were better able to generate lists of comparisons than her white students. "I used suggestive questions and references to nudge some students toward richer language and also toward celebration," she says. She sent one boy who was a loss to describe his light-colored

skin to the science area and he added river stones and prairies to his list. This was just right because the boy spent summers fishing with his grandfather in Montana.

The next day, Johnson read from another book, *The Blacker the Berry* by Joyce Carol Thomas (Amistad, 2008), which celebrates the many hues of African-Americans and links them to family memories, berries, sky colors, and feelings. "Now we had enough poetic moves and categories borrowed from other poets to move into generating student ideas," says Johnson. She unveiled a brainstorming template with categories students had noticed in the poems they'd heard: nature, animals, smells, food, emotions. "Today, we are going to think of our own ideas about how to describe our skin tones," she said. She pulled out her paint chip and read the name: Caramel Whip. "Where would I put this on my chart?" she asked. In the food section, of course. "Let's see if we can think of any other comparisons for my skin," she prodded. "What in nature is like this color?" Beach sand, suggested one student. Bunny fur. Dry grass. Peaches. All these went onto the chart.

Then Johnson invited students to remember the associations they'd generated about their own skin color and share them with partners. More associations went up onto the brainstorming chart. Then she released them to work on their own individual brainstorming charts. "Try to get at least one idea in each section," she said, and roamed around the room observing students at work, helping those who were having trouble generating positive associations. She prompted a white girl who said her skin was like paper and milk, comparing the girl's forearm with her own. The girl decided strawberries and grilled cheese bread more accurately described the actual tone of her skin.

"Now students were ready to sculpt their ideas into poems," says Johnson. She gathered students around the master brainstorming chart they'd made and said, "I am going to take these ideas and turn them into a poem today. You are going to take your ideas and turn them into a poem as well. I need some advice on how to do this." She had two students read aloud the Hamanaka and Thomas poems and began composing her own poem, thinking aloud as she wrote: *I am the color of the Earth. My skin is the color of warm beach sand.* "What idea should I write next?" she asked, and students helped her draft additional lines, completing the poem. Then she released them to work on their own poems, asking, "Who thinks they will start with a food comparison? Who wants to include a detail about how your skin is like the skin of someone else in your family? Who wants to start with hair instead of skin? Who wants to start by comparing it to an animal? Tell a neighbor how you will start your poem."

"We wrote for the rest of the week," says Johnson. "Some days we cranked out longer sessions of 45 minutes of writing and sharing. Once or twice, we simply squeezed in 20 minutes before lunch. But each day that week, students touched this work – writing, rereading, sharing with friends, sharing in small groups, and sharing all together." Johnson held revision sessions, adding more detail to metaphors, adding action to images, suggesting allusions. When students were satisfied with their poems, they created self-portraits, and the poems and pictures hung in the hallway for several months.

"The two weeks we spent writing and learning about skin tone opened my classroom in some important ways," Johnson concludes. "Samantha, an African-American girl who barely

spoke even in morning circle time at the start of the year, read her entire poem aloud to her classmates. Tyler and Justin, one white and one African-American, who had never spent free time together before, became friends when they realized they both had skin that matched Coconut Grove. Jeremy, also African-American, finished a piece of writing on the same schedule as the rest of the class for the first time." Maybe these breakthroughs would have happened anyway, she admits. "Maybe the discussion of the science of skin tone and the praise of our beautiful differences facilitated these important transformations. I prefer to attribute my students' growth to the poems in celebration of skin tone."

"Celebrating Skin Tone: The Science and Poetry of Skin Color" by Katharine Johnson in *Rethinking Schools*, Spring 2015 (Vol. 29, #3, p. 12-16), http://bit.ly/1NOXdQ9

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3. A Veteran French Teacher Trips the Light Fantastic

In this article in *The Language Educator*, Massachusetts middle-school teacher Rebecca Blouwolff describes why she decided to completely revamp her textbook-driven French curriculum after happily teaching and tweaking it for 16 years. The initial impetus came from a new, inexperienced colleague who taught French 7 totally out of the usual sequence and yet passed along students who were "sharp" and knew some words Blouwolff's students didn't. Then there was a colleague who went on and on about thematic units. "When I told her I could never let go of my ordered ways," says Blouwolff, "she asked what I was afraid of."

What brought Blouwolff to the brink was a workshop by Laura Terrill at a regional conference in Boston. "She reminded us that our time is limited and we can either spend it planning or grading – not both," says Blouwolff. "This resonated deeply with me, because I love planning new lessons yet resent most grading. For me, planning a new lesson is full of hope and optimism about what is to come – and grading is the harsh post-mortem of what has actually been internalized. Hearing Terrill speak, I realized that I had to make the shift toward spending my time on the part of my job that I love. How else could I sustain this work for my next 15 years in the profession?"

What finally pushed Blouwolff over the edge was the drudgery of grading 70 quizzes on verb conjugation one spring afternoon. "What did these silly exercises really tell me about my students' ability to use French, anyway?" she asked. "Why was I burdening myself with these endless assessments when I had so many other ways to track students' knowledge and growth?… Did anyone benefit from these papers?" Reading Terrill's book, *The Keys to Planning for Learning* (with Donna Clementi, 2013), Blouwolff took the plunge and determined to spend time that summer revamping her curriculum with these ambitious goals:

- Creating five thematic units with essential questions and "can do" statements;
- Identifying relevant, authentic texts for each unit to "hook" students' interest;
- Generating a battery of formative assessments;
- Developing one interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational assessment for each unit (a realistic number to grade);
- Planning lessons for every teaching day of the school year.

Writing the new curriculum was daunting – working alone, borrowing ideas from others' work, checking constantly with her old curriculum to make sure she wasn't leaving anything out that students needed to be successful in high school – and "truly thrilling," says Blouwolff. "While I had been collecting cool articles and songs for years, and had sprinkled them through my curriculum, now these gems became the backbone of my units." Her block of lessons on the city focused on getting students to think of their ideal metropolis as they prepared for the annual trip to Quebec. The shopping unit included exploring Swiss teens' style "tribes" and international responses to sweatshops in developing countries. Vacation and food activities morphed into an analysis of a balanced lifestyle and what it means to eat well.

"September arrived and I was ready, more of less," says Blouwolff. "I can't say that I slept well during the first weeks of school. Each lesson was untested. Authentic texts took far more time to delve into than I had expected… As a result, I had no idea how far we would get into an activity on a particular day. That may not sound like a big deal, but for someone who had been able to assign a month's worth of homework at a time, it was quite an adjustment." She often spent lunch frantically rewriting lessons for afternoon classes, and many evenings were consumed consolidating the most successful ideas for future years.

All this – and abandoning her lesson quizzes – brought "a cascade of gains for my students," says Blouwolff. Students loved learning how to have a real French conversation, doing creative projects with no limits, and learning from pop culture examples. Weaker students struggled with the authentic texts but were far more engaged and benefited from the focus on understanding in context and using the available learning tools. The whole teaching and learning experience was revitalized.

Here are some resources recommended by Blouwolff:

- The Keys to Planning for Learning website with sample units, sample lessons, and templates: www.actfl.org/publications/books-and-brochures/the-keys-planning-learning
- Laura Terrill's wiki with units and other resources: www.lauraterrill.wikispaces.com
- Laura Terrill and Toni Theisen's wiki: www.terrill-theisen2011.wikispaces.com
- Creative Language Class blog: www.creativelanguageclass.com/about

Blouwolff's article (see link below) has more suggestions for middle-school French materials.

"Focusing on Performance: Reinvigorating Teaching Toward a Student-Centered Classroom" by Rebecca Blouwolff in *The Language Educator*, March/April 2015 (Vol. 10, #2, p. 36-38), http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/TLE_pdf/TLE_MarApr15_Article.pdf

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4. Charlotte Danielson's Short-Form Teacher Rubric

(Originally titled "Framing Discussions About Teaching")

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, author/consultant Charlotte Danielson says that after supervisors or colleagues observe a class, "it's all about the conversation. Whether educators are discussing observation data, assessment results, the rigor of activities and assignments, or student work samples, what they value are not the data per se, but the conversations they have about the data."

Danielson believes her rubric (the Framework for Teaching) has supported such conversations by providing a rigorous analysis of and common language about instruction. But for some educators, she says, the rubric is "just too big… too cumbersome for everyday use… there's just too much detail to permit them to focus on the important ideas about teaching." In response, Danielson has released a draft of a slimmed-down version, reorganizing the content into six "big ideas":

• Clarity of instructional purpose and accuracy of content:
  - Depth of important content knowledge;
  - A clear and ambitious purpose reflecting the discipline's standards;
  - Appropriate to students' levels of knowledge and skill;
  - Topics, strategies, materials, and resources aligned with the purpose;
  - Designed to engage students in high-level learning.

• A safe, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environment:
  - Interactions demonstrate genuine caring;
  - Safe for risk-taking;
  - High expectations for student learning;
  - Hard work and perseverance encouraged;
  - Students take pride in their work and commit to mastering challenging content.

• Classroom management:
  - Well-run and organized;
  - Clear, efficiently executed routines and procedures;
  - Students active in smooth operation and setting the tone;
  - Clearly explained directions;
  - Learning activities supported by the physical environment.

• Student intellectual engagement:
  - High intellectual energy;
  - Activities and questions challenge students to think and make connections;
  - The teacher correctly models academic language and invites intellectual work;
  - Students explain their thinking, argue logically, cite evidence, and question others' thinking;
  - Activities suitable for the discipline;
  - Activities promote student agency.

• Successful learning by all students:
  - The teacher monitors student understanding and ensures all students are learning;
  - The teacher modifies instruction based on student learning;
  - Students monitor their own learning and provide feedback to classmates;
  - The teacher seeks out other resources to support learning.

• Professionalism:
  - The teacher engages with and contributes to the professional community, collaborates productively with colleagues, shows commitment to ongoing professional learning, and takes a leadership role in the school to promote students' welfare.

Danielson and her colleagues invite comments on the draft at www.danielsongroup.org.

"Framing Discussions About Teaching" by Charlotte Danielson in *Educational Leadership*, April 2015 (Vol. 72, #7, p. 38-41); this article can be purchased at http://bit.ly/1Pc23KS; this chart http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el201504_danielson_fig1.pdf shows the correlation between the new categories and the 2013 Framework for Teaching. Danielson can be reached at charlotte_danielson@hotmail.com.

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5. Four Qualities of Great Teaching

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, veteran professor Rob Jenkins (Georgia Perimeter College) describes the qualities of K-12 and college teachers "who most move us, who have made the most difference in our lives, and whom we most wish to emulate."

• *Personality* – Great teachers tend to be good-natured and approachable; professional without being aloof; funny, perhaps because they don't take themselves or their subject matter too seriously; demanding without being unkind; comfortable in their own skin, without being in love with the sound of their own voices; natural; creative; and always willing to consider new ideas, sometimes on the spur of the moment. Some of us enter the classroom with more of these traits than others, says Jenkins, but that doesn't mean we can't develop and fine-tune how we come across. "With apologies to Lady Gaga," says Jenkins, "your students will never know if you were born that way or not."

• *Presence* – This is "the ability to appear completely at ease, even in command, despite being the focal point of dozens (or even hundreds) of people," says Jenkins. "That's a type of presence to which we can all aspire, whether or not we're born with great charisma. All it takes is a degree of self-awareness, a little concentration, and a fair amount of determination."

• *Preparation* – "Knowing what you're talking about can compensate for a number of other deficiencies," says Jenkins, "such as wearing mismatched socks, telling lame jokes, or not having an Instagram account." He believes preparation has three levels:

- Long-term: Your professional degree and training;
- Medium-term: Reading extensively in your field, attending conferences, and continuing to explore new ideas and teaching techniques. "It means being so familiar with your subject matter that you can talk about it off the cuff," he says.
- Short-term: Great teachers go into every class meticulously prepared – but also constantly reassess what they're doing, prepared to abandon ineffective or outdated strategies.

Some of this comes with experience, says Jenkins. "Then again, just because you've been teaching a course for 15 or 20 years doesn't mean you shouldn't approach it each term as if for the first time."

• *Passion* – "Of all the qualities that characterize great teachers, this is the most important, by far," says Jenkins. "Passion, or love, manifests itself in the classroom in two ways: love for students and love for your subject matter." Some educators are always complaining about how their students are irresponsible and disrespectful, say stupid things,

don't do their work, etc. Jenkins has found that students pick up on this attitude and heartily dislike those teachers. Jenkins wants to say to them, "If you dislike students so much, why are you in this business? Why in the world would you want to spend so much of your time with a bunch of people you find so disagreeable?"

"Conversely," he says, "the faculty members who seem to love teaching and love (or at least really like) students are the ones who are the most popular and, I believe, the most effective… Students might not even like a course at first, especially if it's one they're required to take, but a teacher's passion for the subject can be extremely infectious."

"The 4 Properties of Powerful Teachers" by Rob Jenkins in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 3, 2015 (Vol. LXI, #29, p A31-32), http://bit.ly/1Cbnx0B; Jenkins can be reached at Robin.Jenkins@gpc.edu.

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6. Suggested Rules for School Psychologists

In three issues of *Communiqué*, National Association of School Psychologists president Stephen Brock suggests the following for working effectively in schools:

• *Focus on student needs*. "Especially as a young 25-year-old school psychologist," says Brock, "I think I may not have had this rule clearly in mind. As a result, at times I found myself challenged when trying to wade through the divergent views of parents and my fellow educators… If I wanted to sleep soundly at night, I needed to ensure that my recommendations were student centered."

• *There is no such thing as bad data*. It's the interpretation of data that's usually the problem. For example, the test scores of an impulsive and inattentive student may not show what the test is designed to measure, but they tell a lot about the student.

• *Look for information that guides interventions*. "I need to always ask, 'So what?' when evaluating the relative importance of any given assessment finding," says Brock. "*Interesting* data are not necessarily *meaningful* data."

• *Be prepared to ask difficult questions and deliver bad news*. School psychologists need to cope with their own feelings and bite the bullet – for example, asking a teacher, "Have you implemented the IEP?" or telling a parent, "Your child is having thoughts of suicide."

• *Everything is data*. "Assessment is much more than simply administering tests," says Brock. A student's behavior while taking a psychological test may tell as much, or more, than the test itself. RIOT is a useful acronym: Records, Interviews, Observations, and Testing.

• *Statistics do not dictate actions*. ""[T]ests don't make psycho-educational recommendations," says Brock. "I do… Without a competent psychologist to make interpretations, the results of any assessment are not just meaningless, they are dangerous." Just because a student's score is two standard deviations below the mean doesn't mean the student has an intellectual disability, and just because an IQ score is above 70 doesn't rule out eligibility for specific services.

• *Never draw a conclusion from a single data source*. School psychologists need to triangulate with multiple sources of information to reach solid conclusions.

• *There is no such thing as an untestable student*. Even if standard assessments aren't producing useful data, there are other ways to get a handle on any student's issues.

• *Earn the privilege of sharing an "expert" opinion*. School psychologists sometimes don't have instant credibility, says Brock. "I have found that one of the most effective ways to earn this privilege is listening (and I mean truly listening) to the parents and teachers who are the typical consumers of my recommendations. I have found that when these individuals feel that I have understood what they are telling me, they are much more likely to consider and follow my recommendations."

• *Strive to give away psychology*. All psycho-educational consultations are teaching opportunities, says Brock. "My goal is to help teachers, administrators, parents, and students themselves understand learning, learning processes, and how to best ensure student success… For when I am successful in giving away school psychology, the consumers of my services will increasingly be able to independently meet the learning needs of students, which in turn frees me to work with others."

• *Be attentive to what students do well*. Identify strengths and use that information to guide interventions, Brock advises. "All students, no matter how severe their learning challenges, have their islands of strength. I need to find and use them."

• *Tell students what they should do, not just what they should stop doing*. "Each and every student has something that we can celebrate and that will help guide him or her toward greater success at school," says Brock.

• *Be humble, ask good questions, and be a life-long learner*. School psychologists know a lot, says Brock, but there's always something new to learn from colleagues, parents, and students.

• *Be a critical consumer of psycho-educational tools and interventions*. Today's unproved theory can become (with the appropriate study) tomorrow's best practice.

"Rules for School Psychology I, II, and III" by Stephen Brock in *Communiqué*, December 2014, January/February 2015, and March/April 2015 (Vol. 43, #4, #5, and #6), http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/43/4/presidents-message.aspx, http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/43/5/presidents-message.aspx, and http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/43/6/presidents-message.aspx; Brock can be reached at brock@csus.edu.

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7. Short Items:

a. Spanish literature and culture website – This site www.babab.com/biblioteca has articles, music, poetry, and literature and downloadable texts of Spanish and Latin American authors.

"Webwatch" in *The Language Educator*, March/April 2015 (Vol. 10, #2, p. 60)

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b. Website for teachers of Arabic – This site http://arabalicious.com has teaching resources, primary sources, and cultural knowledge.

"Webwatch" in *The Language Educator*, March/April 2015 (Vol. 10, #2, p. 60)
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c. French music blog – This blog www.frenchmusicblog.com features contemporary French music – pop, rap, alternative rock, and new wave revival.

"Webwatch" in *The Language Educator*, March/April 2015 (Vol. 10, #2, p. 61)
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d. A planning tool – This free app https://www.planboardapp.com can be used for planning and sharing lessons, managing schedules, and organizing resources.

"Webwatch" in *The Language Educator*, March/April 2015 (Vol. 10, #2, p. 60)
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e. Chinese phrasebook app – This $4.99 app is a Mandarin phrasebook https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/lingolook-china/id284449396?mt=8 with 800 essential words and phrases, 500 audio translations, and 120 illustrated flashcards.

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If you have feedback or suggestions,
***please e-mail* kim.marshall48@gmail.com**

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 44 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 64 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 50 issues a year).

Subscriptions:

Individual subscriptions are $50 for a year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and how to pay by check, credit card, or purchase order.

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
- Reader opinions (with results of an annual survey)
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in Word or PDF)
- All back issues (also in Word and PDF)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- A collection of "classic" articles from all 11 years

Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
AMLE Magazine
ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief/Public Education NewsBlast
Better: Evidence-Based Education
Center for Performance Assessment Newsletter
District Administration
Ed. Magazine
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher
Go Teach
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
Independent School
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Journal of Staff Development
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Knowledge Quest
Middle School Journal
Perspectives
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Teacher
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children/Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The District Management Journal
The Journal of the Learning Sciences
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal/Learning System/Tools for Schools
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time
Wharton Leadership Digest