

Marshall Memo 496

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
August 5, 2013

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Quotes of the Week

“If someone can't teach, after they've been prepared and supported, they shouldn't be in our profession.”

Randi Weingarten in a speech to American Federation of Teachers convention July 22, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=204597155>

“To succeed as a teacher, you must fail repeatedly as a teacher-in-training (when there are still supports in place), or you will get crushed once you're on your own.”

Lillie Marshall (see item #5)

“Do not underestimate the arrogance of recent college graduates or their inability to comprehend how bad they will be at teaching.”

Lillie Marshall (*ibid.*)

“The opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but, rather, *no* job satisfaction; and similarly, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction, but *no* job dissatisfaction.”

Frederick Herzberg (see item #1)

“Motivation is based on growth needs. It is an internal engine, and its benefits show up over a long period of time. Because the ultimate reward in motivation is personal growth, people don't need to be rewarded incrementally. I write a book – a big accomplishment. Then I write an article – a lesser accomplishment, but nevertheless an addition to my personal growth.”

Frederick Herzberg (*ibid.*)

“We've actually made it harder to be a bad manager.”

Laszlo Bock on Google's management practices (see item #2)

1. How to Motivate People (an Oldie but Goodie Article)

In this seminal 1968 *Harvard Business Review* article (it's been reprinted more than any other article in the magazine's history), Frederick Herzberg (then a psychology professor at Case Western Reserve University) punctures some common theories about how to motivate employees ("snake oil", he calls them) and presents a better theory.

The most common misconception about motivation is that managers just need to prod employees with incentives (a positive "kick in the pants"). Here are some of the forms that externally organized incentives have taken over the years: reducing time spent at work; boosting wages; increasing fringe benefits; human relations training; sensitivity training; better top-down communication; better two-way communication; getting employees more involved in their jobs; and employee counseling. The problem with all of these, says Herzberg, is that they rely on external stimulation, and when it wears off, more is required. Real motivation is when people don't rely on outside agency – they generate motivation within themselves.

So how do managers install a generator inside an employee? Herzberg starts with the research-based proposition that "the factors involved in producing job satisfaction (and motivation) are separate and distinct from the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction... The opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but, rather, *no* job satisfaction; and similarly, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction, but *no* job dissatisfaction." The truly motivating factors in a job are intrinsic to the job, including:

- Achievement;
- Recognition for achievement;
- The work itself;
- Unique expertise;
- Responsibility;
- Advancement;
- Professional growth.

The dissatisfaction-avoidance (or kick in the pants) factors are extrinsic to the job; at best, they can create no dissatisfaction on the job; their absence or mishandling causes dissatisfaction.

Among them:

- Company policy and administration;
- Supervision;
- Interpersonal relationships;
- Working conditions;
- Status;

- Security;
- Salary (“If I get a bonus of \$1,000 one year and \$500 the next, I am getting extra rewards both years, but psychologically I have taken a \$500 salary cut,” says Herzberg).

A study of 1,685 employees (including teachers) in several different countries found the first list was most often the primary cause of satisfaction on the job (81 percent of the time), while the second was most often the cause of work unhappiness (69 percent of the time).

Another study found marked improvements in job satisfaction, attendance, and productivity when the following factors were enhanced:

- Removing some controls while retaining accountability;
- Increasing the accountability of individuals for their own work;
- Giving a person a complete, natural unit of work (e.g., module, division, area);
- Granting additional authority or job freedom to employees in their activity;
- Making periodic reports directly available to the workers themselves, rather than to supervisors;
- Introducing new and more difficult tasks not previously handled;
- Assigning individuals specific or specialized tasks, enabling them to become experts.

All these changes build in responsibility and personal achievement, recognition for a job well done (internal and external), growth, learning, and advancement. “Motivation is based on growth needs,” says Herzberg. “It is an internal engine, and its benefits show up over a long period of time. Because the ultimate reward in motivation is personal growth, people don’t need to be rewarded incrementally. I write a book – a big accomplishment. Then I write an article – a lesser accomplishment, but nevertheless an addition to my personal growth.”

Herzberg suggests that managers conduct a controlled experiment in which job-enrichment changes are introduced for some employees while a control group maintains the status quo, and dissatisfaction-avoidance factors (like salaries and working conditions) are kept the same for both groups. “Be prepared for a drop in performance in the experimental group the first few weeks,” he says. “The change-over to a new job may lead to a temporary reduction in efficiency.” Supervisors may also become anxious as parts of their jobs are taken over by their subordinates.

But in a matter of weeks, job satisfaction, motivation, and happiness will increase in the experimental group and productivity will soar. People will rise to their full potential, and the long-term benefits to the organization will be significant. “Not all jobs can be enriched,” concludes Herzberg, “nor do all jobs need to be enriched.” But for those that lend themselves to this treatment, the rewards are significant.

“One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?” by Frederick Herzberg in *Harvard Business Review*, January/February 1968, with a retrospective commentary by Herzberg in the September/October 1987 issue of *HBR*; (p. 5-16),

http://www.facilitif.eu/user_files/file/herzburg_article.pdf; many thanks to Thomas Hoerr for mentioning Herzberg’s piece in his May 2013 *Educational Leadership* article.

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2. What Google Has Learned About Improving Managers

In this *New York Times* interview, Adam Bryant asks Laszlo Bock, senior vice president of people operations at Google, about the company's personnel policies. Some excerpts:

- *Interviewing* – When quizzing prospective employees, “brainteasers are a complete waste of time,” says Bock. “They don't predict anything. They serve primarily to make the interviewer feel smart.” Far more effective are “structured behavioral interviews” – questions like, “Give me an example of a time when you solved an analytically difficult problem.” Questions like this, followed up thoughtfully by interviewers, tell how the person actually interacted in a real-world situation, and also give insights into what he or she believes is difficult.

- *Upward feedback surveys* – “Twice a year, anybody who has a manager is surveyed on the manager's qualities,” says Bock. They are asked how their boss is doing on 12-18 different qualities – agree/disagree questions like, *My manager treats me with respect. My manager gives me clear goals. My manager shares information. My manager treats the entire team fairly.* “These are fundamental things that turn out to be really important in making people feel excited and happy and wanting to go the extra mile for you,” says Bock.

Sharing the results with managers has brought about a marked improvement in how happy Google employees are with their managers. “We've actually made it harder to be a bad manager,” says Bock. If you go back to somebody and say, ‘Look, you're an eighth-percentile people manager at Google. This is what people say.’ They might say, ‘Well, you know, I'm actually better than that.’ And then I'll say, ‘That's how you feel. But these are the facts that people are reporting about how they experience you.’ You don't actually have to do that much more. Because for most people, just knowing that information causes them to change their conduct.”

- *Employees' college GPAs and test scores* – Google has found no correlation between these and job performance, except for people right out of college, where there is only a slight correlation. “After two or three years, your ability to perform at Google is completely unrelated to how you performed when you were in school,” says Bock, “because the skills you required in college are very different. You're also fundamentally a different person. You learn and grow, you think about things differently.” He also believes that academic environments are artificial and only certain types of people thrive in them. “One of my own frustrations when I was in college and grad school is that you knew the professor was looking for a specific answer. You could figure that out, but it's much more interesting to solve problems where there isn't an obvious answer.”

“In Head-Hunting, Big Data May Not Be Such a Big Deal” by Adam Bryant in *The New York Times*, June 19, 2013, <http://nyti.ms/11AcCfL>

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3. What is “Good Work”?

In this 2008 *New York Times* article, author/speaker Daniel Goleman lists the three qualities that he and Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner believe characterize “good work” in any field of endeavor:

- You are highly competent and effective at what you do.
- The work expresses your ethical values and is aligned to your mission in life.
- The job gives a pleasing sense of engagement – in a word, joy.

“Lacking any of these three ingredients,” says Goleman, “a job or profession may be great in other ways, but it does not make the cut for good work.”

An unexpected finding in this research is the importance of joy. Gardner has this to say about the work of inner-city teachers: “They may be good technically and feel deeply about their responsibility to their students. But if they don’t find joy in their work, they burn out; it’s just too hard. You have to build into hard jobs like that supports and rewards, so that what was initially meaningful and engaging will continue to be so.”

Gardner believes that anyone looking for a job should bear all three of these criteria in mind. He especially advises going to the workplace and asking yourself, “Is this the kind of place where I can see myself in others? Are my colleagues people I’d admire or people I’d prefer to avoid?”

“It May Be a Good Job, but Is It ‘Good Work’?” by Daniel Goleman in *The New York Times*, Nov. 16, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/16/jobs/16pre.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

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4. Why People So Often Misjudge Risks

“The human brain is exquisitely adapted to respond to risk,” says Maia Szalavitz in this intriguing 2008 article in *Psychology Today*. “... Faced with a precipice or a predator, the brain is biased to make certain decisions.” But these evolutionary biases aren’t always functional in the modern world. Szalavitz lists ten areas where we tend to make bad judgments. These might be excellent talking points in a statistics course – or in any part of the curriculum where we’re teaching students to use their heads to overcome deeply rooted misconceptions.

- *We fear snakes, not cars.* Fear is a “lightning-fast risk assessment performed by your reptilian brain, which is ever on the lookout for danger,” she says. Ancient threats like spiders and snakes frighten us more than driving too fast, and our evolutionary reaction to a rapidly-approaching threat – to freeze, which reduces a predator’s ability to see us – is exactly the wrong reaction when a car is speeding toward us.

- *We fear spectacular, unlikely events.* “Because fear strengthens memory, catastrophes such as earthquakes, plane crashes, and terrorist incidents completely capture our attention,” says Szalavitz. “As a result, we overestimate the odds of dreadful but infrequent events and underestimate how risky ordinary events are.” For example, after 9/11, more than a million people changed their holiday travel plans, sticking to the highway rather than flying. It’s estimated that these decisions caused about 1,000 additional auto fatalities.

- *We underestimate threats that creep up on us.* “Humans are ill-prepared to deal with risks that don’t produce immediate negative consequences,” says Szalavitz. “...As a result, we are less frightened of heart disease than we should be.” One cupcake and one French fry at a time seem harmless, but over the years, there are deadly consequences. Obesity, unplanned pregnancies, and global warming are consequences in this category.

- *Being in control makes us think differently.* According to risk consultant David Ropeik, “Many people report that when they move from the driver’s seat to the passenger’s seat, the car in front of them looks closer and their foot goes to the imaginary brake. You’re likely to be less scared with the steering wheel in your hand, because you can do something about your circumstances, and that’s reassuring.” People who are critical of other drivers talking on their cell phones often think they can do the same without a problem.

- *We drive faster when we have a seat belt on.* Similarly, vehicles with better traction get in more accidents in snowy and icy conditions. “Buoyed by a false sense of safety that comes with the increased control, drivers of four-wheel-drive vehicles take more risks,” says Szalavitz. “... People have a preferred level of risk, and they modulate their behavior to keep risk at that constant level.” Features like seat belts and air bags lead people to drive faster. And a person who has a diet soda with a meal feels freer to order a rich dessert.

- *Teens tend to make especially bad choices.* Contrary to popular belief, teenagers are less likely to think, “It won’t happen to me.” In fact, they intellectually overestimate the odds of negative consequences – for example, contracting HIV or syphilis when they engage in sexual activity. But the problem is that they are assessing risk with their rational faculties, and *emotional* considerations – what their peers think and how good something feels – outweigh the rational calculus and lead to bad decisions. In contrast, most adults give more weight to the rational than the emotional.

- *The quality of different people’s “risk thermostat” varies widely.* Some have a very high tolerance for risk while others are much more cautious. Testosterone inclines males to take more risks than females, but “age and situation matter as much as gender,” says Szalavitz. In addition, people take risks and avoid risks in different venues – for example, a woman who has her whole portfolio in unstable junk bonds but doesn’t like to climb mountains. Men between 15 and 25 are the most risk-taking subgroup.

- *Risk assessment is inseparable from values.* For example, we worry about teen marijuana use more than we do about teens playing contact sports – yet not a single death has been reported from smoking pot, while about 13 teenagers a year die in football-related injuries and there are far more accidents and addictions caused by alcohol and tobacco use. What’s going on here? “We value physical fitness and the lessons teens learn from sports,” says Szalavitz, “but disapprove of unearned pleasure from recreational drugs. So we’re willing to accept a higher level of risk of socially preferred activities – and we mentally magnify risks associated with activities society rejects...”

- *“Natural” risks are easier to accept.* For example, people are more worried about radiation from nuclear power plants, while excessive exposure to the radiation in natural

sunlight causes far more deaths. “Nature has a good reputation,” says researcher Paul Slovic. “We think of natural as benign and safe. But malaria’s natural and so are deadly mushrooms.”

- *Worrying about risk is itself risky.*” Studies have shown that the more people were exposed to reports of the 9/11 attacks, the more anxious and depressed they became. A chronically elevated level of stress lowers immune response, increases the likelihood of clinical depression and diabetes, impairs memory and fertility, and plays a part in high blood pressure and long-term cardiovascular damage.

This is why developing accurate risk assessment really matters. “It’s impossible to live a risk-free life,” concludes Szalavitz: “Everything we do increases some risks while lowering others. But if we understand our innate biases in the way we manage risks, we can adjust for them and genuinely stay safer – without freaking out over every leaf of lettuce.”

“10 Ways We Get The Odds Wrong” by Maia Szalavitz in *Psychology Today*, January/February 2008 (p. 96-102),

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200712/10-ways-we-get-the-odds-wrong>

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5. The Characteristics of Effective Teacher-Training Programs

In this thoughtful *Education Week* article, Boston teacher Lillie Marshall [my daughter] identifies six elements in effective teacher-preparation programs. Principals might keep these in mind as they consider how teacher candidates have been prepared.

- *The programs are down-to-earth.* “Specifically, programs should include practical training on long-range lesson planning and how to prevent behavioral mayhem,” says Marshall. Teachers shouldn’t enter the classroom without a clear understanding that lesson plans are not enough; rather, “lessons *must* be planned with the entire unit and endpoint mapped out beforehand.”

- *A full-year practicum with expert support is required.* Marshall praises the Boston Teacher Residency program, which places teachers in classrooms and ensures that they have multiple mentors. “The vast majority of BTR graduates are still teaching because they knew exactly what they were getting into when they took on a class solo,” she says.

- *The practicum is in the same type of school the teacher ultimately wants to work in.* “Teaching in a suburban school is much different from teaching in an urban school,” says Marshall.

- *They expose teachers-in-training to a wide variety of schools.* Marshall suggests that trainees visit at least five different settings in the course of the practicum year.

- *They develop resilience.* “To succeed as a teacher,” she insists, “you must fail repeatedly as a teacher-in-training (when there are still supports in place), or you will get crushed once you’re on your own.” This is the only way new teachers will appreciate the importance of having a rock-solid classroom management plan.

- *They foster humility.* “Do not underestimate the arrogance of recent college graduates or their inability to comprehend how bad they will be at teaching,” says Marshall.

“Six Essentials for Improving Teacher Prep” by Lillie Marshall in *Education Week*, July 23, 2013, http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2013/07/23/fp_marshall_prep.html

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6. Must Close Reading Be “Cold”?

In this helpful article in *Reading Today*, Harvard Graduate School of Education professor Catherine Snow appreciates the fact that the Common Core literacy assessment items she’s seen require close reading and are well aligned with what students need for college and career success. But she worries that if students aren’t properly prepared for the new demands, and if they don’t find the test items engaging and relevant, the rigor won’t be helpful. “I would argue that middle and high-school students are not, on average, deeply motivated to learn and master academic skills,” says Snow. But teachers can hook them and get them working hard “by starting with engaging questions, appealing topics, and important issues.”

What puzzles Snow is that some educators seem to believe that building interest and motivation is somehow contrary to the spirit of close reading – that it should be “cold”, asking students to attack a new passage without support. “Cold close reading is really hard,” she says, and relates her experience trying to read a Spanish newspaper every day during a five-month stay in Madrid. “I was a pretty good reader when I undertook this exercise,” she says, “with well-developed inferential abilities and monitoring strategies, and a very high degree of motivation. Nonetheless, cold close reading was often unproductive. It was discouraging. I found I couldn’t read about the unfamiliar topics [like Spanish politics and soccer] for more than a few minutes at a time, and that I was exhausted at the end of such efforts.”

For students, she continues, close reading will fail to fulfill its potential if the topic is unfamiliar, the text is too hard, too long, or full of unknown words, and students must struggle with every line. Some teachers say this is a failure of stamina on the students’ part, but Snow believes it’s actually “a collapse of motivation.” This kind of reading, she insists, “results, not in productive struggle, but in destructive frustration... It generates a lack of understanding or a misunderstanding, and the longer one reads it the more confused one gets.” Students get confused and conclude that reading is about pronouncing words correctly rather than understanding, enjoying, and learning.

Snow believes close reading is an important part of the new standards, but she’d rather have students do “warm” close reading – teachers give them texts that make sense and require reading for an authentic purpose, and give them access to vocabulary, background knowledge, and skills in drawing inferences – all of which they need to be successful.

“Cold Versus Warm Close Reading: Building Students’ Stamina for Struggling with Text” by Catherine Snow in *Reading Today*, June/July 2013 (Vol. 30, #6, p. 18-19), www.reading.org/lrpblog; Snow can be reached at catherine_snow@harvard.edu.

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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.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 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 50 issues a year).

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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
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 Update/Curriculum Update
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
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Journal of Staff Development
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Knowledge Quest
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
NAESP Journal
NJEA Review
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
Teacher
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children/Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The District Management Journal
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