Marshall Memo 691

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
June 19, 2017

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Quotes of the Week

"What is wrong with those boys? Why can't they just sit still and listen?"
A preschool girl to her Sunday school teacher (quoted in item #5)

"No matter what path students choose in life, the ability to communicate their thoughts in writing in a way that others can easily understand is crucial."
Judith Hochman and Natalie Wexler (see item #2)

"Overall, students who are black, Hispanic, or low-income are more likely to use computers for drill and practice, whereas students who are white or high-income are more likely to use computers for simulations or authentic applications."
Molly Zielezinski (see item #6)

"[F]or the vast majority of teachers, improvement is a learning issue, not a motivation issue. Unless assessments provide information that teachers can use to improve, the assessments probably will not affect teaching."
James Hiebert and James Stigler (see item #1)

"Change at the top can change life in the classroom, and constant change can make teachers want to hunker down and wait things out."
Kara Finnigan and Alan Daly in "The Trust Gap: Understanding the Effects of Leadership Churn in School Districts" in *American Educator*, Summer 2017 (Vol. 41, #2, p. 24-29), https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2017/finnigan-daly

"Change is always great when it happens to someone else. When it happens to you, it's a bitch."
Joel Klein, former New York City school chancellor, in a keynote address at the New York City Leadership Academy's "Shaping Our Future" ceremony, June 14, 2017

1. The Difference Between Improving Teachers and Improving Teaching

In this article in *Educational Researcher*, James Hiebert (University of Delaware) and James Stigler (University of California/Los Angeles) draw on their "eye-opening" video analysis of 8th-grade mathematics classes in the U.S. and other high-achieving countries, including Japan. They found markedly better instructional practices in several other countries, and noticed that Japan had a built-in system for improving teaching "gradually and steadily over time." Hiebert and Stigler conclude that "the biggest problem in the United States is not that mathematics is being taught poorly now; it is that the country has no mechanism for getting better."

The heart of the matter, they believe, is that Americans have focused on improving teachers – by recruiting more-qualified people into the profession, higher standards for teacher certification, increased accountability, professional development, value-added measures, and making it easier to fire ineffective performers. Meanwhile, the Japanese have focused on continuously improving teaching through the school-based, collegial system of lesson study. The result is that teaching in Japan – the way teachers and students interact around the content – has improved dramatically over the last 50 years, while teaching in most U.S. classrooms has remained basically the same.

Hiebert and Stigler are especially scornful of the U.S. attempt to measure teachers' effectiveness by their students' test scores. "[W]e know of no evidence that evaluating teachers and holding them accountable for the learning of their students improves their teaching or their students' learning," say the authors. "This is not surprising because for the vast majority of teachers, improvement is a learning issue, not a motivation issue. Unless assessments provide information that teachers can use to improve, the assessments probably will not affect teaching." They also comment on the strategy of replacing the least effective teachers ("Replacing more than a few teachers requires a much larger pool of more talented teachers than exists") and on current PD practices ("negligible widespread or lasting effects on teachers' practice or students' learning").

The difference in approach, say Hiebert and Stigler, springs from the way we think about improving instruction. If we focus on trying to "fix" individual teachers, we'll fail – and we'll be unfair to individual teachers who are products of their culture and training. But if we see teaching as a *system*, we stand a better chance of succeeding. "The first step in improving teaching is understanding how a system of teaching – within a classroom, school, or nation – works now," they say. "How do the active ingredients of the system work together to produce

student learning and other desired education outcomes – including both average outcomes and variation in outcomes?" The place to begin, say Hiebert and Stigler, is where the rubber meets the road – the classroom lesson: "a mini-system that repeats day after day, where teachers interact with students about content."

"Just as teaching is a system," they continue, "*improving* teaching is a system." Both Japan and China have both focused on the individual lesson as the fulcrum for gradual improvement, using lesson study to continuously improve small components of teaching and spreading those improvements incrementally through the profession until they become common practice. What made this possible? Based on their study of Japanese schools, Hiebert and Stigler say it's four things: Well-crafted learning goals for students, curriculum, assessments, and professional development:

• *Shared learning goals* – "Improving teaching requires, first, that learning goals for students at each stage of their school careers be specified as precisely as possible," say the authors. These need to be hierarchical: overarching goals for the school year; goals for each unit of study; and precisely defined lesson goals, including how those relate to the unit and yearly goals. When common learning goals are shared among teachers, it naturally creates curiosity about what's working best and "great demand for better teaching methods across the system."

• *Widely used curriculum materials that invite improvement* – Japan has several commercial math curriculums for elementary and middle schools, all aligned with national standards. Teachers continuously experiment with improvements by tweaking individual lessons, observing each other as they teach them, and embedding the changes in a shared knowledge base that is passed along to other teachers. "Storing knowledge in artifacts rather than in the heads of individual teachers," say Hiebert and Stigler, "is both a significant consequence and essential component of lesson study as a *system* for improving teaching."

• *Assessments that provide usable feedback to teachers* – "Improving systems requires measurement, both of outcomes and the processes hypothesized to produce the outcomes," say the authors. "In the observations conducted by lesson study groups, teachers examine evidence of student learning as it happens and tie what students are learning to specific aspects of the lesson the teachers are trying to improve." The focus is always on the students and what's helping them learn. At the end of each unit, tests are written collaboratively by teacher teams, given at about the same time, and then scored together comparing students' performance in different classrooms. There's keen attention to differences in performance and what those might indicate. Teachers whose students chronically underperform get help from their colleagues. Some who don't improve leave the profession – an informal form of accountability.

• *Professional development that inducts teachers into the system of improvement* – PD in Japan is driven by lesson study, and new teachers become part of the system of improving teaching. "The focus is not on improving an individual's qualifications or capabilities," say Hiebert and Stigler, "but on improving the methods of teaching and their outcomes. The spotlight in lesson study shines on a group's ability to improve teaching through careful planning, careful observation during the lesson to collect relevant student data, and careful

analysis of the data and consequent revisions to the lesson… The group takes responsibility for the success of a lesson and believes that lessons can always improve." Teachers say focusing so intently on one lesson makes them more effective teachers of all lessons. "The system designed to improve teaching," say the authors, "produces teachers with better capabilities as a side effect."

What are the implications of Japan's teaching-improvement system for U.S. schools? The lack of clear national standards in the U.S. has resulted "in little demand for instructional products, like lesson plans, that could be used across schools, districts and states," say Hiebert and Stigler. "The lack of demand for effective instructional products is one of the major obstacles to scaling up improvements within the United States." Diverse standards and expectations also result in less sharing of effective practices, a "weak sense of professionalism among teachers," less-focused teacher training, and weak enculturation of new teachers. In addition, textbooks are written to cover variable standards in different states and aren't geared to continuous improvement of specific lessons. "Teachers must hold in their heads, rather than in shareable artifacts, the knowledge they acquire about teaching this curriculum to achieve these learning goals," say Hiebert and Stigler. "They become the repository for all the good ideas they develop over time, and they take these ideas with them when they retire… Rather than beginning where the previous generation left off, new generations of teachers must start over, learning themselves what their predecessors had already learned."

But what about the Common Core? Hiebert and Stigler believe the standards were written at quite a general level to win approval and that they don't go to the lesson level. This has resulted in publishers selling textbooks and other materials that claim to be aligned with the Common Core but are actually all over the map. As for the PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments, which are designed to measure student learning on the new standards, Hiebert and Stigler are concerned that some states are planning to use the results to evaluate teachers rather than improve teaching. All this, and the continuation of low-value professional development, they say, "actually work against large-scale and continuous improvement of teaching."

What is to be done? Hiebert and Stigler point to several efforts within the U.S. that are trying to implement the essence of what they advocate: the SERP development of instructional products for teaching; Gallimore and Ermeling's five elements of a school-based improvement system; and a number of lesson study implementation sites. "Although promising," they say, "these examples have not spread far beyond their initial, resource-supported boundaries." Far more effective would be during-the-year assessments that provide data that teacher teams can use to improve teaching practices, focusing on individual lessons and using a collegial process as the prime locus of professional development.

"Is it possible for the United States to develop a system for improving teaching?" ask Hiebert and Stigler. "It would require a cultural change to do so, and changing cultural activities is difficult. Cultural activities change only if all people affected by the change want it to happen. This means teachers, school district leaders, school boards, parents, and state departments of education would all need to work together to change features that support improvement, including the four identified here. The United States also would need to rid itself

of its addiction to quick fixes. Improving teaching on a large scale requires years of continuous, hard work. Payoffs do not come immediately. But, the reward is that when they do come, they last."

"Teaching Versus Teachers as a Lever for Change: Comparing a Japanese and a U.S. Perspective on Improving Instruction" by James Hiebert and James Stigler in *Educational Researcher,* May 2017 (Vol. 46, #4, p. 169-176), http://bit.ly/2rOyjvZ; the authors can be reached at hiebert@udel.edu and stigler@psych.ucla.edu.

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2. Six Principles for Teaching Writing

In this article in *American Educator*, Judith Hochman (The Writing Revolution) and Natalie Wexler (an education journalist) report that on national tests, only 25 percent of U.S. students are writing at the proficient level. This is a problem, they say, since expository writing "is essential for success in school and the workplace. Students who can't write at a competent level struggle in college. With the advent of e-mail and the Internet, an increasing number of jobs require solid writing skills… No matter what path students choose in life, the ability to communicate their thoughts in writing in a way that others can easily understand is crucial."

How did we get to this sad state of affairs? Hochman and Wexler blame a mindset about how writing should be taught – the idea that if students read enough, they'll pick up writing skills by osmosis, and that teaching grammar and syntax will improve students' prose. "But writing is the hardest thing we ask students to do," they say, "and the evidence is clear that very few students become good writers on their own. Many students – even at the college level – have difficulty constructing a coherent sentence, let alone a fluid, cohesive essay." Teachers have been told to show their students models of good writing and have them emulate them, or describe the elements of a good paragraph or essay. "But for many students, that's not enough," say Hoffman and Wexler. "For them, the techniques of good writing are a secret code they just can't crack."

The solution, they say, is to teach writing systematically from K to 12 and not let students' problems pile up to the point where middle- and high-school teachers are confronted by "page after page of incoherent, error-riddled writing" and don't know where to begin. Writing instruction needs to be broken down into manageable chunks that students practice repeatedly, at the same time as they are learning content. For students to get better, say Hochman and Wexler, "they need a series of strategies that specifically target the skills they haven't yet mastered, while building on the skills they already have, in a gradual, step-by-step process. They also need clear, direct feedback that helps them identify their mistakes and monitor their progress."

The authors describe the woeful state of one student's writing when she arrived at New Dorp High School on Staten Island in New York City. Asked to write an essay on Alexander the Great, she managed six simple sentences, one of which made no sense. An actual essay, the ninth grader said, "wasn't going to happen. It was like, well, I got a sentence down. What now?" Teachers at New Dorp went to work implementing six principles of writing instruction,

and by this special-needs student's junior year, she was writing coherent essays, scoring well on state Regents exams, and planning to apply for college. Here are the principles (described in more detail in Hoffman's and Wexler's forthcoming book, *The Writing Revolution*, Jossey-Bass, August 2017):

• *Explicit instruction starting young* – Being a good reader is not enough to become a good writer; writing requires far more decisions. And students who can speak fluently don't necessarily transfer that to coherent writing. Students need to be taught how the conventions of written language differ from those of spoken language, communicating with much more precision and clarity, anticipating what the reader needs to know and understand, and using punctuation and key words (*despite, although, for example, specifically*) to indicate nuances in meaning, connections, and breaks in the narrative. It's also important that they avoid errors in spelling and grammar that will distract readers. All this needs to begin in the early elementary grades, and although it's important that students enjoy writing and get to use it as a means of self-expression, there should be plenty of explicit instruction, practice, and feedback to hone skills.

• *Sentences as the building blocks* – "In many schools, the quantity of writing has long been valued over its quality," say Hochman and Wexler. "The Common Core and other standards have only increased the pressure on teachers to assign essay-length writing. But if students haven't learned how to write an effective sentence, that is where instruction needs to begin." Students need to do plenty of sentence-level writing in which they explain, paraphrase, or summarize sophisticated content, use correct spelling and grammar, and get feedback on form and content. Then they can move on to paragraphs and essays.

• *Writing embedded in curriculum content* – To maximize the benefits of writing instruction, say Hochman and Wexler, teachers need to go beyond personal narrative assignments like arguing the pros and cons of school uniforms and speculating on what it's like to be famous. "Having students write about topics unrelated to content represents a huge wasted opportunity to boost their learning," they say. "Writing isn't merely a skill; it's also a powerful teaching tool." Students should be asked to write about ancient Egypt, tornadoes and hurricanes, Jane Eyre, and other subjects they're studying. And all teachers should see themselves as teachers of writing, even if it's only a 5-15-minute do-now activity, check for understanding, or exit ticket.

• *Curriculum content as a driver of writing rigor* – Hochman and Wexler suggest writing activities that build writing skills and get students thinking deeply about subject matter. One sentence-level exercise is for students to complete a sentence stem adding *because, but*, and *so*. Here are examples from three subject areas at different grade levels:

- Rocket learned to read because/but/so_____.
- Fractions are like decimals because/but/so_____.
- Aerobic respiration is similar to anaerobic respiration because/but/so_____.

"No matter what content you use with these kinds of activities," say the authors, "the specificity of the prompts makes them far more powerful than an open-ended question such as, 'Why did Rocket learn to read?'" In a science class, students at New Dorp High School were

asked to write three sentences about hydrogen and oxygen, starting with *Although, Unless,* and *If*. Here's what one student came up with:

- *Although* hydrogen is explosive and oxygen supports combustion, a compound of them puts out fires.
- *Unless* hydrogen and oxygen form a compound, they are explosive and dangerous.
- *If* hydrogen and oxygen form a compound, they lose their original properties of being explosive and supporting combustion.

This was the student who was unable to write more than six simple sentences as a ninth grader.

• *Grammar taught in the context of writing* – "Research has consistently found that teaching grammar rules in isolation doesn't work," say Hochman and Wexler. For many students, learning parts of speech and diagramming sentences just adds to the confusion, takes up valuable cognitive real estate, and doesn't carry over to their own writing. "But that doesn't mean teachers can't, or shouldn't, teach grammar," continue the authors. "What does work is to teach writing conventions and grammar in the context of students' own writing." One particularly helpful exercise is sentence combining, which students find engaging and gets at many of the same skills as dry grammar instruction.

• *Planning and revising* – "Although experienced writers may be able to turn out a well-developed paragraph or essay on the fly," say Hochman and Wexler, "most of the students we work with find it overwhelming to organize their thoughts at the same time they're choosing words and figuring out the best way to structure their sentences." A planning template helps students think through the main idea or theme, the points they will make, and the order in which they will make them. This helps them think through what additional information they need, connect ideas or claims with relevant details or evidence, and avoid irrelevant information and repetition. Having jotted this outline, writing a first draft is quite straightforward. Then comes revising, which is where students apply what they've learned in sentence-level exercises to insert transition words, vary sentence structure, and use subordinating conjunctions, appositives, and other techniques so the writing flows and makes sense.

"One Sentence At a Time" by Judith Hochman and Natalie Wexler in *American Educator*, Summer 2017 (Vol. 41, #2, p. 30-37, 43), http://bit.ly/2ssh6dE; Hochman can be reached at info@thewritingrevolution.org. See Marshall Memo 454, article #3 (a "classic") for a description of the Hochman/Wexler approach to teaching writing at New Dorp High School.

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3. Seven Forces That Shaped History

In this Social Studies School Service essay, David Bernier says teachers "strive to help students make sense of the complicated mass of information known as history in a way that is coherent yet accessible and useful." He suggests seven "forces of history" as an overarching construct to help students organize information and build their analytic skills as they study historical events. The acronym is INSPECT: Ideas, Natural/Geographic, Social, Political,

Economic, Cultural, and Technological/Scientific. Here are short descriptions of each with suggested Essential Questions:

• *Ideas* – The role of beliefs, ideologies, philosophies, ethics, and ultimate purpose. Ideas can inspire revolution, religious fervor, and the pursuit of rights – "the pen is mightier than the sword."

- What ideas have had the biggest impact on history?
- What factors lead to the emergence of new ideas?
- How do ideas shape social change?
- What causes people to accept new ideas?
- What ideas contributed to an event we're studying?
- What ideas form the core of the society we're studying?

• *Natural/Geographic* – The role of environment, ecology, resources, natural disasters, regions, and climate – for example, the California gold rush, the spread of crops (corn, potatoes, and tomatoes) around the world, and climate change.

- How do people interact with the natural world?
- How does geography shape history?
- What natural resources are valued and why?
- How do natural forces affect migration?
- How do environmental forces interact with economic and political forces?
- How does geography differ between two societies we're studying?
- How did environmental factors shape the country we're studying?

• *Social* – The role of family, gender roles, marriage, class and class conflict, slavery, segregation, education, healthcare, the quest for social justice.

- How do societies arrange themselves?
- What is the best way to organize society?
- What roles do men and women play and why?
- Why do some people discriminate against others?
- Why have people had slaves?
- What influences society more, individuals or groups?
- Is everyone entitled to social services – for example, education and health care?
- What causes people to try to change society?
- How do people pursue social justice?
- Is equality for all attainable?

• *Political* – The role of government, laws, courts, voting, separation of powers, political systems and parties, the military, foreign policies, and wars. Key issues include finding the balance among rights, order, power, prosperity, and safety.

- What is the purpose of government?
- What is the best form of government?
- Why do we have laws?
- How do economic and social forces influence politics?
- What role does culture play in politics?

- How can we influence political forces?
- Why do so few people participate in the political process?
- What is an effective leader?
- What is power?
- How have political forces been a source of good – and evil?

• *Economic* – The role of the production of goods and services, consumption, sources of energy, networks of exchange, employment and unemployment, trade, financial systems, taxes, and the course of money.

- Why do we have money?
- Does money drive the world?
- Is the love of money the root of all evil?
- How have economic factors influenced political decisions?
- How is the world connected economically?
- How do natural forces influence economics?
- What factors are needed to produce economic power?
- Why does economic inequality exist?
- What is worth having?
- Who are the haves and have-nots in our society and the world, and why?

• *Cultural* – The role of the arts, music, architecture, literature, the practice of religion, high culture and pop culture, entertainment, and clothing styles.

- How does religion affect history?
- What role do the arts play in shaping history?
- Are the arts a reflection of society or shapers of society?
- Is it possible for different ethnic groups to be one?
- What does it means to be an American?
- What does it mean to be a global citizen?
- Does culture matter?
- How does pop culture influence economic, social, and political forces?
- How have notions of being "cultured" changed over time?
- Are we what we eat?
- What is globalization doing to culture?

• *Technological/Scientific* – The role of inventions, including vaccines, pesticides, the cotton gin, telephones, computers, automobiles, planes, the machine gun, and atomic weapons.

- What motivates people to pursue scientific knowledge?
- What causes people to be attracted to technology?
- What are the positives and negatives of technology?
- Does technological progress always lead to social progress?
- Why do people seek to create new products?
- How does technology affect our lives?
- How does technology affect the natural world?
- Is technology causing us to be closer to each other or creating more space between us?

"Forces of History" by David Bernier, Social Studies School Service, 2010, http://www.socialstudies.com/pdf/ZP113TG_ForcesofHistory.pdf

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4. Collaboration Helps Ordinary People Do Extraordinary Work

In this article in *American Educator*, Esther Quintero (Albert Shanker Institute) argues that getting superstars on your team, whether in schools or athletics, is not the way to get peak performance. Much more important is nurturing the social and organizational factors that bring out the best in everyone. "Ultimately," says Quintero, "we must learn to identify and reward employees who both perform well individually and contribute to the success of their peers."

Quintero summarizes some of the major findings from a book she edited (*Teaching in Context: The Social Side of Education Reform,* Harvard Education Press, 2017):

- Student performance increases dramatically when teachers have frequent and instructionally focused conversations with their peers.
- Collegiality matters at all levels – among teachers, between teachers and administrators, and between educators and the community.
- Successful schools serving disadvantaged students have a comprehensive approach to hiring, evaluating, and developing their teachers.
- Social relations within a school are malleable, with key variables being job titles, organizational routines, and scheduling.
- Veteran and novice teachers improve more rapidly when collaboration is helpful and extensive.
- In schools with collaborative cultures, teachers don't "plateau" after several years – they continue to grow and improve.
- High turnover of teachers and administrators undermines trust and collegial interaction.

"Elevating Relationships: How Collaboration Shapes Teaching and Learning" by Esther Quintero in *American Educator*, Summer 2017 (Vol. 41, #2, p. 18-21), https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2017/quintero; Quintero can be reached at equinter@ashankerinst.org.

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5. Is "Redshirting" Kindergarteners a Good Idea?

In this article in *Education Next*, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach (Northwestern University) and Stephanie Howard Larson (Rose Hall Montessori School, Illinois) examine whether holding children back a year as they enter kindergarten provides long-term benefits. Parents are most likely to "redshirt" when their children just make the cutoff date – they have a late summer birthday. It's most common with boys who are socially and physically less mature than their peers, resulting in them being among the oldest and most mature in their classes instead of the youngest and least mature. Redshirting is not that common – nationally, about

7.2 percent of boys are held back, 5.2 percent of girls. But for children of college-educated parents, the rate is two times higher, and with boys in this demographic who have late summer birthdays, around 20 percent are redshirted.

Studies have shown that being almost a year older that one's peers does confer an initial advantage. "This makes perfect sense," say Schanzenbach and Larson, " – a redshirted kindergartener has been alive up to 20 percent longer than his on-time counterparts, which means his brain has had more time to develop and he has had that many more bedtime stories, puzzles, and family outings from which to build his general knowledge." But the initial age and maturity advantage dissipates over time; by ninth grade, the redshirted student is only 7 percent older than his or her classmates. As they get older, redshirted students have no net long-term advantage in skill levels.

Statistically, redshirted students are less likely to be retained or diagnosed with learning disabilities as they move through the grades, and may be more likely to be placed in gifted classes, depending on the selection criteria. But these may be an artifact of decisions being made partly on where students stand compared to their peers.

The biggest downside of holding children back, say Schanzenbach and Larson, is that they're likely to be in classrooms with less mature, less intellectually developed, and less well-behaved peers – all of which detracts from their achievement and development. The authors tell the story of a preschool girl in a Sunday school class with several rambunctious boys saying to her teacher during a break, "What is wrong with those boys? Why can't they just sit still and listen?" This girl's mother decided to hold her back because she was quite a bit shorter than her age-mates, and this ended up being an unwise decision: the girl was bored and frustrated in her elementary school classrooms.

Another downside of redshirting: students will graduate from high school at 19 instead of 18 (another year with a teenager in the house!) and will (if they complete a four-year college in four years) enter the workforce at 23 instead of 22 – one less year of work experience and income.

The bottom line: Older students may be bored in classrooms with peers who are less mature and well behaved. Conversely, students who are on the young side benefit from working with students who are older and better behaved. "Looking at the evidence," conclude Schanzenbach and Larson, "we advise parents to redshirt their child only in unique circumstances." For example, extreme developmental delay, outside the normal range, so that a year's delay will put the child in the normal range in a classroom, or a child experiencing trauma such as a terminally ill parent or sibling.

"Is Your Child Ready for Kindergarten?" By Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach and Stephanie Howard Larson in *Education Next*, Summer 2017 (Vol. 17, #3, p. 18-24), http://educationnext.org/is-your-child-ready-kindergarten-redshirting-may-do-more-harm-than-good/; Schanzenbach can be reached at dws@northwestern.edu.

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6. Classrooms That Close the Digital Divide

"Overall, students who are black, Hispanic, or low-income are more likely to use computers for drill and practice, whereas students who are white or high-income are more likely to use computers for simulations or authentic applications," says Molly Zielezinski (Stanford University) in this article in *American Educator*. Her suggestions for more equitable outcomes:

• *Use technology to engage students*. Authentic tasks grounded in relevant, ongoing work with a real purpose. A few high-quality tools:

- Visual Understanding Environment (VUE) – An open-source platform for concept mapping and visual representations: http://vue.tufts.edu
- Canva – A content-creation tool that allows users to design presentations, social media graphics, posters, book covers, and business cards: www.canva.com
- Declara – An educator's tool to curate collections of learning resources and collaborate within collections by sharing insights and posing and responding to questions: https://declara.com

These types of applications are preferable to those that have students memorizing facts, applying rules, and drilling basic skills.

• *Let students create original digital content*. This might include crafting multi-media stories, filming and producing documentaries, designing posters, leveraging social media as a tool for teaching and learning, and publishing wikis, blogs, or websites.

• *Pick digital tools that promote interactivity*. Zielezinski recommends that teachers and administrators "engage with the digital tool – get your hands dirty with the technology and use it the way students will… Does the app or program allow students to construct their own understanding of complex phenomena? Does it encourage students to represent thinking in multiple forms (text, pictures, videos, digital interactions, or some combination of these)? Will students engage with data or true-to-life simulations? Will they use sensors to measure real-life phenomena? These are some of the markers of digital tools that support learning."

• *Let students share their expertise with an authentic audience*. Students do better work when they are communicating with people outside the classroom, locally or globally, who have shared interests, questions, and goals.

• *Find the right blend of teaching and technology*. Teachers "must play a crucial role in supporting the content students get through digital learning," says Zielezinski. This includes real-time feedback and orchestrating productive peer interaction.

"Promising Practices for Education Technology" by Molly Zielezinski in *American Educator*, Summer 2017 (Vol. 41, #2, p. 38-39, 43), https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2017/zielezinski

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7. Do the Arts Produce Higher Test Scores?

In this *American Educational Research Journal* article, Michael Foster (University of Alabama/Birmingham) and Jade Marcus Jenkins (University of California/Irvine) report on their study of whether participating in music and performing arts in school affects students'

cognitive and developmental outcomes. The result? Foster and Jenkins found no causal link between school arts programs and cognitive benefits outside the arts. Previous studies that did find a link between the arts and academic achievement apparently failed to take into account the greater likelihood that higher-SES children had greater exposure to the arts and to other advantages that improved their achievement.

Foster and Jenkins did find that school arts programs were linked to participation in, enjoyment of, and support of the arts in adolescence and early adulthood. "Our analysis need not weaken public support for music education," say the researchers. "What it does do is weaken efforts to bolster support for arts education by linking it to benefits outside the arts, including test scores. Such efforts are well intentioned, and if such benefits existed, it would move discussions away from the inherent value of the arts and toward more 'tangible' benefits." In other words, well-run arts programs are valuable in and of themselves, and should not (and cannot) be justified for other reasons.

"Does Participation in Music and Performing Arts Influence Child Development?" by Michael Foster and Jade Marcus Jenkins in *American Educational Research Journal*, June 2017 (Vol. 54, #3, p. 339-443), http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0002831217701830

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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 48 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, consultant, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 60 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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- 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 and PDF)
- All back issues and podcasts in YouTube and MP3
- An archive of all articles so far, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- A collection of "classic" articles from all issues

Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

All Things PLC
American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
AMLE Magazine
ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief
District Management Journal
Ed. Magazine
Education Digest
Education Next
Education Update
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
English Journal
Essential Teacher
Exceptional Children
Go Teach
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Educational Review
Independent School
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Knowledge Quest
Literacy Today
Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Teacher
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Education Gadfly
The Journal of the Learning Sciences
The Language Educator
The Learning Professional (formerly Journal of Staff Development)
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time Magazine