Marshall Memo 1041

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
June 17, 2024

In This Issue:

1. David Brooks on how giftedness plays out in people's lives
2. Antiracism PD – necessary but not sufficient
3. Should new leaders hit the ground running or take it slow?
4. Dealing thoughtfully with employees who are upset
5. What makes a career and technical education program effective?
6. Principles of good teaching are alive in effective CTE programs
7. Award-winning children's books

Quotes of the Week

"When you get a glimpse of the real lives of gifted people, you see that it's a mistake to separate this thing we call intelligence from all the other aspects of their lives."
David Brooks (see item #1)

"It's nice to know who is good at taking intelligence tests, but it's more important to know who is lit by an inner fire."
David Brooks (*ibid.*)

"Experts often find it hard to put themselves in novices' shoes and truly understand what novices need to learn and how they can get there."
Paul Kirschner, Mirjam Neelen, and Tim Surma (see item #6)

"You need to go slow to go fast. Accepting that idea and pacing yourself accordingly will allow you to steady your efforts and help others develop faith in your leadership."
Claudius Hildebrand, Jason Baumgarten, and Mahesh Madhavan (see item #3)

"Tell people what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them. You'll get tired of this process, but remember: much of what you'll be saying either will feel new to your audience or will start to sink in only after many repetitions."
Claudius Hildebrand, Jason Baumgarten, and Mahesh Madhavan (*ibid.*)

"A lot of teachers just kind of say, 'Okay, sure,' then they just go about their business, 'cause they know nobody's coming back round to make sure that it's occurring."
A teacher reporting on the aftermath of a typical PD session (see item #2)

1. David Brooks on How Giftedness Plays Out in People's Lives

In this *New York Times* column, David Brooks looks at the life trajectories of children who score high on intelligence tests. Unsurprisingly, a high I.Q. is strongly correlated with academic and occupational success (lots of doctors, lawyers, and professors) and moderately correlated with lifetime income. "Intelligence really matters," says Brooks.

But longitudinal studies of gifted kids have also found that only a few go on to be creative geniuses or make transformational contributions in their fields. Why? "Some brilliant people lack ambition," says Brooks. "Some brilliant people don't want to spend their lives at work, slaving away for eminence. They have different values and prefer to do other things with their time."

In addition, there are downsides to being identified as exceptionally intelligent. One man interviewed in a British study said, "My being seen as gifted has produced awful deficiencies in me. I was emotionally scarred by being made to perform. All the time it was, 'Look what Jeremy can do.' I could do almost anything on demand, but I used to feel like a performing penguin." Fear of failure haunted him, and after 13 years as a medical student and doctor, he was sidelined by depression and wound up being a musician, not exceptional but enjoying himself and making enough to pay the bills. Researchers have found that it's nearly impossible to predict adult exceptionality from early I.Q. tests.

"When you get a glimpse of the real lives of gifted people," says Brooks, "you see that it's a mistake to separate this thing we call intelligence from all the other aspects of their lives." Do they have deep friendships, rich intellectual conversations, unconditional love, conscientiousness, self-confidence, resilience? These are harder to measure than intelligence but just as important to the quality of a person's life.

Treating gifted children like "a brain on a stick" and stuffing them full of school learning is a mistake, says Brooks, and can put their emotional balance at risk and undermine future success. "The bottom line is that we need to put intelligence in its place," he says. "We need to value it and put precocious children in settings where they are nurtured and stretched. But we don't want to overvalue it." He believes it's a mistake for universities to reject applicants who score below 1300 on the SAT.

For people who do accomplish extraordinary things, drive and determination are more important than intelligence: "Great accomplishment is the marriage of ability and interest. It's the vital spark that makes people passionately curious about a subject, that makes them determined and relentless, that causes them to say to themselves: I'm going to figure this out, no matter what it takes… They didn't wow people at age 18, but over the course of their

adulthood they found some deep interest in something, and they achieved mastery… They had the right mixture of slight advantages and character traits that came together in the right way."

"It's nice to know who is good at taking intelligence tests," Brooks concludes, "but it's more important to know who is lit by an inner fire."

"What Happens to Gifted Children" by David Brooks in *The New York Times*, June 14, 2024

Back to page one

2. Antiracism PD – Necessary but not Sufficient

In this article in *Urban Education*, Mica Pollock and Andrew Matschiner (University of California/San Diego) say that in the aftermath of the 2020 murder of George Floyd, many U.S. schools have implemented antiracist professional development. The goal has been to improve the ability of the largely white teacher workforce to deal sensitively and effectively with issues of race and equity as they work with their increasingly diverse classes.

Almost immediately, these efforts came under fire, largely from white critics, with claims that it was all left-wing indoctrination in "woke" stances that make white educators feel attacked. "We support the antiracist PD quest and the quest to diversify the field," say Pollock and Matschiner (both white educators), "and we reflect self-critically here on our own expectations for inservice PD with white teachers specifically." The challenge for antiracist professional development, they say, is yes, helping teachers grapple successfully with the issue of race, but also to take *next steps* that will improve their students' learning and opportunities.

What are the problems to which antiracist PD is the solution? Among them: filling gaps in teachers' knowledge of the history of race in the U.S.; becoming more aware of their own and others' segregated upbringing; understanding structural advantages and disadvantages in society and schools; and tuning into stereotypes and unconscious biases educators may have acquired. Being schooled in these and other topics has the potential for addressing classroom practices that limit students' opportunities to learn at high levels.

But will PD on race and equity help teachers "*support their own students* better, versus primarily verbalize their extent of racial consciousness and commitment to such work?" ask Pollock and Matschiner. How can professional learning "go beyond celebrating the racial epiphanies of whites who have become racially aware," including acknowledging "white privilege" and "systemic racism," and engage educators in supporting students of color, and all students, in the day-to-day work of effective teaching and learning?

Recently, Pollock and Matschiner created an antiracist PD curriculum, *Schooltalk*, aimed at getting teachers to build factual knowledge about racial inequality and unlearn common "scripts" that perpetuate educational inequity in classrooms. They expected resistance from white teachers and were relieved when it was quickly overcome. But they realized, to their chagrin, "how easily our high hopes for teachers' work became low expectations that white educators simply express agreement with PD's basic ideas in several sessions – and move on." What was missing: "next steps to analyze or improve students' actual schooling."

Taking a hard look at teachers' reactions in the wake of their PD in a Pennsylvania district, Pollock and Matschiner learned that their sessions were one of multiple trainings teachers went through – trauma-informed care, PBIS, bullying prevention, culturally responsive pedagogy, differentiation, and more – none of which involved sustained discussion and systematic follow-up when teachers were back in their schools.

"There's so much jumping from one fix to another," said one teacher, "that nothing really gets a chance to do what it's supposed to do." Another teacher reported, "A lot of teachers just kind of say, 'Okay, sure,' then they just go about their business, 'cause they know nobody's coming back round to make sure that it's occurring." A third teacher said that none of the administrators were saying, "I want evidence of these things happening and here's some ways you can show me." In fact, few district administrators attended the PD sessions.

Pollock and Matschiner heard about a discussion among teachers in this district that actually had classroom impact. A group of high-school English teachers debated how to bring more diversity to the texts being used in the curriculum. This conversation focused on "antiracist ideas to *actually benefit students*," they say. Ironically, it was completely separate from the sessions on antiracism.

So what would effective PD look like – professional learning experiences that would actually change classroom practices for the better? Ideally, say Pollock and Matschiner, it would "combine efforts exploring essential antiracist concepts with efforts to assess and address specific local classroom and school practices" – including:

- Ongoing book groups;
- Inquiry on classroom practices;
- Classroom action research;
- Classroom coaching;
- Community immersion and reflection;
- Students' feedback on pedagogy;
- Content-specific instructional support;
- Ongoing curriculum revision.

"Toward that end," they conclude, "we wonder whether inservice PD providers, educators, and researchers ourselves might now normalize expecting participants to report back on *next grappling* with improving educational opportunity for their students… exploring additional resources, sustaining ongoing questioning with colleagues and students about the pros and cons of current school/instructional practices in light of PD learning, coming back to a next session with reflections after discussing an issue with some sense; and crucially, prioritizing a concrete improvement for collective focus." One more thing: administrators attending sessions "to envision and support next steps on the learning undertaken."

"'Well, What's Wrong with the Whites?'; A Conversation Starter on Raising Expectations for Inservice Professional Development on Race with White Teachers" by Mica Pollock and Andrew Matschiner in *Urban Education*, July 2024 (Vol. 59, #6, pp. 1842-1870); the authors can be reached at micapollock@ucsd.edu and amatschi@ucsd.edu.

Back to page one

3. Should New Leaders Hit the Ground Running or Take It Slow?

In this *Harvard Business Review* article, Claudius Hildebrand and Jason Baumgarten (Spencer Stuart) and Mahesh Madhavan (CEO of Bacardi) say that many newly installed CEOs "find it tempting to seek out quick wins and take bold actions that reveal a decisive attitude." This belief is reinforced by a piece of folk wisdom – that leaders have 90 days to prove themselves.

But in their study of more than a thousand CEOs of S&P 500 companies, Hildebrand, Baumgarten, and Madhavan found that the opposite approach was essential to long-term corporate success. Gaining the confidence of stakeholders takes a full two years, they report, "and only by focusing strategically and purposefully on building trust during that period can CEOs genuinely create the conditions for long-term success." The authors distilled six pieces of advice:

• *It's a marathon, not a sprint*. "You need to go slow to go fast," they say. "Accepting that idea and pacing yourself accordingly will allow you to steady your efforts and help others develop faith in your leadership." The key is assessing the culture, scoping out key issues, and projecting confidence that you'll be around for a while.

• *Pick your battles strategically*. "From day one," say Hildebrand, Baumgarten, and Madhavan, "you'll find yourself besieged with requests from multiple groups, all expressed with the highest urgency, and as you try to build trust and generate support, you'll naturally feel pressured to address them all." Say no to almost everyone, they advise, and carefully select a few initiatives that will garner quick wins and build the confidence of key stakeholders.

• *Align your team*. Assembling a high-performing leadership team can't wait, say the authors: "If you don't have a team in place that's cohesive, in agreement on objectives, and able to act effectively in support of your plans, it's almost impossible to gain people's confidence widely."

• *Engage stakeholders*. Getting to know board members is key, as is learning the ways they prefer to engage. Winning the confidence of all employees is also a priority in the early stages of the marathon. One strategy is holding regular "ask me anything" sessions and gathering data on what's on people's minds.

• *Communicate clearly and relentlessly*. "Repetition, repetition, repetition," say Hildebrand, Baumgarten, and Madhavan. "Tell people what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them. You'll get tired of this process, but remember: much of what you'll be saying either will feel new to your audience or will start to sink in only after many repetitions." It's also important to use specific data to show progress on what's improving and make course corrections when necessary.

• *Take care of yourself*. Leaders can feel isolated and cut off from people who can give them candid feedback, and can also burn out. It's important to attend to relationships and personal health, stay up to date on professional reading, and engage a leadership coach.

"How CEOs Build Confidence in Their Leadership" by Claudius Hildebrand, Jason Baumgarten, and Mahesh Madhavan in *Harvard Business Review*, July/August 2024 (Vol. 102, #4, pp. 52-56)

Back to page one

4. Dealing Thoughtfully with Employees Who Are Upset

In this *Harvard Business Review* article, Christina Bradley, Lindy Greer, and Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks (University of Michigan) say research clearly indicates that the way leaders respond when employees show negative emotions – anger, sadness, frustration, being overwhelmed – "can make a world of difference to their well-being, the quality of your relationship with them, and your team's ability to perform." An important part of this skillset is leaders knowing when to:

- Give helpful advice;
- Simply acknowledge the person's feelings;
- Give them space to handle their emotions privately.

A meta-skill is reacting to people's emotions in a way that makes them feel they are valued, have a sense of purpose, and are good at their jobs.

There are three common misconceptions about what leaders should and shouldn't do when confronted with negative emotions:

• *Misconception #1: Discussing emotions at work is unprofessional*. In that vein, one study found that 51 percent of managers thought that showing emotions on the job was inappropriate and should be suppressed. In fact, say Bradley, Greer, and Sanchez-Burks, addressing emotions can be very helpful in most situations, and leaders must be able to respond in a supportive manner when employees are upset. Simply noticing and acknowledging emotions – "You seem to be a bit down" – can build trust and be a step toward improving workplace culture.

• *Misconception #2: Getting involved in personal matters is too perilous*. Fear of saying the wrong thing and handling a situation badly prevents many leaders from stepping up. But emotions "are bridges that connect people," say the authors. "Going out of your way to show employees that you care about how they're feeling demonstrates to them that they're not alone in their experience and that you're looking out for them." Big interventions are rarely necessary; something as small as saying you're available to talk, offering a compliment, or leaving a flower on someone's desk can mean a lot.

• *Misconception #3: Managers need to solve all these emotional problems*. Managers are used to solving other people's problems – they have a bias toward action – and it's important to step back, acknowledge, discuss, and find out whether it's best for people to tackle the issue themselves. For many people, knowing that their problem is acknowledged is enough.

Bradley, Greer, and Sanchez-Burks suggest a framework for deciding when and how much to intervene when employees show negative emotions. In a four-square matrix, the two axes are (a) Does the person seem to be coping? and (b) Is the person dealing with a time-sensitive goal? Here are the possible courses of action:

- Not coping, on a deadline – Intervene and help the person focus, check in again later.
- Not coping, not on a deadline – Validate that person's emotions first, then offer to help.
- Coping, on a deadline – Don't engage now; wait till later and ask how they're doing.
- Coping, not on a deadline – Validate the emotion and don't offer advice.

A possible validating statement: "That really is a lot; I'd be overwhelmed too." A possible lead-in to advice: "Would it be OK if I shared some ways that I manage my time? Maybe some of my strategies could help."

Here are Ted Lasso's after-action words when his soccer team had a tough defeat: "This is a sad moment right here. For all of us. There ain't nothing I can say standing in front of you right now that can take that away." He then advised his players that once they felt a bit better, they should, like goldfish with a ten-second memory, move on and focus on the next game.

Bradley, Greer, and Sanchez-Burks close with these skill-building suggestions for leaders:

- Identify your default behavior. Is it to jump in right away, or hold back? Think about fine-tuning your response to each situation.
- Pay attention to and be curious about others' reactions – and your own. Did colleagues seem grateful for your concern? Did they give you feedback?
- Expand your repertoire. "Dealing with employees' emotions in a way that fits each context requires having a portfolio of responses to choose from," say the authors. "You expand yours by observing how others respond to people's emotions… When you spot new and better approaches, try experimenting with them."

"When Your Employee Feels Angry, Sad, or Dejected: The Right – and Wrong – Ways to Respond" by Christina Bradley, Lindy Greer, and Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks in *Harvard Business Review*, July/August 2024 (Vol. 102, #4, pp. 76-83); Greer is at greerll@umich.edu.

Back to page one

5. What Makes a Career and Technical Education Program Effective?

In this article in *American Educator*, James Stone III says the quality of career and technical education (CTE) programs varies widely across the U.S., the result of our decentralized approach to K-12 governance. Drawing on a wide range of research, Stone identifies the academic, technical, and employability skills students master in the best CTE programs and lists the key program features that build those skills:

• The CTE curriculum is derived from industry-recognized standards and reflects qualifications for future employment. Effective programs stay in touch with regional industry leaders and gear their curriculum to the skills and knowledge needed for entry to in-demand industries and occupations; in some cases students earn an industry-recognized credential (IRC).

• The curriculum is delivered through activities that address authentic problems. Students grapple with real-world challenges that develop technical and "figure it out" skills, as

well as non-academic competencies like persistence, communication, teamwork, and reliability.

• The curriculum continually enhances related math, science, and literacy concepts. These academic skills are taught in ways that enliven them and point to practical applications in CTE fields. The National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) has developed an especially effective way to integrate academics with career education.

• The curriculum is guided by industry advisory committees and feeds into postsecondary CTE programs. "Through such advisory committees," says Stone, "educators and employers have one conversation and therefore engage in complementary work… The result should be a smooth pathway from high school into the postsecondary technical curriculum and into employment."

• Teachers use good pedagogy. As many as 85 percent of CTE educators come directly from the workplace and often need support in classroom management, curriculum planning, classroom strategies, and assessing student learning. Providing accelerated training in these areas greatly reduces teacher attrition.

• Work-based learning connects with CTE classrooms. Integrating classroom experiences with workplace problem-solving can be done in a number of ways: apprenticeships, being part of a workplace team, being mentored on the job, and earning wages while learning. European CTE programs often serve as models.

• Student organizations within CTE programs provide more opportunities to explore career pathways and develop skills. These include clubs within the school, on-the-job projects, leadership opportunities, attending conferences, and engaging in community service.

• An assessment framework incentivizes career aspiration. "Although it is beneficial for CTE programs to be open to students who are just exploring," says Stone, "it is also important to develop well-defined pathways that ensure students are on their way to their chosen careers." CTE programs might be assessed at three levels to receive funding: Bronze (the most basic level with students meeting all high-school requirements and at least one industry-recognized credential); Silver (Bronze standards and more-thorough preparation for career success); and Gold (Silver plus higher academic achievement, extensive workplace experience, and a four-course technical education sequence in each career pathway).

"Signature Features of High-Quality Career and Technical Education" by James Stone III in *American Educator*, Spring 2024 (Vol. 48, #1, pp. 12-16)

Back to page one

6. Principles of Good Teaching Are Alive in Effective CTE Programs

In this *American Educator* article, Paul Kirschner (Open University of the Netherlands), Mirjam Neelen (Novartis), and Tim Surma (Thomas More University, Antwerp) say that Barak Rosenshine's ten principles of good teaching (summarized in Memo 431) apply seamlessly to workplace learning in CTE programs:

• *Principle 1: Provide daily review*. This means talking through how previous learning is relevant to and can be applied to the new situation, including safety procedures and a hands-on task completed last time.

• *Principle 2: Present new material in small steps.* In the workplace, it's common to be asked to perform an entire task – for example, checking a patient's vital signs or removing an engine from a car. Applying Principle 2 means breaking it down into manageable parts and addressing them one at a time, without losing sight of the whole task.

• *Principle 3: Ask questions*. "Experts often find it hard to put themselves in novices' shoes and truly understand what novices need to learn and how they can get there," say Kirschner, Neelen, and Surma. This is especially applicable in CTE settings, where the expert/novice gap can be wide.

• *Principle 4: Provide models*. This might involve telling stories, using simulations, providing hands-on examples, showing pictures and videos, or using virtual reality technology to guide learning.

• *Principle 5: Guide practice*. "Novices are not very good at directing their own learning," say the authors. Guided practice with continuous feedback is a staple of CTE pedagogy.

• *Principle 6: Check for understanding*. This can be informal over-the-shoulder observation and coaching or building a portfolio showing mastery of a full range of competencies.

• *Principle 7: Obtain a high success rate*. "Constructive feedback that identifies and corrects inaccurate (or missing) skills and misconceptions further refines knowledge and skills," say Kirschner, Neelen, and Surma.

• *Principle 8: Provide scaffolds for difficult tasks*. CTE and workplace learning lends itself to gauging the difficulty of a task and providing just enough support for success – without giving too much.

• *Principle 9: Create time for independent practice*. This can be tricky in a workplace setting where making a mistake can result in lost time and money, injuries, or even death. How much independence and monitoring are needed?

• *Principle 10: Engage in weekly and monthly review*. Retrieval practice and spaced review are well-established cognitive strategies for reinforcing and retaining knowledge and skills, and are totally appropriate for workplace and CTE settings.

"Maximizing the Effectiveness of Workplace Learning" by Paul Kirschner, Mirjam Neelen, and Tim Surma in *American Educator*, Spring 2024 (Vol. 48, #1, pp. 17-20)

Back to page one

7. Award-Winning Children's Books

In these *Social Education* features, Sydney Beauchamp and the awards committees name the Carter G. Woodson and Septima P. Clark book award winners and honorees for 2024 (click the links below for cover images and brief summaries):

Elementary Woodson winner and honor books:

- *My Powerful Hair* by Carole Lindstrom, illustrated by Steph Littlebird
- *How Do You Spell Unfair? MacNolia Cox and the National Spelling Bee* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Frank Morrison
- *Unstoppable: How Bayard Rustin Organized the 1963 March on Washington* by Michael Long, illustrated by Bea Jackson

Middle level winner:

- *Contenders: Two Native Baseball Players, One World Series* by Traci Sorell, illustrated by Arigon Starr

Secondary winner:

- *Family Style: Memories of an American from Vietnam* by Thien Pham

Elementary Clark winner and honor books:

- *The Lion Queen: Rasila Vadher, the First Woman Guardian of the Last Asiatic Lions* by Rina Singh, illustrated by Tara Anand
- *Chef Edna: Queen of Southern Cooking, Edna Lewis* by Melvina Noel, illustrated by Cozbi Cabrera
- *I Dare! I Can! I Will!* by Linda Olafsdottir

Middle level winner and honor book:

- *The Brilliant Calculator: How Mathematician Edith Clarke Helped Electrify America* by Jan Lower, illustrated by Susan Reagan
- *Hidden Hope: How a Toy and a Hero Saved Lives During the Holocaust* by Elisa Boxer, illustrated by Amy June Bates

Secondary winner:

- *The Women Who Built Hollywood: 12 Trailblazers in Front of and Behind the Camera* by Susan Goldman Rubin

See also this list of Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People 2024, including biography, contemporary issues, folktales, global connections, geography/peoples/places, history/life and culture in the Americas, social interactions/relationships, and world history and culture.

"Carter G. Woodson Book Awards, 2024" and "Septima P. Clark Women in Literature Book Award, 2024" Sydney Beauchamp and Book Award Committees in *Social Education*, May/June 2024 (Vol. 88, #3, pp. 161-166)

Back to page one

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About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and other educators very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 54 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, writer, and consultant 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). Every week there's a podcast and HTMI version as well.

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- The current issue (in Word or PDF)
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- The "classic" articles from all 20 years

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
Cult of Pedagogy
District Management Journal
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
English Journal
Exceptional Children
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
Kappan (Phi Delta Kappan)
Knowledge Quest
Language Arts
Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance)
Literacy Today (formerly Reading Today)
Mathematics Teacher: Learning & Teaching PK-12
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Principal
Principal Leadership
Psychology Today
Reading Research Quarterly
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Social Education
Social Studies and the Young Learner
Teachers College Record
Teaching Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
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
Urban Education