Marshall Memo 346

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
August 9, 2010

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"When one stops learning, one is either dead or in a coma!"
Cathy Toll (see item #3)

"Learning can only occur when a learner sees possibility. Principals support possibility in two ways: providing new visions of what might be and encouraging new lenses for seeing what is."
Cathy Toll (*ibid*.)

"Children need to know that adults consider kindness and collaboration to be every bit as important as algebra and reading… And, as obvious as it might sound, teachers can't just preach kindness; they need to actually be nice to one another and to their students."
Susan Engel and Marlene Sandstrom (see item #2)

"Everybody wants out-of-the-box thinking; the question is, how do you get it? It's very simple. You ask a question: What assumptions am I making that I don't know I'm making?"
Benjamin Zander, Boston Philharmonic Orchestra conductor (see item #1)

"We are faced with this aggressive, unbelievably well-funded industry trying to change the environment in which kids make the decision to smoke or use tobacco-based products."
Karen Lewis (see item #6)

"My husband's fate was sealed at age 11, when he smoked his first cigarette."
Jane Brody (see item #7)

1. An Orchestra Conductor Talks About His Leadership Style

This *Wharton Leadership Digest* article profiles Benjamin Zander, who has conducted the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra for the last 31 years. Zander says that most conductors work with some of the least happy, most professionally frustrated workers anywhere. A 1996 Harvard study found that orchestra musicians are even less satisfied with their jobs than federal prison guards.

String quartet musicians, on the other hand, ranked highest in job happiness and professional growth. Why the huge difference? Quartet players work in a small, cooperative group, each with a degree of autonomy and the power to influence group decisions. Orchestra musicians, on the other hand, are part of a large group that is usually ruled by a dictator. "Conducting is the last bastion of totalitarianism," says Zander. Musicians aren't allowed to speak unless they pose a question. He confesses that for years he ran his orchestras this way and it seemed to work.

Then he shifted his approach, focusing less on wielding power and boosting his ego and more on what he *contributed* each day. The job of running the Boston Philharmonic, he says, is to inspire, not command – to "remind people why they went into music in the first place."

"You can face problems with resignation, anger, or possibility," continues Zander. "These are all valid responses. You have a choice." He wants his musicians to dwell in a world of possibility. "Everybody wants out-of-the-box thinking; the question is, how do you get it? It's very simple. You ask a question: What assumptions am I making that I don't know I'm making? Every organization, every human endeavor, has to have someone whose job it is to notice what assumptions are being made… and [who] has permission to say so. Anybody from the bottom to the top should be able to speak about assumptions without fearing loss of any kind."

When Zander's musicians make a mistake, he asks them not to surrender to self-doubt and recrimination but say, "How fascinating!" Every mistake is an opportunity to learn, every setback a world of possibility. "Education is not so much about the transference of information as the opening up of new categories. When you are educated in that sense, you are actually walking in a different world." The key question becomes, "What are you going to do now?"

"Boston Philharmonic's Benjamin Zander: Tapping Into 'The Art of Possibility'" in *Wharton Leadership Digest*, July-August 2010 (Vol. 14, #7-8)
http://leadership.wharton.upenn.edu/digest/index.shtml

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2. Bullying: Teaching Children What's Wrong and How to Do What's Right

In this *New York Times* Op Ed article, Williams College psychologists Susan Engel and Marlene Sandstrom report that Massachusetts has a new anti-bullying law that requires schools to implement anti-bullying programs, investigate alleged bullying, and report the most serious cases to the police. Engel and Sandstrom support the law but say that "legislation alone can't create kinder communities or teach children how to get along. That will take a much deeper rethinking of what schools should do for their students."

While texting and other forms of electronic communication make it possible for bullies to operate with less supervision and accountability, there's little evidence that kids today are any crueler to each other than they were in the past. "Indeed," say Engel and Sandstrom, "there is ample research – not to mention plenty of novels and memoirs – about how children have always victimized one another in large and small ways, how often they are oblivious to the rights and feelings of others, and how rarely they defend a victim." A 1995 video study of recess activity in Canada recorded 4.5 bullying incidents an hour and found that students rarely intervened. "[T]he inclination and ability to protect one another and to enforce a culture of tolerance does not come naturally," say Engel and Sandstrom. "These are values that must be taught."

The danger with the new crop of glossy, expensive anti-bullying programs, they say, is that schools will be tempted to address the issue quickly and superficially. The problem is more complex than many of these materials recognize. For starters, there are three categories of bullies, each requiring a different response:

• Friendly, responsible children who dabble in mean behavior – These kids respond to a little guidance from adults; for example, Vivian Paley once formulated a recess rule that children were not allowed to exclude anyone from their play.

• Bullies who have emotional or developmental problems and/or come from abusive families – These children need help more than they need punishment.

• Children who get caught up in a peer culture of aggression – for example, a clique of preadolescent girls who form a club aimed at being mean to other girls. Teachers need to keep a sharp eye out for this dynamic and intervene immediately.

Basically, schools need to teach children "how to be good to one another, how to cooperate, how to defend someone who is being picked on, and how to stand up for what is right" – in other words, get them to internalize a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others. This requires a schoolwide initiative that goes beyond curriculum packages and involves every classroom, every staff member, and every parent. "Children need to know that adults consider kindness and collaboration to be every bit as important as algebra and reading," say Engel and Sandstrom. "In groups and one-on-one sessions, students and teachers should be having conversations about relationships every day. And, as obvious as it might sound, teachers can't just preach kindness; they need to actually be nice to one another and to their students."

One of the most important anti-bullying measures that teachers can implement, they say, is frequently structuring classroom activities that make students interdependent and teach them to "view individual differences as unique sources of strength. It's vital that every student, not just the few who sign up for special projects or afterschool activities, be involved in endeavors that draw them together."

After three teenage victims of bullying committed suicide in 1983, Norway launched a nationwide campaign that produced immediate and lasting reductions in bullying, stealing, and cheating. Teachers, custodians, and bus drivers are trained to spot bullying, share information about student interactions, have weekly discussions with students about friendship and conflict, and involve parents. "Clearly, when a school and a community adopt values that are rooted in treating others with dignity and respect," conclude Engel and Sandstrom, "children's behavior can change."

"There's Only One Way to Stop a Bully" by Susan Engel and Marlene Sandstrom in *The New York Times*, July 23, 2010 (p. A19)
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/23/opinion/23engel.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=There's%20Only%20One%20Way%20to%20Stop%20a%20Bully&st=cse

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3. Six Ways for Principals to Be Learning Leaders

In this thoughtful *Journal of Staff Development* article, consultant Cathy Toll draws a distinction between *instructional* leadership – planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction – and *learning* leadership – focusing on what is learned and how it's learned. She believes that both are important but that the second isn't getting enough attention, particularly as it relates to the professional development of teachers. She suggests six ways that savvy principals can be learning leaders:

• *Don't accept that a teacher can't grow*. As a rookie principal, Toll admits that she believed some teachers were stuck and saw herself heroically pushing on them like heavy boulders – a mindset that put these teachers in a deficiency mode. "I saw it as my duty to get unlearning teachers to learn," says Toll. "Over the years, however, I have come to recognize that all people learn all the time, including teachers. When one stops learning, one is either dead or in a coma!" She realized that some teachers learned more slowly, some got it cognitively before their actions caught up, and some grew in areas where she wasn't looking. Seeing teachers this way helped Toll to become more sensitive to their needs and more supportive of their development.

• *Model being a learner*. Early in her principalship, Toll was loath to admit when she didn't know something. When a teacher asked for help using geoboards, Toll, more expert in literacy, made a couple of stumbling attempts and a lame suggestion to look in the literature. "Thus, I missed a great opportunity to be a learner," she says, "both for my own benefit in knowing more about geoboards in math instruction and also to enhance my relationship with the teacher." She wished she had said, "I'm not sure about using geoboards myself. Should we figure this out together?" The same goes for sharing professional reading. Rather than telling

teachers about an article you read over the break (*See how well-read I am!*), it's better to take part in a study group, reading and discussing articles and books along with teachers.

• *Create a hospitable climate for learning*. "The core of hospitality in support of learning," says Toll, "is friendliness toward new ideas and the exploration of the unfamiliar, and a welcoming spirit for those who struggle to question themselves and their learning. In a hospitable environment, teachers can be the learners they truly are, with no pretense to know what they don't know and no shame about what they bring to the learning. Thus, when difficult examinations of past-held beliefs or current failed efforts take place, these struggles occur within a community that can reliably receive and honor that work… In mature learning communities, participants recognize that differences are a rich source of potential understanding and learning." Principals play a key role in creating a hospitable climate: by accepting teachers as they are, warts and all; by clarifying differences in a non-threatening way; by asking teachers to consider other viewpoints and their impact over time; by sometimes asking colleagues to sleep on an issue before continuing a discussion; and by making it clear that some differences won't be resolved – one side doesn't have to win while the other loses.

• *Create a sense of possibility*. "Learning can only occur when a learner sees possibility," says Toll. "Principals support possibility in two ways: providing new visions of what might be and encouraging new lenses for seeing what is." This includes getting teachers to visit other classrooms and schools, sharing videos and teacher accounts of successful instructional approaches, organizing study groups, and getting teachers to look at student work from other grade levels and ask probing questions.

• *Ask the right questions*. Principals reveal a lot about their values by the questions they ask in supervisory conversations, faculty meetings, and classroom visits. Toll believes teachers grow when they are asked questions like:

- What have you learned about your students since the beginning of the year?
- Have you adjusted your work because of something you've learned?
- When you think about a struggling student, what would you like to learn about him or her?
- What new understanding has been most helpful to you this year?
- What information did you use to make that decision?
- How are you learning?
- How can I support your learning?

These types of questions show that a principal values teachers' professional learning.

• *Go deep*. A lot of what teachers "learn" in workshops and try out in their classrooms evaporates within six months. Why? Because it doesn't mesh with what they *know* about teaching and learning and doesn't resonate with who they *are* as educators. Toll believes that professional development "sticks" only when it engages teachers at three levels: knowing, doing, and being. When principals introduce new classroom practices, she says they need to work hard to help teachers understand "why they are implementing those practices, when those practices are best used, and how they might evaluate the appropriateness of particular practices for particular students. Connecting with teachers' being is more challenging, but it helps when

principals honor teachers' beliefs, values, and perspectives and encourage them to teach their students in accordance with those values. Principals can also help teachers see "that they are constantly learning in ways that shape their being," says Toll. "This kind of learning takes place subconsciously as educators interact with students, colleagues, the profession, and the larger community." Finally, principals can recognize teachers' "being" side by holding retreats, personal growth workshops, and health enhancement activities – showing a recognition of "the whole teacher."

"Six Steps to Learning Leadership" by Cathy Toll in *Journal of Staff Development*, June 2010 (Vol. 31, #3, p. 50-56), no e-link available; Toll is at cathy@partneringtolearn.com.

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4. Three Levels of Professional Coaching

In this *Journal of Staff Development* article, Dori Novak, Marceta Reilly, and Diana Williams share coaching ideas they have used in Howard County, MD. Among them is a leadership practices continuum for differentiating coaching depending on each coachee's profile:

- *Coaching zone* – The leader isn't the "wise one" and shifts to equal partnership:
  - Designing actions in collaboration with the coachee
  - Planning and setting goals together
  - Listening for underlying themes or assumptions
  - Avoiding judgments and negative criticism
  - Asking questions that reveal key information needed to maximize the coaching relationship
  - Posing possibilities, sharing information and ideas
  - Giving constructive criticism
  - Pushing thinking so clear and creative ideas emerge
  - Decisions are created by the group, not one individual
  - Monitoring progress
  - Celebrating success
- *Mentoring zone* – A softer form of directing; the "wise one" shares expertise, ideas:
  - Teaching skills needed for self-sufficiency
  - Offering options
  - Creating awareness
  - Appropriate for novices but not for experienced and/or highly motivated staff
  - At its worst, this approach creates a clone of the mentor and denies the individuality of the mentee.
- *Supervising zone* – The expert takes control and decides the course of action
  - Giving advice, telling people what to do, solving their problems
  - Giving advice by asking loaded questions ("Have you thought about…?")
  - Very little autonomy for the coachee

Novak, Reilly, and Williams believe leaders should start in the coaching zone and move to the mentoring zone only if they find the coachee lacks experience. The supervisory zone should be reserved for those who "challenge authority or blatantly disregard policy."

"Leadership Practices Accelerate into High Speed" by Dori Novak, Marceta Reilly, and Diana Williams in *Journal of Staff Development*, June 2010 (Vol. 31, #3, p. 32-37), no e-link. The authors can be reached at denovak@comcast.net, marcetar@coachingschoolresults.com and DWilli1398@aol.com.

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5. Running a Secondary Advisory Program

"Implementing a successful advisory program is a complex endeavor," says Boston consultant Mara Schanfield in this article in *ASCA School Counselor Magazine*, "…[T]he chances of success dramatically increase if it is implemented with patience, collaboration, and a school counselor's leadership." Here are her suggestions in four key areas:

• *Purpose* – Advisories, which meet on a regular basis during the school day, make it possible for a cadre of staff members to get to know a small group of students well, putting them in a position to solve problems that might not be detected in a large school – for example, students who are consistently missing breakfast, being bullied, showing signs of depression, or might need special-education services. Advisors serve as the primary contact with parents, providing one person in the school who knows each child well and can make more frequent and well-informed calls to a manageable number of parents. Advisors can also be trained to write seniors' college recommendation letters, greatly reducing the load on core-subject teachers. At their best, advisories personalize a large school and develop trust and strong relationships that can fundamentally shift the school's culture, engage students, connect families, and improve student outcomes, including achievement, graduation rates, and post-secondary success.

• *Basics* – First comes mission. "An effective advisory program has a clear mission that is closely aligned with the school's goals for student achievement," says Schanfield. For example, a school trying to make AYP in English language arts should focus its advisories on literacy. Second is a champion – the principal or another leader who keeps the flame alive through difficult times. Third is administrative support – training for advisors, curriculum materials (a frequent problem in failed advisory programs), the absolute minimum of interruptions during advisory time, advance notice of changes in the advisory schedule, pulling students out of advisory only for emergencies, time for advisors to make family phone calls, and fostering patience for the long-term benefits that a successful advisory program should produce for students and teachers. Finally, operational support, usually provided by counselors: fitting advisories into the schedule and school calendar; assigning students to groups; getting students to the right places at the right time; adding new students to advisory groups; and dealing with students who need to change their group.

• *Curriculum* – Advisory programs need a curriculum, and Schanfield mentions three that she thinks are solid: *The Advisory Guide* by Rachel Poliner, *Top 20 Teens* by Paul

Bernabei, and a curriculum developed by the Chicago Public Schools. But she believes there should always be flexibility to adapt or depart from the curriculum. "An effective advisory program places emphasis on interactions," says Schanfield. "Essentially, advisory curriculum isn't 'delivered' but rather facilitated." This is new territory for many results-oriented teachers, and they need lots of support to be successful.

This is where the school counselors come in, providing training and support (running "Advisory for Advisors" where teachers can share ideas and support one another), working one-on-one and in small groups with teachers, and finding other supportive roles for teachers who are not cut out to be successful advisory leaders. On the curriculum, counselors can suggest themes (bullying prevention, for example), suggest topics for a grade level (post-secondary planning for seniors), and empower advisors to take advantage of teachable moments. "Advisors who share power and allow students to drive activities are often impressed by the results," says Schanfield, citing a high school where students took the initiative to suggest a rewriting of the school's discipline policy after what they considered an unfair expulsion.

• *Governance and accountability* – Schanfield recommends an advisory board with counselors, administrators, teachers, students, family, and community representatives as members. This board should meet regularly and ensure that ideas are thought through and good policy decisions are made. The board should also track a number of measurable items:

- Student attendance in advisories
- School attendance on advisory days
- Requests to transfer in and out of advisory groups (tracked by advisor)
- Student mobility to other schools
- Attrition
- Teacher retention
- Discipline referrals
- Suspensions

Schanfield also recommends surveying advisors and students at least twice a year, including interviews and informal conversations, to get a sense of buy-in and effectiveness.

"Advisory Advice" by Mara Schanfield in *ASCA School Counselor Magazine*, May/June 2010 (Vol. 47, #5, p. 18-22), no e-link available; Schanfield can be reached at maraschanfield@gmail.com.

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6. Stopping Smoking Before It Gets Started

In this *American School Board Journal* article, editor Del Stover reports on the struggle to keep young Americans from getting hooked on cigarettes and other tobacco products. "We are faced with this aggressive, unbelievably well-funded industry trying to change the environment in which kids make the decision to smoke or use tobacco-based products," says Karen Lewis of the National School Boards Association. Tobacco companies are spending $35 million *a day* to promote their products, which include electronic cigarettes that vaporize liquid

nicotine, fruit-flavored, nicotine-laced lozenges and candies, spitless tobacco packaged in small teabag-like pouches, and cartoon characters like Joe Camel, who is better known among 5-6-year olds than Mickey Mouse or Fred Flintstone.

"The biggest problem we face in tobacco control today is that people think this problem already is solved," says Lewis. Although there has been a 40 percent reduction in teen smoking since the late 1990s, one in five adolescents smoke and others use chewing tobacco or other tobacco products.

Classroom lessons and hallway posters on the evils of tobacco are necessary but not sufficient to make inroads on addiction, says Stover. What teachers and other staff members do in and around schools is another factor, which is why a number of districts and states forbid anyone from using tobacco products anywhere on campus. In North Carolina, 87 of the state's 115 school boards voluntarily implemented total campus bans starting ten years ago and encountered little of the expected push-back; in 2007 the state legislature mandated such policies statewide. "When young people see fewer and fewer adults smoking," says Anita Gaillard of the Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Agency, "it becomes less the social norm."

Another effective tactic is to educate students about the advertising tactics being used by tobacco companies – for example, signs in convenience stores near schools, youth-oriented product packaging, strategic shelf placement, and targeting socially vulnerable adolescents who are most likely to start smoking. When teens see how they are being manipulated, they sometimes rebel against smoking.

Even more powerful is when students take action. At Van Buren High School in Iowa, a "Just Eliminate Lies" group put a long row of shoes on the sidewalk to dramatize smoking deaths, hung up photos of celebrities who died of lung cancer or emphysema, and visited elementary schools to talk to younger students about not getting hooked.

"Thank You for Not Smoking" by Del Stover in *American School Board Journal*, August 2010 (Vol. 197, #8, p. 20-23), no e-link; Stover is available at dstover@nsba.org. The National School Boards Association has information on tobacco-free policies, study guidelines, and more: http://nsba.org/MainMenu/SchoolHealth/SchoolHealthRelatedLinks/TobaccoUse.aspx

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7. More on Smoking

"My husband's fate was sealed at age 11, when he smoked his first cigarette," says *New York Times* health writer Jane Brody in this poignant column. "Although he tried repeatedly to quit, he rarely abstained from nicotine longer than a tortured week or two." He was hooked from his very first cigarette, and begged his sons, "Learn from my mistake – if you never start, you'll never have to quit." Fortunately, they listened – but their father died of lung cancer.

The number of smokers in the U.S. decreased for several decades, but has now leveled off at about 20 percent of adults. As older smokers die, they are replaced by young addicts, keeping the number constant at about 45 million people. There are 435,000 smoking-related deaths in the U.S. every year.

"Nicotine is a legal but pernicious drug, likened in its tenacity to heroin and cocaine," says Brody. "Recent studies have shown how it hooks so many people – especially adolescents – and why those who smoke have such a hard time giving it up, even when they know the risks all too well. One woman I know has had lung cancer twice and is still smoking."

Studies show that people who start smoking young are more likely to become heavy smokers as adults. Nicotine moves rapidly from the lungs to the brain, where it binds to receptors and releases dopamine, giving a sense of pleasure, a reduction of stress and anxiety, and the desire for more nicotine. Smoking additional cigarettes creates partial tolerance during the day so that each cigarette has less effect. But during sleep, nicotine comes off the receptors and the person awakes with an intense craving. Over time, the binding sites in the brain increase, enhancing symptoms of withdrawal and craving for an additional fix. Social cues add another dimension to addiction – people and places associated with smoking. And some people suffering from depression use nicotine to self-medicate.

Animal studies suggest that early exposure to nicotine causes permanent structural and chemical changes in the brain that affect behavior and foster addiction. Kids who make it to 18 without inhaling cigarette smoke are much less likely to smoke as adults. Brody issues a strong plea to prevent young people from taking even one puff of tobacco smoke.

"Not Starting Means Never Having to Quit" by Jane Brody in *The New York Times*, July 20, 2010 (p. D7)
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/20/health/20brod.html?scp=1&sq=Not%20Starting%20Means%20Never%20Having%20to%20Quit&st=cse

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8. Is It Possible That Home Computers Widen the Achievement Gap?

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Jamie Davies O'Leary summarizes a new study from the National Bureau of Economic Research on the impact of home computers on the reading and math achievement of 500,000 North Carolina middle-school students. Overall, having a computer seemed to have a positive, albeit small, effect on reading and math scores – but that seems to have been due to family wealth. In other words, it was wealthier parents who could afford computers and the gains in achievement were due to SES-related factors – parents' educational level, books in the home, etc.

When the researchers looked at individual students before and after they got a home computer and Internet access, the results were quite different. Gaining access to a computer had a small but *negative* effect on both reading and math scores, and getting Internet access had a slightly larger negative effect on math scores (but no effect on reading). These effects were more pronounced for African-American, male, and/or low-income students.

Why would this be true? The researchers believe that (a) home computers and Internet access were crowding out time for studying, (b) many students weren't using their computers for academic pursuits, and (c) parents weren't effectively monitoring their children's computer use.

"Scaling the Digital Divide: Home Computer Technology and Student Achievement" by Jacob Vigdor and Helen Ladd (National Bureau of Economic Research, June 2010), summarized by Jamie Davies O'Leary in *Education Gadfly*, July 22, 2010 (Vol. 10, #27)
http://www.edexcellence.net/gadfly/index.cfm?issue=585

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9. Short Item:

A stuttering brochure – The Stuttering Foundation has a new downloadable booklet, *The Child Who Stutters in School: Notes to the Teacher*, to help identify and support students who stutter: http://www.stutteringhelp.org/default.aspx?tabindex=807&tabid=820.

The Foundation's website has a number of other resources: http://www.stutteringhelp.org

Spotted in "Reading and Reports" in *American School Board Journal*, August 2010 (Vol. 197, #8, p. 50-51)

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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.marshall8@verizon.net

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 37 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 about 50 issues a year).

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- How to change access e-mail or password

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Catalyst Chicago
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
Language Learner (NABE)
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
New York Times
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools