Marshall Memo 390

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
June 13, 2011

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Children cannot eat love, but our love for them directs us to help them find sustenance. Love cannot shelter them, but our love for them directs us to support them by acknowledging the academic challenges that can result from homelessness and, when we can, helping them to secure shelter. Love cannot stand between children and abuse, but it can help them heal."

Alisha Coleman-Kiner (see item #2)

"The brain is very good at sorting out patterns if you give it the chance and the right feedback. I find that often students will try to solve problems by doing only what they've been told to do, and if that doesn't work they give up. Here they're forced to try what makes sense to them and keep trying."

Joe Wise (see item #4)

"English language learners face a debilitating lexical gap between the words they know and the words they need to know."

Keith Folse (see item #8)

"When principals become effective law teachers, their staffs get the information they need from knowledgeable sources, not from the myths and rumors of the Teachers' Lounge Law School."

David Schimmel, Matthew Militello, and Suzanne Eckes (see item #6)

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1. Realistic Goals for Our Poorest Students?

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Michael Petrilli reacts to Diane Ravitch's recent *New York Times* Op Ed column, in which she questioned the achievement data of several high-scoring schools and stressed the primacy of family and non-school factors in achievement (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/opinion/01ravitch.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=Diane%20Ravitch&st=cse). "Rather than get defensive at Diane's defeatism," says Petrilli, "we reformers should clarify the ends that education reform *can* achieve. If not 100 percent proficiency, then what?"

He suggests following the possible trajectories of the 1 million very poor American children who will enroll in kindergarten this fall. Most live in single-parent families headed by women in their late teens or early twenties who dropped out of high school. Most of these children will live in poverty, without an involved father, through their school careers, trapped in communities hard hit by unemployment, drugs, and violence. We want all these children to graduate from high school and college, and have a shot at the American Dream, and we know that some teachers and schools help poor students beat the odds. But the forces working in the opposite direction are powerful, and the path from poverty to prosperity almost always takes several generations.

So what are challenging yet attainable goals for these million children? Petrilli suggests the following: Moving the high-school graduation rate for low-SES students from 50 percent to 60 percent without lowering graduation standards; moving their NAEP reading proficiency rate from 17 percent to 25 percent and the math proficiency rate from 8 percent to 15 percent. Meeting these goals would mean twice as many poor children making it – 9 percent instead of 4 percent.

And what goals should we have for the other 910,000 students? Petrilli suggests getting them to the Basic level on the NAEP, preparing them for decent jobs instead of the lowest-paying, and driving down the teen pregnancy and incarceration rate.

"Is this making you uncomfortable?" he asks. "Good. If we are to get beyond the '100 percent proficiency' or 'All students college and career ready' rhetoric, these are the conversations we need to have. And if we're not willing to do so, don't complain when Diane Ravitch and her armies of angry teachers say that we are asking them to perform miracles."

"Opinion: The Ends of Education Reform" by Michael Petrilli in *The Education Gadfly*, June 9, 2011 (Vol. 11, #22) http://www.edexcellence.net/news-commentary/education-gadfly.html

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2. A Memphis Principal Leads with Love

In this *Education Week* article, Memphis principal Alisha Coleman-Kiner tells how her high school went from a 55 percent graduation rate in 2007 to 81.6 percent in 2010, winning a graduation-day visit from President Obama: "I let my Booker T. Washington children know I love them, they are special to me, and I expect them to do great things," she explains. "I hire professionals who are willing and able to communicate the same messages in word and deed."

Love has been downplayed in schools, she continues. Since women entered education in the 1800s, love in schools has been seen as soft and feminine. "But love is hard and defies gender restrictions," says Coleman-Kiner. "For school leaders, it requires rising above the human instinct of self-preservation and exposing oneself to pain and disappointment. It requires seeing other people's children as valuable and worthy of love even when their parents and communities may not. It requires weeding out staff members who lack love for other people's children, even when they are highly skilled teaching technicians… Before we can put any of our knowledge and skills to use, we have to love our students."

"Success with children who have been cast aside by our society begins with love," she concludes. "Children cannot eat love, but our love for them directs us to help them find sustenance. Love cannot shelter them, but our love for them directs us to support them by acknowledging the academic challenges that can result from homelessness and, when we can, helping them to secure shelter. Love cannot stand between children and abuse, but it can help them heal."

"Leading with Love" by Alisha Coleman-Kiner in *Education Week*, June 8, 2011 (Vol. 30, #33, p. 25), http://www.edweek.org

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3. An Appraisal of Cincinnati's Teacher Evaluation System

In this *Education Next* article, Thomas Kane, Eric Taylor, John Tyler, and Amy Wooten report on their study of the teacher evaluation system used by the Cincinnati Public Schools over the last ten years. The researchers begin by voicing doubts about the efficacy of using test scores and value-added data to evaluate teachers (an approach not being used by Cincinnati):

- Test results are available for only about one quarter of K-12 teachers.
- Test-based measures are not very helpful for identifying effective classroom practices that might be useful in professional development.
- There's the danger that teachers being evaluated on test scores will focus on test prep rather than the full curriculum.

The reason for the current interest in using test data to evaluate teachers, say the authors, is that the conventional classroom observation process is "a largely perfunctory exercise." But could it become effective if a different approach were used? That's what intrigued the team about Cincinnati's system.

The district's evaluation process, developed in collaboration with the teachers' union, has the following components:

• In teachers' evaluation years, they are observed and scored four times. Three of the classroom observations are done by a peer evaluator from outside the school, one by a school-based administrator. Peer evaluators are chosen based on their classroom track record and serve as full-time evaluators for three years. Peer and school-based evaluators go through an intensive training course in which their scores of videotaped teachers must correlate with those by expert observers.

• The evaluation process is required for first-year teachers and for teachers up for tenure. Once tenured, teachers are evaluated every five years. Teachers can also volunteer to be evaluated, which usually occurs when they want to qualify for a selective position such as lead teacher or peer evaluator.

• Evaluators use a teacher evaluation rubric based on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. There are eight standards grouped into four domains: Creating an environment for student learning, teaching for student learning, planning, and professional contributions outside the classroom. Each of more than two dozen criteria is scored on a four-point scale: Distinguished, Proficient, Basic, and Unsatisfactory.

Cincinnati gave Kane, Taylor, Tyler, and Wooten access to multiple years of teachers' evaluation ratings and student test results, and they found a small correlation between higher scores on the rubric and higher student achievement. Specifically, scoring one notch higher on the rubric (for example, Distinguished versus Proficient) was associated with reading scores one-seventh of a standard deviation higher and math scores one-tenth of a standard deviation higher. This means that a student assigned to a top-quartile teacher would, on average, score about three percentile points higher in reading and two points higher in math than a student assigned to a bottom-quartile teacher. The authors acknowledge that this is not a very big difference, but argue that other things a teacher does that are not measured by the rubric might boost student gains to seven percentile points in reading and six in math.

Looking for specific teaching practices that boosted student achievement, the researchers believe that all items on the Cincinnati rubric help achievement. They identified classroom management as a key lever in math achievement and engaging students in questioning and discussion in reading.

Is Cincinnati's teacher evaluation process worth the effort and cost? The authors found that more-subjective ratings by principals and peers were about as accurate in identifying differences in teacher effectiveness as the four-times-a-year process. But they believe Cincinnati's system is worth it because:

- It gives teachers and administrators detailed information on the specific rubric-defined practices that contribute to student results.
- The data can help map out professional development for individual teachers and a whole staff.
- The rubric scores, while high overall (90% of teachers scored overall Proficient or Distinguished), still reveal specific areas for growth in individual teachers.

The most important element in Cincinnati's system, conclude the authors, is that it shows that classroom observations by trained professionals can identify practices that lead to higher

student achievement and can help improve teaching through professional development. As such, it is a better approach than using test scores to evaluate teachers.

[I see several weaknesses in the Cincinnati system that might account for the anemic results reported in this study. First, classroom observations are relatively infrequent within a given year, and teachers go for years without evaluations after their first year and tenure year, both of which mean that teachers don't get regular feedback that could be used to improve practice. Second, the system downplays the role of principals in teacher evaluation by bringing in outside evaluators to do three-quarters of the work – but principals have far more knowledge of curriculum and internal assessments and it could be argued that the resources being devoted to training peer observers should be put into building principals' skills. Third, it appears that observation visits are announced in advance, which raises questions about whether evaluators are seeing an accurate picture of daily instruction. Fourth, there may be some grade inflation in the system, with 90 percent of teachers scoring Proficient or Distinguished; this may come from the wording of the rubrics and/or the collegial relationship of peer observers. And finally, there doesn't seem to be a link between classroom observations and the work of teacher teams planning curriculum and looking at interim assessment results. Overall, Cincinnati's system doesn't appear to be nearly robust enough to bring about significant gains in teaching and learning. K.M.]

"Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: Can Classroom Observations Identify Practices That Raise Achievement?" by Thomas Kane, Eric Taylor, John Tyler, & Amy Wooten in *Education Next*, Summer 2011 (Vol. 11, #3, p. 54-60), http://educationnext.org/evaluating-teacher-effectiveness

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4. Developing Students' Intuition

In this *New York Times* article, Benedict Carey reports on the way a dreary, time-worn classroom sequence – first learn the rules (e.g., order of operations), then solve the end-of-chapter problems – might be flipped as a result of recent research by cognitive scientists. The key is taking advantage of the brain's ability to recognize patterns and help students see what *type* of problem they're dealing with. "When facing problems in real-life situations," says UCLA psychologist Philip Kellman, "the first question is always, 'What am I looking at? What kind of problem is this?' Any theory of how we learn presupposes perceptual knowledge – that we know which facts are relevant, that we know what to look for."

But how can students be taught to activate this skill? Experts in any field (chess, surfing) develop pattern recognition from years of study and practice. The new research shows that students can get better at intuitive pattern recognition if they have the right kind of training – visual, fast-paced, often focused on classifying problems rather than solving them. "Once the brain has a goal in mind, it tunes the perceptual system to search the environment" for relevant clues, says Steven Sloman of Brown University. In one experiment, people did a better job distinguishing among the painting styles of 12 unfamiliar artists after viewing mixed collections of all the artists' paintings than after viewing a dozen works by one artist, then the

next, etc. People's brains began to pick up the differences before they could articulate what they were.

In another experiment, Philadelphia sixth graders worked with a computer simulation of fractions to understand how to change 4/3 into 7/3 by adding or subtracting. Students were able to use a "slicer" to cut a simulated block into fractions and a "cloner" to make additional slices. The program gave students instant feedback on whether they were correct or not, and they did far better than a control group taught using conventional methods (73 percent correct versus 25 percent). Most impressively, these students retained their understanding when retested five months later, after a summer vacation. What made the difference, driving the math concepts home, was repeatedly seeing and manipulating fractions. "The brain is very good at sorting out patterns if you give it the chance and the right feedback," says Joe Wise, a teacher who took part in this research. "I find that often students will try to solve problems by doing only what they've been told to do, and if that doesn't work they give up. Here they're forced to try what makes sense to them and keep trying."

The key is tapping into perceptual intuition, which is more efficient than traditional instruction and frees up mental capacity for deductive reasoning, checking answers, and moving on to harder problems. In problems involving graphs and equations, for example, this includes making quick judgments about where lines should intercept the axes and about their slope, even when this doesn't seem obvious. Students who master the intuitive level also find they can transfer their learning to other situations. "There's no reason someone with a good eye for fashion or word-play cannot develop an intuition for classifying rocks or mammals or algebraic equations, given a little interest or motivation," says Carey. "This ability to transfer… is fundamental to scientific reasoning and is among the highest goals of teachers at all levels."

"Brain Calisthenics for Abstract Ideas" by Benedict Carey in *The New York Times*, June 7, 2011 (p. I1, D6),
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/07/health/07learn.html?scp=1&sq="Brain%20Calisthenics%20for%20Abstract%20Ideas"%20by%20Benedict%20Carey%20&st=cse

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5. Nine Ways to Increase Student Engagement

In this *Kappa Delta Pi Record* article, Greg Conderman and Laura Hedin of Northern Illinois University and Chicago-area teacher Val Bresnahan describe some ways that effective teachers increase students' active involvement and thereby boost learning:

• *Unison responses* – The teacher asks a question, allows a few moments of think time, uses a verbal or non-verbal cue for students to give a choral response, and then confirms or reinforces the right answer. For example, *When I touch each underlined digit in each number on the overhead, say its place value,* or *I will say the state name, and when I signal, say the capital city*. "Unison responses encourage all students to actively practice many skills throughout an instructional period, provide teachers with frequent information about each

student's progress, maintain students' attention, and thus significantly accelerate student progress," say the authors.

• *Response cards* – Students write the answers to all-class questions on index cards, and the teacher scans them and validates right answers. Different answers might be signaled by different color cards. For example, in a music class, students might hold up the card for the musical genre they just heard. Incorrect answers cue the teacher to reteach or clarify student misconceptions.

• *Dry-erase boards* – Students write answers to an all-class question on their individual boards (for example, *Write as many words as you can that rhyme with fall*) and then, on a signal, hold them up, allowing the teacher to see how students did and follow up if necessary.

• *Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down* – Students can indicate their response to a question with these hand signals – for example, *Can a country with a monarchy government impeach its ruler?* or *Does a mammal's body temperature change?*

• *Numbered heads together* – The teacher poses a question and small cooperative groups discuss what the right answer is. Students within each group have a number, and the teacher then calls on a particular number at random for a response. All students with that number stand to share their group's answer (or display them on dry-erase boards). For example, groups might evaluate a piece of writing using a rubric.

• *Jigsaw* – A unit of study is cut into component parts, each member of 5-or-6-student cooperative groups is given a piece, has time to study it, gathers in "expert" groups to think it through, and then returns to his or her cooperative group where students teach their pieces and the group works on understanding the unit as a whole. For example, students might use jigsaw to study several aspects of a country or region – history, natural resources, tourist attractions, famous citizens, and industries.

• *Reciprocal teaching* – The teacher reads a passage and thinks aloud to model four comprehension strategies: questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting. Working in groups, students gradually take over responsibility for these four skills, with the teacher circulating to monitor their work. For example, a science teacher might have students read a section of a textbook on renewable resources to identify main ideas and predict impact.

• *Think-pair-share* – The teacher gives students an open-ended question to consider, gives think time (during which students might jot ideas), then has students pair up and discuss their ideas with a partner and respond to a challenge or task. Pairs then share their ideas with the whole class. For example, an English teacher might ask pairs to identify one character in a novel or play and think of distinguishing characteristics and traits.

• *Peer teaching* – Students sit in pairs and each partner takes a turn teaching an instructional task that the teacher introduced earlier. This requires careful pairing of students and prior training in tutoring skills, but is a valuable activity for students at all levels.

"Promoting Active Involvement in Today's Classrooms" by Greg Conderman, Val Bresnahan, and Laura Hedin in *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, Summer 2011 (Vol. 47, #4, p. 174-180), http://kdpconnect.kdp.org/jit/download.aspx?ProductNumber=RSM11_Conderman

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6. Legal Illiteracy and Its Consequences

In this *Education Week* article, David Schimmel, Matthew Militello, and Suzanne Eckes contend that principals need to do a better job educating their colleagues about school law. "Although teaching law is not in their job description," say the authors, "principals already are the chief law teachers in their schools. This is because most principals frequently give legal advice – in staff meetings, in informal conversations, and in the way they develop, interpret, and enforce school rules." The problem is that sometimes what they say is "confusing, misleading, incomplete, or even incorrect," stopping teachers from taking disciplinary action when they should, or leading them to violate students' rights unintentionally.

"The costs of legal illiteracy are high," say Schimmel, Militello, and Eckes. For example, some teachers are told they shouldn't touch students. "This widespread belief among teachers that any touching of students involves inherent legal dangers persists despite the fact that it is always legal and appropriate for teachers to use reasonable force to protect their students and themselves," say the authors. "Additionally, there are state and federal laws that protect teachers from being held liable in these situations."

Another problem area among public-school teachers is not realizing that they function as agents of the government and need to be aware of First Amendment rights. Some teachers have run into problems ordering students to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, searching their backpacks for contraband without reasonable grounds, or forbidding them to distribute political or religious pamphlets that teachers consider controversial. Another example: a high-school teacher sends a student to the office for refusing to take off a T-shirt that calls the president an "international terrorist", expecting that the student will be suspended. The principal doesn't take action because the slogan isn't causing a disruption and a suspension could result in a lawsuit that the school district would not win. Not understanding this, the teacher feels embarrassed and unsupported by her principal.

To prevent this kind of situation, Schimmel, Militello, and Eckes have several recommendations:

- School law courses should have a unit on how to teach critical legal issues to staff members.
- School lawyers should be more proactive, teaching administrators and teachers how to practice preventive law.
- Principals should regularly include legal mini-lessons in their staff meetings.

"When principals become effective law teachers," conclude the authors, "their staffs get the information they need from knowledgeable sources, not from the myths and rumors of the Teachers' Lounge Law School. And by having a legally literate staff, principals will benefit from a reduction in legal mistakes and misunderstandings by teachers."

"Principals: An Antidote to Educational Malpractice" by David Schimmel, Matthew Militello, and Suzanne Eckes in *Education Week*, June 8, 2011 (Vol. 30, #33, p. 24-25), http://www.edweek.org; the authors' book on this subject is *Principals Teaching the Law: 10*

Legal Lessons Your Teachers Must Know (Corwin 2010). See Marshall Memos 66, 74, 205, and 257 for quizzes on legal issues.

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7. Idiomatic English As a Stumbling Block for ELLs

In this *TESOL Quarterly* article, Ron Martinez of the University of Nottingham and Victoria Murphy of the University of Oxford (U.K.) say that studies indicate that if children know 5,000-8,000 high-frequency words, they can understand 95 percent of most unsimplified texts in English. But this is misleading, say the authors, because buried in those common words are idioms that make reading much more challenging for English language learners. Simple English words are "often merely tips of phraseological icebergs," they say.

For example, here is a paragraph from *The Economist* (2008) containing seven common English expressions (underlined):

> But over the past few months competing 3G smartphones with touch screens and a host of features have been coming thick and fast to the American market. And waiting in the wings are any number of open-source smartphones based on the nifty Linux operating system. Apple will need to pull out all the stops if the iPhone is not to be swept aside by the flood of do-it-all smartphones heading for America's shores.

Understanding this passage would be challenging to an ELL because the meanings of the expressions are opaque to someone with only literal knowledge of the words that make them up. Other examples: Knowing the word *fish* wouldn't be any help understanding the word *fishy*; knowing *perfect* wouldn't help you know what *perfect stranger* means; knowing *time* wouldn't help with *time is money*, *time out*, *time and again*, *on time*, and *the big time*.

Research on ELL reading comprehension has only scratched the surface on this issue, say Martinez and Murphy. They conducted their own study in which ELLs read two passages that used exactly the same high-frequency words, in one case literally, in the other, idiomatically:

Passage 1:

The good part about living here is nature. I need to be free in the world. As I like to make and grow things, I don't live by any large cities. The grounds here on my block are fairly good (and they are pretty). I've been across the country and around the whole world a few times, but I think that here is better than any place I know on earth. And I don't ever need to go to the city to buy things – I don't like it there, actually. That's the good thing about living here, I feel; it's neither the country nor the city. I like to show it off. Call me to come down to see it if you like. I like company! (And I'm nice – really!)

Passage 2:

About me? I'm living large in the city, better than ever. Actually, I've been around the block a few times and I think I make a pretty good living on the whole, but that's neither here nor there. If you don't know any better, I come across as a show off. The thing is, my nature is to

be fairly down to earth, by and large, on the grounds that I call it like I see it. I know my place in the world. If things are down and I need to part company with the world, I go to the country. I don't really need to buy nice things to feel better. But I live off cities – they grow on you. Feel free to call me.

ELLs reading these passages had much better comprehension of the first one, and had a pretty accurate assessment of their own comprehension of that passage. But interestingly, students significantly *overestimated* their comprehension of the second passage. Martinez and Murphy say this suggests a challenge for teachers of ELLs: idioms pose a major barrier to comprehension, and teachers need to do a more explicit job teaching idioms and expand the list of common English word families to make common texts accessible to their students.

"Effect of Frequency and Idiomaticity on Second Language Reading Comprehension" by Ron Martinez and Victoria Murphy in *TESOL Quarterly*, June 2011 (Vol. 45, #2, p. 267-290), no e-link available

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8. Effective Ways for ELLs to Expand Their Vocabularies

"English language learners face a debilitating lexical gap between the words they know and the words they need to know," says Keith Folse of the University of Central Florida/ Orlando in this *TESOL Quarterly* article. Native English speakers know about 20,000 word families, or about 70,000 words; even well-educated ELLs know less than a quarter of that number. About 2,000 words serve to maintain conversation, 5,000 to read authentic texts, and about 10,000 to understand challenging academic materials. Folse goes on to answer four basic questions about ESL teaching:

• *Should teachers explicitly teach vocabulary?* Many educators have assumed that ELLs should learn vocabulary the way native speakers do – indirectly and naturally, through spoken interactions and extensive reading. "For many reasons, however, relying on guessing the meaning of new words from context clues is not an especially good strategy for ELLs whose goal is to learn a lot of vocabulary in a short time," says Folse. The research favors explicit vocabulary instruction, with teachers writing important words from class discussions on the board to support noticing and retention, devoting wall space to posting vocabulary, choosing textbooks that have overt vocabulary components in each lesson, and including vocabulary items in classroom assessments.

• *Which words should teachers teach?* Folse believes teachers should choose vocabulary appropriate to their students' goals – conversation, academic work, business, etc. – and proficiency level. He says that teaching from appropriate lists is more effective than having students learn words indirectly from context, but he doesn't believe in giving students alphabetized lists of words. "Instead, the most frequent and therefore most useful words should come first," he continues, "with the number of words in one list based on logistical factors such as length of course and class meetings or the time interval between class meetings." The research suggests teachers should mix up word lists, *not* present words that are similar phonologically, orthographically, semantically, or in terms of meaning (e.g., color words,

clothing names, directions) to avoid confusion. Students learn words best when the words are unrelated, he says.

• *How should vocabulary be practiced?* How many times students interact with new vocabulary is critical to committing words and meanings to long-term memory, says Folse. "The number of learner retrievals of a word is key," he says, "and teachers can and should control this factor." Having students use words in original sentences is *less effective* than having students complete several short fill-in-the-blank exercises that require pulling the words from memory. "This information is especially important for novice teachers who often mistakenly believe that writing original sentences is better for vocabulary acquisition because it is supposedly cognitively more demanding and personally involving," says Folse. He also advocates having students answer multiple, rapid-fire questions that get them thinking about words from different angles. For example, with the vocabulary list *voters, election, president, majority, incumbent, running mate, citizens, at least, party, poll, ballot,* and *politicians*, students could be asked, *Which word is often a piece of paper?* (ballot) *Which words are people?* (voters, president, incumbent, running mate, citizens, politicians) *Which word goes after Democratic or Republican?* (Party) *Which word is most difficult for you to pronounce? Why?*

• *What should students do?* Even with intensive, explicit instruction, says Folse, the number of words that ELLs need to learn is far greater than what can be accomplished in the classroom time available. This means that students need to take responsibility for learning words on their own. One of the most effective strategies is students keeping a vocabulary notebook, organized according to personal preference, including translations of words into the native language (a practice that used to be frowned on but has proved effective). Folse gives his students short homework assignments in which students are required to use one recently-studied word and one unknown word from their dictionary or other source. This challenges students to stretch beyond their comfort zone and constantly use new words in a meaningful context.

"Applying L2 Lexical Research Findings to ESL Teaching" by Keith Folse in *TESOL Quarterly*, June 2011 (Vol. 45, #2, p. 362-369), no e-link available

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9. Learning New Words

In this *Education Week* article, Sarah Sparks reports on a University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University study of how children and adults learn unfamiliar words. The generally accepted hypothesis has been that people learn new words gradually as they encounter them in various contexts. But this study found that people make a best guess about a new word's meaning based when they first encounter it, and hold onto that meaning unless it turns out to be clearly wrong. This suggests that word lists and flash cards aren't the best way to learn new words; instead, they should be taught in a rich context where people are more likely to make a good initial assessment of meaning.

"Word-Learning Study Finds Sudden Insights Trump Flash Cards" by Sarah Sparks in *Education Week*, June 8, 2011 (Vol. 30, #33, p. 6-7), http://www.edweek.org; the study was in the May 2011 issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

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10. A Discouraging Report on Middle-School Mathematics PD

This report from MDRC found that two years of intensive professional development in seventh-grade math topics (more than 100 hours of support in summer institutes, seminars, and in-school coaching) produced no evidence of improved teacher knowledge or student achievement. Teachers in control groups performed at comparable levels as teachers who went through the training, as did students in both groups.

Spotted in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, June 10, 2011; the full report, "Middle School Mathematics Professional Development Impact Study: Findings After the Second Year of Implementation" by Michael S. Garet, Andrew J. Wayne, Fran Stancavage, James Taylor, Marian Eaton, Kirk Walters, Mengli Song, Seth Brown, Steven Hurlburt, Pei Zhu, Susan Sepanik, and Fred Doolittle, can be found at http://www.mdrc.org/publications/598/overview.html.

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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 41 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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Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
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
The School Administrator
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools