

# Marshall Memo 626

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education

February 29, 2016

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## Quotes of the Week

“Feedback is the central mechanism through which teachers have guided students’ development, but teachers are no longer the sole source of feedback in a technology-rich environment.”

David Williamson Shaffer, Pdraig Nash, and A.R. Ruis (see item #1)

“Generally, when we’re trying something new and doing badly at it, we think terrible thoughts: *I hate this. I’m such an idiot. I’ll never get this right. This is so frustrating!* That static in our brains leaves little bandwidth for learning.”

Erika Anderson (see item #5)

“If we really want students to be lifelong learners, we must scaffold that attitude and the skills that go with it.”

Vince Watchorn and Daniel Willingham (see item #3)

“Creativity develops the soul. Encourage creative exploration even if it does not seem ‘practical’ or ‘career oriented.’”

Maurice Elias (see item #6)

“The ideal approach [to adult bullies] can be summarized in three words: ‘Limits, limits, limits.’ Bullies deserve thoughtful attention and an invitation to be reflective, but when these don’t suffice, they need to know – unequivocally – the minimum nonnegotiable conditions of belonging in the school community.”

Robert Evans and Michael Thompson (see item #4)

“Often, the biggest bullies are, underneath, deeply frightened. Once you set boundaries on their behavior, it may be possible to get to the heart of the matter. But not always.”

Robert Evans and Michael Thompson (*ibid.*)

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## 1. Skills for the Future

(Originally titled “Four Predictions for Students’ Tomorrows”)

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, consultant/author Erik Palmer says there’s a lot of uncertainty about the knowledge and competencies that will be truly useful for today’s students in tomorrow’s world. But he believes that in the decades ahead, some fundamental things will remain. Four predictions:

• *There will still be an Internet.* “It will still be possible to pick up a device, ask a question, and get several million results in less than a second,” says Palmer. The challenge of information overload will only get worse. This means that being able to make sense of an overwhelming amount of information is a crucial skill. It requires:

- A sense of what the World Wide Web really is;
- Sophistication in picking the right search engine for specific queries;
- Ways to formulate queries to get the best information;
- An awareness of how search results are ranked;
- Knowledge of domain types (including .com, .gov., .guru, .hr, and .org);
- Tools to evaluate the people, purpose, and possible bias behind a website.

It’s essential that schools provide direct instruction on these skills, says Palmer.

• *People will still be trying to sell us things and ideas.* “Commercials will bombard us from everywhere,” he says. “To evaluate these sales pitches, students will need an understanding of logic, reasoning, argument, and persuasive techniques.” Specifically:

- What an argument is – statements leading to a conclusion;
- How to evaluate an argument: Are the statements true? Do they force us to accept the conclusion?
- How to support statements – with facts, numbers, quotes, examples, and analogies;
- How to avoid reasoning errors – for example, confusing causality with correlation, generalizing, derailing the train of thought, stereotyping, and ad hominem attacks;
- How to recognize persuasive and rhetorical tricks – bandwagon appeals, transference, loaded words, hyperbole, allusion, and euphemism.

Palmer reports that the teachers he’s surveyed say they’ve never been trained in most of these skills. Their students will really need them down the road.

• *Listening will still be important.* There’s more to listening than paying attention, says Palmer: “Messages are not merely oral communication but rather an elaborate mix of words, sounds, music, and images. This means that all students will need to be media literate so they

can listen well to different kinds of media” – for example, being sophisticated about the power of a short video based on its image selectivity, visual effects, and music.

• *People will still be speaking.* “Unfortunately, schools have often ignored speaking skills,” says Palmer. These will be vital in a world where the channels for verbal communication will continue to blossom – consider how today’s Facetime, Skype, Periscope for Twitter, cell phone apps, webinars, podcasts, and narrated slideshows will be augmented. His desiderata for an oral communication curriculum:

Building a speech:

- How to analyze an audience and craft a message with interesting and relevant information;
- How to use a “grabber” opening, clear transitions, and a powerful closing;
- How to create effective visual aids;
- Fine-tuning personal appearance for the audience and the occasion;
- Appearing poised and avoiding distracting behaviors.

Delivering a speech:

- Making sure every word is clearly heard;
- Skillfully using emotion, passion, eye contact, gestures, and pacing.

“Four Predictions for Students’ Tomorrows” by Erik Palmer in *Educational Leadership*, March 2016 (Vol. 73, #6, p. 18-22), <http://bit.ly/1TL2RJo>; Palmer is at [erik\\_palmer@comcast.net](mailto:erik_palmer@comcast.net).

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## **2. The Changing Role of Teachers in a High-Tech World**

In this article in *Teachers College Record*, David Williamson Shaffer (University of Wisconsin/Madison), Padraig Nash (Lawrence Hall of Science, Berkeley), and A.R. Ruis (Wisconsin Center for Educational Research) report that despite the fact that 99 percent of U.S. classrooms have access to computers, only 40 percent of U.S. teachers use computers on a regular basis. The article explores the skills, knowledge, values, and ways of thinking that teachers will need to support their students’ social, emotional, and intellectual development in a high-tech world.

• *The historic classroom paradigm* – “To look forward, though, we must look back,” say the authors. For centuries, classrooms have been teacher-centered. In traditional “sage on the stage” schoolhouses, practice-based apprenticeships, and even in supposedly student-centered progressive classrooms, the teacher has played a central role in guiding students’ development. The best teachers have performed five primary functions:

- Content delivery – The teacher as tutor, helping students acquire the skills and knowledge in their area of expertise;
- Epistemological guidance – The teacher as explicator, setting the norms of how to think about the subject – for example, is it enough to get the right answer or do students need to explain their reasoning?
- Socialization – The teacher as disciplinarian, establishing order and promulgating norms of behavior and values;

- Nurturing – The teacher as counselor, building constructive interpersonal relationships with and among students and facilitating emotional and social development;
- Assessment – The teacher as evaluator, determining how well students are performing in all areas and conveying those judgments to families and other educators.

“Teachers exhibit the various (and often simultaneous) roles of tutor, explicator, disciplinarian, counselor, and evaluator through the process of giving feedback,” say Shaffer, Nash, and Ruis, “– by structuring, guiding, enforcing, and assessing, both formally and informally, students’ activities and behaviors.” Everything flows to and from the teacher.

One concern with teacher-centered instruction is that there are built-in conflicts among the five roles, which can compromise teachers’ work with students. For example, simultaneously acting as the tutor and evaluator can be tricky. “Furthermore,” say the authors, “when the person doing the *tutoring* in the content of a subject is also *assessing* the results, it is a challenge as an *explicator* to convince students that what constitutes good or bad work is anything other than ‘what the teacher wants.’ Similarly, it is hard for the person responsible for enforcing *discipline* to simultaneously serve as a *counselor* for students who are having problems in school. Complicating things even more, as schooling is presently conceived, teachers assume all of these roles in children’s lives, but they are only rewarded professionally for one thing: their students’ academic performance.” Juggling the five different roles is at the heart of teachers’ work, which is what makes the profession so challenging.

- *The impact of standards and high-stakes tests* – The recent augmentation of external curriculum requirements and implementation of standardized tests to measure how well students are learning is a significant shift from the traditional paradigm, the authors argue. External standards and tests mean that “both teachers and students become engaged in a mutual endeavor to satisfy the objectives defined by the standards,” they say, “which by definition lay outside the classroom and even the school itself.” The teacher is no longer the main assessor of what is acceptable and unacceptable work. “Teachers are forced to teach to the test – or at least to teach with the test in mind – thus potentially compromising their decisions about content, explication, and even nurturing in the presence of an external standard. We see this tension when a teacher worries that he or she is rushing through material to ‘cover content’ for the test, when too little class time is available for ‘off topic’ discussions that are important for children’s development, or when teachers feel forced to cover material that may not be developmentally appropriate for some of their students.”

- *The impact of technology* – When people learned to write, they no longer had to rely on memorization to keep track of information, say Shaffer, Nash, and Ruis. Writing outsourced memory. But people still had to know a lot “because while books and paper are powerful tools for storing symbolic information, words on a printed page are inert. Someone has to be there to read them, to interpret them, and to use them.” Computers are different. They can process information externally, *outsourcing thinking itself*. A simple example is the way a person typing in Microsoft Word can be prompted to correct a spelling mistake or tell the computer that this is a word that’s not in the Microsoft spell-check dictionary. “Computers are tools that

take a particular form of thinking (understanding that can be expressed in the form of a finite-state algorithm) and allow it to be performed independent of any person,” say the authors.

“The question of how teaching will change in the era of digital technologies is thus quite profound,” they continue. “In the traditional classroom, a teacher was simultaneously a tutor, explicator, disciplinarian, counselor, and evaluator because the teacher was the only person in the room who was trained to manipulate and evaluate symbols. There was only one source of feedback in the system, only one functioning computer in the room: the teacher... What is the role of the teacher in a classroom where he or she is no longer the only trained computer – where every student can have his or her own computer, or even more than one? What happens when the learning environment is no longer just a classroom but an online ecosystem? Or, to put it in global economic terms: Which of the traditional roles of the teacher will be outsourced to smart machines?”

Shaffer, Nash, and Ruis believe that computers are unsuited to the role of counselor or disciplinarian – “The social and emotional lives of children are far too complex – and far too rooted in their relationships with adults – to be managed by machines anytime in the near future,” they say. They are also skeptical that social media and MOOCs, while speeding up and facilitating communication – have fundamentally altered the traditional teacher-centered paradigm. “There are, however, a number of learning technologies that are fundamentally changing the centrality of teachers or their professional roles,” they say. For starters, digital workbooks, digital texts, and digital internships.

- *Digital workbooks* – These are based on the idea that students need to learn basic knowledge and skills, which can be developed through workbook practice. Programs like *Math Blaster* help students internalize basic facts, skills, and habits, recreating traditional classroom worksheets in digital form. But they’re different from paper worksheets in that they are able to:

- Evaluate students’ performance and give feedback in real time;
- Search, retrieve, collect, and catalog information on how students are doing;
- Adjust to students’ levels, offering easier or harder problems based on their responses;
- Allow students to ask for help or see worked examples if they run into trouble;
- Track students’ performance over time on a range of skills and knowledge.

All this basically fulfills the teacher’s traditional functions as evaluator and tutor.

- *Digital texts* – These are based on the idea that students should learn from mediated experiences, which can then be interpreted and understood through interactions with adults and peers. Computers do an excellent job of making books, encyclopedias, films, artwork, virtual museums, visual libraries, interactive hypermedia, computer games, and simulations available to students. These can be far richer than the texts of the past, say Shaffer, Nash, and Ruis, which opens the possibility that students will be able to experience and make sense of texts (broadly defined) on their own, without the mediation of a teacher. “In this view,” they say, “students are ‘noble savages’ growing up in a digital wilderness untainted by the prejudices and strictures of adults.” On the other hand, students may continue to experience external material with teachers’ and peers’ explication and support. This would be true with a computer

game like *Civilization*, which requires that the teacher provide essential background information on the historic and economic principles that underlie the game.

• *Digital internships* – These are based on the belief that students require enculturation, learning the skills, values, and ways of thinking of people in the world of work. Computers can provide a virtual environment in which students simulate an apprenticeship or practicum, engaging in practice-based or work-based learning in an avocation or occupation – for example, engineering, urban planning, biology, or journalism. “Interactions that students have within the simulation are analyzed in real time,” say the authors, “and they help the facilitator guide students through the simulation’s content in a way similar to a digital workbook.” But digital internships are different from the other two, say Shaffer, Nash, and Ruis: “They simultaneously *De-centralize* and *RE-professionalize* teachers. Digital internships accomplish this repositioning of the teacher by offloading to the digital tool the roles of tutor, explicator, and evaluator.” Because each simulation is different, the teacher plays a higher-level role of explicator: not deciding which answer is right, but helping students understand when one kind of thinking is more useful than another to solve real problems. Balancing those discussions, in the context of the role of disciplinarian and counselor, is a task that requires the kind of professional judgment that has long characterized teaching, only now that judgment is exercised independent of the teacher’s traditional functions of tutor and evaluator.” And internships can be brought down to middle and elementary grades by using different content.

Looking at digital workbooks, digital texts, and digital internships, it’s clear that each requires different roles and responsibilities for teachers.

- Digital workbooks – Teacher as disciplinarian and counselor;
- Digital texts – Teacher as disciplinarian, counselor, tutor, and explicator, with the central focus and professional demands on the teacher;
- Digital internships – Teacher as disciplinarian, counselor, and explicator, with a focus on teachers’ professional judgment.

In short, digital workbooks fundamentally alter the teacher’s role, digital texts still require teachers to perform many of their traditional roles, and digital internships fall somewhere in between.

But here’s the more fundamental point, in the authors’ view: “Feedback is the central mechanism through which teachers have guided students’ development, but teachers are no longer the sole source of feedback in a technology-rich environment... Instead, they become the coordinators, orchestrators, and interpreters of feedback coming to students through a variety of learning resources... Teachers using such tools, then, can focus on nurturing students and structuring their learning experiences... Removed from the center of the focused activity of the classroom, teachers no longer have to address students as an undifferentiated mass at the periphery of instruction. Both teachers and students are now part of a technological network that connects them to people and resources beyond the classroom. The learning environment is larger, with more resources and with more space for individualized teaching and learning.” This more closely resembles mentoring than traditional teaching, but it takes place as part of a larger system that the authors call *distributed mentoring* – the support is spread across a

network of concerned adults, including parents, coaches, teachers, neighbors, employers, and others, all operating in an environment that supports mentoring.

Shaffer, Nash, and Ruis believe that in the near future, all of these digital tools will be used widely in schools. “The implications for teaching, then, are complex,” they say. “As has always been the case, teachers will need to use different tools in different ways. Across the pedagogical tools, however, there are two consistent themes that will mark teaching in the coming years. First, the guidance – and particularly social support – that teachers provide to students will not disappear, and in fact will become even more integral. Second, the role of the teacher will move from its traditional position of centrality in the academic life of a student to a decentralized position in a distributed network of mentoring.” These shifts will require different classroom pedagogy, a new kind of professionalism, and a teacher-evaluation system that recognizes the new configuration. If this doesn’t happen, there’s the danger that teachers will be relegated to the role of disciplinarians and parents may conclude that students will learn better working on their computers at home.

These shifts will require a different kind of training and professional development focusing on the teacher’s new roles as:

- Coordinator – Students will need lots of guidance navigating the wide variety of instructional tools.
- Mentor – Students’ individual needs will depend on their particular context.
- Translator – Students will need help making sense of the feedback they’re getting from multiple sources.
- Learner – Teachers will need to get comfortable with the new technologies and be less dependent on the “tech guy” to bail them out.
- Expert – Teachers will still need subject-area expertise, but in addition, they must be able to orchestrate the digital tools and platforms they’ll have at their disposal.

“Technology and the New Professionalization of Teaching” by David Williamson Shaffer, Padraig Nash, and A.R. Ruis in *Teachers College Record*, December 2015 (Vol. 117, #12, p. 1-30), <http://bit.ly/1TNen8o>; Shaffer can be reached at [david.williamson.shaffer@gmail.com](mailto:david.williamson.shaffer@gmail.com).

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### **3. A Rhode Island School Opens Up an Hour in the Schedule Every Day**

In this article in *Independent School*, Daniel Willingham (University of Virginia) and Vince Watchorn describe how Providence Country Day School in Rhode Island (where Watchorn is school head) decided that its traditional schedule, with 20-minute breaks for clubs, activities, and assemblies scattered through the week, severely limited connections between teachers and students – many weren’t free at the same time. In 2012, this grade 6-12 private school decided to schedule Community Time, a daily one-hour block (9:25-10:25 a.m.) when all teachers and students would be available at the same time. In addition to maximizing student-teacher and student-student connections, Community Time was designed to empower students to make choices and better prepare them for unstructured environments down the road.

Each block usually begins with a 20-minute assembly or time with advisors. (Longer assemblies, sometimes with guest speakers, take place in Community Time about once a month.) Then students can choose from a variety of activities:

- Student-led clubs;
- One-on-one tutorials with teachers;
- Mini-courses with teachers (among them, cryptography, photography, and learning how to change a flat tire);
- Special programs and visitors;
- Discussion groups on hot topics (for example, the crisis in Ferguson, Missouri);
- Student initiatives (for example, changing the school's dress code);
- Students presenting to peers on an enrichment activity they've concluded (e.g., fencing, Irish step dancing, piloting drones);
- Self-directed learning;
- Open-ended socializing.

Devoting 15 percent of the school day to this – during prime morning hours – is a bold move. “Critics may worry that during this hour the students’ time is too unstructured,” say Watchorn and Willingham, “that the students’ minds are diverted from their studies and that they are too focused on their own priorities or simply being with each other on social terms. For us, however, that is precisely the point.” The goal is creating a “blank page” where “serendipitous learning” can take place, where students can *make choices* to explore new academic and social areas, pursue individual and group projects, and take advantage of faculty expertise.

Watchorn and Willingham believe Community Time is an effective way to pursue the often-amorphous goal of preparing students to take responsibility for learning and development after they’ve left the school. “If we really want students to be lifelong learners,” they say, “we must scaffold that attitude and the skills that go with it. We must give students practice in the idea that their intellectual interests can and should be taken seriously, and we must give them practice in using the tools that satisfy those interests in the absence of a ready-made curriculum or a set of required tasks.”

The sacrosanct daily block of open time also sends an important message to students: *It's within your abilities to discover things worth knowing, to pursue them, and to learn about them.* The school strongly resists attempts to provide more structure in Community Time and prohibits using it for supplemental coursework, rehearsals, or mandatory test reviews (except for occasional one-time student-led sessions). “We hope and expect that our students will learn the value of setting aside time each day to discover and pursue an intellectual interest, even though it may not contribute to a grade or earn a reward,” say Watchorn and Willingham.

Allowing students to socialize is perhaps the most controversial part of Community Time, but the rationale is this: just as recess in elementary schools provides social time and a “downshift” from the outer-directed attention system (achievement, adults, grades), Providence School’s daily morning time allows students to focus for an hour on the inner-directed attention system (themselves and their relationships with others), which helps them concentrate better when they’re back in the classroom.

Introducing Community Time took some serious planning and persuading, and it's a work in progress, but Watchorn and Willingham say that so far, the results are just what they hoped for: students and faculty enjoy the hour, valuable learning takes place every day, and they believe it fulfills the school's mission of preparing graduates to be self-actualizing lifelong learners.

[See Memos 170 and 525 for related articles on unstructured one-hour lunch/activity blocks in large public high schools.]

“Giving Students Their School Day” by Vince Watchorn and Daniel Willingham in *Independent School*, Spring 2016 (Vol. 75, #3, p. 64-69), no e-link available

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#### **4. Dealing with Very Difficult Parents**

In this article in *Independent School*, psychologist/consultants Robert Evans and Michael Thompson say that school leaders they're working with report an increase in problem parents, including a small minority who engage in what can only be described as adult-to-adult bullying. “These parents are habitually rude or demanding or disrespectful,” say Evans and Thompson, “engaging in personal attacks on teachers and administrators, demeaning and threatening them. They repeatedly violate the school's policies, values, and norms of conduct.” The authors have identified three types:

- *Righteous crusaders*, who berate the school for not dealing with a problem that no one else sees. Their concerns range from, “My daughter says you don't like her” to false accusations of sexual abuse.
- *Entitled intimidators*, who want special treatment for their child. “They demand that rules be waived, exceptions made, policies upended,” say Evans and Thompson – for example, firing a teacher they dislike or having their child placed in a particular class.
- *Vicious gossips*, who continually find fault with the school or certain teachers and broadcast their complaints, often to a group of “vigilantes” recruited by the lead parent. There may be an element of truth in their complaint, but it's pursued in a relentless, destructive way that defames and victimizes people in the school.

What explains the increase in adult bullying that Evans and Thompson describe? They believe it springs from three sources:

- *A rising tide of anxiety* – “To be a confident parent requires, among other things, that the rate of change be slow and that the choices for children be few,” they say. In recent years, the opposite has been true in the U.S. socially, economically, and technologically. This means more choices – a good thing – but also more uncertainty about the future. No wonder parents are worried about how their children will fare as adults and more inclined to advocate aggressively for the best possible school experiences.

- *A culture of loneliness* – Some parents may be isolated from other families and their children may not take part in the kind of regular free-play experiences with other children that were common in previous generations. This may result in a lack parental perspective on how

children navigate normal aspects of growing up, which may prevent some parents from keeping in perspective the common ups and downs of the school day.

• *Educator denial of parent mental health issues* – A few parents have genuine personality disorders that lead them to twist the facts and see things that others don't. "Although all of us who are parents can lack perspective when it comes to our own offspring," say Evans and Thompson, "a few have a profoundly distorted view of their children or a deeply rooted mistrust of institutions, notably the school."

For conscientious educators, encounters with bullying parents can be profoundly distressing. Thrown off balance by intense criticism and unreasonable demands, teachers and administrators may try to placate, persuade, convince, and accommodate a righteous crusader, entitled intimidator, or vicious gossip. But these tactics are unlikely to be successful. Evans and Thompson offer these suggestions:

- Have administrators, not teachers, deal with very challenging parents. "Managing bullying parents is a job for those who can speak for the school," they say.
- If a teacher has had a bad encounter with such a parent, he or she should never again meet alone with the parent.
- Realize that bullying parents are externalizers, which means self-observation is not their strong suit. They're unlikely to ask, "Am I doing something to upset people or that keeps them from seeing things my way?"
- Rational discussion is not going to work. "No matter how intelligent they may be, bullies demonstrate arrested social/emotional development," say Evans and Thompson. "Educators will rarely go wrong by treating a bully parent exactly the way they would an outrageous and aggressive high-school student."
- "The ideal approach can be summarized in three words," they continue: "'Limits, limits, limits.' Bullies deserve thoughtful attention and an invitation to be reflective, but when these don't suffice, they need to know – unequivocally – the minimum nonnegotiable conditions of belonging in the school community."
- Some possible lines: "You have every right to your opinion, but you cannot swear at us." "We hear clearly that you want us to change your son's grade, but we will not do so."

What's most difficult for educators is not becoming defensive in the face of an onslaught of criticism and invective. Evans and Thompson suggest keeping this idea in the forefront of one's mind: "Whatever we did, we did nothing to make this person as crazy as he or she sounds at this moment." Avoiding defensiveness, and being persistently curious about how the parent sees the situation, can lower the temperature. "At the heart of any inquiry should be a desire to learn what the parent is hoping for and what his or her biggest fear is," say the authors. "Often, the biggest bullies are, underneath, deeply frightened. Once you set boundaries on their behavior, it may be possible to get to the heart of the matter. But not always."

"Parents Who Bully the School" by Robert Evans and Michael Thompson in *Independent School*, Spring 2016 (Vol. 75, #3, p. 92-98), no e-link available

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## 5. Leaders Who Are Voracious Learners

In this *Harvard Business Review* article, consultant/author Erika Anderson says that effective leaders need to constantly scan the horizon for new ideas, resist their natural reluctance to change, and push themselves to acquire radically different capabilities. “That requires a willingness to experiment and become a novice again and again,” she says, “– an extremely discomforting notion for most of us.” Most people’s reaction to new initiatives and changed procedures is negative: *The old way works just fine for me. I bet it’s just a flash in the pan. It will take too long.* “Generally, when we’re trying something new and doing badly at it, we think terrible thoughts,” says Anderson. *“I hate this. I’m such an idiot. I’ll never get this right. This is so frustrating!”* That static in our brains leaves little bandwidth for learning.”

In the decades that Anderson has spent coaching leaders, she’s noticed there are four attributes they either have or can acquire to adapt successfully to change and become sponges for new learning:

- *Mindset* – “Researchers have found that shifting your focus from challenges to benefits is a good way to increase your aspiration to do initially unappealing things,” she reports. Sometimes leaders need to be prodded and coaxed to envision how things might be better if they take the plunge, or they may adopt a new practice after a little introspection.

- *Self-awareness* – Most people’s sense of what they know and don’t know and what they do well and do poorly is “woefully inaccurate,” says Anderson. In one study, 94 percent of college professors said they were doing “above average work” – a statistical impossibility – and only 6 percent thought they had a lot to learn about being effective teachers. Clearly an overly rosy self-perception diminishes a person’s appetite for new learning. A brutally honest “self-talk” is the only way out of this trap, often stimulated by some negative feedback or data from the outside. It’s also helpful to accept that one’s own self-assessment is often biased and listen carefully to others’ opinions.

- *Curiosity* – Children are explore-and-learn omnivores, says Anderson, but not all adults maintain this child-like drive. Most of us need to push ourselves to ask, *How? Why? I wonder... Could this make my job easier?* and then search the Web, read an article, query an expert, join a group.

- *Vulnerability* – It’s tough for adults to feel incompetent or mediocre at something and have to ask “dumb” questions during step-by-step guidance, says Anderson. A good approach is to accept one’s novice status, which makes one feel less foolish and relax a little. “Great learners allow themselves to be vulnerable enough to accept that beginner state,” she says. “The ideal mindset for a beginner is both vulnerable and balanced: *“I’m going to be bad at this to start with, because I’ve never done it before, AND I know I can learn to do it over time.”*”

“Managing Yourself – Learning to Learn” by Erika Anderson in *Harvard Business Review*, March 2016 (Vol. 94, #3, p. 98-101), no e-link available

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## 6. Adolescents' Deeper Thoughts and Needs

In this *Edutopia* article, Maurice Elias (Rutgers University) says that with all the chatter about social media and superficiality, we give teenagers far too little credit. They're actually going through some significant transitions – heading off to college or full-time work, living away from home for the first time, falling in love, breaking up, family illness and death, religious rites, and more. Under the surface noise, they're asking questions like:

- How does my life have meaning and purpose? Where am I headed?
- What gifts do I have that the world wants and needs? How can I help?
- How can I rise above my fears and doubts?
- To what or to whom do I feel most deeply connected?
- What or who awakens or touches the spirit within me?

The problem is that in contemporary society, few adolescents have forums for exploring these questions. Elias, drawing on the work of Rachael Kessler (*The Soul of Education*, ASCD 2000), suggests that teens need “passages” to bridge the transition to adult responsibility and capability. Here are some of the key experiences that need to be augmented and encouraged:

- *Positive belonging* – Participating in organized youth activities is an important way to explore the deeper questions; camps, teen tours, religious and non-religious youth groups, and local youth centers and recreational programs bring teens together with sensitive leaders to talk about the questions that arise in times of transition.

- *Silence and solitude* – “For some teens,” says Elias, “this is an important way in which they take a break from the pressures of everyday life.”

- *Reflections on life* – The deeper questions are best addressed emotionally, not through straight information, says Elias. Often an older sibling, a grandparent, a respected educator, or a member of the clergy is the right person. Getting teens writing and sharing what they have written can be effective.

- *Joy and play* – Teens need to have genuine fun with their peers – the kind they will remember and be proud to talk about the next day.

- *Creativity* – “Creativity develops the soul,” says Elias. “Encourage creative exploration even if it does not seem ‘practical’ or ‘career oriented.’”

- *Linking to the large* – Find ways to help teens identify with inspiring figures in history and see the potential for greatness in themselves, he suggests. Focus on potential, not limitations.

- *Shape the passages* – Adults working with teens should help to orchestrate their passage to adulthood, and join with them in celebrating their milestones.

“7 Things Parents and Teachers Should Know About Teens” by Maurice Elias in *Edutopia*, June 8, 2015, <http://edut.to/1XW1J69>; more information is on the Rachael Kessler website, <http://www.passageworks.org>.

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## 7. Short Item:

*Information on Harkness teaching* – In this article in *Independent School*, Betsy Potash describes her enthusiasm for the Harkness approach to teaching. In the 1930s, philanthropist Edward Stephen Harkness donated \$5.8 million to Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire to revamp classroom teaching. The school purchased a customized wooden table for each classroom and had students and the teacher sit around the table conducting each class as an interactive discussion. Teachers shifted from being traditional pedagogues to guiding students, helping them learn how ask good questions, listen, share air time with classmates, and support their own opinions. The concept has been widely adopted, with various sizes of Harkness tables (the originals at Exeter have room for only 12 people). Potash provides these links:

- Her own short introductory video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3bD8KYGLEw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3bD8KYGLEw)
- Lawrenceville School's video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RGYSvRWotM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RGYSvRWotM)

“Learning to Share: Life Lessons in Group Dynamics” by Betsy Potash in *Independent School*, Spring 2016 (Vol. 75, #3, p. 12-5), no e-link available

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# About the Marshall Memo

## ***Mission and focus:***

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 44 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 64 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).

## ***Subscriptions:***

Individual subscriptions are \$50 for a year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and how to pay by check, credit card, or purchase order.

## ***Website:***

If you go to <http://www.marshallmemo.com> you will find detailed information on:

- How to subscribe or renew
- A detailed rationale for the Marshall Memo
- Publications (with a count of articles from each)
- Article selection criteria
- Topics (with a count of articles from each)
- Headlines for all issues
- Reader opinions (with results of an annual survey)
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in Word or PDF)
- All back issues (also in Word and PDF)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- A collection of "classic" articles from all 11 years

## ***Core list of publications covered***

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educational Research Journal  
American Educator  
American Journal of Education  
American School Board Journal  
AMLE Magazine  
ASCA School Counselor  
ASCD SmartBrief/Public Education NewsBlast  
Better: Evidence-Based Education  
Center for Performance Assessment Newsletter  
District Administration  
Ed. Magazine  
Education Digest  
Education Gadfly  
Education Next  
Education Week  
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis  
Educational Horizons  
Educational Leadership  
Educational Researcher  
Edutopia  
Elementary School Journal  
Essential Teacher  
Go Teach  
Harvard Business Review  
Harvard Educational Review  
Independent School  
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)  
Journal of Staff Development  
Kappa Delta Pi Record  
Knowledge Quest  
Literacy Today  
Middle School Journal  
Peabody Journal of Education  
Perspectives  
Phi Delta Kappan  
Principal  
Principal Leadership  
Principal's Research Review  
Reading Research Quarterly  
Responsive Classroom Newsletter  
Rethinking Schools  
Review of Educational Research  
School Administrator  
School Library Journal  
Teacher  
Teachers College Record  
Teaching Children Mathematics  
Teaching Exceptional Children/Exceptional Children  
The Atlantic  
The Chronicle of Higher Education  
The District Management Journal  
The Journal of the Learning Sciences  
The Language Educator  
The Learning Principal/Learning System/Tools for Schools  
The New York Times  
The New Yorker  
The Reading Teacher  
Theory Into Practice  
Time Magazine  
Wharton Leadership Digest