

# Marshall Memo 458

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

October 29, 2012

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## Quotes of the Week

“A principal’s job is designed for distraction. Every day brings unpredictable crises and situations that feel incredibly urgent.”

Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (see item #2)

“I think everyone is looking for the shortcut and looking for that quick fix, and there is never going to be a shortcut or a quick fix in education. It’s always going to come down to hard work, trying to be smart, and trying to do what’s best for kids.”

California principal Mike Kerr on blended learning (see item #8)

“By requiring students to demonstrate mastery before moving to the next level, games cultivate student persistence, an essential component of learning.”

Vicki Phillips and Zoran Popovic (see item #6)

“Many Americans think we are in a ‘postracial’ society, partly because a black man is president, so they don’t need to give much thought to race anymore. This view is completely and deeply wrong.”

Lawrence Blum (see item #4)

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## 1. Thoughts from David Allen, *Getting Things Done* Author

In this interview in *The Atlantic*, James Fallows follows up on his 2004 article on time-management expert David Allen [see Memo 41] by asking him whether life is more stressful nowadays with e-mail, texting, and full-time connectivity. Allen maintains that through the ages, musicians and writers [and teachers and principals] “could always be doing *more* work. So I don’t know that it’s ever been different for someone with an open-ended profession or interest.”

But there is a difference today, he concedes: we’re less often in life-threatening, crisis mode, which allows the world to flood into our brains. “Now you’re worried about taxes and tires and ‘I’m getting cold’ and ‘My printer just crapped out.’ Now that flood is coming across in electronic form, and it is 24/7. To cope, you need the executive skill and the ability to make rapid decisions about how you allocate limited resources.” In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many more people are making these kinds of decisions than in the past.

Allen believes we are in the most information-rich environment walking through a forest. But although there are countless stimuli, only a few of them require immediate action – a bear, a snake, poison oak. The constant stream of e-mails is different in that almost every one requires a small decision or a response of some kind.

The other thing about e-mail is that it’s addictive. “Now, some part of you, subliminally, is constantly going, *That could be meaningful, that could be meaningful, that could be meaningful, that could change what I’m doing, that might be something I don’t want to decide about,*” says Allen. “You multiply that by the hundreds, if not thousands, of items sitting there. All those things you’re not deciding about wear you down, and decision-making functions just like a muscle.”

This produces what Allen calls the GSA of life – Gnawing Sense of Anxiety. “You don’t remember what it is, but it might be more important than whatever you’re doing, so you’re not present anywhere. You’re at work worrying about home, and you’re at home worrying about work, and you’re neither place psychologically when you’re there physically. That’s hugely undermining of your productivity, and certainly adds hugely to the stress factor.”

What’s changed, says Allen, is the signal frequency. “You and I have gotten more change-producing and priority-shifting inputs in the past 72 hours than your parents got in a month, some of them in a year,” he says. People had the same worries when the first telephones appeared in houses 100 years ago – “all the interruptions and distractions!”

What is to be done? We need to *externalize* all the stuff in our heads and capture it in a time-management system we trust, says Allen. We need maps to keep track of everything, and the ability to shift from one map to another – “Okay, which map do I want to work on right now? That’s enough of that map. What’s the next map I want to see? Or: I’d just like to read some poetry right now.”

“Busy and Busier” – An Interview with David Allen by James Fallows in *The Atlantic*, November 2012 (Vol.. 310, #4, p. 42, 44), <http://bit.ly/RYZpgI>  
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## 2. How Principals Can Get Control of Their Time

“A principal’s job is designed for distraction,” says Newark (NJ) school leader and author Paul Bambrick-Santoyo in this helpful *Kappan* article. “Every day brings unpredictable crises and situations that feel incredibly urgent.” In addition, principals are social creatures and it’s hard for them to say no to someone making an in-person request. How can school leaders maximize their value-added work – observing classrooms and interacting with colleagues on curriculum, assessment, and instruction? Here are Bambrick-Santoyo’s suggestions:

- *Schedule a weekly or bi-weekly meeting with each teacher.* These brief check-in meetings are for discussing classroom observations, curriculum plans, assessment results, and anything else that needs attention. Knowing that you’re going to sit down with teachers on a regular basis provides a powerful incentive to get into their classrooms and crystallize your suggestions and commendations. It also makes it easier to say no to over-the-transom requests. [In his book, *Leverage Leadership* (Jossey-Bass, 2012), Bambrick-Santoyo suggests that each school-based administrator supervise no more than 15 teachers and make short, unannounced visits to each teacher each week, providing much of the substance for each teacher’s weekly check-in meeting. If the ratio is over 15 for an administrator, the frequency of classroom visits and check-in meetings should be every other week.]

- *Save non-emergency requests for check-in meetings.* Principals naturally want to be accessible to colleagues, students, and parents, but an open-door policy inevitably means that time is nibbled away by an unending stream of random “Got a minute?” conversations each day. By asking staff members to hold non-urgent questions for their regular check-in time, principals build a “screen door” that eliminates many of each day’s time-consuming interruptions. In addition, many concerns that seem compelling at the time end up getting resolved without the principal’s intervention.

- *Delegate.* Teachers, vendors, parents, and others generally want to talk to the principal, but that’s not always essential or efficient. Questions about school lunches should be directed to an administrative assistant, questions about the boiler to the chief custodian, and so on.

“Take Back Your Time” by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo in *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 2012 (Vol. 94, #2, p. 70-71), [www.kappanmagazine.org](http://www.kappanmagazine.org)

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### 3. The Misuse of Statistical Correlations

In this *Kappan* article, Ben Levin (University of Toronto) says it's true that poverty, parental education, family interactions, and ethnicity are strongly correlated with students falling behind in school, dropping out, and not going on to post-secondary education. But all too many educators and parents make the mistake of using these aggregate correlations to predict that a particular eight-year-old will not be successful in life.

This is a serious error, says Levin: "Many studies have found that a large number of students defy negative expectations based on their backgrounds." One Canadian study found that nearly 40 percent of young adolescents with very low reading skills were in post-secondary education six years later, and an American study of failing third graders found that more than 75 percent eventually graduated from high school, including 70 percent from low-SES families. "In every study of this kind," he says, "a significant number of students who seem to have everything against them end up having good results."

It's not that poverty and other factors aren't important, or that we shouldn't be working hard to alleviate social inequalities, or that schools can by themselves overcome entering disadvantages, says Levin: "What is important to keep in mind is that we just don't know how people's lives will turn out... So, while many people in jail come from high-poverty backgrounds, most people who grow up in poverty... don't end up in jail. For educators, there is a very heartening message in this research. What it says, very clearly, is that our work matters." Small actions by teachers – or just doing their jobs well – can make a tremendous difference to struggling children.

"All this means that schools and educators should be very cautious about thinking we can predict any student's future," Levin concludes, "and even more cautious if that belief leads us, or the student, to lower expectations."

"The One-Legged High Jumper and the Perils of Prediction" by Ben Levin in *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 2012 (Vol. 94, #2, p. 74-75), [www.kappanmagazine.org](http://www.kappanmagazine.org); Levin can be reached at [ben.levin@utoronto.ca](mailto:ben.levin@utoronto.ca).

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### 4. What High-School Students Should Learn About Race

"Americans, especially white Americans, don't like to talk about race," says University of Massachusetts professor Lawrence Blum in this thoughtful *Harvard Education Letter* article. "Many Americans think we are in a 'postracial' society, partly because a black man is president, so they don't need to give much thought to race anymore. This view is completely and deeply wrong."

What's needed is what Blum calls racial literacy. From his experience teaching a course on race in a diverse Massachusetts high school, Blum has distilled five key messages:

- *Inaccurate ideas about race are still influential.* In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, whites regarded blacks as inferior, and despite the fact that modern science has shown that all humans are genetically the same, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century view still permeates our society.

- *The first step toward racial literacy is understanding the history of slavery.* Before the English colonies fully embraced the slave trade, people of African ancestry were often equal to white indentured servants. Blum taught his students “that it was not a matter of fate that blacks became slaves in America but a historical process that could have turned out differently.”

- *Race is fundamentally an asymmetric category.* The discomfort felt by a white student in a predominantly African-American class is different from the discomfort a black student has in a predominantly white honors class. The black student is vulnerable to being viewed as intellectually incapable, whereas the white student would be unlikely to feel that way. Of course, whites can be victims of racial exclusion, rejection, or stereotypes, says Blum: “All students are hurt by racism. Understanding the asymmetry sensitizes us to the different forms and degrees of hurt.”

- *Racial literacy is not the same as multiculturalism.* All ethnic groups should be celebrated, but racial literacy gets into how racial groups were kept in an inferior status and fought back over time.

- *Race is about more than skin color.* Recent immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean have significant educational and motivational advantages over native African Americans. “It is unrealistic to expect native-born blacks to miraculously acquire these cultural advantages,” says Blum.

“Five Things High-School Students Should Know About Race” by Lawrence Blum in *Harvard Education Letter*, November/December 2012 (Vol. 28, #6, p. 8, 7), [www.edletter.org](http://www.edletter.org).

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## **5. Problems with Value-Added Teacher Evaluation in Secondary Schools**

In this *Education Week* article, Stephen Sawchuk reports on two new studies that question the accuracy of value-added teacher evaluation in middle and high schools. What undermines the validity of value-added data, say the studies, is students being grouped by achievement. Value-added analysis compares a statistical estimate of students’ projected growth with their actual performance with each teacher, but tracking skews the data, making it difficult to use the data to distinguish between effective and ineffective teachers.

For example, the same teacher can get a higher value-added score simply by teaching upper-track courses. In one of the studies, between 30 and 70 percent of teachers wound up in a different performance quartile after taking into account the courses they taught. At the high-school level, when researchers controlled for tracking, it became impossible to distinguish between high- and low-performing teachers in Algebra 1 and English 1 classes. There’s the additional problem of different schools having different criteria for grouping students.

“We know there are other ways in which we could be spending our energy to improve student outcomes,” said Kirabo Jackson, the author of one of the studies. “My takeaway is that this is not it.”

“‘Value Added’ Use at Secondary Level Questioned” by Stephen Sawchuk in *Education Week*, Oct. 24, 2012 (Vol. 32, #9, p. 6); the studies in question are:

- “Bias in Public Sector Worker Performance Monitoring: Theory and Empirical Evidence from Middle School Teachers” by Douglas Harris and Andrew Anderson;
- “Teacher Quality at the High School Level: The Importance of Accounting for Tracks” by Kirabo Jackson; [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/10/24/09tracking\\_ep.h32.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/10/24/09tracking_ep.h32.html)

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## **6. The Potential of Computer Games in Schools**

In this *Kappan* article, Vicki Phillips (Gates Foundation) and Zoran Popovic (University of Washington/Seattle) say that recently developed classroom computer games have the potential to personalize learning, build conceptual understanding and motivation, and give teachers detailed diagnostic information on students’ learning needs. “Well-designed games can serve as next-generation assessments that engage students in a seamless learning experience and assess their learning without their even realizing it,” say Phillips and Popovic. “By requiring students to demonstrate mastery before moving to the next level, games cultivate student persistence, an essential component of learning.” They’re also very helpful with differentiation.

An example: Refraction <http://games.cs.washington.edu/Refraction/> is a free, online game that allows students to create fractions, find common denominators, and add and multiply fractions. The goal of the game is to rescue different animals who are stuck in space.

“Almost every child has mastered something,” say Phillips and Popovic, “a hobby, game, dinosaur names, or song lyrics. The question for educators is to translate that enthusiasm for mastery into school subjects.” What gets students to mastery is a spark of interest, practice, seeing progress, and more practice. Key ingredients are stick-to-itiveness (grit) and intrinsic motivation to keep kids engaged when things get more challenging. Grit – academic tenacity – may be as important as intelligence.

To be effective learning tools, say Phillips and Popovic, games need to have these characteristics:

- Staying true to learning science principles, not just game design principles;
- Optimizing engagement and learning transfer simultaneously and avoiding boredom;
- Allowing for the student to make continuous improvement over time;
- Containing a within-game assessment for each learner;
- Being usable for students, teachers, parents, and peers.

Game developers are working on games with these characteristics, and teachers are getting more savvy about using games for multiple purposes. The Gates Foundation is investing in GLASS – Games, Learning, and Assessment – to develop games that can serve as assessment tools, develop complex skills, help transfer learning to different contexts, and be especially helpful for students with disadvantages. “Games are far from a silver bullet,” conclude Phillips and Popovic. “But if they could help us instill in all students that relentless desire to seek what’s next, then we would ignite a love of learning that could last a lifetime.”

“More Than Child’s Play: Games Have Potential Learning and Assessment Tools” by Vicki Phillips and Zoran Popovic in *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 2012 (Vol. 94, #2, p. 26-30), [www.kappanmagazine.org](http://www.kappanmagazine.org).

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## **7. Different Approaches to Online Learning**

An *Education Week* special report in the current issue pulls together information on different approaches to blended learning. In the introduction, Katie Ash says there are four basic models:

- *The rotation model* – Within a course or subject, students rotate on a fixed schedule (or as directed by the teacher) between different learning modalities, at least one of which is online learning (Khan Academies, for example).
- *The flex model* – Instruction is delivered primarily via the Internet, with students moving on an individually customized sequence; scheduling is fluid among learning modalities, and the teacher of record is on site.
- *The self-blend model* – Students choose to take one or more courses entirely online to supplement their traditional courses; the online teacher is the teacher of record.
- *The enriched-virtual model* – Students divide their time between attending a brick-and-mortar campus and learning remotely using online delivery of content and instruction.

Which works best? “The more we know about the variety of blended learning models in K-12 education, the more we know we don’t know everything that’s out there,” says Susan Patrick, head of a Virginia-based advocacy and research group.

The most important features of blended learning are up-to-the-minute diagnostic information on students’ learning needs and students being able to move through a learning sequence at their own pace. “It totally empowers the kid because they get immediate feedback, and they know exactly what they need to do,” says Diane Tavenner of the Summit charter schools in California. “It’s a lot of hard work, and it’s uncomfortable, and it looks messy. But we believe that unless school organizations are set up [in new ways], they aren’t really going to move forward.”

“Blended Learning Choices” by Katie Ash in *Education Week*, Oct. 24, 2012 (Vol. 32, #9, p. S4-5), <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/10/24/09el-overview.h32.html>

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## **8. A California KIPP School Uses Blended Learning**

In this *Education Week* article, Ian Quillen reports on how the KIPP Empower Academy in Los Angeles is implementing blended learning as part of its response to severe budget cuts. Computer learning allowed the school to cut from five teachers per 110 students at each grade to four. The school uses the rotational model (see the preceding article), with kindergarten students spending 11 percent of their 8½-hour school day working on reading or math exercises on laptop computers in their classrooms (the computer time increases to about 16 percent by second grade). Still, the look and feel of the school is quite traditional, with

students sitting on carpet squares for whole-group instruction, songs and rhymes, and other activities.

Some teachers initially worried that the computer time would amount to babysitting, and the software programs being used aren't a perfect match for ELA and math curriculum. But students seem to be using the computer time well and are making good progress on STEP literacy assessments – the overall percent proficient and advanced rose from 36 to 96 percent. The challenge is managing students' movement from one activity to another. "If you want them to stand up and go one way, you do that, and you practice and you practice and you practice until you get it right," says Karla Cienfuegos, one of the kindergarten teachers.

"I think everyone is looking for the shortcut and looking for that quick fix," says principal Mike Kerr, "and there is never going to be a shortcut or a quick fix in education. It's always going to come down to hard work, trying to be smart, and trying to do what's best for kids."

"Reality Fuels Innovation" by Ian Quillen in *Education Week*, Oct. 24, 2012 (Vol. 32, #9, p. S14-15), [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

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## **9. Using Blogs to Improve Writing, Especially for Students with LD**

"Writing is a social practice that takes place in the context of ideas and relationships," says Sarah Jones (Indiana Wesleyan University) in this article in *Teaching Exceptional Children*. Jones recommends using blogs to make writing a more interactive experience and suggests the following steps to help students with learning disabilities become more proficient:

- *Step 1: Choose a website that hosts blogs.* She mentions three free platforms: Google Blogger – <http://www.glogger.com>; Word Press – <http://wordpress.com>; and Edublogs – <http://edublogs.org>. Jones stresses the importance of getting students comfortable with the platform using school computers and providing computer time before and after school for students who don't have access at home.

- *Step 2: Create a writing community.* "In order to get the most out of the blogging experience, student writers will need frequent, substantive feedback from an interested audience," says Jones. The best way is to set aside time for students to choose, read, and comment on one another's blog posts. An additional possibility is opening up students' posts to parents, community members, and pre-service teachers at a local university.

- *Step 3: Choose meaningful assignments.* Teachers should zero in on important issues in students' lives and discuss them in class before suggesting writing topics.

- *Step 4: Teach prewriting strategies.* "Before setting students loose to post on blogs, teachers should instruct them in using graphic organizers, composition strategies, and computer-based planning programs to improve their writing success," says Jones.

- *Step 5: Support students' composition.* Students with learning disabilities tend to have difficulty with unspoken expectations, and they need explicit guidance on the conventions of the blogosphere. Showing students exemplars of good posts will show them the best length,

depth, and voice to use. Students should also use word processing software to improve their spelling and perhaps a word prediction program to make full use of their vocabulary (for example, Co:Writer <http://www.donjohnston.com/products/cowriter/index.html>).

- *Step 6: Help students put comments to work.* Students will make best use of this key feature of blogging if they get explicit instruction on how to put comments to work improving their writing.

- *Step 7: Maintain the blog.* Teachers need to keep track of students' progress over time and keep tabs on the frequency of student posts and how the technology is being used.

“Digital Access: Using Blogs to Support Adolescent Writers with Learning Disabilities” by Sarah Jones in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, November/December 2012 (Vol. 45, #2, p. 16-23); Jones can be reached at [sarah.jones@indwes.edu](mailto:sarah.jones@indwes.edu).

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## 10. Web 2.0 Tools to Boost Writing Proficiency

In this article in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, Jill Olthouse and Myriah Tasker Miller (West Virginia University/Morganton) list the characteristics of exceptionally proficient writers:

- They often seek out intellectual peers with similar talents.
- They are precocious in their use of language.
- They are intrinsically motivated.
- They write in new and varied formats.

Olthouse and Miller recommend the following online tools to encourage and develop these qualities:

### Elementary:

- Kidblog: [www.Kidblog.org](http://www.Kidblog.org) - Students can post short entries on current topics and comment on other students' submissions.
- Glogster: [www.Glogster.com](http://www.Glogster.com) - Students create online collages with a mix of photos, text, sound, and video and can share them and comment on other students' work.
- Storybird: [www.storybird.com](http://www.storybird.com) - Students create storybooks using illustrations on the website; they can work with a partner writing a book, comment on others' writing, and print final copies.

### Elementary and secondary:

- CTY and EPGY: [www.cyy.jhu.edu](http://www.cyy.jhu.edu) and <http://epgy.stanford.edu> - Offers students writing courses and detailed written feedback on writing.

### Secondary:

- WritingKid: <http://www.fundsforwriters.com/writingkid.htm> - A newsletter with publication and contest opportunities for young writers.
- NaNoWriMo: [www.NaNoWriMo.org](http://www.NaNoWriMo.org) - Students can compete with others as they write a novel.
- Figment: [www.Figment.com](http://www.Figment.com) - Discussion groups, contests, news about recently published novels, Facebook updates, and social rewards.

- Teenink: [www.Teenink.com](http://www.Teenink.com) - Students can publish nonfiction, poetry, and fiction on the website and in a national print magazine.

“Teaching Talented Writers with Web 2.0 Tools” by Jill Olthouse and Myriah Tasker Miller in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, November/December 2012 (Vol. 45, #2, p. 6-14); Olthouse can be reached at [Jill.Olthouse@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Jill.Olthouse@mail.wvu.edu).

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## 11. Ian McEwan Reflects on the Writing Process

In this interview with Alison Beard in *Harvard Business Review*, novelist Ian McEwan (*Enduring Love, Atonement, Saturday*) talks about the creative process:

- On flow – “All barriers fall away, I’m outside of myself, locked in the moment, and all sense of time, even emotion, is gone... It’s not about possessions or being rich or successful. It’s about achieving total absorption in something that interests you and challenges you.”

- On getting started – “You need silence and this mental rambling out of which things emerge. Characters walk to you as through a mist. Certain phrases require unwrapping. Sometimes I’ll write an opening paragraph I know I’ll never have to complete, but knowing that liberates me, so I trick myself into writing more.”

- On hesitation – The moments when I walk away from what I’m doing are often the moments I think I know exactly what to do but I don’t quite trust it.”

- On solitude – If from nine in the morning until seven the day’s entirely your own, and then you’re going to take a shower and go be stimulated in conversation with food and nice wine, you are riding one of civilization’s lovely waves.”

“Life’s Work” – Alison Beard Interviews Ian McEwan in *Harvard Business Review*, November 2012 (Vol. 90, #11, p. 152), no e-link available

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## 12. Bad Dreams Teachers Have – and What They Mean

“Even your worst nightmares are just your brain doing its thing to help you become a better teacher,” says Florida teacher Roxanna Elden in this *Educational Horizons* article. Here are her interpretations of some recurring teacher nightmares:

- *You come to school in a bathrobe, your pajamas, or the clothes you went out in last night.* Interpretation: feeling vulnerable, inadequate, afraid of being unprepared.

- *You are already running late and then get lost on your way to school.* Interpretation: perhaps a desire to avoid responsibility, or perhaps just fear of being late.

- *Your subject or grade level has been changed at the last minute.* Interpretation: fear of wasting all that preparation you’ve done for your classes due to capricious administrators.

- *Students come to your house and start helping themselves to bowls of cereal from your kitchen cabinets while you think of ways to keep them busy.* Interpretation: you think about your students all the time.

- *You are in a physical fight with a student, fellow teacher, or administrator.*

Interpretation: fight dreams express a desire to defend your honor, values, or personal space. They may also reveal anger, frustration, or a genuine desire to hurt the person in question.

- *Your classroom is in the cafeteria, an open field, or an irregularly shaped room in which you can't see all your students and they can't hear anything you say.* Interpretation: preparing oneself for the worst possible teaching scenario.

“Class Dismissed! Your Unscientific Guide to Interpreting Teacher Nightmares” by Roxanna Elden in *Educational Horizons*, October/November 2012 (Vol. 91, #1, p. 31)

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### **13. Three Possible Reasons Students Are Absent from School**

In this report from Johns Hopkins University, Robert Balfanz and Vaughan Byrnes suggest three helpful categories for thinking about student absenteeism:

- Students who *cannot* attend school due to illness, family responsibilities, housing instability, the need to work, or involvement with the juvenile justice system;
- Students who *will not* attend school to avoid bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment, and embarrassment;
- Students who *do not* attend school because they, or their parents, do not see the value of being there, they have something else they would rather do, or nothing stops them from skipping school.

“The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation’s Public Schools” by Robert Balfanz and Vaughan Byrnes from a report prepared by Get Schooled and the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University, published May 2012; summarized in *Education Digest*, October 2012 (Vol. 78, #2, p. 4-9); the full report can be accessed at <http://new.every1graduates.org/the-importance-of-being-in-school>.

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### **14. The Payoff of Early College Programs for High-School Students**

In this 44-page paper from Jobs for the Future, Ben Struhl and Joel Vargas report on a study of 32,908 Texas high-school students, half of whom participated in dual-enrollment programs with a local college, half of whom did not. Students who were exposed to college coursework while in high school were 2.2 times more likely to enroll in a two- or four-year college, two times more likely to return after the freshman year of college, and 1.7 times more likely to earn a college degree within six years. This held for all racial and economic groups in these two matched sets of students. For the full report, see

[http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/TakingCollegeCourses\\_101712.pdf](http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/TakingCollegeCourses_101712.pdf)

“Taking College Courses in High School: A Strategy for College Readiness” by Ben Struhl and Joel Vargas, Jobs for the Future, October 2012; spotted in *Education Week*, Oct. 24, 2012 (Vol. 32, #9, p. 5)

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## 15. Short Items:

*a. The state of U.S. teacher unions* – This new report from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute compares the strength of teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia: <http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/how-strong-are-us-teacher-unions.html>

“How Strong Are Teacher Unions? A State-by-State Comparison” by Amber Winkler, Janie Scull, and Dara Zeehandelaar, October 29, 2012

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*b. An interactive look at the universe* – This intriguing website allows you to scroll in and out from the tiniest workings of an individual atom to the entire universe:

<http://htwins.net/scale2>

“The Scale of the Universe” by Cary Huang, 2012

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*c. NEA website* – The National Education Association’s website has thousands of lesson plans on topics ranging from rain gardens to compound interest:

<http://www.nea.org/tools/lesson-plan-search.html>

“Bulletin Board” in *Educational Horizons*, October/November 2012 (Vol. 91, #1, p. 6)

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*d. Common Core advice* – This website has advice from educators on making the transition to the Common Core State Standards, plus a list of helpful websites:

[http://www.k12center.org/rsc/pdf/Coming\\_Together\\_April\\_2012\\_Final.PDF](http://www.k12center.org/rsc/pdf/Coming_Together_April_2012_Final.PDF)

“Bulletin Board” in *Educational Horizons*, October/November 2012 (Vol. 91, #1, p. 6)

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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.marshall48@gmail.com](mailto:kim.marshall48@gmail.com)*

# 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 43 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 45 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 the school year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and information on paying by check or credit card.

## ***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.
- How to change access e-mail or log-in

## ***Publications covered***

*Those read this week are underlined.*

American Educational Research Journal  
American Educator  
American Journal of Education  
American School Board Journal  
ASCD SmartBrief  
Better Evidence-Based Education  
EDge  
Education Digest  
Education Gadfly  
Education Next  
Education Week  
Educational Leadership  
Educational Researcher  
Elementary School Journal  
Essential Teacher (TESOL)  
Harvard Business Review  
Harvard Education Letter  
Harvard Educational Review  
JESPAR  
Journal of Staff Development  
Kappa Delta Pi Record  
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  
Teaching Children Mathematics  
The Atlantic  
The Chronicle of Higher Education  
The Language Educator  
The New Yorker  
The Reading Teacher  
The School Administrator  
Theory Into Practice