Marshall Memo 213

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
December 10, 2007

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Facilitation is planned improvisation."

Robert Garmston (see item #3)

"Stop complaining, Junia, and do something about it."

A Boston principal's response to a teacher who was bemoaning the fact that her colleagues weren't reading professional literature. The teacher reached out and 25 other teachers signed up for a study group, which is still meeting twelve years later.
As described by Sonia Nieto, University of Massachusetts/Amherst professor, in an interview with Tracy Crow in *Journal of Staff Development*, Winter 2008 (p. 58)

"A teacher should not mistake ELLs' limited level of output for their ability to think abstractly."

Jane Hill and Kathleen Flynn (see item #4)

"No more motivational, feel-good speakers. No more high-priced out-of-town consultants who offer one workshop and no follow-up. No more catalog approach to professional development in which teachers and principals select courses that sound interesting to them. No longer is it enough to worry about whether the coffee is hot enough and the room not too cool. Instead, student learning is the gauge of effectiveness."

Joan Richardson on the new criteria for professional development
Journal of Staff Development, Winter 2008 (p. 69)

"Separate what you *like* to do from what *needs* to be done."

Joanne Rooney's advice to a young principal in "Managing Leadership",
Educational Leadership, November 2007 (Vol. 65, #3, p. 90) http://www.ascd.org/el

1. How to Make Brainstorming Sessions Truly Productive

In this thoughtful *Harvard Business Review* article, management experts Kevin Coyne, Patricia Gorman Clifford, and Renée Dye say that most people hate brainstorming sessions. Why? Because they are often dominated by a few blowhards. But this is only one reason that traditional brainstorming rarely generates useful ideas. Leaders tend to make two other mistakes: first, they encourage people to go wild and "think outside the box" – with no intention of using the unconventional ideas that are generated; and second, they assign people the task of slicing and dicing old "boxes" in new ways – which does nothing to solve problems rooted in the old way of doing things.

Can brainstorming produce good ideas? Yes, say Coyne, Clifford, and Dye, if the leader asks the right questions and creates new boxes for people to think inside. Here are their suggestions, based on a process they developed at McKinsey & Company and used with numerous clients:

• *Set boundaries on acceptable ideas and tailor questions accordingly.* Take time before the brainstorming meeting to clarify what kind of ideas you are looking for, so people don't waste their time coming up with ideas you'll reject. Do you want big ideas, or safe, surefire winners? How much funding and additional staffing are available, really? How soon do you need to see results? All this should be transparent up front.

• *Select participants who can produce original insights.* Sure, some of the people in the room must be chosen for political reasons, but be sure there are some bright sparks who will contribute worthwhile ideas.

• *Ensure that everyone is fully engaged.* You can do this with parlor tricks like offering a reward to the team that comes up with the best ideas. It's corny, but it works!

• *Structure the meeting to ensure that social norms work for you, not against you.* "In almost all meetings of ten or more people," write the authors, "the social norm is to keep quiet or to speak only a minimum amount. A few pushy people break this rule, and the others let them fill the airtime." But if the leader breaks people into groups of four, the social norms are reversed; in a small group, the norm is that everyone speaks and you're uncooperative if you remain silent. This way virtually everyone will participate, and because the groups are meeting simultaneously, a number of people can contribute ideas at the same time. Coyne, Clifford, and Dye have an additional suggestion: put all the over-participators in one group so they won't prevent people in the other groups from speaking.

• *Focus every discussion using your pre-selected questions.* "At the outset of the meeting," say the authors, "explicitly state the ground rules you've decided on – whether you want big ideas or incremental improvements, what the budget is, and so on. Don't worry about stifling creativity. It is precisely such boundaries – the outline of your new box – that will channel their creativity."

• *Have more than one brainstorming session.* People will have ideas after they leave the first meeting, and other ideas will emerge from reading and research. Having two or more meetings will produce more and better ideas, say the authors.

• *Immediately narrow the list of ideas to the ones you will seriously investigate.* "Nothing is more deflating to the participants of a brainstorming session than leaving at the end with no confidence that anything will happen as a result of their efforts," say the authors. "Many managers are reluctant to pick winners out of fear of disappointing those whose ideas are not selected. This is a mistake. Most people prefer the choice to be made in front of them so they can learn from your thought process and produce better ideas next time."

"In sharp contrast to traditional brainstorming," conclude the authors, "our process typically generates a surfeit of constructive ideas… Within the safe confines of new boxes, they will shower you with good, and great, ideas. Then it will be your job to turn those ideas into… reality."

"Breakthrough Thinking from Inside the Box" by Kevin Coyne, Patricia Gorman Clifford, and Renée Dye in *Harvard Business Review*, December 2007 (Vol. 85, #12, p. 70-78), no free e-link available.

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2. How Effective Leaders Use Stories to Inspire the Troops

In this *Harvard Business Review* article, film producer and UCLA professor Peter Guber says that storytelling is one of the most powerful tools a leader can use to turn dreams into goals and goals into "astonishing results." This article has direct relevance for school leaders, who must create a compelling narrative for colleagues, students, parents, and external partners.

But to captivate and move people, says Guber, a story must be true to the teller, the audience, the moment, and the mission:

• *True to the teller* – An effective leadership story is not a made-up yarn. The teller must be "congruent with his story," says Guber, "– his tongue, feet, and wallet must move in the same direction. The consummate modern shaman knows his own deepest values and reveals them in his story with honesty and candor."

• *True to the audience* – The leader/storyteller is acutely aware of the needs of the audience and crafts the essential elements of the story so they "elegantly resonate with those needs, starting where the listeners are and bringing them along on a satisfying emotional journey." A skillful storyteller also succeeds in converting the "I" in the story to "we", so that listeners become heroes in the narrative – beating the bad guys or doing wonderful things for children.

• *True to the moment* – "A great storyteller never tells a story the same way twice," says Guber. "The context of the telling is always part of the story." This requires situational awareness to the context and the facts on the ground.

• *True to the mission* – "A great storyteller is devoted to a cause beyond self," writes Guber. "This explains the passion that great storytellers exude… Even in today's cynical, self-centered age, people are desperate to believe in something bigger than themselves. The storyteller plays a vital role by providing them with a mission they can believe in and devote themselves to. As a modern shaman, the visionary… leader taps into the human yearning to be part of a worthy cause."

"The Four Truths of the Storyteller" by Peter Guber in *Harvard Business Review*, December 2007 (Vol. 85, #12, p. 52-59), no free e-link available

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3. Four Tips for Facilitators

"Facilitation is planned improvisation," writes California State University/Sacramento professor Robert Garmston in this *Journal of Staff Development* column. "Facilitation, like teaching, is cognitively complex and has the added tensions associated with performing leadership tasks in front of colleagues." Garmston has four suggestions for facilitators:

• *Know your intentions and choose congruent behaviors.* Being clear about what you want a group to accomplish keeps you from being reactive, says Garmston. Clarity supports patience, impulse control, strategic listening, and strategic speaking. It also helps the facilitator hear a group's distress signals (e.g., frustration with process, a diminishing number of thoughtful questions) and extend the inquiry phase of a meeting as long as necessary, so people don't jump to the easiest – but not necessarily the best – solutions.

• *Set aside unproductive patterns of listening and responding*. Garmston gives three examples or natural tendencies that facilitators need to avoid:

- Solution listening – i.e., focusing on solutions while listening to a participant speak. "The listener cannot deeply understand the communications of others if he or she is internally formulating a solution and rehearsing a 'best way' of saying it," says Garmston. This tendency is strong in schools, where there's never enough time and people are eager find solutions and move on. But slipping into solution listening undermines a facilitator's key function, which is to foster thoughtful reflection *before* jumping to action.
- Inquisitive listening – i.e., letting curiosity get the better of you and prying for details about something that distracts from the goal of the meeting. For example, a participant says, "We used an ineffective survey." Inquisitive listening response by the facilitator: "Who developed the survey?" A better response: "What did you hope to learn from the survey?" Another example: "The principal gave us no choice." Inquisitive listening response: "Where did this take place?" A better response: "So you felt as if you had no input or influence."

- Autobiographical listening – Recounting a personal experience triggered by what a group is talking about ("Me, too"). Garmston says that facilitators need to resist the temptation. "Setting aside this type of listening requires first noticing the internal process," he says, "and then sending the thought to *call waiting*." When others in the group slip into this pattern, the group is in danger of wasting time with an endless string of related anecdotes. The facilitator might say, "Please help the group understand how this relates to the topic." Or the facilitator might "paraphrase up" to a higher conceptual level, for example, redirecting a personal anecdote about students hitting and name-calling by saying, "So your children are not showing respect for each other."

• *Know when to intervene and when to go with the flow*. Facilitators need to step in when something is happening that interferes with the group's goal – but also know when this will be intrusive and distracting. An example is how to deal with side conversations within a group. In this kind of situation, the facilitator should do a careful, on-the-spot assessment and ask questions like, "Is it work talk – bodies leaning into one another, eyes on colleagues or on papers between them – or social talk – bodies leaning away from the center, heads bobbing. Is it bothering others? Is it important enough to intervene? Can an intervention be quick or will it take time?"

• *Support the group's purposes, topics, processes, and development*. Facilitators have three goals: getting things done, developing the group, and helping participants become skillful group members. Good facilitators make everyone in the group a partner in all three purposes, providing time for reflection and development while driving toward group goals.

"The best facilitators are continuous learners," concludes Garmston. "They reflect after meetings. What were the meeting goals? To what extent were they achieved? What choices did I make that significantly influenced meeting outcomes? Given the luxury of hindsight, what might I have done differently?"

"Collaborative Culture: Four Mental Aptitudes Help Facilitators Facing Challenges" by Robert Garmston in *Journal of Staff Development*, Winter 2008 (Vol. 29, #1, p. 65-66), no free e-link available; Garmston can be reached at FABob@aol.com.

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4. A Way to Engage English Language Learners in Classroom Discussions

In this thoughtful *Journal of Staff Development* article, McREL consultants Jane Hill and Kathleen Flynn suggest "tiered questions" as a way for teachers to actively engage English language learners and improve their content knowledge and language skills. "[L]anguage learning is not something that will 'just happen' when English language learners are exposed to English in a mainstream classroom," they write. "Instead, teachers need to make language learning purposeful, intentional, and explicit."

Tiered questioning is a far better strategy, say the authors, than the commonly-used approach of having ELLs cluster at the back of the classroom with one student explaining what the teacher just said to his or her peers. "The problem with this practice," write Hill and Flynn,

"is not just that it becomes students teaching students instead of a teacher teaching students – it's students who have understood only some of the lesson teaching students who understood even less."

The first step in tiered questioning is knowing students' stage of language acquisition and the "just right" questions appropriate to each stage. Here are the five levels of second-language acquisition and questions that work to scaffold and engage students at each level. Hill and Flynn suggest using prompts at students' current level – and trying out questions at the next-higher level to move them up the ladder:

• *Pre-production* – The student has minimal comprehension, does not verbalize, nods "yes" and "no", draws and points. Teacher prompts: Show me…, Circle the…, Where is…? Who has…?

• *Early production* – The student has limited comprehension, produces one- or two-word responses, participates using key words and familiar phrases, and uses present-tense verbs. Teacher prompts: Yes/no questions, either/or questions, who, what, and how-many questions.

• *Speech emergence* – The student has good comprehension, can produce simple sentences, makes grammar and pronunciation errors, frequently misunderstands jokes. Teacher prompts: Why…? How…? Explain…, questions requiring a short sentence response.

• *Intermediate fluency* – The student has excellent comprehension and makes few grammatical errors. Teacher prompts: What would happen if…? Why do you think…? Questions requiring more than a one-sentence response.

• *Advanced fluency* – The student has near-native level of speech. Teacher prompts: Decide if…, Retell…

The second step in tiered questioning is asking students higher-level questions. Hill and Flynn say that too many teachers ask lower-level questions – simple recall and recognizing information. This is particularly true of the questions asked of English language learners, usually because teachers think these students cannot understand and respond to higher-level questions.

Wrong, say the authors: "A teacher should not mistake ELLs' limited level of output for their ability to think abstractly. It's easy to keep asking pre-production students to show something by pointing, but the pointing can and must do more than have them recall knowledge. It's easy to ask an early production student a question that requires a yes-no response, but the yes-no question doesn't have to and should not center only on recalling knowledge."

Using Bloom's taxonomy, Hill and Flynn map out the kinds of questions that a third-grade teacher might ask students at different levels of language proficiency during a science unit on habitats and adaptation. A similar tiered approach could then be taken to plan written class assignments and homework.

LEVELS OF THINKING AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY	**Pre-production**: Nonverbal responses	**Early production**: One-word responses	**Speech emergence**: Phrases and short sentences	**Intermediate fluency**: Longer and more complex sentences	**Advanced fluency**: Near native quality
Evaluation: Tell if something is right or wrong, good or bad. Do you agree/ disagree…? Why do you think…? Decide if…	Teacher mismatches animal with its environment and asks: Is this the right environment? Find the right environment.	What are the best materials for the duck to build a nest?	What makes a good home for a bear? (Examine settings and evaluate: "A cave makes a good home.")	What would happen if you put a worm in the desert?	Recommend a different environment for a mother duck to raise her ducklings. Defend your choice.
Synthesis: Put ideas or parts of thing together. What ways could…? Why do you think…? Imagine…?	Point to the animals that live in the soil.	Say the names of the animals that live in the soil.	How could you change a scorpion so it could swim?	What would a clam need to survive in the desert?	How would you protect the wildlife in a forest where hiking was very popular?
Analysis: Look at something closely to find out more about it. Why do you think…? What inference can you make…? What is the relationship between…?	Show me an animal that cannot live in the forest.	Name the parts of a fish that help it live in the water.	How are raccoons and squirrels the same? How are they different?	How does a bear use its claws to catch fish? To gather berries?	Why do you think a bear hibernates in the winter?
Application: Use what you learn in another way. How would you use…? What would result if…? What other way would you plan to…?	Show me what would happen if we put the fish in the desert.	Tell me what would happen if we put a fish in the desert.	How could you change the body of a fish to make it fly?	How would you capture and transport scorpions to a zoo?	How would a deer camouflage itself in the forest in winter? In the desert?
Comprehension: Demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas. How would you compare…? Contrast? Which is the best answer? How would you classify the type of…?	Show me where a deer lives.	Tell me which animals eat meat.	Why is a toad the color it is?	Explain how a snake catches its prey.	Why do fish need gills to live in the water? How do gills work?
Knowledge: Tell what you know or remember. What is…? Where is…? Which one?	Where is the raccoon?	What is the name of this animal?	What are the body parts of a turtle?	Give the definition of a mammal.	Tell me everything you know about a clam.

[Adapted from charts in the article. The authors drew from Bloom's Taxonomy, Halliday's Language Functions, and Krashen's Stages of Language Acquisition, with contributions from Mike Gaddis and Cynthia Bjork.]

The authors suggest an action research project to support teachers in the challenging work of improving questioning skills: have a colleague observe a class and keep track of whether the teacher is asking higher-order questions and gearing them to students' language levels, give feedback, and then return six weeks later to see if there has been a change.

Hill and Flynn acknowledge that synching questions to students' language level takes more preparation time. "But the payoff is huge," they say, "– days of rich learning experiences for English language learners where a teacher, who previously felt helpless, is now confident that she has allowed her students to experience success in the classroom."

"Asking the Right Questions: Teachers' Questions Can Build Students' English Language Skills" by Jane Hill and Kathleen Flynn in *Journal of Staff Development*, Winter 2008 (Vol. 29, #1, p. 46-52), no free e-link available; the authors can be reached at jhill@mcrel.org and kflynn@mcrel.org.

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5. Giving Middle-School Math Students a Choice of Difficulty Level

(Originally titled "When Students Choose the Challenge")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Jakarta (Indonesia) 8th-grade math/science teacher David Suarez describes the frustration he faced in his early years working with mixed-achievement classes. He was an enthusiastic teacher and his students were genuinely interested in learning, yet many of them were not achieving up to their potential. But then he read Vygotsky (zone of proximal development) and Csikszentmihalyi (joyful concentration in "flow") and saw the light: enjoyment and success in learning occur "at the boundary between boredom and anxiety, when the challenges are just balanced with the person's capacity to act." The problem was suddenly clear: "My underperforming students were either bored or overwhelmed," says Suarez.

His solution was to write assignments within each curriculum unit at three levels of difficulty – Green, Blue, and Black. Here are the levels (with examples from a unit on problem-solving with linear equations):

- Green: Foundational – The school's standard for proficiency (The difference in the ages of two people is 8 years. The older person is 3 times the age of the younger. How old is each?)
- Blue: Intermediate – Extending into more complex work (The length of a rectangle is 3 less than half the width. If the perimeter is 18, find the length and width.)
- Black: Advanced – The most challenging (When asked for the time, a problem-posing professor said, "If from the present time, you subtract one-sixth of the time from now until noon tomorrow, you get exactly one-third of the time from noon until now." What time is it?)

Suarez gave students a choice with each assignment, explaining that they would be happiest, most productive, and least stressed if they chose assignments that were "just right" in terms of their current skill and knowledge level.

Suarez begins each class with a mini-lesson for all students, explaining the essential understandings of the lesson. Students then choose practice assignments at their level (they can switch levels any day they want), work for 40 minutes in class (getting help from Suarez and classmates), and finish at home. At the end of each thematic unit, students choose a final assessment at their level and complete it alone. If a student does poorly on a higher-level test, he or she can go back and take the Green test to achieve grade-level proficiency.

Suarez reports that teachers, students, and parents were very pleased with tiered math during its first year (2006-07). Achievement and motivation improved and students took more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers were struck that, although students weren't required to go above Green, many of them chose higher levels (Blue 59% of the time, Black 8% of the time). Gains have been especially significant among struggling students, most of whom did solid work at Green. "Tiered learning fuels a positive self-fulfilling prophecy," says Suarez. "If students believe themselves to be below average, they will generally perform below average on an assessment designed for the entire class. On the other hand, students who believe that assessments were designed with their readiness level in mind will expect themselves to be successful." High-achieving students have also thrived.

Suarez has three suggestions for schools considering this approach: (a) The initial work of creating tiered assignments gets easier over time; "If you are apprehensive, move ahead and don't paralyze yourself with worry," he says; (b) Be on the lookout for challenging math problems, which are scarcer than basic problems; and (c) Develop a standards-based grading system; Suarez and his colleagues are now grading students with respect to their individual goals on the level they work on, and also inform parents of the difficulty level selected.

"When Students Choose the Challenge" by David Suarez in *Educational Leadership*, November 2007 (Vol. 65, #3, p. 60-65), http://www.ascd.org/el. Suarez's blog is at www.challengebychoice.wordpress.com.

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6. A California School Swings for the Fences

(Originally titled "How Do You Sustain Excellence?")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, author/consultant Douglas Reeves describes the remarkable gains made by Mead Valley Elementary School in California. Situated in one of the poorest districts in the U.S., rife with drug abuse and violent crime, the school has more than 95% low-income students and 70% ELLs. Yet here are Mead Valley's Academic Performance Index (API) scores:

- 2000 – 450
- 2004 – 695
- 2005 – 729
- 2006 – 746
- 2007 - 774

Special-education students and English language learners have been part of this surge, and the school was named a California Distinguished School in the fall of 2007.

How did Mead do it? Not by focusing on the "bubble" students, but by a full-court press involving seven factors, all of which Reeves says can be replicated in other schools:

• *Common standards and curriculum materials* – This greatly reduced variations in teacher expectations.

• *Common interim assessments* – The school uses a combination of homegrown and external tests, intentionally written to be more difficult than the final state assessments.

• *SMART goals* – Teachers set measurable targets for every student, for each grade, and for the entire school.

• *Sacred time for literacy* – A daily 3-hour block may not be interrupted by pullouts or peripheral activities. Students write every day, and there's no "Crayola curriculum" – mindless coloring in reading groups.

• *Teacher collaboration* – Every Wednesday, students are dismissed at 12:30 and teachers have two hours of discussions focusing on assessment results, teacher observations, struggling students, and best practices.

• *Zero tolerance for ineffective teaching* – Three of the school's 27 teachers were terminated and two transferred out during the first year of the improvement effort.

• *Celebrations of achievement* – The school builds the "emotional confidence" of students and staff, says Reeves, with regular ceremonies in which recognition and rewards are handed out.

"How Do You Sustain Excellence?" by Douglas Reeves in *Educational Leadership*, November 2007 (Vol. 65, #3, p. 86-87), http://www.ascd.org/el; Reeves can be reached at DReeves@LeadAndLearn.com.

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7. A High School Involves Parents in Their Children's Work

In this *Journal of Staff Development* article, three education professors describe the way a California high school built bridges to families. The staff set up advisory groups and made advisors the primary home liaison (including home visits before the school year began), and it worked to build the cultural and linguistic resources inside the school (including a Spanish-speaking parent liaison, teachers, and paraprofessionals).

But the most powerful mechanism for drawing families into the school and create meaningful collaboration, say the authors, were twice-a-year "exhibitions," which were required for students to advance to the next grade. In the fall, students presented their goals to their advisor and one or more family members. At the end of the school year, groups of five students presented projects and assessments of their progress to advisors and family members. Almost 90% of parents participated in the exhibitions. The principal commented, "I can't tell you how many parents left with tears and smiles and pride like they've never felt." The exhibitions seemed to improve communication and trust and helped families appreciate other students and families across cultural and linguistic lines.

To prepare advisors for the fall and spring exhibitions, the school provided scripts and protocols to structure the meetings, and a scoring rubric to help parents understand and

evaluate the skills that were being taught and what constituted proficient work. The school also organized professional development on curriculum focus areas (for example, writing across the curriculum) and suggestions for working with students on their goals, self-assessments, and end-of-year exhibition projects.

"Beyond Open Houses: School Promotes Cross-Cultural Understanding Among Teachers and Language-Minority Families" by Thomas Levine, Jason Irizarry, and George Bunch in *Journal of Staff Development*, Winter 2008 (Vol. 29, #1, p. 29-33), no free e-link available

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8. Alarming HIV and AIDS Statistics

If you still need to be convinced that today's adolescents, especially those in the African-American community, need comprehensive, high-quality health education, check out these facts from an article and editorial in the *Bay State Banner*:

• While AIDS deaths in the U.S. have dropped 80% since the mid-1990s due to early diagnosis and anti-retroviral drugs, an AIDS epidemic is in full swing in the African-American community.

• African Americans, who are 13% of the U.S. population, constitute 50% of those diagnosed with HIV (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

• Of Americans living with AIDS in 2004, 48% were black (Black AIDS Institute report).

• Of Americans who die of AIDS each year, 50% are black (CDCP).

• Of young people diagnosed with HIV in 2004, 70% were African-American, 15% were white, and 13% were Latino (Black AIDS Institute report.).

• Of women diagnosed with HIV, 67% are black; AIDS is the leading cause of death among young African-American women; among young white women, it ranks seventh (CDCP).

"We are in a public health state of emergency in the African-American community," says Debra Fraser-Howze, head of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS. Carolyn Barley Britton, a professor at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, agrees, adding, "The true tragedy is we know what messages the public needs, ones that de-stigmatize testing and that communicate that preventive measures are available and that treatment is available… We know what works and all we need is to have the will to do it."

"Apathy Fueling Black AIDS Epidemic in U.S." by Adrianne Appel, and "We're the Ones", an editorial, both in the *Bay State Banner*, Dec. 6, 2007 (Vol. 43, #17, p. 1, 21, 4)

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9. Follow-Up on an ADD/ADHD Brain Study

In this *Education Week* article by Debra Viadero, some experts express concern that a recent front-page *New York Times* article (summarized in Marshall Memo 210, #1) could lead educators to take a wait-and-see approach with children diagnosed with ADD/ADHD. "I just

hope people don't say these kids don't need treatment or that they don't need medicine," says Chris Zeigler Dendy, an educator and author in this area, "because then our kids will develop gaps in learning."

The study in question (by the National Institute of Mental Health) used magnetic resonance imaging technology to study the brains of 446 children over a 15-year period. It found that among children with ADD/ADHD, the part of the cortex associated with impulse control, organizational and attention skills, working memory, and some higher-order motor functions develops more slowly, reaching maturity as much 3½ years later than other children.

But this doesn't mean that all children with ADD/ADHD end up with mature brains identical to those of other children. "Two-thirds of children will still have a lot of symptoms as adults," says Dr. Philip Shaw, the lead NIMH researcher. Which points to the need for educators to diagnose early and provide support so that children with ADD/ADHD learn as much as possible in the crucial elementary and middle-school grades.

"ADHD Experts Fear Brain-Growth Study Being Misconstrued" by Debra Viadero in *Education Week*, Dec. 5, 2007 (Vol. 27, #14, p. 1, 14) http://www.edweek.org and navigate to current issue.

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10. Why Peer Tutoring Often Produces Disappointing Results

In this long, scholarly article in the *Review of Educational Research,* University of Pittsburgh researchers Rod Roscoe and Michelene Chi ask why, despite the theoretical potential of peer tutoring, it almost always produces learning gains that are "underwhelming." The answer: most peer tutors tend to engage in "knowledge-telling" rather than leading their tutees to understand what they are teaching. "Unfortunately," conclude Roscoe and Chi, "peer tutors primarily summarize information with little elaboration or reflection, and students' questions tend to ask about basic facts. Even when trained, some peer tutors seem to focus on *delivering* rather than *developing* their knowledge… As a result, the true potential for tutor learning may rarely be achieved."

"Understanding Tutor Learning: Knowledge-Building and Knowledge Telling in Peer Tutors' Explanations and Questions" by Rod Roscoe and Michelene Chi in *Review of Educational Research*, December 2007 (Vol. 77, #4, p. 534-574), no e-link available

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo, please e-mail: kim.marshall8@verizon.net

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 37 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 44 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through more than a hundred articles each week, and selects 5-10 that have the greatest potential to improve teaching, leadership, and learning. He then writes a brief summary of each article, pulls out several striking quotes, provides e-links to full articles when available, and e-mails the Memo to subscribers every Monday evening (with occasional breaks; there are about 50 issues a year).

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Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Atlantic Monthly
Catalyst Chicago
Chronicle of Higher Education
CommonWealth Magazine
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
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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
NASSP Bulletin
New York Times
New Yorker
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
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