

Marshall Memo 29

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
March 15, 2004

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Quotes of the Week

"We cannot prepare citizens to swim in the adult waters of today's turbulent global economy by letting them thrash about in the kiddie pool... [C]ontinuing to award a high school diploma to students who cannot meet real-world demands is a guarantee that many will be left behind."

Michael Cohen, Chester Finn, and Kati Haycock, *Education Week* (see #1)

"Failure to read by 9 years of age portends a lifetime of illiteracy for at least 70 percent of struggling readers."

Reid Lyon and Vinita Chhabra, *Educational Leadership* (see item #2)

"A library should be the center of the school. A library should inspire. A library should be seductive."

Ernest Gregg, Mt. Vernon, NY principal (see item #7a)

"Despite our human wish for a single truth, research can be both right and wrong – even scientific research."

Marge Scherer, editor of *Educational Leadership*, on the reading wars

"A school whose culture embraces professional development related to improving student learning requires a leader who is a facilitator, a leader who is visible, a leader

who models learning, a leader who listens, and a leader who builds positive relationships with students and teachers.”

Sally Clark and Donald Clark, *Middle School Journal* (see item #11)

“Without collaboration, individual change is possible but school change is not.”

Sally Clark and Donald Clark (*ibid.*)

1. National Standards for a High-School Diploma?

In this important article on the back of the current *Education Week*, three leaders from different points of the ideological compass report on the American Diploma Project, a two-year collaborative project by their organizations (Achieve, Fordham Foundation, and Education Trust) to reach consensus on one set of standards for a U.S. high-school diploma. Previous efforts by states to define high-school graduation standards have been too low, the authors contend, reflecting “an earlier era when higher education was an option for a select group of high school students and when good jobs at decent wages were available to motivated but unskilled labor.” Nowadays, almost all eighth graders aspire to college and a college education is a virtual necessity for any job that pays a family wage.

The American Diploma Project interviewed leading economists on market projections for jobs that will pay a decent wage in the decades ahead, looked at high-school transcripts of employees in those professions, and worked with front-line managers to determine workplace requirements and faculty members in colleges and universities to identify what entering students need to know and be able to do to succeed in entry-level courses. The result is an exacting set of standards. In math, they include Algebra I, Algebra 2, geometry and data analysis and statistics. In English, they demand strong oral and written communication skills at a college and workplace level. The standards also describe analytic and research skills that exist mostly in current high-school honors classes.

Needless to say, there is a significant gap between the ADP’s standards and those currently demanded by most high schools. This is especially true in schools that serve low-income, minority populations. The authors suggest that the ADP standard be used as a national benchmark, replacing exit exams, course-taking requirements, and college admission and placement exams. This would anchor high school standards in the demands of college and the workforce. Schools could then map backward to create a K-12 curriculum that “moves students in a clear progression to

these new exit standards.” How would proficiency on the standards be measured? Not on one test. The authors feel that students should be assessed by end-of-course exams, research projects, and oral examinations.

The stakes are high, they contend: “We cannot prepare citizens to swim in the adult waters of today’s turbulent global economy by letting them thrash about in the kiddie pool... [C]ontinuing to award a high school diploma to students who cannot meet real-world demands is a guarantee that many will be left behind.”

“Creating a High School Diploma That Counts” by Michael Cohen, Chester Finn, and Kati Haycock in *Education Week*, March 10, 2004 (Vol. XXIII, #26, p. 52, 38)
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=26cohen.h23>

2. Keys to Literacy for Struggling Students

This article acknowledges that educational research “has historically been of poor scientific quality, lacking in the authority of valid evidence, poorly communicated, and woefully impractical.” Educators are not irrational when they ask whether they can trust the current wave of “scientifically based” research. This has led many teachers to rely on “experience and anecdotal information” to guide their teaching. The authors disapprove: “Although experience is valuable,” they say, “depending on experience alone typically leaves many children behind.” They say that recent research on learning to read is much better: researchers are now using superior methods, their work is peer reviewed, it’s more practical, and the evidence from different studies is converging on a broad consensus: the keys to reading instruction are a balance of phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies.

The authors feel that teachers and school administrators should focus on two key questions:

- *How does reading develop?* Learning to read is not hard-wired or “natural”; it is a relatively lengthy process that begins well before children enter school. As such, the quality of early language and literacy interactions is key, and children from low socio-economic backgrounds enter school with some important disadvantages: they know fewer letter names and sounds and many fewer words. During the preschool years, poor children have logged only half the amount of time listening and speaking to parents (616 words per hour) as average working-class children (1,251 words per hour) and less than one-third that of children in professional families (2,153 words per hour). Preschool programs, including Head Start, rarely address these gaps. These

disadvantages can be lessened in school, but only by expert and integrated teaching of the key skills.

- *How can we prevent reading failure?* “The majority of children who enter kindergarten and elementary school at risk for reading failure can learn to read at average or above-average levels – if they are identified early and given systematic, intensive instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies.” Older students who are struggling with reading can also be helped, but successful remediation at this stage requires extensive, intensive instruction over a period of years.

“The Science of Reading Research by Reid Lyon and Vinita Chhabra in *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (vol. 61, #6, p. 12-17), http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/index.html .

3. Differentiation is a Powerful Reading Strategy

This article by two education professors takes issue with a number of the findings of the National Reading Panel’s 2000 report, especially those on direct instruction of phonics, calling them “flawed science.” The authors say there has been far too much confusion in the use of the terms decoding, phonics, and systematic phonics. What works in reading instruction? There is “no secret formula that will address the needs of every reader... no useful one-dimensional model of reading instruction.” Even balanced literacy is not the best approach, since it may restrict teachers from responding to the unique needs of their students. “This approach eliminates the teacher’s professional power and responsibility for instructional decision making,” the authors assert.

Their recommendation is for teachers to differentiate instruction. “Using this strategy, the teacher assesses students’ needs, determines the appropriate methods to address those needs, and creates individual and group experiences accordingly. Perhaps some students need direct instruction in decoding skills; perhaps none do.” Their opinion on direct instruction of phonics? It may be necessary for some at-risk kindergarten students, “but only if embedded in a print-rich, comprehensive literacy program and delivered in brief, individualized lessons... If a teacher delivers 10 minutes of systematic phonics instruction each day to those students who need it, such instruction may have a high benefit-cost ratio. If phonics activities displace literature-rich and meaning-oriented instruction, however, the benefit of systematic phonics instruction will be greatly diminished.”

The authors conclude: “Questions of whether direct instruction in decoding or phonics is necessary are less important than the questions of when, why, how, and to whom teachers should provide such instruction.”

“Research on Reading: A Cautionary Tale” by Gregory Camilli and Paula Wolfe in *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (vol. 61, #6, p. 26-29), http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/index.html.

4. What Helps Students Really Remember New Vocabulary?

A first-grader class has just finished assembling the letters and understanding the sounds in of the word “hog” and the teacher is pleased with her phonics lesson. But when she asks students if they would like to have a hog as a pet, she realizes that some students think it’s a hawk and some think it’s a log. Such confusion on similar-sounding words is common as primary-grade students learn new vocabulary. Scenarios like this show the limits of phonics instruction in helping students get to the ultimate goal – comprehension.

The source of such confusion is often “word poverty” – the relatively small vocabularies of many students. Louisa Moats estimates that “linguistically advantaged” students know about 20,000 words as they enter first grade, while “linguistically disadvantaged” students know only 5,000 words – and suffer from additional confusions with similar-sounding words, partial knowledge of word meanings, and limited knowledge of how and when to use words. This vocabulary gap entering first grade tracks closely with reading achievement at the end of first grade – and with 11th-grade reading comprehension.

The good news is that effective teaching in the early grades can narrow this gap. The key to developing a broader vocabulary and a better understanding of word meanings and storing that information firmly in retrievable memory is “repeated exposure to the word in a variety of rich contexts.” This includes knowing how a word sounds, how it is written, and how it is used as a part of speech, as well as being familiar with its multiple meanings and its derivation. This goes well beyond the common practice of “context-based mentioning” (in which the teacher gives a quick aside on the meaning of an unfamiliar word) and the more focused “analytic vocabulary instruction,” in which the teacher gives a brief lesson on an unfamiliar word. What really gets results, according to an experiment performed by the authors, is “anchored vocabulary instruction,” in which teachers relate new words to students’ background knowledge, engage students in analyzing word meanings, involve them

in active analysis of the words, and call students' attention to the words' component letters and sounds. The results of this study confirm earlier work suggesting that primary-grade teachers need to engage students in active analysis of word meanings and word structure, relating words to their prior knowledge and personal experiences. This is especially helpful for students with weak entering vocabularies. In short, teachers "should take every opportunity to connect vocabulary words to texts, to other words, and to some concrete orthographic features within words."

"Making Words Stick" by Connie Juel and Rebecca Deffes in *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (vol. 61, #6, p. 30-34), no e-link available.

5. Four Practices That Expand Students' Vocabularies

Expanding children's vocabularies is a key part of boosting reading achievement, especially for students who enter school with less extensive vocabularies. The authors of this article outline four key practices that help close the gap:

- *Develop word awareness and love of words through word play.* This means using a variety of games, activities, jokes, and materials that encourage students to take a playful approach to words.
- *Deliver explicit, rich instruction to develop important vocabulary.* One model for this kind of instruction is STAR: Select, Teach, Activate, and Revisit.
- *Build strategies for independence.* Students need to figure out many new word on their own, and it helps if they know some Greek and Latin roots, know how to use a dictionary, and be taught good problem-solving skills.
- *Engage students actively with a wide range of books.* Wide reading is the best crucible for building vocabulary, especially if the books are well-chosen and of interest to students. "Books provide the grist for great vocabulary learning, and wide reading is the process the mills those books into personal vocabularies." The more the teacher interacts with students while they are reading, and after they have read, the better vocabulary and conceptual growth will be.

"Vocabulary Lessons" by Camille Blachowicz and Peter Fisher in *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (vol. 61, #6, p. 66-69), no e-link available.

6. The Reading Research War Rages On

To keep us all on our toes, this strongly-argued article by Stephen Krashen rebuts four claims contained in the National Reading Panel's 2000 report.

- *False Claim #1 – Phonemic awareness training significantly improves children's reading ability.* Phonemic awareness is not always, Krashen avers, a crucial element in learning to read. "For example, children without phonemic awareness often learn to read quite well, and some adults who are excellent readers do poorly on tests of phonemic awareness."

- *False Claim #2 – Systematic phonics instruction is more effective than less systematic phonics instruction.* Krashen's review of the research claims to find very small differences between systematic phonics and approaches, with individual tutoring and "language activities" proving effective as well.

- *False Claim #3 – Skills-based approaches are superior to whole language approaches.* On the contrary, Krashen says that the evidence is pretty even, with some studies giving a slight advantage to whole language.

- *False Claim #4 – There is no clear evidence that encouraging children to read more in school improves reading achievement.* Krashen says that the National Reading Panel ignored many studies about the efficacy of sustained silent reading of appropriate books and educators should not be deterred from maximizing the amount of time their students read in school.

"False Claims About Literacy Development" by Stephen Krashen in *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (vol. 61, #6, p. 18-21)

http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/index.html

7. Creating Fluent Readers

Fluency is at the heart of proficient reading. Its three components are:

(a) accuracy in word decoding – being able to sound out the word in a text with minimal errors; (b) automatic processing – being able to read with minimal mental effort on decoding so they can put maximum brainpower into making meaning; and (c) prosodic reading – parsing the text into syntactically and semantically appropriate units. Fluency involves reading quickly and accurately with expression and phrasing, paying attention to punctuation and phrasing and making meaning of the text.

Teachers can assess these three dimensions of fluency fairly easily. Accuracy can be measured by looking for fewer than 5-10 percent of word errors. Automaticity can be

assessed through reading rate (coupled with accuracy). Prosody can be measured by listening to a student read a grade-level passage and using a rubric to rate expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace (there is a good fluency rubric on page 49 of this article). Remember not to fall into the trap of confusing fast with fluent!

Teachers can develop fluency by modeling it in their own oral reading and then discussing specific oral interpretations of parts of the passage. Coaching individual students also helps. Here are some models of coaching interventions:

- "You got all the words right, Thomas, but you read too fast. It was hard for me to follow what you were trying to tell me."
- "Eliza, the way you made each character sound different in this dialogue was fantastic. It was easy and fun to listen to these characters arguing."
- "I really like how you paused between sentences. This gave me a chance to think about the author's message. Now think about finding places to pause for just a second more inside longer sentences."
- I loved how you made your voice strong and loud in this section. It really told me that this section of the passage was important."
- "Try slowing down here and making your voice a bit softer. Remember, you're trying to tell me about something mysterious. Tell the story with your voice as well as with the words."

In addition, there are two powerful teaching approaches that help improve fluency: assisted reading and repeated readings. In assisted reading, the teacher reads a passage aloud to students and they follow along, first silently, then aloud as a group. Then students read the passage aloud with a partner, either at a similar or different reading level as them. Repeated readings involve practicing a passage until a level of mastery is acquired and then performing in front of a group (or for parents).

"Creating Fluent Readers" by Timothy Rasinski in *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (vol. 61, #6, p. 46-51), no e-link available

8. Expert Tutoring is the Key – But It's Expensive!

Richard Allington, a leading expert on literacy, says that whole-group classroom interventions by themselves, no matter how good, cannot come close to bringing all or even most students up to reading proficiency. But if good classroom practices are supplemented by expert, individual tutoring, almost all children can reach proficiency (defined as at least 45th percentile on a standardized reading test). However, the amount of tutoring required to meet the needs of all struggling students

would be very, very significant (about \$500,000 a year for a 1000-student suburban school and \$1,700,000 a year in a high-poverty school of the same size).

In this issue of *Educational Leadership*, there is an additional exchange between Allington and other experts on the standard for reading proficiency. The war goes on!

“Setting the Record Straight” by Richard Allington in *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (vol. 61, #6, p. 22-25)

http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/index.html

9. Counterproductive Phonics in the Upper Grades

What do struggling readers in the upper elementary through high-school grades need? Not phonics, say two Virginia education professors in this strongly-worded article. The two key questions in deciding whether to use any reading program or practice are: (a) Does it help students read better? and (b) Does it make students want to read more? There is no evidence that phonics helps in either department.

Phonemic awareness is important for many students in the first two grades of school, and some students in upper grades need thoughtful, age-appropriate instruction in word recognition and spelling (which is best done through word study, which helps students manipulate and understand words from their reading and learn to spell them better). “But working with words alone,” say the authors, “will not build the competence and dispositions that students need to read the increasingly complex texts in their academic subjects, nor will it motivate students to read voluntarily outside school.” Struggling readers in the upper grades need to spend the maximum amount of time reading material that makes sense to them. “Students should spend most of their school reading time with texts that they *can* read and *want* to read.” Working with phonics and reading material that is too difficult is not productive.

What teaching approaches are most effective? “Solid evidence shows that teachers who succeed with lower-achieving readers spend most of their time working with individuals or small groups rather than in front of the class. During these one-to-one times, teachers can observe and respond to students’ confusions about reading and also determine what works for individual students. The most important and sophisticated kind of teaching requires knowledge of how to support students in the midst of reading to facilitate their perseverance and understanding. Struggling readers need this kind of teaching more than other students do.” They respond less

well to workbooks, computer programs, and phonics worksheets – and are especially vulnerable to less-skilled teachers.

“Phonics Instruction for Older Students? Just Say No” by Gay Ivey and Marianne Baker in *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (vol. 61, #6, p. 35-39), no e-link available.

10. Dyslexia Update

In this article, two Yale pediatricians give us the latest information on reading disabilities and the brain. Dyslexia is defined as “an unexpected difficulty in reading in children and adults who otherwise possess the intelligence, motivation, and education necessary for developing accurate and fluent reading.” It accounts for 80 percent of all cases of learning disability and affects 5-17 percent of the American population (and other populations as well). Counter to popular perception, dyslexia affects boys and girls equally, but boys are referred more often because of their disruptive behavior, while dyslexic girls tend to struggle in silence and are often overlooked. Recent brain scans using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) show that dyslexia is associated with the under-activation of two of the three portions of the brain associated with fluent reading (and over-activation of the third area). Dyslexia does not go away as people get older. To prevent reading failure, with all its attendant consequences, it is vital to identify the disability early and provide effective reading programs to address the child’s needs.

The reading ability that is most affected by dyslexia is *fluency* – “rapid, automatic reading that does not require attention or effort.” Children with dyslexia try to work around the disability, but at a cost: their reading is slower and more labored. Knowing what part of the brain is causing reading difficulties has allowed experts to begin to experiment with specifically targeted reading interventions. Initial results indicate that dyslexic students make significant progress and actually begin to use all three reading areas in their brains when they get systematic tutoring that helps them understand that letters and combinations of letters represent the sounds of speech. Eight months of such tutoring, combined with effective instruction in vocabulary, repeated oral reading with feedback and guidance, and strategies for reading comprehension, brought about significant and lasting changes in brain organization so that dyslexic children’s patterns of brain activation during reading were like those of typical readers. Using these methods, the authors say that almost all children can be taught to read proficiently.

“Reading Disability and the Brain” by Sally Shaywitz and Bennett Shaywitz in *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (Vol. 61, #6, p. 6-11), no e-link available.

11. The Most Effective Professional Development for Middle Schools

Conventional professional development seldom focuses on student learning outcomes and often ignores the basics of adult learning and the specific needs of the school in which it takes place. In this article, two Arizona education professors lay out what state-of-the-art professional development would look like in a middle school. For starters, there should be:

- A well-articulated mission focused on student learning in core subjects;
- An analysis of student content learning in that school;
- A focus on specific issues of curriculum and instruction;
- Use of appropriate adult learning strategies and models of effective practice;
- Team collaboration focused on boosting student achievement;
- A commitment to sustain the program over a period of years;
- Continuous measurement of learning and effective practices.

With these general pieces in place, an effective professional development program needs to:

- *Be site-based and focused on school improvement* – It’s key that the professional development focuses on “the difficulties encountered by real students in real classrooms.” (Elmore 2002, p. 7)

- *Include a variety of experiences for teachers* – These might include activities hosted by teachers, exchanging lesson plans, structured sessions where teachers share best practices, workshops, and team and grade-level meetings.

- *Maximize collaboration* – The engine that drives higher achievement is the teacher team discussing student learning in relation to standards and adjusting instruction.

- *Focus on student learning* – It sounds obvious, but improving student achievement needs to be at the heart of the professional development effort. Strong instructional leadership is usually needed to keeping teacher teams focused on standards and improvement; the principal should attend some meetings, encourage a “backwards design” process whereby teachers plan teaching units with state standards and end-point assessments in mind, and periodically ask for work products and student learning results. But this may not be enough. The pressure of external high-stakes tests can be a force for good, encouraging teachers to emerge from isolation and collaborate with their colleagues.

- *Use staff input* – A professional development plan should be drawn up with teacher needs and input in mind and should be the product of frank discussion about what the needs and problems of the school and students really are.

- *Provide enough time* – Teacher teams must have enough time “to collaborate; to design, implement, and assess curriculum and instruction; to visit other classrooms; to monitor agreed-upon instructional approaches; and to coach and provide feedback. One way of opening time is a late-start day each week, with teacher time to meet from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

- *Use accepted adult learning strategies* – The key is supporting continuous, ongoing learning appropriate to adult learners. This means using group approaches that revolve around the analysis of experience and engage teachers in a process of mutual inquiry, allowing for differences in style, time, place, and the pace of learning.

- *Evaluate effectiveness* – Information should be gathered periodically from a variety of sources about whether the program is actually producing student learning gains.

“Expert Leadership and Comprehensive Professional Development: A Key to Quality Educators in Middle Schools” by Sally Clark and Donald Clark, *Middle School Journal*, March 2004 (Vol. 35, #4, p. 47-53), no e-link available

12. Interview Questions that Identify the Best Middle School Teachers

The success of a school depends more than anything else on the quality of its teachers, which means that hiring is the single most important activity that a principal engages in. In this article, a Georgia education professor contends that the best predictor of a teacher’s future performance is his or her previous job performance, i.e., prior teaching, student teaching, or field experience. (The jargon for this approach in the business world is behavior-based interviewing.) If this is true, then interview questions should not be abstract, theoretical, and hypothetical, but should focus on a candidate’s actual track record. This will allow the hiring committee to get a sense of whether he or she has had appropriate experiences and is reflective about those experiences. Here are some sample interview questions in this vein:

- How have the national and state standards for teaching your subject area guided your teaching?
- Describe a two-week unit you have taught.
- Tell me about a time when you wrote a lesson plan that went well and a time when a plan did not go well. What was the difference?

- What are some of your favorite ways to begin and end a class?
- Describe a classroom that you liked where you have observed or taught. What components of that room would you bring to your new classroom?
- Describe a typical homework assignment that you have used in the past.
- What have you done to increase the students' completion rate of homework?
- While a lesson is ongoing, how can you tell if students are "getting" the new material?
- Describe an approach that you have used to help slow learners succeed.
- Describe positive parent communications that you have used in the past.
- Tell me about a time when you discussed an issue with a parent and then the student's behavior or academic progress changed.
- Tell me about a time when you have worked on a teaching team.
- Share an example you have seen or used for integrating writing across the curriculum.
- How have you used games to motivate students in your classes? Have you encountered problems with the use of games, and how did you resolve the problem?
- Describe any opportunity you have had to give students an outside audience for their work (presentations, writings, website).
- Describe a lesson that you have taught that helped prepare your students for high school.
- How do your teaching strategies help prepare students for taking standardized tests?
- How have you found back-up help for a student problem if you felt the issue was beyond your area of expertise?
- How have you built time into your day to allow students to discuss opinions, talk about topics of interest, and to "vent" their frustrations?
- Describe an activity that you have used that helps your students de-stress.
- What have you implemented to make your classroom welcoming and student-friendly?
- What strategies have you used or observed to improve school climate and increase student attendance?
- How have you involved students in discussion of rules, consequences, and rewards?

- What words or phrases have become typical positive reinforcements in your teaching vocabulary and how do middle school students respond?
- How much information do you share about yourself with students during the first days of school?

“Hiring the Best Middle School Teachers with Behavior-Based Interviewing” by Mary Clement, *Middle School Journal*, March 2004 (Vol. 35, #4, p. 25-32), no e-link available.

13. More on Bullying Prevention

Bullying is all too common in schools (a Kaiser Foundation study found that 86 percent of 12-15-year-old students are taunted or bullied in school), and a surprising amount of bullying is verbal (including on-line), not physical. Here is a broad definition of bullying: “conscious, willful, and deliberately hostile activity intended to harm someone else for pleasure.”

The trap in which bullied students find themselves is that if they fight back, they often get in trouble themselves, but if they tell an adult, the bullying sometimes gets worse. “The key to combating bullying is education and awareness,” says Michelle MacPherson, a New Brunswick, Canada social worker, “because until it becomes repugnant and unaccepted by the silent majority, it will be seen as a rite of passage in childhood and a part of growing up.” These are the most important steps for school staff to take:

- *Do not minimize, rationalize, or explain the behavior away.* Bullying victims need to know that they are not helpless or alone.

- *Reassure bullying victims that it’s not their fault.* If this message does not get through, victims may carry the scars into adulthood. One 20-year-old woman spoke up after a workshop and said that she always thought her hair was set on fire when she was a child because there was something wrong with her.

- *Teach children how to respond appropriately.* There are no innocent bystanders. Students need to stand up for themselves and not permit others to be bullied when they are present. Peers can intervene in a number of ways, including with humor.

- *Encourage students to report bullying.* It needs to be said again and again that bullying will not be tolerated. With cyber bullying, students need to learn the same safe “netiquette” rules that apply to adults: (a) never open messages from people you don’t know; (b) do not respond to hostile messages; and (c) do not let yourself be drawn into a war of words over the Internet. For more information on cyber bullying, see <http://www.cyberbullying.ca> .

“A Safer Place for Learning: How Some Schools Are Banishing Bullying” by John Franklin, *ASCD Education Update*, March 2004 (Vol. 46, #2, p. 4-5), no e-link available.

14. Short Items:

- *Neglected libraries* – In last week’s “On Education” column in the *New York Times*, Michael Winerip decried the state of many inner-city school libraries. Focusing on an elementary school in Mount Vernon, New York, he named one dusty, out-of-date book after another and found that students who wanted to write reports on various African-American heroes and heroines during Black History Month could not find a single book on Langston Hughes, Whoopi Goldberg, Oprah Winfrey, Josephine Baker, Cicely Tyson, Leontyne Price, Ossie Davis, Spike Lee, Duke Ellington, Benjamin Banneker, Granville T. Woods, Alex Haley, Frederick Douglass, and Rosa Parks. The new principal, Ernest Gregg, has hired a certified library / media specialist and is going to work to improve the situation, but it’s an uphill battle.

“At Poor Schools’ Libraries, Time Stops on the Shelves” by Michael Winerip, *New York Times*, March 10, 2004

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/10/education/10education.html>

- *A New Teenage Culture of Restraint* – In a two-part series in the *New York Times* last week on the declining teenage pregnancy rate, reporter Nina Bernstein provides a startlingly intimate, poignant look at the struggle of a few New York City teenagers to resist the siren song of risky sex. The second article follows 17-year-old Tabitha F. as she commutes two hours from her mother’s homeless shelter in Queens to her school in the Bronx, fends off various 20-something male predators (with uneven success), and works on getting admitted to college. The heroic efforts of teachers and health staff at DeWitt Clinton High School are of particular note, highlighting the crucial role of schools and school-based health clinics in the tentative progress being made against teen pregnancy and disease – progress that could easily be reversed in the years ahead. These articles are must reading for anyone interested in these issues.

“Behind Fall in Pregnancy, a New Teenage Culture of Restraint” by Nina Bernstein, *New York Times*, March 7, 2004 and “For a Promising but Poor Girl, A Struggle Over Sex and Goals” by Nina Bernstein, *New York Times*, March 8, 2004. Purchase at:

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F00E1FFC345B0C748CDDAA0894DC404482>

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F60C12FD3D5A0C7B8CDDAA0894DC404482>

- ***Board-certified teacher impact*** – An independent value-added study of teacher effectiveness in North Carolina found that National Board Certified teachers were more successful than other teachers at boosting student achievement (as measured by standardized state tests). Specific findings: NBC teachers were more effective than teachers who pursued but did not obtain board certification; were more effective than teachers who do not pursue board certification; have a greater impact on younger students; and have a greater impact on low-income students.

Spotted in *PEN Weekly Newsblast*, March 12, 2004. The study is available at:
http://www.teachingquality.org/resources/html/NBPTS_Goldhaber.htm

- ***Evaluating educational research*** – The Education Commission of the States and the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel) have started an interactive on-line document to help policymakers, education leaders, reporters, and others get answers to three questions about education research: (a) What does the research say? (b) Is the research trustworthy? (c) How can the research be used to guide policy? You can check it out at (spotted in *PEN Weekly Newsblast* March 12):
<http://www.ecs.org/html/educationIssues/Research/primer/foreword.asp>

- ***How do English Language Learners learn to read?*** In this article, Robert Slavin and Alan Cheung (both of Success for All) say that the research evidence comes down squarely in favor two-way bilingual instruction, with students learning both their native language and English in different parts of the school day or week. Research is also positive for bilingual instruction (with students learning their native language first and then making the jump to English), but this approach has the disadvantage of putting off English acquisition for a year or more. The authors say there is no research evidence that English-only instruction is effective.

“How Do English Language Learners Learn to Read?” by Robert Slavin and Alan Cheung *Educational Leadership*, March 2004 (Vol. 61, #6, p. 52-57)

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, or if you saw an article or web item

in the last week that you think should be covered,

please e-mail: kim.marshall8@verizon.net

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo aims to keep busy principals, teachers, and other educators very well-informed on important research, ideas, and developments in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, a former Boston teacher and administrator, is your “designated reader,” searching through a wide range of publications the week they come out, zeroing in on the articles that are most relevant and useful to improving teaching and learning at the school level, and summarizing them in a brief e-mail. Target topics include the following:

- *School leadership* – Building a professional learning community; effective teamwork; effective schools practices; supervision and evaluation of teachers; time management.
- *Effective teaching* – Key variables associated with high student achievement; professional development of teachers; teacher leadership and career ladders; multiple intelligences and brain research.
- *Curriculum* – Alignment and planning with the end in sight; teaching for understanding; new ideas in reading, writing, and math.
- *Assessment* – Aligned formative and summative assessments; using data and student work for continuous improvement; graphic display of student achievement data; standardized testing and the debate on standards.
- *Closing the gap* – Effective strategies to close the racial/ economic achievement gap; the innate-ability / intelligence / effective effort debate; safety-net programs.
- *Positive school culture* – Student discipline; social-emotional learning; moral development; parent involvement; and community partnerships.
- *And...* – New areas of research; upcoming television and radio programs on education.

Publications covered:

(those read this week are underlined)

American Education Research Journal
American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD SmartBrief
Atlantic Monthly
Bay State Banner
Boston Globe
Commonwealth Magazine
Curriculum/ Education Update (ASCD)
Ed. Magazine (Harvard School of Education)
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Elementary School Journal
Harpers
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Education Review
Middle School Journal
New York Times
New Yorker
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal Magazine
Psychology Today
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Review of Educational Research
Teachers College Record
Teacher Magazine

If one of the summaries is of particular interest, subscribers are encouraged to read the full article. E-links will be provided whenever possible. If you would like to suggest additional publications, please be in touch.

Subscriptions:

The Marshall Memo is sent every Monday (with occasional breaks). Subscriptions are \$50 a year. Reduced rates for institutional subscriptions can be negotiated. Contact Kim at kim.marshall8@verizon.net or 222 Clark Road, Brookline, MA 02445 (617-566-4353).