

# Marshall Memo 407

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

October 24, 2011

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## Quotes of the Week

“Youth sports is supposed to be about education and human development.”

David Bornstein (see item #1)

“Because there are so many opportunities to fail in sports, it is a gold mine of teachable moments.”

David Bornstein (*ibid.*)

When you ask people to focus on mastery, it’s not soft. And screaming at a kid is not tough. That’s just a lack of impulse control.”

Jim Thompson (*ibid.*)

“Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler.”

Albert Einstein (quoted in item #8)

“Our educators and students will not make sufficient college-ready gains unless they have information on how... students are actually doing in college.”

J.B. Schramm of College Summit, quoted in “Better Data Urged to Link K-12, Postsecondary Outcomes” by Caralee Adams in *Education Week*, Oct. 12, 2011 (Vol. 31, #7, p. 8), available for subscribers only

“Our students, whether in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade or 7<sup>th</sup>, whether ‘partially proficient’ or ‘advanced,’ want to know. How critical that we as teachers tap that desire, that curiosity.”

Peter Huidekoper Jr. (see item #6)

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## **1. Bringing a New Ethos to Youth Sports – and the Classroom**

In this *New York Times Opinionator* column, author David Bornstein comments on the way inexperienced, untrained coaches of youth sports often give inappropriate and unhelpful advice to their players. (Like so much in athletic coaching, this also applies to K-12 classrooms.) Some examples:

- Putting pressure on children to perform;
- Trying to give them technical advice when they are anxious or frustrated;
- Rewarding misbehavior by giving it extra attention;
- Making children worry about making mistakes.

“I did this in soccer,” says Bornstein, “and, through my over-eagerness, almost destroyed my then-6-year-old son’s delight in the game... Youth sports is supposed to be about education and human development.” Under this kind of pressure, many young players end up imitating professional athletes behaving badly, which has produced an increase in cheating, poor sportsmanship, and acts of aggression. Sadly, most students drop out of sports after middle school.

“What’s needed is a culture change,” says Bornstein, and he describes the Positive Coaching Alliance, which shows coaches how to restore the proper ethos to competitive youth sports. PCA isn’t against winning, but trains coaches in a set of techniques that restore the joy to the game and keep most students actively engaged in sports through high school and college.

PCA was founded in 1998 by Jim Thompson, a former K-12 teacher and director of the Public Management Program at Stanford Business School. The core of PCA’s approach is the “double goal” – balancing the desire to win with teaching life lessons. Coaches are trained to get their young players focused on how to:

- Improve their own game;
- Help teammates improve their game;
- Improve the game as a whole.

Parents are coaxed into putting less emphasis on winning and more on life lessons – teaching children to improve themselves, be a leader who helps others flourish, and make society better.

“Because there are so many opportunities to fail in sports,” says Bornstein, “it is a gold mine of teachable moments.” The key is getting kids to focus on the things they can control, not external factors. This makes them less anxious, more confident, and thus happier and more effective players. Here are some key PCA points:

- *The ELM tree of mastery* – It’s ineffective to praise good performance and criticize bad performance. Instead, coaches need to focus on players’ level of Effort, whether they Learn from experiences, and how they respond to Mistakes.

- *Teaching stick-to-it-iveness* – “If a child misses a big play, it’s a perfect opportunity to talk about resilience,” says Thompson, and he suggests a statement like this: “I know you’re disappointed and I feel bad for you, but the question is what are you going to do now? Are you going to hang your head? Or are you going to bounce back with renewed determination?”

- *Not being afraid of making mistakes* – When they mess up on the playing field, young players immediately look at their coach and/or parent. Saying, “Don’t worry about it” isn’t helpful. The key is getting rid of the mistake quickly and decisively. PCA teaches coaches to make a toilet-flushing hand signal from the sidelines. The player and teammates see this and say, “Flush it, we’ll get it back.” This helps the player focus on the next play rather than beating up on him- or herself. After the game, the coach talks to the player about what happened and why.

- *The emotional tank* – When a player’s tank is empty, it’s difficult to take on challenges and perform well. PCA teaches coaches to get to the “magic ratio” of tank-filling praise and criticism: 5 to 1. Of course, the praise has to be specific and honest, since kids can immediately spot phony praise.

- *Timing and affect* – PCA isn’t against hard conversations with players, but teaches how to deliver criticism when it’s most helpful – not when a child is angry or sulking or defensive. “When you ask people to focus on mastery, it’s not soft,” says Thompson. “And screaming at a kid is not tough. That’s just a lack of impulse control.”

- *The criticism sandwich: praise-critique-praise* – “Instead of getting into a kid: ‘Hey, what’s the matter with you? Didn’t we just go over this?’”, says Ken Eriksen, head coach for the U.S.A. Softball Women’s National Team and a disciple of PCA, “I like to take the approach: ‘Hey, young lady, you’re doing a great job. You know on that approach to a ground ball, maybe I would use a different footwork. Other than that I cannot commend you enough on your hard work.’ It works much better.”

“The Power of Positive Coaching” by David Bornstein in *The New York Times Opinionator*, Oct. 20, 2011, <http://nyti.ms/resBAJ>

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## 2. Teachers Evaluating Teachers

In this important *Education Week* article, consultant Julia Koppich and Daniel Humphrey of SRI International challenge the widely-held belief that teacher evaluation must be separated from teacher support. “It’s an assumption that makes perfect prima facie sense,” they say, “but as our research shows, the assumption is wrong... Truly effective evaluation programs combine accountability and support.”

Koppich and Humphrey studied two California districts (Poway and San Juan) that implemented Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), in which carefully selected veteran teachers leave their classrooms for a period of time and give a year of intensive support to beginning or

underperforming colleagues. The consulting teachers, as they are called, receive a stipend in addition to their regular salaries and in most cases are responsible for conducting end-of-year evaluations of their teachers. These summative evaluations are reviewed by a joint labor-management board, which then makes recommendations on PAR teachers' employment status to the superintendent and school board. Here are Koppich and Humphrey's observations about how this program is working in the two districts:

- *PAR consulting teachers* – They combine evaluation with support – and the combination seems to work well. Consulting teachers diagnose each participating teacher's strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the district's standards, develop a customized year-long improvement program, and work with each teacher to implement it, conducting as many as 30 informal and five formal observations of each teacher. "Many teachers make it out of PAR," report Koppich and Humphrey, "but some don't... [M]aking tough decisions about individuals' employment status is never easy. But it must be done, and done with care and rigor."

How did consulting teachers' evaluations compare with those of building principals? Koppich and Humphrey found that although principals almost always came to the same bottom-line conclusion about each teacher, the difference in the quality of their evaluations was dramatic. "Principals' evaluations were much sketchier than those undertaken by consulting teachers," they say. "Their ratings were based on many fewer observations. Their analyses of teachers' practice tended to focus on one or two areas rather than on the whole picture of teaching. Documentation and evidence were sparse." Principals had about seven pages of documentation on each teacher, compared with 190 pages gathered by consulting teachers. This was because principals were spread thin in terms of the number of teachers they evaluate and their limited subject-area expertise. "Who has the time and the knowledge to do this important work?" The authors believe consulting teachers can do a far better job.

- *The PAR governing board* – Koppich and Humphrey observed meetings and couldn't tell which members represented the district and which represented the union. "Conversations focused on intensive, high-level questioning and probing about serious matters of teaching and learning," they report. "The boards ensured both that consulting teachers focused on improving instruction and that their evaluations of participating teachers were based on solid evidence." Board members were also not shy about criticizing principals' evaluations of teachers, and sometimes asked principals to re-do them with more evidence.

- *Labor-management relations* – In these districts, the PAR boards also provided a forum in which district and union officials collaboratively addressed operational and policy issues that might have wound up in grievances or remained unresolved. "Though both Poway and San Juan have in the past experienced rocky union-district relations," report Koppich and Humphrey, "PAR has served as a springboard for building strong connections. More than simple collaborative efforts, through PAR, management and unions are doing the hard work of confronting tough, high-stakes issues and reaching accord on how to proceed when decisions carry real and human consequences."

“Getting Serious About Teacher Evaluation: A Fresh Look at Peer Assistance and Review” by Julia Koppich and Daniel Humphrey in *Education Week*, Oct. 12, 2011 (Vol. 31, #7, p. 28, 25); <http://policyweb.sri.com/cep/projects/displayProject.jsp?Nick=PARPeer>; Humphrey can be reached at [daniel.humphrey@sri.com](mailto:daniel.humphrey@sri.com).

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### 3. Keys to Effective Professional Learning Community Teams

In this helpful article in *The School Administrator*, Ronald Thomas of Towson University bemoans the fact that many teacher teams don't do a good job collaboratively looking at interim assessment data and following up in classrooms. He believes the following factors are essential to doing this work well:

- *Articulate a compelling reason to analyze data collaboratively.* “It is becoming increasingly clear that justifying data analysis to teachers based on increasing test scores and meeting Adequate Yearly Progress or Race to the Top goals is far less persuasive than basing improvement initiatives on the reason most educators entered and remained in the profession – to help students learn,” says Thomas. “Making every data-based discussion an accountability point for teachers is a fatal flaw that many first-generation, data-driven leaders have committed.” Professional learning community meetings are about improving teaching and learning, period.

- *Convene the right teams.* Same-grade/same-subject teams are best, says Thomas – for example, the first-grade team, the sixth-grade language-arts team, the high school Algebra I team. “Interdisciplinary teams are not as effective for data analysis,” he says, “as members usually do not have the same content standards to meet or the same assessments for students to master.”

- *Foster a collective spirit.* “In real teams,” says Thomas, “...members share the responsibility for the success of all students... It's not a scenario of ‘my students’ and ‘your students’ but rather of ‘our students.’”

- *Build trust.* This doesn't happen overnight, but leaders shouldn't wait for the perfect culture to start the data dialogue, says Thomas. Trust is necessary within teacher teams, and also between administrators and teams. Nothing builds trust better than seeing student improvement after data discussions.

- *Use a protocol to increase collaboration.* Most teachers aren't used to having productive data conversations, and protocols make meetings more productive. Here's a data protocol developed by Thomas and a colleague:

- Identify patterns of classwide strengths and weaknesses in student understanding;
- Identify students who need enrichment and intervention;
- Identify instructional upgrades teachers will make in their next unit.

“A focused exploration of powerful questions in a logical sequence enables teacher teams to begin to develop the skills they need to collaborate,” says Thomas.

- *Give teams autonomy.* “Administrators need to empower the staff to act decisively to raise student learning as long as their actions can be supported by data,” says Thomas. Rigid pacing guides are not compatible with empowering teams to make good decisions for their

students, and teams should be able to depart from aspirational curriculum calendars when there's evidence that significant numbers of students haven't learned what was taught.

- *Provide time, support, and coaching.* Common planning time during the school day is ideal, and coaching and protocols are vital.

- *Build in self-accountability mechanisms.* These include templates for teachers to fill out after data meetings on next steps they will take in their classrooms, and debriefing on classroom successes or failures at the next team meeting. Administrators must be in the loop, and give feedback to teachers and teams on what they see in their classroom visits.

- *Celebrate the specific actions that produced better student learning.* Everyone should be clear about the team discussions and follow-up strategies that worked, says Thomas.

“Why School Teams Don’t Analyze Data” by Ronald Thomas in *The School Administrator*, October 2011 (Vol. 68, #9, p. 24-27), <http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministrator.aspx>; Thomas can be reached at [rathomas@towson.edu](mailto:rathomas@towson.edu).

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#### **4. A Guaranteed Curriculum in a Louisiana District**

In this *American School Board Journal* article, consultants Maria Guilott and Grant Wiggins describe how the 52-school St. Tammany district in Louisiana (Guilott is a former superintendent in that district) significantly boosted student achievement even after Hurricane Katrina caused a sizeable increase in enrollment and economically disadvantaged students.

How did the district achieve this? By putting in place a “guaranteed curriculum,” say Guilott and Wiggins, to “ensure that students across the district would receive the same curriculum, regardless of demographics, resources, or staffing. This replaced what one principal described as “curriculum chaos, where everyone taught their favorite topics, neglecting critical concepts and performances.”

The new district-wide curriculum mandated *what* students needed to understand at each grade level and how it would be assessed, but not how it would be taught; that was left to teachers’ discretion. This tight-loose dynamic has led to much more productive staff interactions, say Guilott and Wiggins. Teacher teams talk about what’s working and what isn’t working based on common goals and assessments.

There were several important pieces producing teacher buy-in. The district used *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins’s curriculum unit planning book with Jay McTighe) as an organizing template. There was extensive professional development. Teachers were asked for feedback on the curriculum. Teachers and administrators took part in “learning walks” to observe each others’ classes. Staff created online units and activities to be shared and revised by teachers throughout the district. Teacher teams were given time to meet on a regular basis.

And the results? In math, the percent of students proficient and above on state tests went from 71.1% in 2005 to 78% in 2008. Students with disabilities went from 38% to 50% proficient and above, and economically disadvantaged students went from 38% to 65%. In English language arts, middle-school students went from 68% to 74% and elementary schools went from 79% to 82%, with students with disabilities going from 35% to 41% and

economically disadvantaged students going from 58% to 63%. In staff surveys, 95% of administrators and 68% of teachers said they saw positive effects from the curriculum changes.

Guilott and Wiggins describe a visit to an eighth-grade classroom that was engaged in reading *The Devil's Arithmetic*, a novel about Nazi concentration camps. Asked what he was doing, a student pointed to the Essential Questions on the wall:

- How can power affect a leader?
- What makes a good leader?
- When is it OK to question authority?
- What obligations do I have for the problems of other groups of people?
- Why does a group of normal people turn into a mob?

“Why do these questions matter?” he was asked. “Are you kidding me?” he replied. “We don’t want it to happen again.” The visitors watched as he read a task card asking him to compare what happened in Germany to a contemporary massacre in Africa and then discussed the questions with classmates. “Indeed,” conclude Guilott and Wiggins, “everyone in the class saw the big picture and seemed intent on accomplishing the goals of the unit. What more can we ask of our curriculum?”

Principals make frequent classroom visits to monitor the implementation of the curriculum. Initially, they focused on teachers’ actions, but then made a mid-course correction to focus more on *learner* behaviors.

“By offering good models, the big ideas, and suggested activities leading to transfer,” conclude the authors, “the district has set high expectations and a clear direction without forcing a narrow and unprofessional compliance. The staff agreed about the important goals, assessments, and variations in learning plans, leaving teachers discretion to meet the needs of their students.”

“The Guaranteed Curriculum” by Maria Guilott and Grant Wiggins in *American School Board Journal*, November 2011 (Vol. 198, #11, p. 29-31), <http://www.asbj.com>; the authors can be reached at [guil@bellsouth.net](mailto:guil@bellsouth.net) and [grant@authenticeducation.org](mailto:grant@authenticeducation.org).

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## **5. What Makes Superstar Teachers Effective?**

In this perceptive article in *The School Administrator*, Neil Bright of the State University of New York/New Paltz says, “What the very best teachers do to produce the best results from students is not some unknowable mystery.” Here is his list of the key factors that lead to classroom success:

- *Taking a wider view of student success* – Highly effective teachers look beyond students’ test scores to their success in life. “This mindset changes everything,” says Bright. “When teachers acknowledge this without question, some common classroom practices become frivolous while others become instructional absolutes.” The most successful teachers don’t have students mindlessly learn irrelevant facts, complete word search puzzles, or memorize passages from textbooks. They have students do the kind of work that will truly

prepare them for future success – creative writing, research, oral presentations, and persuasive essays.

Bright suggests thinking of curriculum as a series of filters: the first is state standards, the second is the school’s mission and purpose, and the third is whether the activity or assignment is beneficial to students. “Whatever concept, fact, or activity cannot pass through those filters should not be taught,” he says.

- *Recognizing instruction as a performance* – “At some level, teaching is a sales job,” says Bright. “Accordingly, how lessons are ‘sold’ is as important as the product itself.” Master teachers prepare for class the way an actor rehearses for a play, fine-tuning content knowledge, presentation, physical movement around the room, eye contact, and confidence to involve all students.

- *Internalizing personal accountability* – The very best teachers hold themselves accountable for student success – “If they fail, I fail.” What matters to them is not just the performance and the effort, but the results.

- *Understanding student motivation* – “To foster learning, tasks must be both doable and important,” says Bright. “If tasks are doable but perceived as unimportant, few people will expend energy on such ‘trivial’ pursuits. And if assignments are important but not seen as doable, most people will give up rather than struggle with ‘impossible’ undertakings.” Rubrics, exemplars of excellent work, and step-by-step guides are essential in motivating students to do their best. Distributed practice is also key: “The common instructional approach of one-time cramming for unit tests and final exams results in learning that’s neither meaningful nor enduring,” says Bright. “For durable learning to occur, students must ‘overlearn’ material by recalling it on a regular, predictable and cumulative basis.” As for importance, the student’s gateway question is, “What’s in it for me?” It’s up to teachers to show exactly how the material matters to students’ lives.

- *A continuing focus on instructional improvement* – “The best teachers have an insatiable appetite both for good student learning and for their own learning,” says Bright. “This is so because exceptional educators realize the more they learn, the more they recognize their own ignorance.”

“Five Habits of Highly Effective Teachers” by Neil Bright in *The School Administrator*, October 2011 (Vol. 68, #9, p. 33-35), <http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministrator.aspx>; Bright can be reached at [zacneil2@hughes.net](mailto:zacneil2@hughes.net).

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## **6. Fostering a Sense of Wonder in Classrooms**

“Our students, whether in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade or 7<sup>th</sup>, whether ‘partially proficient’ or ‘advanced,’ want to know,” says former teacher Peter Huidekoper Jr. in this thoughtful *Education Week* article. “How critical that we as teachers tap that desire, that curiosity. To that end, we must remind ourselves how *little* we know and how much there is to know.” Huidekoper quotes the late historian Daniel Bornstein: “The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance; it is the illusion of knowledge.”

“To learn, it is best to begin humble, open, unsure,” continues Huidekoper. “Most adults know that feeling. Teachers *must* know that feeling. And yet, we forget. Sometimes, as we focus on convincing parents, students, principals (*our evaluators*), even colleagues, of how much we know, we lose touch with this quality we so hope to find in our students. Our foolish pride gets in the way as if we need to prove we know more than those darn bright kids staring back at us, who read better than we ever did and absorb new information faster than we ever could.” He remembers a college professor beginning a seminar on Milton’s *Paradise Lost* by asking simply, “What is freedom?”

The first time Huidekoper taught Russian literature, he was in over his head with Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Solzhenitsyn and his students were learning right along with him. But no subsequent year was as exciting and enjoyable; humility and a steep learning curve were the key ingredients. “This was a mystery for us to unravel together,” he says. “Searching invites participation.” As teachers become more proficient and confident, they run the risk of communicating the message, “I hope you can begin to catch up to me, here at the finish line, here with my wealth of information... I struggled as a teacher when I saw in my students little sense of wonder, the armorlike shrug, the impress-me-I-dare-you look, their challenge for me to make the subject interesting or fun... How grateful we are to see the confusion and hurt in the eyes of Amy and Zach when they read the questions a young Anne Frank, nearly their age, asked in 1944 while hiding in Amsterdam: ‘Who has made us Jews different from all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly up till now?’ Wonder, of course, can be at man’s capacity for Evil, as well as for Good.”

Lecturing can have great value and challenge students to think at high levels, says Huidekoper. “But in K-12 schools, especially in the grades leading up to high school, teacher-talk must be brief. The questions, the invitation to participate, *those* must be central.”

“The Age of Wonder” by Peter Huidekoper Jr. in *Education Week*, Oct. 12, 2011 (Vol. 31, #7, p. 23), available for subscribers only

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## **7. Steven Pinker on Good Conquering Evil**

In this *Newsweek* review of Steven Pinker’s new book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (Viking, 2011), Robin Marantz Henig summarizes Pinker’s portrayal of the perennial struggle between good and evil. Pinker believes our “inner demons” are:

- Sadism;
- Revenge;
- Dominance;
- Violence in pursuit of a practical benefit;
- Violence in pursuit of an ideology.

Our “better angels” are:

- Self-control;
- Empathy;
- Morality;

- Reason.

The basic message of Pinker's book is that in recent years, civilization is winning the battle against humanity's demons. The 21<sup>st</sup> century, he says, is the least violent era in human history: all forms of violence including homicide, hate crimes, domestic abuse, torture, slavery, and even cruelty to animals are at their lowest levels ever.

Why is this happening? The key factors, Pinker believes, are strong centralized governments, international trade, the empowerment of women, and the use of reason to reframe conflicts as problems to be solved peacefully.

Will Pinker's optimistic message lead to complacency? He doubts it: "I think it will embolden people to work harder, if they see that the stuff that people do has made a difference." And that's where schools come in!

"Why Is This Guy Smiling?" by Robin Marantz Henig in *Newsweek*, Oct. 10 & 17, 2011 (p. 71), <http://bit.ly/qGs6Yf>

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## **8. Douglas Reeves on Dealing with Complexity**

In this *American School Board Journal* article, author/consultant Douglas Reeves offers guidelines for dealing with complex issues that sometimes get reduced to sound bites. He draws on the wisdom of Albert Einstein, who said, "Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler."

- *Don't assume causation.* "The first principle of complexity is that life is multivariate," says Reeves. "... Changes in student achievement are never the result of a single cause." For example, many assume that high student achievement is caused by high socioeconomic status, but it's more complicated than that. Effective teaching is the biggest factor in student learning, and the most experienced teachers tend to use their seniority to win positions in schools with high-SES children, supportive parents, and positive climates.

- *Measure what matters.* "Educational statistics are full of what is easiest to measure," says Reeves, "– test scores, economic status, skin color, and gender." It's harder to measure factors like leadership, teaching, character, and commitment. Decisions should be based on nuanced data and focused on influencing the key factors within schools: how educators use time, curriculum, assessments, feedback, and the strategies that drive student achievement.

- *Set meaningful goals.* Leaders should "reach for the stars without being blinded by them," says Reeves. Schools should strive for 100 percent proficiency, but not humiliate educators or children if they don't get there. In addition, schools should inspire their students to be involved in service and contribute to their community.

"Leadership: Tackling Complexity" by Douglas Reeves in *American School Board Journal*, November 2011 (Vol. 198, #11, p. 36-37), <http://www.asbj.com>; Reeves can be reached at [dreeves@leadandlearn.com](mailto:dreeves@leadandlearn.com).

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## 9. What Kind of Parent Involvement Helps Children the Most?

In this *American School Board Journal* article, Patte Barth, director of the Center for Public Education, reports on a new National School Boards Association study of parent involvement. Researchers found that the practices most likely to produce higher student achievement take place at home:

- Monitoring homework;
- Making sure children get to school;
- Rewarding their efforts;
- Talking up the idea of going to college.

These parent actions are linked to better attendance, grades, test scores, and preparation for college.

What can schools do to foster the most effective at-home activity? Barth says successful schools create activities and materials that require family involvement with children. One example is the TIPS program – Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork – developed at Johns Hopkins University, which has created interactive homework assignments that students complete with their families. The take-home work is designed to take the minimum of time in busy homes and not depend on special knowledge or skills.

The study found that getting parents involved with their children’s learning at home is a more powerful driver of achievement than parents attending PTA and school board meetings, volunteering in classrooms, participating in fundraising, and showing up at back-to-school nights. Interestingly, white and more affluent parents were more likely to be involved in these conventional activities, while African-American, Hispanic, and low-income parents were slightly more likely to check homework and be active at home. “Schools need to recognize that parents are engaged and want their children to do well,” she says, “even if they do not appear inside the school building.”

“Research: What Can Parents Do?” by Patte Barth in *American School Board Journal*, November 2011 (Vol. 198, #11, p. 32-33), <http://www.asbj.com>; Barth can be reached at [pbarth@nsba.org](mailto:pbarth@nsba.org)

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## 10. Short Items:

*a. Getting students writing books* – BoomWriter is a free creative writing program that uses technology to get grade 4-12 students writing a collective book one chapter at a time. BoomWriter starts students off with a chapter by a professional writer or the teacher, has them all write Chapter 2, and then uses an online avatar and peer evaluation process to choose the best chapter, which all students then use as the base for Chapter 3 – and so on until their book is finished and published. Check out the details and a short video at <http://boomwriter.com/home/schools/>.

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**b. Civil War 150<sup>th</sup>** – For the sesquicentennial of the War Between the States, there are numerous online resources, including:

- The Civil War Trust – <http://www.civilwar.org/150th-anniversary> - a downloadable Civil War curriculum with animated maps, primary resources, suggested reading, lesson plans and activities for middle-grade students.

- National Geographic has stunning photos and gripping stories about Civil War themes at <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/04/110407-civil-war-sesquicentennial>

“News to Use” in *Middle Ground*, October 2011 (Vol. 15, #2, p. 9)

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**c. Common Craft explanations** – This website <http://www.commoncraft.com> has answers in plain English to questions ranging from project-based learning to cloud technology.

“News to Use” in *Middle Ground*, October 2011 (Vol. 15, #2, p. 9)

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**d. Sign language** – American Sign Language is explained and demonstrated on this interactive website: <http://www.masterstech-home.com/ASLDict.html>

“News to Use” in *Middle Ground*, October 2011 (Vol. 15, #2, p. 9)

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**e. Combating youth drinking** – This website from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health focuses on the marketing practices used by the alcohol industry: <http://www.camy.org>.

“News to Use” in *Middle Ground*, October 2011 (Vol. 15, #2, p. 9)

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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 41 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

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

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- All back issues (also in PDF or Word)
- 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 Educator  
American Journal of Education  
American School Board Journal  
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews  
Better Evidence-Based Education  
Ed. Magazine  
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 Monthly  
The Chronicle of Higher Education  
The Language Educator  
The New Yorker  
The Reading Teacher  
The School Administrator  
Theory Into Practice