

# Marshall Memo 120

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

January 23, 2006

## In This Issue:

1. Teachers mentoring teachers – a model program
2. Strategic planning for schools – without the baloney
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## Quotes of the Week

“We need to permanently abandon the belief that race and poverty determine how much students can learn.”

Kati Haycock, Director of the Education Trust (*ASBJ Education Vital Signs*, Feb. 2006)

“The American teenager remains a strange, sleeping bear. We circle it warily and poke it with sticks, hoping to rouse it, train it, and keep it controlled for a few years until it escapes with a diploma.”

Robert Barsanti (see item #3)

“New teachers need to believe that they have the power to set the bar, exert control, and demand attention.”

Gayle Davis and Margaret Metzger (see item #1)

“These old teachers have so much energy. The ed school said the old teachers were all burnt out, but they're not!”

A new teacher after observing a master teacher's classroom (see item #1)

“The most profound support we can offer new teachers is our willingness to question our successes and to admit our failures.”

Gayle David and Margaret Metzger (*ibid.*)

“Dinosaurs disappeared because they did not change. We assess things regularly. If something doesn't work, we change it.”

Roswell High School, New Mexico (see item #2)

“You can't feel sorry that something doesn't work; you just have to try something different.”

A California principal (see item #2)

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## 1. Teachers Mentoring Teachers – A Model Program

In this detailed and extremely helpful article in *Edge* (the new Phi Delta Kappa magazine), Gayle Davis and Margaret Metzger, two Massachusetts teachers, describe the program their high school has run for the last six years to support new teachers. The bottom line: only 10 percent of new teachers leave this school, compared with 69 percent nationally (Ingersoll and Smith, 2003). Here are the program's main features:

- *Orientation* – When they first started the program, Davis and Metzger made a common mistake in their beginning-of-the-year orientation meeting: they overwhelmed new teachers with too much information at too abstract a level. New teachers need to know *practical* stuff: How can I get the keys to my room? Where are the supplies? How do I make copies? What is the attendance system? The beginning of orientation is no time for lofty educational goals and philosophy. Davis and Metzger turned the first meeting into a question-and-answer session in which the newbies can get answers to these and countless other questions, as well as a tour of the campus, a handbook with maps, class and lunch schedules, tips from veteran teachers, and sample copies of course syllabi and student learning expectations. Their homework between the first and second day of orientation is to write a first draft of their own course expectations. After all this, the new teachers get more general advice, including how to start the year with clear, firm expectations, homework from the beginning, and so forth.

- *Monthly seminars* – All the new teachers (about 25 each year) meet once a month with Davis and Metzger and other veteran teachers. The meetings overlap with professional development meetings for the rest of the staff so there is no above-and-beyond time commitment for the new teachers. Monthly meetings really need to be two hours long to leave enough time for real substance, including presentations by outside speakers, questions and answers, journal writing, and large- and small-group discussions. These are the topics covered:

- Lesson planning: Davis and Metzger have found that most new teachers don't know how to write good lesson plans. They don't "plan backwards" from end-point curriculum goals, rarely check for prior knowledge, are too open-ended in planning for class discussion, and don't build in checks for understanding. Considerable time is devoted to teaching the newbies how to craft purposeful lessons.
- Maintaining balance: New teachers often work so hard after school that there is no time for leisure, exercise, and relationships. They also tend to spend disproportionate amounts of time on things that aren't that important – for example, spending hours

grading a quiz that only counts for 5% of the final grade, or becoming so consumed with record-keeping that they don't devote enough time to unit and lesson planning. The monthly meetings help new teachers understand what the school really values (among its myriad, insistent demands) and encourage them to delegate tasks to students: the attendance mogul, the book czar, the clean-up specialist.

- Using school resources: Davis and Metzger invite in visiting speakers to highlight resources within the school: the librarian, nurse, guidance staff, social workers, union representatives, violence- and drug-prevention counselors, ELL and special education staff, and second-year teachers. This last group is peppered with pointed questions: What is the second year like? How can we get further integrated into the school community? What keeps you in teaching? How do you protect yourself from adolescent cruelty? In these meetings, new teachers' darkest fears and self-doubts often surface: Why don't students like me? Does this school's climate fit my values? Will I be fired?
- Communicating with parents: This topic is usually covered just prior to the annual October back-to-school night, and helps new teachers learn the school's expectations for dealing with parents. Often a seasoned administrator who has a child in the school talks about what she expects when she attends back-to-school night. Davis and Metzger role-play common scenarios with new teachers, including dealing with a parent who is concerned about a grade and a parent who is upset.
- Classroom management: This topic runs through all the monthly meetings. Pairs of new teachers role-play different situations – the disruptive student, the inattentive student, the confrontational student, the perpetually tardy student, the passive or noncompliant student, etc. – and then the group comes back together to discuss strategy and tactics. Seminars also discuss teachers' responsibilities in the school's hallways – the school's policies on confronting misbehavior, the enforceability of rules, and whether they will get administrative support. Teachers are sometimes given an article or book chapter to read (never too much) to help with a particular topic, for example, the chapter in Fred Jones's *Positive Classroom Discipline* on setting limits.

• *Mentoring* – Each new teacher is assigned a mentor who meets regularly the mentee, observes classes, and gives counsel on curriculum, classroom management, and teaching in general. Many mentors spend several hours a week with their mentees and are enormously helpful to them. But mentor-mentee relationships are not always rosy. One new teacher wrote in her year-end evaluation, “Our philosophies and attitudes were quite different. I actually felt a little ‘belittled’ and had my ideas shot down. It ate away at me all year.” Davis and Metzger work on issues like this as they supervise the mentors.

Over the years, they have identified three key elements that help optimize mentor/mentee relationships. They believe that at least two of these are essential:

- Shared office or classroom space, which promotes frequent informal interactions.
- Teaching the same courses, which allows the mentor to guide the new teacher through curriculum sequence and expectations.

- Shared planning time, which makes regular meetings far more likely to occur.

Mentor teachers, who are freed up from a duty and paid a \$450 stipend each year, attend an extensive orientation, including standard pointers and lots of role-playing around common scenarios. Confidentiality is a tricky issue, and the sessions deal with the question of when it's necessary to break confidentiality – for example, when the mentor feels that students are being harmed.

After the initial orientation, Davis and Metzger meet with mentor teachers twice more during the year, discussing issues of concern and updating them on topics that new teachers are bringing up in their monthly meetings. One recurring topic is mentors' tendency to give new teachers a quick fix rather than helping them to understand a problem and come up with their own solution. There are also frequent discussions of curriculum coverage and preparation for state tests, and the degree of autonomy new teachers should have on what they teach.

- *Watching veteran teachers in action* – Davis and Metzger believe that observing experienced teachers is one of the most powerful learning experiences for new teachers. The school goes out of its way to schedule numerous observations, and the coordinators prod new teachers to follow through by posting a schedule of all observations. New teachers first observe veterans in the same department, then branch out to observe teachers in other subject areas. “These old teachers have so much energy,” exclaimed one newbie. “The ed school said the old teachers were all burnt out, but they're not!” New teachers are much more observant when they observe others than they were in graduate school; now they know how hard teaching is!

Davis and Metzger counsel new teachers on what to look for during these observations, for example, what students do before class, classroom routines, proactive classroom management strategies, methods of differentiating instruction, formative assessment, etc. They also talk through some typical reactions after an observation – “She just has good kids” or “He's a natural” – and help new teachers realize that what looks easy is in fact the result of experience, strategy, and hard work. They also confront the misconception that a teacher can't be “hard” and popular with students by showing them veteran teachers who are strict and demanding but are still beloved.

- *Classroom observation by the coordinators* – Davis and Metzger regularly observe all new teachers' classrooms, and give them unvarnished but confidential feedback. “The importance of observing new teachers cannot be overstated,” they say. “In addition to the support we are able to offer, these experiences also allow us to identify perennial problems and to shape the entire induction program.” At the beginning of each year, they divide up the list of new teachers and start their observations immediately, so as not to miss any start-up problems. Post-conferences after each observation often last an hour, and advice is dispensed on several key topics:

- Assuming command: “New teachers need to believe that they have the power to set the bar, exert control, and demand attention,” say Davis and Metzger. “Students know that the teacher has lost control when she gives directions that are ignored, when students arrive late with no consequence and when the hour is filled with the teacher's constant ‘shushing.’ All new teachers must learn that they have the right to expect students to

behave in orderly, respectful ways. Students feel safest with adult control, and the new teacher should develop ways to assume command without becoming authoritarian.” A key lesson here is figuring out which rules really matter and enforcing them without feeling the need to plead or cajole.

- Teaching all the kids: New teachers often fail to tune in to students who are not demanding attention or causing problems – yet these students often represent serious problems in terms of learning, especially if they are passing notes, leaving the classroom without permission, sending messages on their cell phones, making *sotto voce* homophobic, racist, or sexist comments, or reading a magazine under their desk. Davis and Metzger counsel teachers to move around the classroom, change students’ seats if necessary, and constantly check for understanding.
- Planning and pacing: Davis and Metzger are dismayed by how poorly schools of education have prepared new teachers in the fundamentals of unit and lesson planning. “When a teacher doesn’t plan well,” they say, “the lesson just seems to amble along. Students have difficulty discerning the teacher’s intent. The teacher’s choice of activities may be (or seem) haphazard, groups are used for no apparent reason, and the teacher often spends a disproportionate amount of time reviewing homework.” The pacing of lessons is also a constant issue, with too much time consumed in start-up activities and not enough left for the heart of the lesson.

- *Social events and a retreat* – Each monthly meeting begins with coffee and conversation, and there are periodic Friday social gatherings during the year, parties at individual teachers’ houses, occasional outings to plays, and an end-of-the-year “congratulations” party. But most important, each cohort has an overnight retreat right after first-quarter grades are handed in (a relatively quiet time in teachers’ workload). The retreats take place at a local conference center and are funded by a community foundation (the cost is about \$3,000). Everyone arrives late Friday afternoon and drops their stuff in cabins amidst beautiful country surroundings. After dinner, they have an ice-breaker activity and then kick off general small- and large-group discussions with a question like, “What did you worry about in September? And where are you now with that issue?” New teachers open up and voice wide-ranging fears and hopes. Many of them stay up all night, singing and playing games and talking across grade levels and disciplines.

On Saturday morning, there are workshops led by experts from within the school (not outside consultants) on issues like assessment, power, race, and gender in the classroom, substance abuse among students, English as a second language, and proactive options for discipline. “This was a bonding experience that I needed to stay here,” said one teacher. “I made real friends. And I felt far less isolated the next week.”

Davis and Metzger are proud of their new teacher support program, which continues to get strong support from their headmaster, Bob Weintraub, and from the school district (it costs about \$53,000 a year). They believe a program like this accomplishes four things that are vital in any school:

- It decreases teacher isolation. “Teachers need to feel comfortable going into each other’s classes, talking about problems, and collaborating on solutions.”
- It gives veteran teachers a way to give back. “We have concluded that we, the seasoned teachers, must teach the skills that have helped us survive and thrive to our new colleagues so that they, too, will find lifelong success and satisfaction in the classroom.”
- It’s a valuable career track experience for veteran teachers short of going into administration.
- It encourages all teachers to be reflective practitioners: “Strong veteran teachers, even after years of experience, still question their assumptions about students and curriculum. Reflective practice includes the ability to live with ambiguity, to assess situations with critical attention, and to understand one’s role in relation to problems and their solutions. The most profound support we can offer new teachers is our willingness to question our successes and to admit our failures.”

“Teachers Mentoring Teachers” by Gayle Davis and Margaret Metzger in *Edge*, January/February, 2006 (Vol. 1, #3, p. 3-19), link only for Phi Delta Kappa members. The authors can be reached at [gayle\\_davis@brookline.mec.edu](mailto:gayle_davis@brookline.mec.edu) and [margaret\\_metzger@brookline.mec.edu](mailto:margaret_metzger@brookline.mec.edu).

## **2. Strategic Planning for Schools – Without the Baloney**

This trenchant policy brief by Craig Jerald explores a paradox unearthed by a study of high-performing, low-SES schools in Kentucky last year. Researchers found that the best schools hadn’t followed supposed “best practices” in their strategic planning. In fact, there was no difference between high-performing and low-performing schools on any of the 16 indicators measuring how well schools had followed the process for creating Comprehensive School Improvement Plans. Many of the best schools had lousy plans, while some of the worst schools had model plans – but “did not appear to be doing much of it in the classrooms.”

What’s going on here? Jerald says that it has a lot to do with the inadequacies of the required planning process. “Too often,” he writes, “the formal planning process required by state and federal policy is perceived as a bureaucratic exercise resulting in written plans that do not drive real change efforts for the day-to-day work of schools. And too often it is disconnected from the kind of planning that can lead to significant, measurable improvement.”

But what’s most vividly demonstrated by the high-performing Kentucky schools is that there is an informal, underground planning process that is the real driver of improvement. The challenge is to understand this process – Jerald calls it *collaborative, strategic problem solving* – and spread it to other low-performing schools, while freeing them from meaningless, bureaucratic planning processes that waste their time.

What are the characteristics of the “secret” planning processes used by the successful Kentucky schools? Jerald lists them under three headings: problem-solving, strategic, and collaborative.

### Problem-solving:

- *A focus on results* – It’s vital that all staff “firmly believe that whatever other functions schools might perform in the community, they are *at least* and *primarily* responsible for making sure that students learn.”

- *No excuses* – Staff don’t get “mired in the belief that family and social problems present insurmountable obstacles to learning. Instead, they believe that what children experience within schools and classrooms can have a decisive impact on whether and how much they learn.” They analyze problems from the inside out, starting with classroom instruction, then looking at schoolwide policies and arrangements, and finally at family and external factors.

- *Looking at data* – They relentlessly analyze empirical evidence from all levels – student, grade, subject, and schoolwide – to identify internal weaknesses that are causing or abetting low outcomes or obstructing improvement.

- *Identify and test solutions* – They dig deeper, using common sense, creativity, and extensive investigation to find out what’s really going on and decide among possible solutions.

- *Everything is negotiable* – The most successful schools treat standard school policies, arrangements, and sacred cows as “variables rather than givens,” and are much less likely to think that something cannot be changed simply because “that’s the way we’ve always done it.” An example of this is the widespread practice of assigning the least-experienced teachers to the most challenging students (and putting the most experienced teachers in front of Advanced Placement classes). Highly effective schools turn these perverse practices around, finding ways to match their strongest teachers with their weakest students.

- *Nimbleness* – This is how Roswell High School in New Mexico describes its philosophy for improvement: “Dinosaurs disappeared because they did not change. We assess things regularly. If something doesn’t work, we change it.”

Jerald gives us two case studies showing problem-solving schools in action: One high school had low achievement and a high retention rate among its ninth graders. The conventional wisdom said that these problems were caused by “hormones.” Hormones are real, but a more careful look at the data revealed that incoming freshmen had low literacy levels. So was this problem totally beyond the control of the high school? Not to committed problem solvers! Among the solutions this school came up with were:

- Working with feeder middle schools to craft “transition standards” for them to shoot for with their graduating eighth graders;
- Giving diagnostic assessments to incoming ninth graders to provide early warning of literacy problems;
- Setting up a “fast track” literacy program for freshmen to provide immediate and intensive help for students who are behind;
- Changing the master schedule to reduce class size for ninth graders;
- Assigning more-experienced teachers to ninth-grade classrooms.

Another case study: a high school noticed that it had a high rate of classroom absenteeism and lots of students visiting the school's health room complaining of headaches, stomach aches, and dizziness. Digging deeper, the school improvement team found that many students weren't taking advantage of the free breakfast program because there wasn't enough time. So they expanded first period by 10 minutes and later began delivering breakfasts to classrooms to make sure students ate. Visits to the health room dropped by 80 percent.

#### Strategic:

Effective schools don't just "write, sign, seal, and deliver" their improvement plan, says Jerald. "They shape their solutions into a coordinated and thoughtful strategy to be implemented over a given period of time." This involves:

- Considering internal alignment – Do proposed solutions align with one another? Do they conflict with one another? Do they add up to a coherent package? Are they a good fit with the school's culture?
- Considering external alignment – Are proposed solutions a good fit with the district's and the state's goals and reform efforts?
- Lining up budget and other support;
- Expecting the need for mid-course corrections – Planning isn't a one-year process. As one California principal said, "You can't feel sorry that something doesn't work; you just have to try something different."

#### Collaborative:

All of the high-performing Kentucky schools had a culture of shared decision-making rather than a charismatic or authoritarian leader. The research is clear that sustained school improvement requires principals to share responsibility and coordinate an effort involving a wide range of staff members – without getting too bogged down in process. Effective schools:

- Distribute responsibility for analyzing data, brainstorming solutions, and developing improvement strategies;
- Ensure broad involvement of parents, community members, and older students in the planning process;
- "[S]hare all data openly so problems, obstacles, and opportunities are transparent and everyone knows what is at stake."

Jerald closes with several recommendations for district officials who want to facilitate this kind of planning in their schools. "Unfortunately," he says, "school administrators traditionally have been rewarded for hiding problems rather than publicly revealing and dealing with them. As a result, the data and other evidence presented in too many school improvement plans are shaped either to make the school look good or to make a preconceived improvement strategy look good." The most important thing is being open to schools asking hard questions about their outcomes, policies, and practices – and supporting leaders who "dig and dish" difficult truths.

“Planning That Matters: Helping Schools Engage in Collaborative, Strategic Problem Solving” by Craig Jerald, April 2005. This policy brief is published by the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, Washington, D.C. and is available at: <http://www.centerforcsri.org/PDF/April.policy.final.pdf>

### 3. What Can We Learn from Driver’s Ed.?

In this piquant article in the current *Education Week*, Connecticut high-school teacher Robert Barsanti describes the challenge of teaching adolescents in American high schools: “The American teenager remains a strange, sleeping bear. We circle it warily and poke it with sticks, hoping to rouse it, train it, and keep it controlled for a few years until it escapes with a diploma.”

What’s the best way to teach this creature? Barsanti believes that we have a lot to learn from the most successful teachers in any high school – those who teach driver’s ed. “The country may continue to lag in its efforts to teach teenagers to read, write, think, speak, and compute,” he says, “but it does a heck of a job teaching them to drive. We are far better at instructing kids on how to parallel park than we are at teaching them to integrate a fraction or use a semicolon.”

Barsanti came to this conclusion after going through a course on how to drive a school bus. It was taught by Ed, a former military bus and transports guy, and the stakes were high – an accident could result in serious damage or loss of life. The single-minded goal of the course was for everyone to pass the Department of Motor Vehicles bus driving exam.

What was so great about Ed’s teaching? Barsanti describes his approach, and suggests that these techniques and attitudes could well be applied in regular classrooms:

- Ed was polite and humorous, but always on point. Why was it important to check the brakes before going out on a run? “Don’t want to go down a hill without them,” he quipped.

- Ed stripped the course down to what they really needed to know. He didn’t make them memorize all the engine parts, the correct way to tighten a cotter pin, or how to change the oil, but instead quizzed the class every day on the essentials – inspecting the bus, driving it safely, and parking. He assumed that they would learn the other stuff later if they needed to.

- He didn’t “put on the trappings and airs of an expert,” but he knew what he was doing. Even in shorts, a Wal-Mart T-shirt, and a camouflage baseball cap, he carried real authority.

- Ed was always polite and never shouted, browbeat, or threatened. He didn’t need to, says Barsanti: “His knowledge and his wisdom were easily apparent.”

- He never demonstrated or lectured. He put students in the driver’s seat – literally – stood aside, and talked them through each move. “Every step of the way, we had control of this ton of creeping metal,” says Barsanti.

- Making mistakes was an accepted part of learning. “We failed in every class. Sometimes several times.” After each flattened cone or toppled stick, Ed had them get out of the bus, showed them the mistake, had them deduce immediate feedback – “What did you do wrong?” – and kept pushing until they got it right.

What were the results of Ed's teaching? At the end of the course, everyone passed the DMV exam with flying colors. They were ready to go out and use their skills successfully.

But do driver's ed. methods apply in academic classrooms? Barsanti says it would be very difficult for most teachers to give up total control, put students in the driver's seat, and allow them to make a lot of mistakes as part of the learning process. Hardest of all would be leaving out a lot of extraneous stuff and zeroing in on the real essentials – reading, writing, thinking, and speaking. “We would have to line these skills up on the desk and ask ourselves, ‘How do I teach these to kids so that they all learn them?’”

But Barsanti believes that separating the curriculum wheat from the chaff is the beginning of wisdom. “Like driving,” he says, “these are the skills that our students will be using when they are fat and 40. They’ll be reading e-mail and contracts, writing memos and love letters, speaking in boardrooms and town halls. And they will be thinking about the best ways to be a good spouse, parent, and citizen. Long after they forget the symbolism of Piggy’s broken spectacles and the definition of ‘couloir,’ they’ll still be driving minivans. If we taught all the essential skills better, our students could succeed not only on the SAT, but in the rest of life’s tests and contests.”

Asked to apply such radical tactics in their classrooms, Barsanti predicts that many teachers would protest that driver's ed. teachers have an unfair advantage: “Parents want their kids to get driver's licenses. The state tests for it.” But these teachers would be selling themselves short, he says. “Teachers are idealists. We believe that we can make a difference – that we can make the future better than the present. But if we wish to mend the world, we must first mend our practice. Perhaps it is time that we drop our gradebooks and seating charts and go out for a spin with the most successful teachers in the building.”

“Learning to Teach in Driver's Ed.” by Robert Barsanti in *Education Week*, Jan. 18, 2006 (Vol. 25, #19, p. 36), no free e-link available

#### **4. Lesson Plans – Suggested Elements**

Jay McTighe, the co-author (with Grant Wiggins) of *Understanding by Design*, an approach to “backwards planning” curriculum units, is frequently asked what he thinks a good lesson plan should contain. McTighe says that a single lesson is too narrow a slice of instruction to encompass big ideas, enduring understandings, essential questions, and performance assessment tasks. These need to be thought through for the curriculum unit (for example, the 5-week unit on the Civil War, the 6-week unit on poetry). But individual lessons are how all that stuff is delivered to students day by day, so lesson plans are a vital extension of unit planning. Here are McTighe's recommendations on what a lesson plan should contain:

- *Objectives* that flow logically from the overall unit plan – the essential questions, previous activities, and unit assessments;
- *Materials and resources* – a list of what is needed by the teacher and students;
- *An anticipatory set* – a “hook” that is linked to the essential questions, previous and future activities, and assessments;

- *Key learning activities and strategies* – These should be listed in sequence, with the approximate time that each one will take (for example, Students will explore two contradictory primary source documents and discuss the different points of view expressed – 45 minutes. The teacher will use “concept attainment” to help students distinguish fact from opinion – 30 minutes);

- *Checking for understanding* – a planned approach to “dipsticking” to see if students are learning what’s being taught;

- *Closure* – some kind of synthesis, review, and reflection, with foreshadowing of the next lesson;

- Some lessons may need to begin with a diagnostic assessment, although this is probably more suitable at the beginning of the curriculum unit.

How detailed should lesson plans be? McTighe recommends including enough information so that a teacher who is familiar with the content and grade level can follow the plan without further explanation.

“Understanding by Design and Lesson Plans” by Jay McTighe, an unpublished paper circulated to the UbD Cadre, January 20, 2006

## **5. Students Win One in Philly**

Starting in 2004, student activists in Philadelphia’s high schools protested the fact that some students were required to leave core subject classes to attend test prep sessions. “We had to get on this issue, and we had to get on it now,” said Anthony Williams, 17, to an *Education Week* reporter last week. “If you have to get pulled out of your major-subject classes, why do you come to school then? It just takes away your learning time.”

The student group, which is called Youth United for Change, did some research and found that only certain students were being pulled out: the “bubble” kids – those who scored at the upper end of certain testing brackets and were getting special test help to try to boost their school’s AYP status and avoid No Child Left Behind sanctions. “You would think I would be happy to get the help,” said one senior, “but I enjoyed social studies. And it made me feel bad for the other students who needed help and weren’t chosen.”

Last week, the students prevailed. District officials announced that all of Philadelphia’s 22 comprehensive high schools would no longer pull students from core academic subjects for test prep.

“Phila. Students Advocate Changes in Test Products” by Catherine Gewertz in *Education Week*, Jan. 18, 2006 (Vol. 25, #19, p. 5, 12), no free e-link available

## **6. Suggested Ground Rules of Civil Discourse**

Philip Boyle, a government professor at the University of North Carolina, recently presented these ground rules for civil discourse among school board members. They could apply just as well to other school groups:

- *Seek a shared purpose.* Common goals lead to action and help ease tension when there are disagreements over how to get there.
- *Seek consensus.* You won't always get there, but it's worth working in that direction.
- *Focus on interests.* Look for common ground by learning what's important to your colleagues.
- *Share information equally.* Everyone should receive the same information at the same time; trust is eroded when some people think they're not getting the full story.
- *Explain yourselves.* Opposing views are easier to understand when people articulate the values and experiences that gave rise to them.
- *Disagree openly.* It's better to get disagreements out in the open so colleagues can understand and address each other's concerns.
- *Don't take cheap shots.* "There are better ways to express one's frustration," says Boyle, "and a zinger aimed at a colleague can undo months of work building trust – and close minds to your arguments."
- *Invite feedback.* Ask how the previous meeting went. Was it successful? Do people feel they are being heard?

"The Civil School Board" by Philip Boyle in *American School Board Journal*, February 2006 (Vol. 193, #2, p. 49), no e-link available

## 7. Short Items:

**a. Can standards and differentiation coexist?** Carol Ann Tomlinson, a major proponent of differentiated instruction, swats down the idea that it's incompatible with standards-based education. Two reasons:

- Standards guide teachers on *what* to teach; differentiation deals with *how* to teach it. "No matter what you're teaching," she says, "it will be learned better if taught in a way that's responsive to a learner's needs."
- Differentiation isn't about changing the *content* of standards; it's a way of *achieving* standards by making them accessible to a wider array of learning styles and student interests.

"Differentiation Myths and Realities" in *Education Update*, January 2006 (Vol. 48, #1, p. 3)

**b. No Name-Calling Week** – This week, hundreds of schools across the U.S. will take part in No Name-Calling Week, an annual event whose goal is ending name-calling and bullying in schools. For more information, go to <http://www.nonamecallingweek.org>. On the website, you can also find information on the event's Free Expression Contest for students 8 to 18 who want to speak out against bullying – and examples of winning submissions from the last three years.

An advertisement in *Education Week*, Jan. 18, 2006 (Vol. 25, #19, p. 37)

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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](mailto: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 36 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 scores of 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 (with occasional breaks; there were 50 issues in 2004-05).

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- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or password

## ***Publications covered***

*Those read this week are underlined.*

American Educational Research Journal  
American Educator  
American School Board Journal  
ASCD SmartBrief  
Atlantic Monthly  
Boston Globe  
CommonWealth Magazine  
District Administration  
Ed. Magazine  
EDge  
Education Digest  
Education Gadfly  
Education Next  
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Educational Leadership  
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Edutopia  
Elementary School Journal  
Harvard Business Review  
Harvard Education Letter  
Harvard Educational Review  
Jimmy Kilpatrick  
Journal of Staff Development  
Language Learner  
Middle Ground  
Middle School Journal  
NASSP Bulletin  
New York Times  
New Yorker  
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PEN Weekly NewsBlast  
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Psychology Today  
Reading Research Quarterly  
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Review of Educational Research  
Teacher Magazine  
Teachers College Record  
Theory Into Practice