

Marshall Memo 356

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

October 18, 2010

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Quotes of the Week

“Do I have to take this class? I hate reading.”

A Minnesota ninth grader (quoted in item #9)

“I don't think people have a very clear idea of what dyslexia and other learning disabilities are.”

Stewart Hudson of the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation (see item #7)

“When you have met one person with autism, you have met one person with autism.”

Stephen Shore (quoted in item #6)

“In mastery learning, assessments are not a one-shot, do-or-die experience. Instead, they are part of an ongoing effort to help students learn.”

Thomas Guskey (see item #1)

“Trust is an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open.”

Megan Tschannen-Moran (see item #4)

1. Thomas Guskey on Mastery Learning

(Originally titled “Lessons of Mastery Learning”)

Among research-supported strategies, says University of Kentucky/Lexington professor Thomas Guskey, “one of the most powerful is mastery learning. Few strategies have been implemented as broadly or evaluated as thoroughly during the last 40 years. The core elements of mastery learning also provide the foundation for many innovations and interventions that teachers are implementing in classrooms today.”

Benjamin Bloom was the granddaddy of mastery learning; it rested on his conviction that virtually all students can reach high levels of achievement, given enough time and the right learning conditions. Here are the core elements:

- *Unit planning* – Teachers divide the curriculum into chunks and design units to get all students to mastery. This parallels the Understanding by Design backwards planning process.

- *Diagnostic pre-assessments* – These tell whether students have the prerequisite knowledge and skills to be successful in the unit and allow teachers to address any gaps. This is similar to the universal screening recommended in Response to Intervention (RTI).

- *High-quality group instruction* – The next step is engaging all students in high-quality, whole-group, developmentally appropriate, research-based instruction. These lessons are adapted to the content, tied to students’ interests and experiences, and differentiated according to the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and background characteristics of students. This is also true of Understanding by Design and RTI.

- *Interim assessments* – These measure students’ skill and understanding so far. They are assessments *for* learning, not assessments *of* learning.

- *Corrective instruction* – Students get immediate feedback so they can fix any learning difficulties and reach mastery (80% or better). “High-quality corrective instruction is not the same as ‘reteaching,’” says Guskey, “which often consists simply of restating the original explanations louder and more slowly.” Effective correctives accommodate student differences and strive to untangle misconceptions and misunderstandings. Correctives typically mean spending 10-20 percent more time per unit, but Bloom contended that this investment of time pays off in remediation time saved later in the year.

- *Second, parallel interim assessments* – “In mastery learning, assessments are not a one-shot, do-or-die experience,” says Guskey. “Instead, they are part of an ongoing effort to help students learn.” When students have completed the corrective assignments, they take a second formative assessment on the unit, giving them a second chance to succeed. Should students who scored 85% on the second assessment get the same mark as students who scored 85% on the first one and didn’t need correctives? Yes, says Guskey. It’s similar to the test we take for a driver’s license: “Many individuals do not pass their driver’s test on the first attempt.... Because they eventually met the same high performance standards as those who

passed on their initial attempt, they receive the same privileges. The same should hold true for students who engage in corrective activities and eventually show that they, too, have learned well.”

• *Enrichment or extension activities* – Students who achieved mastery the first time around get involved in worthwhile activities that broaden and deepen their knowledge and allow them to delve into related topics – without moving ahead in the instructional sequence. This makes it possible for students in the corrective loop to rejoin their peers when the next unit begins.

“Lessons of Mastery Learning” by Thomas Guskey in *Educational Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 68, #2, p. 52-57); this article can be purchased at

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/current-issue.aspx>

Guskey can be reached at Guskey@uky.edu.

See Marshall Memo 105 for an earlier article by Guskey on mastery learning.

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2. Richard and Rebecca DuFour on What Constitutes a PLC

In this advertisement in *Education Week*, author/consultants Richard and Rebecca DuFour respond to a query they received from a high school that had convened three task forces to address the school’s physical environment, professional procedures, and the need to attract more students in competition with two nearby schools with newer facilities. The school wanted to know if these three task forces fit in the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model.

The DuFours politely said no. A real PLC is “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve,” they write. “PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators. The fundamental structure of a PLC is collaborative teams of educators who work *interdependently* to achieve a *common* goal, for which members are *mutually accountable*.”

A task force, on the other hand, is “a *temporary group* convened to address a specific issue or to fulfill a specific short-term charge.” The work of this school’s three task forces, while important, is peripheral to the core work of improving teaching and learning.

Real PLCs are collaborative teams within a single grade, course, or interdisciplinary program with an ongoing focus on these four questions:

- What do we want our students to learn? The team identifies the essential, guaranteed, and viable curriculum.
- How will we know they are learning? The team creates or procures common interim assessments to measure all students’ learning and uses the results from the assessments to inform and improve team members’ individual and collective professional practice.
- How will we respond when students don’t learn? The school orchestrates timely, directive, and systematic interventions for students.

- How will we respond when they *do* learn? The school orchestrates enrichment and extension of learning for students who have reached proficiency.

“Clarity Precedes Competence” by Richard DuFour and Rebecca DuFour in *Education Week*, Oct. 13, 2010 (Vol. 30, #7, p. 18), no e-link available

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3. Evaluating the Quality of Upper-Grade Literacy Instruction

In this *Kappan* article, Miami University/Ohio professors Alan Frager and Elizabeth Frye present a hierarchy of proficiency in literacy instruction for Grade 4 and above:

Grade F

- *Reading the whole text aloud* – Some teachers think this is a good practice because it exposes all students to important information that they might not get on their own. But Frager and Frye believe that in grade 4 and above, oral reading by the teacher is “doing for students what they should do for themselves” – it’s too passive an experience for much learning and skill improvement to take place.

- *Oral round-robin reading* – This hide-bound practice is still used by some teachers because they were taught that way themselves and/or believe it helps classroom management by getting all students doing the same thing at the same time. Frager and Frye believe round-robin reading (and its cousin, popcorn reading, where each reader gets to pick the next student who will read aloud) border on educational malpractice – “only one person, the reader, is engaged in reading, while 25 others are passive listeners at best, assuming they aren’t sleeping or calculating the place in the text when they’ll have to read.” The emphasis is on pronouncing words correctly, which fills non-proficient students with anxiety; it models moving relentlessly through a text, rather than going back and thinking aloud about confusing and interesting elements, and it distracts everyone’s attention from the meaning of the text.

Grade C (there’s no D in this rubric)

- *Having students read texts silently and answer questions shortly afterward* – This can work moderately well if the texts are at students’ instructional level – challenging but not frustrating with normal classroom instruction and support. Books at students’ independent level don’t have the challenging ideas, syntax, and vocabulary to boost their reading level.

Grade B

- *Using effective pre-reading activities* – The teacher designs before-reading activities that motivate students, activate prior knowledge, introduce new vocabulary, and develop awareness of the questions, issues, and debates that frame the text, and follows up with appropriate during-reading discussion and after-reading questions.

Grade B+

- *Gradual release of responsibility* – The teacher moves students through five stages: teacher modeling, guided practice, collaborative practice, independent practice, and application of strategies in authentic reading situations.

Grade A

- *Making meaning* – The teacher directs students’ attention to their personal

interpretation of the text, anticipating a range of student responses. Student input drives the discussion – which is easy to observe because students are talking more than the teacher. A teacher who is at this level often asks these questions:

- “Please read from the text to support that interpretation.”
- “I would like to hear another interpretation of this passage.”
- “What experience in your life relates to this passage?”

Grade A+

• *Involving students in critical literacy* – Students are grasping “the socially constructed nature of knowledge and experience as expressed in written and spoken language,” in Kathy Hall’s words. “It is essentially about being aware of the processes that produce knowledge.”

Truly outstanding reading teachers:

- Are mindful of the communities in which students live and the concerns of people in those communities, and weave all that into instructional goals and methods.
- Have a broad definition of text – books, articles, film, and community texts like traffic rules.
- Select provocative materials to engage students in critical reflection.
- Encourage multiple interpretations.
- Create opportunities for students to reflect on how they arrive at their opinions, beliefs, values, and arguments.
- Model their own critical process to support students as they participate in ongoing discussions.

“Teachers who challenge students with these practices,” conclude Frager and Frey, “transform how students transact with text and lay the foundation for students to become active, thoughtful, literate participants in our society.”

“Focus on the Essentials of Reading Instruction” by Alan Frager and Elizabeth Frye in *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 2010 (Vol. 92, #2, p. 56-58); this article can be purchased at <http://www.kappanmagazine.org>

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4. The Five Facets of Trust

“Trust between principal and teachers, administrators and school staffs, parents and staff, teachers and students, and among students is essential for schools to improve,” says Valerie von Frank in this *Tools for Schools* article. College of William and Mary professor Megan Tschannen-Moran agrees: “Nontrust is debilitating. People are less willing to share ideas and their energy is devoted to hypervigilance. Communication shuts down.” A 2004 study of Chicago schools by Bryk and Schneider found that schools with a high degree of relational trust as they began a school improvement process had a one-in-two chance of improving math and reading achievement, whereas schools with low levels of trust had a one-in-seven chance of success.

But what exactly is trust? Here is Tschannen-Moran’s definition: “Trust is an individual’s or group’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence

that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open.” These details on each criterion might form the core of a school survey:

- *Benevolence* – Confidence that one’s well-being or something one cares about will be protected by the trusted party... the assurance that others will not exploit one’s vulnerability or take advantage even when the opportunity is available.

- *Honesty* – The trusted person’s character, integrity, and authenticity... acceptance of responsibility for one’s actions and not distorting the truth in order to shift blame to another.

- *Openness* – The extent to which relevant information is shared... openness signals reciprocal trust.

- *Reliability* – Consistency of behavior and knowing what to expect from others... a sense of confidence that one’s needs will be met in positive ways.

- *Competency* – The ability to perform as expected and according to standards appropriate to the task at hand.

Tschannen-Moran has a number of suggestions on how leaders can build trust in a school, and suggests working with a coach to improve the culture of the school. It all boils down to this: “Develop a thoughtful leadership style. Act with humility. Treat teachers like professionals.” The specifics:

- Be reflective about how you are using the five facets of trust. You need all five.
- Build relationships first. “Go slow to go fast,” she advises.
- Trust teachers to make decisions and give them a voice in issues of consequence.
- Structure opportunities for lots of interpersonal interaction so that teachers build relationships around meaningful work.
- Develop a vision of what trust looks like, especially respect, communication, and appreciation.
- Really listen. “Teachers who feel they are being listened to begin to shift the culture,” says Tschannen-Moran.
- Emphasize cooperation and sharing versus competition and favoritism.

“Trust Matters – for Educators, Parents, and Students” by Valerie von Frank in *Tools for Schools*, Fall 2010 (Vol. 14, #1, p. 1-3), no e-link available

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5. Dealing with Depression in Students

(Originally titled “Responding to a Student’s Depression”)

The average age for the onset of major depression in the U.S. is 14, say Canadian school psychologist Marc Crundwell and University of Michigan professor Kim Killu in this *Educational Leadership* article. Depression is closely tied to poor academic achievement and dropping out. The good news, say the authors, is that, “When depression is recognized early and when professionals provide treatment, young people can experience improved mood and function better in school and life.”

It's therefore crucial for school staff to be able to spot the warning signs. Here is the authors' list of the symptoms of depression and how they manifest themselves in elementary and secondary schools:

In pre-adolescents:

- Physical/somatic complaints – Feeling sick, school absence, not participating, sleepiness;
- Irritability – Isolation from peers, problems with social skills, defiance;
- Difficulty concentrating on tasks and activities – Poor work completion;
- Short-term memory impairments – Forgetting to complete work, difficulty concentrating;
- Hypersensitivity – Feelings easily hurt, crying, anger;
- Poor performance and follow-through on tasks – Not finishing work;
- Inattention – Distractibility, restlessness;
- Forgetfulness – Poor work submitted, inconsistent academic performance;
- Separation anxiety from parents or caregiver – Crying, somatic complaints, frequent absence, school refusal.

In adolescents:

- Decreased self-esteem, feeling of self-worth – Self-deprecating comments;
- Irritability – Defiance with authority figures, trouble interacting with peers, argumentative;
- Negative perceptions – Pessimistic comments, suicidal thoughts;
- Peer rejection – Isolation, frequent changes of friends;
- Lack of interest and involvement in activities previously enjoyed – Isolation, withdrawal;
- Boredom – Sulking, noncompliance;
- Impulsive and risky behavior – Theft, sexual activity, alcohol or drug use, truancy;
- Substance abuse – Acting out of character, sleeping in class.

For students who are diagnosed with depression, Crundwell and Killu recommend the following:

- *Establish a touchstone teacher.* This teacher should have the flexibility to meet regularly with the student to coordinate services, review work, set goals, give feedback, and target four key areas that often cause difficulty: work completion, handing work in, social interactions, and physical activity.

- *Differentiate.* Teachers should develop modifications and accommodations to respond to students' fluctuations in mood, ability to concentrate, and the side effects of medications.

- *Teach study strategies.* Teachers should break academic work into manageable tasks, teach basic homework, study, and goal-setting skills, constantly monitor work, and help depressed students to self-monitor their frustration level, their need for physical activity or a break, or physical symptoms (such as a dry mouth from medications) and to take the initiative to solve the problem.

- *Maximize social interaction.* Cooperative classroom projects and club activities can prod depressed students to interact more with their peers.

- *Communicate with the family.* The school should have a tracking system (perhaps a notebook that goes back and forth) to foster close communication with parents/guardians and keep them abreast of academic deadlines and school activities.

- *Confront the issue of suicide.* “For many students,” say Crundwell and Killu, “it’s important to develop a ‘no-suicide contract’ – an agreement between student and school in which a student promises that if he or she experiences suicidal impulses, the student will inform a health care professional, family member, or teacher rather than engage in self-injurious behavior.” The school should also frequently monitor whether the student has suicidal thoughts.

“Responding to a Student’s Depression” by Marc Crundwell and Kim Killu in *Educational Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 68, #2, p. 46-51); this article can be purchased at <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct10/vol68/num02/Responding-to-a-Student's-Depression.aspx> The authors can be reached at marc.crundwell@gecsb.on.ca and kimkillu@umd.umich.edu.

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6. Supporting Students with Autism

(Originally titled “Faces of Autism”)

“When you have met one person with autism, you have met one person with autism,” says Adelphi University professor Stephen Shore, as quoted by Pamela Hudson Baker, Mary Murray, Carolyn Murray-Slutsky, and Betty Paris in this helpful article in *Educational Leadership*. The characteristics of autism, which affects one in 110 children today, lie along a continuum in five main areas: social skills, communication skills, restrictive/repetitive behaviors and interests, sensory responses, and cognitive abilities. Teachers might notice behaviors like:

- Avoiding eye contact;
- Being unable to read nonverbal cues (such a teacher’s disapproving look);
- Turning any group discussion to a topic of high interest to them;
- Becoming anxious or resistant when confronted with a change in routine;
- Covering their ears during a loudspeaker announcement.

These behaviors can be unnerving in the classroom, but the authors believe there are straightforward actions teachers can take, in cooperation with speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and administrators, to help these children be successful:

- *Provide opportunities for movement.* A teacher might ask a student with autism to do 50 jumping jacks before moving to a reading group.

- *Provide structure and visual supports.* A teacher might help a student make transitions with lists, diagrams, or pictures to describe the activities that will take place that day (for example, an animal picture to represent each activity).

- *Teach social and physical skills.* Teachers might help a student learn how to initiate conversations and choose stories that build social skills.

- *Teach self-regulation.* A teacher might have a student describe his or her emotional state on a 5-point scale.

- *Use self-reflected reinforcement.* A teacher might have a student choose an appropriate reward, for example, taking care of a class pet or quiet time in a rocking chair, for successfully using a skill.

- *Implement a functional behavior assessment.* The IEP team looks beyond the student's behavior to the underlying motivation. This involves stating the problem in concrete, measurable terms, collecting data, and formulating and testing hypotheses of what's going on.

"Faces of Autism" by Pamela Hudson Baker, Mary Murray, Carolyn Murray-Slutsky, and Betty Paris in *Educational Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 68, #2, p. 40-45); purchase at <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct10/vol68/num02/Faces-of-Autism.aspx> Baker and Murray can be reached at pbaker5@gmu.edu, mmurray@bgsu.edu.

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7. Confused Beliefs About Learning Disabilities

In this *Education Week* article, Christina Samuels reports on a poll of American attitudes and beliefs about learning disabilities. Here are some of the findings:

- 80 percent said "people with learning disabilities are just as smart as you and me."
- 79 percent said that "all children learn in different ways."
- 92 percent said that children with learning disabilities process words and information differently.
- 76 percent correctly identified dyslexia as a learning disability.
- Only 38 percent said they had heard or read "a lot" about learning disabilities.
- 80 percent linked learning disabilities with intellectual disabilities such as "mental retardation."
- 69 percent linked learning disabilities with ADHD.
- 75 percent linked learning disabilities with autism.
- And 51 percent said that "sometimes learning disabilities are really just the result of laziness."
- More than half said that learning disabilities are "often caused by the home environment children are raised in."

In the understatement of the week, Stewart Hudson of the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation, which commissioned the study, said, "I don't think people have a very clear idea of what dyslexia and other learning disabilities are."

"Poll: Misconceptions Linger About Learning Disabilities" by Christina Samuels in *Education Week*, Oct. 13, 2010 (Vol. 30, #7, p. 10)

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/10/13/071d-2.h30.html>

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8. Home Computers Making a Positive Difference for Disadvantaged Youth

In this *Education Week* commentary article, Computers for Youth CEO Elisabeth Stock and Columbia Business School professor Ray Fisman push back on recent research purporting to show that home computers have a negative effect on the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. [See Marshall Memo 346, #8] What the studies are measuring, say Stock and Fisman, is situations where computers are sent home with inadequate support. "We

certainly don't assume that distributing violins will produce violinists," they say, "nor do we expect footballs, by themselves, to produce varsity quarterbacks."

A better question, they continue, is this: "Can a home computer be introduced in such a way that it will support a more effective home-learning environment and, in turn, improve academic achievement?" It's clear that what happens at home is one of the strongest correlates of achievement, and parents' engagement in their children's learning is one of the best ways to boost learning. The computer revolution "now allows us to deliver cheaper yet more sophisticated home-learning tools than were available even a few years ago," say Stock and Fisman, "offering a low-cost way for students to apply what they've learned in the classroom after the school day ends. The advances allow parents, who may have good intentions but little academic training, the chance to become more involved in the learning process."

For computers to be helpful, they need to be complemented with two Cs: content and context. Computers are an amazing vehicle for content, but what content gets used and how it's used depends on the how students, parents, and teachers interact with each other and the computers. Parent training on the hardware and educational software is essential. Stock and Fisman cite the Texas Technology Immersion Pilot and the Computers for Youth program as examples of documented student gains in reading and math test scores after laptops were made available to students – accompanied by careful computer training and well-selected educational software.

"The Not-So-Simple Debate on Home Computers and Achievement" by Elisabeth Stock and Ray Fisman in *Education Week*, Oct. 13, 2010 (Vol. 30, #7, p. 24, 26), <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/10/13/07stock.h30.html>

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9. Getting Book-Phobic Ninth Graders To Read

(Originally titled "Baiting the Reading Hook")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Minnesota literacy specialist Jennifer McCarty Plucker describes how she turned reluctant ninth graders (*Do I have to take this class? I hate reading. Are you going to make us read out loud?*) into avid readers. She had them almost every day in an academic literacy class they were required to take in addition to regular English.

Her secret? Developing a home-grown literacy program (versus a commercial package); building an extensive classroom library of high-interest young adult novels; working to match students with books and build their ability to choose "just right" books independently; getting students to share their thinking as they read and developed metacognitive skills; teaching students how to do close reading of difficult texts; helping students understand which distractions (like iPods) prevented them from doing thoughtful reading; using online discussion forums, videos, digital posters, podcasts, texting, and classroom social networking to engage students in ongoing discussions about books; doing some oral reading (but avoiding "lame" books); calling small-group instruction CREW time (Collaborative Reading, Enhanced Work), which made it sound cool; getting them reading aloud by creating podcasts of children's books;

and, most important, reserving at least 25 minutes of the 50-minute class for students to read silently for enjoyment – and bringing in books that were highly interesting to students. “Once our students have started reading for fun,” says Plucker, “we brainstorm and set goals for stealing minutes outside school for reading. By the end of the school year, many of our academic literacy students have finished more than 40 books and are reading at least an hour each day.”

Here are some books that Plucker used to grab students’ interest:

- *Ana’s Story: A Journey of Hope* by Jenna Bush (HarperCollins, 2007) – The story of a young Latin American woman infected by HIV/AIDS;
- *Compound* by S.A. Bodeen (Feiwel and Friends, 2008) – A thriller about a family living in an underground mansion waiting for the aftereffects of a nuclear war to dissipate;
- *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (Scholastic, 2008) – A girl chooses to take her younger sister’s place in a annual, televised competition to the death (the competitors are chosen in a lottery) that all citizens are required to watch;
- *L.A. Candy* by Lauren Conrad (HarperCollins, 2009) – Jane and Scarlett move to Los Angeles and end up on a reality TV show that follows their real lives and tests their friendship.
- *Maximum Ride: The Angel Experiment* by James Patterson (Little, Brown, 2005) – A science fiction about Max, who is 98 percent human and 2 percent bird, who escapes from the lab with her family and is being hunted by the Erasers, who are part wolf, part human;
- *Street Pharm* by Allison van Diepen (Simon Pulse, 2006) – A boy must use his wits to keep his incarcerated father’s drug-dealing business successful, but a tragedy makes him rethink his career choice;
- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher (Razorbill, 2007) – A boy gets a package of cassette tapes from a classmate who recently committed suicide.

“Baiting the Reading Hook” by Jennifer McCarty Plucker in *Educational Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 68, #2, p. 58-63); this article can be purchased at

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct10/vol68/num02/Baiting-the-Reading-Hook.aspx>

Plucker can be reached at Jennifer.Plucker@gmail.com

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10. Six Children’s Book Recommendations

In this *Reading Today* feature, Ohio-based writer David Richardson recommends these new books:

- *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes* by Eric Litwin, illustrated by James Dean (Harper, 2010) for ages 2 and up – Pete loves his new white tennis shoes, but he steps in strawberries and they turn red. A book about dealing with life’s little setbacks.
- *Swim! Swim!* by James Proimos (Scholastic, 2010) for ages 4 and up – A goldfish named Learch tries to communicate with a cat, who insists on calling him Lunch.
- *Bad Kitty v. Uncle Murray: The Uproar at the Front Door* by Nick Bruel (Roaring Brook, 2010) for ages 7 and up – Bad Kitty’s owners go on vacation and leave him with Uncle Murray, who thinks cats should be treated calmly and gently. He’s in for a surprise!

- *Because of Mr. Terupt* by Rob Buyea (Delacorte, 2010) for ages 10 and up – Mr. Terupt is a new and somewhat unconventional teacher who gets involved in a tragic event for which everyone must accept responsibility.

- *Scumble* by Ingrid Law (Dial, 2010) for ages 10 and up – In this sequel to *Savvy*, someone in the Beaumont family is turning 13 and that can only mean trouble.

- *Even Monsters Need Haircuts* by Matthew McElligott (Walker, 2010) for all ages – A boy uses his father’s barbershop to cut monsters’ hair when the moon is full. Things get complicated when a human shows up for a trim – at least they all think he’s human.

“Autumn Heralds Season of Sharing... So Many Books!” by David Richardson in *Reading Today*, October/November 2010 (Vol. 28, #2, p. 32), no e-link available

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11. Preparing for College Success

In this *Education Week* article, Catherine Gewertz reports on a new study from ACT, “Mind the Gaps”, which identifies the correlates of success in and graduation from college:

- A strong core curriculum in high school, i.e., four years of English and at least three years each in math, science, and social studies;
- Meeting benchmark scores in all four subjects of the ACT college-entrance exam.

Fewer than 25 percent of students meet these criteria now, and poor and minority-group students lag the worst. However, says Cynthia Schmeiser of ACT, “when kids are prepared for college, college achievement gaps narrow in remarkable ways.”

“For High-Risk Groups, Success Gap in College Hinges on Readiness” by Catherine Gewertz in *Education Week*, Oct. 13, 2010 (Vol. 30, #7, p. 8)

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/10/13/07readiness.h30.html>

Full study available at <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/reports/mindthegaps.html>

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12. Short Items:

a. Using cell phones as clickers – This website allows teachers to use students’ cell phones (assuming they’re allowed in school) to be used as audience response devices for questions posed by the teacher: <http://www.polleverywhere.com>.

Spotted in “Cell Phones as Teaching Tools” by William Ferriter in *Educational Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 68, #2, p. 85)

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b. Supporting students from military families – This guide has background information on each service branch, outlines Department of Defense initiatives that support schools, and sketches the challenges that students from military families face:

<http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu>

“News to Use” in *Middle Ground*, October 2010 (Vol. 14, #2, p. 6)

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c. Technology quiz – This 10-question test from *Edutopia* helps you assess your computer knowledge: <http://www.edutopia.org/quiz-tech-savvy-teaching>

“News to Use” in *Middle Ground*, October 2010 (Vol. 14, #2, p. 6)

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d. Disney’s Planet Challenge – This is a project-based environmental competition for grades 4-6 designed to empower students to make a difference in their school, home, and local community: <http://www.disney.com/planetchallenge>

“News to Use” in *Middle Ground*, October 2010 (Vol. 14, #2, p. 7)

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e. A foldable graphic organizer for studying vocabulary – This online study aid is especially helpful for English language learners as they master vocabulary and definitions: <http://newsouthvoices.uncc.edu/files/nsv/institute/Foldables.pdf>

“Helping ELLs Master the Dreaded Word Problem” by Diana Picchi Cwynar and Susan Hewett in *Middle Ground*, October 2010 (Vol. 14, #2, p. 34)

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

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

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

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

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

Subscriptions:

Individual subscriptions are \$50 for the school year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and information on paying by check or credit card.

Website:

If you go to <http://www.marshallmemo.com> you will find detailed information on:

- How to subscribe or renew
- A detailed rationale for the Marshall Memo
- Publications (with a count of articles from each)
- Article selection criteria
- Topics (with a count of articles from each)
- Headlines for all issues
- What readers say
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Marshall Memo subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in PDF or Word format)
- 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 password

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Catalyst Chicago
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
Language Learner (NABE)
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
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
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools