Marshall Memo 222

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
February 18, 2008

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Although thinking is innate and spontaneous, *skillful* thinking must be cultivated."
Arthur Costa (see item #1)

"Meaning making is not a spectator sport… Humans don't *get* ideas; they *make* ideas."
Arthur Costa (*ibid.*)

"'Teaching to the test' does not effectively teach to the test at all."
E.D. Hirsch (see item #5)

"Language comprehension is a slow-growing plant. Even with a coherent curriculum, the buildup of knowledge and vocabulary is a gradual, multiyear process that occurs at an almost imperceptible rate. The results show up later."
E.D. Hirsch (*ibid.*)

"The mission of the library media program is to ensure that students are effective users of information. Isn't that at the core and heart of education? Is that a luxury?"
Michael Eisenberg, University of Washington/Seattle professor, in *Education Week*, Feb 13, 2008 (Vol. 27, #23, p. 10-11)

"[V]ery soon after that first cigarette, adolescents can experience a loss of autonomy over tobacco."
Dr. Joseph DiFranza (see item #6)

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1. Arthur Costa on Five Ways to Deepen Classroom Thinking

(Originally titled "The Thought-Filled Curriculum")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, California State University/Sacramento professor Arthur Costa quotes teachers' frustrations with their students' thinking:

- *They just blurt out answers. They should think before they respond.*
- *They depend on me for their answers. I wish they would think for themselves.*
- *They give up so easily on difficult tasks. I'd like them to hang in there.*
- *They can't seem to work in groups. They must learn to cooperate and work together.*
- *They don't apply their knowledge. I want them to use what they know in other situations.*
- *They are afraid to take risks. I'd like them to be more creative, more adventuresome.*

Costa believes that students will do better in all these areas if curriculum and instruction are improved. He suggests five themes in what he calls "the thought-filled curriculum:"

• *Learning to think* – "Although thinking is innate and spontaneous," says Costa, "*skillful* thinking must be cultivated." Students need practice, reflection, and coaching to become proficient. "One way to enhance such thinking," he continues, "is to get students intrigued by relevant, generative, conceptual knowledge. Cognition and content are inseparable. One cannot think about 'nothing,' and deep conceptual understanding requires such cognitive skills as comparing, analyzing, applying, translating, and evaluating." Costa suggests explicitly teaching thinking skills, using thinking maps and visual tools, and modeling problem-solving, decision-making, and investigating.

• *Thinking to learn* – "Meaning making is not a spectator sport," quips Costa. "Humans don't *get* ideas; they *make* ideas." To orchestrate active learning, teachers need to pose challenging, content-embedded questions and problems that tax students' imaginations and stimulate inquiry. They need to invite students to assess their own learning. They need to urge students to question assumptions. And they need to value students' viewpoints by maintaining a safe, nonjudgmental tone.

• *Thinking together* – "Learning is a reciprocal process," says Costa. "The individual influences the group's thinking, and the group influences the individual's thinking." But collaborative inquiry isn't easy to orchestrate. Students need to be taught a set of interpersonal skills: (a) focusing mental energy on understanding others; (b) summarizing and paraphrasing others' thoughts; (c) empathizing; (d) monitoring clarity in communication; and (e) setting aside judgments, solutions, and autobiographical responses.

• *Thinking about our own thinking* – Metacognition is key, says Costa, but it doesn't come naturally to most students. "When confronted with perplexing, ambiguous situations," he observes, "skillful thinkers engage in an internal mental dialogue." Here are some questions students might be taught to ask themselves:

- How can I draw on my past successes to solve this new problem?
- How might I look at this situation from a fresh perspective?
- How might I break this problem down and attack it?
- What do I know and not know?
- What emotions might be blocking or enhancing my thinking?
- How is this problem affecting others and how might we solve it together?

• *Thinking big* – Costa urges teachers to give their students the larger perspective and keep global issues in mind when framing units and lessons: Are these learnings essential? How do they contribute to building more thoughtful classrooms, schools, and communities? Do they help students learn to solve problems peacefully? Do they value diversity? Do they show a consciousness of the world's limited resources and living in harmony with our environment? Do they help untangle misunderstandings?

"The Thought-Filled Curriculum" by Arthur Costa in *Educational Leadership*, February 2008 (Vol. 65, #5, p. 20-24) http://www.ascd.org/el or http://www.ascd.org/infocon. Costa can be reached at Artcosta@aol.com.

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2. Keys to Teaching for Understanding

(Originally titled "Disciplining the Mind")

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, Harvard researchers Howard Gardner and Veronica Boix Mansilla imagine a 10th-grade world history teacher wrapping up his unit on industrialization and asking himself if he should give a final test that goes beyond the usual checking to see if students remember key events, dates, people, and inventions. Does he dare ask questions like these?

- Explain why industrialization occurred.
- How did the Industrial Revolution unfold?
- How does today's communications revolution compare with the Industrial Revolution?

The teacher hesitates, rightly surmising that his students will see such questions as an unfair "gotcha" on material they haven't learned.

Therein lies the problem for many teachers, say Gardner and Boix Mansilla: they teach facts, formulas, and figures – not a deep understanding of their discipline. But Google and other search engines, they assert, "have rendered having information much less valuable than knowing how to think with information in novel situations. To thrive in contemporary societies, young people must develop the capacity to think like experts." They must resist oversimplification and embrace the complexity of the modern world.

The result of low-level, facts-only teaching, say the authors, is the continuation of deep misconceptions about how the world works. Many students graduate from high school without understanding why the northern hemisphere is warmer in the summer, believing that events always result from intentional actions, having difficulty grasping unintended consequences, projecting contemporary knowledge and values onto the minds of people in the past, and unable to apply what they know to novel situations.

"A different kind of instruction is in order," say Gardner and Boix Mansilla, "one that seeks to discipline the mind." Students need to develop four capacities: (a) Understanding the big ideas of a discipline – for example, biological interdependence in life science; (b) Learning the essential concepts and knowledge of the discipline; (c) Putting aside naïve beliefs and grasping the inquiry methods of the discipline; and (d) Understanding the ways in which the discipline's expertise is communicated (e.g., narratives in history, data reports in science).

Gardner and Boix Mansilla believe that teachers can help their students develop real understanding by:

• *Identifying the essential topics of their discipline*. In the unit on industrialization, these might include: the big ideas (transformation of production systems and social organization); historians' methods (examining conflicting accounts of workers' experiences and worldviews); some deeper historical strands (how changes in technology led to changes in ways of thinking both then and now); and evaluating how historians communicate (what makes a historical narrative masterful?).

• *Spend considerable time on the key topics*. "By encouraging students to examine multiple perspectives on a topic and study them in depth," write Gardner and Boix Mansilla, "teachers help students become young experts in different topic areas."

• *Approach each topic in a number of ways*. In the unit on industrialization, students might read biographies and life stories, analyze demographic data, interpret works of art, and debate essential questions, for example, did the industrial revolution represent progress?

• *Apply learning*. Students might examine a situation they have not studied, reading conflicting accounts, checking sources and dates, and asking how historians might disagree.

"Disciplining the Mind" by Veronica Boix Mansilla and Howard Gardner in *Educational Leadership*, February 2008 (Vol. 65, #5, p. 14-19) http://www.ascd.org/el or http://www.ascd.org/infocon. The authors can be reached at howard@pz.harvard.edu and veronica@pz.harvard.edu.

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3. An Artist's Suggestions for Energizing Classroom Instruction

In this *Education Week* article, Maryland-based musician Marcia Daft describes her work collaborating with classroom teachers. In a math class covering repeating patterns, skip counting, and multiplication, for example, Daft passed out drums and taught students how to create rhythmic patterns representing the mathematical ideas. In a language arts class on point of view, she led a drama experience in which students became characters and expressed and analyzed their feelings.

"Teachers were immediately impressed by students' motivation and learning during these teaching-artist sessions," says Daft. "Students who typically showed no interest in daily classroom activities joyfully volunteered to be part of the class. Troubled students who had failed year after year and been all but written off shocked us with the imaginativeness and sophistication of their thinking. Preschoolers who had never uttered a single word in the classroom began speaking during my sessions. Students were able to absorb ideas on a deep, conceptual level and with what seemed to be less effort. Retention was off the charts, with students able to remember information for weeks and months between visits."

As word of these successes spread, Dash was asked to train teachers to implement these methods themselves – to "teach like artists." To prepare for her work with teachers, she steeped herself in their curriculum and pedagogy, and was struck by the fact that many educational theories were not being applied in schools. "I found few teachers," she says, "who had ever seen educational theory at work in a classroom." So Dash developed ways of making the link. Here are two examples:

• *Multiple intelligences* – Many teachers are attracted to the idea of reaching diverse learners through a wide range of instructional strategies, but find it difficult to manage this in their classrooms. Faced with a kinesthetic learner, teachers seldom do more than have the student get up and stretch every once in a while, and with an auditory learner, the response might be having the student read aloud. Dash thinks the injecting the arts can take things much further. "Dance is an art form that immediately lends itself to science," she says. "When students use their bodies to connect elements of dance (such as weight, time, force, energy and transformation) to concepts in science, we are truly reaching the kinesthetic learner. Imagine dancing the water cycle – moving through the stages of liquid flow, evaporation, condensation, and rainfall – as a way of learning in the classroom." Similarly, music could be used to reach an auditory learner. "When students explore their voices and use musical phrasing, articulation, inflection, and timing to bring expression to their reading, the sound environment in the classroom shifts from mundane to marvelous."

• *Constructivism* – The theory here is that learning is best when teachers engineer classroom experiences so students construct their own meaning and personal truths. But how can this happen if teachers are afraid to let students leave their desks? With a unit on the Civil War, says Daft, the best thing would be to turn it into a play. "Think of how actors and directors work in the theater," she writes. "Groups of actors often meet independently to discuss and rehearse scenes. After practice, these scenes are shown to the director, who guides the actors through a process of questioning, observation, reflection, and revision… Artists are skilled at creating environments in which learners must cooperate, collaborate, compromise, and reach consensus when working together in groups."

"Artists as Education Consultants" by Marcia Daft in *Education Week*, Feb. 13, 2008 (Vol. 27, #23, p. 32-33), no free e-link available

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4. E.D. Hirsch on Curriculum, Skills, and Standards

In this interview with Michael Shaughnessy in *EdNews*, University of Virginia professor and Core Knowledge guru E.D. Hirsch talks about curriculum incoherence, the folly of teaching skills in isolation, and the unfairness of most state language-arts standards:

• "Children go to school for more than a decade because learning is gradual, and there is a great deal to be learned – especially in matters relating to general knowledge and the buildup of vocabulary. If the specific content for each grade level does not build on what went before and prepare for what will come after, there will be big gaps and boring repetitions. Those are the conditions that now prevail in [most] schools. A great deal of school time is being used unproductively, and the hardest hit by this incoherence are disadvantaged children."

• "Critical thinking skills cannot be learned in the abstract. They always pertain to concrete knowledge of subject matter… The main, somewhat revolutionary point I have been making is that teaching content *is* teaching skills, whereas teaching formal processes is, in the end, teaching neither content nor skills… Students who have been taught coherent knowledge are more highly skilled than those who have been taught 'skills'."

• "The state standards in language arts (where students spend most of their time in early grades) are empty of content. It's all process. They are not standards at all in a meaningful sense. And they cause reading tests to be hugely unfair, because the topics in passages on reading tests always assume content knowledge that has not been taught in schools."

"An Interview with E.D. Hirsch: About School Choice and the Core Knowledge Curriculum" by Michael Shaughnessy in *Ed News*, Feb. 16, 2008
http://ednews.org/articles/22993/1/An-Interview-with-ED-Hirsch-About-School-Choice-and-the-Core-Knowledge-Curriculum/Page1.html

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5. E.D. Hirsch on Test Prep

In this *Washington Post* opinion piece, E.D. Hirsch notes that many elementary educators have fallen into the trap of believing that "to teach to reading tests is to educate children." On the contrary, he says, "intensive test preparation by schools has resulted in lower reading test scores in later grades. 'Teaching to the test' does not effectively teach to the test at all."

Hirsch makes the following argument: "Studies of reading comprehension show that knowing something of the topic you're reading about is the most important variable in comprehension. After a child learns to sound out words, comprehension is mostly knowledge." The language-arts textbooks that students spend up to three hours a day studying, says Hirsch, are constructed on the false premise that "reading comprehension is a skill that can be perfected by practice, as typing can be." The result is students wasting their time "on trivial content and on drills such as 'finding the main idea' and less time on history, science, and the arts."

Hirsch lays part of the blame for this misdirected approach at the doorstep of the National Reading Panel. The NRP's 2000 report had sensible, research-based advice on

phonics and decoding, but was "highly incomplete" on reading comprehension – which is precisely where American students fall apart in the later grades. "Fatefully," says Hirsch, "the National Reading Panel did not include enough top specialists in language comprehension," and there's an urgent need to reconvene the panel and fill in this gap. "A revised and improved NRP report," he says, "would also emphasize that a knowledge-based strategy must be long-range – starting as early as kindergarten to focus on substantial content read aloud to students and discussed."

"Language comprehension is a slow-growing plant," Hirsch notes. "Even with a coherent curriculum, the buildup of knowledge and vocabulary is a gradual, multiyear process that occurs at an almost imperceptible rate. The results show up later." He cites Massachusetts, which is a "stunning exception to the nationwide pattern of stagnation and decline" as students move up through the grades. This, says Hirsch, is due to the fact that in 1997, the Bay State instituted knowledge-rich standards in history, science, and literature – and included those subjects in statewide MCAS testing. "The sure road to adequate progress in reading is adequate progress in knowledge," he concludes. "[T]he best tests to 'teach to' are subject-matter tests based on explicit content standards for each grade."

"The Knowledge Connection" by E.D. Hirsch Jr. in *The Washington Post*, Feb. 16, 2008 (p A21), available with free registration at:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/NewsSearch?sb=-1&st=E.D.%20Hirsch%20Jr.&

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6. Alarming Findings on Teen Smoking

In this *New York Times* "Personal Health" column, Jane Brody cites new evidence that adolescents can become addicted to cigarettes with alarming ease – in some cases after smoking just one cigarette. Since 90 percent of lifelong adult smokers say they began as teenagers, this is an important finding. According to Dr. Joseph DiFranza of the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, "very soon after that first cigarette, adolescents can experience a loss of autonomy over tobacco."

A typical teen smoker is a 14-year-old girl who smokes only three cigarettes a week, well below what had been assumed to be the threshold for addiction. But DiFranza found that many smokers in this category cannot quit; every time they try, they have cravings and feelings of irritability. One study found that only 3 percent of adolescents who tried to stop were still abstinent a year later.

The teen smoking rate declined steadily from its high point in the mid-1990s, but leveled off in 2005. Currently, about 13 percent of teenagers smoke at least once a month. Although teenagers see fewer adult smokers around them, smoking in movies is at an all-time high – and studies show that teens are more likely to smoke if they see tobacco being used in films. This, along with the decline in anti-smoking messages in the media, has public health officials worried.

DiFranza and his colleagues reached their conclusions by administering a ten-item questionnaire to U.S. smokers of all ages. They found that a "Yes" answer to even one question

revealed that the adolescent was in the grip of drug addiction and would find it extremely difficult to quit in the years ahead:

- Have you ever tried to quit smoking, but couldn't?
- Do you smoke now because it is really hard to quit?
- Have you ever felt as if you were addicted to tobacco?
- Do you ever had strong cravings to smoke?
- Have you ever felt as if you really needed a cigarette?
- Is it hard to keep from smoking in places where you are not supposed to, like school?

When you tried to stop smoking or when you haven't used tobacco for a while:

- Did you find it hard to concentrate because you couldn't smoke?
- Did you feel more irritable because you couldn't smoke?
- Did you feel a strong need or urge to smoke?
- Did you feel nervous, restless, or anxious because you couldn't smoke?

This survey was also given to 25,772 adolescent smokers in New Zealand, and researchers found a "loss of autonomy" in 25-30 percent of teens who had smoked their first and only cigarette in the preceding month.

Of course most teenagers who try cigarettes don't become lifelong smokers – so what makes the difference? "We still need to know how to predict who's going to get hooked," says Dr. Robin Mermelstein of the University of Illinois/Chicago's Center for Health Behavior Research. DiFranza believes that once a teenager has tried a cigarette, there's a way of telling: "About one-quarter of young people experience a sensation of relaxation the first time they inhale from a cigarette, and this sensation predicts continued smoking." Studies with rats at Duke University have shown that the first dose of nicotine increases the production of the neurotransmitter noradrenaline in the hippocampus for at least 30 days after the nicotine is gone. "The take-home message," says DiFranza: "It only takes a day for the brain to remodel itself in response to one dose of nicotine."

But we still can't predict which quarter of adolescents are super-susceptible *before* they take that first puff. The conclusion? Parents and other influential adults need to tell kids, "Taking even one puff is like playing Russian roulette."

"In Adolescents, Addiction to Tobacco Comes Easy" by Jane Brody in the *New York Times*, Feb. 12, 2008 (p. D7)
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/12/health/12brod.html?sq=Jane%20Brody&st=nyt&adxnnl=1&scp=2&adxnnlx=1203359939-vQoQWC5JXxus3OTBmzkAbA
DiFranza's study is in the December 2007 issue of *The Journal of Family Practice*.

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7. New Thinking on Physical Education and Health

In this *American School Board Journal* article, editor Naomi Dillon reports on efforts to improve students' health and wellness by systematically tracking key data. Previously, student fitness statistics came from the Presidential Fitness Test. "So they used to compare everybody in class," says Phil Lawler, a child fitness advocate who works with a Chicago-area

middle school. “If you were an athlete, great, but there wasn’t a lot of incentive if you weren’t.” Lawler now gathers data on good health, not athletic ability, and uses software systems like FITNESSGRAM and Tri Fit. “When our seniors graduate,” he says, “they get a 25-page printout of their health profile going all the way back to the fourth grade. Hydration level, blood pressure, family history, nutrition analysis, cholesterol screening. We definitely saved some young people.”

Greg Howit, a physical education teacher in southern California, had his epiphany in 2000 when the federal government released a report on the rising levels of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease – all of which are linked to inactivity and poor nutrition. “I realized we had failed,” says Howit. “We’d been doing what we thought was a good job and we weren’t. The reason we failed was because students should’ve been responsible for their own health. They need to know, ‘How do I get well and fit and how do I stay well and fit for the rest of my life?’” Howit had just moved to a new middle school and designed a physical education program from the ground up. He convinced the school to invest in pedometers, heart-rate monitors, and a computer and tracked data in a whole new way.

Here’s an example. A sixth-grade girl ran a mile in 13.5 minutes (she wasn’t overweight or asthmatic, just out of shape). In the old days, Howit would have timed her using a stopwatch, compared her time to the national standard, and failed her (or perhaps told her to step it up). Now, he was able to measure her heartbeat before running – 183 beats a minute – and while she ran – a dangerous 207 – and referred her for immediate medical attention.

Physical education classes using the new approach look quite different from the old days. “Everything was done in lines, in perfect rows,” says Amanda Krejci, a veteran teacher, remembering how she used to teach, “but if you come to my class today it’s not like that. We are all scattered about, working on our own goals.” Some teachers have used Dance Dance Revolution to motivate students to (safely) get their heart-rates up. “It not only looks like a workout,” says George Graham, a kinesiology professor at Penn State University, who dreamed up this approach. “It is a workout.”

“Phys Tech: Schools Are Turning to Technology to Improve Student Health and Wellness” by Naomi Dillon in *American School Board Journal*, March 2008 (Vol. 195, #3, p 32-35) http://www.asbj.com

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8. More on Exercise and Achievement

In this *Education Week* article, Debra Viadero reports on new research pointing to a direct link between regular physical exercise and academic achievement. “The exercise itself doesn’t make you smarter,” says Dr. John Ratey, psychiatry professor at Harvard Medical School, “but it puts the brain of the learners in the optimal position for them to learn.” What’s the mechanism? According to Ratey, laboratory studies in mice and humans show that exercise prompts the brain to produce greater amounts of a protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which acts like “Miracle-Gro”, encouraging the sprouting of synapses, which

are important to forming the connections vital to learning. BDNF also strengths cells and protects them from dying out.

To explore this theory, researchers assigned 163 overweight Georgia children to three groups: one received a 40-minute workout every day after school, one had a 20-minute workout, and one got no additional exercise. After 14 weeks, researchers gave all the students a standardized test and also measured their thinking processes – planning, organizing, abstract thought, and self-control. The students who exercised for 40 minutes a day did best, followed by the 20-minute exercisers, followed by the control group. "I was frankly bowled over by the results," said Catherine Davis, a professor at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, the study's lead author. "It's like a staircase, which is considered strong evidence for causation." (The 2007 study was published in the *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport.*)

Dr. Ratey has been working with the schools in Naperville, IL on "learning readiness" physical education. Students wear heart-rate monitors and choose from more than a dozen activities designed to get their hearts pumping 160-190 beats a minute for 25-minute stretches (one game has students racing around on scooters to match words with their definitions written pieces of paper on the floor). Naperville school officials found that after one semester, at-risk students who took part in the exercise program and a special literacy class showed 134% of a year's growth on a standardized reading test, compared to 70% of a year's growth for students who attended only the literacy class. The following year, Naperville tried the same one-two combination with students who were having difficulty in math. Students who exercised and took an extra-help math class increased their test scores by 20.4%, compared to only 3.87% for the control group.

But Naperville made an intriguing discovery: gains were much less significant if students attended their academic extra-help classes several hours after they exercised. The district now requires that extra-help classes take place immediately after physical education.

"Exercise Seen As Priming Pump for Students' Academic Strides" by Debra Viadero in *Education Week*, Feb. 13, 2008 (Vol. 27, #23, p. 14-15)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/02/13/23exercise_ep.h27.html

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9. A Computerized Way to Detect Concussions

In this sidebar within the *American School Board Journal* article above, Naomi Dillon describes ImPACT, a diagnostic test that can detect if a student has suffered a concussion. Concussions, says Dillon, occur at the rate of 1.6 – 3.4 million a year, and are one of the most commonly mistreated sports injuries. Concussions can be difficult to detect because there is no structural damage to the brain; also, many student athletes deny they are injured so they can continue to play. If you imagine the brain as the yolk inside an egg, a concussion-producing injury is like shaking the egg violently, which creates metabolic changes in the brain that are subtle and varied and don't always show up on diagnostic tests – perhaps sluggishness, nausea, forgetfulness, or headaches. The only way to know for sure, says Mickey Collins of the

University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's sports medicine program, a co-developer of the ImPACT test, is to put the brain to work.

With ImPACT (which stands for Immediate Post-concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing), there's no escaping an accurate diagnosis, and even an athlete who is in denial can't hide the symptoms. In 20 minutes, the computerized sequence tests reaction time, memory, and attention span and gives a diagnosis. Some schools are administering the ImPACT test to all athletes at the beginning of each season to get a baseline – and some schools give the test to students who suffer falls or are in car accidents. For more information about the test, go to http://www.impacttest.com/.

"Concussion Testing Makes an ImPACT" by Naomi Dillon in *American School Board Journal*, March 2008 (Vol. 195, #3, p 34)

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10. A Parent Reacts to a Standards-Based Report Card

In November 2007, the Hartford, CT schools introduced a new elementary report card that gives parents detailed feedback on their children's progress on 58 academic, social, and behavioral standards. In this *New York Times* editorial commentary, Maura Casey says she has no trouble with one standard measuring behavior – "Shows courtesy and respect toward others" – but balks at much of the rest of the report card, which can run as long as seven pages. Some samples:

- Math: "Uses numeracy and literacy skills to describe, analyze, and present scientific content, data, and ideas."
- Music: "Makes connections between music and other disciplines through evaluation and analysis of compositions and performances."
- Physical education: "Establishes and maintains a healthy lifestyle by avoiding risk-taking behavior."

If her child brought home a report card with language like this, says Casey, she would need "a dictionary and an aspirin." She also worries about the paperwork that already-overworked teachers have to plow through to produce such a detailed report.

Christopher Leone, spokesperson for the Hartford schools, says that the reaction from parents has been overwhelmingly positive. Casey is doubtful. "If schools don't offer information that is simple," she writes, "they will end up creating more barriers, especially in cities like Hartford where many of the students come from families where English is not the first language. If report cards are weighted down with educational jargon that even native English speakers have to struggle to understand, it is fair to ask who the administrators are really reporting to: students and their families or the educational bureaucracy?"

"So Is That Like an A?" by Maura Casey in the *New York Times* Editorial Notebook, Feb. 14, 2008
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/14/opinion/14thu4.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Maura+Casey&st=nyt&oref=slogin

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11. Frederick Hess on Collective Bargaining Agreements

In this interview in *EdNews*, researcher Frederick Hess talks about *The Leadership Limbo: Teacher Labor Agreements in America's Fifty Largest School Districts*, a report he recently co-authored. Two excerpts from his comments:

• *On identifying ineffective teachers*: "I don't think there's any secret recipe here. It's the same challenge that crops up in trying to identify truly incompetent nurses, doctors, engineers, or accountants. Some individuals in any line of work fail to competently execute core responsibilities or impede the work of colleagues. Identifying these individuals is typically not the key challenge; that tends to be summoning the organizational willpower to remove them and to minimize any negative repercussions on colleagues or the larger organization."

• *On working within current contracts*: "[C]ritics may overstate the degree to which labor agreements themselves hamstring large districts. Superintendents need to push principals to lead more aggressively with the authority they already have, and boards must ask superintendents to lead more creatively within the parameters of existing agreements. It appears that district and school leaders are failing to exploit gray areas in which they may be free to act. Whether this hesitancy is due to a fear of provoking conflict and violating comfortable norms, union resistance and influence, or a lack of willingness by district leaders to actively support entrepreneurial activity, it calls for reformers to both address extra-district sources of inflexibility and push district officials to provide the requisite political, legal, and material support."

"An Interview with Frederick Hess: About 'The Leadership Limbo'" by Michael Shaughnessy in *EdNews*, Feb. 16, 2008
http://ednews.org/articles/22994/1/An-Interview-with-Frederick-Hess-About-The-Leadership-Limbo/Page1.html. The full report is available at:
http://edexcellence.net/foundation/publication/publication.cfm?id=380

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

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

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

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

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

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Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Atlantic Monthly
Catalyst Chicago
CommonWealth Magazine
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
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Harvard Business Review
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PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teacher Magazine (online)
Teachers College Record
TESOL Quarterly
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools