Marshall Memo 489

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
June 10, 2013

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"What we need are 'transformational' interventions that interrupt the insidious cycle that turns disadvantaged kids into disadvantaged parents, by giving them hope, confidence, and skills to find a different path. I can't think of institutions better positioned to do that than schools. Can you?"

Michael Petrilli in "What We Talk About When We Talk About Poverty" in *The Education Gadfly*, May 31, 2013 (Vol. 13, #22), http://bit.ly/1bnGYGJ

"Children are quick to ask 'why?' and 'how?' when it comes to new things, but research suggests elementary and preschool students learn more when teachers turn the questions back on them."

Sarah Sparks (see item #2)

"We can't assume what we want to teach is something kids are just going to pick up on."

Cristine Legare (see item #2)

"Math has a bit of an image problem. It's often seen as hard, abstract – even pointless."

Caralee Adams in "Museums Open Doors to New Ways of Learning Math" on the new National Museum of Mathematics in New York City, in *Education Week*, June 5, 2013 (Vol. 32, #33, p. 8), www.edweek.org

"Provide support, support, and more support."

Deborah Short on what's needed for sheltered instruction teachers (see item #6)

"As long as what to teach doesn't become how to teach, the [common] core is good. Teachers need to be free to innovate in order to reach students."

Leo West responding to an article by Lisa Hansel about Common Core curriculum materials, in *Education Week*, June 5, 2013 (Vol. 32, #33, p. 31), www.edweek.org

1. Restorative Justice

In this thoughtful *Middle School Journal* article, Katherine Evans (Eastern Mennonite University) and Jessica Lester (Washington State University) say that "zero tolerance" discipline policies have failed to make schools safer. They point to a growing body of research suggesting that restorative justice, implemented in some schools in Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland, South Africa, Canada, and the U.S., is a better approach. Its purpose is to "hold offenders accountable, repair harm to the victims, and provide support and assistance to offenders to encourage their reintegration into the community." Restorative justice can be seen as "a response to misbehavior and as a way to facilitate healthy school climates." Evans and Lester list its seven principles:

• *Principle #1: Meeting needs* – An underlying assumption of restorative justice is that humans have three basic requirements: autonomy, order, and relatedness. "When these needs are not met, students may go to great extremes to meet their needs," say Evans and Lester. The result is misbehavior, conflict, and sometimes violence.

• *Principle #2: Providing accountability and support* – "While zero tolerance policies promote accountability, they often do so without compassion," say Evans and Lester. Restorative justice "promotes accountability within a supportive and compassionate learning community." If it's clear that a child's actions were wrong and resulted in harm, the perpetrator must accept responsibility.

• *Principle #3: Making things right* – A bad deed is defined "not as an offense against the institution (i.e., the school) but as an offense against the members of the institution (i.e., the students' school community)." Restorative justice is different from restitution, which can be seen as another form of punishment. Rather, restorative justice should serve the needs of the victim, "restoring the relationship between the victim and the offender," say Evans and Lester. "Further, the effectiveness of a restitution plan is contingent on the offender developing and being responsible for the plan, rather than having that plan imposed on them by an authority figure. In this way, the restitution becomes not only a way of repairing harm but also an opportunity to learn."

• *Principle #4: Viewing conflict as a learning opportunity* – Externally imposed sanctions deprive students of the chance to problem-solve, learn, and grow, say Evans and Lester, and "teach students that only those in power are able to make decisions and solve problems… Restorative models of school discipline open conversations between victims and offenders, allowing them a space to share perspectives, listen to one another, and work collaboratively to design solutions that bring about healing and restoration."

• *Principle #5: Building healthy learning communities* – Restorative justice "defines school violence as a breakdown of social relationships and implements specific processes to rebuild those relationships," say Evans and Lester. "Strengthening school community and enhancing student-student, student-teacher, teacher-teacher, and school-community relationships is viewed as the most effective way to prevent misbehavior and school-based violence."

• *Principle #6: Restoring relationships* – Conflict and violence are a violation of relationships more than a violation of rules, say the authors. Restorative justice "seeks an understanding of what has occurred, the needs of those affected – including students, teachers, parents, and anyone else involved in the conflict – and ways to address the harm that was done." Restorative justice "works *with* students and teachers rather than doing things *to* them or *for* them."

• *Principle #7: Addressing power imbalances* – Restorative justice goes beyond students' behavior and looks at the harm that can be done by institutional practices – for example, long out-of-school suspensions.

Evans and Lester say that, despite research pointing to the efficacy of restorative justice, schools have been slow to adopt it. Why? It requires a lot of time and resources, its proponents haven't provided enough conceptual clarity, and the philosophy clashes with existing punitive models of school discipline.

Ideally, restorative justice is has three tiers. The first is schoolwide instruction in social and emotional skills to build school community. The second involves repairing relationships when conflict happens, mostly in small-group conferences or peer mediation. The third tier deals with situations where harm has been done; it involves mediation and victim-offender conferences.

Evans and Lester suggest the following steps for gradually introducing restorative justice in a school:

- Combine top-down leadership with bottom-up energy. "This approach helps to gradually develop a critical mass within a school," they say.
- Start where you are. There may already be elements of restorative justice within the school and staff members who support the idea.
- Start with voluntary participation. Staff buy-in is important, and the restorative process shouldn't begin until offenders have admitted guilt and begun to take responsibility for their actions.
- Shift the paradigm from punishment and control. To implement restorative justice, schools need to move from managing students' behavior to collaboration, mutual respect, accountability, and growth.

"Restorative Justice in Education: What We Know So Far" by Katherine Evans and Jessica Lester in *Middle School Journal*, May 2013 (Vol. 44, #5, p. 57-63), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at kathy.evans@emu.edu and jessica.lester@tricity.wsu.edu.

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2. Challenging Young Students to Explain

"Children are quick to ask 'why?' and 'how?' when it comes to new things," says Sarah Sparks in this *Education Week* article, "but research suggests elementary and preschool students learn more when teachers turn the questions back on them." For example, with the equation 2 x 3 = 6, students who are asked to explain the underlying relationship between multiplication and addition will do better at generalizing to other problems and catching their own incorrect assumptions than students who simply memorize the algorithm.

"We know generating explanations leads to better educational outcomes generally," says Cristine Legare of the University of Texas/Austin. "When children explain events, they learn more than when just getting feedback about the accuracy of their predictions." Legare and her colleagues showed 3-5-year-old children a complex toy with colorful, interlocking gears. A crank at one end turned a propeller at the other. One group of students was asked, "Can you explain this to me?" while another was asked, "Oh look, isn't this interesting?" The first group focused on the chain of gears that turned the propeller, ignored the ornamental gears, and were able to transfer what they learned about gears to new situations. The second group did better on a memory task on the gears' colors. "We can't assume what we want to teach is something kids are just going to pick up on," says Legare.

Dedre Gentner at Northwestern University/Evanston performed a similar experiment with 3- and 7-year olds. Children were shown a picture of two turtles facing each other and told it was a *toma*. They were then shown a series of pictures of turtles, cats, and two cats facing each other and asked which was a toma. Almost all the 3-year olds picked the turtle, but most of the 7-year olds noticed the relationship and picked the picture of the two cats facing each other. But when 3-year olds were taught with several different pictures of animals facing each other and asked to explain them ("Can you say why both of these are *tomas*?"), they performed more like 7-year olds when asked to spot a *toma*.

"Student Explanations Can Drive Learning, Studies Say" by Sarah Sparks in *Education Week*, June 5, 2013 (Vol. 32, #33, p. 6), www.edweek.org

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3. Boosting the Reading Achievement of African-American Male Students

"Too often, instruction designed to improve literacy achievement for black male readers and writers focuses on skill-based learning, ignoring cultural, social, and personal development," say Summer Wood and Robin Jocius (Vanderbilt University graduate students) in this *Reading Teacher* article. All too often these students say, "I hate this stupid book!" and "These books are dumb anyway." Wood and Jocius believe the solution lies in three areas:

• *Culturally relevant texts* – "Unfortunately… black male students are often deprived of opportunities to see themselves, their families, and their experiences reflected in texts," they say. Classroom libraries must have books to which black boys can relate – ideally written and illustrated by African Americans – and these books should be highlighted throughout the school year, not just in February. But not every multicultural book is helpful, say Wood and Jocius: "[E]ngagement will not 'magically' occur" just because the characters and authors are

culturally aligned. In fact, some books are patronizing in what they assume will interest students. "To guide decisions about the use of texts that may provide mirrors into children's cultures and experiences, teachers must consider all aspects of a text, including the characters, themes, and illustrations."

• *Collaboration* – It's not enough for teachers to exhort students to try harder, say Wood and Jocius. They need to foster an ethos of mutual support in which students feel safe about acknowledging reading difficulties and encourage each other to develop critical reading and thinking skills together. "Because black male students are often marginalized in classrooms," they argue, "a collaborative approach not only directly engages these students in literacy instruction, but also allows them to share their accomplishments and struggles with their peers in a comfortable and nonthreatening space… This sense of safety does not come automatically, especially for young readers who may be disengaged or struggling. Instead, this sense of community must be promoted and modeled by the teacher." When one student finds a book too difficult, "buddy reading" may be the solution.

• *Critical conversations* – These "are not merely book discussions in which plot, theme, and facts are being reiterated by group members," say Wood and Jocius. "Rather, these are discussions in which students take positions and critique what is being said, who is saying it, how characters are positioned, whose voices are being heard, and how they may personally fit into the text… Critical conversations give students the opportunity to challenge and inform one another's ideologies."

But aren't these three practices effective for all students? Aren't they just good teaching? Wood and Jocius agree and quote Gloria Ladson-Billings's reaction to the same question back in 1995: "My response is to affirm that, indeed, I am describing good teaching, and to question why so little of it seems to be occurring in the classrooms populated by African American students."

In a sidebar to this article, Wood and Jocius recommend the following websites as resources:

• Coretta Scott King Book Award Winners:
http://www.ala.org/emiert/coretta-scott-king-book-awards-all-recipients-1970-present

• Brown Sugar and Spice Educational Books and Services: www.brownssbooks.com

• Scholastic Multicultural Books:
www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/how-choose-best-multicultural-books

"Combating 'I Hate This Stupid Book!' Black Males and Critical Literacy" by Summer Wood and Robin Jocius in *The Reading Teacher*, May 2013 (Vol. 66, #8, p. 661-669), http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/trtr.1177/abstract; the authors can be reached at summer.wood@vanderbilt.edu and robin.jocius@vanderbilt.edu.

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4. Keys to Learning Science Vocabulary

In this *Middle School Journal* article, Rebecca Shore, Jenna Ray, and Paula Goolkasian (University of North Carolina/Charlotte) report the results of an experiment on science

vocabulary learning with three 7th-grade teachers in a large urban school. The researchers worked with teachers to systematically compare three memory strategies for learning these words: *pathogen, vaccine, antibody, immunity, antibiotic, immune system,* and *antigen*:

- The first group of students used the standard approach – copying seven new words and definitions from the textbook's glossary;
- The second group of students talked to a classmate about the meaning of the words;
- The third group of students drew colorful pictures of the words.

Students were quizzed on their knowledge of the words immediately afterward and again two days later.

The results? "As expected," say Shore, Ray, and Goolkasian, "we learned that different learning strategies can make a difference in word retention, particularly with struggling readers." The second and third groups did significantly better than the first.

But there was an unexpected finding. Looking over more than 800 quizzes, Shore, Ray, and Goolkasian noticed that the majority of students *from all three groups* of students didn't correctly define *antibody*, *antigen*, and *antibiotic* – all beginning with the same prefix *anti*. The researchers thought the same prefix would have helped students remember the meanings and distinguish among them, but the opposite was true. Clearly students' attempts to retrieve the meaning of these words was hampered by confusion caused by the prefix.

Looking back at the textbook chapter from which these words were taken, the authors noticed that students were also introduced to two other clusters of easily-confused words: *stalagmite* and *stalactite,* and *meiosis* and *mitosis*. This made them think that study techniques might not be the most important factor in student success. Instead, they conjecture that teachers should use a morphological approach, emphasizing the meaning of different word parts.

Shore, Ray, and Goolkasian note that "similarities in new learning can cause negative transfer in memory and actually interfere with learning. After new learning takes place, the brain usually needs about a day to consolidate that learning. So, if a student was to practice a second similar skill before a first skill is consolidated in memory, the second skill can interfere with mastery of the first skill, and the child may not be able to perform either skill very well." This suggests that when introducing a new cognitive task (or motor skill), teachers should draw attention to the similarities and differences and space out their presentations.

"Too Close for (Brain) Comfort: Improving Science Vocabulary Learning in the Middle Grades" by Rebecca Shore, Jenna Ray, and Paula Goolkasian in *Middle School Journal*, May 2013 (Vol. 44, #5, p. 16-21), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at rshore6@uncc.edu, jray51@uncc.edu, and pagoolka@uncc.edu.

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5. New Definitions of Disabilities in DSM-5

In this helpful *Education Week* article, Christina Samuels reports on the way the definitions of several disabilities have changed in the just-released fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*

(known as DSM-5). Samuels notes that it may take a while for the federal IDEA definitions to match these.

• *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* – "A pattern of behavior in multiple settings characterized by symptoms such as failure to pay close attention to details, difficulty organizing tasks and activities, fidgeting, excessive talking, and inability to stay seated." What's changed: Several symptoms must be present in more than one setting, and they must be present before age 12 (versus before 7).

• *Autism Spectrum Disorder* – "Characterized by communication deficits, such as responding inappropriately in conversation; dependence on routines; high sensitivity to changes in environment; and intense focus on inappropriate items." What's changed: Four disorders that were previously listed separately (including Asperger's syndrome and "pervasive developmental disorder, not otherwise specified" have been folded into a single umbrella disorder.

• *Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder* – "Children up to age 18 who exhibit persistent irritability and frequent episodes of extreme temper tantrums." What's changed: This is new in DSM-5 and is intended to address concerns about over-diagnosis and over-treatment of bipolar disorders in children.

• *Intellectual Disability* – "Impairment of general mental ability that affects adaptive functioning in three domains: conceptual (reading, writing, math, reasoning); social (empathy, judgment, interpersonal communications); and practical (money management, job responsibilities, personal care)." What's changed: The term "mental retardation" has been removed; the severity of impairment is based not on IQ scores alone but on adaptive functioning.

• *Oppositional Defiant Disorder* – "An ongoing pattern of anger-guided disobedience, hostility, and defiant behavior toward authority." What's changed: The focus is on how frequently behaviors must occur in order to distinguish them from normal ups and downs. Symptoms have been grouped into: angry/irritable mood, argumentative/defiant behavior, and vindictiveness.

• *Social Communication Disorder* – "A persistent difficulty in social uses of verbal and nonverbal communication, such as greeting or exchanging information; following rules for conversation or storytelling, taking turns in conversation; and understanding what is not explicitly stated and nonliteral or ambiguous meanings of language." What's changed: This disorder is new in DSM-5 and is meant to identify people who have some of the communication deficits associated with autism, but without repetitive or restricted patterns.

• *Specific Learning Disorder* – "Deficits that affect academic achievement in areas such as reading, writing, or mathematical reasoning." What's changed: Specific diagnoses like dyslexia or dyscalculia have been folded into one disorder, and clinicians can provide greater detail on the type of disorder observed.

"Disability Definitions Undergo Revisions in Psychiatric Guide" by Christina Samuels in *Education Week*, June 5, 2013 (Vol. 32, #33, p. 7), www.edweek.org

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6. Supporting Sheltered Instruction for English Language Learners

In this article in *Theory Into Practice*, Deborah Short (Center for Applied Linguistics) recommends seven steps for effectively training and supporting "sheltered instruction" teachers – those who teach science, math, social studies, and other content subjects to English learners. "All teachers must be able to engage ELs in rigorous instruction that focuses on academic vocabulary development, content area literacy, and critical thinking," say Short.

• *Start with an empirically validated PD program*. Short recommends SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), a seasoned teaching model that includes these components:

- Lesson preparation – Content and language objectives, content concepts, supplementary materials, adaptation of content, and meaningful activities;
- Building background – Key vocabulary emphasized and new concepts explicitly linked to students' background experiences and past learning;
- Comprehensible input – Appropriate articulation by the teacher, clear explanations, and a variety of techniques to make concepts clear;
- Strategies – Ample opportunities for students to use learning strategies, scaffolding techniques, and a variety of questions or tasks that promote higher-order thinking;
- Interaction – Frequent opportunities for discussion among students and with the teacher, grouping configurations to support language and content objectives, sufficient wait time, and time for students to clarify key concepts in their first language with an aide, peer, or text;
- Practice and application – Hands-on materials and/or manipulatives, activities to apply content and language knowledge, and activities to integrate all language skills;
- Lesson delivery – Content and language objectives clearly supported, students engaged 90-100 percent of the period, and lessons paced appropriately
- Review and assessment – Key vocabulary and concepts gone over, regular feedback, and assessment of students' comprehension and learning of all lesson objectives.

"The SIOP Model offers a set of specific, well-defined features that can be used consistently by all teachers at any school site," says Short.

• *Give teachers time to master new techniques*. "Teachers are busy," she says. "They are planning and delivering several lessons each day. They cannot put their job aside to learn the new approach. Yet they need time to learn it, try it out, and reflect on their progress." Ideally, training lasts for a full school year, with teachers attending a series of workshops and practicing new techniques in their classrooms between sessions.

• *Make the training job-embedded*. The entire program should take place within teachers' instructional environment, with constant in-class trials and coach feedback throughout the year and opportunities to discuss videotapes and student work from different classrooms.

• *Provide support, support, and more support*. "It is not uncommon for teachers to attend some workshops and be excited about their new learnings," says Short. "During training, they may see clearly how to apply the ideas to their classrooms. But when Monday rolls around, and the pressures of a new week arise, teachers may try something new and if it

works the first time, great; but if not, they discard it and revert to familiar practices." This is why in-class support is so important – from coaches, mentors, lesson study, professional learning communities, book study groups, and more.

• *Explain the theories that undergird the intervention*. "In a world of overcrowded schedules and accountability pressures, workshop participants often express the desire for something practical that they can use tomorrow," says Short. "But sheltered instruction is much more than a bag of tricks." Teachers need a conceptual understanding of the program to make good planning and instructional decisions. SIOP is more than just good teaching, says Short. "[I]t addresses the unique second language needs of ELs."

• *Engage the school administration*. Principals and their leadership teams need to be committed to the success of sheltered instruction. What does this look like? Asking teachers about what they are learning in workshops, attending some sessions, and having teachers share their experiences in faculty meetings. More important, looking for specific sheltered techniques in their classroom visits and commenting thoughtfully afterward.

• *Measure implementation*. Ideally, there are before-and-after classroom observations to track what's changed.

"Training and Sustaining Effective Teachers of Sheltered Instruction" by Deborah Short in *Theory Into Practice*, Spring 2013 (Vol. 52, #2, p. 118-127), http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00405841.2013.770329#preview; Short can be reached at dshort@cal.org.

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7. Effective PD for Science Teachers Working with ELLs

In this article in *Theory Into Practice*, Okhee Lee and Cory Buxton (New York University) suggest five criteria for professional development to improve the teaching of science to English language learners:

• *Content focus* – This includes an up-to-date understanding of science content and careful attention to the best ways to communicate it to ELLs. Lee and Buxton suggest that teachers read student science textbooks in a second language "to experience for themselves the challenges they face and the resources they can make use of to make sense of those texts."

• *Active learning* – During professional development, teachers should engage in inquiry activities, taking the teacher and the student role as they wrestle with science concepts and language challenges. "Experiential learning of this kind is essential for teachers to begin to expand their repertoire of science teaching practices," say Lee and Buxton.

• *Coherence* – PD should be directly linked to the curriculum materials and assessments teachers will be implementing in their classrooms, and should be followed up by classroom observations and feedback.

• *Sufficient duration* – Teacher and student mobility can undermine the effectiveness of professional development. It's therefore essential that PD is spread over time.

• *Collective participation* – PD for science ELL teachers should also involve content-area teachers, ESOL/Bilingual educators, and paraprofessionals who work with ELLs.

"Teacher Professional Development to Improve Science and Literacy Achievement of English Language Learners" by Okhee Lee and Cory Buxton in *Theory Into Practice*, Spring 2013 (Vol. 52, #2, p. 110-117), http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00405841.2013.770328#preview; Lee can be reached at olee@nyu.edu.

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8. The Importance of Teaching the Right Kind of Math in Kindergarten

In this *Teachers College Record* article, Amy Claessens (University of Chicago) and Mimi Engel (Vanderbilt University) report on their national study of kindergarten students' math skills. Their findings: (a) Kindergarten math knowledge and skills "are the most important predictors not only for later math achievement but also for achievement in other content areas and grade retention;" (b) Higher-order math skills such as pattern recognition, measurement, and advanced number sense are the most highly correlated with future success; and (c) These more-advanced skills are not just a product of home environment; they can be taught successfully in kindergarten.

The bottom line: Math "should be a primary area of academic focus during the kindergarten year," say Claessens and Engel.

"How Important Is Where You Start? Early Mathematics Knowledge and Later School Success" by Amy Claessens and Mimi Engel in *Teachers College Record*, June 2013 (Vol. 115, #6, p. 1-29)

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo, please e-mail: kim.marshall48@gmail.com

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 42 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 64 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 50 issues a year).

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Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief/Public Education NewsBlast
Better Evidence-Based Education
Center for Performance Assessment Newsletter
District Administration
ED Magazine
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Phi Delta Kappan
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Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
Teacher
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children/Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The District Management Journal
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal/Learning System/Tools for Schools
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time
Wharton Leadership Digest