

# Marshall Memo 469

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education  
January 21, 2013

## In This Issue:

1. [Two books on developing character in students](#)
2. [A survivor of sexual abuse speaks out](#)
3. [Insights on why so few Latina youth are going to college](#)
4. [Getting middle-school students to write their hearts out](#)
5. [Measuring the quality of math instruction](#)
6. [Graphs on the MET Project's teacher-evaluation scheme](#)
7. [Interactive modeling in action](#)
8. [Common Core implementation can be whimsical](#)
9. [What good are multiple-choice tests?](#)
10. [Graphic novels in the classroom and the school library](#)
11. [A middle-school curriculum unit on persuasion](#)
12. [What busy principals can do to reach out to families](#)
13. [A free survey of parent involvement](#)
14. Short item: [Curiosity is the key](#)

## Quotes of the Week

“Frequent, unannounced and brief observations let you keep your finger on the pulse of teaching in your school... [T]he more observations, the better. And the more conversation, the better. If you can manage three short observations, that's a lot better than one longer one.”

Charlotte Danielson in an interview with Liz Griffin in *School Administrator*, January 2013 (Vol. 70. #1, p. 27-31), <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=26268>

“Peers, department heads, mentors, or coaches can serve as observers. When schools do this, it builds the professional conversation about practice. You all become more effective because you know the challenges you face.”

Charlotte Danielson (*ibid.*)

“A teacher-evaluation framework will fall flat if it is seen as bureaucratic or a way to keep score.”

Cindy Weber in “The Triple Challenge of Evaluating Teachers” in *School Administrator*, January 2013 (Vol. 70. #1, p. 33-35), <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=26264>; Weber can be reached at [weber@durandk12.mi.us](mailto:weber@durandk12.mi.us).

“I want him to be able to get over disappointments, to calm himself down, to keep working at a puzzle even when it's frustrating, to be good at sharing, to feel loved and confident and full of a sense of belonging. Most important, I want him to be able to deal with failure.”

Paul Tough on his three-year-old son (quoted in item #1)

“Often writing activities are assigned, not taught.”

Kristine Pytash and Denise Morgan (see item #4)

---

## 1. Two Books on Developing Character in Students

Boston educator Michael Goldstein reviews two recent books on character in *CommonWealth* magazine: *How Children Succeed* by Paul Tough (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) and *Character Compass* by Scott Seider (Harvard Education Press). Goldstein quotes Tough on how researching the book changed his priorities raising a three-year-old son: “I want him to be able to get over disappointments, to calm himself down, to keep working at a puzzle even when it’s frustrating, to be good at sharing, to feel loved and confident and full of a sense of belonging. Most important, I want him to be able to deal with failure.” Goldstein likes the quote, but says middle-class parents have the luxury of worrying less about whether their children will acquire content knowledge. “[A] parent of a kid whose family background does not confer knowledge,” he says, “absolutely needs to worry about how her kid will acquire it, quite apart from any focus on building character.”

Is character innate or can it be taught in schools? In *Character Compass*, Seider cites the conclusion of a major Education Sciences study of seven “research-based” character-education programs: not one of them got results. Seider believes this may be because all the programs were developed outside the schools that used them. His book reports on home-grown character-education programs in three Boston charter schools, each with a different focus:

- Roxbury Preparatory emphasizes *performance* character, including perseverance and optimism.
- Academy of the Pacific Rim emphasizes *civic* character – striving to continuously improve the community.
- Boston Preparatory emphasizes *moral* character, including integrity, compassion, and resistance.

All three schools have made measurable gains in their particular brand of character education, and all three have impressive student achievement on Massachusetts state tests. But it’s too early to tell how lasting these gains will be in terms of college and life success. And Goldstein raises another question: can teachers take on one more agenda item on top of everything else they’re asked to do?

“Content of Their Character: Two New Books Say Character, Not Just Book Smarts, Is a Key to Student Success” by Michael Goldstein in *CommonWealth*, Winter 2013 (Vol. 18, #1, p. 81-83), [www.commonwealthmagazine.org](http://www.commonwealthmagazine.org)

*[Back to page one](#)*

## 2. A Survivor of Sexual Abuse Speaks Out

In this *New York Times* article, Katharine Seelye reports on a one-man performance by Michael Mack, 56, entitled *Conversations With My Molester: A Journey of Faith*. When Mack was growing up Catholic in North Carolina in the 1960s, he wanted to be a priest, but then, when he was 11, a priest molested him. Mack didn't tell anyone and prayed that he would forget the experience, but "the memory," he says, "tingled like a phantom limb." Spurred by the *Boston Globe's* revelations in 2002 of widespread sexual abuse within the Catholic church, Mack located the priest who had abused him and arrived on his doorstep. Drawing on their conversations, Mack wrote and began performing his 90-minute dramatic narration. "By telling my story, I am making this my truth," he says. "I'm claiming it and getting it back."

One issue that Mack wrestles with as he remembers the abuse is painful ambivalence: his simultaneous feelings of attraction and revulsion, feeling half giddy and special and half terrified, finding himself "powerfully attracted, and powerfully repelled, finding self-loathing its own dismal ecstasy." He imagined that not being able to get the crime out of his mind for so long proved that he was responsible, that he had "wanted it to happen, invited it to happen, made it happen, deserved it." All this provides insight into why sexual abuse causes such deep and long-term damage.

"Private Pain, Played Out on Public Stage" by Katharine Seelye in *The New York Times*, Jan. 14, 2013 (p. A10), <http://nyti.ms/WBaSkj>

[Back to page one](#)

## 3. Insights on Why So Few Latina Youth Are Going to College

In this important *Teachers College Record* article, Linda Harklau (University of Georgia) tells the story of Izzie, a young Latina who, despite being identified as gifted in sixth grade, attending upper-track classes in middle school, doing well in high school, and showing every sign of being qualified and capable of succeeding in college, didn't go. What accounts for this missed opportunity, which is so common among Latina youth? Is it mostly cultural pressure to take on traditional roles as wives and mothers?

Not so, says Harklau. These young women's decisions, "far from representing a retreat into traditional women's roles, might in some cases represent emergent feminism and a means of contesting and remaking those roles." Getting a job and becoming independent has greater appeal, and "aspects of college often assumed to be liberating and empowering to women may not be so for a working-class immigrant youth." Izzie's mother was adamant that if Izzie went to college, she would live at home. "For Izzie, college offered only the perpetuation of her house-bound, surveilled, and disciplined status as a female child of the household for four more years," says Harklau, "relegated to the bottom of her family's domestic hierarchy in which income earners (both male and female) were privileged." College expenses would also be scrutinized and continue Izzie's dependence on the family.

Getting a job, on the other hand, was a *de facto* "feminist project" for Izzie. It would be a "family-sanctioned way to fight family strictures on her behavior and the double standard she

perceived in her family's domestic hierarchy," says Harklau. And that's what Izzie did – she passed up college, got a job, and reveled in her newly independent status within her home.

"Izzie's story could be seen as a warning bell for educators hoping to boost immigrant Latina participation in higher education," concludes Harklau. There are several clear implications: better college counseling, outreach to the family, especially the mother, mentors who can communicate the options more effectively, and financial aid and work-study to give college students more independence from their families.

"Why Izzie Didn't Go to College: Choosing Work Over College as Latina Feminism" by Linda Harklau in *Teachers College Record*, January 2013 (Vol. 115, #1, p. 1-32), <http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=16743>

[Back to page one](#)

#### **4. Getting Middle-School Students to Write Their Hearts Out**

"Writing is an activity in which students frequently show little engagement and motivation," say Kristine Pytash and Denise Morgan (Kent State University) in this *Middle School Journal* article. School writing, that is. But in their real lives, middle-school students are writing all the time: "They text, pass notes, send e-mails, blog, and post updates on Facebook. At the center of students' non-academic writing are their day-to-day thoughts, stories, and encounters that define them as individuals finding their way in the world."

How can teachers bring that energy and passion into school writing? How can students be empowered to use topics of personal importance to grow as writers? By using the "unit of study" framework, say Pytash and Morgan. This inquiry-oriented approach gets students to look closely at the kinds of writing they will eventually do and pick topics with personal meaning. "Often writing activities are assigned, not taught," say the authors. In a well-crafted unit of study, students study a genre of writing, hone their skills, select a meaningful topic, and then get to work. "In this way, writing builds bridges between students' out-of-school lives and interests and their in-school learning experiences," say Pytash and Morgan. "This approach closely mirrors what professional authors do," and students find that writing is "easier than I thought."

Pytash and Morgan give a step-by-step description of how two Ohio teachers worked with them to implement an English language arts unit on memoir:

- *Gathering texts* – The goal was to find examples of memoirs that weren't too long and would lead students to think that writing their own was within reach. "Above all, these examples have to be of high-quality, able to withstand close scrutiny, and offer numerous possibilities and crafting techniques for students," say Pytash and Morgan. Students also got involved in searching for appropriate material.

- *Setting the stage* – To build foundational knowledge among students and prevent the dreaded *I don't know what to write about* reaction, teachers got students brainstorming and jotting notes on questions like these:

- At family gatherings and holidays, what story gets told repeatedly about you?
- What is your earliest memory?

- What is the most important thing that has ever happened to you?
- What is the worst thing that's ever happened to you?
- What is something you'll never forget?
- Makes lists of what you remember about people, places, and objects – the births of siblings, getting a new pet, winning or losing a contest, the loss of something special, a courageous moment, etc.

“This work helped students find a memory worth capturing and polishing on paper,” say Pytash and Morgan. Having chosen a specific topic, students then decided whether there was enough detail to write about. Some students found it helpful to create a visual “tellingboard” by drawing pictures and jotting words on sticky-notes and putting them on a larger piece of paper.

- *Immersion* – The teacher then had students read several memoirs and read some passages aloud, drawing attention to common characteristics and the authors’ use of language. One student remarked that “reading helps because, as you’re reading someone else’s ideas, you’re coming up with ideas of your own. The reading will inspire you.”

- *Close study and mini-lessons* – Close study means getting students to name what authors do in their writing, making explicit what they have already begun to notice in the exemplar texts. It’s helpful for students to mark up and annotate a text and then discuss common insights – for example, the way an author uses repetition to draw attention to an important point in the story. Mini-lessons can be used to teach specific aspects of the genre – for example, beginnings that hook the reader and endings that close the loop.

- *Writing under the influence* – As students drafted their memoirs, teachers held small-group and individual conferences. “We avoided good/bad conversations by asking students to pose specific questions about their drafts,” say Pytash and Morgan. “We also worked with students to see how they incorporated specific techniques in their drafts and discussed the rationales for doing so.”

- *Sharing* – At the end of the unit, teachers had students share their writing from the class “author’s chair”, in small groups, on the class website, and collected in a class book. Some were hesitant at first, but peer reactions created momentum and sharing spread through the class.

“A Unit of Study Approach for Teaching Common Core State Standards for Writing” by Kristine Pytash and Denise Morgan in *Middle School Journal*, January 2013 (Vol. 44, #3, p. 44-51), [www.amle.org](http://www.amle.org); the authors are at [kpytash@kent.edu](mailto:kpytash@kent.edu) and [dmorgan2@kent.edu](mailto:dmorgan2@kent.edu).

[Back to page one](#)

## 5. Measuring the Quality of Math Instruction

In this sidebar to a longer *Ed.* article on teaching Common Core math, David McKay Wilson reports on the Mathematical Quality of Instruction tool (MQI) for evaluating K-8 mathematics teaching. Developed by Heather Hill at the University of Michigan and Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, the MQI is designed to give observers a better lens and get teachers self-assessing and bringing more mathematical substance to students. The MQI measures five key components of math instruction:

- *Richness of the mathematics* – Does the teacher explain ideas well and make connections between different ideas (e.g., fractions and ratios) and different representations of the same idea (e.g., a number line, counters, and a number sentence)? Does the teacher include different solution methods, generalizations from specific examples, and fluent and precise mathematical language?

- *Working with students* – Is the teacher “hearing” and understanding what students are saying mathematically, responding appropriately, and remediating misunderstandings thoroughly, with attention to the specific misunderstandings that led to the errors?

- *Errors and imprecision* – Is the teacher making mathematical errors and/or using language and notation imprecisely (for example, telling students that 0.5 percent is one-half when it’s really one-half of one percent)?

- *Student participation in meaning-making and reasoning* – Are students asking questions and reasoning about mathematics (e.g., examining claims and counter-claims or making conjectures)? Are students providing mathematical explanations, finding patterns, drawing connections, determining the meaning of math concepts, and explaining and justifying their conclusions?

- *How classroom work is connected to math* – Does the work have a mathematical point, or is the bulk of instructional time spent on activities that do not develop mathematical ideas (e.g., coloring, cutting, and pasting) or on transitions and discipline problems?

“Teachers Need Help, Too” by David McKay Wilson in *Ed.*, Winter 2013 (p. 28-29), <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news-impact/2013/01/do-the-math>; Hill can be reached at [heather\\_hill@gse.harvard.edu](mailto:heather_hill@gse.harvard.edu) and the website for the MQI is [http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=mqi\\_training&pageid=icb.page394700](http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=mqi_training&pageid=icb.page394700)

[Back to page one](#)

## 6. Graphs on the MET Program’s Teacher-Evaluation Scheme

In this *Education Week* article, Stephen Sawchuk reports on the final report of the Gates-funded Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project (see last week’s Memo 468 for details). If you click on the link below, scroll down to the graphic, and click “To enlarge”, you’ll see the comparison of three different ratios of classroom observations, student surveys, and value-added test data. The bottom line: heavily emphasizing state test scores in teachers’ evaluations produces the strongest correlation with students’ state test results – but the weakest reliability and the weakest correlation with student achievement as measured by more sophisticated, Common Core-like assessments.

“Multiple Gauges Best for Teachers” by Stephen Sawchuk in *Education Week*, Jan. 16, 2013 (Vol. 32, #17, p. 1, 16), [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/01/08/17teach\\_ep.h32.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/01/08/17teach_ep.h32.html)

[Back to page one](#)

## 7. Interactive Modeling In Action

In this *Responsive Classroom Newsletter* article, Margaret Berry Wilson outlines the seven steps of interactive modeling from her book of that title, applied to a lesson on paraphrasing a research source:

- *Say what you will model and why.* The teacher explains, “When we use books in our research, we can use the facts in them, but we can’t copy what the authors have written word for word. We have to write in our own words.”

- *Model the behavior.* On the interactive whiteboard, the teacher displays a paragraph from a research source, reads it out loud, and then switches to a notecard screen and thinks out loud as she records key facts she remembers.

- *Ask students what they noticed.* The teacher draws students out on specific things they saw her doing as she paraphrased the source.

- *Invite one or more students to model.* The teacher chooses a student, displays a new source text, switches to the notecard setting, and has the student paraphrase key facts.

- *Again, ask students what they noticed.* Students volunteer what they saw – for example, that the student looked away from the paragraph while he wrote and that he wrote short sentences with just the facts.

- *Have all students practice.* The teacher displays a new paragraph and all students attempt a paraphrase.

- *Provide feedback.* The teacher circulates, providing on-the-spot coaching to students who need it. After another round of practice, feedback, and reinforcement, she sends students off to work on their own source materials and continues to check on their progress.

“Interactive Modeling for Academic Success” by Margaret Berry Wilson in *Responsive Classroom Newsletter*, Winter 2013 (p. 1-3), [www.responsiveclassroom.org/interactive-modeling](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/interactive-modeling) (this link has several classroom videos)

[\*Back to page one\*](#)

## 8. Common Core Implementation Can Be Whimsical

In this charming *Middle School Journal* article, Gary Senn, Deborah McMurtrie, and Bridget Coleman (University of South Carolina/Aiken) tout the RAFT strategy for getting students to write across the curriculum in ways that connect with the Common Core State Standards. RAFT stands for:

Role – the position of the author, which can be an animal, plant, rock, building, etc.

Audience – for whom the piece is written, not necessarily a human being

Format – this can be a love letter, a wanted poster, an obituary, or a conversation

Topic – limited only by the imagination of the writer

Many students strive to use strong verbs in their RAFT pieces to grab their readers’ attention.

How do RAFT pieces connect with the Common Core? In these and other ways: analyzing a text drawing inferences; analyzing interactions among individuals, events, and ideas; determining an author’s point of view; writing informative/explanatory texts to examine

a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization and analysis of relevant content.

Here's one student team's RAFT in which the Role is a tree branch, the Audience is loggers, the Format is a top-ten list, the Topic is leaving forest trees alone, and the strong verb is *demand*:

A tree branch's top ten reasons for loggers to leave forest trees alone

10. Poets praise me.
9. Scouts study me.
8. Little children love to climb me.
7. I can no longer provide shade for picnic goers and hikers on sweltering days if you remove me.
6. You break us, burn us, and grind us into objects merely for human consumption.
5. You're forcing us from our home, where we have lived for millennia, leaving a silent trail of tears.
4. Animals that are forced to seek food and shelter farther away, in the limbs of my brothers and sisters, collide with human populations.
3. You are reducing the food supply for wild animals.
2. You are depleting the habitats of endangered birds and other species.
1. You are harming the ozone – and all living things on our planet.

Loggers, I demand that you leave my forest alone!

And here are some RAFT ideas in environmental science:

- *Role* (who you are as the writer): a concerned citizen, a tree branch, a predator, an owl, a hawk, a mouse, prey, an owl pellet, decomposing roadkill;
- *Audience*: a hiker, U.S. Forest Service, a predator, an owl, a hawk, a mouse, prey, the governor of our state, people who litter;
- *Format*: obituary, want ad, diary or journal entry, invitation, recipe, last will and testament, confession, eulogy, complaint, a how-to manual, speech, top ten list, advice column, ransom note, country-western song;
- *Topic*: how a natural disaster changed my life; why I am at the top of the food chain; please leave my forest alone; the beauty of a balanced life; why I am important to you; we're made for each other; we're more alike than different; I like to get my nails done; I think I'm going to throw up; this land is my land, so get out.
- *Strong verbs*: persuade, demand, plead, inspire, announce, predict, compare, defend, explain, describe.

“RAFTing with Raptors: Connecting Science, English Language Arts, and the Common Core State Standards” by Gary Senn, Deborah McMurtrie, and Bridget Coleman in *Middle School Journal*, January 2013 (Vol. 44, #3, p. 52-55), [www.amle.org](http://www.amle.org); the authors are [SennG@usca.edu](mailto:SennG@usca.edu), [DeborahMc@usca.edu](mailto:DeborahMc@usca.edu), and [BridgetC@usca.edu](mailto:BridgetC@usca.edu).

[Back to page one](#)

## 9. What Good Are Multiple-Choice Tests?

In this study in *Journal of Psychological Science* (summarized by John Horton in *The Education Gadfly*), Genna Angello, Elizabeth Bjork, Robert Bjork, and Jeri Little (University of California/Los Angeles) found that multiple-choice tests can provide valid and helpful information on students' knowledge and skills if test items push them to retrieve knowledge and do some higher-order thinking rather than just recognize correct answers. At their best, say the authors, wrong answers on multiple-choice tests “trigger the retrieval processes that foster test-induced learning and deter test-induced forgetting” – and are better than cued-recall (fill-in-the-blank) test items.

“Multiple-Choice Tests Exonerated, At Least on Some of the Charges: Forgetting Test-Induced Learning and Avoiding Test-Induced Forgetting” by Genna Angello, Elizabeth Bjork, Robert Bjork, and Jeri Little in *Journal of Psychological Science*, October 2012 (Vol. 23, #11, p. 1337-1344), no e-link available, spotted in *The Education Gadfly*, Jan. 17, 2013 (Vol. 13, #3); Little can be reached at [jerilittle@gmail.com](mailto:jerilittle@gmail.com).

[Back to page one](#)

## 10. Graphic Novels in the Classroom and School Library

In this *Knowledge Quest* article, Robin Moeller (Appalachian State University, North Carolina) makes an impassioned case for graphic novels in schools. She starts by citing some that have won literary awards:

- *Maus* by Art Spiegelman (a special Pulitzer Prize in 1992)
- *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang (2006)
- *To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel* by Siena Cherson and Mark Siegel (2006)
- *Storm in the Barn* by Matt Phelan (2009)
- *Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty* by G. Neri (2010)

“Comics and censorship have a long and storied history together,” says Moeller. Some librarians consider them junk, and there's a common misconception that graphic novels are somehow *graphic*, as in violent or sexual. Nonsense, she says, citing ways that good graphic novels align with the Common Core State Standards. “The use of graphic novels in the curriculum can help us better prepare students for the literacy demands of their futures.”

Moeller suggests the following online resources:

- Comics in Education: [www.humblecomics.com/comicsedu/index.html](http://www.humblecomics.com/comicsedu/index.html)
- Comics in the Classroom: [www.comicsintheclassroom.blogspot.com](http://www.comicsintheclassroom.blogspot.com)
- Graphic Classroom: [www.graphicclassroom.org](http://www.graphicclassroom.org)
- Graphic Novel Reporter: [www.graphicnovelreporter.com](http://www.graphicnovelreporter.com)
- Graphic Novel Resources: [www.graphicnovelresources.blogspot.com](http://www.graphicnovelresources.blogspot.com)
- Great Graphic Novels for Teens: [www.ala.org/yalsa/ggnt](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/ggnt)
- Librarian's Guide to Anime and Manga: [www.koyagi.com/Libguide.html](http://www.koyagi.com/Libguide.html)
- No Flying No Tights: [www.noflyingnotights.com](http://www.noflyingnotights.com)
- Reading with Pictures: [www.readingwithpictures.org](http://www.readingwithpictures.org)

“Convincing the Naysayers; Why Graphic Novels Deserve a Place in the School Library” by Robin Moeller in *Knowledge Quest*, January/February 2013 (Vol. 41, #3, p. 12-17), <http://www.ala.org/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/knowledgequest/archive/v41no3>; Moeller can be reached at [moellerra@appstate.edu](mailto:moellerra@appstate.edu).

[Back to page one](#)

## 11. A Middle-School Curriculum Unit on Persuasion

In this *Education Week* article, Lesli Maxwell reports on the rollout of a five-lesson curriculum unit titled “Persuasion Across Time and Space.” Written by a Stanford University team led by Kenji Hakuta, the unit is designed for grade 7-8 classrooms with a mix of native-language and ELL students and incorporates Common-Core ELA standards. Here is the core content in each lesson:

- Lesson 1 – Advertising in the Contemporary World: An Introduction to Persuasive texts; this lesson features a Canadian TV spot, “Can You Live With Dirty Water?”
- Lesson 2 – Persuasion in Historical Context: Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address
- Lesson 3 – Ethos, Logos, and Pathos in Civil Rights Movement Speeches: Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Robert Kennedy’s “On the Death of Martin Luther King” speech, and George Wallace’s “The Civil Rights Movement: Fraud, Sham, and Hoax” speech
- Lesson 4 – Persuasion As Text: Organizational, Grammatical, and Lexical Moves: Barbara Jordan’s “All Together Now” speech
- Lesson 5 – Putting It Together: Analyzing and Producing Persuasive Text; Severn Suzuki’s “The Girl Who Silenced the World for Five Minutes” speech (by a Canadian 11-year-old).

This unit is available at [http://ell.stanford.edu/teaching\\_resources/ela](http://ell.stanford.edu/teaching_resources/ela)

“Model Common-Core Unit Piloted for ELL Teachers” by Lesli Maxwell in *Education Week*, Jan. 16, 2013 (Vol. 32, #17, p. 1, 15), [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/01/16/17ellstanford\\_ep.h32.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/01/16/17ellstanford_ep.h32.html)

[Back to page one](#)

## 12. What Busy Principals Can Do to Reach Out to Families

In this *Responsive Classroom Newsletter* article, Vermont principal Ed Barnwell suggests that school leaders should take “small, seemingly routine actions that can have a big impact.”

- *Be visible when parents are coming and going with their children.* This is a chance to chat briefly with parents and signal that you’re genuinely happy to be with their children.
- *Make a special effort to connect with parents you don’t know well.* Open house and curriculum nights and special programs are the ideal time to zero in on these family members, especially those of a different culture, language, or background.
- *Show interest in families’ interests.* Even in brief encounters, check in on births of children and grandchildren, a new job, personal struggles and successes, cultural celebrations, and events affecting their children.

- *Make good-news phone calls.* Teachers will handle classroom successes, so the principal should focus on schoolwide accomplishments.

- *Greet new families personally.* “Have an understanding with your school’s secretaries and receptionists that whenever a new family comes to the school to register, they should find you so that you can personally greet and welcome the new family into the school community,” says Barnwell.

- *Invite parents for coffee or lunch.* This is especially important for family members who volunteer in the school.

- *Invite parent input,* but go beyond the usual suspects. This could be on pickup and drop-off procedures, playground equipment, next year’s class placement, or a new curriculum proposal.

- *Go to after-school and neighborhood events.* The principal’s presence is always appreciated, even if it’s just a quick visit.

“Parent Outreach for Busy Leaders” by Ed Barnwell in *Responsive Classroom Newsletter*, Winter 2013 (p. 14-15), [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org)

[Back to page one](#)

### **13. A Free Survey of Parent Involvement**

In this *Education Week* article, Michele Molnar reports on a parent survey developed at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education in collaboration with Survey Monkey. The 71-item question bank covers seven areas of family engagement with children’s education:

- Parental support – How much help are students getting at home?
- Child behaviors – What habits have students developed that shape their success?
- Parent engagement – How engaged are parents in their child’s schooling, and what potential barriers exist?
- Parent self-efficacy – How confident are parents in supporting their child’s schooling?
- School climate – How do parents view their school regarding academic and social standards?
- School program fit – How well do a school’s academic program, social climate, and organizational structure meet a student’s needs?
- Parent roles and responsibilities – How do parents view their roles, as well as teachers’ roles, in different aspects of their child’s education?

The survey questions can be adapted by schools and districts and taken online or via pencil and paper without authorization from Harvard or Survey Monkey. The question bank is available free at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/harvard-education-surveys>. To take advantage of Survey Monkey analysis, the cost ranges from \$17 to \$65 for a one-month survey.

“Survey Tool Aims for Fresh Eye on Parents” by Michele Molnar in *Education Week*, Jan. 16, 2013 (Vol. 32, #17, p. 10),

[Back to page one](#)

#### **14. Short Item:**

*Curiosity is the key* – In this TEDx talk, astrophysicist Mario Livio puts curiosity at the heart of effective teaching and learning: <http://tedxmidatlantic.com/speakers-talks/2012-bios/> and scroll down to Mario Livio. “How do you make kids learn?” he asks. “By making them curious.”

“The Case for Curiosity” by Mario Livio, a TEDx MidAtlantic Talk, 2012

[\*Back to page one\*](#)

© Copyright 2013 Marshall Memo LLC

***Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?***

*If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo,*

*please e-mail: [kim.marshall48@gmail.com](mailto:kim.marshall48@gmail.com)*

# About the Marshall Memo

## ***Mission and focus:***

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 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).

## ***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
- Reader opinions (with results of an annual survey)
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in Word or PDF)
- All back issues (also in Word and PDF)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or log-in

## ***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  
Better Evidence-Based Education  
Center for Performance Assessment Newsletter  
District Administration  
ED Magazine  
Education Digest  
Education Gadfly  
Education Next  
Education Update/Curriculum Update  
Education Week  
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis  
Educational Horizons  
Educational Leadership  
Educational Researcher  
Edutopia  
Elementary School Journal  
Essential Teacher  
Go Teach  
Harvard Business Review  
Harvard Education Letter  
Harvard Educational Review  
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)  
Journal of Staff Development  
Kappa Delta Pi Record  
Knowledge Quest  
Middle Ground  
Middle School Journal  
NASSP Journal  
Newsweek  
NJEA Review  
Perspectives  
Phi Delta Kappan  
Principal  
Principal Leadership  
Principal's Research Review  
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  
Wharton Leadership Digest