

Marshall Memo 1025

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
February 26, 2024

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Quotes of the Week

“As any parent will tell you, the fastest way to get a child to come along willingly on a trip to the grocery store is to point out that there are lollipops by the cash register. That is not deception. It is just a persuasive way of framing the benefits of taking such a journey.”

Jay Conger (see item #1)

“Stress makes you interested in one thing and disinterested in everything else. A hurried spirit makes others feel like an inconvenience.”

Dan Rockwell (see item #9)

“The dynamic interplay between student learning outcomes, instructional practices, organizational support, and the unique context underscores the need for a tailored approach to professional learning planning and evaluation.”

Thomas Guskey (see item #2)

“Ideally, feedback links the ‘not yet’ with the ‘here’s how’... Feedback reminds everyone there is time to make a change.”

Brent Duckor and Carrie Holmberg (see item #4)

“Schools cannot help but inculcate some sort of worldview. What books are read, what behavior is rewarded or punished, who selects curricula, offhand remarks from teachers, uniform rules – everything a school does communicates to students implicit ethical messages and political encouragements. If this philosophy veers too far in any direction from the broader zeitgeist, parents will rightly take umbrage and look elsewhere.”

Daniel Buck in [“Horace Mann’s Solution to Political Turmoil in Education”](#) in *Education Gadfly*, February 22, 2024

1. Persuasion 101

In this *Harvard Business Review* article, Jay Conger (Claremont McKenna College) says the use of persuasion and power often worries leaders. “But like power,” he says, “persuasion can be a force for enormous good in an organization. It can pull people together, move ideas forward, galvanize change, and force constructive solutions.” For those positive outcomes to occur, leaders must understand what Conger calls “the necessary art of persuasion,” which he believes has four essential components:

- *Establish credibility.* Will your perspective and opinions be trusted? “In the workplace,” says Conger, “credibility grows out of two sources: expertise and relationships.” Expertise is established by a track record of sound judgment and knowledge of one’s area. Credibility with colleagues comes from being trusted to listen well and work in the best interests of others – over time. Going into a persuasion situation, it’s wise to take inventory of those two areas and shore up any weaknesses – and always conduct persuasion meetings face to face.

- *Frame the common ground.* “As any parent will tell you,” says Conger, “the fastest way to get a child to come along willingly on a trip to the grocery store is to point out that there are lollipops by the cash register. That is not deception. It is just a persuasive way of framing the benefits of taking such a journey.” At work it’s a little different, but the principle is the same: analyze the situation from the other person’s point of view and identify shared, tangible benefits.

- *Provide evidence.* Ordinary evidence won’t do, says Conger. Effective persuaders use examples, stories, metaphors, analogies, and believable data combined with vivid language to make their position compelling.

- *Connect emotionally.* People’s feelings always play a big role. Leaders should show their own emotional commitment to the position they’re advocating – not too passionately, as that might cast doubt on their credibility. But they need to show conviction that goes beyond the facts. “Without this demonstration of feeling,” says Conger, “people may wonder if you actually believe in the position you’re championing.”

It’s also important to have a strong and accurate sense of the other person’s emotional state, and adjust tone and delivery accordingly. “Sometimes that means coming on strong, with forceful points,” he says. “Other times, a whisper may be all that is required.”

[“The Necessary Art of Persuasion”](#) by Jay Conger in *Harvard Business Review*, May-June 1998; Conger can be reached at jay.conger@cmc.edu.

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2. Thomas Guskey on Backwards Planning Professional Development

In this article in *The Learning Professional*, Thomas Guskey (University of Kentucky) says that in the wake of the pandemic, the need for high-quality professional development is greater than ever. “Furthermore,” he says, “the rapid evolution of technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), necessitates teachers and school leaders to consider entirely new paradigms in instructional methods and assessment.”

Guskey reminds us of his five-level model for assessing professional development initiatives: (a) Did participants like the initial training? (b) Did participants learn what they were supposed to learn? (c) Did the school put in place the supports necessary for successful implementation? (d) Did teachers put their new knowledge and skills into practice? and (e) Did student learning improve as a result? Guskey adds these important provisos:

- Each level is important and no level should be neglected.
- Each level builds on those preceding it.
- “While achieving success at a lower level is often a necessary foundation for success at a higher level,” he says, “it does not guarantee it.”
- It’s important to look at the bigger picture – for example, an initiative to improve student writing might be accompanied by a decline in students’ math achievement because the writing initiative resulted in less time spent on math.
- When planning professional learning, start at the fifth level – desired student learning outcomes – and work backward.

Taking this last point to heart, here are details of each stage of Guskey’s logic model for PD in reverse order, each posed as a question that needs to be answered for ultimate success:

- *What are the desired student learning outcomes?* What evidence will show those goals have been reached – for example, improved reading comprehension, enhanced math problem-solving skills, students’ confidence in learning situations, better collaboration among classmates – as measured by standardized tests, large-scale assessments, school records, examples of student work.

- *What research-based instructional policies and practices will get us there?* “Be especially cautious about adopting popular trends without solid research backing,” says Guskey.

- *What organizational supports need to be in place?* This includes planning time, staff engagement and support, scheduling changes, instructional materials, and more.

- *What educator knowledge and skills are needed?* To implement the initiative successfully, what must teachers and administrators know and be able to do? This includes their willingness to change current school and classroom practices.

- *What must the training include?* Effective learning experiences might include workshops, seminars, collaborative planning, structured opportunities for practice with feedback, action research projects, organized study groups, and more. Of course everything is context-specific; what works in one school may not work in another.

“The backwards planning process is essential,” says Guskey, “because it recognizes the interconnectedness of decisions at different levels and navigates the challenges posed by the context-specific nature of professional learning. The dynamic interplay between student learning outcomes, instructional practices, organizational support, and the unique context underscores the need for a tailored approach to professional learning planning and evaluation.”

[“Look Beyond the Satisfaction Survey”](#) by Thomas Guskey in *The Learning Professional*, February 2024 (Vol. 45, #1, pp. 28-33); Guskey can be reached at guskey@uky.edu.

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3. Evaluating PD

In this article in *The Learning Professional*, Joellen Killion notes the mixed track record of professional development in K-12 schools and suggests seven criteria for evaluating educator learning experiences:

- *Problem identification* – What’s the problem the PD is expected to address? What are the root causes of the problem? What are we hoping to accomplish? What changes will be necessary? What are the best research-based strategies for solving the problem?
- *Planning* – Is the plan aligned with the identified problem? Is the logic model supported by research or evidence? Is it logical, feasible, and sufficient?
- *Quality* – Does the PD meet standards, criteria, or expectations for high-quality learning experiences for educators?
- *Implementation* – Is the PD working as planned – timelines, participation, activities, resources? Is everyone doing their part? Are adaptations being made as needed?
- *Effectiveness* – What changes are educators making in their daily instructional practices, and are they aligned with the plan?
- *Impact on students* – Is the initiative, as designed and executed, having a positive effect on student learning and behavior?
- *Social justice and human rights* – Is the program accessible to all educators? Is it culturally responsive and applied in a manner that is respectful of diverse learners and learner needs? Are we equitably distributing burden and resources?

[“7 Reasons to Evaluate Professional Learning”](#) by Joellen Killion in *The Learning Professional*, February 2024 (Vol. 45, #1, pp. 22-27); Killion can be reached at joellen.killion@learningforward.org.

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4. Keys to Supporting School Leaders

In this article in *The Learning Professional*, Massachusetts assistant superintendent Ayesha Farag reports that 20 percent of U.S. principals leave their schools each year, and the average tenure for principals is four years. How can principal supervisors (Farag works with 15 elementary school leaders) support and sustain their colleagues to change these troubling statistics? She believes the key variables are a supportive district ecosystem, aligned values and

vision, regular collaboration (including frequent school visits and check-in meetings), and opportunities for continuous professional learning.

Farag suggests surveying principals on questions like those below and using the responses to guide districts on providing effective support and creating conditions for success and stamina:

- What district processes and structures will best support you in your role as a principal?
- How can your supervisor best support your work?
- What should trust and transparency look like in the district?
- What role should principals play in district decision-making?
- To what extent do you feel that districtwide decisions and policies reflect and promote shared values, and in what ways can alignment be improved?
- What is the driving force behind your work as a principal? What intrinsic “why” motivates your daily efforts, and how does it show up in your leadership?
- What will best support your ongoing learning and growth as a principal?
- What specific skills or areas of expertise would you most like to develop further? How do you imagine doing so would enhance your leadership?

“How Can We Sustain and Retain Principals?” by Ayesha Farag in *The Learning Professional*, February 2024 (Vol. 45, #1, pp. 12-15); Farag can be reached at faraga@newton.k12.ma.us.

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5. Preparing Well for a Check-In Meeting

In this *Leadership Freak* article, Dan Rockwell suggests ways a supervisor can prepare for one-on-one check-in meetings:

- *Know why you’re meeting.* “People are too valuable, and time is too short, to leave one-on-ones to chance,” says Rockwell.
- *Get right with yourself.* “Set frustrations with higher-ups aside,” he suggests. “Are you disappointed with yourself? Forget it. Turn your attention to the team member on the other side of the table.”
- *Calm your spirit.* “Stress makes you interested in one thing and disinterested in everything else,” he says. “A hurried spirit makes others feel like an inconvenience.”
- *Choose how to show up.* Breathe. Be curious. Be respectful and encouraging, or, if appropriate, challenging.
- *Review your notes.* Check what you jotted down after the previous meeting. (Your colleagues should know that your notes are descriptive, not prescriptive.)
- *Think about potential topics and jot them down.* “You don’t have to bring up any topics that come to mind,” says Rockwell. “Just jot them down.”
- *Recall three things you respect about the person.* This puts you in a positive and supportive frame of mind for the conversation.

[“7 Ways to Prepare for One-on-Ones Like a Pro”](#) by Dan Rockwell in *Leadership Freak*, February 22, 2024; Rockwell can be reached at dan@leadershipfreak.com.

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6. Using “Progress Guides” to Help Students Step by Step

In this *Kappan* article, Brent Duckor and Carrie Holmberg (San José State University) say that a key element in equitable achievement gains is real-time feedback that helps students improve their work before final grades are given. “Effective feedback,” say Duckor and Holmberg, “is less about praise or criticism and more about focused support. Ideally, feedback links the ‘not yet’ with the ‘here’s how’... Feedback reminds everyone there is time to make a change.”

Many teachers use rubrics to make learning goals explicit and let students know how final grades will be computed. But Duckor and Holmberg have several concerns about rubrics:

- There’s a “dysfunctional degree of detail.”
- They produce “anxiety and confusion among students about ‘what’s next.’”
- Self-assessment and peer assessment can demotivate students, especially the most vulnerable.

“Despite the good intentions of educators,” say the authors, “rubrics and similar tools often fail to encourage learners to engage in continuous improvement. Assessment tools and procedures need to support and engage learners – not cause them to shut down and turn away. The rubric too often gets in the way of what matters most: student and teacher dialogue about what’s next.”

A better approach, say Duckor and Holmberg, is *progress guides* – embedded assessment tools giving students concrete, specific, and timely feedback on next steps in their work – formative checkpoints on the way to the final destination. For example, students reviewing their first draft of an essay on the Dust Bowl self-assessed (or got a peer assessment) and then used this progress guide to determine where they were and what next steps should be:

I can:	Next steps to revise my draft:
<i>Weigh evidence</i>	<i>Now I need to...</i>
<i>Add some evidence</i>	<i>Now I need to...</i>
<i>Take a position</i>	<i>Now I need to...</i>
<i>Restate</i>	<i>Now I need to...</i>

“The focus on next steps,” say Duckor and Holmberg, “– rather than on the number of points or a grade – requires students and teachers to have conversations on what it takes to move into the next level.” Progress guides help teachers see patterns in their students’ work and show individual students how they can move forward, step by step. A key feature: there are no grades or numerical scores, which could lead them to accept their work “as is” and stop working.

To create a progress guide, teachers need to think about what’s involved in achieving mastery, step by step, and come up with possible requests, probes, and questions for students at each level, for example:

- What is the skill the progress guide will target?
- Is this skill new to students?
- To what longer-term goal or skill will the progress guide connect?

- What related concepts will students need in order to engage fully with the progress guide?

“Teachers using progress guides for the first time,” report Duckor and Holmberg, “found themselves thinking about the variety of student performances in new ways... This additional nuance enables teachers to come up with more-creative and helpful ways to nudge students’ learning along multiple trajectories... Participating teachers reported their students stayed with tasks longer, worked with one another more frequently, and spoke with their teachers about content longer and more deeply than they had before.”

[“Engaging, Motivating, and Supporting Students Through Feedback”](#) by Brent Duckor and Carrie Holmberg in *Kappan*, February 2024 (Vol. 105, #5, pp. 46-53); the authors can be reached at brent.duckor@sjsu.edu and carrie.holmberg@sjsu.edu.

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7. Boosting the Reading Skills of Struggling Teens

In this *Kappan* article, Martha Abele Mac Iver, Marcia Davis, and Douglas Mac Iver (Johns Hopkins University) describe the troubling decline in the amount of print reading American teens are doing, especially in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. “Many adolescents in those areas,” they say, “enter high school with underdeveloped reading skills that often lead to academic failure, motivational roadblocks, and pervasive disengagement in school... Lack of success in the past makes students less likely to want to read, which leads to a continued downward spiral.” Meanwhile, there’s been a dramatic increase in the time all kids are spending on social media, texting, and other Internet activity.

The key to increasing struggling students’ reading self-efficacy, frequency, engagement, and skills, say the authors, is addressing the ABCs of motivation: autonomy, belonging, and competence:

- *Autonomy* – Being able to choose what they read based on their personal interests is a key factor in building students’ ownership, intrinsic motivation, effort, and willingness to take on challenging work – all of which will improve reading skills.

- *Belonging* – Studies have shown that when students collaborate with peers tackling complex texts – discussing, searching for references and inferences, defending their answers – their understanding and skills improve.

- *Competence* – Reading difficult texts can lead struggling adolescents to disengage. There’s a chicken-and-egg relationship between competence and engagement, and traditional direct skill instruction with on-level texts is often ineffective. A better approach to building reading skills is spurring independent and group work with interesting, content-rich texts at students’ current reading levels, using challenging, conceptual questions to build competence and confidence and gradually ramp up text levels.

Drawing on a 2019 study and What Works Clearinghouse listings, the authors recommend several programs that put these principles to work:

- Achieve 3000 – A supplemental online reading program engages students individually in nonfiction texts at their reading level, with data to guide teachers’ interactions with students.
- READ 180 – A year-long intervention delivered in 90-minute reading blocks uses a combination of whole-group, small-group, and individual computer-assisted work, focused on grammar, writing, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.
- STARI – The Strategic Adolescent Reading Initiative supplements regular ELA instruction with engaging texts at students’ reading levels, encouraging student collaboration.
- ALFA – The Accelerating Literacy for Adolescents Lab – a one-semester elective for below-level ninth graders uses high-interest texts at students’ reading levels and a combination of whole-class and small-group instruction in 90-minute blocks.

[“Motivating Adolescents to Read”](#) by Martha Abele Mac Iver, Marcia Davis, and Douglas Mac Iver in *Kappan*, February 2024 (Vol. 105, #5, pp. 37-41); the authors can be reached at mmaciver@jhu.edu, marcy@jhu.edu, and dmaciver@jhu.edu.

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8. Improving Home-School Communication

In this *Cult of Pedagogy* article and podcast interview, Jennifer Gonzalez and author Nawal Qarooni explore ways to make school-parent communication less top-down (*Please pick up report cards. Please attend this literacy night. Here are the sight words we need to know. Read with your child for 20 minutes.*) “Our understanding of best practices may not match caregivers’ expectations around what should be happening in school,” they say. For example, parents may put more emphasis on children following directions and producing flawless products than on independent thinking and seeing errors as part of the learning process.

Qarooni suggests family lab sites as one way to counteract those tendencies: parents participate in a mini-lesson in the classroom, co-creating something students are working on and debriefing afterward. “These experiences build the relationship between teacher and caregiver and give families a clearer sense of what’s actually happening at school,” she says. “It breaks down the Us versus Them barrier.”

Another way to soften parents’ tendency to be overly critical of their children’s work products is prompting parents to ask questions like these:

- *How did you come up with that idea?*
- *What changes did you make from the beginning to the end?*
- *What are you particularly proud of and why?*
- *What part do you think could still improve?*
- *If you could do it again, what would you do differently?*

It’s also important for parents to see ways in which everyday family activities are tied to literacy learning – grocery shopping, changing a tire, setting the table, dinnertime

conversations, family rituals. “Literacy is living there,” says Qarooni. “It’s giving families the confidence to know that they already are being amazing.”

[“Building Better Collaboration Between Families and Schools”](#) by Jennifer Gonzalez and Nawal Qarooni in *Cult of Pedagogy*, February 18, 2024

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9. Suggested ChatGPT Prompts

With input from her colleagues, Texas-based educator Alexis Wiggins has generated a set of prompts for using ChatGPT in a wide variety of school settings. Here’s a sampling:

- *Curriculum design* – Create a lesson plan for a 4th-grade science class on the water cycle, including videos and interactive activities.
- *Assessment design* – Create a problem-based assessment for 12th-grade physics on the topic of electromagnetism.
- *Class activities* – Provide a topic for a debate in a high-school government class about digital literacy.
- *Student collaboration* – Create role-play scenarios for practicing French conversational skills.
- *Personalized learning* – Create a set of personalized math problems for a student at the 8th-grade level who is struggling with algebra, including step-by-step solutions to enhance understanding.
- *Professional development* – Generate a list of ideas and activities that help educators adopt inclusive language practices that respect and affirm all students’ identities.
- *Language learning* – Design a two-week project with the theme of restaurants, markets, and food for a third-year Spanish class. The project should require students to engage in all of the ACTFL proficiencies at some point, though it should only assess speaking and writing. Please provide a breakdown/timeline of due dates for various components.
- *Counseling, advising, and student life* – Generate 10-minute engaging activities for high-school students using Yale’s RULER approach.
- *Art and creativity* – Suggest an art project idea for 1st graders that combines drawing and storytelling.
- *Physical education and athletics* – What are some drills that can help improve passing accuracy and decision-making under pressure for a high-school girls’ varsity basketball team?
- *Essential questions* – Based on Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe’s definition of Essential Questions, please generate eight Essential Questions for a seventh-grade unit on the solar system, seasons, and moon phases.

[“ChatGPT Tips and Tricks for K-12 Educators”](#) by Alexis Wiggins, February 21, 2024

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10. The Goldilocks Amount of Phonemic Awareness in Primary Grades

In this article in *Scientific Studies of Reading*, Florina Erbeli, Marianne Rice, Ying Zu, Megan Bishop, and Marc Goodrich (Texas A&M University) report on their meta-analysis of Marshall Memo 1025 February 26, 2024

the optimal amount of classroom time on phonemic awareness. The researchers found that kindergarten and first graders improved steadily with up to 10.2 hours of phonemic awareness lessons, after which the effects declined. This was true for all students, including those at risk for reading disabilities.

“Overall,” conclude the authors, “our findings highlight the importance of planning the optimal cumulative dosage of early PA instruction in preschool through first-grade settings so that students acquire the PA and phonological-orthographic associations taught and show progress in learning to read.”

[“A Meta-Analysis on the Optimal Cumulative Dosage of Early Phonemic Awareness Instruction”](#) by Florina Erbeli, Marianne Rice, Ying Zu, Megan Bishop, and Marc Goodrich in *Scientific Studies of Reading*, January 25, 2024; Erbeli can be reached at erbeli@tamu.edu.

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11. Books on Women’s Role in History, Science, and More

In this *School Library Journal* feature, New York librarian Amanda Borgia recommends books on women who made their mark on history:

Upper elementary:

- *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls: 100 Inspiring Young Change Makers* by Jess Harriton, illustrated by Maithy Vu, grade 3-7
- *Latinitas: Celebrating 40 Big Dreamers* by Juliet Menéndez, grade 3-6
- *History Smashers: Women’s Right to Vote* by Kate Messner, illustrated by Dylan Meconis, grade 3-7
- *Muslim Girls Rise: Inspirational Champions of Our Time* by Saira Mir, illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel, grade 1-5

Middle school:

- *Citizen She!: The Global Campaign for Women’s Voting Rights* by Caroline Stevan, illustrated by Elina Braslina, translated by Michelle Bailat-Jones, grade 5-7
- *Amazing Women of the Middle East: 25 Stories from Ancient Times to Present Day* by Wafa’ Tarnowska, illustrated by Margarida Esteves, Hoda Hadadi, Shahar Haghgoo, and others, grade 5-8
- *Girls Solve Everything: Stories of Women Entrepreneurs Building a Better World* by Catherine Thimmesh, illustrated by Melissa Sweet, grade 4-8
- *Focus on the Women’s Suffrage Movement* by Artika Tyner and Cicely Lewis, grade 4-8

High school:

- *Wonderful Women of the World* by Laurie Halse Anderson, grade 9 and up
- *Feminism Is...* by Alexandra Black, Laura Buller, Roxanne Gay, and others, grade 8 and up
- *Feminist AF: A Guide to Crushing Girlhood* by Brittney Cooper, Chanel Craft Tanner, and Susana Morris, grade 8 and up
- *Native Women Changing Their Worlds* by Patricia Cutright, grade 8 and up

- *She Represents: 44 Women Who Are Changing Politics... and the World* by Caitlin Donohue, illustrated by Briana Arrington, grade 7 and up
- *The Book of Awesome Black Women: Heroines, Boundary Breakers, and Females Who Changed the World* by MJ Fievre and Becca Anderson, grade 7 and up
- *Wonder Women of Science: Twelve Geniuses Who Are Currently Rocking Science, Technology, and the World* by Tiera Fletcher and Ginger Rue, illustrated by Sally Wern Comport, grade 7 and up
- *You Are More Than Magic: The Black and Brown Girls' Guide to Finding Your Voice* by Minda Harts, grade 7 and up

“Great Books: Feminism 101” by Amanda Borgia in *School Library Journal*, February 2024 (Vol. 70, #2, pp. 45-48)

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If you have feedback or suggestions, 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 other educators very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 54 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, writer, and consultant lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 60 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). Every week there's a podcast and HTML version as well.

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Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

All Things PLC
American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
AMLE Magazine
ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief
Cult of Pedagogy
District Management Journal
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
English Journal
Exceptional Children
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Ed (formerly Ed. Magazine)
Harvard Educational Review
Independent School
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Kappan (Phi Delta Kappan)
Knowledge Quest
Language Arts
Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance)
Literacy Today (formerly Reading Today)
Mathematics Teacher: Learning & Teaching PK-12
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Principal
Principal Leadership
Psychology Today
Reading Research Quarterly
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Social Education
Social Studies and the Young Learner
Teachers College Record
Teaching Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Journal of the Learning Sciences
The Language Educator
The Learning Professional (formerly Journal of Staff Development)
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time
Urban Education