Marshall Memo 351

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
September 13, 2010

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"When students see a list of problems, all of the same kind, they know the strategy to use before they even read the problem. That's like riding a bike with training wheels."

Doug Rohrer (see item #1)

"The process of retrieving an idea is not like pulling a book from a shelf; it seems to fundamentally alter the way the information is subsequently stored, making it far more accessible in the future."

Benedict Carey (see item #1)

"Testing has such a bad connotation. People think of standardized testing or teaching to the test. Maybe we need to call it something else, but this is one of the most powerful learning tools we have."

Henry Roediger (see item #1)

"What makes a test feel like an interesting challenge rather than an anxiety-provoking assault?"

Elisabeth Rosenthal (see item #2)

"To exponentially increase vocabulary, students need to develop word consciousness and a curiosity about words."

Joan Kelley, Nonie Lesaux, Michael Kiefer, and Elisabeth Faller (see item #3)

"Again and again, we find that teens are thirsty for the chance to be treated as adults. And like parched plants given even a bit of water, they quickly spring back to life, with much of the energy and enthusiasm we recall from their younger days, when given a chance to begin acting like adults."

Joseph Allen and Claudia Worrell (see item #7)

1. Research-Based Approaches to Studying

In this helpful *New York Times* article, Benedict Carey reports the latest findings from cognitive science about the kinds of studying that work best for students of all ages. Interestingly, these findings are at variance with the conventional wisdom among parents and educators. For example, Carey says that all the talk about visual, auditory, left-brain/right-brain learners, etc. is unproven. A recent article in *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* found no empirical support for these theories. "The contrast between the enormous popularity of the learning-styles approach within education and the lack of credible evidence for its utility is, in our opinion, striking and disturbing," write the authors.

Here is what the research says *does* work:

• *Varying study location* – Alternating between two rooms while studying significantly improves retention. A classic 1978 study found that college students who studied 40 vocabulary words first in one room and then in another did far better on a post-test than students who studied the words two times in a single location. Subsequent studies have replicated this finding for a variety of subjects. "The brain makes subtle associations between what it is studying and the background sensations it has at the time…" says Carey. "It colors the terms of the Versailles Treaty with the wasted fluorescent glow of the dorm study room, say; or the elements of the Marshall Plan with the jade-curtain shade of the willow tree in the back yard. Forcing the brain to make multiple associations with the same material may, in effect, give the information more neural scaffolding."

• *Mixed content* – Studying distinct but related skills or concepts in one sitting improves retention. "Musicians have known this for years," says Carey, "and their practice sessions often include a mix of scales, musical pieces and rhythmic work. Many athletes, too, routinely mix their workouts with strength, speed and skill drills." In a recent study in *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, University of South Florida researchers Doug Rohrer and Kelli Taylor reported on a study of fourth graders' retention of geometry concepts. Those who studied a mixture of problems scored 77% on a follow-up test, compared to 38% for students who focused on one kind of problem. "When students see a list of problems, all of the same kind, they know the strategy to use before they even read the problem," says Rohrer. "That's like riding a bike with training wheels." Mixed practice is far more productive. The finding has been replicated in other fields, including an experiment asking college students and older adults to distinguish the painting styles of twelve unfamiliar artists. "What seems to be happening in this case is that the

brain is picking up deeper patterns when seeing assortments of paintings," says Nate Kornell, one of the authors. "It's picking up what's similar and what's different about them."

• *Spaced studying* – "An hour of study tonight, an hour on the weekend, another session a week from now," says Carey, is a highly effective study strategy. Dozens of studies have shown that spacing improves later recall for the same amount of time. One theory is that when the brain comes back to material after some time has passed, it has to re-learn some that's been forgotten before adding new material. "The idea is that forgetting is the friend of learning," says Williams College psychologist Nate Kornell. "When you forget something, it allows you to relearn, and do so effectively, the next time you see it." Last-minute cramming, on the other hand, may help pass a test the next day but is ineffective for long-term memory. "[H]urriedly jam-packing a brain is akin to speed-packing a cheap suitcase," says Carey. "… it holds its new load for a while, then most everything falls out. When a neural suitcase is packed carefully and gradually, it holds its contents far, far longer."

• *Frequent assessment with feedback* – "The process of retrieving an idea is not like pulling a book from a shelf," says Carey. "It seems to fundamentally alter the way the information is subsequently stored, making it far more accessible in the future." Washington University/St. Louis psychologist Henry Roediger agrees: "Testing not only measures knowledge but changes it," he says. Roediger and his colleague Jeffrey Karpicke had college students study science material and tested them for retention. One group studied the same material twice, in two study sessions. The other studied once, and in the second session took a practice test. The second group had far better long-term retention. "Testing has such a bad connotation," says Roediger. "People think of standardized testing or teaching to the test. Maybe we need to call it something else, but this is one of the most powerful learning tools we have."

• *Challenge* – It turns out that a difficult test is better for long-term memory than an easy one. "The harder it is to remember something, the harder it is to later forget," says Carey. "…The more mental sweat it takes to dig it out, the more securely it will be subsequently anchored." Researchers call this "desirable difficulty."

"We have known these principles for some time," says UCLA psychologist Robert Bjork, "and it's intriguing that schools don't pick them up, or that people don't learn them by trial and error. Instead, we walk around with all sorts of unexamined beliefs about what works that are mistaken."

"Forget What You Know About Good Study Habits" by Benedict Carey in *The New York Times*, Sept. 7, 2010 (p. D1, D6)
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/07/health/views/07mind.html

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2. Early-Grade Assessment in China

In this *New York Times* article, Elisabeth Rosenthal recalls her own children's experience with frequent testing when they were in the primary grades at the International School of Beijing. To Rosenthal and her husband, the testing seemed excessive and nervous-

making, and they spent hours prepping their children with flash-cards and bucking them up when they got low grades. "I remember nearly constant tension between the Asian parents, who wanted still more tests and homework," she writes, "and the Western parents, who were more concerned with whether their kids were having fun – and wanted less."

And yet Rosenthal's children didn't mind the tests. When the family returned to the U.S., both children (9 and 11 at that point) enrolled in a progressive school that eschewed tests. Cara, the daughter, asked, "How do I know if I get what's going on in math class?" Both kids soon moved to a more academically focused school with regular testing and did well. And both remembered their early years of schooling in China with genuine fondness.

"Research has long shown that more frequent testing is beneficial to kids," says University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill professor Gregory Cizek, "but educators have resisted this finding… Schools do a lot of nurturing and facilitating, and then it's a bit of a shock for children when they have to sit at a desk all alone and be tested." Now, after years of emphasizing high-stakes tests, American educators seem to be moving toward more frequent "formative" assessment to check for student understanding and fix learning problems in real time.

Rosenthal hopes that this will result in the kind of productive, low-stakes atmosphere that her children experienced in China. "What makes a test feel like an interesting challenge rather than an anxiety-provoking assault?" she wonders. "When testing is commonplace and the teachers are supportive – as my children's were, for the most part – the tests felt like so many puzzles; not so much a judgment on your being."

"Testing, the Chinese Way" by Elisabeth Rosenthal in *The New York Times Week in Review*, Sept. 12, 2010 (p. 1-2)
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/12/weekinreview/12rosenthal.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Testing,%20The%20Chinese%20Way'&st=cse

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3. How to Teach Academic Vocabulary to Middle-School Students

In this thoughtful article in *The Reading Teacher*, researchers Joan Kelley, Nonie Lesaux, Michael Kiefer, and Elisabeth Faller describe an 18-week experiment in teaching academic vocabulary in heavily language-minority, low-income middle schools. They undertook the study because they believe that "For many of these learners, what is missing from class work is direct instruction focused on academic vocabulary that will support them as they read expository texts in their academic future."

The program went well, and although teachers had to learn new skills and struggled with their students' low reading levels and lack of background knowledge, learning gains were impressive. Here are the lessons the researchers drew from the study:

• *Start with a short piece of engaging text*. "To promote deep word understanding, instruction has to begin with good conversation about rich topics and ideas," say the authors. "Struggling readers especially need to be set up to succeed with texts so that they increase their

skills and their confidence." They chose short, high-interest pieces from *Time for Kids* magazine at grade 4-6 reading levels.

• *Focus on depth over breadth*. "We can't possibly cover and teach all of the words that students need to learn," say the authors, "but we can choose a small set of high-utility academic words students need and then use those as a platform for teaching word learning, increasing academic talk, and promoting more strategic reading." Only eight or nine words were the focus of each two-week unit. Teachers immersed students in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to the words. Teachers found one of the barriers was students' overconfidence – they thought they knew words, but they really didn't know them in depth.

• *Increase opportunities to talk*. "Language is social, and so are kids," say the authors. "… Across the United States, teachers talk more than their students… To promote deep understanding, teachers need to structure ways for students to hear more academic language used, hear words analyzed in a fun way, and practice using academic words." Teachers conducted whole-class discussions of texts at the beginning of each unit in which they elaborated on ideas and broadened students' understanding of the key words.

• *Teach specific strategies for word learning*. "Students need to be directly instructed on how to figure out unfamiliar words, as they are constantly coming up against unfamiliar words in texts," say the authors. It's important for teachers to carve out regular time to teach about prefixes and suffixes, roots, and other skills that give students a sense of how words work.

• *Incorporate activities to promote word consciousness*. "To exponentially increase vocabulary," say the authors, "students need to develop word consciousness and a curiosity about words. Through playing with and talking about words, students are more likely to become attached to the words in print and willing to work harder to understand unknown words they encounter." This included talking up the target words, getting students working on fun word tasks like word hunt contests, noting target words used outside the classroom (sometimes incorrectly), sharing the words orally, and posting them on a word wall.

• *Writing is a powerful vehicle for vocabulary development*. "When students can accurately use new vocabulary in writing, clearly they have a sound understanding of the word's definition and usage," say the authors. At the end of each unit, students were asked to write a paragraph using five target words. They found this very difficult at first, but with lots of support, their confidence and proficiency steadily increased.

• *Remember the importance of personal connections*. "To keep students motivated and engaged, and therefore learning continually, teachers should try to personalize examples given in class and choose substantive materials that will be of particular interest to early adolescent students," say the authors.

"If our goal is to help students improve understanding of academic text," they conclude, "then words need to be pulled apart, put together, defined informally, practiced in speech, explained in writing, and played with regularly; only then will students have a chance at deeply understanding the approximately 50,000 words they need to know before they graduate.

Equipped with more knowledge of and about words, students will be set up for success in high school and beyond."

"Effective Academic Vocabulary Instruction in the Urban Middle School" by Joan Kelley, Nonie Lesaux, Michael Kiefer, and Elisabeth Faller in *The Reading Teacher*, September 2010 (Vol. 64, #1, p. 5-14), no e-link available; see a similar article by the same authors in *Reading Research Quarterly* summarized in Marshall Memo 339, #8. The authors can be reached at joangkelley@gmail.com, lesauxno@gse.harvard.edu, mk3157@columbia.edu, and sef416@mail.harvard.edu.

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4. Differentiating with Open Questions and Parallel Tasks

(Originally titled "Beyond One Right Answer")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Canadian educator Marian Small bemoans the fact that so many elementary and middle-school math teachers believe that:

- All students should work on the same problem at the same time.
- Each math question should have one right answer.

"We need to find a way to meet the needs of a broader range of students with richer activities," says Small. When teachers use open questions and parallel tasks, "More students experience success with meaningful tasks, more students are engaged, more students see themselves as competent in math, and more students enjoy learning math." Here's how:

• *Open questions* – These are questions broad enough to challenge and involve a wide range of students – for example:

- The answer is 10. What might the question be?
- Create a sentence using the words and numbers: product, 8, almost, and 50.
- How are the formulas for the circumference and the area of a circle alike? How are they different?

As students grapple with open questions in class, they have choice (a key feature of differentiation), they're challenged at different levels, and they learn from each others' answers. Small suggests four strategies for creating open questions:

- Start with the answer – for example, The 10^{th} term in a pattern is 36. What might the 8^{th} and 9^{th} terms be? Describe the pattern.
- Ask for similarities and differences – for example, How are these two patterns alike? How are they different? 4, 8, 12, 16, 20,… 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, …
- Allow choice in the data provided – for example, Choose a value for the fourth number in the series that follows and calculate the mean: 4, 5, 6, __
- Ask students to create a sentence – for example, Use the words increasing, decreasing, pattern, and the number 18 in a sentence.

If students consistently choose not-very-challenging questions, the teacher should prompt them to step it up.

• *Parallel tasks* – This consists of assigning work that can be challenging to students of varying levels of achievement. Small suggests two steps:

- Let students choose between two problems, one harder than the other – for example, Choice 1: There are 427 students in a school; 99 leave for a field trip. How many are in the school now? Choice 2: There are 61 students in third grade; 19 of them are in the library. How many are in classrooms?
- Pose common questions for all students to answer – for example, Before you calculated, could you tell if the number of students in classrooms was more or less than one-half of the total? What operation did you use and why? Would it be easier to solve if one student had left the classroom? How could you use mental math? How did you solve your problem? What was the answer?

"Beyond One Right Answer" by Marian Small in *Educational Leadership*, September 2010 (Vol. 68, #1, p. 28-32); this article is available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/current-issue.aspx. Small can be reached at marian@onetwoinfinity.ca.

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5. Key Elements in High-Quality Student Projects

(Originally titled "7 Essentials for Project-Based Learning")

"Some projects border on busywork," say California-based educators John Larmer and John Mergendoller in this *Educational Leadership* article. Here are their suggestions for projects that involve meaningful inquiry and engage students' minds:

• *A need to know* – A unit should begin with a "hook" or "entry event" that grabs students' interest and motivates them to think, *I need to know this to meet the challenge I've accepted*. The need-to-know event can be a video, a provocative discussion, a guest speaker, a field trip, or a mock letter setting up a scenario.

• *A driving question* – "A project without a driving question is like an essay without a thesis," say Larmer and Mergendoller. "A good driving question captures the heart of the project in clear, compelling language, which gives students a sense of purpose and challenge. The question should be provocative, open-ended, complex, and linked to the core of what you want students to learn." Examples: *When is war justified? Is our water safe to drink? How can we improve this website so that more young people will use it?*

• *Student voice and choice* – The more, the better, say Larmer and Mergendoller. This might involve students choosing a topic under the guiding question, choosing from a limited menu of options for creative products, or students deciding what products to create, what resources to use, and how to structure their time.

• *21st-century skills* – Collaboration is a key facet of project work – teams of three or four students planning their tasks, figuring out how to produce their product, and monitoring their work quality through self-assessment.

• *Inquiry and innovation* – For example, students working on a water pollution unit might generate a series of specific questions: *What diseases can you get from water? Do you have to drink it to get sick? Where do bacteria come from?* Pursuing answers in books and the Internet – coached by the teacher – should lead to further questions.

• *Feedback and revision* – "Students need to learn that most people's first attempts don't result in high quality and that revision is a frequent feature of real-world work," say Larmer and Mergendoller. The teacher should provide ongoing feedback, bring in experts and mentors to look over students' drafts, and provide rubrics and other guides to help students self-assess.

• *A publicly presented product* – Students should present their final products to an audience that might include parents, peers, community members, and government officials in a big-deal exhibition night. "Schoolwork is more meaningful when it's not done only for teachers or the test," say Larmer and Mergendoller. "When students present their work to a real audience, they care more about its quality."

"7 Essentials for Project-Based Learning" by John Larmer and John Mergendoller in *Educational Leadership*, September 2010 (Vol. 68, #1, p. 34-37); this article is available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/current-issue.aspx. Larmer is at larmer@bie.org and Mergendoller at john@bie.org.

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6. Enhancing Literature Circles with Blogging

(Originally titled "The Virtual Circle")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Massachusetts teacher Stacy Kitsis describes how she improved her high-school literature circles with online discussion groups. Previously, she had students choose books from a list of titles thematically related to the curriculum, assigned them to small groups, and had students read their books in literature circles about once a week, taking 3-4 weeks on each book. The downside, she says, was that conversations within the groups frequently stalled, even when students liked their books.

In her new approach, literature circles continued to meet once a week, with students posting comments on a class blog in between. Kitsis provided prompts (for example, *Talk about a moment that stood out for you*), quickly approved entries, and added comments. At first, she required that every student contribute one comment a week, limited to 200 words, and provided a rubric on ideas and topic development, evidence from the text, style and voice, mechanics, and contributions to the group. Themes emerged from exchanges and students incorporated them into final products presented to the whole class.

Kitsis reports that blogging increased the level of student involvement inside and outside class and provided rapid responses to comments without putting undue strain on her. "In my classes," she says, "I saw students who almost never turned in traditional homework regularly contribute to the blog." Blog entries helped students get past the stilted silence to substantive discussions. Comments ranged from simple clarifications (openly admitting confusion), predictions, connections, evaluations, and challenges of others' ideas. Students who had been superficial before were forced to expand their contributions, and students who had never interacted with each other found themselves engaging in give-and-take online. Some

groups got so involved in a book that they continued blogging after final assignments were handed in.

The system helped the teacher, too. "The virtual environment enabled me to listen in on multiple conversations without missing a word and without changing the dynamic with my presence," says Kitsis. "Because students interacted and got feedback from their peers throughout the discussion, they needed less feedback from me." Her role was supplying prompts, monitoring the online discussion, and visiting groups when they met during class time to share reactions, point out significant comments, give background information, and prod students to dig deeper.

The system was also paper-free. "I happily abandoned the messy stacks of spiralbound reading journals, often containing weeks of assignments that students completed in one furious sprint the night before they were collected," says Kitsis. At first, she printed out posts and used the rubric to comment, but eventually she just gave a "check," "check-plus," or "check-minus" in her grade book.

Assessing the new system and looking at the final blog, Kitsis learned a great deal:

- Which prompts worked best, which books needed to be removed from the book list, and where students most commonly got confused;
- How to pace the work to accommodate students with limited Internet access;
- Deciding on alternative assignments for students who preferred not to share their ideas online;
- Deciding whether people outside the class could read the blog and contribute;
- Deciding whether to pre-approve every post (which slows interaction) or monitor from a distance, intervening when necessary.
- Setting ground rules – first names only, no identifying information, using separate accounts for school work and their personal lives.

"The Virtual Circle" by Stacy Kitsis in *Educational Leadership*, September 2010 (Vol. 68, #1, p. 50-54); this article is available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/current-issue.aspx. Kitsis can be reached at smkitsis@yahoo.com.

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7. Treating Teenagers Differently

(Originally titled "The Big Wait")

"Again and again, we find that teens are thirsty for the chance to be treated as adults," say University of Virginia professors Joseph Allen and Claudia Worrell Allen in this *Educational Leadership* article. "And like parched plants given even a bit of water, they quickly spring back to life, with much of the energy and enthusiasm we recall from their younger days, when given a chance to begin acting like adults… Anthropologists who have studied adolescents in hundreds of other societies… found that problems such as juvenile apathy, rebellion and delinquency are largely nonexistent in societies that routinely ask teens to

engage with adults in adultlike work." Allen and Worrell suggest four approaches to help teens deal better with the frustrations of being almost adults, but not quite:

• *Relevance* – "The teacher's first task in any class is to let students know why they should bother to learn the material," say the authors, "…how what they're learning may someday be useful in the adult world." Bringing in real-world practitioners – physicists, writers, journalists – can make a big difference. So can relating material to students' lives. A history teacher facing the challenge of teaching the less-than-fascinating post-World War I era likened America's exhaustion after the war to how a student feels after a major test. "And what do you want to do then?" asked the teacher. "Party!" came the reply. "OK, so you enter the Roaring Twenties and it's party time. You party and party and party all night – then what happens?" "You crash!" said students, perfectly framing the unit they were about to begin.

• *Real-world feedback* – Frequent in-class checks for understanding and rapid feedback on quizzes are important. So is being assessed by professionals from outside the school, providing realistic opinions on the quality of students' work.

• *Responsibility* – Meaningful volunteer work in the community coupled with classroom discussions led by a facilitator can be immensely valuable, say Allen and Worrell: "Teens, like adults, enjoy being counted on and feeling helpful and important." Studies have shown that this can dramatically reduce suspensions, academic failure, dropping out, and teen pregnancy. An example of this type of program is Teen Outreach – http://www.wymantop.org.

• *Respect* – "Teens instinctively recognize when they're being pulled toward adulthood – and when they aren't," say Allen and Worrell. Little things like being addressed as "boys and girls" (versus "ladies and gentlemen") can make a difference. The more young adolescents are put in charge of their own learning, the better – for example, accompanying their parents to parent-teacher conferences.

"The Big Wait" by Joseph Allen and Claudia Worrell Allen in *Educational Leadership*, September 2010 (Vol. 68, #1, p. 22-26); this article is available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/current-issue.aspx. Allen is at allen@virginia.edu.

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8. College Knowledge

In this *Kappan* interview, editor Joan Richardson quizzes University of Oregon/Eugene professor David Conley about his books on "college knowledge." "Almost everything we're doing right now to connect students with college is probably necessary, but it's not sufficient," he says. "We're not giving the right kinds of tests. We're not delving deeply enough into the disciplines to help students understand them well enough to retain what they're taught. We're not using much of what the cognitive sciences tell us about how people gain and organize information. We don't really organize teaching and learning so that it gets at deeper levels of understanding and stronger retention of disciplinary knowledge and key cognitive strategies."

Arguing for a complete rethinking of the K-12 curriculum, Conley says there are four essentials for students to be successful in college:

- Content knowledge that prepares them for entry-level courses – especially big ideas and core concepts;
- Cognitive strategies that enable students to apply in complex ways what they know and what they are learning; "They must be able to select strategies to formulate a problem, conduct independent research, interpret conflicting explanations of a phenomenon, and express themselves appropriately in writing and speech," says Conley.
- The ability to manage themselves – goal-setting, managing their time, studying alone and in groups, and being persistent with challenging tasks;
- Handling the college application and selection process and getting along with a diverse collection of students, professors, and others once they get there.

The problem with most state standards and exit exams, says Conley, is they are not aligned with what's needed to be successful in college. The new Common Core standards are better, he thinks, providing "a more integrated framework for what secondary education ought to look like" and making it possible to rethink courses so they better prepare students for college success.

Conley supports graduation expectations that are the same for all high-school students, aligned with college and workplace demands. He's struck by how rigorous the demands for the workplace are – for example, for a job in welding. "When you deconstruct almost any of these technical training programs," he says, "you find an academic core. So my rationale is fairly simple: If everyone needs a pretty strong set of academic knowledge and skills anyway, then why would we want to distinguish the education that we give young people?"

"College Knowledge: An Interview with David Conley" by Joan Richardson in *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 2010 (Vol. 92, #1, p. 28-34), available for purchase at http://www.kappanmagazine.org/content/92/1/28.full

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9. Body Language Speaks Loudly

"Teachers need to be aware of more than just the words they speak to children," says Murray State University professor Jacqueline Hansen in this *Kappan* article. "They also need to monitor the nonverbal messages that they're sending to students through proximity, eye contact, gestures, and touching… Indeed, up to 90% of what people say and feel is communicated through their actions, not their words… In today's increasingly diverse classrooms, finding every possible way to communicate with every student is more important than ever. Teachers must become kid-watchers to familiarize themselves with their students' nonverbal communication patterns."

Problems arise when there's a disconnect between what a teacher says and what his or her body is saying. Since students believe what they see over what they hear, it's particularly important for teachers to be tuned in to what they are conveying nonverbally. Hansen encourages teachers to watch themselves on videotape to monitor their unconscious body signals. Here are her suggestions:

• *Proximity* – The space we leave between ourselves and others is a factor of culture, age, personality (introverts stand further away than extroverts), and the intimacy level of the relationship. Most Americans and Northern Europeans stand at arm's length; Asians stand even further away; Latinos and Middle Easterners get much closer. "To accommodate these differences," says Hansen, "teachers need to eradicate their 'special accents' and adjust their conversational distance according to students' and parents' cultural backgrounds." Babies are used to close proximity with other humans, but as they grow up, children take on their culture's template. Hansen suggests these guidelines for teachers:

- Don't sit behind a desk; move among students. In parent conferences, sit side by side to show you are a partner in their children's education.
- Greet students, colleagues, and others in the hallway and maintain eye contact to show respect and build relationships.
- Get close to every student every day (but not too close) to increase accessibility, build relationships, and monitor academic and behavioral progress.

• *Eye contact* – This varies with gender and culture, with females maintaining eye contact longer than males. According to Hansen, more eye contact communicates to others that a person is approachable, dynamic, extroverted, sociable, and believable. Saudi Arabians maintain strong eye contact through half-closed lids, while Japanese, Koreans, Thais, Puerto Ricans, West Indians, African Americans, and Native Americans are taught that extended eye contact is rude. Blinking is considered impolite in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and while winking is a way of sharing a secret in America and Europe, it's a rude gesture in Hong Kong. Hansen has these suggestions for teachers:

- Make frequent eye contact with every student to make sure they're tuned in.
- Maintain steady eye contact and focus entirely on what the student is trying to communicate.
- Recognize that some students' cultural heritage may keep them from making eye contact with an authority figure, especially when being reprimanded.

• *Gestures* – Some gestures are universal, but many are culture-specific. Here are some examples:

- Beckoning – The familiar American palms-up gesture is used by Yugoslavians and Malaysians to beckon animals and Australians to solicit prostitutes.
- Head nod – Americans move their heads up and down to signal agreement and from side to side to indicate disagreement. People in Bulgaria, Greece, former Yugoslavia, Turkey Iran, and Bengal do just the opposite!
- Head tap – North Americans tap their heads to indicate that someone is smart or crazy, depending on the context. In Argentina and Peru, the same gesture means the speaker is thinking. In Holland, it means someone is crazy.
- Okay – When Vice President Nixon made the American "OK" sign on a goodwill trip to Latin America, it caused a furor because it was seen as a sexual insult – and

indeed, it means orifice in parts of South America, Germany, Tunisia, Greece, Turkey, Russia, and the Middle East.

- Thumbs up – In Japan, the gesture that means "Okay" or "Good job" in the U.S. and Europe means the number five, in Germany it means the number one, and in Australia and Nigeria it's a sexual insult.
- The V – Winston Churchill's famous victory sign means "Okay" in Scandinavia, Germany, France, and Italy, but it's a rude gesture in Great Britain if the palm is facing inward.

Hansen has these suggestions for teachers:

- Keep up to date with the meanings of "pop" gestures, such as those used by rappers.
- Use gestures carefully; adolescents can see a sexual meaning in practically anything.
- Use American Sign Language gestures for classroom management (e.g., line up, sit down, bathroom).

• *Touching* – "Compared with other world cultures, Americans seem to be touchy about touching," says Hansen. Studies of how often couples touch each other found 180 touches per hour in Puerto Rico, 110 in France, 2 in Florida, and zero in London. American parents touch their children less frequently than parents in other countries, and lots of children are touch-deprived, which can lead to emotional difficulties. "Teachers can use *appropriate* touching to communicate affection toward their students and to establish a caring classroom community," says Hansen. Her guidelines:

- Ask students' permission before touching them, give them a choice of a hug, handshake, knuckle-bump, or no contact, and respect their decision.
- Limit touching to students' heads, shoulders, hands, and upper backs.
- Leave the classroom door open and avoid being alone with children.

"Teaching Without Talking" by Jacqueline Hansen in *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 2010 (Vol. 92, #1, p. 35-40), available for purchase at
http://www.kappanmagazine.org/content/92/1/35.full

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10. Short Item:

National Punctuation Day – Friday, September 24th honors periods, parentheses, colons, commas, and the rest of the gang: http://www.nationalpunctuationday.com.

"Highlighted and Underlined" in *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 2010 (Vol. 92, #1, p. 6)

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

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

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

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

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

Subscriptions:

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

Website:

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

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

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

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

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Catalyst Chicago
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
Language Learner (NABE)
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
New York Times
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools