Marshall Memo 655

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
October 3, 2016

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Memorizing facts is boring. Drill-and-practice is boring. But thinking, for most students most of the time, is actually fun."
Susan Brookhart (see item #3)

"Students who can self-assess are poised to be life-long learners. They are poised to use self-regulation strategies and to be their own best coaches as they learn. They are able to ask focused questions when they don't understand or when they're stuck."
Susan Brookhart (*ibid*.)

"With the possible exception of *Sesame Street's* Oscar the Grouch, very few of us have the luxury of being able to be completely and utterly ourselves all the time at work."
Susan David (see item #2)

"The key to resilience is trying really hard, then stopping, recovering, and then trying again… Our brains need a rest as much as our bodies do… The value of a recovery period rises in proportion to the amount of work required of us."
Shawn Achor and Michelle Gielan in "Resilience Is About How You Recharge, Not How You Endure" in *Harvard Business Review*, June 24, 2016, http://bit.ly/2d0Zq5L

"If students left the classroom before teachers have made adjustments to their teaching on the basis of what they have learned about students' achievement, then they are already playing catch-up. If teachers do not make adjustments before students come back the next day, it is probably too late."
Dylan Wiliam, 2007

"I wonder if the problem is not that we have our teachers understand the culture of poverty but rather that we have our students understand the culture of success."
Douglas Reeves, 2006

1. Four Secrets of Peak Performance

In this *Harvard Business Review* article, Jim Loehr (LGE Performance Systems) and Tony Schwartz (The Energy Project) explore how leaders can get sustained high performance from their people. "The problem with most approaches, we believe, is that they deal with people only from the neck up," say Loehr and Schwartz, "connecting high performance primarily with cognitive capacity." The strategy they suggest – the performance pyramid – addresses the body, the emotions, the mind, and the spirit. "Each of its levels profoundly influences the others," they say, "and failure to address any one of them compromises performance… Put simply, the best long-term performers tap into positive energy at all levels of the performance pyramid." Here are the four levels:

• *Physical capacity* – Loehr has worked extensively with professional athletes and learned that effective energy management – being able to mobilize energy when it's needed – depends on two things: (a) alternating between intense work and recovery; and (b) developing regular rituals to build in recovery. For example, some professional tennis players use the 15-20 seconds between each point to concentrate on the strings of their racket (to avoid distractions), assume a confident posture, and visualize how they want the next point to play out.

Rituals like this have "startling physiological effects," say Loehr and Schwartz. "When we hooked players up to heart-rate monitors during their matches, the competitors with the most consistent rituals showed dramatic oscillation, their heart rates rising rapidly during play and then dropping as much as 15% to 20% between points. The mental and emotional effects of precise between-points routines are equally significant… By contrast, players who lack between-point rituals, or who practice them inconsistently, become linear – they expend too much energy without recovery. Regardless of their talent or level of fitness, they become more vulnerable to frustration, anxiety, and loss of concentration and far more likely to choke under pressure."

For those of us who are not professional athletes, regular workouts each week, coupled with good nutrition and sleep, make a major difference in work productivity and enjoyment.

• *Emotional capacity* – Positive emotions – feeling calm, challenged, engaged, focused, optimistic, confident – ignite the energy that drives high performance. Conversely, negative emotions – frustration, impatience, anger, fear, resentment, sadness – drain energy. Over time, such emotions can be toxic, elevating heart-rate and blood pressure, building muscle tension,

constricting vision, and crippling performance. Positive emotions have a remarkable impact on reducing physiological stress, whereas negative emotions, even simulated, increase stress. The key, psychologists have found, is to "act as if."

One business leader who was prone to angry outbursts to his colleagues took the initial step of trying to exercise regularly and then adopted a five-step ritual when he felt himself getting upset: Closing his eyes and taking several deep breaths; consciously relaxing the muscles in his face; making an effort to soften his voice and speak more slowly; trying to put himself in the shoes of the person who was the target of his anger, imagining what he or she was feeling; and finally, focusing on framing his response in positive language. The ritual felt awkward at first, like learning a new golf swing, but it made a dramatic difference for the people he worked with and his own state of mind – as well as his effectiveness as a manager.

• *Mental capacity* – The key to improving cognitive work is focus, say Loehr and Schwartz. A big part of that is managing down-time – knowing the body's need for breaks every 90-120 minutes – and using meditation and visualization. "Meditation," they say, "typically viewed as a spiritual practice, can serve as a highly practical means of training attention and promoting recovery. At this level, no guidance from a guru is required. A perfectly adequate meditation technique involves sitting quietly and breathing deeply, counting each exhalation, and starting over when you reach ten… Practiced regularly, meditation quiets the mind, the emotions, and the body, promoting energy recovery." Experienced meditators need considerably less sleep and have enhanced creativity and productivity.

• *Spiritual capacity* – By this, Loehr and Schwartz mean "the energy that is unleashed by tapping into one's deepest values and defining a strong sense of purpose." The spiritual dimension, which can come from religion, philosophy, family, and other sources, "serves as sustenance in the face of adversity and as a powerful source of motivation, focus, determination, and resilience." And it can be quite prosaic. Loehr and Schwartz describe a stressed-out businessman who left for work every morning before his children woke up and came home late, often in an ugly mood. One evening he stopped his car in a park and burst into tears as he thought about what meant the most to him – his wife and three children. When he got home, they were taken aback when he wept and embraced them. From then on, he stopped at the park for ten minutes on his way home every day and was able to be warm and affectionate when he joined his family. As a result of this simple, "spiritual" ritual, he was also happier and more productive at work.

"The Making of a Corporate Athlete" by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in *Harvard Business Review*, January 2001, https://hbr.org/2001/01/the-making-of-a-corporate-athlete

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2. "Emotional Labor" on the Job

"With the possible exception of *Sesame Street's* Oscar the Grouch, very few of us have the luxury of being able to be completely and utterly ourselves all the time at work," says Susan David (Harvard/McLean Institute of Coaching) in this *Harvard Business Review* article. Sometimes, when we're doing work that isn't in synch with how we feel, we have to put on our

professional game face. That effort is known among psychologists as "emotional labor" – remaining energetic and upbeat despite a bad night's sleep, or making pleasant small-talk in an elevator when you're feeling tired and surly.

"Emotional labor is a near-universal part of every job, and of life," says David; "often it's just called being polite." But if politeness is a "surface act" and you're seething inside, suppressing strong emotions, there are real costs, including depression and anxiety, decreased job performance, being abusive to subordinates, burnout, and damage to relationships at home. Here are some workplace conditions that increase emotional labor:

- A mismatch between your personality and what's expected on the job;
- A misalignment of values, especially if what you're asked to do is in conflict with what you believe;
- A workplace culture in which particular ways of expressing emotion are endorsed, or not endorsed.

The ideal, of course, is a job so well suited to who you are that there's no need to suppress emotions. But that rarely happens. If you're in a job that's meaningful and largely aligned with your values, the best way to reduce emotional labor, says David, is to substitute surface acting with what she calls "deep acting." Some tips:

• *Remind yourself why you're in the job you're in*. Connect to your larger purpose, and where the current work fits in. Perhaps you're learning skills that will be useful down the road, or you need health insurance while your children are growing up.

• *Explore "want to" versus "have to" thinking*. What aspects of the job energize you? How can other aspects be made more efficient and pleasant? If this approach doesn't work, maybe a job change is needed.

• *Do some job crafting*. Can you and your boss tweak the work so it's of greater value to you and the organization? Or is there a new project that would be fun and productive?

"Managing the Hidden Stress of Emotional Labor" by Susan David in *Harvard Business Review*, September 8, 2016, https://hbr.org/2016/09/managing-the-hidden-stress-of-emotional-labor

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3. Getting Students Thinking At Higher Levels

(Originally titled "Start with Higher-Order Thinking")

"Memorizing facts is boring," says consultant/author Susan Brookhart in this article in *Educational Leadership*. "Drill-and-practice is boring. But thinking, for most students most of the time, is actually fun." Brookhart suggests four strategies to engage students in higher-order thinking:

• *Open questions* – Every lesson should have two or three of these to highlight key content and thinking skills. Some examples: Ask students to describe similarities and differences that require analysis and reasoning:

- *How are 11 and 16 alike? How are they different?*
- *How was the political climate in President Obama's first term like that in his second and how were they different?*

Another idea: present the work of a fictional student – for example, the student's solution to an algebra problem – and have students analyze it and explain how to fix it. Or ask students to make an argument and explain their reasoning – for example, *Why do you think many people in the U.S. became isolationist right after World War I?* "Probably the simplest suggestion for designing open questions is to ask 'Why?' as often as you can," says Brookhart.

• *Students to respond to one another* – Wait time is important. *Think time, no hands up*, is a good admonition. "If you don't provide enough wait time, you'll get either no responses or surface-level responses," says Brookhart. Another strategy is having students think/pair/share. In all-class discussions, teachers should resist the temptation to comment themselves, instead asking specific follow-up questions to get other students involved. Or start a whole-class discussion and then have students follow up in groups.

• *Students thinking, not just retelling* – All too many student projects are simple regurgitation, says Brookhart – for example, students producing posters showing the natural resources of their state or artistically illustrating one element on the periodic table. "All students have to do is copy information onto their poster, make it colorful and attractive, and voilá, they have a completed assignment, with no evidence of what they understand about their topic," says Brookhart. The way out of this dynamic is posing a thought-provoking problem – for example, ask students to imagine they are astronauts who have been asked decide which planet they'd like to settle on and why. Students look at all eight planets, choose one, and make the case for the choice and the equipment and other steps needed to live there.

Another approach is asking "what if" and "what else" questions to push students to expand or elaborate on what they're studying – for example, *What might have happened in the 1968 presidential election if the U.S. had not been in the Vietnam War?* An even more open-ended question would be to let students choose an election year and develop their own what-if scenarios. In science, rather than a hum-drum project like making a model of the water cycle, ask students, *What else would you need to know about a particular region to predict how the water cycle would function there?* In math, students might be asked for other ways to solve the problem, 46 ÷ 3 using drawings, counters, or different algorithms.

• *Self-assessment* – "Students who can self-assess are poised to be life-long learners," says Brookhart. "They are poised to use self-regulation strategies and to be their own best coaches as they learn. They are able to ask focused questions when they don't understand or when they're stuck." She suggests three ways to help students move to this level.

- Teach students to self-assess with rubrics. It's important that the rubric goes beyond the basic level and stipulates higher-level criteria like stating a position, defending one's reasoning, using supportive details.
- Use confidence ratings. For example, students might be asked to use the "fist of fives" on their chest to indicate how confident they are that they understand a particular term or concept (five fingers means very confident, a fist means no confidence, held close to the chest to avoid embarrassment or peer pressure).
- Have students co-create success criteria. Studying material with which students are familiar, they can jointly create what the teacher and students will look for in their

work. "This higher-order, creative exercise," says Brookhart, "requires students to look at work samples, decide whether they are high or low quality, decide what makes them high-quality or low-quality, and describe those characteristics."

"Start with Higher-Order Thinking" by Susan Brookhart in *Educational Leadership*, October 2016 (Vol. 74, #2, p. 10-15), available for purchase at http://bit.ly/2dqECAZ; Brookhart can be reached at susanbrookhart@bresnan.net.

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4. Student Work Analysis to Improve Teaching, Assessment, and Learning

In this article on her website, consultant Karin Hess suggests analyzing student work in three layers: first *describing* the student work we actually see (or what students tell about it); then *interpreting* what the evidence might mean (specific to the intended purpose); and then *evaluating* what next steps should be taken. Hess outlines how the process of analyzing student work can be helpful to teaching and learning:

• *Purpose #1: Improving the quality of tasks/prompts and scoring guides* – Piloting tasks and looking at student work helps to clarify prompts, make tasks accessible and engaging for all students, trim unnecessary components, modify the wording of scoring rubrics, and tweak questions so they will measure deeper thinking. For example, teachers gave this assessment to kindergarten students: *I saw 4 kindergarten students lined up to go outside to play in the snow. Everyone was wearing boots and a hat. How many boots and hats did I see in all? Show and tell how you know.* By jotting down the details of students' individual responses as they completed the task, teachers gained insights on the task and their students' abilities – for example, one student knows how to count to 8 but not how to write an 8.

• *Purpose #2: Making key instructional decisions* – Observing and taking notes on students' responses to this task gave teachers two specific teaching points. First, the sentence *Show and tell how you know* was unfamiliar to students. Second, watching students complete the task on paper and listening to their thoughts, teachers were quite surprised that students could do as much as they did with the task, changing adult perceptions of what was possible at this point in the school year.

• *Purpose #3: Monitoring progress over time* – A good pre-assessment focuses on the core learning or prerequisite skills that students will need to build on, and teachers can sort and work with students according to what they need to learn to be successful in the unit. Here's how a group of New York City teachers handled a unit on opinion writing with their third graders:

- The pre-assessment asked students to write about a favorite or not-so-favorite holiday and give personal reasons to support their opinions.
- Looking at students' work, teachers saw that most of them wrote an informational summary about holidays, not an opinion.
- Teachers designed lessons that taught the key parts of an opinion piece and how they differ from parts of a summary, also how to locate relevant text evidence to support an opinion.

- The post-assessment asked students to read about a shark scientist, examine facts about two different kinds of sharks, and state and support an opinion about which shark they wanted to study.

The post-assessment allowed teachers to track students' progress writing opinions from the pre-assessment and also measure more-complex skills, including using text-based evidence.

• *Purpose #4: Engaging students in peer- and self-assessment* – One approach is having students look at two pieces of work by other students side by side and asking them (for example):

- What does each student know and understand and where might they improve?
- (With two pieces of work done by the same student at different times) What does the student know now that he or she didn't know how to do as well on the first task? What were the areas of improvement?
- Which piece of work comes closest to the expectations? What's the evidence?

Students can use assessment evidence to set and monitor progress, reflect on themselves as learners, and evaluate the quality of their own work. "Valuing both one's struggles and successes at accomplishing smaller learning targets over time has proven to have a profound influence on deepening motivation, developing independence as a learner, and building what we have come to know as 'a growth mindset,'" says Hess.

• *Purpose #5: Better understanding how learning progresses over time* – Many skills, concepts, and misconceptions revealed in student work analysis are not explicitly addressed in curriculum standards. Looking at students' learning trajectories in interim assessments and student work can guide teachers in the next step that students at different levels of progress need to take.

• *Purpose #6: Building content and pedagogical expertise* – "Teachers give assignments and grade them daily," says Hess, "but it is analyzing evidence in student work that causes teachers to reflect on *how* students learn and how to make their instructional and assessment practices more effective." Teacher teams can establish common understandings of student work quality and measure the effectiveness of their instruction over time. "By the same token," she concludes, "students who engage with rich, strategically-designed tasks on a regular basis learn that finding the answer is not as personally meaningful as knowing how to apply knowledge in new situations and explain the reasoning that supports their thinking."

"Student Work to D-I-E For" by Karin Hess, *Educational Research in Action*, Winter 2016, http://media.wix.com/ugd/5e86bd_0f9ffd8bf4a24aaf87371d9d1bc586cc.pdf

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5. Elements of the Haberman Principal Interview

Martin Haberman's online Star Urban Administrator Questionnaire is designed to predict which candidates for school leadership positions will be successful in diverse, high-poverty schools. There are 104 questions measuring 13 dimensions of school leadership, all based on research on the most effective leaders' behaviors and predispositions. Here are the dimensions with brief descriptions of the positive and negative side of each one:

• *Sensitivity to diversity* – Understanding the pervasive importance of race, ethnicity, class, and gender when interacting with all constituencies in the school community, versus being perceived as unfair and inequitable.

• *Creating a common vision* – Understanding the importance of schoolwide agreement on a common set of goals and objectives as drivers of effective teamwork and cooperation, versus trying to keep colleagues happy by following their preferences.

• *A positive working climate* – Understanding the role of the school leader in dealing with a complex set of interpersonal relationships and fostering professional working conditions, versus running a depersonalized, rule-oriented bureaucracy.

• *Instructional leadership* – Understanding the principal's central role in improving teachers' instructional effectiveness, versus acting as a building manager.

• *Data driven* – Understanding the importance of using solid information to shape school policies on achievement, attendance, suspensions, and other critical areas, versus relying on school traditions, personal charisma, and pleasing colleagues.

• *Product evaluation* – Understanding the importance of looking at student learning results as the criterion for success, versus being process-oriented and focusing on implementation and procedures.

• *Personal accountability* – Understanding the importance of accepting responsibility for student learning and other measures of success, even those that aren't completely under the principal's control, versus holding others accountable for various aspects of the school's program.

• *Responsible leader* – Understanding the importance of taking direct responsibility for performing major functions, versus delegating as much as possible to others and overseeing their work.

• *Expanded role* – Understanding the need to be a leader of a complex community-based, non-profit organization, versus sticking with the traditional principal role within the district bureaucracy.

• *Bottom-up representative* – Seeing the importance of representing the needs of the school to superiors and protecting effective school practices, versus following orders and representing the district's mandates and policies to school staff.

• *Parents with voice* – Understanding the need for parents, caregivers, and the community to be genuine partners with voice, influence, and power in the life of the school, versus seeing them as visitors, homework helpers, and supporters of the school program.

• *Client advocate* – Understanding the role of the principal as an advocate for children, parents, and the community, balancing that role with representing professional staff, versus reflexively supporting teachers and staff in conflict situations.

• *Problem solver* – Seeing the role of school leader as actively and creatively diving into solving problems, versus making final decisions from options that are developed and presented by others.

"The Star Administrator Questionnaire" by Martin Haberman, available at http://habermanfoundation.org/StarAdministratorQuestionnaire.aspx

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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 others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 45 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:

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Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
AMLE Magazine
ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief
Center for Performance Assessment Newsletter
District Administration
Ed. Magazine
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
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 Educational Review
Independent School
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Journal of Staff Development
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Knowledge Quest
Literacy Today
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Perspectives
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Teacher
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children/Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The District Management Journal
The Journal of the Learning Sciences
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal/Learning System/Tools for Schools
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time Magazine
Wharton Leadership Digest