Marshall Memo 255

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
October 13, 2008

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Teachers are notoriously private about what they do in their classrooms."

Wayne Ryan, Washington, D.C. principal, quoted in "New Project Details Low-Income Schools' Avenues to Success" by Stephen Sawchuk in *Education Week*, Oct. 8, 2008 (Vol. 28, #7, p. 1, 12) http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/10/08/07practice.h28.html

"I quickly learned that there is a need to spread the leadership among all the stakeholders in the building. A lot more is accomplished that way."

Wayne Ryan (*ibid.*)

"I'm not loyal to charter schools or traditional public schools. I'm only loyal to results."

Mayor Cory Booker of Newark, quoted in "Fertile Soil for Charters" by Erik Robelen in *Education Week*, Oct. 8, 2008 (Vol. 28, #4, p. 20-23) http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/10/08/07newark_ep.h28.html

"Value-added models provide important information, but that information is error-prone and has a number of other important limitations. Moreover, these methods are still under development, and the various approaches now in use do not always paint the same picture."

Daniel Koretz (see item #1)

"If students score well on math tests but appear bored to tears in math class, take their high scores with a grain of salt, because aversion to mathematics will cost them later in life, even if their eighth-grade scores are good."

Daniel Koretz (*ibid.*)

"My argument is, you don't get to do the creative and visionary work… without having attended to the nuts and bolts of time management, people management, project management – and getting the right thing done in the right order at the right time."

Douglas Reeves (see item #4)

1. Are We Ready for Value-Added Assessment of Teachers?

In this *American Educator* article, Harvard education professor Daniel Koretz provides a thoughtful analysis of value-added models for measuring teacher effectiveness. Koretz says that value-added is superior to the two models used by many schools and districts over the last 30 years, which is why there is such favorable buzz about it. Here's a comparison of how each approach analyzes the achievement of a hypothetical fifth-grade teacher's class:

- *Status models* look at the test scores of her students this year (usually the percent proficient and above) and compare them to national averages or other fifth grade classes;
- *Cohort-to-cohort change models* compare the scores of the teacher's students this year to those of the students she had last year (not the same group);
- *Value-added models* compare her students' achievement this year to the same students' achievement last year.

The status and cohort-to-cohort models are unfair to the teacher if students enter her classroom with low achievement. Proponents of value-added assessment say it does a better job measuring the teacher's impact because it measures students' progress "on her watch," holding her accountable for what she contributed to their growth.

Not so fast, says Koretz. Value-added, while clearly superior to the two other approaches, is not perfect, and he identifies six areas of concern:

• *Scope* – Standardized tests measure only a subset of knowledge and skills in a few subject areas (usually reading and math) and don't measure motivation, curiosity, creativity, or the ability to work in groups. In addition, for value-added assessment to be valid, tests need to be vertically scaled through the grades to allow valid comparisons of growth. Not many state tests meet this criterion, which narrows the range of subjects for which value-added models will work.

• *Alignment* – Koretz points out that what's taught in different classrooms is not always perfectly aligned to what state tests measure. For example, one 7^{th}-grade classroom might be covering algebra while another focuses on arithmetic, yet all students take the same state test. Depending on what the state test covers, one class would lose out in a value-added analysis. There's also the question of whether the same achievement gain at different points on an achievement scale – for example, moving from 500 to 540 versus moving from 700 to 740 on the SAT math test – are comparable.

• *Precision* – All measures of student achievement have a margin of error, based on the size of the sample (small classes are more prone to fluctuations from year to year) and variations based on the questions asked, fluctuations in students' performance from day to day, and inconsistencies in scoring. It's therefore impossible to be truly precise in measuring a teacher's impact. "We may be able to identify some teachers whose students show higher- or lower-than-average gains," says Koretz, "but it does not seem that we can be much more precise than that. For example, if we wanted to rebuke or intervene with teachers in the bottom decile in terms of growth or reward those in the top decile, we would often select the wrong teachers." The only way to overcome this is to look at several years of value-added data.

• *Technical issues* – Calculating value-added is highly technical. There are different ways of dealing with these issues, and the devil is in the details. "The choice among methods can matter," says Koretz. "It can influence, sometimes substantially, how a school or teacher is rated." One of the most difficult to untangle is the lingering impact of highly effective teachers from previous years – a good thing, but it needs to be taken into account to get a true sense of the impact of *this* year's teacher. There's also the question of how to deal with gaps in some students' past achievement data. And then there's the fact that students at different levels of achievement grow at different rates, even with identical teachers. This means that a fair comparison of teachers must take into account the expected growth trajectories for different students based on their performance several years back.

• *Other influences on achievement growth* – The teacher is not the only factor influencing student achievement during the year. There's also parent support and attitudes, peer influences, special needs, health issues, etc., and it's very difficult for value-added models to disentangle them. Also, the same teacher may do better with one type of student than another (Koretz says that he's noticed this in his own teaching). Finally, there's the phenomenon of interference, where students whom researchers have neatly separated into control and experimental groups have the audacity to interact with each other during the school day, on the bus, and at home, contaminating the results.

• *Score inflation* – Student scores on high-stakes standardized tests have a tendency to move up every year the test is given, often more than students' actual achievement. "Research has shown score inflation is widespread and that it can be very large," says Koretz. "Some studies have found score gains that are three to five times as large as they should be, and others have found large score gains that were not accompanied by any meaningful improvements at all." The only way to combat this problem is by using multiple measures and strengthening the role of human judgment in the evaluation of teachers and schools.

Where does this leave us? Koretz says there is no question that value-added models are superior to the alternatives and we should continue to refine them. But they are not a silver bullet. The bottom line: "Value-added models provide important information," he says, "but that information is error-prone and has a number of other important limitations. Moreover, these methods are still under development, and the various approaches now in use do not always paint the same picture." Here are his recommendations:

- Use value-added assessment where it is most appropriate, for example, in elementary school reading or math.
- To use value-added assessment, state tests must have a vertical scale that allows for comparisons from one grade to the next.
- Be aware of the lack of precision involved in value-added assessment. "Efforts to graft [value-added models] onto grade-specific tests and standards are bad practice," says Koretz.
- Use value-added assessment primarily to compare classes or schools that start at fairly similar levels of performance.
- Don't use test scores as the sole focus of the accountability system.
- "Evaluate, evaluate, and evaluate more," says Koretz, by which he means evaluate the accountability program.

"A Measured Approach" by Daniel Koretz in *American Educator*, Fall 2008 (Vol. 32, #3, p. 18-23, 26-27, 39) http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/fall2008/koretz.pdf

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2. Test Preparation: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

In this sidebar in the *American Educator* article summarized above, Daniel Koretz tackles the issue of test preparation and goes much deeper than the usual debates about "teaching to the test." He believes there are seven ways educators have tried to prepare students to do better on high-stakes tests:

- Teaching more effectively – better curriculum materials and teaching methods;
- Increasing instructional time;
- Working harder;
- Reallocating instructional resources – shifting the best teachers to testing grades or increasing classroom time, homework, and parental nagging;
- Alignment – making sure what's tested is what's taught;
- Coaching students on test-taking skills;
- Cheating.

Koretz says the first three are all positive ways to improve student achievement (within reason – he doesn't believe in eliminating elementary-school recess), and cheating is clearly unethical and does nothing to improve real achievement. But what about the other three? Each, he says, can produce real gains – or illusory test-score inflation – depending on how it's handled:

• *Reallocation of resources* – Whether this produces true learning gains depends on what gets more emphasis and what gets less. For example, if a ninth-grade interim assessment shows that students are having difficulty with solving basic algebraic equations, it makes sense for teachers to spend more time on algebraic equations. But what if this takes time away from Topic B? If Topic B isn't emphasized on this particular test, students' overall scores will rise – but at the expense of their understanding of Topic B. If a subsequent test *does* emphasize Topic B, scores will plummet. In other words, reallocation of resources can lead teachers to rob Peter

to pay Paul. This is also true of shifting teachers to high-stakes testing grades; if it results in mediocre instruction in other grades, students in the school will not have gained in the long run.

• *Alignment* – Of course what's taught should line up with what's tested, says Koretz. But since tests can only cover a subset of the total curriculum, he worries that alignment can result in teachers skimping on important segments of the curriculum. Alignment is bad if it means that students aren't taught content and skills they'll need later on.

• *Coaching* – Before primary-grade students' first encounter with bubbling in multiple-choice answers, it's good to spend a small amount of time familiarizing them with the process. "Most often, however, coaching students either wastes time or inflates scores," says Koretz. This is especially true of teaching students how to game tests – for example, eliminating one or two incorrect answers and guessing among the remaining options. This inflates scores because it works only on multiple-choice items and doesn't reveal students' true knowledge of the material – meaning that scores won't represent students' real knowledge of the domain.

"So what distinguishes good and bad test prep?" asks Koretz. "The acid test is whether the gains in scores produced by test preparation truly represent meaningful gains in student achievement… Gains that are specific to a particular test and that do not generalize to other measures of the domain and to performance in the real world are worthless." Koretz worries that inordinate pressure on teachers to raise scores on a few tests will produce inflated scores and unwise classroom practices, including drilling old test items, inappropriate narrowing of instruction, and reliance on test-taking tricks.

Koretz is at pains to emphasize that he supports increased accountability in U.S. schools. But he wants a system that "maximizes real gains and minimizes bogus gains and other negative side effects." He suggests using test scores as a starting point and paying attention to other evidence of school quality. "If students score well on math tests but appear bored to tears in math class, take their high scores with a grain of salt," he concludes, "because aversion to mathematics will cost them later in life, even if their eighth-grade scores are good… A test score is just one indicator of what a student has learned – an exceptionally useful one in many ways, but nonetheless one that is unavoidably incomplete and somewhat error-prone."

"Measuring Up: What Educational Testing Really Tells Us" by Daniel Koretz in *American Educator*, Fall 2008 (Vol. 32, #3, p. 22-25); this sidebar is adapted from Koretz's new book, *Measuring Up: What Educational Testing Really Tells Us* (Harvard Education Press, 2008)
http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/fall2008/koretz.pdf

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3. Failure Is Not An Option: The A-B-I Grading System

In this article in *Middle Ground*, Massachusetts middle-school reading teacher Eileen Dame describes how she struggled with the effort-versus-knowledge grading dilemma. How should she mark students who behaved in class and dutifully did their work but didn't understand the material? And how should she mark students who refused to jump through the

hoops but demonstrated mastery on the final test? "Just what are grades supposed to measure anyway?" she asks. "What is fair; what is useful?" She also says she had failed to actualize her belief that all students can succeed. She encouraged failing students to re-take their tests, but none took her up on the offer.

Then Dame stumbled upon the A-B-I grading system (in *Effort and Excellence in Urban Classrooms: Expecting – and Getting – Success for All Students* (Teachers College Press, 2002) by Dickson Corbett, Bruce Wilson, and Belinda Williams) and "fell in love." A year after adopting it, she believes it's the best teaching decision she's ever made. Now there are only three grades in her class:

A = 90%+ Every assignment is done well, plus extra-credit projects done well;

B = 85% The basics, every assignment done well;

I = Incomplete; one or more assignments missing or not yet done well.

Students are required to complete and submit every assignment, no matter how late. Each student must achieve at least mastery (85%) on each assignment – otherwise it must be re-done. Only students who are on top of their work are allowed to submit extra-credit projects, and they can't be substituted for regular assignments. Students with incomplete assignments can continue to work on them after the marking period ends. When all assignments are satisfactorily completed, the Incomplete is changed to a B.

"The message behind A-B-I grading is that every student will succeed," says Dame. "Some may learn quickly, others will take longer, but every student will succeed… I have to believe that every assignment is work worth doing, worth tracking, worth chasing. This has made me a better teacher. I have traded quantity for quality, demanding fewer, more meaningful assignments." Parents loved the policy, she says. The one parent who was initially resistant swung around when Dame explained it to her.

But doesn't giving students more time undermine their sense of responsibility? "Yes, I want to help my students become organized and responsible," she says. "However, I will not penalize them for continued struggles in these areas. My job is to improve reading skills. Therefore, I grade my students on reading skills… There is nothing about timeliness of submitted assignments, one-try-only testing, or orderliness of binders in my state frameworks." Instead, her message to students is:

- Your responsibility is to do all assigned work.
- Ignored work doesn't disappear.
- A job poorly done must be done again.
- The more I have to nag you, the more your Effort grade suffers.
- Detentions are doled out those who fall behind.

Dame says grading is much easier – just three choice points and no fussing over small percentage differences.

Dame concedes that the A-B-I grading system has some downsides. Here's how she describes them:

- Severe special needs – Students with disabilities can fail – or be given bogus mercy grades – if they are not receiving support services.

- Reprioritizing – Dame says that students who have more stringent on-time demands from other teachers tend to do her work last. She hasn't solved this problem.
- Extra work for the teacher – Grading late re-done papers is time-consuming, but Dame believes it's better than calculating percentages.
- When the fat lady sings – Students who haven't caught up by the summer get the grade they deserve. Dame now gives a 55 for each incomplete, meaning that a student with three incomplete quarters gets a failing 62.5 (65 is passing in her school).

"Trying Out a Different Idea: The ABI Grading System" by Eileen Dame in *Middle Ground*, October 2008 (Vol. 12, #2, p. 19-20), no e-link available; Dame can be reached at adame@charter.net.

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4. Douglas Reeves on Teacher Leadership

In this interview with Patti Kinney in *Principal Leadership*, author/consultant Douglas Reeves shares his ideas on teacher leadership. Some highlights:

• Reeves thinks a powerful one-two punch is teacher leadership *and* action research. In fact, he says, "teacher leadership without action research doesn't really lead to changes in professional practice, and action research without teacher leadership winds up as interesting data that is not applied in the classroom. You're got to have both to make it work."

• He warns against making a false dichotomy between leadership and management. "Whether you're talking about the leader of a large, complex school system or the leader in a classroom, all sorts of routines and protocols – plain old garden-variety management – have a lot to do with allowing us to be successful and creative," he says. "My argument is, you don't get to do the creative and visionary work… without having attended to the nuts and bolts of time management, people management, project management – and getting the right thing done in the right order at the right time."

• He says that one-shot workshops often have little impact, and suggests a seven-to-one rule: for every hour spent in a workshop, seven hours should be spent implementing the ideas in the classroom.

• Reeves is a strong proponent of principals handling routine announcements via e-mail and staff memos and using faculty meetings to look at student work, redesign rubrics, create common assessments, and work on interdisciplinary assessments.

• The three barriers to changing a school's culture and practices are blame, bureaucracy, and baloney, says Reeves. On the first, he acknowledges that poverty, language difficulties, unsafe housing, poor nutrition, and family challenges all matter, but the take-away for educators should be, *Even though all these things are important, there's a lot I can do in the classroom. I can make a difference through a challenging curriculum, great instruction, and immediate feedback to students.*

• On bureaucracy, Reeves says that superintendents and other leaders need to get people out of their silos and sharing ideas across functional teams.

• On baloney, he says, "I hear the most astonishing claims made, preceded by 'research shows that,' and 'studies show that,' with nary a footnote." Sometimes, the evidence is just one person's experience. We can do better than that, says Reeves.

• He suggests that teachers keep a weekly journal on two students: one who is struggling, one who is doing well, recording what's happening each week and what interventions are and are not working. Talking about these journals in meetings can be excellent professional development.

• Teachers' willingness to talk honestly with colleagues and learn from them is vital to effective schools, says Reeves. The best professional conversations spring from statements like, "I'm really frustrated about what's not working with the students. I've tried this, I've tried this, and I've tried this. But I noticed that you've had success. How would you approach this?" Schools need to create a climate in which teachers are willing to acknowledge classroom problems, reach out to colleagues, and share best practices – all driven by actual assessment results, publicly displayed.

• On principal burnout, Reeves suggests that we have to dial back 24/7 expectations and "knock off the notion that if you didn't show up for every athletic event and every other activity, no matter how early or late, you somehow disrespected the team and the mascot." He also suggests sabbaticals for principals every seven or eight years.

"Transforming Teacher Leadership: A Conversation with Douglas Reeves" by Patti Kinney in *Principal Leadership*, October 2008 (Vol. 9, #2, p. 20-24), no e-link available

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5. Websites for Classroom Study of the Presidential Election

In this *Education Week* article, Kathleen Kennedy Manzo describes the way some secondary history teachers are using online tools to enliven the study of the presidential election. "We are looking at the presidential election not as passionate individuals, but as historians," says Gamal Sherif, a Philadelphia high-school teacher. "The aim is to get a better understanding of the political process they are witnessing… and to employ scholarly strategies to present information in a clear and organized manner."

The goal is to help students digest information from the Internet, analyze issues, and put this election in historical context. Sherif's ninth graders have been viewing online footage of candidates on the campaign trail and in the debates, using text-mapping to analyze speeches, interviews, and campaign websites, working with interactive maps of electoral vote projections, and drawing on impartial sources like Factcheck.org to document each side's positions on major issues.

One difficulty is security firewalls that sometimes prevent the use of YouTube and other sources. Some teachers have created their own Web pages to collect useful resources for easy access. Among the sources that have proved useful:

• The Living Room Candidate, sponsored by the Museum for the Moving Image, provides clips of campaign commercials from 1952 to the present, also background and historical information on campaign advertising: http://www.livingroomcandidate.org.

• National Association for Media Literacy provides suggestions for teaching about the election: http://namle.net/resources/teaching-the-2008.

• Glassbooth has an online quiz to analyze a user's positions on various issues and see which candidate is the closest match: http://www.glassbooth.org.

• A presidential election Wiki, with resources and Web links, administered by Joyce Valenza of Springfield Township High School in Pennsylvania: http://presidentialelection.wikispaces.com.

• YouTube has a channel dedicated to the election with clips of candidates in action and commentary by a variety of pundits: http://www.youtube.com/youchoose.

• Media Construction of Presidential Campaigns from Project Look Sharp at Ithaca College has a detailed teacher's guide and downloads for units on media issues in campaigns since 1800: http://ithaca.edu/looksharp/mcpcweb.

• Access, Analyze, Act was created at Temple University as part of A Blueprint for 21st Century Civic Engagement from the Public Broadcasting Service. This site has teacher's guides for teaching media literacy, critical thinking, communication, and technology skills: http://www.pbs.org/teachers/vote2008.

• Factcheck.org is a searchable website at the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. It monitors the factual accuracy of presidential campaign statements, advertisements, interviews, and debates: http://www.factcheck.org.

• eLections is an online multimedia game from Cable in the Classroom in which players are candidates and choose their party affiliation and positions, then analyze polling maps and devise campaign strategies: http://www.ciconline.org/elections.

"Historic Election and New Tech Tools Yield Promising Vistas for Learning" by Kathleen Kennedy Manzo in *Education Week*, Oct. 8, 2008 (Vol. 28, #7, p. 1, 9)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/10/08/07curriculum_ep.h28.html

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6. Insights on During-Instruction Assessments

In this *Middle Ground* article, Virginia-based teacher trainer Rick Wormeli shares his wisdom on assessments conducted as instruction unfolds:

• Students, especially those who are not doing well, need to know what they are learning, why, and how they are doing. "Over the years," he writes, "I noticed that students who repeatedly struggled were the least likely to know where they stood against the lesson's goals."

• Teachers need to expand their repertoire of in-the-moment assessments and incorporate them in lesson plans. Some possibilities: quick-writes, exit cards, oral responses to clarifying questions, "clicker" questions, generating metaphors and analogies, completing

graphic organizers, practice problems and sentences, skill demonstrations, think-alouds, and the teacher observing body language and facial expressions.

• A good way to come up with during-instruction assessments is breaking down the standards and asking what students should know and be able to do at the end of the unit or the year. For example, if the summative assessment will ask students to translate an English paragraph into Spanish with correct vocabulary, verb conjugation, sentence structure, and other nuances of the Spanish language, during-instruction assessments might include: conjugating regular and irregular verbs; translating single sentences; defining vocabulary terms; identifying errors in others' translations and correcting them; and justifying pronoun/verb/noun/adjective sequences. If students will be asked to think of novel applications in the summative assessment, they should be thrown regular "curve balls" on applying the concepts during the unit.

• It's vital that students get detailed, helpful feedback on all these assessments – but Wormeli feels strongly that it shouldn't be in the form of letter grades or percentages. The point is for students to be able to make mistakes and learn from them without fearing a final judgment on their proficiency. If students will try hard only on graded assignments, something is wrong; the assignment needs to be made more engaging, or other learning problems need to be addressed.

• Teachers who use during-instruction assessments effectively have a distinctive approach to instruction, says Wormeli: "A basic tenet in this mindset is that teaching and learning are interactive, not one-way streets. Students learn how to learn for themselves using teacher and classmate connections, and teachers adjust instruction in light of evidence gathered in assessments."

"Staying Focused on Formative Assessment" by Rick Wormeli in *Middle Ground*, October 2008 (Vol. 12, #2, p. 41-42), no e-link; Wormeli can be reached at rwormeli@cox.net.

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7. Children Choose Their Favorite Books

Every year, about 12,500 children ages 5-13 read thousands of new children's books and choose the ones they like the best. Here are their top choices for 2008:

Grades K-2:

• *Dino-Dinners* by Mick Manning and Brita Granstrom (Holiday House)
• *Five Little Monkeys Go Shopping* by Eileen Christelow (Clarion)
• *Frankie Stein* by Lola Schaefer, illustrated by Kevan Atteberry (Marshall Cavendish)
• *Three Little Fish and the Big Bad Shark* by Ken Geist and Julia Gorton (Cartwheel)
• *Tucker's Spooky Halloween* by Leslie McGuirk (Candlewick)

Grades 3-4:

• *Babymouse: Camp Babymouse* by Jennifer Holm and Matthew Holm (Random House)
• *Big Cats* by Elaine Landau (Enslow)

• *Monday with a Mad Genius* by Mary Pope Osborne, illustrated by Sal Murdocca (Random House)
• *The Richest Poor Kid* by Carl Sommer, illustrated by Jorge Martinez (Advance)
• *Wolves* by Duncan Searl, illustrated with photographs (Bearport)

Grades 5-6:

• *Beowulf* by Paul Storrie, illustrated by Ron Randall (Lerner)
• *Encyclopedia Horrifica* by Joshua Gee (Scholastic)
• *Ghosts* by Stephen Krensky (Lerner)
• *The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley* by Colin Thompson, illustrated by Amy Lissiat (Kane/Miller)
• *When the Shadbush Blooms* by Carla Messinger with Susan Katz, illustrated by David Kanietakeron Fadden (Tricycle)

"Kids Stuff the Ballot Box" in *Reading Today*, October/November 2008 (Vol. 26, #2, 34); these are the most popular books; a PDF of the full list is available at http://www.reading.org/downloads/choices/cc2008_bookmark.pdf .

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8. Recommendations for New Children's Books

In this *Reading Today* feature, former ELA teacher David Richardson recommends nine Fall-oriented children's books with "stunning illustrations, witty text, and a variety of fascinating and enlightening topics":

• *Gorgonzola: A Very Stinkysaurus* by Margie Palatini, illustrated by Tim Bowers (Katherine Tegen Books, 2008) ages 4 and up
• *The Black Book of Colors* by Menena Cottin, illustrated by Rosana Faria (Groundwood, 2008) ages 5 and up
• *Bad Kitty Gets a Bath* by Nick Bruel (Roaring Brook, 2008) ages 7 and up
• *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (Scholastic, 2008) ages 12 and up
• *The Floating Circus* by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer (Bloomsbury, 2008) ages 10 and up
• *Highway Cats* by Janet Taylor Lisle, illustrated by David Frankland (Philomel, 2008) ages 9 and up
• *Standing on My Own Two Feet* by Tamara Schmitz (Price Stern Sloan, 2008) ages 3 and up
• *No Mush Today* by Sally Derby, illustrated by Nicole Tadgell (Lee & Low, 2008) ages 4 and up
• *The Princess Gown* by Linda Leopold Strauss, illustrated by Malene Reynolds Laugesen (Houghton Mifflin, 2008) all ages

"Children's Book Reviews" by David Richardson in *Reading Today*, October/November 2008 (Vol. 26, #2, p. 30), no e-link available

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9. Short Items:

a. Review of Accelerated Math – This brief *Education Week* article reports on a recent finding by What Works Clearinghouse, the federal group that provides "Consumer Reports" on curriculum materials, that Accelerated Math, a popular middle-school software program, has "no discernible effect" on student achievement.

"What Works Clearinghouse Dings 'Accelerated Math' Program" by Sean Cavanagh in *Education Week*, Oct. 8, 2008 (Vol. 28, #7, p. 4)

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b. Caution on calculators – This *Education Week* article by Sean Cavanagh reports on a recent study of the use of calculators in classrooms. The study found (a) When students who haven't mastered multiplication use calculators, their performance gets worse; (b) When students who have a solid grasp of multiplication use calculators, their math achievement isn't affected one way or the other; and (c) Students who have mastered multiplication can solve more problems and make fewer errors when they use calculators. Vanderbilt professor Bethany Rittle-Johnson, a co-author of the study, said this suggests that students should master basic computational skills before using calculators.

"Use of Calculators" by Sean Cavanagh in *Education Week*, Oct. 8, 2008 (Vol. 28, #7, p. 5); the study, "When Generating Answers Benefits Arithmetic Skill: The Importance of Prior Knowledge" by Bethany Rittle-Johnson and Alexander Oleksij Kmicikewycz is in the *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*.

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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).

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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
Changing Schools (McREL)
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
Teacher Magazine (online)
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Language Educator
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools/The Learning Principal