Marshall Memo 303

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
September 28, 2009

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Our very planet has been transformed (for good and for ill) by science's power to reveal how the world really works. Ensuring that everyone makes first-person contact with the actual human source of this power isn't just good public policy; it meets a deep human need to connect with the world we all share."
Joshua Roth (see item #1)

"Establish social norms in the classroom that value the search for understanding and allow students and teachers to feel comfortable making mistakes while engaged in learning."
Steven Turner (see item #4)

"[T]he compositions they do in school is what they call *writing*, but what they do outside of school is a different practice that they call *communication*… To them, school writing is not writing for other human beings who respond, but rather an exercise in test taking."
Kathleen Blake Yancey (see item #6)

"My text message policy is not another thing to do. It is a smarter thing to do."
High-school principal Susan Stone Kessler, who texts with 2,000 students (see item #8)

"Perhaps feeling successful was the medicine Billy needed."
Joshua Patterson, Mindy Connolly, and Shirley Ritter (see item #7)

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1. Why Physics Matters

In this article in *Sky and Telescope* magazine, Massachusetts physics teacher Joshua Roth remembers that when he was in high school in the late 1970s, science courses (especially physics) were regarded as "curricular boot camps designed to separate from the rest of humanity those who might have the technical chops to send men to the Moon. These courses also did a very good job of excluding women and minorities." Roth is happy to report that his current 1,100-student high school has three full-time physics teachers and almost all students take physics.

This is great, says Roth, not just because of what it does for America's global competitiveness, and not just because it nurtures citizens who can cast a critical eye on astrology and perpetual motion machines. The most important reason, he believes, is that "it is our birthright to know how science has transformed our lives, our culture, our language – even our dreams. For if no one's education is complete without reading Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, without having a familiarity with Shakespeare's *King Lear*, without hearing King's "I Have a Dream" speech, without reading Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, it likewise is incomplete without knowing that:

- Galileo Galilei made his own telescope and used it to unearth evidence for a Sun-centered cosmos;
- Michael Faraday, a self-taught physicist, discovered the basis for generating electrical power;
- Marie Curie discerned the existence of two previously unknown chemical elements;
- Henrietta Swan Leavitt enabled generations of astronomers to reliably chart the universe's expansion."

"Likewise," Roth concludes, "no one's education is complete without first-person, hands-on experiences that allow the individual to discover for one's self how falling bodies accelerate, how electric charges can be separated and put to work, and how the chemical makeup of distant stars can be read with telescopes and diffraction gratings. Our very planet has been transformed (for good and for ill) by science's power to reveal how the world really works. Ensuring that everyone makes first-person contact with the actual human source of this power isn't just good public policy; it meets a deep human need to connect with the world we all share."

"Physics as a Liberal Art: Culture, Not Cash, Is the Real Payoff from Studying Science" by Joshua Roth in *Sky and Telescope*, November 2009 (Vol. 118, #5, p. 86), no e-link available; Roth's blog is at http://whsrothphysix.blogspot.com.

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2. Middle-School Students Watch a Play About Drinking and Smoking

In this *Middle School Journal* article, a team of nine researchers describes a Florida community's decision to write and perform a play in nine middle schools aimed at preventing students from using tobacco and alcohol. A survey of local students in grades 6-10 had shown local leaders that:

- Students were intrigued with what they considered benefits of alcohol and tobacco: having fun, the "buzz", reaping emotional/coping benefits, and, with tobacco, improving one's social image.
- Students were aware of the costs: getting caught, becoming addicted, and, with alcohol, looking dumb.
- Students had formed impressions of peers who drink and smoke – not all of them negative;
- Students didn't want to be lectured on the subject.

Based on these findings, planners decided on four objectives for their theater project:

- Emphasize that a large majority of youth choose not to drink and smoke;
- Promote assertiveness and develop students' self-efficacy in refusing offers of tobacco and alcohol;
- Increase awareness of the benefits of not drinking and not smoking;
- Increase awareness of the consequences of underage drinking and depict underage drinkers as immature and less in control of their lives.

To meet these goals, a 30-minute play titled *The End of Summer* was written, checked out with various stakeholders, and performed 16 times by local high-school students. Teachers were given information packets beforehand. The plot was as follows: a 15-year-old girl invites three girlfriends for a sleepover to celebrate the end of summer and the beginning of high school. No adults are in the house. The girl's older brother and a friend (who is drunk) crash the party and pressure the girls to drink and smoke. One of the girls whose mother is an alcoholic refuses to take part, but another girl who wants to appear cool gives in. Ultimately, one of the characters is killed as the intoxicated boy and his friend drive home from the party.

After each performance, the actors answered questions from the middle-school students in the audience, some of whom spoke to the actors as if they were still in character.

What was the impact of the play? The researchers conducted a survey of 811 students who had watched it and had several hundred students write letters to cast members. About 31 percent of responding students said they had tried cigarette smoking and 44 percent had tried alcohol. The surveys and letters showed that students felt the play was realistic and compelling. Among the messages that came through from the play were:

- It's not necessary to drink or smoke to be popular or cool.
- Both knowledge and ignorance affect kids' decisions on smoking and drinking.
- Fear of disappointing parents and getting in trouble affect decisions on drinking and smoking.

The authors conclude that this kind of live theater performed by credible, local teenage actors can have a significant impact on students' thinking about drinking and smoking.

"A Theater-as-Education Project Discourages Tobacco and Alcohol Use" by Bethany Bell-Ellison, Melinda Forthofer, Robert McDermott, Lauren Zapata, Jodi Nearns, K.T. Curran, Susan Calkins, Carol Bryant, and Kelli McCormack Brown in *Middle School Journal*, September 2009 (Vol. 41, #1, p. 11-19), no e-link available; Bell-Ellison can be reached at bellb@mailbox.sc.edu.

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3. Dealing with Adolescents' Test and Performance Anxiety

In this *Principal Leadership* article, Indiana University psychology professor Thomas Huberty says that test anxiety can seriously impair some students' performance, even when they are well prepared. "My mind goes blank," said one 14-year-old girl. "I get shaky. I get sweaty and red." In some cases, teachers are critical of anxious students, accusing them of being lazy, unmotivated, or less competent than their peers. Some anxious students act out as a way of avoiding the embarrassment of failure.

Cognitive characteristics of anxiety include problems with concentration, memory, attention, oversensitivity, difficulty solving problems, and cognitive dysfunctions like distortion and deficiencies. Behavioral characteristics of anxiety include motor restlessness, fidgeting, task avoidance, rapid speech, erratic behavior, irritability, withdrawal, perfectionism, lack of participation, failure to complete tasks, and seeking easy tasks. Physiological markers of anxiety include tics, recurrent localized pain, rapid heart rate, skin flushing, perspiration, headaches, muscle tension, difficulty sleeping, nausea, and enuresis.

Huberty says it's important to distinguish between "state anxiety", which means being anxious in particular situations like tests or oral presentations, and "trait anxiety", which means being pervasively anxious. Students with trait anxiety may have significant emotional problems that are precursors to depression (this is especially true of adolescent girls) and may need a psychologist's help.

Huberty says it's important for principals to understand and communicate to staff that test anxiety is a real psychological issue and doesn't mean a student is lazy, unmotivated, or incompetent. Inservice training can help teachers understand the nature of anxiety so they can identify students with particularly acute anxiety issues and get them the support they need. Counselors and other support staff can help in a number of ways:

- Providing relaxation training;
- Using desensitization, pre-task rehearsals, and practice tests to help students deal with anxiety-producing situations;
- Breaking tasks down into smaller units;
- Using mnemonic devices to boost memory;
- Teaching students "cognitive scripts", self-monitoring strategies, positive self-talk, and self-relaxation;

- Using alternative assessments, modifying time constraints in tests, and recognizing effort as well as performance;
- Emphasizing success and avoiding criticism, sarcasm, or punishment for performance problems.

Huberty also suggests providing parents with similar information, since parental pressure can heighten students' anxiety levels.

"Test and Performance Anxiety" by Thomas Huberty in *Principal Leadership*, September 2009 (Vol. 10, #1, p. 12-16), no e-link available; Huberty can be reached at huberty@indiana.edu.

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4. The Right Kind of Test Preparation

In this *Middle School Journal* article, Kent State professor Steven Turner takes note of the potential harm that anxiety about high-stakes tests and inappropriate test prep can do and frames the dilemma that educators face: "They must prepare their students for the tests without compromising what they know to be true about effective teaching and learning." Turner believes there are five ethical and appropriate ways that schools can meet both goals:

• *Teaching to the curriculum and integrating test content* – This means aligning instruction with state standards and what students will be tested on. It does not mean "teaching to the test" in the sense of overly narrowing the curriculum and drilling students on test items all the time. Rather, it means having students learn appropriate curriculum material in different contexts – learning centers, presentations, textbook chapters, and independent study, and building a word wall of content-specific academic vocabulary. Turner suggests finding out what students already know before beginning curriculum units to avoid wasting time. Differentiating instruction also helps bring the standards to all students in a manageable fashion.

• *Integrating assessment approaches and item formats* – State tests use a variety of items to tap factual, inferential, application, evaluation, and opinion, and teachers are wise to give students practice demonstrating their knowledge and skills in multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, true-false, essay, story, or presentation items. Turner also recommends teaching students to scrutinize assessment items for key words, practice evaluating their own work, and explain why correct answers are right and incorrect answers are wrong, and occasionally take classroom tests using a separate answer sheet.

• *Reviewing test-taking strategies* – Teachers should study previous versions of high-stakes tests and discern what students must know, understand, and do to be successful – including knowledge of test-specific terminology. In addition, here are some specific test-taking skills that students should know:

- Always check to make sure the right answers are marked on answer sheets and the intended bubbles are filled in.
- Completely erase any wrong answers and stray marks.
- On math tests, estimate answers and always check computation.

- Use the process of elimination with multiple-choice items.
- Skip difficult items and create a place mark to return to them later.
- With difficult items, make informed guesses rather than skipping them entirely.
- With written essay responses, sketch out a web or brief outline first.
- Before reading a reading passage, read the questions.

During the year, students should have plenty of practice following directions on their own, including multi-part instructions, so they can handle these independently on the test.

• *Spreading out and integrating test preparation* – "Cramming content instruction or one-shot test preparation just before the test have not been found to be effective or helpful strategies in any context," says Turner. A much more effective approach is spreading out and integrating preparation into regular instruction throughout the year. This should include emphasizing literacy skills, having students read passages of increasing length, challenging them with open-ended questions and constructed responses, and involving students in using rubrics to score their own work. Turner says that students should have practice with Bloom's levels – recall, comprehension, application, analysis, and synthesis. He also advises that teachers look at their students' in-class tests and homework diagnostically, searching for weaknesses that can be remedied before high-stakes tests take place. In addition, he says, "Establish social norms in the classroom that value the search for understanding and allow students and teachers to feel comfortable making mistakes while engaged in learning."

• *Fostering student motivation for test taking* – If students aren't motivated to do their best, they will mark answers randomly, finish tests quickly and carelessly, and fail to do their best critical thinking. Turner says that teachers should demonstrate a positive "can-do" attitude when discussing the tests with students and parents and talk up the importance of big-deal tests – while urging students and families to keep them in perspective. Here are other suggestions for building motivation:

- Avoid competition among students as a motivational tool; it often backfires and adds to students' stress.
- Establish individual learning goals in which students are invested.
- Create authentic connections between the curriculum and students' personal experiences.
- Hold family activity nights that emphasize important academic concepts and the fun of learning rather than the stress of testing.
- Provide strategy instruction that includes scaffolding, hurdle help, extended guided practice, and useful mnemonics.
- Make sure parents understand the nature of the tests their children are taking and how they can help at home.

"Ethical and Appropriate High-Stakes Test Preparation in Middle School: Five Methods That Matter" by Steven Turner in *Middle School Journal*, September 2009 (Vol. 41, #1, p. 36-45), no e-link available; Turner can be reached at sturner6@kent.edu.

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5. Rethinking the Ways We Teach and Assess Literacy in the Digital Age

In this *Education Week* commentary article, Kentucky middle-school teacher Paul Barnwell notes the mismatch between his students' constant chatter about Facebook, blogs, music websites, online photo albums, and other forms of new media and the standardized tests they are required to take. NCLB and state tests focus only on print media and don't reflect the reality of our time, says Barnwell. "We must be open to the idea that how and why students read and write is in flux… It's time for the accountability movement to demand that schools teach and foster responsible student use of new literacy forms… I want my students to be able to assess the validity of a Web site. I want them to watch thought-provoking YouTube clips and understand the point of view and potential bias of the presentation. I want students to read blogs and understand how or why certain images and videos are embedded within the text. I want them to be able to listen to podcasts and write down three features of the presentation that affect its tone and message." Mastering these new literacies, says Barnwell, is important to becoming a responsible citizen. Mastery also empowers students to deal thoughtfully with the torrent of information they encounter every day.

How about traditional literacy standards? Barnwell is not suggesting that we stop teaching and testing them, but he sees a two-way street running between them and the new literacies. " 'Reading' video, images, and other multimodal texts demands just as much critical thinking and analysis as a challenging excerpt from *Moby Dick*," he says. "If we develop critical literacy skills with new forms of media, the skills can transfer to the written word."

"Literacy Accountability in a New-Media Age" by Paul Barnwell in *Education Week*, Sept. 23, 2009 (Vol. 29, #4, p. 23) http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/09/23/04barnwell.h29.html

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6. Getting Web 2.0-Addicted Secondary Students Writing

In this *Principal Leadership* article, Florida State University English professor Kathleen Blake Yancey echoes the point made in the previous article and offers two specific suggestions for bridging the chasm between in-school and out-of-school writing. Teenagers are well aware of this gap, says Yancey: "[T]he composing they do in school is what they call *writing*, but what they do outside of school is a different practice that they call *communication*… To them, school writing is not writing for other human beings who respond, but rather an exercise in test taking… Putting up a firewall between students' academic writing and their recreational writing, particularly lower-status writing, such as text and instant messages, prevents them from taking the successful lessons of one environment and using them in another." Here are Yancey's suggestions:

• *Invite students to articulate, revise, and build on their prior knowledge*. Students need to make connections between their two worlds and create a model of writing that accommodates all their writing experiences. This includes building up their pool of experience by reading a lot and, of course, writing a lot – responding to challenging writing assignments and getting high-quality feedback. They should also identify what's preventing good written

communication – often grammar and spelling – and work on those areas, but also go beyond mechanics and work on improving the higher-order writing areas that are trickier to master: purpose, audience, evidence and support, and genre.

• *Elaborate on key terms*. Students are familiar with the writing process, but they need to flesh it out into several categories: genre, audience, rhetorical situation, revision, assessment, and reflection. Yancey reports that a recent study in Florida found that secondary-school students usually have time to pre-write and do a first draft but seldom have time for peer review and using feedback to create a second draft. "It's a challenge to bring revision into practice," says Yancey, "but it must be done if students are to develop a fully elaborated writing process."

What does an ideal 21st-century writing assignment look like? Yancey suggests the following features:

- It is a real task that has meaning beyond the classroom.
- It has a real audience in addition to the teacher – an audience students want to impress.
- It's located in a real-world genre.
- It allows for discussion about the topic at hand.

"Writing by Any Other Name" by Kathleen Blake Yancey in *Principal Leadership*, September 2009 (Vol. 10, #1, p. 26-29), no e-link available; Yancey can be reached at kyancey@fsu.edu.

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7. Restructuring a Middle-School Inclusion Math Class

In this *Middle School Journal* article, South Carolina educators Joshua Patterson, Mindy Connolly, and Shirley Ritter describe how a sixth grader named Billy started the year in his inclusion class in a high-poverty middle school with very low math skills, little motivation to improve, and a negative attitude. He cried almost every day and often daydreamed and fell asleep in class. He had failing grades and his teachers were starting to believe that Billy was a hopeless case.

Billy's two teachers were using time-honored methods: one would present new problems, demonstrate them on the board, guide students through the first few problems together, and then give them an assignment to do independently. The second teacher would move from student to student keeping them on task and helping out.

After a couple of months, the teachers concluded that what they were doing wasn't working. "Even with two of us, it doesn't seem to be meeting the needs of our students," one said. The teachers decided to try a radically different approach. They divided the class into groups of four or five students, mixed by gender, ethnicity, personality, and academic achievement. Within each group, students were assigned roles:

- Leader (usually an underachieving student) – Keeping group members on task, answering general questions, setting the tone, and providing an example for others.
- Messenger – A liaison between each group and the teachers, conveying questions and concerns and taking the teachers' messages back to the group.

- Distributor – Providing all needed materials for the group.
- Collector – Gathering all materials and returning them to their proper location.
- Encourager – Serving as the cheerleader, reminding members of upcoming assignments and encouraging members to do their best.

Each of the four groups was assigned a color, and the groups rotated through two activities during each 90-minute math block and through an alternating A/B schedule every other day. Instruction followed a four-part model, with two segments each day:

1. Teach new material
2. Review/remediate basic skills
3. Review new instruction
4. Computer-based review of new topics and exposure to upcoming material using Odyssey software (Compass Learning).

For example, on the A day, after 10 minutes of whole-class agenda-setting and logistics by the teachers, the red group spent 40 minutes with the math teacher learning a new topic (for example, divisibility rules), using hands-on learning as much as possible. In the next 40 minutes, the group moved to another area of the classroom and worked together to sharpen math skills on which they were weak, using games, songs, and other strategies tuned to students' learning styles. During this segment, students might also work on collaborative projects or labs on the current unit of study. Teachers monitored students, answered questions, and corrected errors.

On the B day, the red group spent 40 minutes with the inclusion teacher reviewing concepts learned the previous day, reviewing any homework, and clarifying misunderstandings, then, time permitting, getting additional enrichment on the previous day's instruction, journaling, tutoring each other, or reviewing basic skills. For the remaining 40 minutes of the block, the red group moved to the computer station to use the Odyssey software. Odyssey starts each student with a pre-test and moves into an individualized set of instructional items decided by the teachers. If a student is successful with a certain percent of questions, he or she moves on to the next set, if unsuccessful, there's more explanation and practice.

What was the impact of this reorganization scheme? Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests showed that the class progressed from 33 percent performing at grade level at the beginning of the year to 47 percent meeting standards in February to 67 percent meeting standards at the end of the year. A survey of students showed that 87 percent preferred the new format, 92 percent said they had received more individualized instruction, 87 percent said they were learning more, and 95 percent felt more comfortable in class.

Billy blossomed. "He began socializing with other students, paying attention in class, and participating in activities," report Patterson, Connolly, and Ritter. "He was volunteering in class and excited about giving answers every day. Beginning and completing a task was no longer a grueling process for Billy, and he appeared to truly enjoy being in class as his grades progressed from failing to Bs and Cs. Billy exhibited confidence in himself, not only in math, but also in all of his classes. Perhaps feeling successful was the medicine Billy needed."

"Restructuring the Inclusion Classroom to Facilitate Differentiated Instruction" by Joshua Patterson, Mindy Connolly, and Shirley Ritter in *Middle School Journal*, September 2009 (Vol. 41, #1, p. 46-52), no e-link available; Patterson can be reached at josh.patterson@spartanburg2.k12.sc.us.

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8. A Principal Who Texts with Her 2,000 High-School Students

In this *Principal Leadership* article, principal Susan Stone Kessler describes how she solved the problem of developing a meaningful connection with 2,000 students in her Nashville, Tennessee high school. Kessler had noticed that with her own teenage son, communication flowed more quickly and easily when she sent him a text message, and she took the bold step of asking all students to add her cell phone number to their contacts lists and send her a text message if they had a question or concern. She promised to respond to each message she received, and immediately started hearing from students about policies and procedures, ideas for activities, grades, complaints about teachers (and more frequently, compliments), a rumored fight, and occasionally a personal crisis (one snowy holiday weekend, a student said that a friend had been thrown out of her house by her parents). If a student sends a text message during the school day (the school's policy is that cell phones must be turned off and out of sight in school), she doesn't respond until after dismissal and begins her reply by reminding the student of the policy.

Kessler says that she doesn't try to identify which students are calling by their numbers, but if a message is serious, she has to find out who's texting. "I have never had a student refuse to identify him- or herself when I asked," she says. "Students know if they ask for help, they will get it. That trust has enabled me to refer them to resources for depression, pregnancy, homelessness, and basic necessities." Because her cell phone number is in many students' contacts lists, she also receives blanket text messages that students send to all their contacts, which often alerts her to rule-breaking and crises. Kessler says that at the end of the school day, when many students get out their cell phones and connect with their friends, she gets messages from socially isolated students. "Very often the text messages are typical teenage banter," she says, "but that banter lets me get to know kids on a personal level and engage with them. And it reduces my feelings of isolation too."

Parents are happy with her accessibility, says Kessler, and she gets text messages from them quite frequently, as well as students texting her to call their mothers or fathers. Teachers were wary about the texting policy at first, thinking that an angry student might whip out a cell phone in the middle of a class and text the principal. "In all the months that I have been texting students, that has not happened, not even once," says Kessler. "Teachers are supportive of the texting now, and they frequently send me texts too!"

Has this idea created an impossible time management problem? Kessler says that she would have to answer all these questions and hear from all these students one way or another, and a text exchange is more time-efficient than a phone call, in-person conversation, or e-mail exchange. "My text message policy is not another thing to do," she concludes. "It is a smarter thing to do. Texting students has proved to be an easy way to communicate with a large student

body in a personal, individual way. It enables me to give students the attention they need and deserve."

"The Texting Principal" by Susan Stone Kessler in *Principal Leadership*, September 2009 (Vol. 10, #1, p. 30-32), no e-link available; Kessler is at susan.kessler@mnps.org.

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9. What Happens When High-Achievers Go to Lower-Tier Colleges?

In this *Education Week* story, Debra Viadero highlights a new book, *Crossing the Finish Line* (Princeton University Press, 2009), in which William Bowen, Matthew Chingos, and Michael McPherson argue that one reason for the extraordinarily high college attrition rate (only 56 percent of U.S. college freshmen graduate in four years) is that some students end up going to colleges for which they are *over*qualified. "Unfortunately, there's a sense now that going anywhere in higher education is good," comments Kevin Carey of the Education Sector. "It matters," says Bowen, "because contrary to what we might think intuitively, students who go to schools for which they are overqualified are much less likely to graduate in four years."

Why? Bowen and his co-authors believe it's because in lower-tier colleges, more students drop out before graduation, and the overqualified students tend to go with the crowd. If they were in higher-tier colleges, the peer expectation of graduating in four years would influence them to stay. In addition, more-competitive schools have better facilities, better teaching, more financial help, and more available counseling.

Who are these overqualified students? The book found they are mostly low-income students whose parents didn't attend college. Why are they choosing lower-tier colleges? Bowen, Chingos, and McPherson believe it's because parents are scared off by the "sticker prices" of more elite colleges and lack good information on financial aid. The biggest "leaks" in the pipeline to elite colleges seem to be in the application process. Prestigious schools aren't rejecting these students; the students either aren't applying or rejecting their admission offers. Carey believes schools need to do "a much better job providing guidance and counseling to high-school students."

"Student-to-College 'Mismatch' Seen as Graduation-Rate Issue" by Debra Viadero in *Education Week*, Sept. 23, 2009 (Vol. 29, #4, p. 1, 13)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/09/23/04undermatch_ep.h29.html

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10. Ten Tips for Effective Presentations

In this website summary, author Garr Reynolds shares his suggestions for making an effective presentation:

• *Show your passion*. "Yes, you need great content," he says. "Yes, you need professional, well-designed visuals. But it is all for naught if you do not have a deep, heartfelt belief in your topic."

• *Start strong*. "The audience wants to like you and they will give you a few minutes at the beginning to engage them," says Reynolds. "Most presenters fail here because they ramble on too long about superfluous background information or their personal/professional history…"

• *Keep it short*. People can't take too much of listening passively to a speaker, says Reynolds. "Audience attention is greatest at the opening and then again when you say something like 'In conclusion…' So, if you have 30 minutes for your talk, finish in 25 minutes."

• *Get out from behind the podium*. "Removing physical barriers between you and the audience will help you build rapport and make a connection," says Reynolds.

• *Use a remote-control device to advance slides and "builds*." This allows you to get away from the podium.

• *Remember the "B" key*. This allows you to clear the screen, which is useful when you digress from the topic and want the audience focused on you. When you're ready to move on, press "B" again and the latest image reappears on the screen.

• *Make good eye contact*. Look at individuals rather than scanning the group, says Reynolds, don't turn your back on the audience, and (unless the topic is grim), smile!

• *Keep the lights on*. Today's LCD projectors are bright enough for the image to be seen with ambient lighting, he says. A lighted room helps keep people awake and focused on you, not just the screen.

• *Use a TV for small groups*. This is more intimate than a large screen.

• *Always be courteous, gracious, and professional*. Thank people for their input, says Reynolds, even if they are being difficult.

"Top Ten Delivery Tips" by Garr Reynolds, from his book, *Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery* (New Riders Press, 2008)

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11. Short Items:

a. Test yourself for hidden bias – Psychologists at Harvard, the University of Virginia, and the University of Washington have developed online tests to measure unconscious bias. Check them out at https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/

Spotted in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, Sept. 25, 2009

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b. Online Mandarin Chinese – Check out this Confucius Institute course at Michigan State University: http://confucius.msu.edu.

Spotted in "The Rise of Online Learning" by Bruce Umpstead in *Principal Leadership*, September 2009 (Vol. 10, #1, p. 68-69)

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c. High-school biology blog – This Staten Island, NY teacher's blog is full of interesting hands-on experiments: http://www.extremebiology.net.

Spotted on *Science Friday* on National Public Radio, Sept. 25, 2009

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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:

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- 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
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