Marshall Memo 944

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
July 11, 2022

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the United States, but for the most part, we remain invisible."
Judith Heumann and John Wodatch (see item #3)

"Well-being in school doesn't just happen; it has to be made a priority."
Sarah Miles, Jennifer Curry Villeneuve, Samantha Selby and Denise Pope (see item #4)

"Word recognition, expression of ideas, and knowledge of the subject inform understanding of what is read and therefore what a child can produce using oral or written language."
Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (see item #2)

"Data from a variety of sources confirm one of our worst fears as social studies educators: Americans' civic knowledge is remarkably low. A recent research study revealed that only 51% of Americans surveyed could name all three branches of the U.S. government correctly – and 23% of Americans surveyed could not name any branches."
Lisa Kissinger and Members of the NCSS Seal of Civic Readiness Task Force in "Civics Diploma Seals: Energizing Civic Education for Students" in *Social Education*, May/June 2022 (Vol. 86, #3, pp. 209-215)

"Choosing a college is an act of self-determination, the first big opportunity to shape one's direction in life. At least that's true for some lucky students. But many applicants don't have an abundance of options. For them, picking a college isn't about soul searching, finding a Perfect Fit, or reflecting on the magical feeling they got on the quad when the wind blew just so."
Eric Hoover in "The College Choice" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 8, 2022 (Vol. 68, #22, pp. 18-27)

1. A Tribute to Tom Hehir

Tom Hehir, a longtime advocate for students with disabilities and educational equity and a former colleague in the Boston Public Schools and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, died earlier last month after a battle with ALS. Here some quotes from several of his articles that were summarized in Memos 109, 119, 173, and 681:

"I believe that what we should be doing in special education is *minimizing the impact* of disability and *maximizing the opportunity* to participate in the world. All our interventions should be directed toward this goal."

"It is also important for students with disabilities, particularly as they move into adolescence and begin to take appropriate responsibility for their education, to understand both the nature and impact of their disability. They need to integrate their disability into their self-image in a way that is natural and positive."

"Assuming that there is only one 'right' way to learn – or to walk, talk, paint, read, and write – is the root of fundamental inequities."

"Text is the most efficient means we have to communicate knowledge, develop vocabulary, and impart the wisdom of the ages to children, even for students who struggle the most with reading. All learners should experience the joy and benefits of reading."

"The most damaging ableist assumption is the belief that people with disabilities are not intellectually capable. Therefore, although performance on a high-stakes test should not be the only means through which students with disabilities can demonstrate what they know and are able to do, the requirement to include students with disabilities in standards-based reform holds promise."

"People are very quick to modify curriculum for children with disabilities, which reflects, in my view, an assumption that these kids aren't capable… These IEPs can go on forever! And what they're going on forever about is dumbing down the curriculum."

"As a special education teacher I learned and practiced the art of negotiation in order to integrate 'my kids' into general education classrooms. There were some teachers who were a godsend for the students I served, while there were others I avoided. Looking back, I have mixed feelings about my behavior. On the one hand, I was successful in attaining important educational experiences for students with disabilities. On the other hand, I was condoning discrimination that was – and is – illegal and immoral… Though it may be difficult for school principals to force integration on a recalcitrant teacher, failure to do so will keep the system in place and result in lost opportunities for students."

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2. Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey Look Back at a Successful Literacy Effort

In this article in *Literacy Today*, Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (San Diego State University and Health Sciences High & Middle College) revisit an improvement effort at Rosa Parks Elementary School in San Diego 15 years ago. Fisher and Frey ask what, if anything, schools should do differently today in light of the latest research.

But first they describe the key components of the literacy framework implemented at Rosa Parks, a high-poverty, majority-ELL, 1,500-student school:

- Collaboration – Kids with kids, kids with teachers, teachers with teachers, teachers with parents, parents with kids.
- Oral language development – Classroom discussions were central to developing fluency and reading proficiency.
- Integrating reading, writing, and oral language – "Word recognition, expression of ideas, and knowledge of the subject inform understanding of what is read," say Fisher and Frey, "and therefore what a child can produce using oral or written language."
- Gradual release of responsibility – This involved: (a) direct, focused instruction and modeling for each lesson's purpose; (b) guided instruction that provided scaffolds as students did an increasing amount of the cognitive work; (c) collaborative learning with students working in groups; and (d) independent work focused on deliberate practice, application, and further extensions.

These components guided teachers through the daily literacy block and extended into science, social studies, math, and visual and performing arts. The result: students made dramatic and sustained progress in academic achievement from 1999 to 2006.

While Fisher and Frey believe many of these elements are solid, in light of recent research they believe the following should be added to make literacy programs even more robust:

- Building students' background knowledge to improve comprehension;
- Leveraging students' cultural and linguistic repertoires as part of an asset-based approach to learning;
- Using alphabetics and morphological awareness to enhance word study and word recognition;
- Giving students more agency in setting goals and assessing their own progress;
- Self-regulated strategy development, especially for students having difficulty with writing – including the six stages of purposeful writing instruction as part of the teacher's gradual release of responsibility.

"Past Successes, New Ideas" by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in *Literacy Today*, July/August/September 2022 (Vol. 40, #1, pp. 27-29); the authors can be reached at dfisher@sdsu.edu and nfrey@sdsu.edu.

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3. Using a Film About Disabilities in High-School Social Studies

In this article in *Social Education*, Neil Dhingra and Joel Miller (University of Maryland/College Park) and Kristen Chmielewski (Western Washington University) say disability education is given short shrift in most U.S. history classes – often just a quick mention on Franklin Delano Roosevelt "overcoming" his paralysis to win the presidency. "People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the United States," say long-time activist Judith Heumann and civil rights lawyer John Wodatch, "but for the most part, we remain invisible." Why? "Disabled people can make nondisabled people feel vulnerable."

Popular entertainment, say Dhingra, Miller, and Chmielewski, tends to treat disability in two different ways: (a) a tragedy that can be resolved only by a cure or death – the paralyzed boxer in *Million Dollar Baby*; and (b) the "super-crip" who accomplishes extraordinary tasks. "Such narratives," say the authors, "ignore the real lived experiences of individuals with disabilities and prioritize the feelings and fears of nondisabled individuals."

Dhingra, Miller, and Chmielewski suggest the Netflix documentary *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution* as a refreshing and powerful resource for high-school social studies classes. Judy Heumann is a central character in the film; she grew up in Brooklyn, contracted polio in 1949 in the second year of her life, and used a wheelchair to get around. A doctor suggested that she be institutionalized, but her parents, orphaned by the Holocaust, refused. Heumann was excluded from the local public school (the principal declared her a "fire hazard") until her mother waged a successful battle against the school's policy.

The film shows how Heumann and other adolescents with disabilities had a completely different experience in Camp Jened in the Catskills in the early 1970s – a summer camp in which (as a camp co-director remembers) "everyone had something going on with their bodies." *Crip Camp* is a compilation of footage from handheld Sony PortaPak cameras, often filmed by the campers themselves, portraying disabilities in a new light. The kids were not constantly in need of "favors" and reveled in freedom from parental control: competitive sports, democratic decision-making, time for solitude, adolescent romances – and teaming up to eradicate lice.

The film then shifts ahead in time to California and Washington D.C., where Heumann led successful protests against the non-enforcement of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. *Crip Camp* concludes with the 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including the "Capitol Crawl" in which activists dramatically inched their way up the Capitol steps.

"Reframing disability from a medical issue to 'a question of civil – and human – rights,'" say Dhingra, Miller, and Chmielewski, "meant that those with disabilities had a right to be visible and secure autonomy." The film, they believe, can help high-school students make this mindshift – away from "framing disability as a medical deficit that forces those with disabilities into romantic martyrdom or to inspirationally 'overcome' their condition… Heumann's disability rights activism, compelling legislators and the public to recognize disabled Americans as a minority group experiencing discrimination, makes her a worthy classroom counterpart to FDR and his hidden wheelchair."

Crip Camp can be seen in its entirety on this YouTube link, and the authors also provide a study guide for using the film in high-school social studies classes.

"*Crip Camp* and Rethinking Disability in the Social Studies Classroom" by Neil Dhingra, Joel Miller, and Kristen Chmielewski in *Social Education*, May/June 2022 (Vol. 86, #3, pp. 158-163); the authors can be reached at ndhingra@umd.edu, jdm1@umd.edu, and chmielk@wwu.edu.

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4. Tweaking the Schedule to Promote Student and Adult Sanity

(Originally titled "Making Time for Well-Being")

"Well-being in school doesn't just happen; it has to be made a priority" say Sarah Miles, Jennifer Curry Villeneuve, Samantha Selby (Challenge Success) and Denise Pope (Stanford University) in this article in *Educational Leadership*. They believe the schedule is a key lever for promoting physical and mental health. "Though some aspects of the school schedule may not be within a school's control," they say, "the design of any schedule is ultimately a reflection of the school community's values and priorities."

A well-thought-out schedule can help address three areas that are particularly important as schools emerge from the pandemic: closer interpersonal connections, increased autonomy, and deeper student engagement and mastery. Some specifics in each area:

• *Bringing people together*:

- Lunch – In many schools, say the authors, lunch periods are too short for students and staff to "take a break, slow down, see friends, and 'break bread' together" – students grab lunch and carry on with their hectic day. Building in enough common time for lunch, and making it a truly social time, is a scheduling priority.
- Advisory time – The same is true of high-quality advisory periods where small groups of students meet daily or weekly with an adult advisor, share struggles, support each other, and "feel known." Advisories often replace homeroom time (teachers take attendance and students listen to announcements), but the authors believe advisory time needs to be significantly longer to fulfill their purpose – from 20 to 60 minutes, depending on frequency.
- Office hours and tutorials – These should be built in to give students greater access to teachers, counselors, and other support personnel. Some schools conduct "connection audits" of student/adult connections and make sure every student has at least one strong relationship with a teacher or other staff member.

• *A more measured pace for engagement and mastery*:

- Longer class periods and more transition time between classes – These give students time to "experience multiple modalities of teaching and learning, ask questions, or find time to reflect on their learning," say the authors, reduce the "hustle and bustle" of the day, and allow more time for inquiry, projects, and individual and group work.
- Staggering tests and assignment due dates – When teachers coordinate to do this, students' stress is reduced and they have more time for deeper reflection and mastery.

- Later school start time and rotating morning periods – Adolescents' sleep patterns make this a high priority.

• *Maximizing agency and autonomy* – "When students and faculty can control how they use their time and have opportunities to make decisions and choices aligned with their needs and interests," say the authors, "they are more likely to thrive." Some possibilities:

- Electives – These give teachers and students more opportunities to pursue personal interests.
- Extracurriculars – Intrinsic interest and motivation are key – although there can be too much of a good thing if these encroach on family time and sleep.
- Flexible time – Free periods during the school day allow students to attend to a variety of tasks without staying after school; for teachers, time for preparing lessons and grading during the school day is a boon.
- Weekends and breaks – No-homework weekends and holidays ("This is genius!" said a student in a school that implemented these) and giving exams before breaks – these simple changes send the message that everyone needs time to rest and recover.

"Making Time for Well-Being" by Sarah Miles, Denise Pope, Jennifer Curry Villeneuve, and Samantha Selby in *Educational Leadership*, July 2022 (Vol. 79, #9, online only); Pope can be reached at dpope@stanford.edu.

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5. Why Are In-Person Meetings Better than Videoconferences?

In this article in *Nature*, Melanie Brucks (Columbia University) and Jonathan Levav (Stanford University) report that people in face-to-face meetings did better at creative collaboration than those in remote meetings. In-person teams, Brucks and Levav found, generated 15-20 percent more ideas than remote teams working on the same problem. In-person participants observed and remembered more, which helped the creative process, and were better at forming new associations and coming up with original ideas.

Why? The researchers believe it's because zeroing in on a computer screen during a remote meeting also constricts the thought process. Each videoconferencing participant has their gaze fixed on a computer screen – if they don't, other people can see their eyes wandering and may conclude that they're not paying attention or being disrespectful. "If your visual field is narrow," says Levav, "then your cognition is likely to be as well. For creative idea generation, narrowed focus is a problem."

By contrast, people taking part in an in-person meeting can let their eyes dart around the room without seeming inattentive, looking quickly at colleagues and other objects – and that seems to help them be more creative and generate more ideas and associations.

However, when it comes to selecting the best ideas, people in virtual meetings did as well and possibly better than in-person, and there was no difference in how well people got along – mutual trust and social connection – in the two different meeting formats.

"Virtual Communication Curbs Creative Idea Generation" by Melanie Brucks and Jonathan Levav in *Nature*, April 27, 2022 (#605, pp. 108-112); Brucks can be reached at mb4598@columbia.edu, Levav at jlevav@stanford.edu.

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6. Are College Rankings Fair and Helpful?

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Francie Diep reports on the annual conference of the Association for Institutional Research, where college data people get a chance to question Bob Morse, who for more than 30 years has helmed the *U.S. News and World Report* ranking of colleges. The magazine's annual report is closely followed by students, parents, and colleges, and opinions vary on how valid and useful it is. Here's what Diep learned:

• *U.S. News* started its annual college rankings in 1987 and there's definitely a profit motive – selling magazines and other products. That said, many educators credit the rankings for encouraging data transparency and accountability in higher education and helping prospective students get their hands on colleges' graduation rates, student body make-up, costs, and other key information.

• Colleges follow the ratings very closely and send representatives to the AIR conference to learn about any changes in the metrics. Some colleges have a goal of doing well in the rankings – for example, the University of Houston's strategic plan includes getting into the top 50 for public universities.

• From the start, there have been criticisms of the *U.S. News* metrics, among them: Do the rankings favor wealthier colleges over those with fewer resources? Are they fair to Historically Black Colleges and Universities? Are the data on instructional spending and instructors' degrees valid?

• Rankings are the most controversial aspect of the report. Can *U.S. News* really say that one college is better than another? And do the rankings distract students from finding a college that's a good fit for them?

• There's also been concern about whether the *USNWR* rankings spur colleges to change practices and submit data in an effort to game the system – for example, admitting more-privileged students. There have been instances of colleges submitting misleading data; graduate schools at the University of Southern California and Rutgers were recently alleged to have done this.

• *U.S. News* has made some changes in response to criticism, including eliminating colleges' acceptance rates and analyzing their value-add for low-income students, both in terms of graduation rates and whether graduates' socioeconomic status rises.

• *U.S. News* data crunchers continue to use SAT and ACT scores, which they insist correlate with timely graduation independent of family wealth. "How well test scores foretell students' success in colleges is a hotly debated topic," says Diep; "several colleges have found that SAT doesn't help them predict who will graduate."

• Students can pay $40 for College Compass, a subscription service that provides access to more data on each college. For researchers, there's Academic Insights, a subscription service that gives historical data on the *U.S. News* rankings (it costs thousands of dollars a year).

"Where Rankers Meet the Ranked" by Francie Diep in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 8, 2022 (Vol. 68, #22, pp. 28-31)

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7. Award-Winning Multicultural Children's Books

In this feature in *Social Education*, the National Council for the Social Studies announces the winners of the Carter G. Woodson Book Awards for 2022 (click the link below for cover images and brief reviews):

Elementary level winner

- *I Am an American: The Wong Kim Ark Story* by Martha Brockenbrough, illustrated by Julia Kuo

Elementary level honoree

- *Saving American Beach: The Biography of African American Environmentalist MaVynee Betsch* by Heidi Tyline King, illustrated by Ekua Holmes

Middle level winner

- *Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Floyd Cooper

Middle level honoree

- *A Man Called Horse: John Horse and the Black Seminole Underground Railroad* by Glenette Tilley Turner

Secondary level winner

- *Race Against Time* by Sandra Neil Wallace and Rich Wallace

Secondary level honoree

- *We Are Not Broken: A Memoir* by George Johnson

"The Carter G. Woodson Book Award, 2022" by The National Council for the Social Studies in *Social Education*, May/June 2022 (Vol. 86, #3, pp. 184-186)

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8. Reflecting at the End of the Week

In this *Leadership Freak* article, Dan Rockwell suggests four questions we might ask ourselves at the conclusion of a work week:

- How did you receive help this week? Asking for advice? Seeking help?
- What are three things you're thankful you did this week?
- What's one thing you did this week that you want to stop? Ask your inner critic to choose one.
- What's one thing you want to do next week? Something new!

"4 Questions to Ask at the End of the Week for Self-Reflection" by Dan Rockwell in *Leadership Freak*, July 8, 2022; Rockwell can be reached at dan@leadershipfreak.com,

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If you have feedback or suggestions,
please e-mail kim.marshall48@gmail.com

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and other educators very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 52 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, writer, and consultant, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 60 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through more than 150 articles each week, and selects 8-10 that have the greatest potential to improve teaching, leadership, and learning. He then writes a brief summary of each article, pulls out several striking quotes, provides e-links to full articles when available, and e-mails the Memo to subscribers every Monday evening (with occasional breaks; there are 50 issues a year). Every week there's a podcast and HTML version as well.

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- The current issue (in Word and PDF)
- All back issues (Word and PDF) and podcasts
- An easily searchable archive of all articles so far
- The "classic" articles from all 18+ years

Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

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