

Marshall Memo 52

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
September 6, 2004

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Quotes of the Week

“Sitting in class is like being in the car with your parents on a long road trip without your CD player.”

High-school student (see item #1)

“Today’s digital divide occurs at a higher level – between students who can use a computer to do valuable work and those who cannot.”

Frank Levy and Richard Murnane (see item 2)

“We contend that teachers can best raise test scores over the long haul by teaching the key ideas and processes contained in content standards in rich and engaging ways; by collecting evidence of student understanding of that content through robust local assessments rather than one-shot standardized testing; and by using engaging and effective instructional strategies that help students explore core concepts through inquiry and problem solving.”

Jay McTighe, Elliott Seif, and Grant Wiggins (see item #3)

“[T]here are vast differences between a principal who talks about ‘my’ school and one who talks about ‘our’ school.”

Michael DiPaola, professor at William and Mary (see item #4)

“A principal’s main impact on learning is indirect – teachers teach, not principals.”

Hechinger Newsletter (see item 4)

“[I]n a school with a healthy culture it should be possible to disagree without being disagreeable.”

Ibid.

1. Can High-School Teachers Run Classes that are not B-O-R-I-N-G?

“Classrooms are powerful places,” writes Sam Intrator, a former teacher who is now a professor at Smith. “They can be dynamic settings that launch dreams and delight minds, or arid places that diminish hope and deplete energy.” Intrator has observed scores of high-school classes and interviewed countless students to try to get a fix on the arid type of class. He found three flavors of student disengagement:

- *Slow time* – Many students describe their classes as monotonous, predictable, mechanically routine, and dull. “Sitting in class is like being in the car with your parents on a long road trip without your CD player,” said one student. When they are trapped in classes like this, students invent ways to amuse themselves – sneaking magazines, secretly listening to headphones, daydreaming, etc.
- *Lost time* – “I enter a zone where time bends, but does not move,” said one student, describing how he passively waits for class to end without daydreaming or distractions.
- *Fake time* – Some students know what teachers are looking for and devote energy to “doing school” – going through the right motions to appear as though they are learning and focused. One student said, “I set up my books, position my calculator, and sit forward in my seat not because I’m interested, but because I know my teacher likes to see me looking like I’m paying attention.” Behind this charade, these students are doing homework, passing notes, writing to-do lists, studying for quizzes, and checking out their classmates.
- *Worry time* – “High schoolers,” writes Intrator, “spend vast stretches of time worrying and strategizing about nonacademic matters” – romantic interests, athletic events, drama performances, etc.
- *Play time* – When teachers are playing movies or music, many students are attentive but passive. “They watch with the vigor of a popcorn-scarfing sitcom viewer.” And during collaborative work time, many students are deep in off-topic social conversations that shift the minute the teacher comes by.

But what about dynamic classes? Intrator tried to find out “what characterizes classroom episodes during which students become wholly engaged and energized, finding genuine meaning in academic experiences... roused to life, animated with feelings and ideas.” He believes that such classroom episodes “represent formidable triumphs of teaching,” and happened because the teachers “made crucial pedagogic

decisions in the short term... fought fiercely to hold their students' attention... and cultivated a powerful classroom ethos over the long term." Here are his suggestions for creating such classes:

- *Manipulate classroom pace* – One teacher veered from a frenetically-paced question-and-answer discussion to stretches of quiet journaling time. Others broke with routines, taking students outside, introducing a unit with dramatic video clip, bringing in visitors, or dressing up in costumes.

- *Let students create* – Students were most alive when they were creating or thinking about something new. "I can't emphasize enough how invigorating it was for them to be part of a discussion or project that allowed them to express their originality. Students tuned in when they felt ownership over ideas expressed in class and felt they were in a safe place to share their own ideas. They yearned to be listened to and have their insights taken seriously."

- *Share personal presence* – "Energy and passion matter," writes Intrator. "Energized, expressive teaching fosters energized learning; sedentary, monotonous teaching sabotages attention." Poignant personal stories also helped teachers to reach students. "Mr. X is a real person," was definitely a compliment. Showing love for learning and scholarship also helped: "When teachers showed wonder and passion for what they taught," observed Intrator, "sharing what they were learning from their own reading or in courses they were taking – students sometimes rolled their eyes. But I rarely thought they meant it."

- *Know students as people* – Intrator writes: "The young people I spent time with... wanted their teachers to understand their experiences, interests, aspirations, needs, fears, and idiosyncrasies. Feeling known, understood, and appreciated matters. The teachers I observed in turn genuinely enjoyed young people. They were kid-savvy and created opportunities to get to know their students beyond the classroom..."

- *Connect content to teen questionings* – "The teenagers I shadowed," writes Intrator, "were on a journey, striving to figure out who they are, to whom they belong, what talents and potential they have, and where they might end up. Teachers who engaged young people used virtually any subject matter as an opening to meaningful conversation about big ideas like these."

"The Engaged Classroom" by Sam Intrator in *Educational Leadership*, September 2004 (Vol. 62, #1, p. 20-24),
http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/index.html

2. Preparing Students for a World Full of Computers

There's a lot of talk about how computers are taking away jobs. In this article, two Harvard economists look at what computers *can* and *cannot* do well in the American workplace, and describe how we can help students get ready to do the kinds of work that computers will *not* be doing.

Every job involves processing information and deciding what to do next (for example, dealing with words on a page, untangling a statistical report, "reading" a customer's facial expression, evaluating the taste of a sauce, and diagnosing the sounds coming out of a troubled car engine). Computers excel at doing tasks that can be reduced to a sequence of rules, for example, bookkeeping, filing, repetitive manufacturing work, recording bank deposits, issuing airport boarding passes, and evaluating mortgage applications. Rule-based tasks are also the easiest to send off shore to lower-wage countries (for example, a call center's step-by-step script providing answers to most customer questions).

As a result of computerization and outsourcing, an increasing percentage of jobs consist of tasks in which information *cannot* be processed simply by following rules. These fall into three categories:

- *Expert thinking* – Identifying and solving new problems (where step-by-step procedures haven't been developed yet);
- *Complex communication* – Jobs like teaching, leading, marketing, and negotiating;
- *Simple physical activities* – Service jobs such as janitorial work, waiting on tables, and security-guard patrols (although these jobs are quite simple for humans to perform, they are almost impossible for computers).

Jobs that lend themselves to computerization are disappearing (administrative-support and blue-collar jobs that required only a high-school education), and there has been rapid growth of jobs at either end of the wage scale: (a) low-wage service work, and (b) high-wage sales, technical, professional, and managerial work. Most of the latter require a college education, and students who leave high school without "expert thinking" and complex communication skills will end up competing for low-wage service jobs.

How do we best prepare students with the right stuff to gain access to college and good-paying jobs? Reading, writing, and mathematics are key skills in expert thinking and complex communication. Science and social studies skills and

knowledge are as important as they ever were. “What is of growing importance,” the authors write, “is that instruction in all these core subjects emphasize identifying and solving problems and the listening, speaking, and writing skills that are central to effective communication.”

Learning specific computer skills is less important, they contend. The basic computer skills (using basic operating-system features, creating word-processed documents, using the Internet to find information, and communicating with others) have spread widely, and the “digital divide” that existed 15 years ago has almost disappeared. Today’s digital divide is at a higher level, “between students who can use a computer to do valuable work and those who cannot.” A National Research Council report lists the following high-end skills that are essential for access to good jobs in the 21st century:

- Engaging in sustained reasoning
- Managing complexity
- Testing solutions
- Evaluating information
- Collaborating
- Communicating to other audiences

Schools need to emphasize these skills, focusing on “using computers as tools in working on problem-solving and complex communication tasks that are at the center of instruction in the core school subjects.”

“Preparing Students for Work in a Computer-Filled Economy” by Frank Levy and Richard Murnane in *Education Week*, September 1, 2004 (Vol. XXIV, #1, p. 56, 44)
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=01murnane.h24>

3. Responding to the “Yes, but...” Critique of Understanding by Design

In this article, the creators of Understanding by Design (a set of design tools for planning curriculum units with the end in sight) respond to two push-backs they frequently encounter when they present their model:

- *Yes, but we have to teach to the test.* Many teachers believe that teaching and assessing for deep understanding is incompatible with state mandates and standardized tests – that they are stuck using lower-level teaching methods to prepare students for the test. The authors think this is an unfortunate misconception: “We contend that teachers can best raise test scores over the long haul by teaching the key ideas and processes contained in content standards in rich and engaging ways; by

collecting evidence of student understanding of that content through robust local assessments rather than one-shot standardized testing; and by using engaging and effective instructional strategies that help students explore core concepts through inquiry and problem solving.” The authors cite copious research evidence that this is the case.

- *Yes, but we have too much content to cover.* Teachers at all levels complain that there is too much curriculum to cover with depth and quality, and they have a point: American curriculum documents and textbooks are almost always overloaded, and most states and districts mandate a curriculum that is “a mile wide and an inch deep.” But the feeling that all that content MUST be covered is based on two unfounded assumptions:

- If the teacher *covers* material (i.e., talks about it and assigns some work) students will adequately learn it for the tests.
- Lesson plans should address standards one at a time.

The authors say that there is no research evidence for either of these assumptions. On the contrary, they contend, students’ achievement will improve if teachers: (a) focus on fewer topics and core understandings, (b) cluster discrete standards under the umbrella of a “big idea,” and (c) use complex performance assessments (as well as classroom quizzes and tests) to apply the facts, concepts, and skills contained in state standards in a more meaningful way.

“*You Can Teach for Meaning*” by Jay McTighe, Elliott Seif, and Grant Wiggins in *Educational Leadership*, September 2004 (Vol. 62, #1, p. 26-30), no e-link available

4. Getting a Fix on a School’s Culture

Schools with a toxic school culture, says consultant Kent Peterson, “reinforce inertia, blame students for lack of progress, discourage collaboration and often have hostile relations among staff. These schools are not healthy for staff or students.” This article in the newsletter of the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media gives advice to reporters on how to find out if a school’s culture is effective, toxic, or merely mediocre. The questions in the article could easily be asked of principals:

- Who do teachers and students go to with a problem?
- What positive accomplishments do the faculty and students hold in high regard?
- Do teachers talk specifically and knowledgeably about their students’ academic needs?

- Do teachers blame students' poverty or language background or their parents' seeming lack of involvement for the school's low achievement?
- Does the principal keep a school-wide conversation going, urging people to examine what they're doing and how they can do it better?
- When the principal walks around the school, does he or she leave a trail of fear or respect?
- Do staff meetings focus on professional development or deteriorate into gripe sessions about access to the copier or inattentive parents?
- Does the principal refer to "my" school or "our" school?
- Does the school focus on collaboration or competition?
- Are instructional practices driven by data or by textbooks? Does the faculty take its cue from student assessments and professional development or from tried-and-not-always-so-true lesson plans?
- Do teachers talk together about individual students and their needs, or do they talk about groups of faceless students and gripe that they can't be reached?
- Do teachers feel that they can try something new to reach a child and get across a concept without fear of retribution if it fails?
- Do teachers share with each other, or do they hunker down to avoid notice?
- Is it possible for staff members to disagree without being disagreeable?

The article closes with some wise advice and an interesting analogy for school leaders: "A principal's main impact on learning is indirect – teachers teach, not principals." Matthew Delaney, a Massachusetts teacher, is quoted as saying that teachers want their principals to be like Gore-Tex clothing: "Effective principals... allow you to move freely to do what you need to do, while filtering out the bad."

"School Culture Holds Clues to Quality of Leadership" in *Hechinger News*, Summer/Fall 2004, p. 6-7, <http://www.teacherscollege.edu/hechinger>

5. What NAEP Results Say About Teaching Facts vs. Critical Thinking

For the last three decades, educators have debated whether schools should emphasize facts or critical thinking. In this article, Hunter College professor Harold Wenglinsky cites evidence from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that "although students must learn basic skills and facts at some point... instruction emphasizing advanced reasoning skills promotes high student performance." He breaks down the findings by subject:

- *Math* – Teaching mathematical reasoning and emphasizing data analysis and probability early in the curriculum produces better student achievement than drilling multiplication tables first. An emphasis on higher-order thinking, project-based learning, opportunities to solve problems that have more than one solution, and hands-on learning produce the best results. An intriguing conclusion of this research is that the sequence of instruction is important: students do better if they *start* with higher-order thinking in math and *then* learn the basics (like times tables).

“Apparently, students more effectively learn simple content, such as the times tables, if they understand the conceptual framework that lies behind that content. Educators do not need to choose between basic and advanced skills in math and science, but we should introduce advanced skills early to motivate students to learn the basic algorithms – which, let’s face it, are not very interesting in and of themselves.”

- *Science* – According to the NAEP data, the sequence of instruction should be similar to math: teaching for meaning first, followed by basic knowledge. This means projects in which students take a high degree of initiative. Just filling out worksheets and reading textbooks had no positive effect.

- *Reading* – The data suggest a more linear approach in the humanities: basic skills first, then meaning. “Students should not begin their school lives as readers developing their own rules for spelling or creating their own vernacular language. But once they know how to take language from the page, students need opportunities to construct sense out of text by interpreting it, writing about it, and reflecting on what they have written.” NAEP results strongly suggest that once the basics are mastered, “basic skills” approaches are inappropriate and teachers should give students experience drawing meaning from text by asking questions, summarizing the work, identifying key themes, and thinking critically about the author’s purpose and whether that purpose was achieved. Students also have better comprehension when they read “real” books (rather than short passages in basal readers) and write about what they read.

- *Civics* – The sequence is similar here: students need first to learn some basic facts about American government in the elementary grades, and then in middle school, get involved in a mixture of textbook learning and hands-on activities such as community service, field trips, and communicating with elected officials.

“Facts or Critical Thinking Skills? What NAEP Results Say” by Harold Wenglinsky in *Educational Leadership*, September 2004 (Vol. 62, #1, p. 32-35), no e-link available

6. Two Hands-On Projects, One Good, One Not-So-Good

This thoughtful article on elementary-school classroom projects begins with a vignette about two different approaches to teaching kindergarten students about spiders:

- Class #1 – Students accordion-folded strips of paper to make “legs,” glued eight of them around a paper plate, and drew two large circles on top for eyes. The kids had practiced small motor coordination, followed directions, identified shapes, and counted. When their teacher wrote “spider” on the board, they copied it down. Students seemed to enjoy the whole lesson.

- Class #2 – A student brought in a realistic toy spider to show the class, which responded enthusiastically. The teacher got out books with pictures of real spiders, which led to a conversation about the similarities and differences between spiders in the books and the toy spider. The teacher put the toy spider and the books in the art area for sketching. Students asked her to write *spider*, *eyes*, *hairy spider*, and *fuzzy legs* for them to copy. They asked a number of questions and talked about how they could find the answers. An investigation about spiders was born.

Although students in both classes were working on the same topic and were involved in hands-on, sensory experiences, the difference in the quality of their experience was huge. The author makes a strong case for a degree of student ownership and initiative in classroom projects. If they are too teacher-controlled and artificial, she says, they resemble what Martin Haberman has called the “pedagogy of poverty” (found most often in inner-city schools), which limits students’ achievement and thirst to learn.

Quoting Lilian Katz (*The Power of Projects*, 2003), the author says that teachers should pay attention to three elements to give projects depth and engage students’ minds:

- The processes – Projects should lead students to questioning, hypothesizing, and predicting, not just factual recall. Kids should be asked how things *might* work before they learn how they actually do work.

- The content – Teachers should pick rich topics – or follow their students’ lead in finding “deep wells of potential learning... Content deepens when the teacher integrates curriculum goals and standards into projects.”

- The products – What students produce at the end of a project should reflect their understanding and have real meaning – and this is most likely to happen when they are emotionally involved in the product.

“Projects That Power Young Minds” by Judy Harris Helm in *Educational Leadership*, September 2004 (Vol. 62, #1, p. 58-62), no e-link available

7. Finding the Middle Ground in Classroom Science Experiments

Alan Colburn, a California science education professor, describes the two extremes of hands-on classroom science experiments:

- *The verification approach* – With the perennial experiment on bread mold, students get a manual entitled “Factors Affecting Fungal Growth” that describes their lab activity, including the expected outcome: “This experiment demonstrates that molds grow more quickly in dark, moist environments than in light, dry ones.” Students follow the steps: they put four pieces of white bread in separate zip-lock bags and put one in a refrigerator, one in an incubator, one on a sunny windowsill, and one in a dark closet. Over the next few days, students then note their observations of the four pieces of bread in the manual’s blank data tables, and when the experiment is finished, they answer the manual’s questions about the learning objectives.

- *The discovery approach* – Students are asked to “think like scientists” with minimal guidance from the teacher. They choose the topic, procedure, data collection, and so on.

Each of these has obvious disadvantages. In the case of the discovery approach, which grew out of the Sputnik panic and held sway during the 1960’s and 70’s, unrealistic demands are made on teachers, especially generalist elementary teachers.

The appropriate middle ground, Colburn says, is:

- *The inquiry-based approach*. There are different degrees of structure, depending on teacher training and experience. Using the bread-mold experiment:

- *Structured inquiry* – The students get the basic materials and the manual has step-by-step instructions, but it doesn’t have a ready-made data table. Students must decide for themselves which observations are most important to draw conclusions.
- *Guided inquiry* – Students get the same materials and the teacher poses the question in an open-ended fashion: investigate whether or not light and temperature affect fungal growth on bread. Students then have to design the experiment and gather the data themselves.

Colburn concludes with a plug for the importance of assessment. “Continual formative assessment of student understanding through observation, student questioning, and written assignments help teachers decide how well students are

doing – when it’s time to move on to more open-ended activities and when it’s time to backtrack and scaffold student understanding. Assessment also tells students what is really important. If the teacher assesses students solely on the basis of factual recall, then students learn that factual recall is the class’s central goal.”

“Inquiring Scientists Want to Know” by Alan Colburn in *Educational Leadership*, September 2004 (Vol. 62, #1, p63-66), no e-link available

8. Figuring Out What We Mean by “Curriculum”

When people use the word “curriculum,” it’s not always clear which of seven possible meanings they have in mind. This article makes the case for using different terminology for each of the possible meanings to clear up confusion and misunderstanding:

- *Curriculum as in state standards* (“We have no choice but to follow the Illinois curriculum.”). These are broad learning objectives, usually only for certain grade levels (e.g., grades 4, 8, and 10).
- *Curriculum as in K-12 articulation* (“The curriculum nixed teaching about evolution!”). This is a school district’s kindergarten-through-high-school game plan for which skills and content should be taught at each grade, for example, the Holocaust, division of fractions, magnetism, and the friendly letter.
- *Curriculum as in grade-level learning expectations* (“The curriculum expects my students to be able to write a five-paragraph persuasive essay by the end of this year.”). This takes articulation a step further, giving teachers detailed marching orders on what students need to know and be able to do by the end of each grade.
- *Curriculum as in classroom methods* (“We’re using a really rockin’ science curriculum this year that says we have to do tons of hands-on experiments.”). These are the pedagogical approaches that teachers use to convey standards, e.g., cooperative learning, project-based learning, direct instruction.
- *Curriculum as in commercial programs* (“Our district just bought the most fantastic new reading curriculum from Houghton Mifflin.”). These are published packages that usually include materials, an approach to instruction, assessments, and teacher training. (Other examples: Facing History and Ourselves, Success for All, and Open Court Reading.)
- *Curriculum as in teaching units* (“My team just wrote a four-week curriculum on the colonial era in Africa.”). These are carefully-crafted chunks of instruction of

limited duration, for example, a six-week unit on World War II or a three-week unit on poetry.

- *Curriculum as in classroom materials* (“We’re using a new computer curriculum that teaches students how to solve multi-step word problems.”). Narrower than programs and units, these are commercial or teacher-created materials, including textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, software, and other media. Other examples include *Wordly Wise* and *Mario Teaches Typing*.

“Let’s Clarify the Way We Use the Word ‘Curriculum’” by Kim Marshall in *Education Week*, September 1, 2004 (Vol. XXIV, #1, p. 43)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/ew_printstory.cfm?slug=01Marshall.h24

9. Short Items:

a. A principal’s idea for goal-setting – Thomas Hoerr, a principal in St. Louis, Missouri, described the process he is using this year with his staff for setting what he calls *personal/professional goals*. In August, he talked to faculty members about setting their own goals. He said the goals would remain private, but they had to relate to teachers’ effectiveness at work. At the next faculty meeting, each teacher was asked to write his or her goal on a piece of paper and seal it in an envelope with their name on the outside. All the goals (including Hoerr’s) went into a box, which was then ceremoniously taped shut. Hoerr announced that in May, just before teachers’ end-of-year professional growth conferences, he would give their unopened envelopes to them. In his one-on-one meeting with them, he would ask whether or not they had succeeded in attaining the goal, and whether he could help them in any way. He also said that sharing any information about the goal would be entirely up to teachers.

Hoerr plans to monitor teachers on their goals during the year. He’ll remind them of their goals, asking questions like “How do you think you’re doing on your goal?” and “If someone knew your goal, what might he or she say about your progress?” He concedes that every goal will not be achieved, but thinks this process will foster a healthy dialogue about purposes – and what works.

“New Year, New Goals” by Thomas Hoerr in *Educational Leadership*, September 2004 (Vol. 62, #1, p. 86-87)
http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/index.html

b. Hooking students at the beginning of a physics unit – To demonstrate the principle that, if force is spread evenly over a surface, the pressure at a specific point

is negligible, Mark Torche, a high-school physics teacher in Florida, lay between two boards containing a total of 2,000 sharp steel nails. He wasn't injured, even through three students stood on top of the board. "I want to use activities that will make the students re-examine their incorrect view of physics," said Torche. "We go through the world with information that we develop from growing up – ideas that are not fully understood unless they are confronted with something that contradicts it – and suddenly realize that it may be wrong."

"Lying Down on the Job" by Tal Barak in *Education Week*, September 1, 2004 (Vol. XXIV, #1, p. 3) <http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=01Take.h24>

c. Assessment literacy: it's not rocket science – In the first monthly column on assessment that he's writing for *Educational Leadership* this year, UCLA professor James Popham stresses the importance of "assessment literacy" for today's school leaders (not to be literate in this area, he says, is professional suicide). But he has some good news: "the entirety of what today's educators need to know about accountability-related testing is readily understandable without learning even a single formula." He advises against reading an educational measurement textbook (they're designed for graduate students who want to be assessment specialists) and against Googling "educational assessment" (this yields about 5 million entries). Instead, he suggests getting one of several short books geared for principals (he modestly suggests one of his own), setting up a study group, and chewing over the key points in a few meetings.

"All About Accountability: Why Assessment Illiteracy is Professional Suicide" by James Popham in *Educational Leadership*, September 2004 (Vol. 62, #1, p. 82-83), http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/index.html

d. When is Algebra I really Algebra I? – A perusal of curriculum documents and math textbooks shows significant variation in the content of Algebra I courses. There is little uniformity from school to school and district to district on what students are expected to learn. As a result, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is launching a study to get more detailed information. The center chose Algebra I because it is seen as a "gateway to college" course. Robert Lerner, commissioner of NCES, said of algebra course content, "It's all over the place. This is a nation of local control."

“NCES to Examine Content of Algebra I Courses” by Sean Cavanagh Barak in
Education Week, September 1, 2004 (Vol. XXIV, #1, p. 5)
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=01Algebra.h24>

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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 aims to keep busy principals and other educators very well-informed on important research and ideas in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, a former Boston teacher and administrator, is your “designated reader,” searching through 37 publications the week they come out, choosing the articles that are most relevant and useful to improving teaching and learning, and summarizing them in a brief e-mail. Some ideas will be familiar, reinforcing what readers already know, but others will be new and genuinely thought-provoking. Target topics include:

- *School leadership* – Building a professional learning community; effective teamwork; effective schools practices; supervision and evaluation of teachers; time management.
- *Effective teaching* – Key variables associated with high student achievement; professional development of teachers; teacher leadership and career ladders; multiple intelligences and brain research.
- *Curriculum* – Alignment and planning with the end in sight; teaching for understanding; new ideas in reading, writing, and math.
- *Assessment* – Aligned formative and summative assessments; using data and student work for continuous improvement; graphic display of student achievement data; standardized testing and the debate on standards.
- *Closing the gap* – Effective strategies to close the racial/economic achievement gap; the innate-ability/intelligence/effective effort debate; safety-net programs.
- *Positive school culture* – Student discipline; social-emotional learning; moral development; parent involvement; and community partnerships.
- *And...* – New areas of research; upcoming television and radio programs on education.

Publications covered:

(those read this week are underlined)

American Education Research Journal
American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD SmartBrief
Atlantic Monthly
Bay State Banner
Boston Globe
Commonwealth Magazine
Curriculum/Education Update (ASCD)
Ed. Magazine (Harvard School of Education)
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Elementary School Journal
Harpers
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Education Review
Journal of Staff Development
Middle School Journal
NASSP Bulletin
New York Times
New Yorker
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal Magazine
Principal Leadership
Psychology Today
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Review of Educational Research
Teachers College Record
Teacher Magazine

E-links will be provided whenever possible.

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