

Marshall Memo 387

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
May 23, 2011

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Quotes of the Week

“There is a Talmudic saying, ‘No one is the owner of his instincts, but controlling them, that is civilization.’”

Elie Wiesel, expressing sadness for Anne Sinclair, the wife of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, in “Backing Her Man with Impressive Resources” by Steven Erlanger and Maia de la Baume in *The New York Times*, May 21, 2011 (p. 1, A6)

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/21/world/europe/21sinclair.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=“Backing%20Her%20Man%20with%20Impressive%20Resources”%20&st=cse

“[I]t’s difficult to fix errors we can’t see.”

Daniel Kahneman, Dan Lovallo, and Olivier Sibony (see item #2)

“People do sometimes lie deliberately, of course, but self-deception and rationalization are more common problems.”

Daniel Kahneman, Dan Lovallo, and Olivier Sibony (*ibid.*)

“You can’t lead with your feet on the desk.”

The title of a new book on management by Ed Fuller (Wiley, 2011)

“Many high performers would rather do the wrong thing well than do the right thing poorly.”

Thomas DeLong and Sara DeLong (see item #3)

“It’s a process where you ask others what you should *stop* doing, what you should *keep* doing, and what you should *start* doing.”

Thomas DeLong and Sara DeLong on effective mentoring and support (*ibid.*)

1. Are International Student-Achievement Comparisons Fair?

This summary of a National Governors Association report in *The Learning System* puts to rest a number of myths about recent comparisons of student achievement (PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS):

- *Myth: Other countries test a more select, elite group of students.* This may have been true for early studies, but it's no longer the case. Comparisons now include a sampling of the whole student population of each country, including those who attend public, private, and vocational schools and those who have special needs or are not native speakers. The U.S. tests similar proportions of its school-age population as other developed nations.

- *Myth: The U.S. performs poorly because of poverty and other family factors.* In fact, the U.S. is about average compared with other developed countries on most economic, social, and cultural measures. It is true that our schools do a relatively poor job supporting lower-SES students and equalizing learning opportunities and have one of the largest gaps in access to qualified teachers between high- and low-SES students.

- *Myth: Cultural factors prevent U.S. students from performing as well as those in other nations, particularly those in Asia.* It's true that mothers and students in Asian nations are more likely than Americans to attribute success in math to effort than innate ability, but experimental studies have shown that innate-ability beliefs can be changed. As for work ethic, U.S. 15-year-olds report spending more time on homework in science, math, and reading than do students in the 30 OECD nations. Moreover, there are high-performing nations all over the globe – Finland, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia. Finally, some countries that are doing well today were not doing well just a few decades ago (Singapore and Finland among them), indicating that it was educational interventions rather than national culture that made the difference.

- *Myth: Other countries are less diverse.* Among the eleven other OECD countries that, like the U.S., had more than 10 percent immigrant students, all performed better in math and nine performed better in science than the U.S. Singapore, widely viewed as homogeneous, has three major ethnic groups, and, like the U.S., experienced serious ethnic strife in the 1960s. Finland's success has been attributed to lack of diversity, but Finland had mediocre student achievement just a few years ago; its recent educational success was brought about by specific educational policies, including teacher recruitment and student support.

- *Myth: Wealthier countries spend more than the U.S. on education.* In fact, the U.S. is first among OECD countries in GDP per capita and second highest in educational expenditures

– but we rank only in the middle of the pack in our “effort” to fund education when school spending is compared to gross national product.

• *Myth: U.S. student attainment cannot be compared to that of other countries because the U.S. tries to educate many more students.* “The U.S. does rank higher than average on access to higher education,” says the report, “but that does not explain its very low college completion rates.” Significantly more U.S. students enter college than the OECD average, but our college “survival rate” is 17 points lower (54% versus 71%).

“Myths and Realities About International Comparisons” from the National Governors Association, in *The Learning System*, Spring 2011 (Vol. 6, #3, p. 6-7), <http://www.learningforward.org>

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2. A Checklist for Managerial Decision-Making

In this thoughtful *Harvard Business Review* article, Nobel-winning Princeton professor Daniel Kahneman, University of Sydney professor Dan Lovallo, and McKinsey director Olivier Sibony say managers are increasingly aware that mental biases can lead to bad decisions – for example, confirmation bias (which leads people to ignore evidence that goes against their preconceived notions), anchoring (which results in weighing one piece of information too heavily), and loss aversion (which makes leaders overly cautious).

The problem, say Kahneman, Lovallo, and Sibony, is that being intellectually aware of the impact of biases isn’t enough to prevent them from continuing to mess things up. Humans tend to be blind to their own biases, and even very smart people can’t do much about that. Why can’t people see their own biases? There are two kinds of thinking: intuitive and reflective. With intuitive thinking, “impressions, associations, feelings, intentions, and preparations for action flow effortlessly,” explain the authors, as when people brush their teeth, chat with friends, or play tennis. “We’re not consciously focusing on how to do those things; we just do them.”

Reflective thinking, on the other hand, is “slow, effortful, and deliberate. This mode is at work when we complete a tax form or learn to drive... It’s mobilized when the stakes are high, when we detect an obvious error, or when rule-based reasoning is required.”

But most of the time, we’re operating at the intuitive level, which leaves us vulnerable to cognitive biases. “We almost never catch ourselves in the act of making intuitive errors,” say Kahneman, Lovallo, and Sibony. “Experience doesn’t help us recognize them... This inability to sense that we’ve made a mistake is the key to understanding why we generally accept our intuitive, effortless thinking at face value. It also explains why, even when we become aware of the existence of biases, we’re not excited about eliminating them in ourselves. After all, it’s difficult for us to fix errors we can’t see.”

But all is not lost, say the authors. “We may not be able to control our own intuition,” they contend, “but we can apply rational thought to detect others’ faulty intuition and improve *their* judgment.” When making important decisions that are dependent on recommendations from colleagues, leaders should focus on the decision-making process and systematically

identify and neutralize biases in their colleagues. To do this, bosses need a *checklist* when teams make recommendations. The authors agree with Atul Gawande's findings about the use of checklists in hospitals: "Using checklists is a matter of discipline, not genius. Partial adherence may be a recipe for total failure."

- *Check for self-interested biases.* "People do sometimes lie deliberately, of course, but self-deception and rationalization are more common problems," say Kahneman, Lovallo, and Sibony. Managers shouldn't ask directly about self-interest, which would come across as questioning integrity and diligence, but they should probe for this possibility.

- *Check to see if the team fell in love with its recommendation.* "When evaluating something we like, we tend to minimize its risks and costs and exaggerate its benefits," say the authors. "When assessing something we dislike, we do the opposite." If this is occurring, it's time for an extra-careful examination of the components of the recommendation.

- *Check for groupthink.* Were dissenting voices stifled? "Regardless of its cause, an absence of dissent in a team addressing a complex problem should sound an alarm," say the authors. Short-term, the manager may have to speak to one or two team members privately to find the real story. Long-term, managers should strive to create a climate where dissent and arguments are seen as healthy.

- *Check to see if the recommendation was overly influenced by an analogous situation.* People sometimes use past successes to argue for a similar program (an example of saliency bias), and the manager has to ask whether the analogy is apt.

- *Check for confirmation bias.* When trying to solve a problem, groups have a tendency to come up with one plausible hypothesis and then search only for evidence that supports it. The manager needs to ask what other alternatives were considered, and ask teams to present more than one recommended course of action.

- *Check for availability bias.* This gets at the WYSIATI assumption: What you see is all there is. "Because our intuitive mind constructs a coherent narrative based on the evidence we have," explain Kahneman, Lovallo, and Sibony, "making up for holes in it, we tend to overlook what is missing." One question a manager can ask is whether we would make the same decision a year from now, when different information is available.

- *Check for anchoring bias.* There's a tendency for teams to use initial estimates or figures extrapolated from past history and stick with them. Managers need to ask where the numbers came from and request solid evidence or new analysis.

- *Check for the halo effect.* There's a tendency to assume that because a person or approach was successful in one area, they will be just as successful in another. The manager needs to eliminate false inferences and ask the team to seek additional comparable examples.

- *Check to see if the recommendation is overly attached to past decisions.* People tend to go with past practices, and the manager needs to challenge that and ask for a thorough rationale as if the decision were being made for the first time.

- *Check for overconfidence.* The manager needs to push teams to take a harder look and adopt an outsider's perspective, thinking through what could go wrong.

- *Check for disaster neglect.* The manager might have the team construct a pre-mortem, imagining that the worst has happened and constructing a story explaining why.

- *Check for loss aversion.* Is the team being overly cautious because it fears consequences? Managers need to realign incentives or remove risks so colleagues aren't too conservative in their recommendations.

“Before You Make That Big Decision...” by Daniel Kahneman, Dan Lovallo, and Olivier Sibony in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2011 (Vol. 89, #6, p. 50-60), no e-link available; Lovallo and Sibony are at dan.lavallo@sydney.edu.au and olivier_sibony@mckinsey.com.

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3. Advice for Under-Achieving High Achievers

“Why is it that so many smart, ambitious professionals are less productive and satisfied than they should or could be?” ask Harvard Business School professor Thomas DeLong and psychiatrist Sara DeLong in this *Harvard Business Review* article. “Why do so many of them find their upward trajectories flattening into a plateau?” The reason is that anxiety about performance hampers their progress. They avoid challenges that will test their limits and hunker down in ways that limit their personal growth.

“Many high performers would rather do the wrong thing well than do the right thing poorly,” say the DeLongs. “And when they do find themselves in over their head, they're often unwilling to admit it, even to themselves, and refuse to ask for the help they need.” Here are some examples of underachievers' quirks:

- Turning inward – Achievers can get so caught up in tasks that they don't open up to colleagues and come to believe that helping others is a waste of valuable time.
- Can't let go – Achievers believe, often rightly, that nobody can do things as well as they can, which makes them micromanagers or poor delegators.
- Everything is important – Achievers can fail to distinguish between the urgent and the important.
- Thin-skinned – Achievers tend to ignore positive feedback and obsess over criticism.
- Invidious comparisons – Achievers tend to compare themselves to others, which can lead to a chronic sense of inadequacy and career missteps.
- Peaks and valleys – Intense highs can give way to intense lows. For achievers, there's a fine line between triumph and agony.
- Risk aversion – Achievers may shy away from the unknown.
- Guilt – No matter how much they accomplish, achievers feel they aren't doing enough.

The DeLongs advise that professionals who suffer from this syndrome take a hard look at what's holding them back and adopt counterintuitive practices that get them out of their comfort zone. “This won't happen overnight,” they say. “It requires acknowledging vulnerability, something that driven professionals don't like to do and that runs counter to their obsession with managing their image at all costs.”

- *Put the past behind you.* It's helpful to look at negative experiences in the past and compare your perception to that of your colleagues – and to how you are dealing with current challenges. The DeLongs suggest writing down what happened in a difficult personal interaction and then underlining only the facts. “You will find that there are only a handful of underlined phrases,” they say. “The rest is pure interpretation. The point is that when you shift the way you view a painful interaction, you can begin to put the past behind you.”

- *Use your support network.* “High achievers are, as a rule, very independent and don't like to think they need a lot of help,” say the DeLongs. As they rise through the ranks, “they often become even more reluctant to confess to fear, confusion, or incompetence. Making matters worse, they confide in people who tell them what they want to hear, not what they need to hear.” It's vital to have a support network and reach out for honest feedback. “It's a process where you ask others what you should *stop* doing, what you should *keep* doing, and what you should *start* doing,” say the DeLongs.

- *Become vulnerable.* Voicing anxiety and uncertainty to trusted confidants can bring a surprising amount of relief, say the DeLongs. So can asking “dumb” questions when you are uncertain. And so can taking on new challenges, like learning a new language or joining a book club where you can't control the selections.

- *Focus on the long term.* “Major goals can withstand interim setbacks,” say the DeLongs. “When you are looking at the big picture, you often give yourself more latitude to make a few missteps.”

“The Paradox of Excellence” by Thomas DeLong and Sara DeLong in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2011 (Vol. 89, #6, p. 119-123), no e-link available

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4. Should High-School Hours Accommodate Teenagers' Sleep Patterns?

“As children grow into adolescents,” say Carleton University (Canada) professors Matthew Kirby, Stefania Maggi and Amedeo D'Angiulli in this *Educational Researcher* article, “they tend to experience changes in the sleep-wake cycle, causing them to exhibit a natural preference to go to bed later and wake up later in the day.” Recent research indicates that *delayed phase preference* (DPP), as this shift is called, has biological, not cultural or psychosocial, origins. This means that nagging teenagers to go to bed earlier is not a practical solution to the problem. DPP comes with the onset of puberty; older, more physically mature adolescents show greater evening preference than younger, less mature adolescents.

When adolescents go to schools with early start times, they arrive in class without enough sleep and accumulate sleep debt during each week. As a result, they suffer in a number of areas: cognition, executive function, concentration, memory, task completion, and mood.

In 1997, based on this research, the Minneapolis Public Schools pushed the morning start times in seven high schools forward from 7:15 to 8:40. The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement studied the impact over five years and found the following:

- Students slept later in the morning (but didn't stay up later at night), getting five hours of additional sleep each week.

- Student attendance improved, especially for ninth graders.
- Parents, teachers, and school administrators noted significant improvements in student demeanor and a reduction in disciplinary problems.
- Students' report card grades did not improve significantly.

It seemed clear that students were cognitively and emotionally better suited to the later start time. Defenders of the later start time argue that letter grades aren't the most sensitive indicator of student learning, since teachers, grading policies, and curriculum requirements changed during the course of the study.

What about the costs of moving high-school start times? Minneapolis was able to shift the same buses to later schedules, resulting in no additional cost. But Fairfax County, Virginia estimated that changing high-school hours would add \$4-40 million, indicating that there is no fixed rule of thumb for the impact on transportation. Several other considerations come into play when shifting hours:

- Later start times may result in high-school students being tardy more often because they are picked up after elementary and middle-school students.
- Additional buses on the roads during rush hour can add to traffic congestion and make bus rides longer.
- Later hours cut into high-school students' ability to babysit for younger siblings.
- Later hours have an impact on teachers' and administrators' schedules.
- Extracurricular and athletic activities have to be delayed or shortened, and if other schools don't share the same schedule, interscholastic activities are affected.
- Later dismissal affects students' ability to take part in after-school activities like music lessons, martial arts, and gymnastics.
- Later dismissal affects students' after-school jobs.

All these factors, say Kirby, Maggi, and Amedeo, can be mitigated by careful planning and community-wide coordination. In most cases, simply shifting after-school activities forward solves the problem. The key variables in districts that have successfully changed school hours have been careful planning, community outreach, and giving timely information to parents.

“School Start Times and the Sleep-Wake Cycle of Adolescents: A Review and Critical Evaluation of Available Evidence” by Matthew Kirby, Stefania Maggi and Amedeo D’Angiulli in *Educational Researcher*, March 2011 (Vol. 40, #2, p. 56-61), no free e-link available; the authors can be reached at matthewkirby@gmail.com, stefania_maggi@carleton.ca, and Amedeo@connect.carleton.ca.

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5. Should a Teacher Physically Intervene When Students Are Fighting?

In this helpful *Kappan* article, Lehigh University law and education professor Perry Zirkel addresses the widely held belief that educators may not put their hands on students who are fighting, and risk legal sanctions if they do so (“You can’t touch me!” shouted a bully to a teacher about to intervene in a fight). It’s true, says Zirkel, that the Constitution, federal laws, and state laws set some limits, but there is wide latitude for teachers and other school staff:

- *Fourth Amendment* – A teacher touching a student to break up an altercation doesn't necessarily amount to "seizure", and the Amendment applies only to "unreasonable" governmental action. Courts have consistently held that public-school officials have ample discretion in deciding if bullying or bodily harm is taking place and whether the circumstances and the age of the students warrant physical intervention.

- *Fourteenth Amendment* – Past court decisions on Fourteenth Amendment due process have established that a student would have to prove that "the teacher's intervention was so extreme as to shock the conscience of society, which the judge represents," says Zirkel.

- *Civil rights laws* – These protect students from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or national origin (Title VI), gender (Title IX), and disability (Section 504 and the ADA). Even if the aggressor in a bullying incident was a member of one of these groups, it's hard to see the teacher's intervention as discriminatory. And if the victim was being targeted because he or she was a member of one of the protected groups, the teacher would be expected to intervene promptly and effectively.

- *State laws* – State civil rights laws are also likely to support the teacher's intervention, says Zirkel, especially anti-bullying laws that have been passed in 41 states so far. Tort liability is another aspect of state law; as long as the teacher's use of force is reasonable, a lawsuit is unlikely. "Indeed," says Zirkel, "convincing a lawyer to take the case on a contingency basis – in which the attorney's earnings are determined by the final amount of the award – would be difficult." On the other hand, if the teacher *didn't* intervene and failure to act caused further injury, a tort claim for negligence could be filed. "Courts are more likely to protect the student victim from injury than to protect the aggressor from physical intervention," says Zirkel.

"The belief that teachers can't touch students is myth, not law," he concludes. The myth has spread through ignorance of the law and sometimes the overly cautious advice of school attorneys, school insurance companies, and other interest groups that benefit from erring on the side of caution. Zirkel is not advocating that teachers dive into physical confrontations every time. "Rather," he says, "other factors – such as whether alternative, less restrictive means are readily available – should be controlling... The focus should be on selecting appropriate action based on professional reason rather than restricting action based on false fear."

"You Can't Touch Me!" by Perry Zirkel in *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 2011 (Vol. 92, #8, p. 76-77), <http://www.kappanmagazine.org>

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6. Do We Need to Rethink the Teacher's Job?

In this provocative *Education Week* article, Frederick Hess and Olivia Meeks of the American Enterprise Institute and Greg Gunn of City Light Capital and Wireless Generation say that teachers are being asked to do a lot these days – design and align lessons, craft assessments, differentiate instruction, analyze data, grade homework, connect with parents, enforce discipline, promote fitness, write individualized education plans, cultivate a love of learning, inspire, mentor, and more.

It's simply too much to expect that recruitment, mentoring, professional development, merit pay, and all the other ideas being proposed can produce enough teachers who operate at such a high level of performance, say Hess, Meeks, and Gunn. Instead, they suggest rethinking the teacher's job in three ways: make the job easier, split it into multiple pieces, and make more effective use of technology tools. Here are their ideas:

- *Rethink geographic location* – Programs like Tutor.com can offer families expert online tutoring 24 hours a day. “Fundamentally, this means it's at least conceivable that we can provide quality calculus instruction to students in west Texas or rural Kentucky even if it's tough to get a terrific math teacher to move there,” they say.

- *Rethink tasks* – School models like Rocketship Education use a combination of computer-assisted instruction, real-time assessments, small-group tutoring, and customized supplementary services to meet students' needs in a way that's not possible in conventional classrooms. “This division of labor allows classroom instructors to delegate substantial amounts of remediation, basic skill-building, assessment and analysis, and activity-materials management to the tutors,” say Hess, Meeks, and Gunn, “so they can focus on cultivating expert-level skills in coaching and motivation, instruction and discussion, classroom management, and problem-solving around student issues and needs.”

- *Rethink who can teach* – Programs like Citizen Schools can provide local volunteers to teach weekly modules that tackle complex projects with interested students.

The authors draw an analogy with the field of medicine, which has about 7 million professionals in the U.S., only 10 percent of whom are M.D.s; the rest are trained practitioners with complementary skills. “The trick is figuring out how to mesh and coordinate skills in a smooth, cooperative fashion,” say Hess, Meeks, and Gunn. “This is not easy work, but we posit it's more manageable than asking each and every medical practitioner to be a gifted cardiovascular surgeon, nurse, pediatrician, urologist, and on and on. We would think it bewildering if we walked into a hospital and saw elite cardiovascular surgeons, novice residents, and bookkeepers taking turns conducting heart surgery and handling administrative duties. Yet that is standard practice in schools, where all teachers – regardless of skill or demonstrated performance – take equal turns monitoring the lunchroom, supervising bus loading, patrolling the hallways, filling out stacks of mandated paperwork, and the rest.”

What this suggests, say the authors, is rethinking teacher certification and getting a variety of practitioners working at several different levels of expertise. This, along with differentiated pay scales and thoughtful use of technology, would make it possible to run schools without counting on finding 3 million superheroes in the years ahead.

“Maybe the Square Peg Will Do” by Frederick Hess, Greg Gunn, and Olivia Meeks in *Education Week*, May 11, 2011 (Vol. 30, #30, p. 28, 32), <http://www.edweek.org>

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7. Four Questions That Should Drive Professional Development

“Most educators struggle with how to focus their attention and effort,” says Learning Forward senior fellow Hayes Mizell in this article in *The Learning System*. One of the most

difficult challenges is organizing deep professional development experiences that are appropriate and useful. Mizell says that four questions should guide this effort:

- *What do the performance data of our students reveal about the learning needs of our teachers and principals?* “Understanding the gaps in students’ learning should inform the content of educators’ professional development,” says Mizell. This works best when teachers use data from their own students to shape PD.

- *How are we organizing professional development so it causes our educators to take greater responsibility for their students’ learning?* Teachers and principals shouldn’t be passive recipients of PD. If professional learning stems from a close analysis of students’ learning problems, educators will get invested and commit themselves to continuously improving results.

- *How are we organizing professional development so it causes our educators to learn from each others’ successes, and collaborate to learn from experts elsewhere?* “In all school systems,” says Mizell, “some teachers are more effective than others... Professional development that draws on the expertise of these educators will in most cases be more relevant, credible, and cost-effective than contracting with an external consultant.”

- *What is the evidence that our professional development is increasing educators’ effectiveness in ways that also raise levels of student performance?* “Collecting and publicizing evidence about the results of professional development is essential to improve and sustain it,” says Mizell.

“Four Questions Focus Learning on Expectations and Accountability” by Hayes Mizell in *The Learning System*, Spring 2011 (Vol. 6, #3, p. 2), <http://www.learningforward.org>; Mizell can be reached at hayes.mizell@learningforward.org.

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8. What Makes a Team Effective?

In this *Harvard Business Review* interview, Carnegie Mellon University professor Anita Woolley and M.I.T. professor Thomas Malone explain their research on effective teams. One surprising finding: elements that would seem essential to a team’s success weren’t – for example, the intelligence of individuals in the group, group satisfaction, group cohesion, and group motivation. A group’s collective intelligence depends on the amount of social sensitivity in the group. And since women tend to be better endowed with social sensitivity than men, groups with more women are more effective.

As in sports, say Woolley and Malone, to have an effective team, it’s not a question of recruiting talented people; team members have to be able to work together, listen to one another, share criticism constructively, and refrain from being autocratic. “[W]e saw pretty clearly that groups that had smart people dominating the conversation were not very intelligent groups,” says Woolley.

Although groups with more women tended to be the most effective, Woolley and Malone found that some gender diversity was helpful, and also noted that some men are

socially sensitivity and some women aren't. Groups that are too homogeneous at either end of the spectrum can be too process-oriented or too contentious.

All this is good news for managers. "Though you can change an individual's intelligence only so much," conclude Woolley and Malone, "we think it's completely possible to markedly change a group's intelligence. You could increase it by changing members or incentives for collaboration..."

"What Makes a Team Smarter? More Women", an interview with Anita Woolley and Thomas Malone in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2011 (Vol. 89, #6, p. 32-33), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at awoolley@cmu.edu and Malone@mit.edu.

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9. A School Librarian Gives Students the Skills to Figure Out the Web

In this helpful article in *Knowledge Quest*, Illinois high-school librarian Frances Jacobson Harris pushes back on the recent notion that school libraries (and librarians) are no longer necessary because students have access to the Internet. Harris works in a university lab school with unfiltered access to the Web, which poses interesting instructional challenges – and convinces her that school libraries and librarians have a vital function in schools today.

"Our response to life without filters has been to institute aggressive and long-term educational efforts in the ethical and responsible use of information and communication technologies," she writes. "We see it as a distinct advantage that our students' online experiences *at school* are not so different from their or their peers' online experiences *outside* the school setting. Our choice has been to directly address issues related to the freedom they enjoy – issues ranging from intellectual property and cyberbullying to content evaluation." Here is Harris's personal toolkit for helping students as they do research and navigate the Web:

- *Use digital tools that open up new possibilities for teachers and students, and keep them connected to high-quality content that supports inquiry.* Harris introduces her students to digital pathfinders and quality databases, including enhanced search tools like Sweet Search <http://www.findingdulcinea.com>, The Unquiet Library blog <http://theunquietlibrary.wordpress.com>, and the Never Ending Search <http://blog.schoollibraryjournal.com/neverendingsearch>.

- *Teach website evaluation in ways that reflect the reality of student searching.*

"Educators need to understand that students *will* go to Google and *will* use Wikipedia outside of school if not inside, no matter what alternatives we provide," says Harris. "It is in their best interests and ours to provide students with the intellectual tools for assessing what they find in those places." Teachers and librarians need to get past guessing games and hoax websites and provide more sophisticated guidance.

- *Focus on today's real evaluation puzzles: advocacy, commercialism, and mediocrity.* "Though my students are pretty good at detecting hoax content," says Harris, "they are not so good at discerning point of view, conflict of interest, and plain old mediocrity." She teaches through "whodunit" exercises that help students uncover authorship and identify persuasion techniques. For example, students working on environmental projects need to be able to figure

out the agendas of: advocacy sites (Sierra Club and Greenpeace), commercial sites that support environmental causes, government sites that conduct environmental research, news sites that report on issues, and information sources that may or may not have an agenda.

- *Wrap intellectual property issues into the mix.* “[W]e are all tired of being ‘copyright police’ in our schools,” says Harris. She contends that school librarians are ideally positioned to head plagiarism off at the pass. They can urge teachers to give assignments that encourage original thinking and authentic synthesis and can also play a key role in educating colleagues and students about copyright, emphasizing what teachers and students *can* do. She recommends Creative Commons <http://www.creativecommons.org>, which deals with licensing issues for intellectual property.

“The school librarian’s information specialist role is more important than ever,” concludes Harris. “Our students are engaged in a world that is saturated with information enigmas, both intellectual and ethical. Now is not the time to turn away from helping students confront those challenges – not as long as we have the skills and knowledge to teach them to solve the puzzles of their information needs today and the rest of their lives.”

“The School Librarian as Information Specialist: A Vibrant Species” by Frances Jacobson Harris in *Knowledge Quest*, May/June 2011 (Vol. 39, #5, p. 28-32), <http://www.ala.org/aasl>; Harris can be reached at francey@illinois.edu.

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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 41 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 44 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through more than a hundred articles each week, and selects 5-10 that have the greatest potential to improve teaching, leadership, and learning. He then writes a brief summary of each article, pulls out several striking quotes, provides e-links to full articles when available, and e-mails the Memo to subscribers every Monday evening (with occasional breaks; there are about 50 issues a year).

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- How to change access e-mail or log-in

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
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
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
The School Administrator
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools