Marshall Memo 975

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
February 27, 2023

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Teenagers are some of the most sleep-deprived people in the U.S… Teenagers need about nine hours of sleep a night – but they get closer to seven… For decades we've ignored overwhelming evidence that delayed start times help teens succeed."

> The editors of *Scientific American* in "Let Teenagers Sleep," February 1, 2023; the article has a chart showing more teen suicides on school days and fewer on weekends and in June, July, and December.

"Each day in social studies courses around the country, students ask questions about the realities of the world around them."

> Tina Ellsworth, Scott Waring, and Jason Beavers (see item #2)

"If students do not learn how to work with others and find solutions in ways that understand diverse perspectives and views through civil discourse, then how can we expect students to grow to be the problem solvers of our democracy's tomorrow?"

> Shannon Pugh (see item #1)

"Although nationwide efforts to educate college and high-school students about consent are both necessary and laudable, for many young people such interventions are arriving too late."

> Eve Ewing, Sanya Khatri, Sireen Irsheid, and Leah Castleberry (see item #3)

"I believe my most essential tasks, as a teacher, are helping my students think critically, disagree respectfully, argue carefully and flexibly, and understand their mind and the world around them. Unconventional, improvisatory, expressive, metacognitive writing can be an extraordinary vehicle for those things. But if most contemporary writing pedagogy is

necessarily focused on helping students master the basics, what happens when a computer can do it for us? Is this moment more like the invention of the calculator, saving me from the tedium of long division, or more like the invention of the player piano, robbing us of what can be communicated only through human emotion?"

Daniel Herman in "Chatbot GPT and The End of High-School English" in *Larry Cuban On School Reform and Classroom Practice*, February 18, 2023

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1. Standing Up for First-Rate Social Studies Teaching

In her keynote address as president of the National Council for the Social Studies at its December 2022 conference in Philadelphia (reprinted in *Social Education*), Shannon Pugh urged her colleagues to think through effective responses to the challenges social studies educators are facing today. "Those who question us have practiced their questions," she says, "so we need to practice our answers." Excerpts from her suggestions:

• *Content and pedagogy* – "The standards that I teach are written by educators, including content and pedagogy experts, who know that social studies is not bar trivia. Our students should learn content through inquiry and disciplinary skills, not through rote memorization."

• *Discomfort* – "Social studies classrooms help students understand that history is complicated and that not all people have experienced history, government, geography, and economics in the same way. Learning this does not teach students to hate their country or to be ashamed of their heritage. Learning this allows students to understand that there is not one history or one narrative."

• *Race and equity* – "We also cannot truly work on ensuring that all of us are fully benefiting from the opportunities and experiences that this great nation provides without understanding and addressing the barriers, both intentional and not, that prevent all of us from having an equal opportunity at achieving all that this country claims to stand for."

• *Global scope* – "My students learn the ideas, values, and experiences of people in both Western and non-Western traditions, because doing so prepares students to best participate as global citizens in a global economy."

• *Controversial topics* – "Social studies classrooms should promote civil discourse, media literacy, and inquiry in a way that moves solutions forward rather than restricts or forbids conversations about important topics. If students do not learn how to work with others and find solutions in ways that understand diverse perspectives and views through civil discourse, then how can we expect students to grow to be the problem solvers of our democracy's tomorrow?"

"Inquiry Is Not a Bad Word, It Is a Best Practice" by Shannon Pugh in *Social Education*, January/February 2023 (Vol. 87, #1, pp. 6-9)

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2. A Seven-Step Framework for Analyzing Original Historical Documents

"Each day in social studies courses around the country, students ask questions about the realities of the world around them," say Tina Ellsworth (Northwest Missouri State University), Scott Waring (University of Central Florida), and Jason Beavers (University of Missouri/ Kansas City) in this article in *Social Education*. The authors suggest using the SOURCES framework (developed by Scott Waring) to analyze and work with primary and secondary sources.

Ellsworth, Waring, and Beavers observed a teacher using the framework in a Kansas City high-school class studying blockbusting. Students were given a copy of an anti-blockbusting pamphlet distributed in the city in the 1960s: *Did You Hear What Happened to Joe Jitters When Negroes Moved in Across the Street?* The essential question for the unit was: *Why do most black people in Kansas City live east of Troost Avenue?* Students started off with simplistic answers to the question (houses west of Troost were too expensive) and gradually understood the history as they followed the SOURCES steps and delved into other documents and documentary films. Here's how the process unfolded:

• *Scrutinize the source*. What is its origin? Who wrote it? When was it written? What events could have influenced this source? What are your impressions of this source? Is it reliable?

• *Organize thoughts*. What do you need to know to better understand the document? What other sources do you wish you had? What else do you need to know?

• *Understand the context*. What was happening at the time the document was written? Where was it written? Place the source in its proper geographic and historical context.

• *Read between the lines*. What inferences about the source can you make that are not evident? Was there a reason the source was created that was not stated?

• *Corroborate and refute*. Look at other sources about the topic. How are they similar? How are they different? Do they align with the fundamental source?

• *Establish a plausible narrative*. Using all the evidence from the sources you examined, what are your thoughts about the essential question? What have you learned?

• *Summarize final thoughts*. What questions do you still have? What else do you want to know? Do you need more sources to more fully answer the essential question?

"'I Wonder What Happened to Joe Jitters': Teaching About Blockbusting in the United States" by Tina Ellsworth, Scott Waring, and Jason Beavers in *Social Education*, January/February 2023 (Vol. 87, #1, pp. 45-55); Ellsworth can be reached at tellsworth@nwmissouri.edu, Waring at scott.waring@ucf.edu.

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3. Talking About Consent with Middle-School Students

In this *Teachers College Record* article, Eve Ewing, Sanya Khatri, and Leah Castleberry (University of Chicago) and Sireen Irsheid (New York University) say that sexual harassment and assault are "distressingly common" in middle schools. "Although nationwide efforts to educate college and high-school students about consent are both necessary and laudable," say the authors, "for many young people such interventions are arriving too late." Studies suggest that addressing the issue of consent in middle school can build young people's ability to say no to unwanted sexual contact at that age – and in high school and beyond.

The authors surveyed and interviewed seventh and eighth graders in Chicago Public Schools to see how consent was defined, understood, and enacted in students' interactions with peers. The study was conducted in 2018-19, when the #MeToo movement was gathering momentum in the aftermath of accusations of assault against Harvey Weinstein, R. Kelly, and others.

Of particular interest to the researchers are social *scripts* – unspoken understandings about how young people are supposed to feel, think, react, and behave in particular situations. "Like actors on a stage," say Ewing, Khatri, Castleberry, and Irsheid, "they draw on a variety of scripts internalized over many years from peers, schools, family, the media, and other agents of social influence." When two people share the same script, both know what is expected and act accordingly, but if they don't share the script, conflicts can emerge. Two examples of ambiguous friendship scripts: Is it acceptable to touch someone's hair in the workplace? Should a story shared in confidence by a friend be passed along to another person?

Scripts can be tricky with sexual interactions, especially for young adolescents who are taking in society's expectations, watching their peers testing boundaries, and experiencing the hormonal changes of puberty. The authors focused on students' *consent scripts*, specifically:

- When it is necessary to obtain consent before a kiss, a touch?
- Who initiates that process?
- How should consent be sought?
- How does one signal if consent has been granted or denied?
- How should disputes around consent be resolved and negotiated?

Here are some insights about students' consent scripts that emerged from the study:

• *Consent works differently depending on the relationship*. With a casual or new relationship, verbal consent for any kind of contact was expected, but the boundaries changed in a dating or committed relationship.

• *Seeking consent is a form of empathy and respect*. "Respect for others' individual autonomy, and a sense of 'doing unto others,' were recurring themes," say the authors. Students spoke about the importance of their friends feeling comfortable, of their boundaries being understood. One girl said that asking for consent – even for a hug – was a way of showing caring for the other person.

• *Acts of seeking or violating consent are informed by norms of masculinity*. In many cases, there seemed to be different rules for boys, who felt freer to touch others without permission, joked about sex, and boasted about conquests.

• *Close friends respect norms of consent*. A good friend is more likely to back off when a clear signal is given – but even here, boys felt peer pressure to keep pushing for intimate contact even if their partner clearly said no.

These four elements of students' developing consent scripts "suggest the importance of having conversations about consent during early adolescence," say the authors, as part of comprehensive middle-school sex education programs. "It is crucial that such efforts strive to meet young people where they are and invite them to use their own experiences as a basis for discussion." That means going beyond simplistic slogans like *No Means No* and *Yes Means Yes* and helping young adolescents think through scenarios they are likely to encounter and develop the ability and assertiveness to enact an effective consent script.

"'They Don't Have the Right to Be Touching Girls': Understanding Middle-School Students' Consent Scripts" by Eve Ewing, Sanya Khatri, Sireen Irsheid, and Leah Castleberry in *Teachers College Record*, December 2022 (Vol. 124, #12, pp. 3-34); Ewing can be reached at evee@uchicago.edu,

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4. How Many Misconceptions Do You Have About Creativity?

In this *Science of Creativity* article, Annie Murphy Paul challenges us to take a true/false quiz on creativity. Test yourself and then check out her research-based answers below:

a. Creative accomplishments are usually the result of a sudden inspiration.
b. Creativity tends to be a solitary activity.
c. Creative ideas typically combine remembered information in new ways.
d. Children are more creative than adults.
e. When stuck on a problem, it is helpful to continue working on it after taking a break.
f. People get more creative ideas under the influence of alcohol or marijuana.
g. Achieving a creative breakthrough in a domain (i.e., publishing a successful novel) typically requires at least 10 years of deliberate practice and work.
h. Creative thinking mostly happens in the right hemisphere of the brain.
i. We are most creative with total freedom of action.
j. The first idea we have is often not the best one.
k. Long-term schooling has a negative impact on children's creativity.
l. Positive moods help people get creative ideas.

These questions were posed to more than a thousand people by University of Connecticut professor James Kaufman. Their answers revealed persistent, widespread misconceptions about creativity (the findings were published in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences* in 2021).

Correcting misconceptions matters, says Paul, because "if many of us are misinformed about creativity, it's likely that creativity will not be taught or practiced effectively." Here are the true/false answers to the 12 questions with a brief explanation for each:

a. False – Creative accomplishments most often result from lots of hard work.
b. False – Collaboration can liberate great creativity.

c. True – Creative ideas often combine remembered information in new ways.
d. False – Adults are usually more creative than children.
e. True – If you're stuck, take a break and return to the task.
f. False – Sorry, booze and weed don't help.
g. True – Ten years of deliberate practice and work are often required for a breakthrough accomplishment.
h. False – Both sides of the brain are involved in creative thinking.
i. False – Creative work often happens within situational constraints.
j. True – The best idea might be the second, or third, or fourth…
k. False – Staying in school need not impede children's creativity.
l. True – It helps to be in a good mood.

Paul goes on to cite five common beliefs that explain many of the misconceptions:

• *Myth #1: Creativity is a transcendent mystery*. In fact, say Robert Sternberg and Todd Lubart, it's the "extraordinary result of ordinary processes" such as memory and attention.

• *Myth #2: Creativity is a rare capacity expressed most often in the arts*. Not so; it can occur in every area of human activity.

• *Myth #3: Creativity is the product of spontaneous inspiration*. "In fact," says Paul, "research increasingly highlights the strategic and controllable aspects of creative cognition."

• *Myth #4: Creativity is the product of a naïve and childlike approach to life*. Actually, education, training, expertise, developing cognitive abilities, and persistence play a crucial role in important creative contributions.

• *Myth #5: Creativity flourishes when there are no rules and constraints*. In reality, says Paul, "creativity is usually an ingenious and resourceful response to situational constraints (e.g., making dinner with what's already in the cupboard.)"

"Can You Tell Creativity Fact from Fiction?" by Annie Murphy Paul in *Science of Creativity*, February 26, 2023

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5. Key Steps in Being an Effective Principal

In this article in *Serendipity in Education*, Allyson Apsey says that principals can't possibly be "masters of best practices and pedagogy in every content area and every subject area." That's what makes it so challenging to give helpful feedback on standard teacher observation forms. Apsey wonders if that's why research consistently finds "that teacher evaluation systems have zero or very little positive impact on student achievement."

But other aspects of principals' work *do* make a difference, she says, which is why school leadership is second only to classroom teaching in improving student learning. Apsey lists what she believes are school leaders' most valuable activities:

• *Visiting classrooms regularly and giving specific, positive feedback* – Apsey recommends following up with cause-and-effect statements, for example: "When you had students stand and use gestures to represent the vocabulary words, all of them became engaged

again and excitedly participated." Frequent, informal visits and statements like this build trust – so teachers don't cringe when the principal walks in, fearing a negative judgment.

• *Talking face to face with teachers about instruction* – These conversations are more about guidance and coaching than evaluation, with administrators frequently learning about pedagogy and curriculum from teachers and always discussing what's working – and what's not.

• *Shadowing students* – Following a student through all or part of the school day is one of the best ways to get insights on teaching and learning, says Apsey. She recommends doing this frequently in all parts of the school, seeing all classrooms through students' eyes.

• *Sitting in on professional development* – "This is not to become the expert in the room," says Apsey; "this is to show teachers how important investing in professional learning is to you. It is to have a knowledge base that will allow you to have deep conversations with them about the impact of the instruction on student learning."

• *Orchestrating effective PLCs* – Teacher teams looking at student work and evidence of learning are key to improved teaching and learning, says Apsey: "We move from trying to Tier Two our way out of a Tier One problem to genuinely collaborating around the impact of instructional practices."

• *Always talking about student learning* – Teachers are often good at planning together, discussing student behavior, and organizing events, says Apsey. "However, they are not always quick to pull out student work and sort through it together to look for strengths and next instructional steps. They need constant guidance and modeling from leaders to always bring the conversation back to evidence of student learning, and not just quarterly to look at percentages on standardized tests."

• *Having fun every day* – "If you are a secondary principal and like to make a fool of yourself trying to shoot hoops for a few minutes with the varsity basketball team, go do that," says Apsey. "If you are an elementary principal and you love pushing kindergarteners on the swings, go do that. Play fun music and dance with students. Whatever you need to do to remind yourself about the things you love the most about your job each day, be sure to schedule in time to do it."

"Principals: You Don't Need to Be an Instructional Leader" by Allyson Apsey in *Serendipity in Education*, February 25, 2023; Apsey is at allyson.apsey@creativeleadership.net

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6. Building Math Problem-Solving Skills That Last

In this *Edutopia* article, Texas curriculum coordinator Dani Fry says that when she follows GPS directions driving to a new location, she doesn't need to think about the route and wouldn't be able to follow it the next day without satellite guidance. She believes this is what happens when we give students too much support solving math word problems. Fry has six suggestions for getting students to do the heavy lifting so they learn how to solve these problems on their own:

• *Link problem-solving to reading*. Students should be reminded that they already have

reading skills that are helpful with math word problems: retelling the story in their own words, visualizing (character, setting, connections, events), making a quick sketch, using manipulatives. "We can break these skills into short lessons," says Fry, "so students have a bank of strategies to try on their own." There might also be an anchor chart on the classroom wall with a helpful list.

• *Avoid boxing students into choosing a specific operation*. Giving hints ("how many more" means subtraction) does the thinking for students (like GPS) and also creates problems with upper-elementary word problems where the signals on which operation to use are less clear. It's better to have students try different approaches, struggle a little, and build their own skills for figuring out the operation and strategy to use.

• *Don't ask students to "represent" a problem in a particular way.* "When we ask students to match our way of thinking," says Fry "we rob them of critical thinking practice and sometimes confuse them in the process." She suggests a grade-appropriate anchor chart (see the article link below for examples) to choose a representation that most closely matches what they're visualizing.

• *Give time to process*. "Sometimes we have to go slow to go fast," says Fry. When students are asked to solve a complex problem, they need time to sit with it and figure it out, perhaps turning and talking with classmates. Teachers should not rush the process, which means assigning fewer problems and going deeper at a slower pace.

• *Ask questions that get students doing their own thinking*. Open-ended questions are best, as is suggesting that students re-read the problem. A useful mantra: *Good readers and mathematicians reread*.

• *Spiral concepts*. Assigning a set of problems with the same problem-solving pattern does not build long-lasting skills, says Fry. It's best to interleave problems so students have to switch gears and apply different strategies.

"6 Tips for Teaching Math Problem-Solving Skills" by Dani Fry in *Edutopia*, February 6, 2023

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7. Using ChatGPT to Generate Multiple Examples

In this *Cult of Pedagogy* article, Chris Mah and Sarah Levine (literacy researchers and former high-school teachers) acknowledge the downsides and risks of the new AI answer machine ChatGPT – it can generate incorrect, illogical, sexist, and racist information – but suggest a positive use for K-12 classrooms: quickly generating lots of examples on any topic.

May and Levine believe this is especially helpful with learning strategies like concept attainment, inductive learning, and using contrasting cases. Examples and non-examples help students develop mental models and understand concepts and processes – for example, lists of different types of government, kinetic and potential energy, or literary interpretations. ChatGPT can churn out a list and then the teacher can curate it and have students sequence, rank-order, or categorize the examples and dive into a more-advanced, creative discussion of the underlying concepts.

"ChatGPT will do exactly what it is prompted to do and noting more," say Mah and Levine, "so it's important to give it precise instructions. They suggest:

- Spell out the criteria for a good example of the concept, process, or phenomenon being taught.
- Prompt the bot to create examples.
- Review and refine what's generated.
- Prompt ChatGPT for contrasting, incorrect, or ambiguous examples.
- Review and refine that list.
- Mix up the lists using Padlet or a Google Slide.
- Have students sort, debate, and explain their choices and generate "rules" explaining the concept at a more-abstract level.

(Click the article link below for several simulations of this sequence.)

Mah and Levine go on to show how ChatGPT can generate examples of *processes* (solving mathematical inequalities, balancing chemical equations, describing mitosis, the growth of a seed, how a bill becomes law), *concepts* (an author's style, statistical variance, the separation of powers), and *evaluating arguments* (whether a character in a play is sympathetic, possible causes of World War I, whether a virus is a living organism). With authorial voice, the bot can generate examples in the voice of an author with whom students are familiar. With social studies debates, Chat GPT can come up with counterarguments to what students propose. With science concepts, it can generate summaries of competing scientific theories.

"Before ChatGPT, teachers might spend hours searching for or writing suitable examples of arguments like these," conclude Mah and Levine. "Now we are learning how to prompt ChatGPT to generate these arguments to suit our teaching purposes. There's so much more this example machine can do to help us save time and employ our creativity so that we can better serve our students."

"How to Use ChatGPT As an Example Machine" by Chris Mah and Sarah Levine in *Cult of Pedagogy*, February 19, 2023

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8. Children's Books with a Positive Message About Divorce

In this *School Library Journal* article, Gail Cornwall says there are too many children's books about divorce that paint a gloomy picture of heartbreak, conflict, and parental mistakes (like using children as messengers). There certainly is sadness and in some cases trauma with divorce, but Cornwall highlights books that describe break-ups that were handled well and whose narratives convey three important messages: (a) the child is not the only one whose parents are splitting up; (b) it's normal to have doubts, anxieties, and questions; and (c) there are coping skills that help navigate a divorce. Here are Cornwall's suggested books (click the link below for cover images and brief descriptions):

- *Living with Mom and Living with Dad* by Melanie Walsh
- *Always Mom, Forever Dad* by Joanna Rowland
- *Fred Stays with Me!* by Nancy Coffelt and Tricia Tusa

- *Lou Caribou: Weekdays with Mom, Weekends with Dad* by Marie-Sabine Roger and Nathalie Choux
- *The Enormous Suitcase* by Robert Munsch
- *The Ring Bearer* by Floyd Cooper
- *No Ordinary Family!* by Ute Krause
- *My Parents Are Divorced Too: A Book for Kids by Kids* by Melanie Ford, Steven Ford, Annie Ford, and Jann Blackstone-Ford
- *A Brand New Day* by A.S. Chung
- *It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear* by Nicki Lansky
- *Standing on My Own Two Feet* by Tamara Schmitz
- *Glad Monster, Sad Monster* by Ed Emberley and Anne Miranda

Cornwall also recommends an adult book by David Hill: *Co-parenting Through Separation and Divorce*.

"Good Divorce Books" by Gail Cornwall in *School Library Journal*, February 2023 (Vol. 69, #2, pp. 33-35); see also this online article by Lillie Marshall on what to say, and what not to say, to a couple going through a divorce.

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9. A Fun Word-Finding Game with Students' Favorite Words

In this article in *Language Arts*, Clare Donovan Scane suggests a fun way to get students (and adults) thinking about letters and phonics. Everyone writes down their name on a piece of paper and then uses the letters to make as many words as possible. The first stage is finding words embedded within the name (Scane's full name has ARE, DO, NO, VAN, SCAN, CAN, CANE, and more). In the second stage, participants can mix up the sequence of letters. The third stage is turning and talking, comparing ideas with others. Finally, everyone tries to find words in their name from a second or third language. "If they haven't already done so," says Scane, "multilingual participants beam with pride as they revise their list and add to the collection of words derived from their names using their full linguistic repertoire."

"Get Curious About Language to Build Upon Connections, Critical Literacy Practices, and Joy!" by Clare Donovan Scane in *Language Arts*, January 2023 (Vol. 100, #3, pp. 219-222)

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10. Short Items:

a. A World Map of Earthquakes – This map by Adam Symington shows earthquakes over the last six decades with a magnitude greater than 4.5 on the Richter scale.

"Mapped: The World's Major Earthquakes from 1959-2022" by Adam Symington (Python Maps), *Visual Capitalist*, February 11, 2023

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b. Tectonic Movements Through the Eons – An animated graphic by Carmen Ang shows the movement of the earth's tectonic plates over the last billion years.

"1 Billion Years of Tectonic Plate Movements in 40 Seconds" by Carmen Ang, *Visual Capitalist*, July 10, 2021

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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 48 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 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 50 issues a year). Every week there's a podcast and HTMI version as well.

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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 SmartBrief
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
Kappan (Phi Delta Kappan)
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
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