Marshall Memo 989

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
June 5, 2023

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Be curious, not judgmental."

Ted Lasso (quoted in item #1)

"No one can perform their best unless they feel secure to express ideas, ask questions, and make mistakes."

W. Edwards Deming, one of his "principles for transformation," quoted in *Win-Win* by John Dues (Myers EP, 2023); Dues is at jdues@unitedschoolsnetwork.org.

"A good mentor listens empathetically, offers a safe space to vent, to air, to complain, and to feel shame."

Phyllis Gimbel in "What I Learned About Mentoring Principals" in *Harvard Ed*, Spring/Summer 2023 (p. 54)

"You need to bring something to the process rather than wait for the author to intrigue you,"

Daniel Willingham's advice on reading a textbook (see item #4)

"To create and continually improve high-quality learning systems that enable joy in work for staff and joy in learning for students, so that everyone can access opportunity-rich lives in our society, now and in the future."

The aim of the United Schools Network in Columbus, Ohio (quoted in *Win-Win*, p. 77)

"Kids are angry, rightfully so, at the generations before them. Teachers also have the challenging and important position of being a bridge between generations… Helping young people see that some people were taking action and some cultures do live sustainably, while helping them to understand the human cognitive processes that can lead to inattention and denial, can lead to a better sense of how we got here and how they can address inaction in the future."

Tina Grotzer in "When We Teach Climate Change," interviewed by Lory Hough in *Harvard Ed*, Spring/Summer 2023 (pp. 50-51)

1. Ten Leadership Skills from Ted Lasso

In one of her regular coaching letters, Connecticut educator Isobel Stevenson uses the developmental relationship framework to identify key leadership qualities exhibited by Ted Lasso as he coaches a British soccer team in the three-season Apple TV series that just wrapped up:

• *Express care*. Lasso "is the very epitome of caring," says Stevenson. "He is dependable, he listens, he makes people feel known and valued, he is warm, and he is encouraging" – including baking cookies for his boss every day and making sure the team celebrates a Nigerian player's birthday when he's feeling far from home.

• *Challenge growth*. Lasso pushes players' performance in ways that are non-threatening and indirect, says Stevenson – for example, giving the book *A Wrinkle in Time* to the toughest, most macho member of the team, who proceeds to read it to his niece, apparently seeing the book's message about taking on the mantle of leadership.

• *Provide support*. "Ted is all about encouragement," says Stevenson. He organizes an *ad hoc* support group called the Diamond Dogs that convenes when a teammate has a personal problem and tries to figure out a solution.

• *Share power*. Despite his natural talent as a leader, Lasso is not a soccer expert, so he's strategic in calling upon the talents of his compadres, including a lowly kit-man who, it turns out, has exceptional talent as a coach.

• *Expand possibilities*. Lasso plays a part in encouraging and supporting the growth of every major character: his boss to get past her bitterness toward her ex-husband; her assistant to emerge from being a disrespected lackey to a strategic partner; the ditsy girlfriend of two players to start her own publicity company; and a talented but obnoxious player to provide more assists than goals and actually become likable.

• *Embody self-efficacy* – Lasso encourages others, works for their success, and helps them move on from failures – including using the metaphor of a goldfish forgetting what it saw the last time it swam around the bowl.

• *Be positive and optimistic* – Lasso's "folksy upbeat ways manage to be hokey and authentic at the same time," says Stevenson, "and this rubs off on the people around him." But he's not blind to the team's problems, takes them seriously, and doesn't engage in "toxic positivity."

• *Nurture belonging* – Lasso makes everyone feel part of the team's gradual and inexorable improvement, suppressing negativism and raising performance, well-being, and self-worth.

• *Use soft skills* – Lasso is formidable in this department, says Stevenson, "but he is not working to convince people that he likes them in order to make them feel good – or at least, not only that. His agreeableness, and his soft skills, are both means and ends."

• *Defy assumptions* – In a pivotal scene, Lasso outsmarts the show's villain (his boss's ex) by exploiting the man's assumption that an American can't possibly be good at darts. Lasso's zinger: "Be curious, not judgmental."

"What Ted Lasso Has to Teach Us About the Holding Environment" by Isobel Stevenson, Coaching Letter 179, April 7, 2023, Partners for Educational Leadership; Stevenson can be reached at istevenson@ctschoolchange.org.

Back to page one

2. How Exceptionally Effective Teachers Think About Their Work

"How can it be that some teachers succeed in remaining in our memory for years or even decades, whereas others fade into oblivion after just a short period of time?" ask John Hattie and Klaus Zierer in their book, *Ten Mindframes for Visible Learning*. They believe the answer lies in the way successful teachers think about teaching, which can be summed up in ten "mindframes":

Impact:

- I am an evaluator of my impact on student learning.
- I see assessment as informing my impact and next steps.
- I collaborate with my peers and my students about my conceptions of progress and my impact.

Change and challenge:

- I am a change agent and believe all students can improve.
- I strive for challenge and not merely "doing your best."

Learning focus:

- I give and help students understand feedback and I interpret and act on feedback given to me.
- I engage as much in dialogue as monologue.
- I explicitly inform students what successful impact looks like from the outset.
- I build relationships and trust so that learning can occur in a place where it is safe to make mistakes and learn from others.
- I focus on learning and the language of learning.

Ten Mindframes for Visible Learning: Teaching for Success by John Hattie and Klaus Zierer (Routledge, 2018)

Back to page one

3. Mike Schmoker on Leading Civil, Text-Based Classroom Discussions

In this *American Educator* article, author/consultant Mike Schmoker says that discussions, along with reading and writing, are "a co-equal leg of the tripod of literacy."

When classes have structured conversations about academically challenging content, he believes, students learn "to *listen* (not just wait for their chance to talk), to offer their thoughts with an open mind, to fairly consider multiple perspectives, and to agree to respectfully disagree" – skills and dispositions we need in our increasingly polarized communities, workplaces, and the political arena.

There's not nearly enough discussion in classrooms, says Schmoker. When he conducts model lessons in high schools, he finds that students respond when he coaxes them to sit up and speak more audibly, repeat their thoughts more clearly and logically, point to evidence in a text they've read, consider different viewpoints, and use sentence stems he writes on the board:

- I agree/disagree with… because…
- I have a different opinion…
- I have something to add…
- Can you explain your answer?

"In the course of these brief demonstrations," says Schmoker, "I often see students brighten as they learn to express themselves more effectively and as they are helped to see that their thoughts matter and are being taken seriously." Without K-12 practice in discussions like these, he believes, students may grow up with a bad combination: fixed beliefs and little practice considering other viewpoints.

Facilitating rich discussions takes practice and some specific components, says Schmoker. He suggests this step-by-step strategy:

- Establish the purpose, which is to have a civil, open, fair-minded exchange of ideas and perspectives, versus winning and losing.
- Be clear that claims are mere opinions until they are supported by facts and evidence, that everyone should engage, and that students will be cold-called.
- Choose a curriculum topic that is interesting but not highly charged – for example, the pros and cons of nuclear power.
- Give students some brief background on the topic.
- Have students carefully read a text (or texts) that will form the basis for discussion.
- Anticipate which aspects of the text will be most challenging for students and what direction the discussion might take (not always predictable).
- To kick off the discussion, share a substantive, higher-order question or prompt (click the article link below for a sidebar of suggested prompts with fiction and nonfiction texts).
- Show students how to underline, annotate, and take notes in their text in response to the prompt.
- Provide visible sentence stems (see above) to guide students in their early attempts to share their thoughts in a logical, ordered fashion.
- Have students share their initial thoughts in pairs.
- Then launch the all-class discussion. "Don't be surprised if those least apt to raise their hands are ready and willing to make solid contributions," says Schmoker.

- During the discussion, encourage students to turn toward and give eye contact to whoever is speaking and respond to their classmates' comments.
- Cold-call pairs or individual students to ensure maximum participation (Schmoker notes that after pair sharing, this is really "warm calling").
- Gently prompt students if they need to speak more clearly and logically, cite the text, or express themselves more courteously.
- Pause periodically to give students time to jot notes about how peers' comments have influenced their initial views.
- Wrap up the discussion by asking students to write a reflection on the strongest arguments they've heard and then share those with the class.

"In my experience," says Schmoker, "offering such structure and coaching is typically well-received. I've seen how just a few such discussions enable students to make great strides toward becoming more effective, confident listeners and speakers."

After some practice, students might be ready to take on a more contentious topic. "It is vital," he says, "that you do your best to maintain a disciplined neutrality" – without, of course, dignifying Holocaust deniers and other outlandish narratives. He recommends free online resources like AllSides for Schools and ProCon.org that provide a spectrum of news and views on historical, scientific, and literary controversies.

"The Urgent Need for Free, Frequent Classroom Discussion" by Mike Schmoker in *American Educator*, Summer 2023 (Vol. 47, #2, pp. 1-14); Schmoker can be reached at schmoker@futureone.com.

Back to page one

4. Daniel Willingham on Strategies for Getting the Most Out of Textbooks

In this article in *American Educator*, Daniel Willingham (University of Virginia) lists the reasons textbooks are notoriously difficult for students to read: the prose is dense, general, hierarchical, and lacks vivid stories. Students who are used to a narrative arc have to adjust to textbooks, which aren't written that way. He suggests four strategies for high-school and college students when they read textbooks:

• *Don't just read and highlight*. "This is a terrible plan," says Willingham. Students who lack background knowledge on a subject don't have the best judgment on what's most important. Researchers proved this by looking at multiple copies of used textbooks in a college bookstore; they found little overlap in what different students highlighted. Faulty highlighting is a real problem when students re-read their textbooks to study for a test or write a paper.

• *Read with a strategy*. "You need to bring something to the process rather than wait for the author to intrigue you," says Willingham. A time-tested approach is SQ3R:

- Survey – Get a rough idea what the passage is about by skimming the headings, subheads, and illustrations.
- Question – Pose one or more questions you want to answer.
- Read – Actually read the passage with the questions in mind.
- Recite – Recite/retrieve/summarize the content as if describing it to another person.

- Review – Revisit the content focusing on answers to your questions.

Research going back to the 1940s confirms that SQ3R improves reading comprehension, says Willingham. Reciting and retrieving are especially important, since it's easy to overestimate what we learned from reading a passage; checking for understanding highlights any gaps.

• *Take notes as you read*. When Willingham meets with struggling students, he asks them to bring their notes and often finds they haven't been taking notes on textbooks, relying instead on their highlighting. He advises them to take good notes as they read, using headings and focusing on answering key questions, writing down new vocabulary, and then reviewing the notes to see if they're comprehensible. This keeps students mentally on task and memorializes the most important material for later review. Willingham advises students to use their own words: "There's no point in taking dictation," he says; "you need to manipulate the material mentally."

• *Block out enough time for reading*. Procrastinating and avoiding textbook reading is a constant temptation, says Willingham, especially with "texts on complex topics written by authors who are not afraid to bore their audience." Two pieces of unhelpful advice: speed reading (it's not a thing, he says; it's skimming), and reading only the headings and summaries (this is not a substitute for fully engaging with the ideas in the passage). Willingham says reading is one of the most important sources of learning in high school and college and urges students not to cut corners.

"How to Read Difficult Books: A Guide for High-School and College Students" by Daniel Willingham in *American Educator*, Summer 2023 (Vol. 47, #2, pp. 1-15); Willingham can be reached at willingham@virginia.edu.

Back to page one

5. A Survey of 22,000 Students in Independent High Schools

In this article in *Independent School*, John Gulla (E.E. Ford Foundation) says that in his visits to hundreds of high schools over the last decade, the two themes he's heard the most about are *community* and *belonging*. To get more insight into these key areas, Gulla and two colleagues conducted an online survey last year; they received responses from students in 80 independent high schools in the U.S. and 16 in Canada. Through a combination of multiple-choice and open-response questions, students were asked about their sense of being prepared, feeling respected, experiences with discrimination, and time spent on social media, homework, and sleep. Some key findings:

• Students' sense of belonging, ability to manage time and stress, and confidence facing challenges were closely linked to their school's emphasis on nurturing curiosity, developing passion, and heightening engagement.

• Students feeling respected and valued was strongly associated with "virtually every other desirable measure in the survey," says Gulla. "Disrespected and unvalued students don't become engaged members of the community."

• Being allowed to make academic choices built students' sense of autonomy and agency and fueled academic passions, which helped students make better decisions, manage their time, reduce stress, and take on challenges.

• Increased use of social media (the average was 2.4 hours a day, with more than a quarter of students spending more than three hours a day) was correlated with declines in enthusiastic involvement with activities outside the classroom, being passionate about at least one area of study, and students' overall school experience.

• The survey showed "wide-sweeping and profoundly negative correlations of a lack of sleep with desirable outcomes," says Gulla – and high levels of social media use was correlated with fewer hours of sleep.

Gulla has these takeaways from the survey, which he believes school leaders should focus on rather than "the latest education fad or momentary fixation":

- Talk to students, parents, and teachers about the importance of adequate sleep.
- Engage with students and families on reducing time spent on social media.
- Intentionally create opportunities to nurture students' curiosity, passion, and engagement.
- Create opportunities for students to make choices about emotional well-being and time management and become better decision-makers.

"Fit Start" by John Gulla in *Independent School*, Summer 2023 (Vol. 82, #4, pp. 39-41); the full study, "Community and Belonging Survey of Students 2022," is available here.

Back to page one

6. Getting the Most from Online Instruction When It's Necessary

In this *Review of Educational Research* article, Carla Johnson, Janet Walton, Lacey Strickler, and Jennifer Brammer Elliott (North Carolina State University) say the pandemic shone a bright light on the underdeveloped state of online teaching and learning. They conducted a thorough review of the literature and summarize key conditions for successful remote instruction.

For starters, the researchers list three foundational conditions for online instruction to be successful:

- Educators' knowledge and preparation for online teaching – training and support for teachers;
- Technology infrastructure and support – making sure all students have access;
- Students' developmental needs and abilities – especially accounting for and building self-regulated learning skills.

Johnson, Walton, Strickler, and Elliott then outline seven "pillars" of online teaching from their wide review of the research (most of these also apply to in-person instruction):

• *Evidence-based course organization and design* – This includes clear objectives, user-friendly support for teachers, visually streamlined materials, sound pedagogical practices, manageable cognitive load for students, opportunities for them to engage with content in

multiple ways and become increasingly self-sufficient, embedded assessments, and navigation that is simple, streamlined, and logically sequenced.

• *Connected learners* – Instruction is linked to students' lives, community, and experiences, makes personal connections, and involves students in real-world, meaningful challenges and problems.

• *Accessibility* – Technology needs to support students of all abilities while meeting the unique needs of students with disabilities, using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

• *Supportive learning environment* – The most important factor here is teachers supporting parents as they help their children with online learning.

• *Individualization and differentiation* – Technology has great potential to tailor instruction to individual and group needs, and teachers can take advantage of this when working remotely – especially tutoring students having difficulty and accelerating the learning of high-achieving students.

• *Active learning* – Teachers can use discussion boards and other online tools to increase the level of discourse with and among students. Teachers can also get students actively involved in real-world assignments, simulations, and project- and inquiry-based learning.

• *Real-time assessment* – Checking for student understanding during lessons allows teachers to give students immediate feedback, build students' skill at assessing their own and classmates' work, and improve instruction. Interactive tools like polling can reduce the distance between teachers and students inherent in online teaching. Summative assessments are trickier online because of the potential for cheating and in some cases students' level of keyboarding skill.

"Online Teaching in K-12 Education in the United States: A Systematic Review" by Carla Johnson, Janet Walton, Lacey Strickler, and Jennifer Brammer Elliott in *Review of Educational Research*, June 2023 (Vol. 93, #3 pp. 353-411); Johnson can be reached at carlacjohnson@ncsu.edu.

Back to page one

7. Using ChatGPT to Tailor Math Lessons to Students' Interests

In this *Edutopia* article, math teacher and instructional coach Kristen Moore suggests how mathematics teachers can use ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence bots to point students to real-life applications of math skills and concepts:

- Use surveys and daily classroom interactions to learn about students' interests.
- Prompt ChatGPT with a question like, "What are real-life applications of polynomials?"
- Choose the responses that are the best fit for your students' interests – perhaps computer graphics and video game design
- Alternatively, you can start with a student interest – buying a car for the first time – and ask the bot for math curriculum connections at your students' grade level.

- You can then ask ChatGPT to create lesson plans and instructional materials for that idea, including warm-ups, essential questions, word problems, performance tasks, projects, inquiry-based activities, partner tasks, practice problems, remediation, extension activities, exit tickets, and homework assignments.

Moore says the more specific information you include in the prompt – curriculum standards, student interests, sample essential questions – the better the material it will produce. But it's still essential to apply what she calls the "human touch" to make the lesson plan the best fit for you and your students.

"Using ChatGPT in Math Lesson Planning" by Kristen Moore in *Edutopia*, May 25, 2023

Back to page one

8. Children's Books About Dealing with Challenges

In this article in *Language Arts*, Aeriale Johnson recommends books that help children understand and grapple with problems, mistakes, and adversity:

- *The Book of Mistakes* by Corinna Luyken
- *Beautiful Oops!* by Barney Saltzberg
- *Maya's Song* by Renée Watson, illustrated by Bryan Collie
- *Dear Wild Child* by Wallace Nichols and Wallace Grayce Nichols, illustrated by Drew Beckmeyer
- *Still This Love Goes On* by Buffy Sainte-Marie, illustrated by Julie Flett
- *All the Way to Havana* by Margarita Engle, illustrated by Mike Curato
- *Bessie the Motorcycle Queen* by Charles Smith, illustrated by Charlot Kristensen
- *The Electric Slide and Kai* by Kelly Baptist, illustrated by Darnell Johnson
- *Peace* by Baptiste Paul and Miranda Paul, illustrated by Estelí Meza
- *Dad Bakes* by Katie Yamasaki

"Normalize, Problematize, Galvanize: Becoming More Human by Interrogating Struggles in Community with Texts" by Aeriale Johnson in *Language Arts*, May 2023 (Vol. 100, #5, pp. 416-421)

Back to page one

9. Short Item:

Mapping Life Expectancy – This map from a *Time* article by Jeremy Ney shows the troubling discrepancies in lifespans across the U.S., ranging from an average of 68 years in Owsley County, Kentucky to 87 years in Summit County, Colorado. This chart shows the relationship between income, rural and urban areas, and longevity.

"America's Life-Expectancy Map" by Jeremy Ney in *Time*, May 8/May 15, 2023

Back to page one

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
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 Ed (formerly Ed. Magazine)
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