Marshall Memo 279

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
March 30, 2009

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"You can't be too honest in describing big problems, too bold in offering big solutions, too humble in dealing with big missteps, too forward in re-telling your story, or too gutsy in speaking the previously unspeakable."

Thomas Friedman in "Secrets of a Pollster" in *The New York Times*, Mar. 25, 2009, on leadership lessons from crises experienced by Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, Ehud Barak, and Tony Blair, as adduced by pollster Stan Greenberg;
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/25/opinion/25friedman.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Secrets%20of%20a%20Pollster&st=cse

"The most successful people are those who have been resolute in the face of failure."

Michael Craig Miller (see item #2)

"What is restraining educators from using rich literature instead of trivial reading passages as test prep? If students can find the main idea in sophisticated texts, they surely will be able to do so in the grade-level passages on the tests… Repeated low-level test prep instruction reflects low expectations."

Norene Mahoney Rolle (see item #4)

"I was never an A student, and it would constantly frustrate me. Nobody ever bothered to tell me how to get that A, to get to that next level."

Dennis Lauro, school superintendent in Pelham, New York (see item #7)

"I Only Play Videogames While Snacking Chips" (an acronym for remember seven writing traits in exam conditions: Ideas, Organization, Paragraphs, Voice, Word choice, Sentences, and Conventions)

Heidi Andrade, Colleen Bluff, Joe Terry, Marilyn Erano, Shaun Paolino (see item #5)

1. Leadership Lessons from Honest Abe

In this *Harvard Business Review* interview, historian Doris Kearns Goodwin tells editor Diane Coutu some insights from her study of Abraham Lincoln:

• *A team of rivals* – Lincoln surrounded himself with people who had strong egos and high ambitions, men whose temperaments were different from Lincoln's and who weren't afraid to argue with him, question his assumptions, and challenge his authority. The danger of a feisty leadership team like this, of course, is that "you're constantly talking and arguing about things late into the night without reaching a consensus," says Goodwin. "It can be paralyzing." Fortunately, Lincoln was able to listen to the debate and, when consensus didn't emerge, he'd reach a decision: "Like it or not, here's what we're doing." Even though not every member of his cabinet agreed with the outcome, they all felt they had been heard and were able to support the president.

• *Generosity* – Lincoln was comfortable sharing credit for his successes with other members of his inner team. "Basically, you want to create a reservoir of good feeling, and that involves not only acknowledging your errors but even shouldering the blame for failures of some of your subordinates," says Goodwin. "Again and again, Lincoln took responsibility for what he did, and he shared responsibility for the mistakes of others, and so people became very loyal to him." Goodwin believes that Lincoln's one flaw was that he liked people, wanted to give them a second chance, and was sometimes slow to lower the boom on incompetence.

• *Knowing how to relax and recharge one's batteries* – Lincoln went to the theater about 100 times while he was in Washington, says Goodwin. He loved to tell stories and had a great sense of humor. Similarly, FDR had a cocktail hour with his associates every evening during World War II, during which nobody was allowed to talk about the war.

• *Emotional intelligence* – Goodwin notes that Lincoln was not particularly charismatic and it took the country a while to warm up to him. People working closely with him initially thought there wasn't anything very exceptional about him, but they soon came to believe that Lincoln was as near a perfect man as anyone they'd ever met. "He was able to acknowledge his errors and learn from his mistakes to a remarkable degree," says Goodwin. "He was careful to put past hurts behind him and never allowed wounds to fester."

"Leadership Lessons from Abraham Lincoln: A Conversation with Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin" by Diane Coutu in *Harvard Business Review*, April 2009 (Vol. 87, #4, p. 43-47), no e-link available

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2. The Uses of Regret

In this *Harvard Business Review* article, psychiatry professor Michael Craig Miller argues that feeling regret – thinking that things would have worked out better if we had just made different choices – can actually be a productive process. It can help us "make sense of life events and remedy what went wrong," he says.

Brain scans have shown that when a person experiences regret, the part of the brain that deals with reasoning and emotion lights up; perhaps it's comparing real outcomes with imagined alternatives. The greater the emotional intensity, the more learning can take place. Miller offers the following pointers for getting the most out of regret:

• *Beware of hindsight bias*. Monday-morning quarterbacks always know exactly what should have been done. As Kierkegaard said, "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards." So don't be too hard on yourself.

• *Use regret to improve decision making and clarify values*. "Instead of ruminating over what might have been," says Miller, "let what happened point the way." Regret shouldn't undermine self-confidence; it should help prioritize future actions.

• *The message isn't always to play it safe*. "Instead of choosing a less risky option that you are least likely to regret, choose the one that will maximize your chances of reaching realistic goals," says Miller. "In fact, past experiences of regret may have given you a better appreciation of risk – and what is worth risking – which is a sign of growth."

• *Don't worry alone*. "If misery loves company, it's because perspective helps," says Miller. "Support from colleagues, mentors, or coaches can boost your resilience… It's good to know you're not the only 'idiot' in the neighborhood. On some level, we're all idiots. The most successful people are those who have been resolute in the face of failure."

"Go Ahead, Have Regrets: There Is An Upside" by Michael Craig Miller in *Harvard Business Review*, April 2009 (Vol. 87, #4, p. 28), no e-link available

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3. E.D. Hirsch on Reading Tests That Could Narrow the Achievement Gap

In this iconoclastic *New York Times* op-ed article, core knowledge guru E.D. Hirsch tees off on conventional reading tests and suggests an alternative. The problem, he says, is that the passages in most tests are "random" – that is, they are about subjects that many students haven't learned about in their schools' grade-by-grade curriculum (hiking in the Appalachians, for example). Because of this, reading tests widen the achievement gap by giving an advantage to students who have picked up content-area knowledge outside school. "The test passages may be random," says Hirsch, "but they aren't knowledge-neutral. A child who knows about hiking in the Appalachians will have a better chance of getting the passage right; a child who doesn't, won't. Yet where outside of school is a disadvantaged student to pick up the implicit knowledge that is being probed on the reading tests?"

To drive home the point, Hirsch describes a 1988 study that divided seventh and eighth graders into four groups according to their reading proficiency and knowledge of baseball:

- Strong readers who knew a lot about baseball;
- Strong readers who didn't know much about baseball;
- Weak readers who knew a lot about baseball;
- Weak readers who didn't know much about baseball.

All students were given a reading test with passages about baseball. Sure enough, the third group (weak readers with baseball knowledge) significantly outperformed the second group (strong readers without baseball knowledge). This confirms that content-area knowledge is central to reading comprehension, says Hirsch. "For a student with a basic ability to decode print, a reading-comprehension test is not chiefly a test of formal techniques but a test of background knowledge."

Because teachers can't prepare students for the content in current reading tests, says Hirsch, they spent hours and hours teaching generic reading strategies like finding the main idea. "Yet, despite this intensive test preparation," he says, "reading scores have paradoxically stagnated or declined in the later grades. This is because the schools have imagined that reading is merely a 'skill' that can be transferred from one passage to another, and that reading scores can be raised by having young students endlessly practice strategies on trivial stories."

This is unwise, says Hirsch. Classroom time would be much better spent learning their grade's content-area knowledge and vocabulary in literature, science, history, geography, and the arts. If reading tests contained passages on the grade level's content, then students would be killing two birds with one stone: learning content and demonstrating their reading proficiency. "Test preparation would focus on the content of the tests," he says, "rather than continue the fruitless attempt to teach test taking." What we need to do, he says, is "move from teaching to the test to tests that are worth teaching to."

Step one is doing a better job defining what students need to learn at each grade level, says Hirsch, starting in kindergarten and working up through the grades. Instead of vague, hard-to-grasp learning goals like this third-grade standard from Ohio – "Compare the cultural practices and products of the local community with those of other communities in Ohio, the United States, and countries of the world" – states should spell out specific knowledge for each grade level – for example, exactly what students should learn about the 13 colonies and Paul Revere's ride.

Step two would be aligning tests with the standards. "Better-defined standards in history, science, literature, and the arts combined with knowledge-based reading tests would encourage the schools to conceive the whole course of study as a reading curriculum – exactly what a good knowledge-based curriculum should be," says Hirsch. And this, he argues, would gradually narrow the achievement gap.

"Reading Test Dummies" by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. in *The New York Times*, Mar. 22, 2009; http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/23/opinion/23hirsch.html?_r=1

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4. *New York Times* Readers Respond to Hirsch's Article

E.D. Hirsch's Mar. 22, 2009 *New York Times* op-ed article, "Reading Test Dummies", sparked a number of letters to the editor. Some excerpts:

• Jay Parker Buchanan of Bristol, Connecticut, argues that reading skills *should* be assessed by unfamiliar test passages. "[E]stablishing context and dealing with unfamiliar subject matter are crucial skills, both in school and in life," he writes. "No doubt having background knowledge does give a test taker a slight edge. But every topic chosen will give an advantage to some students and not others. The inclusion of many diverse passages is the proper equalizer. If we want children to learn history or science, we should test them on those subjects, rather than strip reading-comprehension exams of their basic purpose."

• Arthur Salz of Queens, New York, describes a professor who had his college seniors read articles about cricket in the sports page of a British newspaper and then take a comprehension test. Knowing nothing about cricket, they all failed. Schools are spending too much time on test preparation and thereby narrowing the curriculum, says Salz. "In our desperate attempt to inch up test scores, we have not only forgotten our definition of the educated person but also, as Mr. Hirsch points out, created a school environment where children know less about the world and therefore cannot possibly become better readers. How sad."

• Peter Kempe, an English teacher in Christchurch, Virginia, disagrees that schools should make a priority of teaching specific knowledge. "The race to teach the content that will prove important to our students is a race we will never finish," he says. "… The amount of knowledge available is both far more vast and far more easily found than ever before… There's a good chance that the content we teach today will be laughably antiquated by the time students are in college or the workplace." They key is teaching the skills that will help students make meaning out of the worlds around them.

• Robert Pratt of London, Ontario, writes, "Situational knowledge is not a precondition of learning, because humans have the ability to empathize. I have never walked through Thoreau's woods, but every time I read 'Walking,' I feel as if I can enjoy every breeze and the snap of twigs under my feet as I (in spirit) walk with him. Any child, even one from the concrete canyons of our larger cities, will instinctively understand well-written prose… Let's start teaching kids and engage their creativity with thoughtful lessons. Children are pretty smart. They suck knowledge out of anything that isn't dry or bereft of human feeling."

• Norene Mahoney Rolle, a secondary reading specialist in Massachusetts, writes, "What is restraining educators from using rich literature instead of trivial reading passages as test prep? If students can find the main idea in sophisticated texts, they surely will be able to do so in the grade-level passages on the tests. Don't change the tests; change the instruction. Repeated low-level test prep instruction reflects low expectations."

"Tests Are (a) Fair (b) Unfair. Explain" – Letters to the Editor, *The New York Times*, Mar. 29, 2009
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/opinion/l29reading.html?scp=1&sq="Tests%20Are%20(a)%20Fair%20(b)%20Unfair.%20Explain"%20&st=cse

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5. A New York Middle School Involves Students in Improving Their Writing

In this helpful article in *Middle School Journal*, Heidi Andrade of the State University of New York/Albany and Colleen Bluff, Joe Terry, Marilyn Erano, and Shaun Paolino of Knickerbacker Middle School in Troy, New York, describe how they brought about dramatic improvements in students' writing.

In 2005, the school was not meeting federal or state benchmarks because of low subgroup scores on state ELA tests and decided to focus on improving students' writing. A major part of their strategy was using interim/formative assessments to guide their teaching and involving students in diagnosing and improving their own writing. "Peer and self-assessment are key elements in formative assessment," write the authors, "because they involve students in thinking about the quality of their own and each others' work, rather than relying on their teachers as the sole source of evaluative judgment."

A team of teachers began to meet with Andrade in the fall of 2005 and decided to create common rubrics to assess students' writing on an ongoing basis. Drawing on New York state standards and the 6+1 Traits of Writing (Northwest Regional Educational Lab, 2008), they wrote seven-trait rubrics for sixth and eighth grade (seventh grade used the sixth-grade rubric in the first half of the year, the eighth-grade rubric in the second half). These are the traits the school decided on:

- Ideas: the heart of the message, the main theme, with the details that enrich it;
- Organization: the internal structure, the thread or pattern of central meaning;
- Paragraphs: each is indented and has one topic, supporting details, and a closing;
- Voice: the sense of a real person speaking to us and caring about the message;
- Word choice: rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens readers;
- Sentence fluency: the rhythm and flow of words, how the writing plays to the ear;
- Conventions: mechanical correctness: spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage.

(The full sixth- and eighth-grade rubrics are available through the link below.)

"Knowing that simply handing out rubrics would not magically produce good writers and high test scores," say the authors, "we concerned ourselves with the matter of engaging students in carefully considering the strengths and weaknesses of their works in progress, according to the standards set in the rubrics." Teachers introduced the rubrics to students, walked them through assessing a model piece of writing using colored pencils to highlight evidence of each of the traits, and got students marking up their own rough drafts with colored pencils. For the first three writing assignments, teachers walked through the process with each class together, and then gradually released responsibility until students were editing each others' writing in groups of three.

For their peer editing, students were taught the COACH steps for giving feedback: *Commend* (offer praise), *Observe* (note ways in which their own writing is similar to the writing they are editing), *Ask* (question the writer about what he or she meant to say), *Consider* (always be thoughtful of the writer's feelings), and *Help* (offer useful assistance). Teachers were pleasantly surprised by how students took to the process of revising their own writing. "In the past, they would rather have their teeth pulled with a pair of rusty pliers than revise a

paper," they write. Now, using the rubrics and the COACH suggestions, students got in a groove. At each monthly meeting, the teacher team discussed how the process was going and planned classroom follow-ups.

In April, teachers checked in with students on their reactions to the rubrics, and students were positive, although they needed a few words explained. Teachers also group-scored two sample essays and were pleased to find that rubric scores from different teachers were quite similar.

In the fall of 2006, after each writing assignment, teachers began charting their students' 4-3-2-1 scores on each of the seven traits. They also asked students for a show of hands for different scores to raise their awareness of strong and weak areas. This helped them pinpoint weaknesses (for example, paragraphing) that could be worked on in mini-lessons and in peer editing.

With the New York state ELA test coming up in January of 2007, teachers decided to give students a simulated writing assessment under testing conditions. To their distress, students didn't do nearly as well as when the writing process was scaffolded in class. Clearly students weren't able to transfer what they were learning to an unscaffolded setting. "Because writing, in general, and the ELA test, in particular, happens in rubricless situations," they said, "we were worried."

The solution was to give students a way to remember the seven traits (Ideas, Organization, Paragraphs, Voice, Word choice, Sentences, and Conventions). They were instructed to write the acronym IOPVWSC at the top of the paper, which they could remember by this sentence: *I Only Play Videogames While Snacking Chips*. To reinforce the acronym, one teacher had her students snack on chips as they wrote it.

Teachers also had students respond to a series of questions and brainstorm effective strategies: What is so difficult about writing essays? Why don't you include everything in the rubric? How can teachers help you? What would help you remember all the criteria? One student wrote, "I don't think there is much more you can do for us. I think it is us. If we are lazy, we have to just do it. I guess it all really depends on us." The teachers were pleased with this comment, which showed that at least one student appreciated all that teachers had done to help them improve their writing but saw that it was up to them to do the real work.

As they prepared for the dress-rehearsal writing assessment, one teacher raised the stakes by offering a free Friday class with snacks, board games, and video games if every student scored three or above on all the rubric traits. Students worked feverishly on their essays, but one boy with a track record of writing problems showed signs of giving up. There was no way he could meet the challenge, he said plaintively. His teacher pulled him aside and made a private deal that if he got 2s on the rubric, the whole class could still win the award, and this got him back in the game.

After the first day, the teacher looked over students' rough drafts and doubted that they would make it. On the second day, after being reminded of the acronym, students got to work on revising their essays, and when the teacher graded the final essays, every student (including the boy who was allowed to score 2s) had a 3 or 4 on all the rubric criteria. "What was even

more amazing was that the students were just as excited as I was," says the teacher. "This was the best experience of my teaching career thus far."

Guided by feedback from teachers, self-assessments, and peer editing, students' writing steadily improved. Teachers noticed more eagerness to get started with each writing project, more use of the thesaurus, and much harder work. "Now that they understand the process of self-assessment," says one, "they enjoy it and are ready to begin even before I am. The self-assessment gives them a sense of independence and helps them take ownership of their writing."

How did these students do on the New York state tests? Eighth graders' scores on the ELA test had been uneven and unimpressive from 2003 to 2006 (44%, 35%, 39%, and 37% proficient and above, respectively). In 2007, the first year of the new initiative, 52% of eighth graders scored proficient and above. Sixth graders rose from 50% in 2006 to 57% in 2007. African-American sixth graders jumped 16 percentage points and eighth graders 22 points. Economically disadvantaged students rose 20% in both sixth and eighth grade. (New York's seventh-grade ELA test doesn't include an extended writing section.) Needless to say, teachers and students were thrilled. Andrade and her colleagues attribute the gains to three factors:

- Teachers making assessment processes, criteria, and standards crystal clear to students;
- Students receiving frequent, useful feedback on the quality of their writing from teachers, peers, and their own self-assessments;
- Teachers using assessments to analyze the strengths and weaknesses in students' work to plan instruction.

"Assessment-Driven Improvements in Middle School Students' Writing by Heidi Andrade, Colleen Bluff, Joe Terry, Marilyn Erano, and Shaun Paolino in *Middle School Journal*, March 30, 2009 (Vol. 40, #4, p. 4-12); the full article and PDFs of the 6th and 8th-grade rubrics are at: http://www.nmsa.org/Publications/MiddleSchoolJournal/Articles/March2009/Article1/tabid/1869/Default.aspx. Andrade can be reached at handrade@uamail.albany.edu.

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6. Fluency and Comprehension: Why Can't They Just Get Along?

In this thoughtful article in *The Reading Teacher*, researchers Mary DeKonty Applegate, Anthony Applegate, and Virginia Modla report on their grade 2-10 study of how students can read with reasonable fluency and yet not understand what they are reading. This is perfectly captured in a teacher's comment about one of her students: "Oh, she's my best reader, for sure. She's just not a good comprehender."

Fluency has been defined as reading with accuracy, expression, and appropriate speed. One theory is that fluency is a precursor and facilitator of comprehension; this is because once a child is reading with reasonable fluency and automaticity, more brainpower can be devoted to understanding what's being read. A second theory is that fluency is an *outcome* of comprehension; once students can understand what they're reading, they read more smoothly.

The authors disagree with both theories, arguing that fluency and comprehension need to be taught in tandem. It's clear that good comprehension doesn't develop automatically in fluent readers or vice-versa, they say. There are too many middle- and high-school students with poor comprehension and/or non-fluent reading for that to be true. The problem, they say, is that too many schools are not knitting together fluency and comprehension instruction in the early grades – and recently, too much emphasis has been placed on fluency without enough explicit instruction in understanding. The authors are particularly concerned with the way assessments like the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Elementary Literacy Skills) can lead teachers to confuse curricular means and ends.

"Our data lend support to the notion that assessments of fluency without concurrent assessments of thoughtful comprehension are potentially misleading and damaging," conclude the authors. "What may ultimately be even more detrimental is the establishment of programs of instruction that divorce fluency and word recognition from comprehension." The complex interaction of these two vital aspects of reading needs much more investigation and research, they say.

"'She's My Best Reader; She Just Can't Comprehend': Studying the Relationship Between Fluency and Comprehension" by Mary DeKonty Applegate, Anthony Applegate, and Virginia Modla in *The Reading Teacher*, March 2009 (Vol. 62, #6, p. 512-521), no e-link available

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7. Standards-Based Report Cards: How Are They Faring?

In this front-page *New York Times* story, Winnie Hu reports on several school districts that are adopting standards-based report cards – and the controversy that sometimes accompanies the change. Among the goals of the new report cards are: more accurate grades because standards are more explicit; greater consistency and less teacher subjectivity from one classroom to another; reducing grade inflation; more detailed information for parents; and teachers, parents, and students focusing more accurately on progress as the year unfolds. Here are several areas where there's been push-back and rethinking:

• *Grading on a 4-3-2-1 scale instead of A-B-C-D-F*. In Pelham, New York, a 4 means "Meeting standards with distinction" and a 1 means not meeting state standards. Some parents are reluctant to let go of traditional grades because of what they mean for the honor roll, class rank, and college admission. When the San Mateo-Foster district in California tried to shift to 4-3-2-1 grades, parents protested vigorously. One parent said that it would remove the incentive for high-achieving students to work hard. A hybrid approach was proposed, with letter grades for each subject and 4-3-2-1 grades for specific skills.

• *Spelling out the standards in detail and giving each student a grade on each standard*. For example, Pelham has ten sub-skill grades in math and ten in language arts, two each in science and social studies, and a total of 15 in art, music, physical education, technology, and "learning behaviors." Conduct, effort, behavior, and homework are separated out from academic achievement. "We wanted parents to clearly know what their child's actual achievement was," said Melanie Horowitz, a principal in Wilmette, Illinois, "without clouding

the issue with how often they turned in their homework or participated in class." However, some parents find the profusion of sub-skill marks confusing. Dennis Lauro, superintendent in Pelham, pushes back: "I was never an A student, and it would constantly frustrate me. Nobody ever bothered to tell me how to get that A, to get to that next level."

• *Grading with respect to a standard rather than compared to other students*. Thomas Guskey, who is about to publish a book on standards-based report cards, says the problem with grading on a curve is that it's difficult to tell how much has been learned. "They could all have done miserably," he says, "just some less miserably than others." At least one Pelham parent appreciated this change. "I'm not against competition," says Rebecca Westall, "but I don't think it belongs in fifth grade."

• *Grading on end-of-the-year standards rather than on achievement on the material covered up to each report card*. This means that most students don't score higher than a 2 on the early report cards, which dismays some parents. "We're running around the school saying '2 is cool,'" says Pelham parent Jennifer Lapey, "but in my world, 2 out of 4 is not so cool." In response to parent complaints, Pelham is planning to tweak the grading system next year so that students are graded with respect to benchmarks each marking period, not end-of-year standards.

• *Getting students more involved in self-assessment*. Pelham has students set individual goals, assemble portfolios of their work, and discuss progress with teachers and parents. "I set a goal to get a 3 in writing and I really, really wanted it," said one Pelham fifth grader. "I got it because I didn't rush through my work just to get to the end. I look in the dictionary. I don't hate it anymore."

"Report Cards Give Up A's and B's for 4s and 3s" by Winnie Hu in *The New York Times*, Mar. 25, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/25/education/25cards.html?scp=1&sq=Report%20Cards%20Give%20Up%20A's%20and%20B's%20for%204s%20and%203s&st=cse

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8. Picture Books That Hook Middle-School Readers

In this *Middle School Journal* article, Arkansas State University professor Patricia Miller sings the praises of well-chosen picture books as literacy tools in middle-school classrooms. "Picture books can help by entertaining, informing, and leading students to greater understanding of the world around them," says Murphy. "They teach about content, about the world they represent, about form, about literature, about language, and about how stories can be told." Here are some of her suggestions:

- *Iditarod: The Great Race to Nome (2002)* by Sherwonit describes a dogsled race and is accompanied by stunning photographs.
- *Terrible Things* (1980) by Bunting is an allegory about the Holocaust.
- *The Harmonica* (2004) by Johnston is based on the story of a Holocaust survivor.
- *The Cats in Krasinski Square* (2004) by Hesse is also about the Holocaust.

- *Rose Blanche* (1985) by Innocenti is about a girl who finds a concentration camp near her home during World War II.
- *Pink and Say* (1994) by Polacco is about an interracial friendship between two 15-year-old Union soldiers during the Civil War.
- *Through Thursday* (1998) by Cooper is a model of good writing.
- *Wondrous Words* (1999) by Ray is about the craft of writing.
- *The Wall* (1990) by Bunting is about a young person finding a grandfather's name on the Vietnam Memorial.
- *Baseball Saved Us* (1993) by Mochizuki is about a young Japanese boy in an internment camp and the baseball diamond that gave internees a purpose.
- *Feathers and Fools* (2000) by Fox is an allegory about peacocks and swans with a subtext about the Cold War arms race.
- *Something Permanent* (1994) by Rylant is about the Great Depression.
- *Encounter* (1992) by Yolen describes the first encounter between Columbus and the people of San Salvador through the eyes of a young native boy.
- *Old Dry Frye: A Deliciously Funny Tall Tale* (1999) by Johnson is about a preacher who loves fried chicken but ends up choking on a bone.
- *Fly Away Home* (1991) by Bunting is about a young boy living undetected in an airport.
- These books bring parts of speech to life: *Kites Sail High: A Book About Verbs* (1988), *Many Luscious Lollipops: A Book About Adjectives* (1989), and *Behind the Mask: A Book About Prepositions* (1995) by Heller and *A Mink, a Fink, a Skating Rink: What Is a Noun?* and *Hairy, Scary, Ordinary: What Is an Adjective?* by Cleary.
- *Starry Messenger: Galileo Galilei* (1996) by Sis tells the story of the scientist, mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and physicist Galileo.
- *Snowflake Bentley* (1998) by Martin is the story of the man who discovered that no two snowflakes are alike.
- *One Grain of Rice* (1997) by Demi shows how numbers double and grow from one to one billion in 30 days.
- *Math Curse* (1995) and *Science Verse* (2004) by Scieszka humorously delve into each subject.
- *Anno's Mysterious Multiplying Jar* (1999), *Anno's Math Games* (1997), and *Anno's Magic Seeds* (1999) by Anno take on factorials, logic, permutations and combinations.

"Using Picture Books to Engage Middle School Students" by Patricia Murphy in *Middle School Journal*, March 2009 (Vol. 40, #4, p. 20-24), access only for NMSA members; Murphy can be reached at pmurphy@astate.edu.

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9. Short Item:

Websites for teachers – *Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook,* a new magazine from *Education Week,* recommends these websites as good sources of materials for teachers:

• Wiki-Teacher – http://www.wiki-teacher.com - Created by the Clark County Schools in Nevada but open to all, this website features K-8 lesson and unit plans that are searchable by topic, level, and textbook. There are also short video clips.

• Teach-nology – http://www.teach-nology.com - This site has 28,000 free lesson plans for K-12 teachers and a variety of tips, printable worksheets, and games for all subjects.

• Curriki – http://www.curriki.org - This site has searchable collections of math, science, language arts, and social studies lesson plans and activities for all grades. Teachers can also contribute resources.

"Web Sites to Know" by Liana Heitin in *Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook*, Spring 2009

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo, please e-mail: kim.marshall8@verizon.net

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo 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 37 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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- What readers say
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Marshall Memo subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in PDF or Word format)
- All back issues (also in PDF or Word)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or password

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Catalyst Chicago
Changing Schools (McREL)
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
Teacher Magazine (online)
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Language Educator
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools/The Learning Principal