

Marshall Memo 215

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
December 31, 2007

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Quotes of the Week

“Standards are meaningless until you define how you will assess them.”

Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (see item #3)

“When implemented well, formative assessment can effectively double the speed of student learning.”

Dylan Wiliam (see item #4)

“[F]eedback is only effective when it translates into a clear, positive message that students can hear.”

Susan Brookhart (see item #5)

“The last 30 years have shown conclusively that you can change teachers’ thinking about something without changing what those teachers do in classrooms.”

Dylan Wiliam (*ibid.*)

“Without a careful plan, it’s just glorified babysitting.”

Jeffrey Riley, principal of the Edwards Middle School in Boston, on extending learning time (see item #9)

“If a rating is to be reliable, it’s like a scale in the grocery store – it doesn’t change based on the season or how sympathetic the grocer is to my needs. A scale is just a scale, and it gives me a consistent and accurate measurement.”

Douglas Reeves (see item #8)

1. A College Student Gets It – and Tries to Pass the Message Along

In this lovely article in *Essential Teacher*, ESL teacher Dorothy Zemach describes a defining moment in her own education. In her junior year in college, she was struggling to complete a final assignment for a music theory and composition class – writing a keyboard sonata. She happened to run into the professor just before the assignment was due, and when he asked how it was going, she said, “Well, I’ll finish it in time, but I won’t like it.”

The professor looked distressed and asked what it would take for her to create a composition that she *did* like. “About three days of sleep!” joked Zemach. The professor asked whether she was going home for the semester break, and when she said she was, he insisted that she not work on the composition until she had three days of sleep and gave her an extension until after the break. He also asked that she not turn in the sonata until she was happy with it.

“I don’t know if it was what he said or how he said it,” writes Zemach, “but at that moment, the clouds parted for me, and I truly Got The Point. He didn’t care about my sonata. He’d doubtless heard more than enough student sonatas in his years of teaching. The only person who could possibly care about my sonata was me – and if I wasn’t writing it for myself, then I was wasting my time and effort.

“That sounds like such a simple concept, and yet at that point, I’d been in school continuously for fifteen years, since age four. I’d attended more than twelve schools in six countries and had studied under scores of teachers and professors, most of them quite good. And yet somehow I’d gotten to be a junior in college without truly understanding that my education was supposed to be meaningful to *me*. Teachers might assign papers and ask questions and distribute grades, but those were just tools they were offering me so I could progress. Even teachers themselves were tools for me, and I am to this day grateful for that music professor who cared enough about me to get me to care about myself.”

When Zemach began her own teaching career, she tried pass this insight along to another generation of students – but it wasn’t easy. “You can’t just tell a class, ‘Hey! This is the meaning of education!’ and have them get it,” she says. Zemach tried in various ways – a student would say, “Thank you, teacher, for giving me an A!” and she’d reply, “I *didn’t* give it to you – you *earned* it” – but she didn’t seem to be getting through. When she told her sonata story, a student responded, “You mean our paper is not really due on Friday?”

So Zemach decided to shoot for smaller targets, explaining the reasons behind what she did day to day in the classroom:

- *Why work in pairs?* So you can practice both question forms and answer forms.
- *Why study topic sentences?* Because the sample essays showed that most of you didn't write strong topic sentences, and I know you'll need this skill in your college classes.
- *Why play the vocabulary game?* Because you seem tired, it's a rainy November day, and I want you to practice the material in an enjoyable way.

"I like to think that articulating this level of purpose helps my students," says Zemach. "I know it helps me. It was exhausting at first to try to justify everything I did. However, I found myself making better choices. After all, if I can't think of a good reason to do something, then I probably shouldn't be doing it."

And from time to time, she asks broader questions: *Why study how to read in English? Why use process writing? Can listening strategies really make a difference?* Occasionally she gets into the deepest questions: *What do I want from my education? How will knowing English help me get there?*

Is this making a difference? Zemach says she honestly doesn't know, because students don't share their reactions. But then, come to think of it, *she* didn't share her blinding insight with her music professor, even though she continued to study under him until she graduated. "He's probably still teaching somewhere," she concludes ruefully, "unaware of how much impact he had on my education, my career, and my life – just as your students may not be telling you about the impact you're having on them. Who knows? Perhaps in twenty years, you'll be reading an article like this about yourself."

"Thank You, Mario Pelusi" by Dorothy Zemach in *Essential Teacher*, December 2007 (Vol. 4, #4, p. 12-13), no e-link available. The author can be reached at zemach@comcast.net.

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2. How Can We Help Adolescents Avoid Risks?

In this intriguing *New York Times* article, health columnist Jane Brody reports on some recent research on teen risk-taking. "Is it that teenagers think that they are immortal or invulnerable, immune to the hazards adults see so clearly?" she asks. "Or do they not appreciate the risks involved and need repeated reminders of the dangers inherent in activities like driving too fast, driving drunk, having unprotected sex, experimenting with drugs, binge drinking, jumping into unknown water, you name it?"

Actually, Brody reports, teens are well aware of the dangers involved in certain situations – in fact, they *overestimate* the probability of getting pregnant, getting a sexually-transmitted disease, or dying in a car accident. "We found that teenagers quite rationally weigh benefits and risks," says Valerie Reyna, a professor of human development and psychology at Cornell. "But when they do that, the equation delivers the message to go ahead and do that, because to the teen the benefits outweigh the risks... The risk of pregnancy from a single act of unprotected sex is quite small, perhaps one chance in 12, and the risk of contracting H.I.V., about one in 500, is very much smaller than that."

For this reason, said Reyna in a June 2007 article in *Scientific American Reports* (with co-author Frank Farley), the conventional approach of appealing to teenagers' reasoning power won't work – not because teens fail to weigh risks against benefits, but because they are seduced by the benefits and miscalculate the risks. “It now becomes clearer why traditional intervention programs fail to help many teenagers,” say Reyna and Farley. “Although the programs stress the importance of accurate risk perception, young people already feel vulnerable and overestimate the risks.” Lecturing teens with factual risk information can backfire because adolescents will realize that behaviors are in fact *less* risky than they thought. This approach, they argue, is “a slippery slope that all too often results in teens' thinking that the benefits outweigh the risks.”

So what are parents and educators to do? Reyna and her colleagues say two approaches are worth considering:

- “*Gist*” thinking – Adults draw on their life experience to see the forest for the trees, quickly sizing up a situation as good or bad, safe or dangerous, and intuitively deciding on the best course of action. For example, offered the chance to play Russian roulette for a \$1 million payoff, most adults would immediately grasp the big picture, saying, “No way! No amount of money is worth a one in six chance of dying.” But young people, Reyna says, “don't get it. They don't get the gist of a situation. Gist is based on one's culture, background and experiences, and experience is what teens lack.”

So how can we teach adolescents to take more of a gist approach? Teens need “practice at recognizing cues in the environment that signal possible danger before it's too late to act,” say Reyna and Farley. A woman who became a paraplegic in a car accident caused by swerving to avoid a squirrel now urges her sons and daughters-in-law to train themselves not to take risks avoiding small animals. “The gist here is that the life of a squirrel is not worth the possible consequences to me or anyone else on the road,” writes Brody.

“Likewise, in helping a teenage girl resist spontaneous, unprotected sex, a gist-based approach has her practicing ways to say ‘no’ and not worry about losing her boyfriend.” A 15-year-old who had already had one unintended pregnancy took part in a gist-based program designed by Reyna and Farley. “In talking about all the different ways to say ‘no,’” said the girl, “I've actually used them, which makes me feel much more comfortable. And I feel confident. I don't feel stupid saying ‘no.’ And even if people think I'm stupid, that's their problem.”

- *Supervision* – “Younger adolescents don't learn from consequences as well as older adolescents do,” says Reyna. “So rather than relying on them to make reasoned choices or to learn from the school of hard knocks, a better approach is to supervise them.” This means filling their time with positive activities and protecting them from risky, tempting situations such as being alone in a house with a friend of the opposite sex or going to parties where alcohol is present and no responsible adults are on the scene.

“Teenage Risks, and How to Avoid Them” by Jane Brody in the *New York Times*, Dec. 18, 2007, (p. F7) http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/18/health/18brod.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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3. Effective Interim Assessments in Two Newark Schools

(Originally titled “Data in the Driver’s Seat”)

In this compelling article in *Educational Leadership*, Paul Bambrick-Santoyo tells how two charter schools in Newark, NJ – North Star Academy (which he leads) and Greater Newark Academy – brought about dramatic gains in student achievement between 2003 and 2007, outstripping state averages in almost every category. How did they do it? By shifting the conversation in both schools to *results*. The key driver: interim assessments given every 6-8 weeks, with the following characteristics:

- *Transparent, rigorous common assessments* – “Standards are meaningless until you define how you will assess them,” writes Bambrick-Santoyo. For example, a 7th-grade math standard – *Understand and use percents in a variety of situations* – could be assessed in a variety of ways, including:

- What is 50% of 20?
- J.J. Redick and Chris Paul were competing for the best free throw percentage. Redick made 94 percent of his first 103 shots, whereas Paul made 47 of 51 shots. (a) Which one had a better shooting percentage? (b) In the next game, Redick made only 2 of 10 shots, and Paul made 7 of 10 shots. What are their new overall shooting percentages? Who is the better shooter? (c) Jason argued that if J.J. and Chris each made their next 10 shots, their shooting percentages would go up the same amount. Is this true? Why or why not? Describe in detail how you arrived at your answers.

Without more guidance on how that math standard will be assessed, teaching will be all over the map, says Bambrick-Santoyo. “In many schools, teachers define the standards according to their own level of expectation, and those expectations vary radically from one classroom to the next.” Only if the curriculum is aligned to the rigor demanded by state tests can all students reach high standards. Following this philosophy, he and his colleagues created common interim assessments – aligned with New Jersey and national standards – and shared them with teachers at the beginning of each quarter.

- *Test-in-hand analysis* – “Looking at state test or interim assessment results in isolation is like reading a newspaper summary of a sports event,” says Bambrick-Santoyo. Using a sports analogy, a swimming coach who looked only at race statistics might conclude that one of his swimmers needed to increase her speed. But if the coach was at poolside – paying close attention – he would see that the girl finished last because she was slow off the starting block. Teachers at the two Newark schools pore over interim assessment data and actual test items to find what students misunderstood – and why.

- *Classroom follow-up* – Impressive binders containing interim assessment results are worthless, says Bambrick-Santoyo, unless they are *used*. Teachers in both Newark schools follow up each interim assessment with detailed six-week action plans that drive unit and lesson planning, beginning-of-class problems, mini-lessons, small-group sessions, tutoring, and homework assignments.

• *Culture* – When Bambrick-Santoyo introduced interim assessments in 2003, there was significant skepticism and resistance. “Don’t we already assess our students and analyze their progress?” teachers asked. He persisted, and just before the first interim assessment, asked teachers to predict how their groups would do on each item – Confident, Not Sure, or No Way. When the results came in, teachers were shocked at the results – and from that point on, they were hooked on looking for the causes of poor performance, evaluating the rigor and quality of their teaching, and creating targeted follow-up plans. “The results came first; the buy-in came next,” says Bambrick-Santoyo.

“Data in the Driver’s Seat” by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo in *Educational Leadership*, Dec. 2007/ Jan. 2008 (Vol. 65, #4, p. 43-46), <http://www.ascd.org/el>. The author can be reached at pbambrick@uncommonschoools.org.

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4. “Teacher Learning Communities” Supporting Formative Assessments (Originally titled “Changing Classroom Practice”)

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, British researcher Dylan Wiliam sings the praises of formative assessments – by which he means short- and medium-cycle checks for understanding in which students receive feedback immediately or within a few hours or days. “When implemented well,” says Wiliam, citing five research reviews, “formative assessment can effectively double the speed of student learning.”

But formative assessments are tricky, he says, and suggests five “nonnegotiable” components necessary to tap their full potential:

- Clarify learning goals and criteria for success with students.
- Engineer effective classroom discussions, questions, and learning tasks. “Teachers need to use effective questioning techniques that keep all students engaged and that gauge the understanding of the whole class instead of just selected students,” says Wiliam.
- Provide feedback that moves learners forward. “Comments that address what the student needs to do to improve, linked to rubrics when appropriate, promote further learning more effectively than letter grades do,” he writes.
- Get students involved in assessing their own learning.
- Enlist students as instructional resources for one another.

These five steps sound obvious enough, but Wiliam and his colleagues have found that many teachers have trouble changing old habits. Traditional professional development that focuses on theory won’t work, he says: “The last 30 years have shown conclusively that you can change teachers’ thinking about something without changing what those teachers do in classrooms... Knowing what to do is the easy part. Actually doing it is what’s hard.”

The secret to bridging the knowing/doing gap, he says, is *teacher learning communities* – small, building-based groups with each member developing a plan for specific things he or she wants to change in the classroom and getting support in regular meetings to carry out the

plan. Here's what Wiliam and his colleagues have learned from experimenting with teacher learning communities in scores of schools:

- *Start with volunteers.* “We’ve worked with volunteers and we’ve worked with conscripts – and trust us, volunteers are better,” he says.
- *Group teachers who teach the same subject and age level in the same building.*
- *Aim for a group size of 8-10.*
- *Require teachers to make detailed, modest, individual action plans.* For example, increasing wait-time; using color-coded cards to get students responding to multiple-choice formative questions to check for understanding; using peer assessments.
- *Meet monthly, for at least 75 minutes, ideally 2 hours.*
- *Plan for each group to run for at least two years.* “Don’t treat formative assessment as just this year’s quick fix,” advises Wiliam.
- *Have a facilitator, not a guru.* Each group needs a person to take care of the details of each meeting and keep people on task, but this person should not be seen as an “expert.”
- *Use a structured meeting protocol.* Wiliam suggests following these steps in each meeting:
 - Introduction and Agenda-Setting (5-10 minutes)
 - How’s It Going? (30-50 minutes) – Each member debriefs and answers questions: Was it successful or unsuccessful? How so? What was formative about it?
 - New Learning (25-40 minutes) – This could be watching a video of a classroom activity, discussing an article or book chapter, or looking at student work.
 - Personal Action Planning (10-15 minutes) – Time to think about possible revisions to individual projects.
 - Review of the Meeting (5 minutes)

“Changing Classroom Practice” by Dylan Wiliam in *Educational Leadership*, Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 (Vol. 65, #4, p. 36-41), <http://www.ascd.org/el>. In addition, see Wiliam’s classic article, “Inside the Black Box” (with Paul Black) in Marshall Memo 146, and four other articles by Wiliam and various colleagues in Memos 53, 111, 143, and 165. The author can be reached at dylanwiliam@mac.com.

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5. Suggestions for Giving Feedback to Students

(Originally titled “Feedback That Fits”)

“[F]eedback is only effective when it translates into a clear, positive message that students can hear,” writes Duquesne University researcher/consultant Susan Brookhart in this *Educational Leadership* article. Feedback can actually be destructive if a student hears it the wrong way – “See, I knew I was stupid!” Brookhart suggests the following guidelines for helping students see what they have learned and develop a sense of control over the learning process:

• *Timing* – Put yourself in the student’s shoes, Brookhart suggests. Sometimes students need feedback immediately, for example, finding out whether an answer is right or wrong. Sometimes it’s best to wait until some work has been done before speaking up.

• *Quantity* – Teachers naturally want to “fix” everything, but that’s overwhelming for students. Brookhart suggests praising what’s right and addressing problems one at a time.

• *Mode* – Sometimes written feedback is best (especially on written work), sometimes verbal (while students are solving math problems), and sometimes by demonstrating (helping a kindergartener hold a pencil correctly). Whole-class feedback can be efficient, but one-on-one is often better. Feedback can be directive or take the form of questions: *What are you noticing about this? Does anything surprise you? Why did you decide to do it this way? What other words could you use instead of big?*

• *Content* – “General praise (‘Good job!’) or personal comments don’t help,” says Brookhart. “The student might be pleased you approve, but not sure what was good about the work, and so unable to replicate its quality.” The most helpful feedback:

- Focuses on specific work and processes;
- Compares students’ work to the learning goal;
- Involves the student: “Did you notice you have all the names capitalized this time?”
- Is descriptive, not judgmental, since some students shut down when they hear a teacher’s judgment;
- Is positive and specific. “Being positive doesn’t mean being artificially happy or saying work is good when it isn’t,” writes Brookhart. “It means describing how the strengths in a student’s work match the criteria for good work and how they show what that student is learning... Feedback should be specific enough that the student knows what to do next, but not so specific that you do the work.”

Brookhart concludes with two examples of feedback on a fourth-grade girl’s composition (students were asked to compare having dogs and cats as pets, using a clear topic sentence, a clear concluding sentence, and at least three supporting details). The first teacher red-penned every mistake the girl made and made corrections, focusing entirely on mechanics and usage and ignoring several things the student had done quite well. This left the girl with nothing to do but recopy the composition – with no guarantee of having learned anything. The second teacher read the composition and then had a brief conference with the student, praising her for what she did right (“You used a lot of details. I count seven different things you like about dogs”), comparing what she did with the assignment, pointing her toward some corrections (“Did you check your spelling? See if you can find two misspelled words”), and showing her how to strengthen her topic sentence.

“Feedback That Fits” by Susan Brookhart in *Educational Leadership*, Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 (Vol. 65, #4, p. 54-59), <http://www.ascd.org/el>. Brookhart can be reached at susanbrookhart@bresnan.net.

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6. Getting Students Involved in Assessing Their Own Work With Rubrics

(Originally titled “Self-Assessment Through Rubrics”)

In this *Educational Leadership* article, SUNY/Albany professor Heidi Andrade touts student self-assessment with rubrics as an effective way for students to get formative feedback on their efforts. She draws a distinction between self-*assessment* and self-*evaluation* and says that the latter, where students essentially grade themselves, is often tainted by students not having enough time to improve their work and inflating their grades. For this reason, Andrade believes that self-assessment is the more effective classroom tool.

She does concede that many students, when first introduced to the idea of self-assessment, think it’s “a big pain.” Andrade says that if teachers push ahead, refusing to accept work unless it’s accompanied by a self-assessment, students will become more positive. Studies indicate that self-assessment improves achievement in a variety of subjects.

The quality of the rubrics makes all the difference, of course. If rubric criteria are too narrow – for example, a rubric for a writing assignment about donating blood with criteria on the importance of blood giving, the steps in giving blood, the impact of Mad Cow disease, and the reasons people cannot give blood too frequently – students will produce cookie-cutter products.

Andrade has three suggestions for getting a good student self-assessment process going in the classroom:

- *Setting clear expectations* – Students should be thoroughly familiar with the rubric, and involving them in developing it helps a lot. One approach is to show students an example of a relatively strong piece of writing, have them analyze its strengths and weaknesses, and then take their points and construct a rubric.

- *Monitoring their own work* – Andrade suggests having students keep the rubric in front of them as they work on their first draft of an assignment and use colored pencils to note different parts of the rubric (for example, *clearly states an opinion*) and where this criterion appears in their own work. She suggests focusing on one or two domains at a time – for example, organization and voice one day and word choice and fluency on another.

- *Revising* – Students use the notes they make during the monitoring stage to revise their first draft. “The revision step is crucial,” says Andrade. “Students are savvy, and they will not self-assess thoughtfully unless they know that their efforts will lead to opportunities to actually make improvements.”

“Self-Assessment Through Rubrics” by Heidi Andrade in *Educational Leadership*, Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 (Vol. 65, #4, p. 60-63), <http://www.ascd.org/el>. The author can be reached at handrade@uamail.albany.edu.

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7. Zeros Are Not an Option in This School

In this passionate article in *Principal*, Liz Dunham, principal of an American middle school in Germany, describes the pattern that she and her staff noticed when they analyzed why so many students were failing: a student would get behind on assignments, not turn in

work, get a zero, see a big drop in grade-point average, lose motivation, get even further behind, reach the point where it was mathematically impossible to pass – and give up. “No wonder they quit working!” says Dunham. And the process was self-perpetuating, since failing students missed important portions of the curriculum in the areas where they didn’t complete assignments.

In 2005, the staff decided to break this cycle of failure by eliminating zero grades. They dubbed the program ZAP – Zeros Aren’t Permitted. Here are the details:

- Students were required to complete every assignment.
- Teachers focused on assigning meaningful work and providing plenty of support as students did their work.
- Teachers adjusted their policies so that late work could earn some credit.
- Many teachers experimented with a “work in progress” policy, allowing students to earn full credit when they met a standard.
- The school organized professional development on differentiated instruction to help meet the needs of those who “in the past might have been written off as unmotivated students who deserved the zeros they earned.”
- If a student missed any work in class, he or she had the following opportunities to complete it successfully: (a) a one-hour seminar period after school every other day; (b) a required after-school homework club on Thursdays for students who have not turned in assignments; (c) Saturday school from 9-11 a.m. There was flexibility on which of these a student would attend, but completing their work was mandatory.

During the two years the school implemented ZAP, student failures dropped significantly, and in the 2006-07 school year, not a single student failed a class. Standards were not lowered, says Dunham, and standardized test scores improved.

“Should your school allow zeros?” concludes Dunham. “Absolutely not! Knowing that zero grades are the cause of so much student failure, educators must find creative ways to eliminate the zero-grade option.”

“Why Zeros Should Not Be Permitted!” by Liz Dunham in *Principal*, January/February 2008 (Vol. 87, #3, p. 62), no e-link available. Dunham can be reached at liz.dunham@eu.dodea.edu.

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8. Should We Grade Students on Current or End-of-Year Expectations?

In this online question-and-answer forum, author/consultant Douglas Reeves advises an elementary educator on whether to grade students on end-of-year expectations (including material not yet covered) or current grading-period expectations:

- Rating students on end-of-year expectations makes sense. It essentially says to students in the fall, “You are not proficient yet – that’s why you come to school.” It doesn’t mean you or your teachers are failures – just that there’s work to be done between now and the end of the year.

- Rating students on work done so far is also a good idea. Reeves draws an analogy to teaching a teenager to drive: “I *heap* praise on my 16-year-old for getting across the parking lot without any damage to people or property. But at the same time, I don’t call her ‘proficient’ or in any way inflate her ‘grade’ on driving until she has truly mastered that skill. Similarly, I can tell my ESL students and, for that matter, my regular students, that they can be justifiably proud of their progress, but also challenge them appropriately that there is a huge distance between where they are now and where they need to be in the spring.”

- It’s also a good idea to have a separate rating for progress. “If a rating is to be reliable,” says Reeves, “it’s like a scale in the grocery store – it doesn’t change based on the season or how sympathetic the grocer is to my needs. A scale is just a scale, and it gives me a consistent and accurate measurement.”

“Q&A Featuring Dr. Douglas Reeves” in *Focus on Achievement Online*, December 2007, from the Leadership and Learning Center

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9. Making Good Use of Extra Learning Time

This *Education Week* article describes a Massachusetts experiment to significantly expand learning time in a number of schools. Preliminary results are encouraging. One of the schools taking part, Edwards Middle School in Boston, has classes from 7:20 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday – but dismisses at 11:45 every Friday to provide professional development time for teachers. Principal Jeffrey Riley stresses that simply adding time is not enough. “Without a careful plan,” he says, “it’s just glorified babysitting.” His school uses the extra afternoon time for tutoring, a math league, academic study sessions, musical theater, band, cooking, art, photography, step team, Latin dance, karate, cheerleading, football, art, community service, and an outside apprenticeship program. Teaching in the afternoon program is voluntary for Edwards teachers, but between 2/3 and 3/4 of the school’s teachers take part.

“Mass. Initiative: Does More Time Equal More Learning” by Debra Viadero in *Education Week*, Dec. 12, 2007, p. 10-11); go to <http://www.edweek.org> and navigate to this issue.

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10. Middle Schools or K-8 Schools: Does It Make a Difference?

In this article in *Principal*, Columbia researcher Christopher Weiss reports on the Philadelphia Education Longitudinal Study, which compared the long-term achievement of Philadelphia eighth graders who went to K-8 and 6-8 schools (the city had both configurations during the study, which began in 1996). Here are the main findings:

- There were no significant differences in grades, failures, absences, and suspensions between students who attended middle schools and those who attended K-8 schools.
- Students who attended middle schools had lower self-esteem than students who attended K-8 schools.
- Eighth graders in middle schools were more likely to report being threatened at school.

“Re-Examining Middle School Effects: What the Research Says” by Christopher Weiss in *Principal*, January/February 2008 (Vol. 87, #3, p. 60-61), no e-link available. The author can be reached at cw2036@columbia.edu.

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11. How Is the Presidency Like the Principalship?

In this *New York Times* op ed piece, columnist David Brooks describes the U.S. presidency in ways that call to mind the challenges of the principalship: “Presidents are buffeted by sycophancy, criticism and betrayal. They must improvise amid a thousand fluid crises. They’re isolated and also exposed, puffed up on the outside and hollowed out within. With the presidency, character and self-knowledge matter more than even experience.”

“The Obama-Clinton Issue” by David Brooks in the *New York Times*, Dec. 18, 2007 (p. A35)

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12. Short Items:

a. Six-trait writing website – This website, created by high-school English teacher Steve Gardiner, 2008 Teacher of the Year for Montana, gives detailed descriptions and examples of student work using the six-trait rubric: <http://senior.billings.k12.mt.us/6traits/>.

Spotted in *Educational Leadership*, Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 (Vol. 65, #4, online only), <http://www.ascd.org/el>.

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b. Having fun with English website – This award-winning blog was created by Teresa Almeida d’Eca, a middle-school EFL teacher in Portugal. It’s for fifth- and sixth-grade students learning English and provides an interactive forum to communicate in English, practice what’s learned in school, and access a plethora of resources. Check it out at <http://fwe2.motime.com/>

“Have Fun with English! 2” by Christine Meloni in *Essential Teacher*, December 2007 (Vol. 4, #4, p. 40-41)

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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).

Subscriptions:

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Website:

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Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Atlantic Monthly
Catalyst Chicago
Commonwealth Magazine
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
NASSP Bulletin
New York Times
New Yorker
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
TESOL Quarterly
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools