

Marshall Memo 391

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
June 20, 2011

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Quotes of the Week

“The press may cover No Child Left Behind, vouchers, charter schools, Wisconsin teacher protests, and Texas textbook controversies, but speaking as a parent, these issues pale next to the importance of the quality of your kids’ teachers, day in, day out.”

Katherine Whittemore in “In Praise of Teachers” in *The Boston Globe*, June 12, 2011; Whittemore can be reached at Katharine.whittemore@comcast.net

“Collaboration, it turns out, is easier to value than it is to implement.”

Anthony Armstrong in “Lesson Study Puts a Collaborative Lens on Student Learning” in *Tools for Schools*, Summer 2011 (Vol. 14, #4, p. 1) <http://www.learningforward.org>

“We don’t need ‘data driven’ schools. We desperately need ‘knowledge driven’ schools.”

Ronald Thomas (see item #2)

“I am a former middle-school social studies teacher. If I can ‘do’ data, anybody can ‘do’ data.”

Ronald Thomas (*ibid.*)

“We did not get into this business to increase state test scores or to implement federal mandates. We are here to help children learn.”

Ronald Thomas (*ibid.*)

“The whole-class novel is not good for anyone, but it is especially detrimental for boys.”

Pam Allyn (see item #4)

1. Eight Leadership Paradigms

In this intriguing *Wharton Leadership Digest* interview, authors James Quigley and Mehrdad Baghai talk about eight archetypes of leadership from their new book, *As One: Individual Action, Collective Power* (Portfolio, 2011):

- *The landlord and tenants* – Tenants voluntarily decide to join landlords, but once they do, the boss has the top-down power, controlling access to scarce resources, doling out rewards and sanctions, and dictating the terms of tenants' participation.

- *The community organizer and volunteers* – The power for setting direction comes from the bottom up, but the community organizer is the glue that holds things together. Volunteers can't be ordered around; instead, they join on their own terms if they are motivated by the organizer and the cause. This archetype can be dysfunctional if one or more volunteers have disproportionate influence or the leader can't articulate a compelling logic for cooperation.

- *The conductor and orchestra* – This archetype is based on "highly scripted and clearly defined roles that focus on precision and efficiency in execution as defined by the conductor," say Quigley and Baghai. "The orchestra members, who have similar backgrounds, need to be fully trained to comply with the requirements of the job and, therefore, must be carefully selected to ensure they fit the strict culture and scripted tasks." This model is ideal for leaders who require and value precision and consistency, but not in a more fluid environment.

- *The producer and creative team* – Here the charismatic boss gives a team the freedom to do its best work, while achieving the producer's objectives. "Producers guide the vision and overall progress, while the creative team develops ideas through frequent meetings and interactions using an open culture of collaboration," explain Quigley and Baghai. "Dissent is used to push creative boundaries." This model works well if leaders value creativity and innovation, but isn't ideal in a culture that doesn't truly support sharing of ideas, open feedback, and dissent.

- *The general and soldiers* – This is a command-and-control model with a strict hierarchy organized around the general's mission. Soldiers follow clearly-defined tasks and are motivated to move up through the hierarchy. This is the right paradigm for situations where there is an accepted mission and culture, extensive training, and authoritarian direction is needed for large groups of people who cannot all directly communicate with each other.

- *The architect and builders* – This model consists of "creative collaboration among groups of diverse builders that have been recruited by visionary architects to bring a seemingly

impossible dream to life,” say Quigley and Baghai. “Their visions are so innovative and ambitious that they can’t be achieved simply by using conventional means, so builders often need to reinvent and rethink ways to achieve them.” This paradigm is great for continuous innovation and pushing people beyond their normal boundaries.

- *The captain and the sports team* – This model has minimal hierarchy and the team has strong camaraderie and trust, acting “like a single cohesive and dynamic organism, adapting to new strategies and challenges with great agility as they appear,” say the authors. There’s a strong shared identity, with extensive communication channels and a set of highly scripted, repeatable tasks. The captain is on the field and part of the team to motivate and encourage. This paradigm works where there is a high degree of trust in the skills and judgment of those on the team, and doesn’t work when there are mavericks or rogue elements with their own agendas.

- *The senator and citizens* – This model requires a strong sense of responsibility to follow values or a constitution. “Sovereignty is held by both senators and citizens, and the citizens thrive on the values of democracy, freedom of expression, and autonomy,” say Quigley and Baghai. “There is no set framework or direction organizing the citizens. Instead, much of their direction is emergent as they gather ideas and collaborate with other citizens. Senators are the guiding intelligence for the citizens and oversee decision-making for the community.”

“Five Questions for James Quigley and Mehrdad Baghai, Co-Authors of *As One: Individual Action, Collective Power*” in *Wharton Leadership Digest*, June 2011

<http://wlp.wharton.upenn.edu/LeadershipDigest/as-one-authors-question-and-answer-quigley-baghai.cfm>

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2. Using Data Wisely

In this thoughtful *Education Week* article, former Maryland central-office district official Ronald Thomas lists what he’s learned about using data to improve teaching and learning:

- *Focus on instructional insights derived from data.* “We don’t need ‘data driven’ schools,” says Thomas. “We desperately need ‘knowledge driven’ schools... Data are useless unless organized into meaningful patterns.” Some schools are getting better at creating charts and graphs that can be useful to teacher teams, but others are drowning in data.

- *Don’t leave analysis to the wonks.* “Data analysis is not about numbers,” says Thomas. “It is all about improving instruction... I am a former middle-school social studies teacher. If I can ‘do’ data, anybody can ‘do’ data.”

- *Looking at interim assessment results should not be a solo activity.* “Data analyses are most effective when they are performed with other teachers who share the same standards and assessments,” says Thomas, “and who can discuss concretely and specifically, based on student results, what is working and what is not working to increase student learning in their context.”

- *Data meetings should be frequent.* Thomas says teacher teams should talk about student results at least every two weeks, during the school day, for 45-60 minutes each time.

• *Teacher teams need norms.* “The most productive data-driven teams follow established analysis protocols and enforce clear procedural and relationship norms,” says Thomas. Here is the website for the Classroom-Focused Improvement Process developed at the Center for Leadership in Education at Towson University in Maryland:

<http://mdk12.org/process/cfip/index.html>

• *Teacher teams should focus on next steps.* “The most important questions in data analyses are not, ‘What did the students score?’ and ‘How many passed?’”, says Thomas. “The most important questions are, ‘What do the students know?’ ‘What do they not know?’ and ‘What are we going to do about it?’”

• *Schools should focus on alignment.* Thomas believes that we’ve maxed out the potential of student interventions as the primary improvement strategy. “There is just no more time left in the school day, and no more energy left in the children,” he says. The focus now should be on strengthening the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

• *Professional learning communities need to continuously improve.* Conventional PD isn’t very helpful for this, says Thomas. Leaders need to work on beefing up program coherence and help teacher teams get better and better at collaborative inquiry – that is, making “ongoing instructional adjustments based on their analysis of what does and does not work for their students.”

• *Keep teachers’ eyes on the higher purpose of this work.* “None of these steps is going to have any impact unless, as educational leaders, we clearly articulate compelling reasons why teachers should invest time and effort in data analysis,” concludes Thomas. “We did not get into this business to increase state test scores or to implement federal mandates. We are here to help children learn.” So let’s focus on moral purpose, he urges – improving all students’ futures and eliminating achievement gaps. “After all is said and done, isn’t that why we are here?”

“My Nine ‘Truths’ of Data Analysis” by Ronald Thomas in *Education Week*, June 15, 2011 (Vol. 30, #35, p. 36, 29), <http://www.edweek.org>

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3. What Really Drives High Student Achievement?

In this Centre for Strategic Education paper, Canadian author/consultant Michael Fullan argues that American and Australian policymakers have been using the wrong drivers to improve student learning. The mistake has been focusing on accountability (versus capacity building), individual teacher and leader quality (versus group quality), technology taking the lead (versus instruction leading technology), and fragmented strategies (versus systemic reform). These drivers have not worked, will never work, and are making things worse, he says.

“Jettison blatant merit pay,” Fullan urges, “reduce excessive testing, don’t depend on teacher appraisal as a driver, and don’t treat world-class standards as a panacea.” The *right* drivers, he says, are:

- *The learning-instruction-assessment nexus* – The goal must be to make learning more exciting, more engaging, and more linked to assessment feedback loops around the achievement of higher order skills.

- *Focus on groups to build the profession* – We must use teams to accomplish a new learning-instruction culture, says Fullan. The development of individuals will fail if it's not surrounded by a culture of developing instructional skills.

- *Pedagogy driving technology* – Fullan believes that skilled teachers working directly with students must take the lead in deciding which kinds of technology will best serve their purposes. This will lead to far more effective use of computers and other cutting-edge tools.

- *Systemic synergy* – The right drivers “must be conceived and pursued as a coherent whole,” says Fullan. “There are only a few key components. Focus on the right ones, and treat them as feeding on each other.”

“Choosing the Wrong Drivers for Whole System Reform” by Michael Fullan, a Centre for Strategic Education paper, April 2011,

http://www.michaelfullan.ca/home_articles/SeminarPaper204.pdf

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4. Should Classes Study the Same Book Together?

“The whole-class novel is not good for anyone, but it is especially detrimental for boys,” says literacy expert Pam Allyn in this *Education Week* article. Allyn describes a 12-year-old boy who fails to understand or connect with *To Kill a Mockingbird* in class and, ashamed of his failure, disrupts the lesson. After school, in a one-on-one tutoring session, he finds the perfect book for his reading and interest level – *Horton Hears a Who!* by Dr. Seuss. Why couldn't this happen in class?

Two developments make it imperative to move away from the whole-class novel paradigm, says Allyn: new technology, which opens up countless texts and facilitates communication, and the Common Core standards, which demand that students think critically across genres. “We should stop reacting as if all the ways students read and write outside school are wrong and superficial,” she says, “and instead bring that mash-up of personal ideas and text variety into our teaching... We should expect students will read across genres and engage in deeper, more critical and collaborative thinking about their own and others' responses to text.”

Why can't class novels accomplish this? Because they require students with widely divergent interests and reading levels to read the same book at the same time in the same way. And why are whole-class books especially unhelpful for boys? “We have relentlessly selected books about women, by women, mostly fiction, very, very rarely nonfiction,” says Allyn. “We've turned reading into something that does not belong to boys at all.” Could this be why 12th-grade boys score 13 points below girls on reading tests?

So what does Allyn suggest? Students should have significant choice in what they read and read *a lot*, both in school and on their own. This builds vocabulary, fluency, stamina, and critical-thinking skills, she believes. Technology allows students to build their own reading list

and follow their interests to websites, articles, and books. Allyn mentions an iPad app called Flipboard, which allows people to pull from many different sources to create a personalized online magazine.

But what about the literary canon? Shouldn't all students be exposed to some classic works of literature? Yes, says Allyn – but the trick is to read these books aloud, or read especially good passages and pair them up with contemporary books or articles, and then follow up with creative uses of technology. “Have your students respond and discuss the reading by text messages, on a whole-class blog, or on a great website built just for these kinds of collaborations,” she suggests.

“With our guidance,” Allyn concludes, “they will discover the texts they want to stay up late to read. And they will come to school the next day wanting to read more. They will ingest not just hundreds, but thousands of words each day, to fortify and empower themselves for this radiant new era that is upon us.”

“Against the Whole-Class Novel” by Pam Allyn in *Education Week*, June 15, 2011 (Vol. 30, #35, p. 27, 29) http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/06/15/35allyn_ep.h30.html

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5. What It Takes to Get All Students On the Path to College Success

In this helpful article in *The School Administrator*, former superintendents Monte Moses and Jim Nelson say they are convinced that “preparing more students to succeed in college is critical to perpetuating the American dream in the 21st century and vital to our nation’s future.” American schools’ results are lagging, they say, “in large part because of the failure to educate poor and minority students to the same level as white, middle-class students.” Here are Moses and Nelson’s suggestions for turning this situation around:

- *Make a genuine commitment to college readiness for all students.* What makes this difficult is the low expectations that permeate the system – the belief that many students “aren’t college material.” But we will never close the achievement gap without asking the same of all students. The fact is that the requirements for success in college and the requirements for success in the workplace are virtually identical.

- *Invert the curriculum planning model from K-12 to 16-PreK.* We should begin with the end in mind – the end being college, career, and life success – and work backwards to preschool, say Moses and Nelson. “Whether in business, on the playing field, or in a school classroom, success depends on the target being constantly in mind.”

- *Develop college awareness among staff, students, and parents.* “If teachers and administrators don’t have correct information about the requirements for college and career success, they are likely to communicate erroneous and limiting messages,” say the authors. Lower-grade expectations and curriculum are hugely important, since students’ level of academic attainment at eighth grade has a larger impact on college and career readiness than any other factor. Books by David Conley and publications from the ACT and College Board are especially helpful. Students need constant reinforcement, especially those who doubt

themselves, and parents need to keep their expectations high, especially those who didn't go to college themselves.

- *Implement a more robust academic propulsion model.* Some educators believe that pushing the bell-shaped curve upward is like defying the law of gravity, say Moses and Nelson. Higher levels of achievement will happen only if there are high academic expectations for *all* students – but this means changing the mindset of students who don't enter school with intrinsic motivation and changing the mindset of adults who believe that intelligence is innate. Teachers can change attitudes by showing students examples of people who have changed their trajectories by hard work, and by having students set and pursue goals – “the most powerful self-improvement strategy ever discovered,” say Moses and Nelson.

- *Build the attributes that promote college and life success.* These have as much to do with college success as cognitive skills, say the authors – personal goals, a strong work ethic, study skills, and perseverance.

- *Provide the support and scaffolding necessary to make college success possible.* By this, Moses and Nelson mean getting students to the point where they don't need to take remedial courses once they enter college. They hold up the AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination) as a program that does this through a focus on college readiness skills, mentoring and homework help, and building camaraderie among students.

- *Acknowledge and address student deficits.* “Academic success in college will not improve unless we confront some difficult facts,” say the authors. The reason that 30 percent of college students need remediation is weak curriculum and watered-down expectations in elementary, middle, and high schools. Students especially need much better preparation in reading and writing, including ongoing critiques of their writing and critical thinking. “It is possible to speak without thinking,” said one college professor, “but it is difficult to write without thinking.” An important step is giving good diagnostic tests (EPAS and PLAN, among them) and following up on the results.

- *Abandon pride of ownership and use outside experts.* Moses and Nelson believe that College Board, ACT, AVID, and Education Trust have valuable services and information and schools should take advantage of them.

- *Listen to the voices of students.* “In this era, teachers to have to shift from working *for* students, to working *with* them,” said one high-school student.

- *Provide energetic leadership to guide the way.* The superintendent must take care of five essentials: collaborative goal-setting; non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction; board alignment and support of district goals; monitoring of goals; and use of resources to support the goals. In addition, say Moses and Nelson, superintendents must stay in touch with teachers and students: “When these relationships are in place, the obstacles no longer seem insurmountable, and the function of public schools can permanently shift from gatekeeping to opening doors to college and career success for all students.”

“Opening Doors to College Access and Success” by Monte Moses and Jim Nelson in *The School Administrator*, June 2011 (Vol. 68, #6, p. 26-30),

<http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=19128>; Moses can be reached at monte.moses@yahoo.com.

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6. Early-College High Schools Show the Way

In this article in *The School Administrator*, Boston-based Jobs for the Future leaders Joel Vargas and Marc Miller describe the spread of the early-college idea from its beginnings in three high schools in 2002 to more than 230 schools today. The high-poverty Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District in south Texas has taken the concept to its most ambitious level, gearing all schools K-12 to the early-college concept. “By embedding a college and career culture in everyday activities, beginning with elementary school but especially in middle school and high school, the district is motivating all students to believe they can and will go on to postsecondary education,” say Vargas and Miller.

The district is pursuing these ambitious goals by implementing three strategies. The first is strengthening the academic program by adopting a common instructional framework, including:

- Collaborative group work – getting students supporting and challenging their peers;
- Writing to learn – this helps students develop ideas, critical thinking, and fluency in all subjects;
- Literacy groups – students read a variety of texts in different disciplines to build comprehension, fluency, and higher-level discourse;
- Questioning – teachers and students go beyond low-level questions to foster purposeful conversations and stimulate intellectual inquiry;
- Classroom talk – students are pushed to develop their thinking, listening and speaking skills, and learn through active participation;
- Scaffolding – teachers help students connect new concepts to prior knowledge.

The district’s second strategy is increasing college course-taking in high school, with each student expected to complete at least 12 college credits before graduation. These tuition-free course credits give students a significant leg up on college success. Even students who don’t go on to college are better prepared for higher-paying jobs.

The third strategy is counseling to prepare students for college success. Pharr-San Juan-Alamo has three transition counselors, two based in nearby colleges, one working with students who might be in danger of dropping out of high school. The district also pursues dropouts, sitting them down to figure out the credits they need, giving them intensive remediation, and getting them into preliminary college courses. “Students experience themselves as college students rather than high-school dropouts,” say Lili Allen and Rebecca Wolfe in a sidebar to the Vargas/Miller article.

“Early College Designs” by Joel Vargas and Marc Miller in *The School Administrator*, June 2011 (Vol. 68, #6, p. 18-25), <http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=19124>; Vargas can be reached at jvargas@jff.org.

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7. An Illinois High School Attacks Senioritis

In this article in *The School Administrator*, former New Trier High School (IL) guidance counselors Janice Dreis and Larry Rehage describe what they used to see among seniors: “vacant eyes, unruly behavior, increased absenteeism and tardiness, flagging motivation, and apathy.” For most seniors, with academic requirements completed and college admissions in hand, there was little reason to take the last few months of school seriously.

But when Dreis and Rehage asked seniors for ideas, they had plenty: give us more choice about curriculum, they said. Let us learn new topics. Help us apply what we’ve learned to real-world situations. Prepare us to succeed in a diverse and challenging society. Seniors were acutely aware that they were about to leave the familiar world of home, school, and community, and they wanted help from the adults. Responding to seniors’ suggestions, here’s what New Trier High School put in place:

- *Senior Instructional Leadership Corps* – Qualified seniors work as teachers’ assistants in classrooms. In some students, the experience kindles an interest in pursuing a career in teaching.

- *Senior Institute* – All seniors were asked what issues, skills, and knowledge had not been covered by the curriculum. The result was a full day of workshops and presentations designed to prepare for life after high school, including diversity training; tips for freshman year, money management, health, and personal safety; how to avoid substance abuse and date rape; and information on legal issues and self-advocacy.

- *Senior Project* – During the last five weeks of the school year, seniors can leave school grounds to work on community projects of their own choosing, including interning in law firms, advertising agencies, fire departments, small businesses, radio and TV stations, social agencies, schools, dance studios, theatrical companies, and restaurants; some seniors’ projects take them to foreign countries. Each experience culminates in a presentation and exhibition to which the school and community are invited.

- *Exit interviews* – New Trier staff began to conduct brief interviews with a random sample of departing seniors. Among the questions:

- What was the most significant educational aspect of your senior year? Why?
- If there were one thing you could change about the 12th grade, what would it be?
- Which of the last four years was the most challenging?
- What educational opportunities do you think should be included that were not available in your final year?
- To what extent do you feel the school prepared you to meet the challenges of life beyond high school?
- In what subject areas do you feel best prepared? Least prepared?
- Is there a teacher or staff member who stands out as having had an especially positive impact on you?

“Redesigning the Senior Year” by Janice Dreis and Larry Rehage in *The School Administrator*, June 2011 (Vol. 68, #6, p. 10-16),

<http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=19120>; the authors can be reached at dreisj@gmail.com and lrehage@gmail.com.

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8. Using Classroom Videotapes to Improve Instruction

In this *Digital Directions* article, Ian Quillen reports on Teachscape, a California company specializing in classroom videotaping designed to help teachers self-assess and work with coaches and administrators to improve instruction. Teachscape worked with the Gates Foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project to videotape more than 20,000 lessons in recent months. The use of video is routine among sports teams, medical practitioners, and professional dancers, who look at tapes to critique and fine-tune performance. Some education leaders believe videotaping will be a less costly way of offering professional development within and between schools. Earlier this year, the Wyoming legislature considered a bill to install cameras in all classrooms statewide, but it died without coming to a vote.

The Escambia County schools in Florida are using Teachscape in a teacher mentoring project in which 12 newly-hired teachers are paired with 12 mentors and use tapes to discuss what's working and what's not working in the rookies' classrooms. They are also giving teachers access to tapes of exemplary lessons.

Teachscape's 360-degree videotapes show everything in the a classroom – students as well as the teacher – and allow an observer to track all interactions. But learning from classroom tapes is not a simple matter, says Joellen Killion of Learning Forward. “The whole problem with using video in the classroom is the whole notion of trying to unpack everything that happens in a classroom,” she says. “Having the camera available doesn't automatically mean we're going to have better student learning.” Killion points out that it's difficult to assess how responsive teachers are to individual students' needs over time, or how competent teachers are across the curriculum. It's also essential that teachers trust the process, which requires “absolute clarity about the intended purpose, the intended results, and the qualifications of those who will be doing the evaluation.”

“Room With a View” by Ian Quillen in *Digital Directions*, Spring/Summer 2011, <http://www.edweek.org/dd/articles/2011/06/15/03video.h04.html>

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9. Short Items:

a. Online historical documents – This website <http://www.Teachinghistory.org> has digitized historical records appropriate for elementary, middle, and high school.

“Digitized Historical Records Take Students Back in Time” by Katie Ash in *Education Week*, June 15, 2011 (Vol. 30, #35, p. S10-11)

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b. Science video games – In this *Digital Directions* article, Katie Ash lists several games and simulations designed to improve students’ understanding of science concepts:

- UbiqBio, developed at M.I.T.: <http://education.mit.edu/projects/ubiquitous-games>
- Possible Worlds developed at E.D.C.: http://cct.edc.org/project_detail.asp?id=3096
- PhET developed at University of Colorado/Boulder: <http://phet.colorado.edu>
- Netlogo investigations in electromagnetism at Vanderbilt: <http://ccl.northwestern.edu/NIELS>

“Program Fun Into Science Ed.” By Katie Ash in *Digital Directions*, Spring/Summer 2011, <http://www.digitaldirections.org>

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

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

Subscriptions:

Individual subscriptions are \$50 for the school year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and information on paying by check or credit card.

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- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or log-in

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
Language Learner (NABE)
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
New York Times
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
The School Administrator
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools