Marshall Memo 352

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
September 20, 2010

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Many new teachers tend to overreach, take on too many extra duties, and seriously underestimate the amount of physical and emotional energy real teaching requires. New teachers too often push through the school year at a breakneck pace, neglecting their health and their families."

Renee Moore in "Tips for New English Teachers" in *Education Week*, Sept. 15, 2010 (Vol. 30, #3, p. 34)
http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2010/09/01/tln_moore_tipsforenglishteachers.html?qs=renee%20moore

"As young adolescent girls look to the media to discern cultural standards, they receive a strong message that a girl's worth is primarily determined by how beautiful, thin, hot, and sexy she is."

Jennifer Curry and Laura Choate (see item #1)

"A static set of 'best practices' on paper or video is insufficient because students are not static."

Catherine Lewis (see item #6)

"I believed I was a good teacher because I was working really, really hard. In fact, I was working too hard – often a lot harder than my students were."

ReLeah Cossett Lent (see item #9)

"Students cannot know what teachers are thinking, but they do observe how teachers behave – and they make inferences on the basis of these behaviors."

Robert Marzano (see item #8)

1. Oversexualization of "Tween" Girls and What Middle Schools Can Do

"Young adolescent girls have more opportunities today than ever before in history," say Louisiana State University professors Jennifer Curry and Laura Choate in this powerful *Middle School Journal* article, "but it is important that their self-worth and dignity not be compromised by the current cultural context." What they're referring to is the over-sexualization of young adolescent girls in the U.S. Here is a glimpse of the onslaught of stereotyping and objectifying that middle-school girls experience every day:

- At the mall, they see provocative Victoria's Secret underwear designed for "tweens" and tight-fitting Abercrombie and Fitch T-shirts reading, "Who needs brains when you have these?"
- In a major department store, they see a popular clothing line called Pornstar, tween-size sweat pants with "Juicy" on the backside, and padded bras down to 30AA.
- In tween specialty shops, they can buy underwear with a four-leaf clover and the slogan, "Feeling Lucky?", Playboy Bunny merchandise, and "Future Porn Star" T-shirts.
- In bookstores, they can find their favorite teen magazines with articles like, "Hallway Makeout Sessions: Dos and Don'ts", "Your Total Turn-Him-On-Guide", and "Boy Bait: 41 Moves He Can't Resist."
- On the radio, they might hear Lil Wayne's song, "Lollipop" or Britney Spears's "If You Seek Amy."
- Half of young teens watch MTV, VH1, CMT, and BET music videos daily, replete with images of scantily-clad women dancing provocatively for the pleasure of men.
- They may also see reality shows in which women are often portrayed as "catty" and "gold digging."

"As young adolescent girls look to the media to discern cultural standards," say Curry and Choate, "they receive a strong message that a girl's worth is primarily determined by how beautiful, thin, hot, and sexy she is."

Young adolescents are particularly susceptible to all this as they wrestle with the perennial psycho-social challenges of their age-group: establishing a sense of personal identity, developing a sense of who they are within their families and social systems, and gaining acceptance with their peers. "During this time, students tend to be egocentric and overly self-conscious," say Curry and Choate, "and perceive that others are judging them based on social expectations."

So girls in this age group are likely to internalize the messages with which they are bombarded every day. "Over time, girls may begin to self-objectify, viewing their bodies and their appearance as objects to be evaluated by others," say Curry and Choate. "Instead of evaluating themselves from a first-person perspective ('How do *I* think I look or feel?'), they focus on themselves from a third-person perspective ('How are others judging my body and appearance?'). Girls who self-objectify chronically monitor themselves, worrying excessively about others' judgments and negative evaluations." Body-dissatisfaction stemming from comparing oneself to unrealistic standards of thinness and beauty can result in shame, anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and eating disorders.

It also undermines academic achievement. One study compared college women's ability to complete complex math problems when the women were wearing either a swimsuit or a sweater and pants, both in front of a full-length mirror. The young women wearing a swimsuit performed significantly worse. Curry and Choate say the same psychology applies to a young adolescent girl; the more she worries about her appearance and the opinions of others, the less focused she will be on school work. The same goes for forming career aspirations and plans. "While there are many successful role models for girls, including doctors, lawyers, educators, and scientists, there are far more female role models in popular media who are in sexualized roles such as beauty pageant contestants, plastic surgery patients, video vixens, or reality television stars." Even the four successful women in *Sex and the City* (a writer, lawyer, gallery manager and public relations agent) spend most of their time talking about their sex lives and working on being as attractive and stylish as possible.

Girls who internalize these cultural norms tend to present themselves in overly sexualized ways – how they dress, speak, dance, and cheerlead, and the kinds of messages and images they send to boys on their cell phones. One study showed that 20% of girls between the ages of 13 and 16 admitted to "sexting" - sending nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves electronically. "These examples demonstrate ways in which middle grade girls may implicitly suggest that they are interested in and ready for sex," say Curry and Choate, "even though they may not even understand the implications of how they are presenting themselves to others."

An inevitable concomitant of all this is sexual harassment. "As girls are objectified, they are more likely to be treated in sexually degrading ways," say the authors, "resulting in sexual harassment or even sexual assault… Further, girls who adopt current sexualized cultural attitudes may be more likely to view sexual harassment as normal and even expected behavior from others. In fact, they may confuse sexual harassment from boys or men with the attention that they actually desire from romantic partners."

All this is harmful to girls' healthy sexual development. In the media, young adolescents see sexual relationships that are "devoid of emotions, attachment, or consequences" (Levin and Kilbourne, 2008). The result is that "girls today may not know what a healthy sexual relationship is and how to garner respect in a caring relationship," say Curry and Choate. "The consequences of early sexual activity that precede normative sexual development include a greater number of sexual partners, increased risk of pregnancy, increased risk of exposure to and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, and the

emotional consequences that come from abusive relationships or not knowing how to process sexual behaviors and their consequences."

What is to be done? Curry and Choate have recommendations for middle-school administrators, counselors, teachers, and families:

• *Administrators* – School leaders can help their staffs understand the hidden curriculum of sexualization and work to get girls fully participating in all aspects of middle-school life, including encouraging girls to be leaders and seeing that teachers engage them in class discussions as much as boys. Administrators can also do a lot to reduce sexual harassment by clearly defining appropriate sexual boundaries in a school setting. Curry and Choate recommend this handbook from AAUW: http://www.aauw.org/learn/research/upload/completeguide.pdf.

• *Counselors* – They are in an ideal position to help middle-school girls develop healthy self-concepts by (a) encouraging them to take rigorous courses, get involved in extracurricular activities, and explore challenging careers, and (b) providing large-group guidance to develop media literacy (seeing the hidden messages all around them), empathy (understanding the perspective of others), and leadership skills to resist and push back against sexualizing messages.

• *Teachers* – First, teachers can watch their language – not calling girls "drama queens," "divas," and "princesses," avoiding comments about girls' appearance ("It looks like you're losing weight"), and cutting out male-dominated words like "mankind." Teachers are on the front lines when it comes to stopping harassment and bullying. Teachers can also ensure that girls are active in leadership activities, encourage all students to reflect on their unique qualities (other than physical appearance), provide nontraditional role models, infuse career information into the curriculum, and help students see through media and social stereotypes.

• *Families* – School leaders can conduct workshops for parents and guardians on social pressures experienced by girls – an excellent resource, say Curry and Choate, is the *Words Can Work* website: http://wordscanwork.com. Teachers can assign projects that get students exploring their family history and articulating values and traditions.

"The Oversexualization of Young Adolescent Girls: Implications for Middle Grades Educators" by Jennifer Curry and Laura Choate in *Middle School Journal*, September 2010 (Vol. 42, #1, p. 6-15), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at jcurry@lsu.edu and lchoate@lsu.edu.

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2. Addressing Chronic Student Absence

In this *Education Week* article, school attendance expert Hedy Chang says that daily attendance data can tell a lot about students, classrooms, schools, and communities, but many educators don't use the information as well as they might because they believe one or more of these myths:

• *Myth #1 – Attendance isn't a big problem until the secondary level*. In fact, 10% of U.S. kindergarten and first-grade students miss at least a month of school every year, and in

New York City, 20% of elementary students have this level of absence. Most elementary students are staying home with their parents' knowledge, and schools need to do more to change the pattern.

• *Myth #2 – Absences in the early grades don't affect academic achievement*. To the contrary, studies have shown that poor attendance in kindergarten affects achievement all the way through the elementary grades, poor attendance in sixth grade predicts high-school dropout, and poor attendance in ninth grade is more highly correlated with dropping out than eighth-grade achievement. "When too many students miss too much school," says Chang, "the classroom churn starts to affect the entire class, as teachers repeat material to help children catch up." And of course low attendance means less state funding.

• *Myth #3 – Schools have a handle on chronic absenteeism*. In fact, most don't. They track average attendance and truancy, but they don't analyze chronic absences. An elementary school with 400 students might have 95% attendance but 60 students are missing 18 days a year. "Further analysis can find that these students are concentrated in neighborhoods with no school bus service, in chaotic classrooms with an inexperienced teacher, or in communities with high asthma rates," says Chang. "Often, chronic absence is tied to poverty – to families who have no reliable transportation, little access to health care, unstable housing, or no home at all. Understanding these patterns can lead to solutions – if we crunch and examine the numbers."

• *Myth #4 – There's not much schools can do*. Yes, parents are key, but there's a lot schools *can* do, says Chang. Some examples: a school in the Bronx noticed that Muslim students were being kept home during Ramadan because parents were worried that they would be tempted to break their fast in the school cafeteria. So the school hired a special monitor and set up a separate lounge for Muslim students. A school in Providence, R.I. realized that parents who worked overnight shifts were falling asleep and not bringing their children to school. So the school set up an early-morning program with breakfast so these parents could get their kids to school before going home to bed. In New York City, 15 homeless shelters have a point person who monitors children's school attendance. If all else fails, the courts can step in. "But it's generally quicker and much less costly to start with preventive measures and targeted solutions," says Chang.

• *Myth #5 – The federal government has no role*. Not true, says Chang. The feds can get local school districts to report chronic absence as well as truancy data, require states to report absences in longitudinal student databases, make chronic-absence rates part of school improvement data, and promote the use of federal grants to address high levels of absence.

"Ultimately, it comes down to this," Chang concludes: "Students can't learn if they don't go to school. And schools can't improve if students don't show up for class regularly."

"Five Myths About School Attendance" by Hedy Chang in *Education Week*, Sept. 15, 2010 (Vol. 30, #3, p. 29), http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/09/15/03chang.h30.html

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3. Twelve Leadership Suggestions from a College Department Head

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Iowa State University department head Michael Bugeja shares the lessons he's learned in seven years as an administrator. How much of this applies to K-12 schools?

• *Start serving others*. Bugeja says that when he moved from teaching to leadership, he had an epiphany: "When you apply for a faculty job, it's all about you. When you apply for an administrative job, it's all about what you can do for others…Praise employee accomplishments in e-mails, newsletters, and meetings. Host graduation brunches, awards banquets, and alumni homecomings. Write thank-you notes to benefactors and network socially with prospective students. Greet everyone when you arrive in the office, and thank everyone when you leave."

• *Stop loving students*. "You can like them, respect them, recruit them, and advocate for them," says Bugeja, "But you cannot love them like you did as a teacher… Learn to trust the faculty and staff members who serve the students you used to love." Otherwise you'll meddle in routine teaching and advising instead of focusing on your job – getting teachers the support, resources, and supervision they need to be effective.

• *Get organized*. Missing appointments, blowing deadlines, not being able to put your hands on key documents, signing in the wrong place – all this detracts from a leader's impact and credibility. Bugeja preaches the basics: putting reminders and deadlines in a calendar on a daily, weekly, monthly, and semester basis, creating a timeline of recurring activities and events, and being sure to stay on top of supervision and evaluation.

• *Appoint a leadership team*. You will burn out in a few years, says Bugeja, if you don't delegate budget, scheduling, and other administrative matters to individuals and committees.

• *Be transparent*. Bugeja advises keeping an open file in the office of non-confidential memos and letters and passing along all appropriate communications from above. "Don't let such openness alarm you," he says. "You'll write more concisely and factually if you keep in mind that everyone will be able to read the documents."

• *Learn how to run faculty meetings*. This includes agendas, clear purpose, a crisp process, appropriate frequency (once a month?), and keeping meetings as short as possible.

• *Create an advisory committee*. "Your title does not entitle you to executive proclamations," says Bugeja. Run important decisions by a group of trusted advisors before presenting them to the faculty, and when you do present them, include a detailed rationale.

• *Honor governance policies*. Create a staff policy handbook with input from colleagues, post it online, and explicitly refer to it as you make decisions.

• *Resist the natural tendency to play favorites*. Agreed-upon policies and procedures must guide who teaches what, and in which classrooms. Any hint of favoritism creates problems and disunity.

• *Become an advocate for civility and diversity*. "Act immediately to deal with stereotyping, harassment, and incivility in others," says Bugeja. "Respect for differing viewpoints is essential in any learning environment…"

• *Support non-tenured faculty*. You are a key advisor as well as a supervisor and evaluator, both individually and in regular group meetings, says Bugeja. Non-tenured faculty should also have mentors and meet together periodically to share teaching methods and student data.

• *Tune up the interviewing and hiring process*. Faculty involvement and clear procedures are essential to getting the right people on the bus.

"12 Rules for New Administrators" by Michael Bugeja in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sept. 17, 2010 (Vol. LVII, #4, p. A29, A31), no e-link

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4. The Power of Professional Learning Communities

In this advertisement in *Education Week*, Solution Tree consultant Bill Ferriter says that "groups are almost always smarter than individuals… No challenge is ever too great for a collaborative team." He cites three characteristics of the best teams from James Surowiecki's book, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (Bantam, 2004):

• *They are cognitively diverse* – When group members have a varied set of aptitudes and abilities, they consider a wider range of ways to tackle problems – which increases the chances that they'll develop the most effective and efficient solutions.

• *They are independent* – This protects against groupthink, says Ferriter, because members are "able to act as individuals free from the influence of their peers and willing to push against early conclusions whenever necessary."

• *They are decentralized* – Within the boundaries of common learning objectives and assessments, teacher groups should have a measure of flexibility to be creative and divergent in how students are taught.

Professional learning communities don't have to be in the same school building, says Ferriter. Teachers can join in online forums like Classroom 2.0 http://classroom20.com and The English Companion Ning http://www.englishcompanion.ning.com to study topics of personal and professional interest. Teachers can also use Twitter to share resources, ask questions, and lend just-in-time support, as well as organizing webinars, following blogs, and creating wikis (see http://twitter4teachers.pbworks.com to find teachers at the same grade level or content area). Some teams also use an RSS feed reader to organize blogs written by classroom teachers and spend five minutes a day browsing the latest articles. "Leave comments for the authors," suggests Ferriter. "Ask questions. Challenge thinking. Eventually, you'll notice a shift in the kinds of conversations you're having with colleagues. Provocative thoughts drawn from shared texts will replace small talk in no time!"

But in the end, face-to-face work with your local grade-level or content team is the most powerful, says Ferriter. "Peers with a nuanced understanding of local circumstances will always be able to offer better advice than colleagues in other counties, countries, or continents."

"Growing Smarter Together" by Bill Ferriter in *Education Week*, Sept. 15, 2010 (Vol. 30, #3, p. 13), no e-link available

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5. The Prerequisites of Teacher Collaboration

"Teacher collaboration is a prime determinant of school improvement," says Edmonton Schools (Canada) psychologist David Piercey in this *Kappan* article. "Unfortunately, though we talk about it a lot, we don't do it as much as we might hope for."

One problem, he believes, is that we use the sports metaphor for teamwork – for example, football, where a star quarterback calls the plays and other players do their narrowly-defined jobs. This is not the right way to think about professional collaboration, which he characterizes as much more democratic, with many voices contributing equally. Piercey lists the following conditions for effective collaboration in a school:

- Based on mutual goals;
- Parity among participants;
- Shared responsibility for participation and decision-making;
- Shared responsibility for outcomes;
- Participants share their resources;
- Voluntary relationship.

This kind of collaboration doesn't flourish under "take charge" leadership, which tends to engender passivity, submission, and cynicism among subordinates.

"If leaders are to foster collaboration," concludes Piercey, "they must first change their own attitudes toward leadership… The biggest obstacle is getting used to the idea that there is not just one chief and relinquishing some of the power one has in order to empower others."

"Why Don't Teachers Collaborate? A Leadership Conundrum" by David Piercey in *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 2010 (Vol. 92, #1, p. 54-56), available for purchase at http://www.kappanmagazine.org.

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6. Using "Public Research Lessons" to Hone National Standards

In this *Education Week* article, Mills College researcher Catherine Lewis says that as states adopt the Common Core learning standards, we need a way to bridge the gap between standards and classroom implementation. She points to Japan, where every change in national standards is followed up by lots of activity in schools. Teacher teams experiment with ways of teaching new standards, get colleagues to observe them in the classroom, polish their lessons, and share them in face-to-face discussions and online forums. Teachers and researchers are able to ask questions, look at unit plans and data on student learning, and offer their own ideas and critiques.

"Such a public proving ground has several advantages over the processes of standards enactment currently familiar in the United States," says Lewis:

• It recognizes that operationalizing the standards in classrooms is demanding intellectual work. "Their enactment in the classroom requires continuing experimentation, intense scrutiny, and the development of shared knowledge about what works and does not – in many settings," she says.

• It allows teachers to bring their contextual knowledge to bear on standards. "Public research lessons provide a natural incentive for collaboration between teachers and researchers," says Lewis. "[They] share the desire to create effective lessons and document them in ways that enable others to learn from their work."

• It puts student thinking and learning at the center of the process. This is where the rubber meets the road.

• It recognizes that curriculum documents and teacher manuals can only go so far – the wisdom of those in the classroom adds the vital finishing touch.

• It recognizes that improvement is a continuous process. "A static set of 'best practices' on paper or video is insufficient because students are not static," says Lewis.

• It puts pressure on textbook companies to align with standards and use the best instructional approaches. "Japanese publishers notice the conclusions emerging from public research lessons and revise textbook content to reflect what is being learned," says Lewis. She and her colleagues recently compared Japanese and U.S. elementary math textbooks and noticed that the latter used 15 different models to represent fractions while the former used only four – the best four.

• Public research lessons provide feedback to those writing national standards based on real-world experience in classrooms, leading to ongoing refinement and improvement.

"A Public Proving Ground for Standards-Based Practice" by Catherine Lewis in *Education Week*, Sept. 15, 2010 (Vol. 30, #3, p. 28-29), http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/09/15/03lewis.h30.html

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7. Scaffolding Student Writing

"When teachers merely assign writing topics without teaching," says Utah State University/Logan instructor Sylvia Read in this article in *The Reading Teacher*, 'they are essentially throwing non-swimmers into the pool and shouting 'Swim!' from poolside." As an antidote, she presents IMSCI, a five-step process for teaching writing at any grade, in any subject:

• Inquiry – Students delve into a particular literary genre or topic for a couple of weeks, hearing and reading several texts.

• Modeling – The teacher demonstrates how to write a text in that genre or subject, thinking aloud at every stage – brainstorming, pre-writing using graphic organizers, drafting, revising, and editing.

• Shared writing – The class writes with the teacher, thinking out loud about topic, sentence structure, organization – all the decisions they need to make when they write on their own.

• Collaborative writing – Gradually releasing responsibility to students, the teacher has them write a short passage in pairs. "Collaborative writing is especially helpful for English-language learners, who benefit from oral rehearsal of ideas and sentences before composing," says Read.

• Independent writing – Because of the scaffolding in the previous four steps, students are now ready to write on their own.

"A Model for Scaffolded Writing Instruction: IMSCI" by Sylvia Read in *The Reading Teacher*, September 2010 (Vol. 64, #1, p. 47-52), no e-link available; Read is at sylvia.read@usu.edu.

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8. Robert Marzano on Expectations

(Originally titled "High Expectations for All")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, author/consultant Robert Marzano proposes a way for teachers to address the perennial issue of low expectations:

• *Name the students from whom you expect less*. At the beginning of the year, go down the class list and make an honest assessment.

• *Identify patterns*. It doesn't mean you're a racist if there is a racial pattern to low expectations, says Marzano. The point is to behave in a manner that is *not* controlled by our upbringing and culture.

• *Describe how you treat some students differently* – for example, less eye contact, fewer smiles, less physical contact, less playful dialogue, calling on them less, easier questions, not pushing their thinking, and accepting less robust responses.

• *Consciously treat all students the same*. "Students cannot know what teachers are thinking," says Marzano, "but they do observe how teachers behave." Teachers should make a point of acting with low-expectancy students the same way they do with high-expectancy students. The most difficult part is classroom questioning. "When teachers change this behavior," he says, "some students might feel uncomfortable." But if the teacher perseveres, students will get to the place where they can risk being wrong and develop to higher levels.

"High Expectations for All" by Robert Marzano in *Educational Leadership*, September 2010 (Vol. 68, #1, p. 82-84), available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org

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9. Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose in the Classroom

(Originally titled "The Responsibility Breakthrough")

"I believed I was a good teacher because I was working really, really hard," says ReLeah Cossett Lent in this *Educational Leadership* article. "In fact, I was working too hard – often a lot harder than my students were." She began to build more student responsibility into her classroom, and now promotes it as a writer and consultant. Drawing on the work of Daniel Pink (*Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* – Penguin, 2009), she suggests three ways of doing this:

• *Autonomy* – "Too many students have had so little experience making academic choices that they don't know how to decide," says Lent – and she believes many teachers enable this helplessness. She suggests that teachers start by giving students choices in small things and eventually provide as much autonomy as possible in content, tasks, texts, partners, delivery, due dates, and assessments. "Teach students responsibility by allowing them to experience it," she says.

• *Mastery* – Pink defines mastery as getting better and better at something that matters – a more forgiving definition than a rigid percent score on an Accelerated Reader quiz, for example. Lent believes that autonomy and choice motivate students to work hard to get better, and that teachers should make clear to students that different people attain mastery in different ways and in different time-frames.

• *Purpose* – Improving test scores is not the purpose of a reading lesson, says Lent. "As long as test scores are our primary motivation for teaching and students' motivation for learning, I fear that deep, meaningful reading, writing, thinking, and understanding will elude both us and those whom we're committed to teach." The question that drives better, deeper learning is, *What is the purpose of this lesson?*

"The Responsibility Breakthrough" by ReLeah Cossett Lent in *Educational Leadership*, September 2010 (Vol. 68, #1, p. 68-71), available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org; the author can be reached at rlent@tds.net.

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10. Projects - the Right Amount of Choice – and the Right Kind

(Originally titled "Choice Is a Matter of Degree")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, McREL staffer Bryan Goodwin shares two research findings about student projects:

• *Limit choice*. Studies have shown that giving students choice increases motivation, but there's a point of diminishing returns. The sweet spot appears to be around five choices. In one study, some students were given six choices of essay topics and others were given 30 choices. Those who had fewer choices were more likely to turn in the assignment and wrote better essays. It appears that the students who had a lot of choices spun their wheels deciding what to write about, settled for a "merely satisfactory" choice, and were less motivated when they started writing.

• *Develop a driving question*. "A major shortcoming of many student projects," says Goodwin, "is that they tend to become 'doing for the sake of doing.'" A student, asked why his class was doing a rocket-building project, said, "You know, to build them and see how high they will go." Strong guiding questions make all the difference; for example, in a history unit, *What was it like to live in the time of the Great Depression?*

"Choice is a Matter of Degree" by Bryan Goodwin in *Educational Leadership*, September 2010 (Vol. 68, #1, p. 80-81), available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org; the author can be reached at bgoodwin@mcrel.org.

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11. Effective Use of Expert Visitors in the Classroom

(Originally titled "What Kids Learn from Experts")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Expeditionary Learning school designer Cheryl Becker Dobbertin extols the power of bringing experts into the classroom. "There is a special excitement in classrooms when students are anticipating the visit of a paleontologist or an engineer not just as a classroom guest, but as a collaborator who will assess and improve their work," says Ron Berger, also of Expeditionary Learning. "A classroom teacher's feedback, however clear, is not the same as having a professional architect critiquing student blueprints or a biologist checking student experimental protocols and data analysis." Here are Dobbertin's pointers on getting the most from visiting experts:

- Use word of mouth, letters, and e-mail to cast a wide net. "Many of the best connections come when friends and professional acquaintances pass the e-mails along," she says.
- Reach out to parents and create a binder describing the expertise they have to offer.
- Contact local universities' service learning and volunteer offices.
- Check with representatives from the relevant field before inviting anyone into the classroom.
- Meet with visiting experts ahead of time to check out their comfort level with students. Discuss your students' needs and the specifics of the visit.
- Be open to the expert's feedback and suggestions.
- Make clear to the expert what you want students to get from the interaction.
- Build up students' background knowledge before the visit so they can make the most of the expert's knowledge and skills.
- Prepare students to greet, welcome, and introduce the expert.
- Offer a small honorarium.
- Acknowledge the expert in written materials associated with the project.
- Have students present a thank-you note or other token of appreciation at the end.

"What Kids Learn from Experts" by Cheryl Becker Dobbertin in *Educational Leadership*, September 2010 (Vol. 68, #1, p. 64-67), available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org; the author can be reached at cdobbertin@elschools.org

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12. Short Item:

A parent communication tool – In this *Educational Leadership* article, North Carolina 6th-grade teacher William Ferriter recommends http://www.drop.io as an excellent, free way for teachers to continuously share information with parents. He says it has saved him a great deal of back-and-forth with parents because current information is so readily available.

"Drop.io: One-Stop Sharing" by William Ferriter in *Educational Leadership*, September 2010 (Vol. 68, #1, p. 86-87), available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org. The author is available at wferriter@hotmail.com.

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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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Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
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Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
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