Marshall Memo 240

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
June 23, 2008

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"If students have left the classroom before teachers have made adjustments to their teaching on the basis of what they have learned about the students' achievement, then they are already playing catch-up. If teachers do not make adjustments before students come back the next day, it is probably too late.

Dylan Wiliam (see item #1)

"[A] teacher with 20 years of experience will have asked approximately half a million questions in her career. When one has done something a certain way half a million times, doing it another way is very difficult."

Dylan Wiliam (*ibid*.)

"Asking teachers to change what they do is rather like asking a golfer to change his swing in the middle of a tournament. Change is most likely to occur if teachers adopt only one or two techniques at a time."

Dylan Wiliam (*ibid*.)

"It is teachers' goal to teach and students' to learn… and nothing stands so consistently in the way of those goals than the ubiquitous art of bluffing."

Patricia Martin (see item #2)

"A teacher can't clarify and do comprehension checks too often, alas."

Patricia Martin (*ibid*.)

"The real gender gap is not in ability but in motivation – not in what girls and boys can do, but in what girls and boys *want* to do."

Leonard Sax (see item #4)

1. Dylan Wiliam on Using Minute-by-Minute and Day-to-Day Assessments

"Forget No Child Left Behind and adequate yearly progress," says British researcher Dylan Wiliam in this important piece. "Forget district and state reports that rank schools by proportion of proficient students. Raising achievement is important because it matters for individuals and society. If you achieve at a higher level, you live longer, are healthier, and earn more money." And one high-school student staying through graduation rather than dropping out saves society about $209,000.

So what raises student achievement? The major drivers are not student demographics, class size, school size, changing student attitudes, curriculum reform, computers in the classroom, schedule changes, or improving teachers' content knowledge, says Wiliam. All these factors can play a role, but none has been a home run. School leaders have come to the plate and hoped that each of these would be the long ball, and they ended up striking out again and again. "What the research has shown us," says Wiliam, "is that the only answer is continuous, small improvements – 'small ball' if you like. We need to worry about getting to first base before we can make it home."

And what is the key to bringing about the continuous, small improvements in learning that add up to significant gains in long-term student achievement? The quality of day-to-day instruction. Students who have effective teachers learn at *four times* the rate of students with ineffective teachers. In other words, students with the best teachers learn in six months what students with average teachers will learn in a year and what students with the worst teachers will learn in two years.

So the best way to raise student achievement is to improve teaching, and the best way to improve achievement quickly is to work with the teachers in our classrooms right now – the "Love the one you're with" strategy. Wiliam concedes that the track record for professional development of teachers has been dismal. But he believes this has been because PD has been wasted on ineffective, unproven strategies, such as "brain-based learning." He and his colleagues believe that there is a PD strategy that can get teams of teachers producing much higher levels of achievement in a fairly short period of time. The strategy is helping teachers use minute-by-minute, day-by-day assessments to check for understanding, adjust instruction, and follow up with students who are not yet proficient. Wiliam says that the research track record for formative assessments is among the most robust in the field. [See his 1998 article, "Inside the Black Box," co-authored with Paul Black, summarized in Marshall Memo 146.]

The essence of formative assessment is using evidence of learning to modify instruction before it's too late. "If students have left the classroom before teachers have made adjustments to their teaching on the basis of what they have learned about the students' achievement," he writes, "then they are already playing catch-up. If teachers do not make adjustments before students come back the next day, it is probably too late." Involving students in the process adds another important dimension. Wiliam sums up the key points:

Students and teachers
Using evidence of learning
To adapt teaching and learning
To meet immediate learning needs
Minute to minute and day by day.

This sounds pretty straight-forward, but how does it play out in the classroom? Wiliam describes five key steps to the effective implementation of formative assessments, with an example of a specific strategy under each one. He stresses that each classroom is different, and different strategies work in different situations – but the five steps apply to all classrooms.

• *Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success* – A sample strategy: Before asking students to write a lab report, a high-school science teacher hands out four sample lab reports ranging from first-rate to low-quality and asks students to rank them from best to worst, identifying what qualities each level had or didn't have.

• *Engineering effective classroom discussion, questions, and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning* – A sample strategy: During a lesson on equivalent fractions, a fifth-grade teacher asks students to write down a fraction between 1/6 and 1/7 on their individual dry-erase boards and, on the count of three, hold up their answers. This kind of all-student response system gets every student to participate and lets the teacher know immediately if the class can move on or the concept needs to be re-explained or clarified. It also allows the teacher to use students' errors or misconceptions to inform instruction and help students understand better.

• *Providing feedback that moves learners forward* – One sample strategy: When students complete a set of exercises, the teacher checks over students' papers and, rather than marking each item right or wrong, tells each student (for example), "Five of these are incorrect; find them and fix them." This gets students to respond cognitively to the feedback rather than emotionally to the grade.

• *Activating students as the owners of their own learning* – A sample strategy: When students complete a piece of work, the teacher tells them to look back at the rubric or success criteria provided at the beginning of the lesson and indicate their level of understanding with a colored circle: Green means "I understand," Yellow means "I'm not sure," and Red means "I don't understand." The teacher then provides follow-up instruction to help move all students to Green.

• *Activating students as instruction resources for one another* – One strategy: Before students turn in an assignment, they trade papers with a peer and each student goes over the paper in front of him or her using a "pre-flight checklist." With a lab report, the criteria might

include: diagrams drawn in pencil and labeled; the results clearly separated from conclusions. Only when the work meets the success criteria can it be turned in to the teacher.

These classroom practices have a profound effect on teachers' actions and beliefs, says Wiliam. The problem with traditional, workshop-based professional development, he says, is that it tells teachers how to act but doesn't involve them in the process and tailor the work to their own students. Learning how to make effective use of formative assessments, on the other hand, emphasizes classroom-specific content, then process. As Millard Fuller, the founder of Habitat for Humanity, once said, "It's easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of acting."

If the formative assessment process is so powerful, why isn't it used more widely? Wiliam believes it's because learning to use formative assessments involves breaking long-established classroom patterns – assigning work, giving grades, and moving on. "These are not superficial changes like learning to teach new units or adopting different lesson structures," he says. Using formative assessments "requires deep changes in the way that teachers teach, and this is much harder than it appears. For example, a teacher with 20 years of experience will have asked approximately half a million questions in her career. When one has done something a certain way half a million times, doing it another way is very difficult." Even relatively inexperienced teachers have "scripts" of how teaching is supposed to proceed from their own experience as students and from the way they were parented.

So how can these deeply-ingrained classroom patterns be changed? "After many false starts and blind alleys," says Wiliam, "I have become convinced that the best way to support teachers in adopting minute-to-minute and day-by-day formative assessment is through building-based teacher learning communities." Over the last three years, he and his colleagues have been working with teacher teams in the U.S. and the U.K., and have learned five lessons:

• *Proceed gradually*. "Asking teachers to change what they do is rather like asking a golfer to change his swing in the middle of a tournament," says Wiliam. "Change is most likely to occur if teachers adopt only one or two techniques at a time."

• *Be flexible*. Techniques that work in one classroom or school may not work in another. "Only the teacher is able to judge this," says Wiliam, "so he or she must be able to make adjustments to the techniques" – all within the five-item framework outlined above.

• *Allow for choice*. When teachers can make decisions on which techniques to try in each of the five areas, they have ownership and the whole process is less daunting.

• *Stay focused on the bottom line*. Even with gradualism and flexibility and choice, each teacher should still be accountable to the team for the impact of their practices on student learning.

• *Provide support*. This is the flip side of accountability, says Wiliam, who likes the term "supportive accountability." With support, a team is much more likely to move beyond "polite serial turn-taking" and begin to engage in genuine professional growth centered around measurable gains in student learning. Another important condition is that team members meet as equals. "In our experience," says Wiliam, "when one member of the community sets him- or herself up as the formative assessment 'expert,' the learning of the other members is

compromised. While there is a valuable role for those who are not currently teaching – supporting the group, running interference, providing advocacy, and so forth – they can never be full participants in such a community."

"Content Then Process: Formative Assessment in Teacher Learning Communities" by Dylan Wiliam, October 2007, in *Ahead of the Curve: The Power of Assessment to Transform Teaching and Learning*, Douglas Reeves (Ed.), Solution Tree, 2007

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2. Students Who Pretend to Understand When They Don't

In this thoughtful article in *Essential Teacher*, Massachusetts ELL teacher Patricia Martin confesses that when she travels in Latin America with her limited Spanish, "I'm duplicitous; I'm an unmitigated bluffer." More than once, she says, she's boarded the wrong bus rather than keep the people in line behind her waiting while she haltingly asks the driver where the bus is going. On these trips abroad, she says, "I can say with humble certainty that at least half my daily energy was devoted to various modes of faking comprehension."

In her intensive Spanish classes in school, Martin also frequently pretended to understand when she didn't. "Comprendes, Patricia?" her patient teacher would ask. "Ready to move on?" "Oh, yes," she'd reply, telling herself the textbook would help her figure it out later. As a result, Martin still hasn't mastered Spanish imperatives.

Why is bluffing so common? Mark Twain said it best: "Each man is afraid of his neighbor's disapproval – a thing which, to the general run of the human race, is more dreaded than wolves and death."

Martin's experiences have helped her empathize with her ESOL students, for whom, she believes, "bluffing is a permanent part of their lifestyle, in and out of the classroom… In mainstream classrooms throughout the United States, nodding, smiling, American-accented ESL students are bluffing their way through the school day." Teachers confidently say, "Oh, she's fine. She's getting everything I say" and huge gaps in knowledge go undetected and only show up on high-stakes state tests.

Once Martin taught a unit on the *War of the Worlds* hoax by Orson Wells. Students read news accounts about the phony radio program, the story of a family that was almost fooled into abandoning their home, and Wells's own reactions to the panic he caused. But two weeks into the unit, Martin realized that one girl was utterly convinced that giant Martians had laid waste parts of northern New Jersey sometime before she was born. Reminded of all the material they'd read making it clear that the whole thing was a hoax, the girl said, "Oh, is that what all that means?"

This is also true outside school, where shopkeepers and others have little patience. English learners, says Martin, try to "fly under the radar, eager to avoid the humiliation of being the center of irritated attention, fearful of sounding like a tyro in front of strangers. This determination not to humiliate yourself in front of native speakers calls for full-time vigilance and a straight-face-and-nervous-gut approach to the world." Many students are also put in the role of interpreting for their entire families. "Imagine the confusion," says Martin, "when

someone who only half-understands the terminology explains complicated medical matters to family members, who understand much less. Their collective comprehension must frequently spin out of control…"

For teachers, student bluffing and faking is a major instructional challenge. Teachers who check for understanding by asking, "Are you with me?" or asking their students to give a thumbs-up or thumbs-down signal are not going to get an accurate sense of what's being learned. Martin has formulated the Rule of 50% Bluffing – kids are nodding and pretending to understand about half of the time. But it's hard to tell who's bluffing and when, because many ELLs have good verbal language and social skills and sound so plausible.

These insights have led Martin to check for classroom understanding in a much more systematic way. She stops after each instructional point and asks students to rephrase what she's just explained. In every class, she calls for some written demonstration of mastery, either on erasable whiteboards or in students' notebooks. Because students know they will be held accountable for they understand, Martin says they're less likely to bluff. "They may as well admit their confusion," she says, "since they know it will soon be revealed." Constant checking for understanding also keeps Martin from kidding herself about how well things are going. "A teacher can't clarify and do comprehension checks too often, alas," she concludes.

"The Ubiquitous Art of Bluffing" by Patricia Martin in *Essential Teacher*, September 2007 (Vol. 4, #3, p. 17-19), no e-link available

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3. Teachers Give Candid Advice to a First-Year Principal

In this piece in *Teacher Magazine*, members of the Teacher Leaders Network offer advice to a newly-appointed principal in the rural Southeast. Here is a synthesis of their suggestions:

• *Reach out*. Have a personal talk with every staff member, asking questions like, What is going right in this school? What could be improved? What do you want me to know about you? How can I help you do a better job? What does your department need?

• *Be visible and accessible*. It means a lot to teachers and other staff to see their principal in the corridors, in the cafeteria, and at after-school functions. "Also, an open-door policy makes the staff and parents comfortable with bringing issues directly to you rather than starting a whispering campaign. Identify teacher leaders in your school and work with them to monitor how your policies are working out."

• *Get into classrooms*. "Focus on good and engaging instruction by doing lots of observations and/or modeled lessons, informally and formally," advises one teacher.

• *Combine accessibility with accountability*. One teacher says that her current principal has a stuffed monkey in his office and pats it when teachers bring the "monkeys on your back" to him. But when they leave his office, they have to take their "monkey" with them. It's a humorous way of being open to discussing any problem and acknowledging that the principal

has "monkeys" too, but making sure colleagues take responsibility for doing their part to solve them.

• *Be clear about learning goals*. What students need to know and be able to do at each grade level should be crystal clear, and the principal should be in the business of providing teachers the support they need to reach those goals.

• *Be transparent about expectations*. One teacher recalls being chewed out for forgetting to close her classroom blinds at night – something she didn't even know she was supposed to do. "Sometimes people get busy and need reminding," she writes, "but I like to at least know that I was given explicit instructions for what my administrators are looking for."

• *Set limits*. One teacher appreciates that her principal "chides negativity for negativity's sake." He's open to suggestions that are results-oriented, she says. Another teacher appreciates her principal's no-nonsense approach to student discipline problems.

• *Pick the low-hanging fruit*. Zero in on the most important problems and, if something glaring is missing, attend to it right away. One school, for example, didn't have a PTO and setting one up solved several problems.

• *Look before you leap*. Don't make the mistake of "taking charge" and laying down your expectations and non-negotiables before you have a good sense of the culture of the school. "Be sure you remember one thing," advises one teacher: "It is their culture. Before you set about changing it, you must first show that you understand and appreciate what is already present that is valuable to children and learning. You must acclimate first." Teachers should know they are being listened to, but at the same time understand that their individual views are being incorporated into a larger schoolwide perspective. Before making a major change, advises one teacher, be sure that teachers, staff, and parents understand what you are doing and support it.

• *Think before you speak*. Sometimes it's smart to ask for some "think-time" before responding. This is especially important when you are angry. Cool off before having a private talk with the people involved.

• *Assume positive intent*. Principals start with the assumption that teachers are professionals and will do what's right for children. "When confronted with a situation that seems ridiculous or outrageous to you," advises one teacher, "before jumping down someone's throat, ask why the person chose to do whatever it is. Sometimes there is actually a logical, reasonable answer." Another teacher says of a former principal, "When we made mistakes, she was kind enough to target the error and not the person."

• *Nurture ongoing relationships*. Keep learning about your colleagues' strengths and weaknesses, passions and viewpoints. Forming these bonds is key to good leadership. "I have a different attitude about working for this principal because he actually notices how hard I work and lets me know that he sees what I do," says one teacher.

• *Praise*. Give teachers positive feedback in a meaningful, not formulaic, way. "A nice note in my box on a random Thursday means more than the time I won the 'Gold Star Award' because it was 'my turn,'" writes one teacher.

• *Be a teacher of teachers*. "If someone is struggling," advises one teacher, "offer extra help. If one way of approaching a topic doesn't work, try a new way. Most importantly, remember that they are deserving of your respect."

• *Allow room for mistakes*. Teachers should feel safe about taking risks in their classrooms, always guided by the question, "Is it right for the children?"

• *Share ideas*. "He reads a lot of different research and shares it with staff," writes one teacher of her principal. "He strives to establish some form of professional learning community…"

• *Don't lecture*. Preaching in staff meetings is rarely appreciated, says one teacher.

• *Have a sense of humor*. This counts for a lot with students and adults.

"Advice to a New Principal" by members of the Teacher Leaders Network in *Teacher Magazine* (online), June 12, 2008, http://www.teachermagazine.org/tm/index.html

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4. What Would Get More Girls to Study Physics and Engineering?

"The real gender gap is not in ability but in motivation," says psychologist/author Leonard Sax in this *Education Week* article, "not in what girls and boys can do, but in what girls and boys *want* to do: specifically in what they want to learn, and how they want to learn it." He cites the 50-percent drop over the last 20 years in the number of high-school girls who say they want to study physics or engineering in college – this in an era in which girls were told from kindergarten that they could do anything they wanted. Two data points: 75 percent of students taking AP Physics are boys, while 80 percent of students taking AP Spanish are girls. And the choices young women are making have economic ramifications: careers in the hard sciences pay much better than the fields being chosen by most young women.

Why is this happening? Sax believes it's because physics and engineering are almost always taught in ways that are more appealing to boys than to girls. "With boys," he says, "you start with kinematics and momentum: race cars accelerating, football players colliding, that sort of thing." To hook girls on physics and engineering, it's much better to start with probing, open-ended questions, for example, *What is the nature of light? Is light a wave? Is it made up of particles?* Through an inductive process, students then figure out that light is both a wave and a particle.

How can this kind of differentiation reach more students? Sax, who is director of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education, believes that the best way is to separate boys and girls and teach them in ways that match their learning styles. "Girls at girls' schools are several times more likely to study subjects such as computer science, physics, and engineering, compared with girls attending coed schools," he says. "Boys at boys' schools are more than twice as likely to study subjects such as art, poetry, and advanced Spanish as boys of comparable ability attending coed schools."

"Where the Girls Aren't" by Leonard Sax in *Education Week*, June 18, 2008 (Vol. 27, #42, p. 36, 29), http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/06/18/42sax_ep.h27.html

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5. Rhode Island's Performance-Based Assessments for High-School Seniors

In this *Education Week* article, Scott Cech reports on Rhode Island's new requirement that seniors choose and pass two of three possible performance-based assessments:

- A portfolio of work selected from their four years of high school, including a research project that spans all four years; seniors must defend their portfolio in front of a panel of judges.
- A senior project, for example, designing and implementing a poetry-writing course for adults, or building a snow machine and using it to open a backyard sledding hill.
- A comprehensive course assessment, at least half of which must incorporate applied-learning and performance elements, such as the results of original research, presented in PowerPoint slides, Web pages, and other suitable media.

Some educators say that meeting the new requirements, on top of passing standardized tests, will be a challenge for students and teachers. Others point out that an earlier attempt to implement performance-based assessments in Vermont in the 1990s foundered on problems with scorers' inter-rater reliability. "Some things need to be demonstrated by performance, and that's a fact," says Chester Finn of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. "But making those things count on a large scale and in a high-stakes environment is fraught with difficulties."

But Rhode Island education officials believe they have learned from the experiences of other states and can successfully implement performance-based assessments for all seniors. They have developed a 24-item rubric for judging student presentations, including items on whether the content adequately supported the main ideas, the effectiveness of audiovisual elements, and the amount of eye contact the student had with the audience. Students are judged by panels, half of whose members are regular citizens.

"Showing What They Know" by Scott Cech in *Education Week*, June 18, 2008 (Vol. 27, #42, p. 25-27), available to subscribers only

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6. Children's Book Recommendations

In this *Reading Today* feature, Children's bookstore manager David Richardson and librarian Susan Dove Lempke each recommend first-rate children's books for summer reading. ***Richardson's list, with his commentary on each book:***

• *Me and the Pumpkin Queen* by Marlane Kennedy, ages 10 and up (Greenwillow, 2007) – A poignant, uplifting, and informative tale of a young girl who tried to grow giant pumpkins because her deceased mother always admired them at the local fair

• *Ballpark: The Story of America's Baseball Fields* by Lynn Curlee, ages 7 and up (Aladdin, 2008) – An informative look at the places where sports history was made.

• *Leaping Beauty: And Other Animal Fairytales* by Gregory Maguire, ages 10 and up (HarperTrophy, 2004) – A collection of fractured fairytales by the author of *Wicked*.

• *The End of the Beginning: Being the Adventures of a Small Snail (and an Even Smaller Ant)* by Avi, ages 8 and up (Harcourt, 2008) – In a style similar to that of A.A. Milne,

the author takes an odd pair of friends and sends them on a journey to the end of a tree limb and back.

• *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* by Kate DiCamillo, ages 9 and up (Candlewick, 2007) – This Velveteen Rabbit/Pinocchio tale of Edward's journey of love and discovery is a classic.

• *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney, ages 10 and up (Amulet, 2007) – This graphic novel captures the highs and lows of middle school with humor and insight.

• *The Mercy Watson Series* by Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Chris Van Dusen, ages 6 and up (Candlewick) – A pig with a penchant for buttered toast, owners who treat her like a member of the family, some nosy neighbors, and lots of fun.

• *Imogene's Antlers* by David Small, ages 4 and up (Dragonfly, 1988) – A girl wakes up one morning with antlers – a classic tale of acceptance and personal innovation.

• *Tacky the Penguin Series* by Helen Lester, ages 4 and up (Houghton Mifflin) – An unlikely hero finds his way in and out of trouble in his own hilarious way.

• *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, ages 10 and up (HarperCollins, 2006) – Many kids have seen the movie but never read the book. An enduring classic!

• *The Underneath* by Kathi Appelt, illustrated by David Small, ages 10 and up (Atheneum, 2008) – A lovable old hound dog, a protective mother cat, two adorable kittens, a villain beyond evil, a 100-foot alligator, lost love, impending doom – a masterful story!

• *A Birthday for Cow!* By Jan Thomas, ages 3 and up (Harcourt, 2008) – Pig and Mouse want to bake Cow a birthday cake, but Duck believes using a turnip would make the cake better…

• *Hush, Little Dragon* by Boni Ashburn, illustrated by Kelly Murphy, ages 3 and up (Abrams, 2008) – A mother dragon sings a lullaby to her restless and hungry baby, promising princesses, knights, magicians, and much more.

• *Savvy* by Ingrid Law, ages 11 and up (Dial, 2008) – A girl's father is in a terrible accident away from home, and she must get to him and save him with her Savvy (her special gift). She and a few others sneak a ride on a Bible delivery bus, but there are complications…

• *Me Hungry!* By Jeremy Tankard, ages 2-7 (Candlewick, 2008) – A young cave boy want something to eat, and decides to hunt for food on his own.

• *Monarch and Milkweed* by Helen Frost, illustrated by Leonid Gore, ages 5 and up (Atheneum, 2008) – A nonfiction book that reads like fiction, juxtaposing the life cycle of the milkweed plant with that of the monarch butterfly.

• *Suck It Up* by Brian Meehl, ages 12 and up (Delacorte, 2008) – A teenage vegetarian vampire belongs to a secret society (the I.V. League) that's dedicated to living peacefully with humans. Filled with suspense and humor.

• *Where the Steps Were* by Andrea Cheng, ages 10 and up (Wordsong, 2008) – A group of children deal with the destruction of their school and the challenge of attending a new school, supported by their teacher and her mother.

• *Wave* by Suzy Lee, all ages (Chronicle, 2008) – A wordless picture book about a girl's discovery of the ocean.

Lempke's list, with her comments:

• *Smash! Crash!* By Jon Scieszka, ages 3-6 (Simon & Schuster, 2008) – A book about the way kids play with their trucks, as Jack Truck and Dump Truck Dan smash and crash their way through various adventures.

• *Trainstop* by Barbara Lehman, ages 4-8 (Houghton Mifflin, 2008) – A wordless picture book about a girl who gets off a train on which all the adults have fallen asleep and enters a brightly colored world of tiny people.

• *Max's Dragon* by Kate Banks, ages 5-8 (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2008) – In a sequel to *Max's Words*, Max comes up with imaginative rhymes watching clouds shaped like dinosaurs and dragons.

• *Sisters and Brothers: Sibling Relationships in the Animal World* by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page, ages 6-10 (Houghton Mifflin, 2008) – Animal siblings from elephants to termites.

• *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths* by Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire, ages 8-14 (Delacorte, 1962) – This version of classic myths remains fresh and lively.

• *The Willoughbys* by Lois Lowry, ages 8-12 (Houghton Mifflin, 2008) – A witty and dark story of wicked parents, their four children, and their nanny. A great read-aloud.

• *Mary Poppins* and *Mary Poppins Comes Back* by P.L. Travers, ages 8-12 (Harcourt, 2007) – The magical nanny takes them on a series of adventures.

• *Dodger and Me* by Jordan Sonneblick, ages 8-12 (Feiwel & Friends, 2008) – Tim sees himself as a poor baseball player and a loser in his classroom, but a genie in a fast-food bag changes things.

• *Saffy's Angel* by Hilary McKay, ages 10-12 (McElderry, 2002) – This tender depiction of the relationships between the quirky Casson siblings is a delight.

• *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children's Literature* by Leonard Marcus, for adult readers (Houghton, 2008) – A children's-book scholar takes an in-depth look at the history of children's books and the personalities of the authors and those working behind the scenes.

"New and Classic Books Can Spark Summer Reading" by David Richardson and Susan Dove Lempke and "There Never Seems to be Enough Time" by David Richardson in *Reading Today*, June/July 2008 (Vol. 25, #6, p. 26, 27, 30), no e-link available

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7. Short Items:

a. Route 21 website – Set up by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, this website has copious materials in four areas: life and career skills; learning and innovation skills; information, media, and technology skills; and core subjects and 21st-century themes. Check it out at http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/route21.

"Top Picks: Go-To Sites for Educators: Route 21" compiled by Katie Ash in *Digital Directions*, Spring/Summer 2008 (p. 10)

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b. Crossword-creating website – The ReadWriteThink site, sponsored by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, has launched a crossword puzzle tool that makes it easy for students from kindergarten through high school to create their own crossword puzzles and share them with classmates. Check it out at http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/crossword.

"Creating Crosswords in the Classroom" in *Reading Today*, June/July 2008 (Vol. 25, #6, p. 44)

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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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- How to change access e-mail or password

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
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 Language Educator
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools/The Learning Principal