

Marshall Memo 3

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education

September 8, 2003

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Quote of the Week

"One fact is clear. There can be no major progress for African Americans as a group without improving the level of academic achievement. Everyone must insist as another school year begins that students attain academic proficiency. From now on proficiency is essential for future advancement." *Bay State Banner* editorial, Sept. 4, 2003 (Vol. 37 #49, page 4)

1. Seven Keys to Effective Schools

In this commentary piece, UCLA management school professor William G. Ouchi wonders why the Los Angeles schools are in such terrible shape and asserts that it's not poverty, size, unions, or the other usual suspects. He reports on his recent analysis of a number of successful and unsuccessful U.S. public and parochial school districts and asserts that there are seven key factors in producing high student achievement in any school district:

1. Every principal is an entrepreneur.
2. Every school controls its own budget.
3. Everyone is accountable for student performance and for budgets.
4. Everyone delegates authority to those below.
5. There is a burning focus on student achievement.
6. Every school is a community of learners.
7. Families have real choices among a variety of unique schools.

“Making Schools Work: The Seven Keys to Success” by William G. Ouchi, *Education Week*, September 3, 2003 (Vol. XXIII, #1, page 56, 44). Ouchi’s book (co-authored with Lydia Segal) is *Making Schools Work*, Simon & Schuster, 2003. For more information, go to www.simonsays.com/book/default_book.cfm?isbn=074324630&areaid=33.

2. What Makes an Effective Math and Science Lesson?

A new study, “Looking Inside the Classroom: A Study of K-12 Mathematics and Science Education in the United States”, criticizes the methods of most American math and science teachers and identifies some key elements of the most effective teaching in the United States. Five researchers observed 364 math and science lessons in 31 representative districts and found it was not a question of the type of instruction (American-style lecture and practice or Japanese-style discovery and explanation); the key factor was the level of student understanding.

“The emphasis has been on pedagogy, rather than on getting students to learn,” said Iris Weiss, the director of the study. The report says that professional development should model the types of lessons teachers should be doing in their classrooms. That means teachers need to be focused on helping their students achieve a set of specific learning goals, and they should use a variety of strategies, from lectures to inquiry-based projects.

Two ineffective lessons were described: (a) students solve worksheet problems and the teacher later gives them the correct answers (problem: students were never challenged to explain the mathematical reasoning behind the problems); (b) students were asked to draw their favorite animals (problem: the teacher never talked about any scientific content related to animals).

The common characteristic of effective lessons, Ms. Weiss said in an interview, was that students could make sense of the mathematical or scientific content and then apply it to other situations. The problem, she said, was that “the whole system is not set up with either the capacity or the incentives for teaching for understanding... We see the absence of sense-making. That seems to be the part that’s hardest.” Johnny Lott,

president of the NCMT, added: “You have to have a teacher who knows how to ask the deep, probing kind of question. The big question is, how do we teach people to ask those questions?”

James Stigler, UCLA professor and director of the international videotape study for TIMSS and TIMSS-R, said the new study echoes his own findings. He said, “Teachers need to learn how to analyze lessons and know what a quality lesson looks like. We need that in the same way a student needs to know what an A essay looks like and why he got a C.”

“Large-Scale Study Finds Poor Math, Science Instruction” by David J. Hoff, *Education Week*, September 3, 2003 (Vol. XXIII, #1, page 8). This study can be downloaded from www.horizon-research.com/insidetheclassroom/reports

3. Social-Emotional Learning Is Essential to Academic Achievement

Citing fears that the recent federal education legislation may result in the “Whole Child Left Behind”, a number of educators are saying that social-emotional learning needs to be included in classrooms. An example: in a social studies lesson, third-grade teacher Mary Ellen McDonnell has one academic and one social goal: (a) researching how the early fur traders helped build Chicago, and (b) practicing listening well to each other.

This La Grange, Illinois school is implementing the Child Development Project, one of several social-emotional program with solid research behind them. McDonnell admitted that she initially thought, “Oh no, here’s this cutesy thing we have to put on top of all the curriculum we have to accomplish. But it didn’t turn out that way. It gets integrated into everything. It works better for me, because I share the onus of learning with the kids. Everyone feels a sense of responsibility, and it makes it more exciting. It makes reaching our [state] benchmarks more possible.”

Advocates of social-emotional learning contend that schools will not reach their academic goals if students are not taught how to manage emotions, challenges, and relationships and make good decisions. The article cites evidence that “stress can

interfere with the brain's cognitive functions, and that students care more about learning when they feel attached to their schools and valued by their peers and teachers... A deliberate and comprehensive approach to teaching children social and emotional skills can raise their grades and test scores, bolster their enthusiasm for learning, reduce behavior problems, and enhance the brain's cognitive functions."

Pennsylvania State researcher Mark Greenberg says, "Because the emotional centers of the brain are very connected to the thinking and learning centers of the brain, we know that people who are better able to control their emotions and moods are more effective learners." Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence* and other books in the same vein, says that a school that focuses only on academics is "very wrongheaded... Social-emotional learning is a win-win, because it is the active ingredient in most [prevention] programs, and may help educators fulfill their mandate as well because you're teaching children crucial skills they need in order to learn."

"Hand in Hand" by Catherine Gewertz, *Education Week*, September 3, 2003 (Vol. XXIII, #1, page 38-41). "Academic and Social-Emotional Learning", a pamphlet by Maurice J. Elias, is available at www.unesco.org/International/Publications/pubhome.htm.

4. Teacher Induction and Support Need Drastic Change

In a punchy Op Ed piece in the Boston Globe, former teachers Vivian Troen and Katherine Boles say that schools do not give novice teachers anything approaching the support they need. "Dating back to its 19th century roots," they write, "teaching has been built on the notion of rugged individualism. Teachers sink or swim, and they do it alone. This culture of isolation pervades the practice of teaching and becomes a strong obstacle to mentoring, collaboration, the sharing of knowledge and ideas, and ultimately most education reforms of any kind." Troen and Boles say that teaching has to be transformed into a "real" profession by making several structural changes:

- Implement a career ladder with new jobs and responsibilities for teachers who are at different levels of skill and experience.
- Principals should oversee a cadre of "chief instructors", all of whom have gained licensure after several years of teaching and intensive study.
- Chief instructors are responsible for teams of teachers.
- There would be three levels of teachers on each team:

- Professional teachers – the highest rung below the chief instructors;
- Associate teachers – these are novices, fresh out of a training program, a program like Teach for America, or a career change. They have an intensive two-year period of induction, teaching classes only part of the week with constant supervision and mentoring. After two years they become fully licensed and, if they wish, advance to the level of professional teacher.
- Teaching interns – they are enrolled in degree-granting programs and have limited responsibilities for teaching children under the supervision of professional teachers.

Troen and Boles say that this model would ensure that teamwork, collaboration, mentoring, supervision, and professional development are no longer “add-ons” but an integral components of school improvement and a real professional career.

“Back to School, but Who’s There to Teach?” by Vivian Troen and Katherine C. Boles, *Boston Globe*, September 2, 2003. These ideas are expanded in their book, *Who’s Teaching Your Children? Why the Teacher Crisis Is Worse Than You think and What Can Be Done About It* (Yale University Press, 2003). Abigail Thernstrom wrote a thoughtful and somewhat critical review of this book in the summer 2003 *Commonwealth Magazine* (page 83-86).

5. How Proficient Is Proficient?

In Florida, 90% of public schools did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress last year. In Minnesota, only 8% failed to meet AYP. Disparities like these come from the vastly different ways that “proficient” is defined across the country.

“State Reports On Progress Vary Widely” by Eric W. Robelen, *Education Week* Sept. 3, 2003 (Vol. XXIII, #1, page 1).

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Any feedback? Anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, or if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should be covered, please e-mail:

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About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

The Marshall Memo aims to keep busy educators very well-informed on important research, ideas, and developments in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, a former Boston teacher and administrator, will act as “designated reader”, looking through a wide range of publications as soon as they come out and sending a brief weekly e-mail summarizing a few select articles. These will be chosen based on relevance and usefulness to improving teaching and learning. Target topics include the following (those covered in this issue are boldfaced):

- *School leadership* – Building a professional learning community; effective teamwork; **effective schools practices**; time management;
- *Closing the gap* – Effective strategies to close the racial/economic achievement gap; the innate-ability/intelligence/effective effort debate.
- *Effective teaching* – **What produces high levels of student achievement**; supervision and evaluation of teachers; **professional development of teachers**; **teacher leadership and career ladders**; **multiple intelligences and brain research**.
- *Curriculum* – Alignment and planning with the end in sight; **teaching for understanding**; new ideas for teaching reading, writing, and math; parent involvement.
- *Assessment* – Aligned formative and summative assessments; using data and student work for continuous improvement; graphic display of student achievement data; standardized testing and the debate on standards.
- *Positive school culture* – Student discipline; **social-emotional learning**; moral development.
- *Other* – New areas of research; upcoming television and radio programs on education.

If one of the summaries is of particular interest, subscribers are encouraged to read the full article. E-links will be provided whenever possible.

Publications covered:

American Education Research Journal, American Educator, Atlantic Monthly, **Bay State Banner**, **Boston Globe**, Commonwealth Magazine, **Education Digest**, Education Gadfly, Education Update (ASCD), **Education Week**, Educational Leadership, Elementary School Journal, Harpers, Harvard Education Letter, Harvard Education Review, Harvard Graduate School of Education Ed. Magazine, New York Times, New Yorker, Phi Delta Kappan, Principal Magazine, Psychology Today, Review of Educational Research, Rethinking Schools, Teacher Magazine, and occasional books, lectures, conferences, and websites. If you would like to suggest additional publications, please be in touch.

Subscriptions:

The Marshall Memo is published weekly (with occasional breaks), usually on Monday. Major support from Research for Better Teaching and New Leaders for New Schools makes possible individual subscriptions of \$50 a year. To subscribe, please contact Kim Marshall at kim.marshall8@verizon.net or at 222 Clark Road, Brookline, MA 02445 (617-566-4353).