Marshall Memo 186

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
May 21, 2007

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Quotes of the Week

"Even the most valid and reliable assessment cannot be regarded as high quality if it causes a student to give up."
    Rick Stiggins (see item #1)

"[W]e can't let students who have not yet met standards fall into losing streaks, succumb to hopelessness, and stop trying."
    Rick Stiggins (*ibid.*)

"It is virtually impossible to make things relevant for or expect personal excellence from a student you don't know."
    Carol Ann Tomlinson and Amy Germundson (see item #2)

"It is far easier and more efficient for teachers to modify instruction from the outset than add accommodations and modifications after the fact."
    Clark Harris, Marilyn Kaff, Mary Jo Anderson, and Ann Knackendoffel (see item #5)

"The urgent question is this: Why do we create strategic plans that interfere with effective teaching, make no arrangements for teachers to work in teams to improve their lessons, and fail to ensure that instruction is at least occasionally monitored, so that we can celebrate progress and identify areas for further improvement?"
    Mike Schmoker and Richard Allington in *Education Week*, May 16, 2007, p. 28-29

"[T]he best single predictor of a candidate's future job performance is his or her past job behavior."
    Richard Deems (quoted in item #3)

1. Involving Students in the Improvement Process

(Originally titled "Assessment Through the Student's Eyes")

In this trenchant article in *Educational Leadership*, Oregon-based assessment guru Rick Stiggins continues his campaign to get students involved in continuous improvement by sharing formative and interim assessment data with them. He argues that the traditional approach to assessment has created classroom winners and losers, each with their own self-perpetuating psychology. "Understanding the emotional dynamics of the assessment experience from the student's perspective is crucial to the effective use of assessments to improve schools," says Stiggins. "Even the most valid and reliable assessment cannot be regarded as high quality if it causes a student to give up."

For students on winning streaks, success breeds success; they are hopeful and optimistic, know what to do next, seek out challenges, practice with gusto, and have a firm foundation for future success. But students who are on a losing streak feel hopeless, panicked, confused, and stressed, see all feedback as criticism, have no idea what to do next, and conclude that they are too dumb to learn. "[W]e can't let students who have not yet met standards fall into losing streaks, succumb to hopelessness, and stop trying," writes Stiggins. "Our evolving mission compels us to embrace a new vision of assessment that can tap the wellspring of confidence, motivation, and learning potential that resides within every student."

Step one, says Stiggins, is giving students measurable achievement targets in kid-friendly language and displaying examples of exemplary student work. Step two is having students do frequent self-assessments that give descriptive feedback on their progress. "The student's role," writes Stiggins, "is to strive to understand what success looks like, to use feedback from each assessment to discover where they are now in relation to where they want to be, and to determine how to do better the next time. As students become increasingly proficient, they learn to generate their own descriptive feedback and set goals for what comes next on their journey." This can include students constructing rubrics or brief multiple-choice tests that parallel the content of final exams, gathering evidence of their learning in a growth portfolio, or leading parent/teacher report card conferences. The key outcome of students taking ownership of the assessment process is that they begin to believe that "success is within reach if they keep trying."

Stiggins tells the story of Gail, a fifth grader who is struggling with math. She gets 60% on a math test – an *F* – and her growing sense of failure and inadequacy is reinforced. But then her teacher hands out another paper – a worksheet with six columns. The first column lists the

20 items on the test. The second column lists the math skill each item tested. The third and fourth columns have *Right* and *Wrong* at the top, and the teacher asks students to check which items they got right and which they got wrong. Gail follows directions and finds she got 12 right and 8 wrong.

The teacher then asks students to honestly evaluate why they got each incorrect item wrong: if it was a careless error, they mark column five. If they didn't understand how to do the problem, they mark column six. Gail finds that four of her incorrect answers were careless mistakes, but four of the problems she really didn't grasp. The teacher then has students go over their don't-understand questions and look for patterns. Gail notices that all four of her wrong answers stemmed from the fact that she doesn't understand how to subtract 3-digit numbers with regrouping. The teacher provides differentiated instruction to students on their weak areas and allows them to take a second form of the same test. This time, Gail gets 100%, and leaps from her seat with her arms in the air. Her winning streak has begun.

Stiggins shares another story. A high-school English teacher asks students to read three novels by the same author, develop a thesis statement about a common theme, consistent character development, or social commentary in the books, and write a term paper defending their argument. The teacher then gives students a sample of an outstanding paper to read and analyze, and leads a discussion about what made the paper so good. The next day, the teacher gives students a low-quality student paper and has them analyze its features. Comparing the two papers, students decide on the criteria for excellence and translate them into a 4-3-2-1 scoring rubric, and the teacher produces samples of student work at each level. Students then write their first drafts, exchange papers, evaluate one another's work, and give descriptive feedback on how each paper can be improved, using the language of their rubric. The teacher circulates, giving comments and feedback when asked. Students hand in their papers when they feel they have done their best work. "In the end, not every paper is outstanding," writes Stiggins, "but most are of high quality, and each student is confident of that fact before submitting his or her work for final evaluation and grading."

"Assessment Through the Student's Eyes" by Rick Stiggins in *Educational Leadership*, May 2007 (Vol. 64, #8, p. 22-26); this article is available free on the ASCD website: go to http://www.ascd.org, click on Publications, and navigate to the May 2007 issue.

2. Four Keys to High-Impact Teaching

(Originally titled "Teaching As Jazz")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, differentiated-instruction guru Carol Ann Tomlinson and University of Virginia graduate student Amy Germundson riff on the similarities of the best teaching to jazz. "Like jazz," they write, "great teaching calls for blending different cultural styles with educational techniques and theories. It requires recognizing that there are independent rhythms in the classroom. Most of all, great teaching demands improvisation in how teachers invite an array of young lives into the music with us."

This kind of teaching, say Tomlinson and Germundson, combines four elements in a jazz-like fusion:

• *Asking big curriculum questions* – Citing *Understanding by Design*, they say curriculum must be more than a collection of names, dates, facts, and terms, but must get at the big ideas of the discipline and invite students to connect those and hunt for other overarching concepts. "Curriculum that brings soul to the music doesn't neglect the details of content," they write. "It helps students see a reason for these details and makes them memorable, useful, and transferable."

• *Connecting with students* – "Students need connections to learn," say Tomlinson and Germundson, "and so do teachers. From the student's perspective, the keen interest of a teacher is an affirmation of personal worth. It is an invitation to learn – a bridge between security and the unknown… From the teacher's perspective, it's difficult to teach a student whose character remains amorphous in your thinking. It is virtually impossible to make things relevant for or expect personal excellence from a student you don't know." In addition, personal connections provide sustenance for teachers in their exhausting work.

• *Teaching for connections* – "Instruction is about connecting content with human beings," write the authors. "Teaching without a sense of interdependence with students can be like practicing piano scales day in and day out – rote, routine, leaving little room for discovery. Teaching becomes an art when the teacher is struck by the power of curriculum to dignify a life and by students' need for that dignity." The key is finding the right connections to students' individual and group needs – matching the content to each class.

• *Assessment as refinement* – Tomlinson and Germundson bemoan the kind of assessment that merely checks to see who "got it" – and then moves on. "Other than passing judgment," they write, "such assessment *of* learning has little to offer either teacher or student." Assessment *for* learning, by contrast, begins with a good diagnosis before the unit commences, checks on student progress as the unit progresses, and gives helpful feedback to students and the teacher to fine-tune the learning process. "The teacher is the chief learner," they write, "whose purpose is to make learning a better fit for all."

The article concludes with a before-and-after example of a 9th-grade biology teacher. She used to teach her unit on cells mostly through lectures, with students labeling models of plant and animal cells and answering textbook questions. Most students did okay on the end-of-unit quiz, but few retained the information over time – or saw any meaning to what they had learned. Over time, the teacher found her way to a better approach. She now begins the unit with a pre-assessment to see what students know about organelles and their function within a biological system. (There's usually a wide range of knowledge, but little sense of the connections between key concepts.) She then leads a discussion of the big ideas she's identified – structure, function, and system – and asks students to work in groups to propose scientific meanings for those concepts and relate them to school, musical groups, and sports. Having circulated and listened to the groups' discussions, she then presents an overview of the major cellular organelles in plant and animal cells, peppering her lecture with questions that get students thinking about the relationships of structure, function, and systems in various real-world situations, in cells – and in a Harry Potter novel.

The teacher then puts students into mixed-achievement groups, gives them electron microscope images of cellular organelles, and asks each group to examine the structure behind the function of each organelle and construct and justify a classification system explaining its structure and function. To check for understanding, she has students make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the cellular organelles of plant and animal cells. In the final lesson, she groups students by how well she thinks they understand what's been taught and gives them assessment tasks that challenge them to explain and construct their understanding of cells.

"Teaching As Jazz" by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Amy Germundson in *Educational Leadership*, May 2007 (Vol. 64, #8, p. 27-31); this article can be purchased on the ASCD website: go to http://www.ascd.org, click on Publications, and navigate to the May 2007 issue.

3. Advice on Interviewing Teachers

In this helpful article in Phi Delta Kappa's *Edge* Magazine, veteran educator and author Mary Clement makes the case for behavior-based interview questions – asking teacher candidates what they have *done* rather than what they *believe*. Originally from the business world, behavior-based interviewing is based on the notion that "the best single predictor of a candidate's future job performance is his or her past job behavior" (Richard Deems, 1994, 9). It's also inspired by the scary finding in one business study that 75 percent of employee turnover can be traced to poor hiring practices – that is, hiring by gut feelings, assumptions, or intuition.

Every minute counts in interviews, says Clement, and we can't afford to waste time on questions that aren't informative – questions like, "Tell me about yourself" or "Why did you want to become a teacher?" or "Where do you see yourself in five years?" Behavior-based questions address specific job criteria and probe candidates' knowledge and experience. "Interviewers don't have to wonder about specifics if they are asking about specifics," says Clement. "When wondering about candidates' abilities to do any teaching skill, ask them about it and require them to answer with past behaviors, experiences, and situations." Interviewers should never ask a question that can't be objectively evaluated, she says.

Clement suggests assembling a representative interview team, training members on the basics (including what constitutes an illegal or unacceptable question), going over the rationale for behavior-based interviews, and developing a quick scoring sheet for evaluating candidates' paperwork (cover letter, resume, and letters of recommendation). She then suggests agreeing on a set of generic questions (suitable for all positions) and more specialized questions (geared to this particular position). She suggests printing a copy of the questions for everyone, asking the same questions in the same order to all candidates for a particular position, and scoring each candidate as the interview proceeds (see below). Here are samples of questions in three tiers:

An ice-breaker at the beginning of the interview:

- Tell me about the best teaching experience you have had.
- Name one accomplishment from your previous teaching that characterizes your work.

Generic questions:

- Describe a lesson you taught that met state- or district-mandated standards.
- Tell about a lesson plan that you taught that didn't go as well as you had hoped and what you would change about that plan.
- What are some of your best strategies to begin or end a class?
- Describe one or two basic routines that have worked well in your class.
- Describe a common misbehavior of students and what you have done to correct it.
- How do you tell if students are "getting" the material without paper and pencil quizzes and tests?
- Describe a grading system that you have used and would implement if hired.
- How have you used and evaluated student homework?
- Describe a lesson or an activity that your students said they enjoyed, and explain why they liked it.
- How have you modified or adapted lessons to meet the needs of special-education students or English language learners?
- How have you been able to get students to use computers and/or Internet resources?
- Describe a positive form of parent communication that you have implemented.
- Tell about a positive experience working on a teaching team or committee or with joint planning.
- What part of your teacher education preparation do you use the most?
- How have you evaluated your teaching?

Specialized questions for particular jobs:

- <u>Preschool</u>: Describe how you get a child separated from the parent, into the room, and settled for the morning.
- <u>K-2</u>: Describe a math lesson that has worked well for a class you taught.
- <u>Grades 3-5</u>: How have you prepared students for standardized tests?
- <u>Middle school</u>: How have you dealt with the worries and stress that middle-school students have?
- <u>High school</u>: How have you interested students in your subject and convinced them of their need to learn it?
- <u>ELA</u>: How have you dealt with the diversity of reading levels in your classes?
- <u>Math</u>: How have you assessed a new class with regard to students' previous math skills?
- <u>Science</u>: Tell about the use of labs in classes you have taught.
- <u>History</u>: Describe a current trend or controversy in the teaching of history and how you have dealt with this issue.
- <u>World languages</u>: What percent of a typical lesson do you teach in the target language? Why? (Clement also advocates having the candidate speak the language to a fluent staff member.)
- <u>Art</u>: Describe how you have helped students who don't feel artistically talented.
- <u>Music</u>: Describe a successful concert or presentation and why it went well.

- Health/Physical Education: How have you built weight-consciousness into your courses?
- Special education: Tell us about working with other teachers or professionals to help a student through collaborative consultation.

Clements believes interviewers should score candidates' responses using a 3-2-1 scale: Target, Acceptable, and Unacceptable. For example, if a candidate said that the best approach to dealing with disruptive students was to publicly humiliate them, that would be marked Unacceptable; a teacher who met the minimum standard, showing some past experience and proficiency would be marked Acceptable; and a teacher who "wowed" the committee, relating convincingly successful experiences, showed evidence of having learned from past experience, was articulate and precise, and showed promise to teach at an outstanding level would be rated Target. Clement suggests looking for short-and-sweet responses that incorporate the items in one of these acronyms: PAR – problem, action and result – or STAR – situation, task, action, and result.

What about portfolios? Clement says that the committee should not ask candidates to page through their portfolios; rather, interviewers should watch to see if the candidate uses the portfolio as an effective prop when answering behavior-based questions (e.g., showing the letter they sent home to parents describing classroom routines, or a rubric they used to score students' writing). "Good portfolios are small, well-organized ones that candidates create to highlight their work and that serve as visual aids for answering questions," says Clement. "The items should include a sample lesson plan, an outline of a management plan with rules, a sample parent letter, and possibly a sample from a syllabus or curriculum map. There may be pictures of students working, or the teacher involved with students, but an interview portfolio is not a scrapbook, and pictures should be used to tell the story of how the candidate teaches rather than offer a trip down memory lane… Bad portfolios are those four-inch notebooks containing every assignment from the candidate's teacher education program."

"Retention Begins with Hiring: Behavior-Based Interviewing" by Mary Clement in *Edge*, May/June 2007 (Vol. 2, #5, p. 2-19), no e-link available

4. New Research on Obesity – and its Implications for Educators

In this fascinating *New York Times* article, science reporter Gina Kolata describes a number of recent studies of obesity that make clear that some people are genetically wired to become obese and have to make superhuman efforts to lose weight, while others can maintain a normal weight with no extra effort. In a study at Rockefeller University, people who had been overweight since childhood or adolescence volunteered to live in the university's hospital for eight months and go on a special diet that reduced their weight and shrunk their fat cells to normal levels. Everyone assumed that these people would leave the hospital permanently thinner – but every one of them regained their weight. The researchers were stunned, and repeated the experiment several times – with similar results.

In subsequent studies, researchers noticed something: when obese people entered the program, their metabolism was normal – the number of calories burned per square meter of body surface was no different from people who had never been fat. But when they lost weight, their metabolism was that of a starving person, and they experienced the symptoms that normal-weight people have when they are deprived of nutrition, including a psychiatric syndrome called semi-starvation neurosis: they dreamed of food, fantasized about food, thought constantly about breaking their diet, were anxious and depressed, considered suicide, snuck food into their rooms, and binged.

Researchers wondered whether becoming overweight permanently altered body chemistry in a way that made it extremely difficult to lose weight from that point on. If this were true, early prevention of obesity might work. But new experiments disproved this hypothesis. A series of studies of adopted people showed that obesity was 70 percent inherited; only 14 percent of people who are obese as adults come from non-obese biological parents. This is a higher heritability rate than nearly any other condition, including mental illness, breast cancer, or heart disease. In another study, normal-weight inmates in a state prison were persuaded to put on weight. With great difficulty, they made themselves fat. But as soon as they went off their special weight-gaining diets, they shed the extra pounds, returned to their original weight, and effortlessly stayed there.

This and other studies have led researchers to adopt a new theory about weight: every person's body has a genetically programmed range to which it naturally gravitates, and when the person's weight gets outside that range, his or her metabolism increases or decreases to push the weight back into the normal zone. For naturally obese people, reducing weight below the comfortable range triggers the starvation response, making it extremely difficult to stay thin. How powerful are an obese person's cravings? Dr. Jeffrey Friedman, an obesity researcher at Rockefeller University, believes it's like trying to hold your breath: "This conscious act is soon overcome by the compulsion to breathe," he wrote. "The feeling of hunger is intense and, if not as potent as the drive to breathe, is probably no less powerful than the drive to drink when one is thirsty. This is the feeling the obese must resist after they have lost a significant amount of weight."

What are the implications for schools? Kolata says that researchers believe that "if family environment alone has no role in obesity, efforts now directed toward persons with little genetic risk of the disorder could be refocused on the smaller number who are more vulnerable" – those with one or more obese parents. And these findings also suggest a non-blaming approach to obesity. It's very, very difficult for overweight people to reduce their weight. In the Rockefeller Hospital studies, the very small number of people who managed to keep their weight down made it their life's work – special diets, regular exercise, and daily monitoring. People who have a tendency to be overweight have to constantly battle their genetic inheritance, and they need a lot of support.

"Genes Take Charge, and Diets Fall by the Wayside" by Gina Kolata in the *New York Times*, May 8, 2007,
http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/08/health/08fat.html?ex=1179892800&en=948354178ad3c7fb&ei=5070

5. Using Universal Design for Learning to Reach All Students

In this *Principal Leadership* article, four educators from Kansas State University make the case for Universal Design for Learning (UDL). "It is far easier and more efficient for teachers to modify instruction from the outset," they write, "than add accommodations and modifications after the fact… If teachers identify the accommodations and modifications their students need well in advance, their instruction will be improved and the stress of last-minute adjustments to lesson plans will be reduced. The result is that the instruction becomes more understandable and enjoyable for students, and the teachers will feel more enthusiastic about the new methodologies."

The authors put forward three tenets of UDL that will create multiple pathways for students to access information, practice what they've been taught, and show what they've learned:

• *Multiple means of presentation* – for example, PowerPoint presentations with audio, video, and notes, teacher-created blogs, student podcasts, using multimedia books, electronic text with text-to-speech (to read aloud), and graphic organizers.

• *Multiple means of expression* – for example, teachers using guided notes, skits, models, concept maps with key ideas, and students using podcast series and online discussions.

• *Multiple ways to engage students* – For example, teachers using rubrics, online quizzes and activities, graphic organizers like Inspiration, and tiered assessments; students creating podcast series, blog entries, websites, PowerPoint presentations, and portfolios.

The authors give the example of a high-school English class where a student was failing because she couldn't read the textbook. The teacher realized that the student could understand the literature when it was read to her, but at first couldn't manage the logistics of getting the text read aloud to this student. After consulting with a special educator, the teacher gave this student a digital version of the textbook and access to a text reader so she could hear the textbook read aloud. The student was now able to keep up with the required reading and began to fall in love with the literature.

Another example: a high-school U.S. History teacher give his students several ways to show their understanding of a unit on the Lewis and Clark expedition:

- Sony uses her artistic abilities to create a display board to show the path the explorers took through the Northwest and key facts about the journey.
- Jamal, who enjoys creative writing, creates a blog about the journey from the perspective of a crew member, drawing on journals and material he's reading in class.
- Emily, a student with Asperger Syndrome, develops a timeline with photographs she found on a various websites.
- Austin uses Emily's timeline to create a website for the class, including links to professional websites on the Lewis and Clark expedition and on American Indian tribes encountered by the explorers.

The authors stress the importance of collaboration between regular education teachers, who are usually strongest at the content design, and special educators, who have valuable insights on ways to design units so that all students can be successful.

"Designing Flexible Instruction" by Clark Harris, Marilyn Kaff, Mary Jo Anderson, and Ann Knackendoffel in *Principal Leadership* (Middle Level Edition), May 2007 (Vol. 7, #9, p. 31-35), no e-link available

6. Working With Students Who Have Tourette's Syndrome

This *Principal Leadership* article by Steven Shaw, Amelia Woo, and Shana Valo of McGill University provides helpful insights on Tourette's syndrome. The involuntary tics and utterances that are manifestations of Tourette's are disruptive in classrooms and pose real dilemmas for teachers and school administrators. Tourette's appears to be genetic in origin; symptoms usually begin in the first decade of a child's life, wax and wane through adolescence (affecting 1-4% of the typical high-school population, three times more common among boys than girls), and may subside in young adulthood. Tourette's often goes hand in hand with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, poor impulse control, behavioral outbursts, obsessive compulsive disorder, phobias, panic attacks, stuttering, and speech problems.

Tics can involve eye blinking, coughing, head or limb twitching, hitting, jumping, making lewd or obscene gestures, or imitating others. Students with Tourette's often know a tic is coming and try to suppress it, but they're not always successful and experience great discomfort and stress as they wrestle with their impulses. Some youth with Tourette's are able to identify specific triggers, including chocolate, cigarette smoke, or anxiety-producing situations, including classroom tests. But knowing what sets off the symptoms may not be enough to stop them.

Students with Tourette's often have problems with classroom reading and writing assignments because they have difficulty keeping their eyes on the task. Tics may also result in stern disciplinary measures by teachers (accompanied by anger at the disruptions) and teasing, bullying, and ostracism by peers. As a result, Tourette's students often have problems with academic achievement and peer relationships and become withdrawn and aggressive.

The authors list several common misunderstandings about the syndrome and offer corrections:

• *People with Tourette's can control the tics if they want to*. To a small degree this is true: counseling to identify triggers, reduce anxiety and embarrassment, and focus on the work at hand can reduce tics somewhat. But there is little evidence that tics can be entirely controlled by most youth with Tourette's.

• *Holding in tics will build up pressure and result in an explosion of tics*. Not true – but holding in tics can produce anxiety, which can be a trigger for tics.

• *All people with Tourette's use profanity*. Only a small percentage of tics involve profanity; throat clearing and barking noises are more common. Students with Tourette's may use profanity more than peers because of impulse control issues.

• *People with Tourette's are emotionally disabled or mentally ill*. Tourette's is not considered a psychotic disorder, but people with the syndrome are at greater risk for anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, ADHD, and other mental health problems. They may be prescribed antipsychotic medication to control tics.

• *People with Tourette's will grow out of it*. Although the symptoms change with age, Tourette's appears to be a lifelong problem.

The authors suggest the following approaches that school staff might use as they work with students who have Tourette's:

- A time-out space – For a student with Tourette's, controlling tics is like holding in a sneeze. It's helpful to have a private space and a scheduled time to let tics out without embarrassment or disruption.
- Regular physical exercise – This can help burn off energy and reduce anxiety.
- Reducing environmental triggers – Parents and students can often provide information on what sets off symptoms; for example, fluorescent light bulbs or odors from fresh paint or new carpets. Even if they're not really triggers, eliminating one or more may have a positive placebo effect.
- Social-skills training and counseling – As with students who have ADHD, Tourette's students will benefit from explicit teaching of coping and social adjustment skills, either in groups or in individual counseling. Topics might include making friends, following rules, taking tests, studying, resolving conflicts, appropriate emotional responses, and talking to adults.
- Medication – School staff should work with parents and the child's doctor and follow their medication program.
- Testing accommodations – Students with Tourette's might have an IEP that allows them to take tests in a separate room, have extra time, or perform relaxation exercises just before each test.

"Tourette's Syndrome: A Primer for School Leaders" by Steven Shaw, Amelia Woo, and Shana Valo in *Principal Leadership* (Middle Level Edition), May 2007 (Vol. 7, #9, p. 12-15), no e-link available

7. Professional Development That Promotes Better Use of Assessments

In this *Principal Leadership* article, Marcella Emberger, an ASCD faculty member and former director of the Maryland Assessment Consortium, urges principals to improve the quality of classroom assessments with thoughtful, differentiated professional development. One key is getting teachers to think like assessors and make assessment planning part of the backwards design of instructional units, always bearing in mind Rick DuFour's three questions:

- What do we want all students to learn?
- How will we know each student has learned it?
- What will we do when students experience difficulty?

Another key professional development focus should be deepening content knowledge. Without this, says Emberger, "teachers are unable to know what makes a topic easy or hard. They are unable to make judgments about what misconceptions students have and what strategies might help students overcome those misconceptions." She suggests that teacher teams continuously ask:

- What do you need to know about our content area that will foster deeper student understanding? How can we learn these concepts?
- What do students need to know in life that relates to our content area?
- What do we know about what has come before and what will follow our instruction?
- What do we know about the most effective and engaging materials that can be used to support our content area?

In a sidebar taken from an earlier article (*Principal*, March/April 2006), Emberger outlines critical shifts from traditional to new thinking about classroom assessments:

• From traditional supervision that looks at what the teacher is *doing* to a focus on how well students are *learning*.

• From a focus on covering the curriculum to ensuring that what is taught is actually learned by all students.

• From seeing the textbook as the major source of information to using multiple, rich sources of information.

• From Friday quizzes and mid-term and final exams to assessments that occur regularly and are an integral part of instruction.

• From assessments that are "done to" students to assessments that are assigned to support student learning.

• From teachers grading student work alone to collaborating with teammates to understand proficiency and how to move all students forward.

"Helping Teachers Improve Classroom Assessments" by Marcella Emberger in *Principal Leadership* (Middle Level Edition), May 2007 (Vol. 7, #9, p. 24-29), no e-link available, but Emberger can be reached at marcyemberger@earthlink.net.

8. Reducing the Isolation of Special-Education Teachers

In this *Principal Leadership* article, Utah junior-high assistant principal Spencer Hansen observes that special-education teachers are often isolated from their regular-education colleagues and don't have an adequate support network, which reduces their effectiveness and contributes to a "horrific" attrition rate. He suggests that principals level the playing field by doing the following:

• Assign each special educator to a grade-level or subject-area team so they regularly attend meetings and discuss students, curriculum, and assessments with colleagues who work with the same students.

• Have the same expectations of special-education teachers for attending meetings, going to professional development, serving on committees, taking part in study groups, and attending social functions. Don't allow them to become isolated from the mainstream faculty.

• Involve special educators in running student advisory programs and other social-emotional skill building and character development programs. Special-education teachers usually have good training and experience in this area.

• Encourage, facilitate, and, if necessary, require collaboration between special educators and regular-education teachers. Each has a lot to offer the other.

"Ending Special Educators' Isolation" by Spencer Hansen in *Principal Leadership* (Middle Level Edition), May 2007 (Vol. 7, #9, p. 37-40), no e-link available but Hansen can be reached at sdhansen@dsdmail.net.

9. Short item:

Tracking high-school graduates – An article in *Educational Leadership* suggests the following service for gathering data on high school graduates' downstream successes and struggles: check out http://www.lifetrack-services.com for the Advanced Graduate Survey.

Spotted in the May 2007 *Educational Leadership* article, "Balance in the Balance", by Richard Rothstein, Tamara Wilder, and Rebecca Jacobsen (Vol. 64, #8, p. 13); for the full article, go to http://www.ascd.org, click on Publications, and navigate to the May issue.

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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

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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 36 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 (with occasional breaks; there are about 50 issues a year).

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Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs
Atlantic Monthly
Catalyst Chicago
CommonWealth Magazine
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
NASSP Bulletin
New York Times
New Yorker
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teacher Magazine
Teachers College Record
TESOL Quarterly
Theory Into Practice
Times Educational Supplement, Magazine