Marshall Memo 158

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
October 30, 2006

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Education is the quintessential way in which people move beyond the circumstances of their birth."

Isabel Sawhill (see item #1)

"Writing well is not just an option for young people – it is a necessity."

Steve Graham and Dolores Perin in a new study on teaching writing (see item #3)

"[T]he heart of good writing is good thinking… Isolated from the larger tapestry of reading and thinking, the ability to write becomes meaningless. Students may dazzle us with their word choice and sentence structure, but they often have nothing compelling to say."

Alex Hernandez, Melissa Aul Kaplan, and Robert Schwartz (see item #5)

"To be sure, there is a little magic in writing. But writing is mostly difficult work. Why don't we tell students so?"

Ruth Culham (see item #6)

"Squeeze it once, and let it go."

Ralph Fletcher on critiquing students' writing (see item #6)

"If you made me education magician and I had one thing that I could pull off, it would be that every kid in this country had a desk full of books that they could actually read accurately, fluently, with comprehension."

Richard Allington (*Washington Post*, Oct. 24, 2006, p. A10)

"If educators don't take on the really important issues for teenagers in this era of abstinence-only education, we risk leaving sex ed to pop stars and lyricists, to define for our kids what sex is 'really like.'"

Sharon Lamb and Lyn Mikel Brown (see item #8)

1. The Role of Schools in Reducing Economic Inequality in the U.S.

"Education is the quintessential way in which people move beyond the circumstances of their birth," says Isabel Sawhill in this *Education Week* article. "Yet when you look at education under a microscope, you discover it's not as much of an opportunity-enhancing vehicle as many of us thought it was."

Sawhill is the editor of a Brookings report on education's potential for increasing intergenerational mobility, and the findings are disturbing. Historically, wealth begets wealth, but compared to other industrialized countries, the U.S. has more "stickiness" across generations; that is, relatively smaller proportions of American children who are born poor rise out of poverty, and the rich tend to be more successful at passing along their advantages to their children.

This chart from the Brookings study shows where American children (1979-2000) who were born into each income bracket (left-most column) ended up as adults (the five other columns). For example, of children who started out in the poorest bracket, 45% ended up in the same bracket, while 9 percent rose to the richest bracket. At the other extreme, of those who were born into the wealthiest bracket, 55% ended up in the same bracket, while 5% sank to the poorest bracket.

	…. ended up in the:				
Those who started in the:	**Poorest**	**Second**	**Third**	**Fourth**	**Richest**
Poorest	**45**	27	11	9	9
Second	24	**35**	20	14	7
Third	11	20	**35**	21	13
Fourth	7	11	23	**33**	25
Richest	5	6	9	25	**55**

The Brookings study says that opportunities to improve social mobility for the poor exist in preschools, K-12 schools, and higher education. The problem, says the report, is that schools often reinforce the gaps between the haves and the have-nots. For example:

- Wealthier children are more likely to attend preschool.
- Poorer children are less likely to attend high-quality preschools.
- Wealthier children are more likely to have certified and/or experienced teachers.
- Poorer children are less likely to have access to Advanced Placement courses.
- Wealthier children are less likely to get low test scores and drop out of school.

- 75% of top-tier college students grew up the highest income bracket.
- 3% of students in these colleges grew up in the lowest income bracket.

The imperative, concludes the report, is to deliver high-quality education to all students, for example, smaller class size and high-quality teaching. This will disproportionately benefit the least advantaged, who benefit more from high-quality schools.

But the *Education Week* article ends on a cautionary note. Education is "the best escalator we've got," says Harvard professor Christopher Jencks, but "How on earth would you imagine getting the best teachers to the most disadvantaged kids? I don't know how far down that road we can get before there would be a revolt in the upper classes."

"Rags to Riches in U.S. Largely a Myth, Scholars Write" by Debra Viadero in *Education Week*, October 25, 2006 (Vol. 26, #9, p. 8). The full report, "Opportunity in America: The Role of Education", is at http://www.brookings.edu/es/research/projects/foc/20060913foc.pdf.

2. Areas Where Principals Can Make the Most Difference

In this *Educational Leadership* column, author/consultant Doug Reeves acknowledges that there are some areas where school leaders don't have much control, for example, the skills that kindergarteners bring to school, or the community's tax base. But rather than spending time worrying about these things, he urges principals to focus on the things they *can* directly influence, including:

• *Teacher assignments* – All too often, says Reeves, "the least-experienced and least-qualified teachers are assigned to the classes with the most complex and challenging student needs, whereas the teachers with the most experience and highest qualifications teach the most motivated and self-directed students." He tells what happened when a group of senior teacher-leaders in the Whittier Union High School District in California agreed to take on the challenge of teaching struggling math students: the percentage of students who passed the state math exam rose from 37 percent in 2001 to 79 percent in 2006. This volunteerism is an unusual event, and not all principals have the contractual power to make involuntary teacher assignments, but Reeves suggests that principals can use incentives to persuade more experienced teachers to take on more challenging assignments – by reducing class size in the toughest classes, or example, or offering more planning time, professional development opportunities, and autonomy to teachers who do the right thing.

• *Professional development* – "Unfortunately," says Reeves, "some schools are still influenced by vendors who cram every available second of professional development time with mind-numbing workshops." Far better to seize control of PD time and focus on a few things:

- What to teach
- How to teach it
- How to meet the needs of individual students
- How to build internal capacity.

Ideally, the leadership for professional development should come from the faculty itself, with most PD taking place in classrooms in the context of authentic learning. Reeves cites the experience of Oceanview Elementary School in Norfolk, Virginia, where grade-level teacher

leaders run meetings that include coaching, model lessons, and analyzing interim assessment data. In 2001, 53 percent of the school's students scored proficient and above in reading; by 2006, more than 90 percent of students met that standard.

• *Collaboration* – "Imagine a football game in which each referee had a different opinion about the shape of the ball, the dimensions of the field, and the height of the goal posts," says Reeves. Chaos and unhappy fans. Yet in many schools and districts, educators aren't on the same page in a number of important respects, which has a marked effect on teaching and learning. "After all," writes Reeves, "if the adults cannot agree on what proficient means, then how are students supposed to figure it out?" He urges principals to structure time for real collegiality – not just friendly coffee-and-bagels congeniality – to hammer out some of these issues. He cites the experience of the Bristol, Connecticut schools where traditional faculty meetings have given way to teachers and administrators collaboratively scoring student work, discussing disagreements, improving their scoring guides, and clarifying assignments.

• *Time* – Reeves is an advocate of devoting significant amounts of instructional time to literacy, which means less-frequent teaching of science and social studies – and more integration of content into literacy lessons.

• *Meetings* – "Principals and superintendents sometimes waste hundreds of person-hours reading announcements and tolerating political agendas," says Reeves. Instead, he urges leaders to deal with administrative announcements and routine matters in e-mails and memos and focus meetings on student learning, creative teaching strategies, collaborative scoring, and the development of engaging assessments.

"Leadership Leverage" by Douglas Reeves in *Educational Leadership*, October 2006 (Vol. 64, #2, p. 86-87)
http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.MAXIMIZE/menuitem.459dee008f99653fb85516f762108a0c/?javax.portlet.tpst=d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_ws_MX&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_journaltypeheaderimage=%2FASCD%2Fimages%2Fmultifiles%2Fpublications%2Felmast.gif&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_viewID=article_view&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_journalmoid=2649f3563ba0e010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_articlemoid=455af3563ba0e010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.prp_d5b9c0fa1a493266805516f762108a0c_journalTypePersonalization=ASCD_EL&javax.portlet.begCacheTok=token&javax.portlet.endCacheTok=token

3. Effective Writing Instruction in Middle and High Schools

This *Education Week* article reports on a new meta-analysis of quantitative studies on the teaching of writing in American middle and high schools. The report, written by Steve Graham of Vanderbilt and Dolores Perin of Teachers College and issued by the Alliance for Excellent Education, declares, "Writing well is not just an option for young people – it is a necessity. Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy."

The report identifies eleven elements that are effective in helping middle- and high-school students become better writers and use writing as a tool for learning:

• *Writing strategies* – Teaching students strategies for planning, revising, and editing their compositions.

• *Summarization* – Explicitly and systematically teaching students how to capture the big ideas of texts.

• *Collaborative writing* – Getting students working in teams to plan, draft, revise, and edit their compositions.

• *Specific product goals* – Helping students set specific, reachable goals for writing tasks they must complete.

• *Word processing* – Using computers and word processors as instructional supports for writing assignments.

• *Sentence combining* – Teaching students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences.

• *Prewriting* – Helping students generate and organize ideas for their compositions.

• *Inquiry* – Teaching students to analyze data and marshal ideas and content for a particular writing task.

• *Process writing* – Interweaving a number of instructional activities in a workshop environment that stresses extended compositions, writing for authentic audiences, personalized instruction, and cycles of writing.

• *Study of exemplars* – Getting students to read, analyze, and emulate models of good writing.

• *Writing for content learning* – Using writing as a tool for learning math, science, history, and other content material.

"Need Cited for Secondary-Level Writing Instruction" by Kathleen Kennedy Manzo in *Education Week*, October 25, 2006 (Vol. 26, #9, p. 5, 18). The study, entitled "Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools," is available at http://www.all4ed.org/publications/WritingNext/WritingNext.pdf

4. Students Write Better When They Know What They're Writing About

In this thoughtful *Educational Leadership* article, teacher/consultant Joanne Hawkins describes an epiphany she and a colleague had in their Vermont middle school several years ago. They had just finished a unit on African-Americans after the Civil War, and were discouraged with the quality of the papers students had written. What made it worse was that the teachers felt they had done everything right to set students up for success:

- The subject matter was interesting.
- Students were allowed to choose a topic that was challenging but not frustrating.
- Students had access to content resources at all reading levels.
- Students had been given plenty of class time for their research and writing.
- Students had clear due dates for each part of the project.
- Students had plenty of index cards, large envelopes, and rubber bands.
- Students were taught how to cite sources.
- Students looked at model papers so they knew what proficient work looked like.
- Students conferred with classmates on their first drafts.
- The teachers were available for questions.

Yet students' papers were undeniably lackluster. Even the best papers were not thoughtful, precise, or well developed. The teachers couldn't figure out what had gone wrong.

The next morning, students began to present another summative project from this unit: each student got up in front of the class and talked about a poster he or she had made about one aspect of the history of African Americans in this era. As students spoke, it was obvious that they had taken a great deal of care on their posters and had lots of information to talk about. The teachers peppered them with questions, and each student rose to the challenge and spoke knowledgeably about their subject. When students were finished, Hawkins's colleague whispered to her that it was too bad they hadn't had students do their presentations *before* they wrote the papers.

Then it hit them. "It was one of those epiphanies that come to teachers every now and then," says Hawkins, "when we stumble on an obvious truth. We had always heard the axiom that students need to write about what they know. Here we saw the corollary: Students need to know about what they write." The teachers decided to have students revise their papers, and the second drafts were dramatically better.

"[W]e have never taught quite the same way since," declares Hawkins.

In retrospect, it was obvious what was missing: when students initially wrote their papers, they didn't know enough about the subject matter. When this happens, mediocre writing is predictable. "Of course, some students figure it out," says Hawkins. "They know enough, or they read well enough, or they have enough determination (or helpful enough parents) to make coherent meaning out of a subject. Many students don't, however. They settle for partial meaning, partial understanding – the kind of writing that demonstrates they 'sort of' get it. And the students who struggle the most, who have the most limited vocabularies and the lowest reading abilities, often conclude that writing is not for them."

Since their "aha" moment, Hawkins and her colleague have developed an approach to content writing that they call Writing for Understanding, which draws on Wiggins and McTighe's Understanding by Design. There are six steps, four of which the teachers were already doing, but two of which – the third and fourth, boldfaced below – they had neglected:

• *Identify a big idea* or enduring understanding that students should demonstrate in their written product.

• *Develop a focusing question* that will enable students to approach the big idea in a specific, manageable way.

• ***Build working knowledge of the content.*** This involves three things: (a) Explicitly teaching key vocabulary in the topic area; "We cannot leave concept knowledge to chance," writes Hawkins. "Without a solid shared understanding of this vocabulary, students will not be able to express their ideas about the content of the unit;" (b) Giving students time to read extensively on their topic in books at their reading level; "All the best resource material in the world is of little help to students if they do not comprehend it," says Hawkins; and (c) Refining understanding through discussion; "Humans make meaning through sharing, discussing, exchanging, and refining experience and language," writes Hawkins. Recalling how students sharpened their understanding of their topic while presenting their posters, she says, "Students were constructing real understanding from fragmented knowledge through guided oral conversation."

• ***Help students capture the knowledge in notes so they can use it in their writing.***

"We have found that we need to be intentional about having students take notes," says Hawkins. "Sometimes their notes include pictures, but they always include primarily written language." She and her colleague explicitly teach the note-taking process at the beginning of units.

• *Help students structure their writing* so their thinking is clear.

• *Use the writing process* (draft, confer, revise) to help students produce a written product that is focused, organized, and developed to show understanding of the big idea.

"Think Before You Write" by Joanna Hawkins in *Educational Leadership*, October 2006 (Vol. 64, #2, p. 63-66), no e-link available.

5. A California High School Uses the Toulmin Model to Teach Writing

In this intriguing *Educational Leadership* article, three educators from View Park Preparatory High School in South Los Angeles describe their use of Stephen Toulmin's system for teaching writing (1958). The authors credit this approach for the dramatic gains in View Park's achievement, which include the highest 2005 test scores among African-American high school students in California.

View Park's literacy program has a single, measurable goal: by graduation, every student will be able to write a 500-word sustained argument free of mechanical error, reflecting his or her ability to reason. This emphasis on logic and argumentation reflects the school's philosophy: *the heart of good writing is good thinking*. "Other approaches often teach writing as a process or as a series of discrete skills," say the authors. "Isolated from the larger tapestry of reading and thinking, the ability to write becomes meaningless. Students may dazzle us with their word choice and sentence structure, but they often have nothing compelling to say. In contrast… we treat writing not as an end in itself but as a means to an end as students learn effective argumentation and the type of analytical reasoning necessary for college success."

To meet the school's demanding graduation target, students must master the four Toulmin elements of an effective composition:

• *Claim* – the position

• *Clarification* – qualifiers limiting the claim

• *Evidence* – support for the claim

• *Warrant* – the reasoning that connects the evidence to the claim.

All View Park teachers use this model, supplemented by three classroom practices: (a) getting students to make personal connections with what they are learning; (b) Socratic discussions in which students are pushed to justify their thinking; and (c) "essential questions" that challenge students to think and write about the deepest elements of the subject matter.

Students spend much of their ninth-grade year learning to apply the Toulmin elements. In their early compositions, which may be only a paragraph long, students label the elements as they write. Teachers have found this helps struggling writers to avoid the "I don't know where to start" syndrome.

On each writing assignment, teachers give feedback in two areas: the strength of the argument (using a rubric with the four elements) and mechanical accuracy (in terms of its effect on the argument, for example, "This is a run-on sentence. Would shorter sentences with transition words better illustrate your point?"). Teachers highlight every error, but they do so on a separate copy of the student's paper. "Students are less discouraged by marked papers replete with errors because they see that the purpose of improving mechanics is to strengthen their argument," explain the authors. View Park students learn mechanics entirely within the context of their writing assignments; the school doesn't use grammar texts or prewritten grammar exercises.

In tenth grade, students gain more facility with the Toulmin model; they start to write with more purpose and are more confident in Socratic discussions, which become more student-driven as students see weaknesses in other people's arguments and offer rebuttals. Teachers often report that their lowest-achieving students show sparks of great thinking, and by the end of tenth grade, most students can write a one-page argument following the model.

In eleventh grade, "the training wheels come off," say the authors, and students write without formally labeling the four components of their argument (although they still refer to the Toulmin elements in their notes and drafts). Compositions become increasingly sophisticated, with sub-claims, expanded clarifications, and rebuttals. Teachers keep pushing students to higher levels by posing more challenging essential questions, using texts that support multiple interpretations, and assigning longer passages as sources. The goal is for all graduates to be able to sustain an argument in response to college-level material. Here are examples of eleventh-grade assignments and essential questions:

- Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" – Does this short story assume that humankind is inherently good or inherently wicked?
- Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* – Does R. P. McMurphy serve to liberate or further imprison his fellow patients on the ward?
- Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* – As illustrated in this drama, does passion degrade or beautify the human experience?

Students are also asked to make Toulmin arguments in other subject areas, including chemistry (the primary causes of fish kills in a local river), math (can two shapes have the same area?), and history (looking at Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" to address the question of whether civil disobedience is ever justified). Why a uniform system throughout the school? "With students entering high school so far behind," argue the authors, "no teacher can single-handedly prepare them for college. Accelerated learning requires a sustained, collaborative effort in which all teachers reinforce the same set of critical-thinking skills."

"For the Sake of Argument" by Alex Hernandez, Melissa Aul Kaplan, and Robert Schwartz in *Educational Leadership*, October 2006 (Vol. 64, #2, p. 48-52), no e-link available

6. Making Optimal Use of the Six-Trait Writing Rubrics

Writing consultant Ruth Culham is known as the "trait lady" because she's been giving workshops on the six-trait writing rubric for years. The traits are:

- Ideas
- Organization
- Voice
- Word choice
- Sentence fluency
- Conventions
- (Presentation is sometimes added in the 6+1 model)

From her work in schools, Culham has identified five common myths about the well-known rubric:

• *Myth 1: The traits are a writing program.* Not so, she says. There are no scripted lessons, no scope and sequence, no packaged materials. "Use the traits to assess student writing to understand what students know and can do," she advises. "Then focus your writing lessons and activities so that students can improve their writing within the curriculum you're expected to teach… The traits tell writers what they are doing well and what they still need to work on. And they give teachers an effective instructional road map… The traits bring the writing curriculum to life. But they are *not* the curriculum."

"Use all the traits all the time," Culham advises. "Students need all the traits at every grade level every time they write… We use the traits for assessment and as a shared vocabulary to describe what good writing looks like at every age… Using the same terminology from year to year is crucial for building deep understanding. Just as math teachers continue to use the terms *addition* and *subtraction* – instead of inventing new ones at different grade levels, like *plusing* and *minusing* – so should teachers of writing consistently use the same terms."

• *Myth 2: The writing process and the traits are different things.* "Actually, they're two sides of the same coin," says Culham. "The writing traits are a fine assessment tool and a kind of language to communicate about writing. Writing workshop is a structure to encourage writers to write often and for a variety of purposes. And writing process is just that: a series of reflective stages that writers go through as they figure out what to say and how best to convey it in writing… When these three powerful ideas coexist in writing classrooms, both students and teachers win." The first five traits – ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency – are what a writer bears in mind while drafting, refining, and revising a piece for clarity. For final polishing, conventions (and presentation) come into play.

• *Myth 3: You adopt the traits program.* The traits are a model, not a program, says Culham. "A model is highly flexible; teachers can use it in a variety of ways within a writing program." Ideally, writing programs promote the writing process and are built around "books, magazines, texts, and other rich models that help students aspire to write clearly and effectively." The traits are a helpful adjunct to demystify the revision and editing process. "Use

the traits as the language of writers who are desperate to figure out how to be clearer, more powerful, and more interesting," urges Culham.

• *Myth 4: You teach the traits and the writing takes care of itself*. No, no, no! says Culham. "The traits are not a replacement for teaching… Traits won't solve all your instructional woes… They won't make students love to revise. They won't help you find time in your busy schedule to talk to students one-on-one about their writing. But they will give students the opportunity to write more, better, and more widely because they reveal much of the mystery of writing… To be sure, there is a little magic in writing. But writing is mostly difficult work. Why don't we tell students so?"

• *Myth 5: The traits are not part of writing workshop*. In fact, says Culham, the traits are the *language* of writing workshop. "Managing and coordinating the writing workshop can be a challenge," she admits. "The traits are helpful here because they provide teachers with a built-in model for ensuring that students learn the craft. They offer a common language for assessing and talking about writing, which becomes the core of writing workshop lessons and exposes the 'inside-ness' of writing – how texts are formed and how and why they work."

Culham concludes with some advice on conferencing with students. "As many writers discover – adults and student alike – often the first draft isn't patently wonderful or awful. It's usually somewhere in between, which can make clear communication a challenge as you confer with the author about the piece." Traits give you a convenient way of talking about strong points in the draft and focusing on a few areas that need work. "Don't swamp student writers with every last thing in the world they can do to improve a particular piece of writing," advises Culham. She quotes Ralph Fletcher: "Squeeze it once, and let it go."

"The Trait Lady Speaks Up" by Ruth Culham in *Educational Leadership*, October 2006 (Vol. 64, #2, p. 53-57), no e-link available. A simplified version of the original Vickie Spandel rubric can be found at http://home.mindspring.com/~lclifton1/id6.html

7. A Riposte to Fitzhugh on Non-Fiction Writing

In this letter to *Education Week*, Michigan educator Henry Maloney thanks Will Fitzhugh for advocating for more research and writing about history in American high schools (see Marshall Memo 155, #7), but says Fitzhugh's criticism of the five-paragraph essay is overdone. "The point he misses," writes Maloney, "is that the five-paragraph essay is admittedly limiting; its purpose, like that of the rockets that propel astronauts into space, is to provide developing writers with the basic organizational skills that will enable them to soar comfortably into that vast amount of white space to be filled in their future writing."

Maloney also takes Fitzhugh to task for not acknowledging that many high-school teachers *do* assign non-fiction books, including John Hersey's *Hiroshima* and Elie Wiesel's *Night*, as well as using the non-fiction book excerpts in most history and literature textbooks.

"Bibliophobia Revisited" A letter to the editor from Henry Maloney of Troy, Michigan in *Education Week*, October 25, 2006 (Vol. 26, #9, p. 41), no e-link available

8. Better Sex Education for American Teens

In this trenchant *Education Week* article, New England professors and authors Sharon Lamb and Lyn Mikel Brown bemoan the fact that many schools offer weak, "abstinence-only" sex education that is no match for the explicit, exploitative, crude depictions of sex that bombard American teenagers in the popular media. Shouldn't parents be handling this job? Lamb and Brown are skeptical: "For all their good intentions and for all kinds of legitimate reasons – time, limited media savvy, and good old anxiety – parents are inconsistent at best when it comes to talking with their children about the racy world coming at them full force."

Schools have to step up to the plate, contend the authors. Otherwise "we risk leaving sex ed to pop stars and lyricists to define for our kids what sex is 'really like' – shakin' it, jiggling it, having her, nailing her, doing her… Kids need safe spaces to talk about media depictions of sex that are degrading, cruel, and dehumanizing. They need help in learning to recognize when journalists and marketers are using them to titillate readers or consumers, and how music artists use them to make big bucks… And let's acknowledge that if we're not in this with them – talking, analyzing, educating – then probably no one is."

The problem, say Lamb and Brown, is that sexuality education is often timid and unrealistic and rarely addresses the issues that young people are wrestling with every day. "Abstinence programs may tell kids when and when not to have sex," they write, "but no one is telling them how to treat one another with respect and care… Let's ask ourselves, as educators, what kind of knowledge about sex we want children to have and when… What kind of intimate relationships would we hope for them someday, when they engage in sexual relationships?"

"Music, The Media, and Teenage Sex: Why Educators Should Step Into the Fray" by Sharon Lamb and Lyn Mikel Brown in *Education Week*, October 25, 2006 (Vol. 26, #9, p. 39-40), no e-link available

9. Short Items:

a. Art museum websites – This article in *Essential Teacher* recommends a number of museum websites and their audio guides as especially helpful for teaching English language learners. "The broad educational mandate of art institutions," says the article, "has resulted in some of the most interactive, varied, and pedagogically sound Web sites online." Here are a few recommendations:

- Art:21 – http://www.pbs.org/art21/
- Design for the Real World – http://www.studio360.org/yore/arch.real.html
- The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library – http://www.frick.org
- The Guggenheim – http://www.guggenheim.org/new_york_index.shtml
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art – http://www.metmuseum.org
- The Museum of Modern Art – http://www.moma.org
- The Whitney Museum of American Art – http://www.whitney.org

"Using Art Institute Web sites for English Teaching" by Marlene Friis in *Essential Teacher*, September 2006 (Vol. 3, #3, p. 42-43)

b. MERLOT website – *Essential Teacher* also recommends the Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT) website at http://www.merlot.org. MERLOT is a free repository of information generated by educators from around the world. It features peer-reviewed ELL materials (click on World Languages, then ESL) and a bounty of native-speaker resources in all disciplines (including biology, math, and history). For ESL and Bilingual teachers, the site is helpful for students who need practice with pronunciation, grammar, and listening or need vetted content-area materials.

"Cybersights" by Carla Meskill in *Essential Teacher*, September 2006 (Vol. 3, #3, p. 51)

c. A video game on ancient Mesopotamia – This *Education Week* article tells about a recent report from the Federation of American Scientists on the potential for video games to improve students' science learning. One example of an effective instructional game, says the report, is *Discover Babylon*, which teaches the history of ancient Mesopotamia and the origins of writing. Students can use a keyboard or a video game console to control the game's main character as he walks through Mesopotamia and learns about writing from ancient cuneiform tablets. The game, which was developed over two years with a $500,000 grant, is being used in the Fairfax County, Virginia and Baltimore schools. It can be downloaded for free at: http://www.discoverbabylon.org

"Video Games Can Improve Learning, Scientists' Report Says" by Rhea Borja in *Education Week*, October 25, 2006 (Vol. 26, #9, p. 12)

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 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 scores of 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 were 50 issues in 2004-05).

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Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD SmartBrief
Atlantic Monthly
CommonWealth Magazine
District Administration
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Update
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Jimmy Kilpatrick
Journal of Staff Development
Language Learner
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
Theory Into Practice
Times Educational Supplement