Marshall Memo 338

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
May 31, 2010

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"If you want to lift ten pounds, you can do it yourself. If you want to lift two hundred pounds, you'd better have a team."

Nancy Love, Mary Ann Haley-Speca, and Deborah Reed (see item #3)

"[A mission statement is] a long, awkward sentence that demonstrates management's inability to think clearly."

Scott Adams (quoted in #2)

"I thought, This is *crazy*, this is a *crazy* way to change people's behavior."

Hawaii judge Steven Alm (see item #1)

"Think about it. By the end of 1st grade, most struggling readers already know they're terrible at reading and they think they're the problem. And at that point they start working very hard on any number of schemes to try to hide the fact that they can't read or aren't very good at it."

Richard Allington (see item #4)

"If you want a kid to remain illiterate and ultimately end up in special ed., send him out to work with someone who lacks expertise in teaching reading."

Richard Allington (*ibid*.)

"Too often, no one gets worse or less instruction in reading than the kids who need it most."

Richard Allington (*ibid*.)

1. The Power of Swift, Predictable, Moderate Consequences

In this *New York Times Magazine* article with unexpected implications for K-12 schools, George Washington University law professor Jeffrey Rosen describes the epiphany that came to Steven Alm, a state trial judge in Hawaii. In 2004, Alm was seeing a constant stream of offenders who had violated their probation or tested positive for drugs. Probation officers usually overlooked the first 5-10 violations but then got fed up and brought the scofflaws before the judge for serious jail time. "I thought, This is *crazy*, this is a *crazy* way to change people's behavior," said Alm, and decided to try a middle ground between letting probation violations slide and sending offenders off for long jail terms.

Alm called in his probation violators and told them that he was launching a new policy: if they tested positive for drugs or missed an appointment, they would be arrested within hours, have a hearing, and if they'd indeed violated their probation, they would go directly to jail for a term proportionate to the severity of the violation – usually a few days. "I can guarantee that everyone in this courtroom wants you to succeed on probation," he told his startled audience, "but you have not been cutting it. From now on, you're going to follow all the rules of probation, and if you don't, you're going to be arrested on the spot and spend some time in jail right away." He dubbed the program HOPE: Hawaii's Opportunity Probation with Enforcement.

HOPE was extraordinarily successful. There were only three hearings in the first week, two in the second, and none in the third. The rate of positive drug tests fell by 93 percent. People around the country heard about the program and wondered why it was working. Here are the reasons:

- The threat of a mild punishment imposed immediately and reliably is a more effective deterrent than the threat of a severe punishment that is delayed and uncertain.
- People are more likely to follow the rules when they see the punishments as legitimate, fair, and consistent.
- A positive message and high expectations accompanied Alm's tough words.

"When the system isn't consistent and predictable," says Alm, "when people are punished randomly, they think, My probation officer doesn't like me, or, Someone's prejudiced against me, rather than seeing that everyone who breaks the rules is treated equally, in precisely the same way."

This approach to reducing probation and parole violations and crime, says Rosen, "includes elements that should appeal to liberals (it doesn't rely on draconian prison sentences)

and to conservatives (it stresses individual choice and moral accountability)." Because the majority of prison admissions in most states come not from new crimes but from probation and parole violations, it's estimated that extending Alm's system nationwide could reduce the prison population by 50 percent. "If you can get people to behave by threatening them credibly, you'll need less actual punishment than if you let them run wild and punish only occasionally," says Mark Kleiman, an author who has studied this issue.

Alm got the idea for HOPE from a speech by David Kennedy, who now teaches at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and is something of a guru in the field of positive deterrence. Kennedy implemented a program with the Boston Police in 1996 in which gang members were ordered by their probation and parole officers to attend face-to-face meetings with the police and given a three-part message. First, if anyone in your gang commits a murder, the entire gang will be arrested (virtually all members had outstanding warrants or violations of probation, parole, or traffic laws). Second, if you are willing to give up the street life, job training is available from social service agencies and churches. Third, members of the community are here to tell you that violence is wrong and it has to stop.

The program was highly effective: within two years, youth violence in Boston fell by two-thirds and the murder rate was cut in half. Why? Rosen believes it was because gang members knew exactly what to expect, were certain it would happen (the police knew where they lived), were offered a way out of the criminal life, and saw the program as fair and legitimate. Also, group consequences for the misdeeds of individuals was an effective variation on classic deterrence theory, which focuses on punishment for individuals. Operation Ceasefire was a way of enlisting the "community's moral voice" and deterring the most dangerous gang members by persuading their friends and neighbors to keep them within the law. By contrast, draconian individual prison sentences that were imposed in many U.S. cities in the 1980s and 1990s had the effect of delegitimizing the system and making prison terms seem like badges of honor rather than something to be ashamed of.

After the success of Operation Ceasefire, Kennedy worked with the police in High Point, North Carolina to try to curb its rampant drug trade. First, Kennedy helped the police come to terms with two ugly beliefs: many members of the community believed the police were part of a racist conspiracy to lock up black offenders while ignoring white drug dealers – that the police were almost as bad as the crooks; meanwhile, many police officers viewed the black community as corrupt and uncaring about the violence that was destroying it and had given up on ever winning the drug war.

Having swallowed these bitter pills, the police followed Kennedy's lead and identified 16 active drug dealers, arrested four of them, and prepared warrants for the other 12 that could be signed whenever the police chose. Next they called those 12 dealers to a meeting, asking them to bring along their mothers, grandmothers, or other community "influentials", and delivered the following message: "You could be in jail tonight. We don't want to do that, we want to help you succeed, but you are out of the drug business." The mothers and grandmothers, impressed by the decision not to immediately arrest the dealers, cheered on the police. In subsequent meetings, the "influentials" shouted down naysayers, including those

who said the crack epidemic had been created by the C.I.A. to oppress black people. The drug market in the area dried up.

Rosen describes another success story from the West Side of Chicago, in which police officers called in parolees who had committed violent or gun-related crimes and, sitting around tables in public libraries or schools, delivered the same three-part message that had been used in Boston's Operation Ceasefire. "All these strategies," says Yale law professor Tracey Meares, "are a way of signaling to groups of people that government agents view them with dignity, neutrality and trust, which is the best way of convincing them that the government has the right to hold them accountable for their behavior."

[How does this article apply to K-12 schools? First, it affirms the wisdom of handling disciplinary infractions with firmness, immediacy, and certainty – "sweating the small stuff" as some successful schools put it. Second, it cautions educators about "zero tolerance" and harsh punishments, suggesting that moderate consequences may be more effective if they are handled right. Third, it invites us to take an honest look at attitudes about schools and the community that may have developed on both sides of the fence – and to overcome them with honest talk that establishes the legitimacy of schools with our toughest customers with respect to following the rules and the legitimacy of high standards, tests, and graduation requirements. Fourth, it suggests getting mothers and other community members to speak up in support of the goals of education. And finally, it reinforces the importance of delivering positive messages, even when we are frustrated and discouraged, about our belief in students' futures and the huge potential of schools to change lives. K.M.]

"Prisoners of Parole: Could Keeping Convicts from Violating Probation of their Terms of Release Be the Answer to Prison Overcrowding?" by Jeffrey Rosen in *The New York Times Magazine*, Jan. 10, 2010 (p. 37-39) http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/magazine/10prisons-t.html?scp=1&sq=Prisoners%20of%20Parole%20by%20Jeffrey%20Rosen&st=cse

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2. Eleven "Better Practices" for Getting Results

In this helpful IBM Center for the Business of Government monograph, Harvard Kennedy School lecturer Robert Behn presents a set of "better practices", which apply seamlessly to K-12 school leadership. The practices answer three questions:

What would it mean to do a better job?

• *Articulate the mission*. The danger is that the mission statement is "a long, awkward sentence that demonstrates management's inability to think clearly" (Scott Adams) – or is not known and acted on by the troops. This is why the leadership team needs to proclaim, clearly and frequently, what the organization is trying to accomplish so that everyone understands the big picture.

• *Identify the most important performance deficit*. Leadership needs to zero in on a key problem that is getting in the way of achieving the mission. It might be in the area of people, strategies, materials, or fuzziness on the overall direction. "Every organization – no matter whether public or private, no matter how well it is performing – has multiple performance

deficits," says Behn. "It has a variety of things that, if it did them better, would enhance its output, and thus the outcomes to which it contributes. Someone has to choose. This is a leadership requirement."

• *Establish a specific performance target*. Specify what new level of success the organization needs to achieve, and by what date – for example, improving the percent of students achieving Proficient or Advanced in math from 65 to 85 percent in two years. "Whether the targets are allocated among teams or individuals," says Behn, "…everyone in the organization must be part of a personal or collective unit with responsibility for achieving a specified target."

• *Clarify the theoretical link between target and mission*. Define the mental model that explains how meeting the target will help accomplish the mission. Doing this is vital to getting people mobilized for effective action and keeping them on track.

<u>How can we mobilize our people?</u>

• *Monitor and report progress frequently, personally, and publicly*. Publish the data so that every team knows that you know (and that everyone else knows) how well every team is doing. This spurs what Behn calls "friendly competition" or competition against a goal, which is different from win-lose athletic competition in that everyone can be a winner and everyone wins if the organization wins.

• *Build operational capacity*. Provide teams with what they need to achieve their targets – the money, resources, people, training, technology, tactics and strategies, etc.

• *Take advantage of small wins to reward success and ratchet up performance*. "Create performance targets that people can hit," says Behn. "Get them hooked on success." Break down long-term targets into quarterly mini-targets (for example), say "thank you" frequently, and find lots of reasons to dramatize that you recognize and appreciate what teams have accomplished.

• *Create "esteem opportunities."* When lower-level Maslow needs have been met, it's important that people have opportunities to earn a sense of accomplishment and gain both self-esteem and the esteem of their peers. This can come from being publicly listed among the teams that met their goals, being asked to share successful practices – or just being thanked.

<u>How must we change to do even better?</u>

• *Check for distortions and mission accomplishment*. "The leaders need to check carefully to be sure that the agency has, by achieving its performance target, indeed helped further its true purpose," says Behn. "…The target could have encouraged perverse behavior." Some organizations, for example, inadvertently encourage "honest cheating… focusing strictly on achieving the target while ignoring the mission." In schools, this would be narrow test preparation that leaves students unprepared to be successful in the next grade level or in college. Leaders need to constantly check that people are achieving their targets in a way that furthers the mission – not in a way that fails to help or actually undermines this effort.

• *Analyze a large number and a wide variety of indicators*. Leaders need to look at many forms of data – both quantitative and qualitative – to learn how the organization can improve – and why it's doing well in areas of effectiveness.

• *Adjust mission, target, theory, monitoring, reporting, operational capacity, rewards, esteem opportunities, and/or analysis*. Act on what's learned, making the modifications necessary to ratchet up performance another notch.

"Performance Leadership: 11 Better Practices That Can Ratchet Up Performance" (Second Edition) by Robert Behn in the *Managing for Performance and Results Series*, IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2006, no e-link available; Behn can be reached at redsox@ksg.harvard.edu.

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3. Getting the Most from Teacher Teams

"If you want to lift ten pounds, you can do it yourself," say Massachusetts consultants Nancy Love, Mary Ann Haley-Speca, and Deborah Reed in this article in *Perspectives*. "If you want to lift two hundred pounds, you'd better have a team. Bringing each and every student in our schools to high levels of achievement is like lifting a very heavy weight." The teams the authors have in mind are grade-level teams at the elementary level and subject-area teams in middle and high schools (e.g., seventh-grade math, physics) – teachers who teach the same content to different students. High-functioning teams that get results, say Love, Haley-Speca, and Reed, put four essentials into practice, which spell T.E.A.M.:

• *Take time to build the foundation* – It's essential for teams to put basic understandings in place and regularly revisit them, including:

- A shared understanding of purpose, roles, responsibilities, and protocols;
- Holding regular meetings, ideally at least 45 minutes a week;
- Agreement about student learning goals, values, standards, and collaborative norms;
- A commitment to strengthening cultural proficiency;
- Developing collaborative inquiry knowledge and skills.

Teams that act on and monitor these are less likely to blame students and their backgrounds for achievement gaps and more likely to do the serious work necessary to get results.

• *Engage in data-driven dialogue* – This means giving common interim assessments (e.g., math problems of the week, quarterly writing prompts, reading responses, science journals) and analyzing them together following these steps:

- Predicting how students will do before looking at the data;
- Displaying student achievement results in graphs and charts that compare new data with previous assessments;
- Looking at the results without assumptions and making comments and observations;
- Generating possible explanations, inferences, questions, and implications for reteaching.

• *Act together to improve instruction* – The team pinpoints specific teaching strategies of targeted concepts and skills and decides on the most effective follow-up, including:

- Reteaching in a different way;
- Engaging students in a different way;
- Aligning reteaching to the essence of the error or confusion;

- Challenging students with more complex tasks;
- Helping struggling students through tutoring before, during, or after school.

• *Monitor implementation and results* – The team sees how various follow-ups work with students through classroom observation and subsequent assessments.

Love, Haley-Speca, and Reed believe that teacher teams work most effectively when they are supported and coordinated by their principal and a data coach (while still running their own meetings), are linked to other teams in their school through a schoolwide data team that meets regularly, and share insights and ideas with other schools through a district data team that their principal attends.

"The Skillful Data Team: Four Essentials for Improving Teaching and Learning" by Nancy Love, Mary Ann Haley-Speca, and Deborah Reed in *Perspectives*, Spring 2010, no e-link available

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4. Richard Allington on Helping Struggling Readers Succeed

In this *Education Week Teacher PD Sourcebook* interview, editor Anthony Rebora draws out literacy guru Richard Allington on Response to Intervention (RTI) and other topics. Some highlights:

• Allington calls RTI our "last, best hope" for bringing virtually all students up to proficiency in reading. Why? Because RTI allows a district to take "up to 15 percent of our current special education allocation and use that money instead to *prevent* the development of learning disabilities or reading disabilities," he says. "And do it in a way that, while there's no mention of specific intervention tiers, incorporates increasingly expert and increasingly intensive instruction. It's just telling schools to stop using money in ways that haven't worked over the past half-century and start investing at least some of that money in interventions that are designed to actually solve kids' reading problems."

• Allington believes the most important RTI tier is the first one – effective regular classroom instruction for all students. He also believes in starting young. "RTI works best if it's started in kindergarten and 1st grade," he says. "We know how to solve those problems."

• However, Allington believes that many kindergarten and first-grade teachers are not as effective as they need to be. The good news is that there are almost always highly effective teachers in the same building, and principals can put them to work mentoring and supporting their less-effective colleagues. Allington cites one study that documented dramatic improvements in student achievement when marginal teachers were provided with this kind of support. He helped debrief some of these teachers at the end of the study and reports, "We had veteran teachers – people my age [62] – breaking down in the interview and starting to cry, saying 'Why didn't anyone ever teach us this before? Why have I been teaching for 30 years and never knew how to teach kids to read?'"

• Allington says the biggest implementation mistake with RTI is allowing unqualified paraprofessionals, parent volunteers, or special-education teachers to handle Tier 2 or 3

interventions. “If you want a kid to remain illiterate and ultimately end up in special ed,” he says, “send him out to work with someone who lacks expertise in teaching reading… The idea behind RTI was for a district to actually take some of its special education budget to fund reading specialists, but in most cases, they haven’t done that… So the amount of expert reading instruction the kids are getting under RTI is typically very slight.” Allington frequently asks superintendents if they would hire a paraprofessional as assistant superintendent for finance or to teach AP chemistry. Of course not, they say. “But when you take people who are not reading experts and put them with the hardest kids to teach and then blame the kids when they don’t make progress,” he says, “you penalize the children for the rest of their lives because of your decision.”

• Allington is critical of packaged reading programs, which he says have no scientific validity and can’t possibly meet the wide range of instructional needs in any given classroom. “What kids need are teachers who know how to teach and have multiple ways of addressing their individual needs,” he says. “And the evidence that there’s a packaged program that will make a teacher more expert is slim to none.”

• Instead, says Allington, districts should invest in teacher training, and cites Reading Recovery as a first-rate program that leaves lasting expertise in teachers’ minds and practices, even if the program is discontinued.

• Allington is utterly unimpressed by digital screening and monitoring assessment of students. “It’s idiotic,” he says. “We don’t have any evidence that any computerized screening and monitoring tools are related to reading growth.” Teachers already know who their problem readers are, he says. “Call a hundred 1st grade teachers around the country and ask them, ‘Do you have any kids who are in trouble learning to read?’ They’re not going to say, ‘Gosh, I don’t know. I haven’t DIBEL’d them yet.’ Teachers know who needs help. If they don’t know, they shouldn’t be teaching… The point is we need to free teachers up from spending their time using an assessment program on kids every few weeks, or having a reading or LD specialist going around doing it. Educators need to be working with kids and teaching them rather than continuing to document that they can’t do something.”

• How much intervention is needed to rescue struggling readers? “In kindergarten, amazingly, it takes as little as 15 to 20 minutes a day, working in a one-on-one or very small group setting with a child,” says Allington. “That’s it.” In first grade, it takes 30-45 minutes a day, five days a week, for about 20 weeks. A few students still won’t be proficient, but another 20 weeks of the same treatment will reduce their numbers to only about 2 percent of the student population – and these are almost all highly mobile students or those with very severe cognitive disabilities. The problem is that almost no schools are this systematic about early intervention – even though they would save huge amounts of money if they were.

• How much can be done with older students who are behind in reading? With a fourth grader who is reading at the second-grade level, says Allington, the child would need reading instruction virtually all day. Science and social studies textbooks need to be at the second-grade level (with fourth-grade content). “If we did that in addition to high-quality classroom reading instruction and then provided 45 minutes every day after school of one-on-one expert

instruction, and maybe did something in the summer that wasn't as useless as what we usually see going on in summer school, we might be able to catch him up," he says. That's realistic, and it's not expensive compared to "what we're doing now to keep the child essentially illiterate… Too often, no one gets worse or less instruction in reading than the kids who need it most."

• Allington believes that many special education teachers know less about literacy than the regular-education teachers who turn to them for help, and in addition don't have high enough expectations for their students. This is why, in most cases, he recommends continuing Tier 2 RTI interventions versus moving to special education classification. He worries about RTI being run by special educators in some districts, contending that RTI is not intrinsically a special ed program. "It's about strengthening regular classroom instruction and general education interventions for students so they can stay out of special ed," he says. "But I'm afraid some schools just see it as a way to find more LD kids faster."

• Allington closes with a plug for Peter Johnston's book, *Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Children's Learning* (Stenhouse, 2004), which describes how teachers' words affect children's sense of agency and identity. "Think about it," says Allington. "By the end of 1st grade, most struggling readers already know they're terrible at reading and they think they're the problem. And at that point they start working very hard on any number of schemes to try to hide the fact that they can't read or aren't very good at it. And not surprisingly, they don't do much reading independently. This is a cycle that teachers need to and can break. In the end it's us, educators, who really matter in the case of struggling readers. We have to understand that and ask the questions about what we are doing or not doing, rather than asking what is wrong with the child."

"Responding to RTI" An Interview with Richard Allington by Anthony Rebora in *Education Week Teacher PD Sourcebook*, Spring/Summer 2010

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5. How Should Teachers Measure Students' Vocabulary Knowledge?

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, literacy professors Katherine Dougherty Stahl and Marco Bravo focus on teaching technical content-area vocabulary and accurately assessing students' word knowledge. Stahl and Bravo believe that multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and matching vocabulary tests typically given at the end of curriculum units are "shallow", and they are also critical of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III) and large-scale standardized tests. Vocabulary is multidimensional, incremental, context-dependent, and develops across a lifetime, they say. So how can teachers get a handle on how well students' vocabularies are developing?

This begs the question of what it means to know a word. Stahl and Marco say that knowledge grows with each additional encounter with a word. Here is one scale (Dale, 1965):

- Stage 1 – Never having seen the word before;
- Stage 2 – Knowing there is such a word, but not knowing what it means;
- Stage 3 – Having context-bound and vague knowledge of the word's meaning;

- Stage 4 – Knowing the word well and remembering it.

A number of similar scales have been devised, with the top level usually including generalization (the ability to define the word), application (selecting an appropriate use), breadth (knowledge of multiple meanings), precision (being able to apply the term correctly in all situations), and availability (being able to use the word productively).

Stahl and Marco recommend that teacher teams use a step-by-step process to assess and teach vocabulary in content units:

- Identify the key vocabulary of the unit – the words that are essential for understanding the conceptual material and successfully engaging in the unit – and the words that students will be held accountable for on assessments driven by state standards (for example, in an elementary unit on insects: thorax, ponds, abdomen, swamps, feelers, legs, antenna, beetle, backyard, bugs, ant, hatch, cockroach, wing, spider, hatch).
- Pretest the words before the unit begins.
- Post the words on a content-area word wall.
- Systematically teach the words.
- Make sure the teacher and students use the words multiple times throughout the unit.
- Post-test the words at the end of the unit.

Stahl and Marco suggest three types of classroom vocabulary tests to measure students' vocabulary learning:

• *Vocabulary Knowledge Scale* (created by Wesche and Paribakht, 1996) – This assessment does not assess higher-level knowledge. Students self-report on how far up this scale they can go with each word:

1. I don't remember having seen this word before. (1 point)
2. I have seen this word before, but I don't think I know what it means. (2 points)
3. I have seen this word before, and I think it means _____. (synonym or translation, 3 points)
4. I know this word. It means _____. (synonym or translation, 4 points)
5. I can use this word in a sentence: _____. (If you do this section, please also do category 4: 5 points)

An incorrect response at level 3 yields a score of 2 points even if the student attempted 4 and 5 unsuccessfully. Students are usually quite accurate in their self-assessment of their word knowledge.

• *Vocabulary Recognition Task* – The teacher writes a list of 25 words, 18 of which are related to the content of a particular curriculum unit (for example, insects) and 7 are unrelated distracters. Students are asked to circle the words they are able to read that are related to the unit. Students are scored on their correct "hits" versus "false alarms." Studies showed that this type of assessment more accurately measured students' word knowledge than traditional multiple-choice tests. In addition, it gives teachers useful feedback on how successfully they have conveyed content knowledge.

• *Vocabulary Assessment Magazine* – Students read brief passages followed by open-ended questions and then are asked to draw and label two different aspects of the content they

have been learning. Studies showed that this assessment accurately measured students' vocabulary gains after a unit of instruction.

"Contemporary Classroom Vocabulary Assessment for Content Areas" by Katherine Dougherty Stahl and Marco Bravo in *The Reading Teacher*, April 2010 (Vol. 63, #7, p. 566-578), no e-link available; the authors are at kay.stahl@nyu.edu and mbravo@scu.edu.

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6. How to Make Middle-School Science Instruction Stick

In this article in *Better Evidence-Based Education*, researcher Christopher Harris and University of Arizona professor Ronald Marx describe Project-Based Science, an inquiry-based approach designed to improve motivation and learning. The idea is for students to investigate a "driving question" that frames important science content, connects to their interests and curiosity, and guides them through several weeks of collaborative investigations, weighing of evidence, writing explanations, and discussing and presenting their findings. Harris and Marx highlight five key practices for this kind of teaching:

• *Make it relevant*. Students are more likely to learn science content if it is linked to need-to-know situations – for example, learning about force and motion by exploring the difference that wearing a helmet makes when a bicycle rider or skateboarder wipes out.

• *Activate prior knowledge*. People use what they already know to make sense of new information – but what if prior knowledge is incomplete or inaccurate? "Research tells us that these fledgling ideas can actually serve as productive starting points for building more sophisticated science understandings," say Harris and Marx.

• *Support reasoning and explanation*. "Scientists advance in their understanding not simply by describing the natural world, but by explaining it," say Harris and Marx. "…Similarly, students can advance in their own understanding by weighing evidence, interpreting results, evaluating claims, and sharing and critiquing explanations of their own and others."

• *Focus on learning goals*. It's easy for students to lose sight of the central point of a curriculum unit when they are immersed in a series of activities over several days or weeks. That's why it's important for teachers to clearly state the main learning goals and essential questions and organize instruction around them. "Without some sense of the learning goals," say the authors, "students run the risk of missing relevant features of the phenomena under study, overlooking key science ideas, or picking up disconnected pieces of information."

• *Attend to student thinking*. "Teachers need to have a rich, flexible grasp of the science ideas under study as well as an understanding of how to move students forward in their thinking," say Harris and Marx. The best approach is to get students to make their thinking visible – getting them talking about their observations, hypotheses, and findings, listening carefully to gauge their level of understanding, and prompting when necessary to move students toward a deep understanding of the concepts.

"Teaching Practices That Matter in Middle-Grades Science" by Christopher Harris and Ronald Marx in *Better Evidence-Based Education*, Spring 2010 (Vol. 2, #3, p. 4-5), no e-link available

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7. Questions for States Adopting the Common Core Standards

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Chester Finn challenges states and districts to ask themselves four questions as they look at the final version of the Common Core Standards in English language arts and Math that will be released on June 2nd:

• How do the national standards compare to those we have been using?

• Do we have the political, organizational, and financial capacity to infuse new and different standards throughout our K-12 system?

• If the new standards are more demanding than those we're currently using, do we have the intestinal fortitude to deal with a likely consequence: fewer students scoring at the Proficient or Advanced level and more students not being promoted or graduating?

• Will we have the resolve and the means to raise standards in ELA and Math without shortchanging science, social studies, the arts, civics, health, and foreign languages?

"States will do their kids no favor if they mess up this decision or just go through the motions of embracing new standards, maybe only long enough to qualify for Race to the Top funding," says Finn. "In short order, everyone in those jurisdictions will recognize that this was a false messiah – and educators and voters alike will grow even more cynical about standards-based education reform."

"Rushing to Judgment?" by Chester Finn, Jr. in *The Education Gadfly*, May 27, 2010 (Vol. 10, #20) http://www.edexcellence.net/gadfly/index.cfm?issue=573

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8. Four Ways the Common Core Standards Can Produce Results

Following up on Chester Finn's article in the same *Education Gadfly*, Kathleen Porter-Magee suggests these ways to make the new Common Core Standards effective vehicles for high student achievement:

• *Data-driven instruction* – "Standards drive student achievement only if they are used every day to drive planning and instruction," she says. Teachers should use the standards as the core of unit and lesson plans, frequently check for understanding, and use the feedback to drive whole-class and small-group instruction and help struggling students.

• *Ownership of results* – "Instructors who successfully drive student achievement in their classrooms are those who 'own' their students' outcomes," says Porter-Magee. "They actually believe not only that it is their responsibility to ensure students master essential content, but also that it is within their power to guide students towards life-altering achievement gains."

• *Accountability* – It's important that everyone in the school recognizes that measurable student learning is the bottom line.

• *Flexibility* – "The most powerful way to ensure that ownership of student achievement results is held at the school level – rather than the district or state level – is to pair accountability with flexibility," says Porter-Magee. This means giving principals authority over budget and staffing and giving teachers flexibility in the methods and materials they use – as long as they get results.

"Moving Beyond Adoption" by Kathleen Porter-Magee in *The Education Gadfly*, May 27, 2010 (Vol. 10, #20) http://www.edexcellence.net/gadfly/index.cfm?issue=573

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9. Short Item:

New teacher resources website – This website has a voluminous collection of resources for new teachers: http://www.guidetoonlineschools.com/online-teaching/new-teachers. Many thanks to Nathan Grimm of the SR Education Group for the suggestion.

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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).

Subscriptions:

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Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Catalyst Chicago
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
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
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools