Marshall Memo 394

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
July 11, 2011

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Simply handing out a rubric does not guarantee much of anything."
Heidi Andrade (see item #4)

"If ELLs are going to succeed in high school, all teachers need to integrate language and literacy into their subject teaching."
Margarita Calderon in "Teaching Writing to ELLs in High Schools" in *Better: Evidence-Based Education*, Winter 2011 (Vol. 3, #2, p. 8)
http://betterevidence.org/us-edition/issue-6/

"Like their socioeconomic peers at ballgames, students in education skyboxes are buffered from realities most students face by their well-appointed educational accommodations… Meanwhile, the vast majority of students sit in the equivalent of bleacher seats, or they are stuck behind a pillar, squinting to see their teachers in overcrowded classrooms."
Richard Riley, former U.S. Secretary of Education, in *Education Week*, June 24, 2011
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/06/24/36riley.h30.html

"…[T]he National Assessment of Educational Progress recently rated history as the subject at which students are least proficient. This wouldn't matter if history were just some recreational stroll down memory lane. But it isn't. In the fiery debates of Americans long dead can be discerned the lineaments of the same core issues that divide us today."
Simon Schama in "The Founding Fathers, Unzipped" in *Newsweek*, July 4, 2011
http://www.newsweek.com/2011/06/26/the-founding-fathers-were-flawed.html

1. What Purposes Do Colleges Serve?

In this provocative *New Yorker* article, Louis Menand tackles the question of what a college education is for – and whether colleges add value. Menand draws on his own experience – he's taught English at an Ivy League university and a 16,000-student public university – and also comments on two recent books about post-secondary education.

A student in one of Menand's public-university classes once asked, "Why did we have to buy this book?" The question got Menand thinking about three possible theories of college education:

• *Theory 1: Meritocratic – College is a four-year intelligence test*. "Society needs a mechanism for sorting out its more intelligent members from its less intelligent ones," he explains, "just as a track team needs a mechanism (such as a stopwatch) for sorting out the faster athletes from the slower ones." But, he continues, "There is no intellectual equivalent of the hundred-yard dash. An intelligent person is open-minded, an outside-the-box thinker, an effective communicator, is prudent, self-critical, consistent, and so on. These are not qualities readily subject to measurement." So a college degree serves as a merit badge. "Students have to demonstrate intellectual ability over time and across a range of subjects," says Menand. "If they're sloppy or inflexible or obnoxious – no matter how smart they might be in the I.Q. sense – those negatives will get picked up in their grades." At the end of the process, professional schools and employers can look at a graduate's GPA and trust that he or she is intellectually able and has productive potential. Under Theory 1, the response to the student who asked why he had to buy a book would be, "You are reading these books because you're in college, and these are the kinds of books that people in college read."

• *Theory 2: Democratic – College is a social leveler*. According to this theory, people tend to learn only the narrow skills they need for a successful career. "They will have no incentive to acquire the knowledge and skills important for life as an informed citizen, or as a reflective and culturally literate human being," explains Menand. "College exposes future citizens to material that enlightens and empowers them, whatever careers they end up choosing." In addition, college socializes a diverse population into mainstream norms of reason and taste, producing graduates who are more or less on the same page. Under Theory 2, the response to the student's question about buying the book would be, "You're reading these books because they teach you things about the world and yourself that, if you did not learn them in college, you are unlikely to learn anywhere else."

If you like Theory 1, says Menand, it doesn't matter what kids study in college, or what material is in their courses, as long as the work is rigorous enough for the sorting mechanism to operate. If you like Theory 2, it's what students *learn* that matters: "There is stuff that every adult ought to know, and college is the best delivery system for getting that into people's heads."

The problem since 1945, says Menand, is that Americans have been asking higher education to be both democratic *and* meritocratic. We want higher education to be available to all Americans, *and* we want college students to earn their grades.

Before 1945, things were different, with elite colleges reproducing social and economic privilege. Between 1906 and 1932, 405 boys from Groton applied to Harvard and 402 were accepted. In 1932, Yale accepted 959 out of 1,330 applicants, one-third of them sons of Yale alumni. But after World War II, there were two developments. First, the SAT and ACT gradually replaced legacy status as gatekeepers in elite colleges, which became much more selective. Last year, Harvard admitted a mere six percent of applicants.

Second, public universities expanded by leaps and bounds. Today, there are 15 million students in public institutions compared with 6 million in private. About 68 percent of high-school graduates go to college, compared to 49 percent in 1980, and six percent of the American population is in college and graduate school, compared to three percent in Great Britain and France. "There is now a seat for virtually anyone with a high-school diploma who wants to attend college," says Menand. And college pays off: in 2008, an average high-school graduate made $31,283 while a college graduate made $58,613.

So it would appear that American higher education is succeeding at both its meritocratic and its democratic functions. But are college students actually *learning* anything? Menand examines two recent books on the subject. In *Academically Adrift* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), sociologists Richard Arum and Josipa Roska say that colleges are failing to improve their students' critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving, and communication skills. They gave the Collegiate Learning Assessment to a sample of students and found distressingly little value-added during the college years. They conclude that not everyone is capable of learning at the college level, and they say that those who do attend college should be rigorously assessed on key skills before they graduate.

Although Arum and Roska's study has been criticized, Menand thinks it raises some disturbing points. Too many students regard college as primarily a social experience. In 1961, college students reported spending about 25 hours a week studying; today it's 12-13 hours, with a third of students saying they study less than five hours a week. College professors are assigning less reading and writing and concentrating more on being entertaining, perhaps because they are evaluated by students and don't want negative ratings.

• *Theory 3: Vocational education* – Menand says one of the most significant developments in American higher education is the growth of business and other vocationally oriented college majors. In fact, 60 percent of students are not majoring in liberal arts: 22 percent major in business, 10 percent in education, and 7 percent in health professions. Menand says that Theory 1 and Theory 2 are not how these students see post-secondary education: "For

them, college is basically a supplier of vocational preparation and a credentialing service." High school provides general education, and college gives more specialized training for a specific career in an economy that is increasingly high-tech and specialized. "When Barack Obama and Arne Duncan talk about how higher education is the key to the future of the American economy," says Menand, "this is the sector they have in mind. They are not talking about the liberal arts."

But even vocationally-oriented students have to take courses in English composition and literature, philosophy, history, political science, chemistry, mathematics, and economics. This leads Menand to a second book, *In the Basement of the Ivory Tower* (Viking, 2011). Professor X, the pseudonymous author who teaches English at a four-year university and a community college, says the academic motivation of students who are in college to become nurses and state troopers (for example) is utilitarian. These students want one thing: a passing grade from Professor X.

The problem, he says, is that most of his students aren't qualified to attend college and are unteachable in his subject area. Channeling Professor X, Menand writes, "Why should you have to pass a college-level literature class if you want to be a state trooper? To show that you can tough it out with Henry James?" Professor X thinks the "college for everyone" mantra is nonsense – and socially inefficient to boot. Sixty percent of college students need to take remedial classes, and almost half of college students never graduate. He's on a mini-crusade to allow vocationally oriented students to skip college and go straight into career training. This, says Menand, is the tracking approach used in Britain, France, and Germany. As early as middle school, a decision is made about who is on the academic track and who is on the vocational track.

This has not been the American way. For fifty years, our universities have embraced one new population after another:

- World War II veterans who entered under the GI Bill – 2.2 million of them;
- Baby boomers in the 1960s, doubling college enrollment;
- Coeducation, with almost all colleges admitting women;
- Students of color, admitted in large numbers starting in the 1980s and 90s.

"These students did not regard college as a finishing school or a ticket punch," says Menand. "There was much more at stake for them than there had been for the Groton grads of an earlier day. (How many hours do you think *they* put in doing homework?) College was a gate through which, once, only the favored could pass. Suddenly, the door was open: to vets; to children of Depression-era parents who could not afford college; to women, who had been excluded from many of the top schools; to nonwhites, who had been segregated or under-represented; to the children of people who came to the United States precisely so that their children could go to college. For these groups, college was central to the experience of making it – not only financially but socially and personally. College was *supposed* to be hard. Its difficulty was a token of its transformational powers."

The problem now, concludes Menand, is that our higher-education system has become too big and too heterogeneous to work for everyone. "The system appears to be drawing in

large numbers of people who have no firm career goals but failing to help them acquire focus," he says.

Thinking back on the question, "Why did we have to buy this book?" Menand says it was a great question. "The student who asked it was not complaining," he says. "He was trying to understand how the magic worked. I (a Theory 2 person) wonder whether students at that college are still asking it."

"Live and Learn: Why We Have College" by Louis Menand in *The New Yorker*, June 6, 2011
http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2011/06/06/110606crat_atlarge_menand
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2. Using Money and Staff More Effectively in Tight Budget Times

In this thoughtful *Peabody Journal of Education* article, Lawrence Picus of the University of Southern California and Allan Odden of the University of Wisconsin/Madison offer advice on how financially strapped U.S. school districts can reduce spending while maintaining a strong emphasis on improved student performance.

For starters, Picus and Odden say districts must have a theory of action on what makes the biggest difference. They suggest that three factors are associated with significant gains in teaching and learning:

- Time for teacher collaboration – These meetings should be during the regular school day and get teacher teams focused on curriculum and instruction.
- Instructional coaches analyzing interim assessment data with teachers – The goal should be using student learning results several times during each year to improve instruction.
- Certified teachers working with struggling students – This is the vital Tier 2 in the Response to Intervention (RTI) model, in which students are given targeted, high-quality assistance in groups of one to five.

"All three are 'costly' resources," say Picus and Odden, "but can often come about by restructuring the organization of instruction inside schools and freeing up resources for these key purposes." The authors go on to suggest eight strategies for freeing up these funds:

• *Salary freezes* – "This is not a statement that workers do not deserve to be paid what they were promised," they write, "but simply a reflection of the reality that the funding shortfall is significant and that the best strategy is for everyone to take a wage 'haircut' to recognize a financial reality that is no one's particular fault but that impacts everyone."

• *Small increases in class size* – Research shows that reducing class size has a significant impact on student results in primary grades when classes have 15 students. Otherwise, smaller classes are expensive and have marginal impact. Therefore, increasing class size by one or two students can free up significant resources without serious harm to teaching and learning.

• *Trimming electives* – Secondary-school electives are expensive (some electives cost $36,000 per student, compared to $5,000-$7,000 for algebra or biology), and in tight budget times, school leaders have to weigh their impact.

• *Modifying school schedules* – Seven-period days (with teachers teaching five periods), often adopted to accommodate more electives, are far less efficient than six-period days (usually with the same teaching load). Picus and Odden say that moving from a seven-period to a six-period day saves eight teaching positions in a 1,000-student middle school.

• *Rethinking professional development* – Some large districts spend $8,000 per teacher per year on PD, with dubious impact on core-subject teaching and learning. Picus and Odden recommend cutting down on professional development that is driven by teacher choice and focusing on PD driven by the district's teaching and learning needs, using proven strategies.

• *Reducing paraprofessionals* – The authors point to research on the limited instructional impact of paraprofessionals and suggest that resources are better spent on instructional coaches, teacher tutors, ongoing PD, and strategies that really do boost student achievement.

• *Taking advantage of technology* – Online courses are available in almost all areas, and they are cheaper than teachers. Picus and Odden suggest that motivated AP students, for example, could take online courses and derive comparable benefit.

• *Cutting teachers based on effectiveness, not seniority* – The authors believe there are now ways to judge teachers' impact on students, and say it makes much more sense to do layoffs on that basis rather than just seniority.

"Reinventing School Finance: Falling Forward" by Lawrence Picus and Allan Odden in *Peabody Journal of Education*, Summer 2011 (Vol. 86, #3, p. 291-303), http://0-www.eric.ed.gov.novacat.nova.edu/ERICWebPortal/search/recordDetails.jsp?ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=%22Hauptman+Arthur+M.%22&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=au&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&accno=EJ928260&_nfls=false

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3. Mini-Observations and Teacher Evaluation Rubrics in Tennessee

In this article in *The District Management Journal*, Hamilton County (TN) superintendent Jim Scales and human resources director Connie Atkins describe how their 42,000-student urban-suburban district (centered in Chattanooga) confronted shortcomings in their teacher supervision and evaluation process. "Like many districts around the country," they say, "too few evaluations were given, too many indicated consistently high performance, and too few resulted in real action… Evaluations were isolated from professional development and other human-resource operations, and the evaluation system only sometimes produced positive outcomes."

The turning point came during a presentation by consultant/author Kim Marshall in February 2010, in which anonymous "clicker" questions revealed deep dissatisfaction with the old process and principals practiced giving face-to-face feedback after watching a ten-minute classroom videotape. "Perhaps the biggest transformation was in understanding just how much great dialogue and feedback could take place between teacher and principal in just a few short minutes," say Scales and Atkins. Principals also realized that if they did a few brief, unannounced observations a day, they could do an astonishing number by the end of the school year.

In the next few weeks, the district decided to change its regimen of infrequent, announced "dog-and-pony-show" teacher observations, guided by five principles:

- Supervision and evaluation would be oriented toward teacher development.
- The system would focus on frequent feedback and collaboration.
- Principals and assistant principals would provide both formal and informal feedback.
- Teachers would get individualized support.
- The system would be practical and fair.

Schools were offered the chance to take part in a pilot program in which administrators would conduct ten unannounced mini-observations per teacher per year, have a three-to-five-minute face-to-face feedback conversation with each teacher within two school days, and follow up with one- or two-sentence written documentation. Of the district's 78 schools, 68 signed up for the pilot, which involved all teachers except those up for tenure. A Memorandum of Understanding with the teacher union stipulated that teachers identified as possibly ineffective after three mini-observations would go on a Performance Improvement Plan.

Hamilton County enlisted a team of teachers, union officials, and administrators to revise Marshall's end-of-year teacher evaluation rubric, and hired a recently-retired principal to coordinate the pilot program. The revised rubric became the district's common definition of teaching at four levels (Highly Effective, Effective, Improvement Necessary, and Does Not Meet Standards) and was used for summative evaluation of teachers in the pilot schools. Administrators summed up each teacher's performance in each of six domains:

- Planning and preparation for learning
- Classroom management
- Delivery of instruction
- Monitoring, assessment, and follow-up
- Family and community outreach
- Professional responsibilities

Evaluations were based on the mini-observations and glimpses of teachers during team meetings, parent conferences, and other settings. The district contracted with a Tennessee company that developed T-Eva, a laptop/iPad platform that allowed administrators to quickly record the brief narratives from mini-observations and compile rubric scores, gave teachers a chance to respond in writing, aggregated data from across the district, and reduced the amount of paperwork: http://www.educatorsoftwaresolutions.com.

How did the pilot go? Principals and assistant principals completed more than 15,000 mini-observations during the 2010-11 school year; administrators and teachers were very positive when they responded to a survey (100% of principals and 84% of teachers agreed that the verbal feedback after mini-observations was helpful in improving classroom instruction); and preliminary data indicate that student achievement improved. The district is continuing to study the results of the pilot, with particular interest in how well teachers' rubric scores correlate with student results.

"Hamilton County Department of Education: Rethinking Teacher Evaluation Through Project COACH" by Jim Scales and Connie Atkins in *The District Management Journal*, Spring 2011

(Vol. 7, p. 12-21), http://www.dmcouncil.org. Full disclosure: Kim Marshall is the editor of The Marshall Memo; his teacher evaluation rubrics and writings on mini-observations are available at http://www.marshallmemo.com/about.php.

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4. Getting Students Involved in Formative Self-Assessment

In this helpful article in *Better: Evidence-Based Education*, University of Albany professor Heidi Andrade says the research is clear: when students get feedback on their work in progress, they do better. The problem is that very few students get this kind of feedback from their overworked, spread-too-thin teachers.

"Fortunately," says Andrade, "research also shows that students themselves can be useful sources of feedback by thinking about the quality of their own work rather than relying on their teacher as the sole source of evaluative judgments." Studies have documented significant improvements in writing and mathematics when elementary and middle-school students use self-assessment well. Interestingly, grammar and spelling improved very little with self-assessment; the most robust gains came in written organization, ideas and content, voice and tone, and plot development – and mathematical problem-solving.

Drawing a distinction between formative student self-*assessment* and summative student self-*evaluation*, Andrade says the latter is unwise (students might cheat in high-stakes grading situations), but even young students are capable of formatively assessing the quality of their own work and improving it. Here are the conditions that make self-assessment productive:

- Students have been taught the value of looking at their own work.
- Students have access to clear criteria for assessing their work.
- Students have a task or performance to assess and time to revise and improve it.
- Students have direct instruction, help, and practice with self-assessment, including cues as to when self-assessment is appropriate.

Andrade suggests three steps that teachers might follow to get students self-assessing:

• *Articulate expectations*. What students need to do in the task or performance must be clear, as well as the criteria for quality work. However, says Andrade, "Simply handing out a rubric does not guarantee much of anything." Ideally, students are involved in developing the rubric or quality description.

• *Have students self-assess*. Students make a first attempt at the task or performance – an essay, for example, or a speech, word problem, lab report, fitness plan, or self-portrait – and then apply the rubric criteria to see how they are doing so far. For example, in self-assessing a piece of persuasive writing, students might underline the rubric phrase, Clearly states an opinion in blue and then underline in blue the opinions in their draft. They might then underline Sentences begin in different ways in yellow on the rubric and then circle in yellow the first words of every sentence in their draft and say the circled words aloud with an ear for repetition. If students find they aren't meeting a particular standard, they make a note to revise that aspect. This highlighting process can be completed in one class period, says Andrade.

• *Have students revise*. Students use the notes and insights from their self-assessment to revise their drafts. "This last step is crucial," says Andrade. "Students are savvy, and will not self-assess thoughtfully unless they know that their efforts can lead to opportunities to actually make improvements and possibly increase their grades."

"Promoting Learning and Achievement Through Self-Assessment" by Heidi Andrade in *Better: Evidence-Based Education*, Spring 2011 (Vol. 3, #3, p. 12-13), http://betterevidence.org/us-edition/issue-7/; Andrade can be reached at handrade@uamail.albany.edu

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5. Boundaries in High-School Counseling

In this thoughtful *ASCA School Counselor* article, University of North Carolina professor Carolyn Stone presents a high-school case study:

- Cedric is a student from a chaotic home – father not present, mother with drug-abuse issues, a frail grandmother taking care of him.
- Cedric is a talented member of the school's wrestling team, but nobody in his family has ever attended a match.
- Cedric often drops by the counselor's office after wrestling practice in the late afternoon when something is on his mind.
- If Cedric hasn't dropped in for a couple of weeks, the counselor seeks him out.
- The counselor is considering going to Cedric's next wrestling match, which is 140 miles away on a Saturday night.
- The counselor is also considering taking Cedric out to dinner after the match and driving him home.

What boundary issues are involved here? Has the counselor already crossed boundaries? What should the counselor do about the wresting match?

Stone says that when she presents this case to school counselors, about 20 percent say he should attend the match and are puzzled when others argue against doing so. But when she throws in the dinner and drive home, 100 percent of counselors say that's a boundary violation.

What's the distinction, and what guidelines should counselors use? Stone believes observing boundaries is an essential part of counseling, and says dilemmas usually crop up in three areas: Role, time, and place:

• *Role* – Stone says counselors are there to support and advocate for students, but should not try to be a friend, surrogate parent, caregiver, outside school support, or even an always-on-call counselor. "We are working with minors who are still developmentally immature, mandated to be in our settings, and are susceptible to becoming too attached to us or to misinterpret our attention as other than advocacy," she says. "In this complex role, there is also the danger of counter-transference, which is when school counselors project their own unresolved needs and conflicts onto the student …" Her advice: send Cedric a note the Friday before the wrestling match wishing him well, follow up Monday asking how it went, have the

team's efforts recognized in morning announcements, explore getting a Big Brother to mentor Cedric, and explore ways of getting his grandmother to one of his matches.

• *Time* – Stone is wary of the unscheduled late-afternoon drop-in sessions the counselor is having with Cedric. She doesn't believe the counselor should be rigid ("I cannot see you without an appointment"), but says the counselor needs to be sensitive to the risks and make an effort to find an alternative structure so that boundaries can be maintained.

• *Place* – "A long drive to a match, a dinner, and then a ride home between Cedric and his school counselor is not a benign event," says Stone. "Boundary violations do not necessarily arise from bad character… Egregious boundary violations are usually preceded by relatively minor boundary excursions. School counselors are continuously balancing the complex work of trying to show loyalty and support with developmentally immature students. This work is fraught with shades of gray and requires hyper-vigilance on the school counselor's part to avoid boundary crossings, which can lead to the slippery slope of boundary violations."

"Boundary Crossings: The Slippery Slope" by Carolyn Stone in *ASCA School Counselor*, July/August 2011 (Vol. 48, #6, p. 6-9), http://www.ascaschoolcounselor.org/article_content.asp?edition=91&section=140&article=1221; Stone can be reached at cstone@unf.edu.

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6. Strategies to Help Students Improve Their Writing

"Writing cannot be a subject that is short-changed or glossed over due to time constraints," say Vanderbilt professor Steve Graham and doctoral student Amy Gillespie in this article in *Better: Evidence-Based Education*. Stressing the need to devote significant classroom time to writing, they list practices that, according to rigorous studies, have produced results in grades 4-12:

• *Strategies* – Explicitly teaching students strategies for planning, revising, and editing their writing, with the teacher modeling the strategy, helping students as they practice using it, and gradually releasing support as students practice independently.

• *Summarizing* – Explicitly teaching students to pull out the main ideas of what they read. This gives them practice doing concise, clear writing to convey an accurate sense of what they read.

• *Cooperative groups* – Students should practice working in small groups, taking turns being editors to each others' writing.

• *Tasks* – Writing assignments should have measurable goals, for example, including at least three reasons that support a belief in an opinion paper.

• *Word processing* – Writing on computers allows students to more easily add, delete, and move text, check spelling, and otherwise improve their writing.

• *Sentence combining* – Learning how to put together two or more related sentences helps students learn to write more complex and sophisticated sentences.

• *Authenticity* – Students should write for an authentic audience, take responsibility for continuously improving their written work, and interact with other students throughout the drafting and revising process.

• *Inquiry* – Students benefit from having a clear goal (for example, writing about conflict on the playground), looking at data (observing students arguing on the playground), and translating what they learned into one or more compositions.

• *Prewriting* – Help students prepare for writing by organizing their thoughts, access what they already know, do research to find new information, and arrange ideas visually.

• *Models* – It's helpful to show students exemplars of effective writing and encourage emulation.

Although these practices are rank-ordered, Graham and Gillespie suggest mixing and matching the strategies according to students' needs – no one strategy works for all students, they say.

"Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching Writing" by Steve Graham and Amy Gillespie in *Better: Evidence-Based Education*, Winter 2011 (Vol. 3, #2, p. 4-5), http://betterevidence.org/us-edition/issue-6/

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7. Research on How Memory Works

In this *New York Times* Op-Ed article, Benedict Carey reports on recent brain research on contextual memory – the thoughts and emotions surrounding everything we learn. "Just as the taste of a cookie and tea can start a cascade of childhood memories," he says, "so a recalled bit of history homework can bring to mind a math problem – or a new dessert – from that same night." The research suggests that memory is like a "streaming video that is bookmarked, both consciously and subconsciously, by facts, scenes, characters, and thoughts," in effect time-stamping new information. People asked to memorize a list of words and then recall them found they could remember the word just before and after the word they named, and the brain signals recorded by the scientists looked almost identical with these associated words. "When you activate one memory," says University of Pennsylvania neuroscientist Michael Kahana, "you are reactivating a little bit of what was happening around the time the memory was formed, and this process is what gives you that feeling of time travel."

"The Then and Now of Memory" by Benedict Carey in *The New York Times*, July 5, 2011 (p. D4), http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/05/health/05memory.html

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8. Nonfiction Book Recommendations

In this *Reading Today* feature, National-Louis University/Lisle professor Sunday Cummins recommends nonfiction books to pique students' interest and engage them in reading:

• *Adventure Beneath the Sea* by Kenneth Mallory, photographs by Brian Skerry (Boyds Mils Press, 2010), age 9 and up – A dramatic and humorous account of how scientists lived for seven days in a special tank 60 feet under the sea investigating a coral reef ecosystem.

• *The Buzz on Bees: Why Are They Disappearing?* by Shelley Rotner and Anne Woodhull, photographs by Shelly Rotner (Holiday House, 2010), age 4 and up – The importance of bees to plant pollination and various products, and the mysterious disappearance of one-third of the honeybees in the U.S.

• *Seed Soil Sun: Earth's Recipe for Food* by Cris Peterson, photographs by David Lundquist (Boyds Mills Press, 2010), ages 4 and up – A handful of dirt has more living organisms than there are human beings on Earth! This book explores how soil, sunlight, water, and air produce plants that keep the planet alive.

• *Bones* by Steve Jenkins (Scholastic, 2010) ages 9 and up – Many of the cut-paper bones in this book are actual size, others are scaled, accompanied by interesting information about bones and skeletons.

• *Survival at 40 Below* by Debbie Miller, illustrations by Jon Van Zyle (Walker & Company, 2010), age 9 and up – Information about how animals survive icy winters in the Gates of Arctic National Park in Alaska, and how climate change threatens this habitat.

• *About Raptors: A Guide for Children* by Cathryn Sill, illustrations by Jon Sill (Peachtree Publishers, 2010), age 4 and up – Information and illustrations on how birds of prey hunt and live, from the bald eagle to the northern goshawk.

• *How to Clean a Hippopotamus: A Look at Unusual Animal Partnerships* by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page (Houghton Mifflin, 2010), age 4 and up – Examples in cut-paper art of symbiotic relationships between animals, including the Nile crocodile and birds that clean its teeth.

• *Disasters: Natural and Man-Made Catastrophes Through the Centuries* by Brenda Guiberson (Christy Ottaviano Books, 2010), young adult – Each chapter describes a disaster, including 19 million Native Americans dying of smallpox and 300,000 people fleeing New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

• *Case Closed? Nine Mysteries Unlocked by Modern Science* by Susan Hughes, illustrated by Michael Wandelmaier (Kids Can Press, 2010), young adult – How modern forensic science is solving disappearances that were mysteries for centuries.

"'Hey, Teacher! Did You Know?'" by Sunday Cummins in *Reading Today*, April/May 2011 (Vol. 28, #6, p. 24-25), no e-link available

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9. Children's Books That Give a New Spin to Old Tales

In this *Reading Today* feature, Illinois public librarian Susan Dove Lempke recommends books that give an original twist to time-honored stories:

• *Goldilocks and the Three Bears: A Tale Moderne* by Steven Guarnaccia (Abrams, 2010), age 4-8 – Goldilocks is critical of the bear family's furniture and fixings in this sophisticated but amusing retelling.

• *Goldie and the Three Hares* by Margie Palatini (HarperCollins/Tegen, 2011), age 4-8 – Goldie falls down a rabbit hole, injures her foot, and is a demanding guest with a family of hares.

• *Me and You* by Anthony Browne (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2010), age 5-9 – An edgy and amusing retelling of the Goldilocks story from the point of view of the baby bear.

• *Chicken Big* by Keith Graves (Chronicle, 2010), age 4-8) – An enormous chicken convinces the flock that he's a squirrel after an acorn falls on a chicken's head.

• *The Gigantic Sweet Potato* by Dianne de Las Casas (Pelican, 2010), age 3-6 – A sweet potato grows to enormous proportions and Ma Farmer enlists people and animals to pull it out of the ground.

• *Bless This Mouse* by Lois Lowry (Houghton Mifflin, 2010), age 7-10 – Mouse Mistress (stepping into the shoes of Stuart Little and Despereaux) leads a group of 250 mice through various adventures in a church.

• *The Adventures of Nanny Piggins* by R.A. Spratt (Little Brown, 2010) age 9-12 – Nanny Piggins (like Mary Poppins) behaves in unexpected ways, including encouraging three children to eat chocolate cake and avoid going to school.

"Tales Meant to Be Told… and Retold" by Susan Dove Lempke in *Reading Today*, April/May 2011 (Vol. 28, #6, p. 28), no e-link available

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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 41 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:

Individual subscriptions are $50 for the school year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and information on paying by check or credit card.

Website:

If you go to http://www.marshallmemo.com you will find detailed information on:

- How to subscribe or renew
- A detailed rationale for the Marshall Memo
- Publications (with a count of articles from each)
- Article selection criteria
- Topics (with a count of articles from each)
- Headlines for all issues
- What readers say
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Marshall Memo subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in PDF or Word format)
- All back issues (also in PDF or Word)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or log-in

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, 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
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
The School Administrator
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools