

# Marshall Memo 1044

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

July 8, 2024

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## Quotes of the Week

“Research is clear that learning to write improves reading, learning to read improves writing – and both improve content learning – which further feeds reading and writing – which better prepares students to succeed in our world.”

Karen Harris in [“Four Reasons Writing Instruction Needs a Makeover – and Evidence-Based Solutions”](#) in *Learning Without Tears*, June 13, 2024; Harris can be reached at [Karen.R.Harris@asu.edu](mailto:Karen.R.Harris@asu.edu).

“The truth is, learning to write is hard! Good writing is a complex, problem-solving process that develops over many years and must be taught, not caught. Our students must learn to evaluate the writing task (e.g., do I need to inform, persuade, and/or provide a narrative?); determine multiple goals (e.g., consider readers, text characteristics, desired effects); orchestrate skills and strategies needed; identify environmental conditions and supports for writing; identify when and why to engage in components of the writing process; and self-regulate the writing process – which includes managing working and long-term memory, affective responses to writing, peer interactions, attention, and time.”

Karen Harris (*ibid.*)

“When teachers don’t connect with others, it has an impact on the culture of learning in the school. This is where you end up seeing silos of growth and innovation.”

Tyler Rablin (see item #2)

“No longer are we beholden to the old industrial model with a leader who knows and decides all, then orders the people they manage to take action. Instead, our technology-ridden, information-driven environment calls for leaders who nurture curious, learning cultures.”

Chaveso Cook and Joshua Bowen (see item #1)

“WAIT – Why Am I Talking?”

Chaveso Cook and Joshua Bowen on a question leaders should ask themselves (*ibid.*)

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## 1. When Leaders Should Shut Up

In this *Fast Company* article, U.S. Army officers Chaveso Cook (Fort Meade) and Joshua Bowen (Fort Carson) write about the tendency of leaders to talk too much. “No longer are we beholden to the old industrial model with a leader who knows and decides all, then orders the people they manage to take action,” they say. “Instead, our technology-ridden, information-driven environment calls for leaders who nurture curious, learning cultures... It calls for leaders to talk less.” They have two suggestions summed up in acronyms:

- HALT: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired – It’s important to check whether a colleague is subject to one of these risk factors for stress and grumpiness. Have they gone too long between meals? Are they upset about something? Are they starved for human companionship? Are they sleep-deprived? “If you keep trying to influence others when they’re hungry, angry, lonely, or tired (or some combination of the four),” say Cook and Bowen, “you won’t be as persuasive.”

- WAIT: Why Am I Talking? – Taking a moment before making a comment or offering advice allows leaders to think about whether a comment is needed or useful and the impression it will leave.

Thinking about HALT and WAIT tunes leaders in to whether they are opening their mouths to satisfy their own needs or genuinely addressing an external need. “Sometimes the leader may lack the experience, insight, or feedback to offer something of value,” say Cook and Bowen. “In this scenario, leaders should avoid satisfying or justifying their own needs and encourage others to speak up... Building in brief pauses, asking for reflections, or crafting moments to think, pair, and share can go a long way to add value on both sides.”

Another question to ask in a HALT/WAIT moment is, *What is not being said, and who is not talking?* That may be a prompt to draw others out and let everyone learn from them.

[“Here’s Why \(and How\) Leaders Need to Learn When to Stay Silent”](#) by Chaveso Cook and Joshua Bowen in *Fast Company*, July 2, 2024

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## 2. Solving Four Perennial Problems with PD

In this *Edutopia* article, Washington instructional coach/writer/consultant Tyler Rablin says that when teachers are asked what experiences really contribute to their professional growth, they rarely mention school-sponsored PD. Instead, they point to informal collaboration

with colleagues and independent efforts. The poor reputation of PD, says Rablin, stems from four problems, and he suggests how “strand-based” professional learning can address each one:

- *PD problem #1: Lack of cohesion* – Teachers roll their eyes at the constant stream of new initiatives, says Rablin, which are often seen as extras and prevent teachers “from being able to invest consistent time and effort into specific elements of teaching to be able to actually grow in their practice.” But if the focus is on a core element of effective teaching – formative assessment, inquiry, student engagement, grading practices – PD can be more cohesive, with teachers working on the chosen strand across initiatives and time.

- *PD problem #2: Lack of teacher autonomy and choice* – “Obviously,” says Rablin, “there are still aspects of professional learning that should be whole group, but what would it look like to increase the amount of autonomy for teachers?” He advocates encouraging teachers to select learning strands that are relevant to their current practice and classroom challenges and pursue them over a semester or longer. During PD time, teachers could choose from breakout workshops, self-selected discussion groups, or asynchronous events.

- *PD problem #3: Lack of community around learning and growth* – “When teachers don’t connect with others,” says Rablin, “it has an impact on the culture of learning in the school. This is where you end up seeing silos of growth and innovation.” Better to have same-grade/same-subject teacher teams decide on a strand and meet periodically to pursue research, share insights, and try out ideas. Teams might alternate between strand-focused meetings and more-generic schoolwide PD experiences.

- *PD problem #4 – Few learning opportunities* – Full-day professional days are few and far between, says Rablin, and there aren’t enough opportunities for teachers to engage in productive discussions and sharing. If teams are working on strands, schools could set up lunch-and-learn times where pizza is provided and teachers sit in table groups and discuss their area of focus. With strands, instructional coaches can also use their time more productively, providing resources, training, and coaching in each team’s chosen area.

[“Strand-Based PD Provides Teachers with Autonomy”](#) by Tyler Rablin in *Edutopia*, June 28, 2024

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### **3. What Kinds of Readers Should We Raise?**

In this article in *Reading Research Quarterly*, Maren Aukerman (University of Calgary) and Lorien Chambers Schuldt (Fort Lewis College) say that much of the current discussion around the science of reading focuses on one overarching question: *What works best to improve students’ test performance in decoding and reading comprehension?* While those components are important, say Aukerman and Schuldt, they believe focusing only on them won’t develop well-rounded readers. A broader and more-ambitious question is required: *How can we go beyond decoding and comprehension and develop a robust and socially just science of reading?*

Aukerman and Schuldt ground their vision of effective literacy instruction in these observations:

- Literacy includes writing, oral language, and meaning making in multiple modalities.
- Literacy should focus not just on the primary grades but on K-12 and adult life.
- Literacy research should include randomized control studies and case studies.
- Proficient reading (and good teaching) has social, cultural, and historical dimensions.
- Research should include an honest dialogue about the role of literacy in social justice.

The authors go on to suggest two major dimensions of a more-ambitious approach to literacy – textual dexterity and literate dispositions – which complement each other in service of students’ deeper proficiency as readers:

• *Textual dexterity* – This is what readers are able to do with text, including being successful code breakers (decoding), text participants (comprehension), text users (achieving salient purposes within a social context), and text analysts (critically analyzing and questioning text). “Textual dexterity,” say Aukerman and Schuldt, “is a central element in students’ academic success. In addition, its various dimensions provide a foundation for human beings to thrive, not only as proficient decoders and comprehenders but also as literate people who can use reading in flexible, meaningful ways to learn things, think critically, and get things done, as well as to connect with and understand others.” More detail on the components:

- Decoding – The goal of explicit, systematic phonics and phonemic awareness is producing high automaticity and fluency and applying those skills, and knowledge of sight words, to reading connected texts.
- Comprehension – Building – and building on – prior knowledge and vocabulary are critical, along with classroom discussions of high-quality texts using open-ended questions. Supportive teacher-student and student-student relationships are also essential.
- Purposeful use – Working with varied texts for varied purposes, within and beyond school, helps students see the importance and usefulness of reading. Aukerman and Schuldt recommend including philosophical and ethical questions as students move through the grades: *What is kindness? Is it okay to deprive someone of their freedom?*
- Critical analysis – Students should begin asking questions about authors’ perspective and civics-related questions on news and other online material, for example, *Who is behind this information? What is the evidence? What do other sources say?*

• *Literate dispositions* – This includes students’ affective and intellectual involvement with texts, and their sense of themselves as readers.

- Literate engagement – This is the quality and depth of readers’ cognitive, social, and affective participation with text as they read, interact with peers, and engage in related activities. “Engaged readers,” say Aukerman and Schuldt, “participate actively and deeply in the work (and imaginative play) of reading.”
- Motivation – When students bring positive thoughts, beliefs, and emotions to a text, it spurs an intrinsic desire to read, not just for compliance. Motivation can come from

curiosity, a desire to learn more or find out what happened, and the challenge of understanding complex material.

- Self-efficacy – Readers’ beliefs about their capabilities shape their choice of reading matter, the goals they set, and their persistence in the face of difficult tasks. Teachers can boost students’ reading self-confidence through the assignments they give and the way they talk about success and setbacks. Studies show that self-efficacy is strongly correlated with reading achievement.

There is a marked decline in reading engagement, motivation, and self-efficacy as students get older, especially among boys and students with disadvantages. “Fortunately,” say Aukerman and Schuldt, “there is evidence that students’ literate dispositions are malleable, shaped by factors that include the texts themselves, literacy practices, and the instruction teachers provide.” High-quality, culturally relevant texts are helpful, as are lively classroom discussions, positive peer relationships, real-world literacy tasks, choice of activities, student goal-setting, and opportunities for social interaction around texts.

In every classroom there is significant cultural, linguistic, and individual variation among students. “To become more socially just,” say Aukerman and Schuldt, “the science of reading should honor, recognize, and leverage such differences as starting points for instruction.” This is especially important for students whose language and culture is not in the “standard English” mainstream. These students tend to be tracked into remediation with narrower, skills-based teaching approaches and little culturally relevant and meaning-focused pedagogy. The most effective teachers teach in ways that are culturally, linguistically, and individually sensitive and affirming.

This vision of reading instruction “has the capacity to better serve students who have historically been underserved,” say Aukerman and Schuldt, and they believe “it is also a vision that has the capacity to better serve all students.” They call for a “reimagining” of teacher professional development to support broader goals, and literacy assessments that go beyond decoding and comprehension, measuring the more-ambitious and rewarding goals of textual dexterity and literate dispositions.

[“What Matters Most? Toward a Robust and Socially Just Science of Reading”](#) by Maren Aukerman and Lorien Chambers Schuldt in *Reading Research Quarterly*, May 2021 (Vol. 56, #S1, pp. 85-103); the authors can be reached at [maren.aukerman@ucalgary.ca](mailto:maren.aukerman@ucalgary.ca) and [licschuldt@fortlewis.edu](mailto:licschuldt@fortlewis.edu).

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#### **4. How Students Can Be More Active in IEP Meetings**

In this *Edutopia* article, Ohio consultant Angie Chapple makes the case for students playing a significant role in their IEP meetings (that’s true for only about 12 percent of students with disabilities, according to a 2006 study). Why is active participation important? Because when students have a good understanding of their disability and the services to which

they're entitled, says Chapple, they're more likely to work toward accomplishing their goals and advocate for themselves inside and outside the classroom.

Chapple suggests a continuum of ways students from kindergarten to high school can be involved in the process, always with support and scaffolding from trusted adults:

- In discussions with teachers and counselors, articulating their interests, hobbies, strengths, challenges, and improvement goals and how the school can accommodate and support them;
- Recommending who should attend their IEP meeting;
- Helping to prepare the meeting agenda;
- Preparing and sending out invitations;
- Creating a one-page profile of themselves describing how they learn best, what they find difficult, when and how they need to ask for help and when to figure things out themselves, their rights, the accommodations they need, SMART goals, ways to monitor progress, and wished-for outcomes for the meeting;
- Recording a short video on their strengths, interests, and needs (to be played at the meeting);
- Conferring with teachers, counselors, and others on the specific role they will play in the meeting;
- Preparing talking points, notes, PowerPoint slides, visual aids, perhaps with assistive technology;
- Thinking through and practicing the role they will play, including how to speak assertively in support of their needs;
- Doing a dry run of the meeting and thinking through contingency plans for unexpected developments, including if they don't feel comfortable being so active;
- At the beginning of a meeting, introducing members of the team;
- Making a live presentation on their strengths, interests, and needs;
- Drafting certain sections of the IEP or facilitating that part of the meeting;
- Taking a leading role in the IEP meeting;
- Conducting a debrief after the meeting and discussing how it went – comfort level, reactions to each part of the meeting, thoughts about participants, and next steps.

“By implementing these strategies,” says Chapple, “teachers can empower students with disabilities to take the lead in facilitating their IEP meetings. By building self-advocacy skills, using opportunities for practice, and using technology and visual aids, students will develop the confidence and competence necessary to actively shape their educational journeys.”

[“How to Foster Student Self-Advocacy in IEP Meetings”](#) by Angie Chapple in *Edutopia*, June 27, 2024

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## **5. ChatGPT and the School Library**

In this article in *School Library Journal*, Elissa Malespina suggests two ways school librarians can use ChatGPT (and other generative AI tools like Claude, Perplexity, and Bard):

• *Book synopses* – Log in to [ChatGPT](#) and enter a prompt asking for a description of a specific book – for example: Give me a five-sentence summary of *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B. White that will appeal to fourth graders. Make it fun and heartwarming to entice students to read the book. Write it at the fourth grade reading level. “Review and refine,” says Malespina, asking for more detail or a different angle. For middle- and high-school students, librarians might ask for themes, conflicts, and thought-provoking elements. Using AI can produce scores of book synopses to find “just right” books for students.

• *Interest inventories* – Ask ChatGPT for book suggestions on specific student interests – for example, Recommend some adventure and fantasy books for middle-school students who enjoyed Harry Potter and Percy Jackson books. Refine and share the suggestions.

“With a Little Help from AI” by Elissa Malespina in *School Library Journal*, July 2024 (Vol. 70, #7, pp. 14-15)

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## 6. Picture Books About Differences

In this *School Library Journal* feature, Massachusetts librarian Chance Lee Joyner showcases picture books that describe healthy interactions among people with differences:

- *A Little Bit of Respect* by Claire Alexander, Preschool-grade 1
- *John’s Turn* by Mac Barnett, illustrated by Kate Berube, Kindergarten-grade 2
- *Biindigen! Amik Says Welcome* by Nancy Cooper, illustrated by Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley, Preschool-grade 3
- *On the Edge of the World* by Anna Desnitskaya, Preschool-grade 2
- *The Crocodile and the Dentist* by Taro Gomi, Kindergarten-grade 2
- *Come Over to My House* by Eliza Hull and Sally Rippin, Kindergarten-grade 2
- *Toasty* by Sarah Hwang, Preschool-grade 3
- *Some Bodies* by Sophie Kennen, illustrated by Airin O’Callaghan, Kindergarten-grade 2
- *Thao* by Thao Lam, Preschool-grade 4
- *Don’t Touch My Hair!* by Sharee Miller, Preschool-grade 4
- *Can I Give You a Squish?* by Emily Neilson, Preschool-grade 1
- *Some Dogs* by Lydia Nichols, Toddler-grade 2
- *A Kid Is a Kid Is a Kid* by Sara O’Leary, illustrated by Qin Leng, Preschool-grade 2
- *Talking Is Not My Thing* by Rose Robbins, Preschool-grade 3
- *Everybody Counts: A Counting Story from 0 to 7.5 Billion* by Kristin Roskifte, Kindergarten-grade 4
- *Clive and His Babies* by Jessica Spanyol, Kindergarten-grade 3
- *Mommy’s Khimar* by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow, illustrated by Ebony Glenn, Preschool-grade 4
- *Like Me: A Story About Disability and Discovering God’s Image in Every Person* by Laura Wifler, illustrated by Skylar White, Preschool-grade 3
- *There Must Be More Than That!* by Shinsuke Yoshitake, Preschool-grade 2

“Embracing Others: Picture Books That Celebrate Differences” by Chance Lee Joyner in *School Library Journal*, June 2024 (Vol. 70, #6, pp. 36-39)

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# About the Marshall Memo

## ***Mission and focus:***

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and other educators very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 54 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, writer, and consultant lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 60 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 50 issues a year). Every week there's a podcast and HTML version as well.

## ***Subscriptions:***

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- The current issue (in Word or PDF)
- All back issues (Word and PDF) and podcasts
- An easily searchable archive of all articles so far
- The "classic" articles from all 20 years

## ***Core list of publications covered***

Those read this week are underlined.

All Things PLC  
American Educational Research Journal  
American Educator  
American Journal of Education  
American School Board Journal  
AMLE Magazine  
ASCA School Counselor  
ASCD SmartBrief  
Cult of Pedagogy  
District Management Journal  
Ed Magazine  
Education Digest  
Education Gadfly  
Education Next  
Education Week  
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis  
Educational Horizons  
Educational Leadership  
Educational Researcher  
Edutopia  
Elementary School Journal  
English Journal  
Exceptional Children  
Harvard Business Review  
Harvard Educational Review  
Independent School  
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy  
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)  
Kappa Delta Pi Record  
Kappan (Phi Delta Kappan)  
Knowledge Quest  
Language Arts  
Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance)  
Literacy Today (formerly Reading Today)  
Mathematics Teacher: Learning & Teaching PK-12  
Middle School Journal  
Peabody Journal of Education  
Principal  
Principal Leadership  
Psychology Today  
Reading Research Quarterly  
Rethinking Schools  
Review of Educational Research  
School Administrator  
School Library Journal  
Social Education  
Social Studies and the Young Learner  
Teachers College Record  
Teaching Exceptional Children  
The Atlantic  
The Chronicle of Higher Education  
The Journal of the Learning Sciences  
The Language Educator  
The Learning Professional (formerly Journal of Staff Development)  
The New York Times  
The New Yorker  
The Reading Teacher  
Theory Into Practice  
Time  
Urban Education