

Marshall Memo 857

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
October 12, 2020

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Quotes of the Week

“One of the biggest complaints about online school is the zombie-like after-effects of spending too much time focused on a screen.”

Kathy Swan, Andrew Danner, Meghan Hawkins, S.G. Grant, & John Lee (see item #1)

“Social studies educators cannot sit this year out.”

Kathy Swan, Andrew Danner, Meghan Hawkins, S.G. Grant, & John Lee (*ibid.*)

“No academic goal is worth the soul of a child.”

Carol Ann Tomlinson (see item #3)

“Empathy isn’t just something that happens to us – a meteor shower of synapse firing across the brain – it’s also a choice we make to pay attention, to extend ourselves.”

Leslie Jamison (see item #4)

“You have two ears and one mouth, so you can listen twice as much as you speak.”

Karamo Brown, quoting his grandmother quoting the Greek philosopher Epictetus (see item #4)

“It’s always the right time to say a good word to someone who’s facing challenges.”

Dan Rockwell (see item #7)

“Solidarity is nice, but we need action.”

Elena Aguilar in [“Black Boys Are More Than Inequity Statistics”](#) in *Educational Leadership*, October 2020 (Vol. 78, #2, pp. 82-83); Aguilar can be reached at elena@brightmorningteam.com

1. Teaching Remote Lessons in 25-Minute Chunks

“One of the biggest complaints about online school is the zombie-like after-effects of spending too much time focused on a screen,” say Kathy Swan, S.G. Grant, and John Lee (lead authors of the C3 Framework) and teachers Andrew Danner and Meghan Hawkins in *Social Education*. This school year finds educators, students, and families immersed in “some of the most momentous events that this country has ever experienced,” say the authors, raising questions central to the social studies curriculum:

- In the throes of the pandemic, what is the balance between freedom and security?
- What will it take for the economy to recover?
- What will change as a result of the nation’s racial awakening?
- Will the current crises bring out the best or worst in Americans?
- What do we make of this generation-defining election?

“Social studies educators cannot sit this year out,” say Swan, Grant, Lee, Danner, and Hawkins, and suggest a way of chunking instruction that explores key issues while avoiding the zombie effect. Their idea is to apply the Pomodoro method, a time management strategy designed to keep people more engaged and productive. Devised in the 1980s by Italian business student Francesco Cirillo, Pomodoro breaks work into 25-minute intervals, separated by short breaks, with a 15-30-minute break after three Pomodoros (the name comes from a tomato-shaped kitchen timer). Different school schedules can accommodate these chunks: 30-minute classes (one Pomodoro), 60-minute classes (two), 90-minute blocks (three).

Last summer, the authors applied the Pomodoro principle to an inquiry unit on the 2020 protests, starting with an introduction, then building background knowledge, then assessing students’ work and thinking about applications. Here are the eight 25-minute learning experiences, each building on the one preceding it:

- Provoking curiosity and highlighting the unit’s core purpose with a compelling question;
- Teacher modeling of the historical practice of analyzing change over time;
- Students practicing with partners;
- Reinforcing ideas with the class;
- Independent practice;
- Group deliberation, with the teacher fine-tuning skills and knowledge;
- Summative assessment by the teacher;
- Applying ideas in real-world scenarios.

The authors say it’s important to use a variety of formats within each Pomodoro: synchronous whole-class presentations and discussions; breakout room activities; polling; and chat box

interactions. They found it was important to cue students to the breaks between Pomodoros, with everyone standing up, moving away from their computers, and doing jumping jacks or some form of physical activity. Without the prompt, students tended to switch to another browser and not get the cognitive break they needed before moving on to the next chunk.

The authors recommend recording Zoom meetings, making class recordings available to students, providing “office hours” several times a week to support struggling students, giving detailed instructions and scaffolds via Google Docs, using a class message board to elaborate on class discussions and breakout rooms, and modeling appropriate posting on the message board.

In the full article linked below, the authors give a detailed description of an eight-Pomodoro inquiry unit on the question, “Is there anything new about the 2020 protests?”

[“Zooming Inquiry: Online Teaching with the Pomodoro Technique”](#) by Kathy Swan, Andrew Danner, Meghan Hawkins, S.G. Grant, and John Lee in *Social Education*, September 2020 (Vol. 84, #4, pp. 229-235)

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2. Physical Education in Covid-Time

In this article in *Principal Leadership*, James Barry and Ingrid Johnson say that physical activity is more important than ever during the pandemic. In addition to keeping students fit and strong when they’re confined to their homes or a single classroom, well-planned physical activity helps deal with anxiety and stress and boosts the immune system. Observing three key restrictions...

- Conducting classes outdoors or in a well-ventilated space;
- Students physically distanced (for example, marking off 6 x 6-foot squares in a gym);
- Not sharing equipment, and sanitizing equipment after every class...

physical education teachers can make an important contribution. Some possibilities for in-school, hybrid, or at-home activities:

- Flipping instruction, with students watching demonstration videos on their own;
- Having students use Flipgrid to share their developing skills;
- Dances like the Cha-Cha Slide;
- Involving family members in scavenger hunts;
- Skills and games with each student using one ball;
- Personalized workout plans;
- Modifying activities for students with special needs;
- Mindfulness exercises.

Barry and Johnson recommend several organizations for ideas on safe physical education and sports activities: [Move United](#), [Chromebooks for Health and Physical Education](#), [Adapt at Home](#) (for students with special needs), SHAPE America, OPEN (Online Physical Education Network) PE, PE Central, and Dynamic PE ASAP.

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3. Carol Ann Tomlinson on Working with Students Experiencing Trauma

(Originally titled “Learning from Kids Who Hurt”)

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, Carol Ann Tomlinson (University of Virginia) says that as a K-12 teacher, she had a number of students who were dealing with abuse, the death of a parent, war-related incidents, bullying, or other forms of trauma. “Those were the stressors I know existed and could label,” says Tomlinson. “There were doubtless others my students faced that never surfaced but were no less real and damaging.” She describes three particularly vivid stories, and what she learned:

- Reading a story to her primary-grade class, Tomlinson walked around the room, paused briefly behind four-year-old Franklin, and rested her arm on the back of his chair. Suddenly he started screaming and running around the room, arms flailing. Tomlinson left the class in the care of her teaching assistant and took the boy outside, and he gradually calmed down and took her hand. Back in the classroom, she got students working on a free-choice activity and made a point of checking in with each child. A four-year-old girl looked her in the eye and said, “Ms. T, you shoulda figured out by now, ya can’t sneak up on Franklin!” That was his trigger.

- The mother of an eighth grader about to enroll in Tomlinson’s class described how every summer the boy put on plays to the delight of audiences in their neighborhood, doing casting, costumes, and directing. But he had a serious learning disability, constantly failed spelling and writing in school, and felt worthless. One more year of failure, said his mother, and he would be lost. “Trauma often accompanies long struggles with disabilities,” says Tomlinson. Determined to avoid setting him up for failure with conventional spelling instruction and tests, she told herself, “*No academic goal is worth the soul of a child.*” She worked around his disability, got other students to help him with spelling, and gave him opportunities to create stories and cartoons with advanced vocabulary. The class was transformational for him, and years later the student earned a master’s degree.

- One morning Tomlinson found a note on her desk that one of her best-behaved and highest-achieving students had left on her desk the afternoon before: *I wanted you to know I won’t be in class tomorrow. I thought you might worry.* As Tomlinson read the note, she looked up and saw a police officer standing in the door. It turned out the girl had run away from home; her mother was in the hospital with a terminal illness, and her father was abusing her every night. “I should have known more than I did,” says Tomlinson, “or should at least have been more watchful than I was.” The girl was located, spent time with a foster family, and returned to the class. Soon afterward Tomlinson found her in the hallway in tears; she had learned by chance (not from her estranged father) that her mother had died.

Thinking back on these three students, and others with different forms of trauma, Tomlinson wishes that as a young teacher she’d had professional development and done more

reading on trauma. As it was, she learned on the job, with students her most important teachers. “Here’s the most powerful lesson I took from them,” she says: “Empathy is the great healer. To the degree that we were able, together, to take steps forward, empathy was the reason.” Her other takeaways:

- There’s wide variation in how young people respond to trauma, “from almost complete withdrawal to atomic explosion.”
- Teachers need to know more about kids than their grades and attendance records.
- A teacher can’t always figure out how to make things better, but should be able to avoid making them worse.
- There’s almost always someone who can help – perhaps last year’s teacher, a counselor, a family member – and a teacher should never try to deal with a crisis alone.
- Students need to know that their worth as humans is not tied up in academic skills and grades.

“Don’t ever assume that a student’s behavior is about you,” Tomlinson concludes. “As long as that’s your frame, a student’s worth is somehow an indication of your own worth.”

[“Learning from Kids Who Hurt”](#) by Carol Ann Tomlinson in *Educational Leadership*, October 2020 (Vol. 78, #2, pp. 28-33); Tomlinson can be reached at cat3y@virginia.edu.

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4. Developing and Fine-Tuning Empathy

In this *New York Times* article, Emma Pattee interviews five people on ways we can improve our ability to empathize – that is, care for others by trying to understand and share their perspectives, feelings, and experiences from their point of view versus our own. Pattee contrasts empathy with sympathy, which is caring about others by feeling sorry for or concerned about them.

- Roman Krznaric, Australian philosopher, author of *The Good Ancestor: How to Think Long Term in a Short-Term World* – “We are facing a chronic and growing empathy deficit,” he says. The best way to develop empathy, he believes, is by talking with people we otherwise might not interact with and being curious about what makes them tick. Have a conversation with a stranger once a week, urges Krznaric.

- Leslie Jamison, author of *The Empathy Exams* – “Empathy isn’t just something that happens to us,” she says, “– a meteor shower of synapse firing across the brain – it’s also a choice we make to pay attention, to extend ourselves. It’s made of exertion, that dowdier cousin of impulse. Sometimes we care for another because we know we should, or because it’s asked for, but this doesn’t make our caring hollow.”

- Brené Brown, University of Houston professor and author of *Daring Greatly* – She cautions against taking on another’s burdens and trauma. “What’s the use of both of us being in that dark place?” she asks. “There’s no help there.” Better to communicate that they are not alone and you are with them as they wrestle with the problem. And know that we won’t get it right all the time: “Circling back and cleaning up an empathic miss is as powerful, if not more powerful, than getting it right the first time,” says Brown.

• Karamo Brown, former social worker, one of the Fab Five on the Netflix makeover show, *Queer Eye* – “Working in social services,” he says, “you learn to remove yourself, and learn to say: ‘You’re not the same as the last child who was in here. You have your own story.’” He quotes his grandmother: “You have two ears and one mouth, so you can listen twice as much as you speak.”

• Nedra Tawwab, a therapist and the voice behind a popular Instagram account – “People have a full story,” she says, “and just because they did something bad or unfavorable, they probably have also done so many kind and good things in their life, too... Like if your grandfather grew up in 1937, he may be using language that is appropriate for when he grew up. Is it serving him now? Absolutely not. Can you set boundaries? Yes.” But you can understand.

[“How to Improve Your Ability to Empathize with Others”](#) by Emma Pattee in *The New York Times*, October 5, 2020

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5. School Administrators Co-Teaching

In this article in *AMLE Magazine*, Illinois assistant principal Pauline Zdonek says that many new administrators believe they’ll spend their days working with colleagues on instruction, planning, and student work, only to have their days consumed by meetings, management, and student misbehavior. As the years go by, principals and assistant principals are more and more removed from their own classroom experience and less current about curriculum and technology. Then there’s the challenge of being knowledgeable about multiple subject areas and grade levels. “Considering these obstacles,” asks Zdonek, “how can administrators maintain credibility and maximize impact as instructional leaders?”

She and her principal have an answer: each joins one teacher as a co-teacher one day a week over a period of months. This initiative has accomplished several things:

- Building credibility with colleagues as they work together on classroom discipline, curriculum, and technology.
- Getting a teacher’s-eye perspective on district curriculum and technology initiatives;
- Taking part in pilots of new ideas with possible schoolwide implications;
- Improving administrators’ curriculum and pedagogical knowledge, especially in areas in which they had no teaching experience.

Having successfully co-taught for several years, Zdonek has these suggestions:

• *Make it voluntary.* Even in a building with a positive culture and years of relationship-building, it’s a good idea to co-teach only with teachers who sign up. Even then, participating teachers have admitted to jitters having an administrator in their classroom so often.

• *Be transparent.* Offering to co-teach is not about spying on teachers; it’s to broaden the administrator’s knowledge and skills, build relationships with colleagues and students, get a better understanding of teachers’ challenges, and actually help with teaching and learning – in the target classroom and for the school as a whole.

• *Experiment.* “Push yourself and your co-teacher to try something new,” says Zdonek. “Ask others to come in and give you feedback. Co-teaching is the perfect vehicle to model yourself as the lead learner in the building.” One year she made a point of working in a classroom that allowed her to observe a new math curriculum and get insights on overcoming teachers’ anxiety and resistance.

• *Be reliable.* That means finding a time of the week and day when the teacher can use skilled help and when co-teaching is least likely to be interrupted by administrative meetings and discipline referrals. Zdonek chose Tuesday second block one year, Thursday first block another. The co-teaching time needs to be blocked out in the administrator’s calendar and protected from random incursions.

• *Be intentional.* The first year Zdonek co-taught, she helped out with whatever the teacher happened to be doing that period. The result was a fairly random one-teaches-one-assists dynamic, which was suboptimal. Ever since, Zdonek and her co-teacher have planned activities that made good use of having two professionals in the room.

• *Support remote and hybrid learning.* The pandemic has launched teachers into uncharted waters. “Uncertainty and e-learning should not scare you away from co-teaching,” says Zdonek, and offers these words of wisdom:

- Give teachers space. With the stresses most schools are under, it may take a while for volunteers to step forward.
- Help out. Small things that lighten a teacher’s load – leading online meetings, following up with struggling students – will pave the way for more-extensive collaboration.
- Appreciate. “Help your co-teacher stay positive and focus on the impact you can have with students,” Zdonek concludes, “even from a distance.”

“In the Trenches: Co-Teaching as an Administrator” by Pauline Zdonek in *AMLE Magazine*, October 2020 (Vol. 8, #4, pp. 14-16); Zdonek can be reached at Pauline.zdonek@gmail.com.

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6. Do Teachers’ Danielson Scores Predict Student Outcomes?

In this *American Educational Research Journal* article, Helen Patrick and Panayota Mantzicopoulos (Purdue University) and Brian French (Washington State University) report on their study of 81 Indiana kindergarten teachers’ Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) scores and their students’ end-of-year motivation and achievement growth. The researchers had evaluation data for the second and third Danielson domains (Classroom Environment and Instruction) from eight of the teachers’ reading and eight math lessons observed over the course of the year, as well as students’ end-of-year standardized reading and math test results, criterion-referenced test data, and a measure of motivation. Here are the results:

• Teachers’ Danielson scores “capture small, yet measurable, associations between ratings of teachers’ practices and their students’ end-of-year standardized achievement,” say the authors.

- However, they continue, “only a very small proportion of the total variability in student standardized achievement was related to ratings of teacher instructional practices – at most, 2.5% for reading achievement and 1.3% for mathematics achievement.”

- “Together,” say Patrick, Mantzicopoulos, and French, “the findings suggest that the FFT is not sufficiently sensitive to identify the average effect of teachers’ instruction on student achievement.”

- In addition, the study found that teachers’ Danielson scores didn’t predict criterion-referenced achievement scores in reading or math, nor measures of students’ motivation.

- What did significantly predict students’ achievement and motivation were several other variables: family SES, incoming achievement, and fall mastery of content standards – and occasionally gender and ethnicity.

Given these findings, Patrick, Mantzicopoulos, and French caution on the use of Danielson scores to draw high-stakes conclusions about a teacher’s performance.

[Several observations on this study and its discouraging message about teachers’ impact on students, teacher evaluation, and the comparative importance of social class and students’ prior experiences on their academic and social-emotional success:

- This number of lesson observations in the course of a school year represents a remarkable amount of time in each classroom. Yet the researchers say that even this many observations may not be sufficient to get an accurate picture of teachers’ daily performance.
- This is especially true when classroom observations are announced in advance, giving teachers a chance to put their best foot forward and skewing ratings upward. All the researchers’ observations used classroom videos, meaning they were announced.
- Most principals make far fewer evaluative visits per teacher, many of them announced, raising serious questions about the validity of their judgments on teachers’ effectiveness.
- All the researchers’ observations were used to *rate* teachers, not to *coach* them. This is understandable given the goals of the study, but what a missed opportunity to explore the possible impact of ongoing, face-to-face coaching conversations with teachers after each observation visit throughout the school year. Imagine if the FFT and other rubrics were used this way – which was what Charlotte Danielson had in mind when she originally created the Framework for Teaching. K.M.]

[“The Predictive Validity of Classroom Observations: Do Teachers’ Framework for Teaching Scores Predict Kindergarteners’ Achievement and Motivation?”](#) by Helen Patrick, Panayota Mantzicopoulos, and Brian French in *American Educational Research Journal*, October 2020 (Vol. 57, #5, pp. 2021-2058); the authors can be reached at hpatrick@purdue.edu, mantzi@purdue.edu, and frenchb@wsu.edu.

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7. Encouraging Words from the Boss

In this article in *Leadership Freak*, Dan Rockwell reports a recent Gallup poll finding: only 30 percent of employees in the U.S. said that in the previous week they'd received recognition or praise for doing good work. "It's always the right time to say a good word to someone who's facing challenges," says Rockwell. Some possibilities:

- I know you're facing big challenges. What you do really matters.
- Thank you for rising to this challenge.
- I notice you have been...
- You're so good at...
- I'm thankful for you.

The response to statements like these is often, "Thanks, I really needed that today."

["Of All the Complaints I've Heard About Bosses, I've Never Heard This One"](#) by Dan Rockwell in *Leadership Freak*, October 9, 2020; Rockwell can be reached at dan@leadershipfreak.com.

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8. Online Maker Resources

In this *School Library Journal* article, Virginia school librarian Idamae Craddock suggests ten STEM maker resources that can be used for remote learning:

- [CoBuildAtHome](#) – A wealth of online maker activities, a Facebook group, and suggestions from luminaries in the maker world – appropriate for all ages.
- [Community Science Workshop Network](#) – Engaging and not technologically complicated; has low-cost projects using inexpensive or recycled materials.
- [San Francisco Exploratorium](#) – This amazing museum's site investigates everything from skateboarding engineering to using Oreo cookies to explore plate tectonics – upper elementary and older.
- [Science Friday](#) – This site's maker challenge has everything from "The Many Uses of Mucus" to "Fossilize Me" – upper elementary and older.
- [MakerEd](#) – A compilation of projects and learning approaches designed for educators and parents.
- [MakeCode](#) – This Microsoft program has physical and virtual coding and app development – upper elementary through middle school.
- [Scratch](#) – An archive of hundreds of math and visual arts activities with examples and stories to help build classroom community and support curriculum content – elementary through middle school.
- [Algodoo](#) – This free download allows students to create, alter, and run engineering simulations, changing gravity, adding gears, planes, ropes, and wheels to see how they will interact – middle school and older.
- [Blockscad](#) – A simple block coding program to make 3-D objects and teach math concepts – middle school and older.

- [Google Experiments](#) – An archive of experiments that require little or no equipment, entertaining and with firm curriculum foundations – middle school and older.

“On-Screen and Hands-On” by Idamae Craddock in *School Library Journal*, October 2020 (Vol. 66, #10, p. 17)

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9. Graphic Works on Voting, Government, and Activism

In this feature in *School Library Journal*, Brigid Alverson (Good Comics for Kids) recommends graphic novels on voting rights, the U.S. government, and political activism:

- *Constitution Illustrated* by R. Sikoryak (Drawn and Quarterly, 2020), grade 7 and up.
- *Fault Lines in the Constitution: The Graphic Novel* by Cynthia Levinson and Sanford Levinson, illustrated by Ally Shwed (First Second, 2020), grade 6 and up
- *Drawing the Vote: An Illustrated Guide to Voting in America* by Tommy Jenkins, illustrated by Kati Lacker (Abrams ComicArts, 2020), grade 8 and up
- *This Is What Democracy Looks Like* (Center for Cartoon Studies, 2019), grade 7 and up
- *Act* by Kayla Miller (HMH, 2020), grade 3-7
- *Colored: The Unsung Life of Claudette Colvin* by Emilie Plateau (Europe Comics, 2019), grade 7 and up
- *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* by Alfred Hassler and Benton Resnick, illustrated by Sy Barry (Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1957), grade 5 and up
- *Unrig: How to Fix Our Broken Democracy* by Daniel Newman, illustrated by George O'Connor (First Second, 2020), grade 10 and up

“Stellar Panels: We the People” by Brigid Alverson in *School Library Journal*, October 2020 (Vol. 66, #10, pp. 42-45)

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10. Short Item:

Virtual connections – This free (with registration) [toolkit](#) from Panorama Education has nine virtual learning resources to build connections with students, families, and staff.

“9 Virtual Learning Resources to Build Connectedness with Students, Families, and Staff” by Panorama Education, October 2020

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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 50 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.

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- The current issue (in Word and PDF)
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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
District Management Journal
Ed. Magazine
Education Digest
Education Next
Education Update
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
English Journal
Essential Teacher
Exceptional Children
Go Teach
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
Knowledge Quest
Language Arts
Literacy Today (formerly Reading Today)
Mathematics Teacher: Learning & Teaching PK-12
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Reading Research Quarterly
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Social Education
Social Studies and the Young Learner
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Education Gadfly
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 Magazine