Marshall Memo 934

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
May 2, 2022

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Quotes of the Week

"Young people are more educated; less likely to get pregnant, use drugs; less likely to die of accident or injury. By many markers, kids are doing fantastic and thriving. But there are these really important trends in anxiety, depression, and suicide that stop us in our tracks."

> Candice Odgers (University of California/Irvine) quoted in "'It's Life or Death': U.S. Teenagers Face a Mental Health Crisis" by Matt Richtel in *The New York Times*, April 24, 2022

"Leaving aside the usual political battles between left and right, what's at play here are two fundamentally different conceptions of parents' responsibility to their children, with the same ultimate goal: Do you offer your kids broad exposure to the world, in all its beauty and foulness, and hope they make good decisions? Or do you try to protect them from ideas and activities that you see as dangerous or immoral – and also hope they make good decisions? Obviously, both approaches involve a leap of faith. And it's impossible to adhere entirely to either philosophy."

> Matt Gross in "Your Kids Can Handle Dangerous Ideas" in *The New York Times*, April 30, 2022

"There are so many passionate educators who recognize that our students are going to need some skill sets that we might not have needed growing up at a different time, and that if they're going to be successful – in our increasingly diverse society – then we've got to equip them with the tools to do that. I deeply believe that the ability to grapple with hard history and come out with a vision for the future that you feel like you could be part of is one of the best ways for us to do that."

> Coshandra Dillard in "Teaching Local History in Tulsa" in *Learning for Justice*, Spring 2022 (Issue 2, pp. 28-32)

"Coaches can help us move from the micro to macro and back again. In the midst of all the laws, mandates, strategies, protocols, and discussions we need to navigate, they can help us make time to pause, reflect, and redirect. Coaches can also help us understand our overwhelm, find some structure in our perceived chaos, and help us remember what our goals were to begin with."

Jennifer Abrams in "Coaches Help Us Become Better Selves and Better Educators" in *The Learning Professional*, April 2022 (Vol. 43, #2, pp. 13, 15); Abrams can be reached at jennifer@jenniferabrams.com.

"The most important thing when you're directing is to show kindness. It creates an energy on the set, where anyone can say, 'I don't know the answer to that question. Let's have a discussion. Let's collaborate. You bring your ideas to the table. I'll bring mine. And let's decide what's best for the project.'"

Robin Wright, actress and director, in "Life's Work: An Interview with Robin Wright" by Alison Beard in *Harvard Business Review*, January/February 2022

"You'll inevitably get scars from other people – because you're young, naïve, vulnerable. So you really have to know: What is your direction? What is your purpose? What do you want to do?"

Robin Wright (*ibid*.) on the "boundary bubble" she wished she'd had in her early years: a dancer at 10, model at 14, soap opera actress at 18, star in *The Princess Bride* at 21, later, Claire Underwood in *House of Cards*

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1. Jennifer Gonzalez on Working with Students with ADHD

In this *Cult of Pedagogy* article, Jennifer Gonzalez says that as a teacher, she dutifully complied with IEP accommodations for students with ADHD, which often included having them sit at the front of the class and have additional time for tests. But they still struggled. "The preferential seating and extra time wasn't enough to help them turn in completed work on time, keep track of their things, and stay focused on class activities," says Gonzalez. "Knowing as little as I did about ADHD, I figured that was the best we were going to get."

She sometimes wondered why these students didn't do what *she* did when things got the better of her: sort things out, get back on track, power through. And she caught herself blaming the parents: lack of structure, permissive on TV and video games, not enough oversight. "Suffice it to say, I really, *really* didn't understand ADHD," says Gonzalez.

A little research revealed that she wasn't alone; many teachers don't have a handle on meeting the needs of students with disabilities – and, sadly, teachers are less likely to form close relationships with them than with other students.

Gonzalez read widely and found this 2016 book by Russell Barkley very helpful for improving her understanding of students with ADHD, especially his insights on what's going on in their brains. Here is her summary of Barkley's main points:

• *ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition affecting executive function.* This includes difficulty with persisting toward goals, resisting distractions, holding information in working memory, planning, problem solving, inhibiting impulsive behavior, and reining in displays of emotion. "All of these are often categorized as misbehavior or 'poor choices' in the classroom," says Gonzalez, "and if teachers don't understand how ADHD works, they can spend years responding in ways that will do little to address the underlying causes."

• *ADHD is largely genetic*. It's not caused by social factors, parenting, the school environment, diet, television, videogames, or media consumption. "Knowing this," says Gonzalez, "should put an end to attempts to 'motivate' students with ADHD by giving them pep talks, angry reprimands, or guilt trips."

• *About one in ten students in a given classroom is likely to have ADHD.* The numbers continue to rise, with boys diagnosed more often than girls.

• *There are social-class differences in ADHD diagnosis*. Overdiagnosis is more common in wealthier, better-resourced communities, underdiagnosis in poorer, less-resourced communities.

• *ADHD is linked to a number of serious problems*. These include difficulties relating to peers and adults, depression, anxiety, addiction, auto accidents, and suicide. "These statistics shocked me," says Gonzalez, "and they underscore how important it is for educators, who work with these students for hours every day, to learn as much as we can about how to better support them in school."

• *Medication can help*. Despite the ongoing controversy, well-calibrated meds coupled with interventions and support have a high rate of success for improving academic performance and reducing auto accidents, addiction, and suicide.

• *Research continues to evolve*. There's been major progress in recent decades, and the work continues, highlighting the importance of staying up to date with new findings.

Drawing on Barkley's work and other research, Gonzalez suggests these principles for helping students with ADHD experience success in school:

- Be proactive rather than reactive. Plan ahead with strategies that can prevent problems before they occur and manage them when they do.
- Be prepared for restlessness. Use standing desks, balance balls, wobble chairs, stress balls, and fidget toys, and build in frequent movement and exercise breaks.
- Support students' limited working memory with written rules and directions, instruction in note-taking, color-coded folders, visual timers, daily behavior reports, and additional scaffolds.
- Break large tasks into smaller ones.
- Toggle between activities that are humdrum, those that are highly engaging, and those that require effort and focus.
- Make good use of technology. Well-chosen programs are especially helpful to students with ADHD.
- Teach keyboarding. This is an important skill that gives students with ADHD an alternative way to express themselves in print.

- Use incentives. Meaningful, positive reinforcements should be delivered frequently and numerically outweigh punishments.
- Monitor and modify interventions. A particular program might work for a while and then fade. Educators need to stay tuned to changes and adapt nimbly, providing the best fit for the moment.

Gonzalez has one concern with Barkley's book: his support for public accountability systems in classrooms. "Public behavior charts and systems have gotten a lot of pushback in the teaching world over the past 5 or 10 years," she says, "and I agree with the criticism. The shame these can cause is not worth any benefit they may offer." The best approach, she believes, especially important for students with ADHD, is making the behavior system *visible* to students while avoiding publicly calling out student misbehavior.

"8 Principles for Supporting Students with ADHD" by Jennifer Gonzalez in *Cult of Pedagogy*, April 20, 2022

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2. Can School Psychologists Do Their Work Remotely?

In this article in *Communiqué*, Kait Gould and Cynthia Anderson (May Institute), Rose Iovannone (University of South Florida), and Christine Hoffkins, Allyson Jordan, and Brenna Cavanaugh (University of Rochester) say there are two reasons school psychologists are finding it challenging to meet all their clients' needs:

- A national shortage of psychologists – The recommended ratio is one for every 500 students, but the national average is one psychologist for every 1,211 students, with some locations having only one for every 5,000 students.
- Competing priorities and travel constraints – Large caseloads and the need to drive between multiple sites (including home visits) means psychologists may spend a lot of time on the road – which reduces their effectiveness and contributes to fatigue and burnout.

The good news is that teleconsultation is increasingly accepted by educators and families; this may be a silver lining of the pandemic. Gould et al. describe six ways working remotely can be an effective tool for psychologists:

• *Meetings* – A school psychologist can conference with teachers and teams throughout a school district, expanding their ability to provide timely supports and using their limited time much more efficiently. Teachers and parents might also welcome less travel for meetings.

• *Counseling* – Studies have found that conducting individual and group psychotherapy remotely is as effective as face-to-face, if not more so.

• *Collaborating* – Teleconsultation is also helpful for connecting students with community mental health providers, and for psychologists meeting with providers from outside organizations, including those in other cities and states.

• *Classroom observations and consultation* – Psychologists can observe lessons remotely using devices such as Swivl, and debrief with teachers afterward via Zoom. A 2018

study by Matthew Kraft et al. found that consulting with teachers remotely was as effective as meeting face to face.

• *Assessment* – Teleconferencing may not be suitable for all types of standardized assessments, but certain components – including interviews with teachers, parents, and students and behavioral observations – can be done remotely.

• *Parent involvement* – Family members can join meetings by phone or videoconference from home or their workplace, overcoming the challenges many families experience with travel and child care.

Gould et al. emphasize that psychologists need to set clear ground rules to ensure privacy and confidentiality for remote meetings and consultations, including:

- Seeking active consent from participants;
- Using a private meeting space, closing the door, and using headphones;
- Not recording remote meetings;
- Not sharing meetings with others, including on social media.

"Using Teleconsultation in Schools" by Kait Gould, Rose Iovannone, Cynthia Anderson, Christin Hoffkins, Allyson Jordan, and Brenna Cavanaugh in *Communiqué*, May 2022 (Vol. 50, #7, pp. 26-27); Iovannone can be reached at iovannone@usf.edu.

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3. Getting to the Heart of the Matter with a Troubled Colleague or Friend

In this article in *Psychology Today*, psychiatrist Mark Rego suggests three questions that therapists, leaders, and friends might ask when there are signs of trouble. These queries, he says, "cut through the verbiage of symptoms and reflect information that everyone knows about themselves." The questions:

• *Do you feel like yourself?* This question is universally relevant, says Rego, applying to any life challenge: "Not feeling like themselves is their early warning sign that something is amiss." It's possible, of course, that feeling like yourself could include being sad – for example, after the death of a loved one.

• *What's missing that would get you back to feeling fully like you?* This is the follow-up if the answer to the first question is No. Once a person has focused on their baseline condition, it's usually easy to articulate what's needed to get there again. Some people who have experienced severe trauma or illness "may never feel like themselves again," says Rego. "Forming a new self – which may not feel the same – is their therapeutic and life task."

• *Do you have the capacity for interests, fun, and relaxation?* Affirmative answers indicate that the person is not just *better* but *well*. "As with the other two questions, most people intuitively know the answer," says Rego. They may not be engaging in interests, fun, and relaxation at that moment, perhaps because of a super-busy job or a house full of kids, but they know if they have the capacity to do so. Also, he adds, "The answer may point to ways to adjust our life to become the person we aspire to be."

Almost anyone – a supervisor, a colleague, a friend – can use these questions or versions of them, says Rego. An indirect way to broach the first one might be to say, "You

don't seem like yourself," to which the person might respond, "In what way?" – opening the opportunity to say what's worrisome: the person is quieter, not as cheerful, quicker to anger, changed in other ways. "If kept in a conversational tone," says Rego, "such a simple back-and-forth can help a friend bring their discomfort to light."

We might ask these questions of ourselves, he concludes: "If an honest accounting reveals that we aren't feeling much like ourselves these days – or that we're struggling to relax, muster interest in those around us, or have fun – it may signal the need for a conversation with a trusted friend or a therapist."

"The Questions Every Therapist Should Ask" by Mark Rego in *Psychology Today*, May/June 2022 (Vol. 55, #3, pp. 16)

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4. Coaching Teachers on the Most Effective Use of Data

In this article in *The Learning Professional*, Jim Knight (The Instructional Coaching Group) and Michael Faggella-Luby (Texas Christian University) say many educators have a negative reaction to the word *data*, stemming from its association with late-arriving standardized test scores and aggressive accountability systems. "In worst-case scenarios," they say, "leaders sometimes share data in a way that erodes teacher morale, especially when scores are lower than hoped and teachers don't know what they can do to improve results."

This negativity notwithstanding, Knight and Faggella-Luby believe that data on classroom results, used wisely, "can improve student learning and well-being, accelerate professional growth, and build teacher morale." Something as simple as an exit ticket at the end of a lesson can affirm effective instruction and reveal student misconceptions and errors that can be fixed the next day. Clear learning goals, continuous feedback, and agency (what Shane Lopez calls "the perceived ability to shape our lives") are integral to a sense of making progress on important work.

Knight and Faggella-Luby conducted a two-year study of how teachers, instructional coaches, and school leaders were using data. Seven takeaways on effective practices:

• *It's best to use data that teachers trust and believe in*. A good way to decide which information to collect and analyze is asking teachers, "How will you know when your students have succeeded?"

• *Data needs to be appropriate to what's being measured*. For example, quizzes and checks for understanding are good for assessing knowledge, rubrics for complex skills like writing.

• *Data should be reliable, with common definitions within a teacher team*. "This is important," say Knight and Faggella-Luby, "because when people engage in dialogue about data, they need to be certain they are talking about the same things."

• *Data should provide objective assessments of learning*. "Although subjective data can be helpful," say the authors, "most of us find it easier to process factual data rather than someone's opinion."

• *Data should be gathered at least once a week*. Real-time information on students' struggles and progress helps teachers see what's working and what needs to be corrected or rethought, either immediately during a lesson or the following day. A regular flow of information can also highlight small wins and give an energizing sense of success.

• *Data should be easy to gather*. This means keeping assessments of student learning simple and efficient and using technology when appropriate.

• *Teachers should be involved in gathering data.* Although it's tempting to outsource data collection and analysis to coaches or third parties, teacher ownership is key. "When teachers see for themselves the impact of their teaching," say Knight and Faggella-Luby, "they are much more likely to believe they and their students can achieve their goals."

The authors believe three types of classroom data are especially helpful as teachers and teacher teams work with instructional coaches:

• Data on student achievement – In-the-moment, formative checks for understanding are the most helpful for guiding teacher decision-making. When measuring *knowledge*, it's best to use quizzes, response cards, polls, and exit tickets. Measuring *skills*, holistic or analytic rubrics are preferable. Measuring understanding of *big ideas*, prompts and performance tasks provide the best insights.

• Student engagement – Knight and Faggella-Luby suggest looking at three dimensions: *behavioral* (by observing whether students are on task, using appropriate materials, asking and answering questions, few disruptions), and *cognitive* and *emotional* (by using focus groups or students' jottings or journaling to check in on their level of mental investment, interest, happiness, low anxiety, not giving up.

• Instructional practices – When teachers view videos of their own lessons and look at coaches' notes, the focus should be on two key areas: the types of questions teachers ask (one-right-answer or open-ended, low-level or thought-provoking), and the teacher-student talk dynamic (monologue, teacher-initiated dialogue, or student-initiated interactions).

"'Data' Shouldn't Be a Dirty Word" by Jim Knight and Michael Faggella-Luby in *The Learning Professional*, April 2022 (Vol. 43, #2, pp. 48-51); the authors can be reached at jim@instructionalcoaching.com and m.faggella-luby@tcu.edu.

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5. Jay McTighe on Supervising for the Big Picture

(Originally titled "For School Leaders, Reviewing Isolated Lessons Isn't Enough")

"Don't miss the forest for the trees," says author/consultant Jay McTighe in this *Educational Leadership* article. When supervisors inspect lesson plans and observe individual lessons, they may not see the overall curriculum unit plan. Focusing narrowly on individual lessons can miss the big ideas, essential questions, skills and knowledge, assessments, and other details that unfold over several weeks.

McTighe likens a good unit plan to a full-course dinner, with lessons being its components: aperitif, appetizer, entrée, side dishes, bread, dessert, and digestif. Savoring just one part of the meal doesn't do justice to the whole experience. In addition, each element

serves a specific purpose; with a curriculum unit, the first lesson may set the stage, pose the essential questions, assess students' prior knowledge, and dramatically hook their interest; a lesson in the middle of the unit may include direct instruction, cooperative learning, a hands-on experiment, a visiting speaker, or a field trip; and a concluding lesson may involve students polishing their performance task or studying for the final test.

Supervisors can't possibly observe every lesson, but looking at the unit plan, sampling a few lessons, checking in with students, and talking with the teacher can give important insights on how everything fits together. "In the spirit of 'backward design,'" says McTighe, "leaders need to clearly have the end in mind – the overall goals of a unit – before they analyze and evaluate individual lessons – the *means* to those ends." He suggests these look-fors with unit plans:

- Does the plan focus on priority standards, big ideas, and transferable skills?
- Are students helped to understand overall goals and the success criteria for their work?
- Are individual lessons aligned with unit goals?
- Do lessons give students opportunities to actively make meaning of and apply the content and skills?
- Do essential questions keep bringing students back to the big picture?
- Are checks for understanding built in so students can get timely, specific feedback?
- Is there a gradual release of responsibility so students move from guided practice to increasingly independent application of knowledge and skills?
- Does the summative assessment collect appropriate evidence of student learning?

"For School Leaders, Reviewing Isolated Lessons Isn't Enough" by Jay McTighe in *Educational Leadership*, Summer 2021; McTighe can be reached at jay@mctighe-associates.com.

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6. More Ideas on Dealing with Procrastination

"What can you do when your students are aware of deadlines and responsibilities but still avoid them?" asks Jennifer Sullivan in this *Edutopia* article. Time management strategies like homework planners and digital calendars go only so far, she says, because non-rational factors are at the heart of procrastination.

According to psychologist Tim Pychyl (Carleton University, Canada), people avoid tasks because of the emotions associated with completing them. Feeling stressed about an impending deadline, the amygdala kicks in, telling the body to avoid the anxiety-producing situation. "It's all about our feelings," says Pychyl. "We think that by putting things off, we're going to feel better." Procrastination is a self-reinforcing loop: a perceived threat, avoidance, feeling better. But of course the task doesn't go away.

Sullivan has synthesized a list of eight ways that teachers can help students get the better of procrastination:

• *Don't judge*. Teachers are often impatient and irate with students who procrastinate

and don't ask for help. When they do (usually just before the due date), it's best to respond patiently: "I'm so glad you asked!" or "That's a great question."

• *One step at a time*. Breaking a large task into manageable pieces may be just the help students need to get started.

• *Put boundaries on breaks*. "Sometimes the things we do while we're procrastinating lead to more procrastination," says Sullivan, confessing her own tendency to let a quick check of e-mail turn into a deep dive. Teach students how to use alarms to signal the end of a break-time activity.

• *Provide a reward when a task is completed*. Whether it's time on a fun video game or Jolly Rancher treats, it's smart to pair a pleasurable experience with completing a chunk of work.

• *Build self-awareness about moods and daily rhythms*. Students can learn to be strategic about scheduling tasks during times of day when they have higher energy.

• *Reframe negative thoughts*. Staring at an empty page or computer screen, unable to get started, can lead students to feel incompetent and stupid, which can become a runaway train. "Teach your students to practice forgiveness and self-compassion," says Sullivan. "Yes, they missed the deadline because they procrastinated, but let's move forward."

• *Consistency is key*. Some students think they can get by if they pull all-nighters at the last minute. That's not a viable long-range strategy; teachers need to encourage students to spread out the work and use the other tricks on this list to do a little at a time.

• *Waiting till you feel like it doesn't work*. "Many students procrastinate because they are waiting for just the right moment to get started," says Sullivan. "Explain to your students that life requires us to do things we don't feel like doing" – filing tax returns, taking out the garbage. "We need to teach our students how to look beyond their feelings in the moment, and reassure them that they can persevere even if they don't feel like it."

"Addressing the Emotional Roots of Procrastination" by Jennifer Sullivan in *Edutopia*, April 22, 2022; Pychyl can be reached at tim.pychyl@carleton.ca.

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7. Myths About Student Motivation

In this article in *Education Week*, Sarah Sparks reports some insights on student motivation that she gleaned from the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference in San Diego. She frames them as pushback on three myths that are common in K-12 schools:

• *Myth #1: The best source of student motivation is advice from a teacher*. A teacher's suggestions may help, says Ayelet Fishbach (University of Chicago), but the student will get a bigger motivational boost from giving advice to another student (for example, on improving study habits or temper control). Trying to understand a peer's difficulties and offering advice is more productive for the helper than getting direct advice from an adult. Interestingly, students don't predict that helping a classmate will be motivational.

• *Myth #2: Students setting goals for themselves is the best motivational strategy*. Carlton Fong (Texas State University) conducted a meta-analysis of 400 studies to see which of these self-motivation strategies worked best for K-12 students:

- Engaging in mastery self-talk – telling themselves they were competent or would perform well on a task;
- Enhancing the interest of the task – making it into a game or aligning it with personal interests;
- Warning themselves of the external consequences of not succeeding;
- Controlling their environment – setting up the work space to reduce interruptions;
- Proximal goal-setting – breaking down one long-term goal into smaller interim goals.

Goal-setting had no significant benefit for middle- and high-school students, the researchers found, nor did enhancing the interest of the task. What worked? Controlling their environment, mastery self-talk, and warning themselves of the consequences of failure.

• *Myth #3: Making a difficult task fun and entertaining will motivate students*. The common assumption is that fun tasks (like embedding a math concept in a fantasy football team) are more motivational than serious tasks (like comparing prices). Not necessarily, say Tory Higgins and Emily Nakkawita (Columbia University). Their research showed that persistence with a task was more closely associated with whether the modality fit with what the student considered to be the goals of the task. "It depends on whether someone considers the activity fun or important," says Higgins. "If it's considered fun, then adding something enjoyable surrounding the situation can inspire them to redo the activity – but if it's important, [fun] actually will undermine it."

"3 Counterintuitive Findings About Motivation That Teachers Can Use" by Sarah Sparks in *Education Week*, April 24, 2022

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8. Short Items:

a. Resources for AAPI Heritage Month – This website compiled by Liza Talusan has a wealth of materials for celebrating Asian-American Pacific Islanders Month.

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b. How Writers Can Grab Readers' Attention – This New Yorker article by Calvin Trillin would be great for high-school students learning how to kick off their essays with a punchy lead-off paragraph.

"The Lede: How to Start Off" by Calvin Trillin in *The New Yorker*, December 27, 2021

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If you have feedback or suggestions, please e-mail kim.marshall48@gmail.com

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 52 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 150 articles each week, and selects 8-10 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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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 Express
Cult of Pedagogy
District Management Journal
Ed. Magazine
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
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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
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
Phi Delta Kappan
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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