Marshall Memo 702

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
September 11, 2017

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Kind without tough makes you a pushover. Tough without kind makes you a jerk."
Dan Rockwell (see item #2)

"Some of the worst mistakes I made as a classroom teacher could be traced back to me protecting my ego. I overreacted at times when I thought my students weren't respecting me. I did stupid things so my students would think I was cool. I kept my mouth shut at times when I should have spoken up because I wanted my colleagues to like me. Ego, ego, ego, ego."
Jennifer Gonzalez (see item #1)

"In a lot of cases, what teachers need is not more professional development, more collaboration with peers, or even more materials to work with. What they need is time, in their rooms, alone, to implement the things they have already learned to do. They need to concentrate. They need to not be interrupted. They need you to trust them."
Jennifer Gonzalez (*ibid*.)

"Basically, the human brain isn't 100% rational, so if you want to achieve large groups of people working together, you need to know this and not assume everyone will pitch in because it's the logical thing to do."
Dean Burnett (quoted in item #5)

"Research shows our brains are not hard-wired to understand logic or retain facts for very long. Our brains are wired to understand and retain stories. A story is a journey that moves the listener, and when the listener goes on that journey they feel different and the result is persuasion and sometimes action."
Jennifer Aaker (quoted in item #3)

1. Five Messages Some Principals Need to Hear from Their Teachers

In this *Cult of Pedagogy* article, Jennifer Gonzalez says the teachers she hears from have a range of emotions about their work. "Some are engaged in a healthy struggle, the 'good stress' of working at a challenging job," she says. "If we think of teacher stress as a continuum, I would put these teachers at the healthy end. At the other end, the struggle has a different character, a kind of desperation that goes beyond 'good stress.' Teachers at that end of the continuum are panicked. Many nights they go home and cry. They don't sleep. They can't concentrate. And they are thinking seriously about leaving the profession altogether."

There's a common factor with the most stressed-out teachers, says Gonzalez: their administrator. "Behind every teacher story is an administrator who is interpreting policy, setting expectations, and establishing a tone that will determine the quality of their teachers' work, and by extension, the education their students receive… [T]oo many administrators are tolerating, or creating, unhealthy working conditions. Administrators who may have forgotten what it's like to be a teacher."

Gonzalez acknowledges that few teachers understand how difficult it is to be a principal. "Most of us will never fully understand the difficulty of your job," she says, "the pressures from parents, community members, central office, students, and teachers. How mandates are passed down without your input. How things like safety and the budget weigh on you. The dozens of decisions you make every hour. How you protect your staff in ways they will never know, how you do things for kids that no one ever sees. We forget how, unlike when you were in the classroom and had plenty of colleagues to vent to when things got tough, you are now mostly alone. How you miss out on so much of the good stuff: because you're constantly putting out fires and making sure the ship keeps sailing, you don't get to experience so much of the joy of educating young people. You don't have time to really get to know kids, to make memories with them and impact them in small ways all year long. We don't often consider the fact that despite doing your very best, you always have to disappoint someone."

That said, Gonzalez wants to pass along a few things for school leaders to keep in mind about the professional conditions in their schools:

• *Treat teachers' time as a precious commodity*. Most schools give teachers about an hour a day, sometimes less, when they're not teaching classes. In that time, teachers need to plan units and lessons, design materials, make copies, write feedback on student work, enter grades in the system, complete office paperwork, contact parents, work with colleagues, give extra help to struggling students, troubleshoot technology problems, display student work, and

tidy up the classroom. Given all this, says Gonzalez, it's "soul-crushing" when administrators steal during-the-day time for nonessential activities. "It forces teachers to make the choice between bringing more work home or just not doing it. The lessons become less engaging. The feedback gets less meaningful, more robotic. The paperwork comes back late. The collaboration gets postponed, again." Her suggestions:

- Drastically reduce meetings. Many are unnecessary, or could be handled by e-mail or conducted remotely using software like Voxer.
- Guard instructional time like a Doberman. Eliminate public address all-calls, buzz-ins to classrooms, and disruptions to the regular schedule that aren't worth the time.
- Trust that unstructured time will be used well. "In a lot of cases," says Gonzalez, "what teachers need is not more professional development, more collaboration with peers, or even more materials to work with. What they need is time, in their rooms, alone, to implement the things they have already learned to do. They need to concentrate. They need to not be interrupted. They need you to trust them."

Yes, some teachers might not use unstructured time well, she acknowledges. "They might socialize. They might fool around. *Don't punish everyone else for that*. Deal with those teachers one-on-one and treat everyone else like the professionals they are."

• *Differentiate your leadership*. "Some of the most ham-handed mistakes administrators make come from a place of treating all staff members as a single homogenous unit," says Gonzalez. A better approach:

- Meet teachers where they are instructionally. On lesson plans, some teachers might need to be checked more frequently than others, and some might have developed a non-standard format that works for them.
- Address problems on a case-by-case basis. "One of the most maddening things some administrators do is reprimand an entire staff for the transgressions of a few," says Gonzalez. "What would be so much better is if you just went directly to the people who are causing the problem and deal with them alone."
- Provide choice. An ideal PD would be several blocks of time with multiple offerings in each one.
- As needed, support teachers with classroom management and back them up when dealing with parents.

The underlying principle: Every teacher is in a different place instructionally, personally, and career-wise. Personalization is challenging, but it's something principals should strive for.

• *Give specific feedback*. Telling teachers they're doing a great job is thin gruel for professionals, especially if it's based on few if any classroom visits, and a catered lunch every now and then isn't much better. Short classroom visits followed by specific observations are far more affirming – for example, noting the way the teacher respectfully redirected a student, the quality of questioning, wait time after posing a question, students' enjoyment of a particular part of the lesson.

• *Regularly check in with your ego*. "Some of the worst mistakes I made as a classroom teacher could be traced back to me protecting my ego," says Gonzalez. "I overreacted at times

when I thought my students weren't respecting me. I did stupid things so my students would think I was cool. I kept my mouth shut at times when I should have spoken up because I wanted my colleagues to like me. Ego, ego, ego, ego." Principals can fall into the same traps: Bringing in a new program that makes the school look good but overloads teachers. Not admitting that a new program isn't going well. Being unwilling to loosen up on certain policies – for example, requiring that lesson plans be turned in – for fear of appearing weak or being taken advantage of by a few. Not daring to ask for anonymous feedback from the staff. "In all of your decisions, but especially the ones where you'll be asking more from your teachers, take a few moments and see whether your ego is shouting in your ear," says Gonzalez. "Sometimes you only have to recognize it to make it quiet down."

• *Fight for us*. "You stand right in the middle, wedged between those who make the policies and the teachers and students impacted by them," she says. "When policies or norms that affect teachers' workload come down from above, and they aren't working, and they ultimately don't serve kids, whose responsibility is it to communicate that to those in power? You have the ear of the superintendent, at least more than the average classroom teacher. Is it possible that you could be the vanguard in reversing some of our biggest problems in schools? Could you say to those above you, This isn't working? Could you join forces with other administrators, tell stories to make the decision-makers understand, and then tell them again?"

"What Teachers Want You to Know: A Note to School Administrators" by Jennifer Gonzalez in *Cult of Pedagogy*, September 4, 2017, http://bit.ly/2wCgUuI

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2. Saying No With Kindness

"Kind without tough makes you a pushover. Tough without kind makes you a jerk," says Dan Rockwell in this *Leadership Freak* article. "Some leaders choose kindness and neglect toughness. They bring coffee for the staff. They exchange pleasantries and tell jokes. They're always affirming." And inevitably, some people take advantage, asking for special exemptions, granting themselves special privileges, or worse. At moments like this, many leaders have trouble being tough, or they're tough in a way that undermines relationships and trust.

But you don't have to be Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde, choosing between kind and tough, says Rockwell. "When it's time to be tough, do it with kindness." Some suggested language:

- "I want to say yes, but this time I have to say no."
- "I work to be fair with everyone. I'd love to make an exception, but I can't."
- "It's hard for me to say no, but this time I have to."

"How To Be Tough When You Prefer Being Kind" by Dan Rockwell in *Leadership Freak*, September 6, 2017, http://bit.ly/2wJcAvc; Rockwell is at dan@leadershipfreak.com.

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3. The Impact of Telling a Story

In this article in *The Guardian*, Brianne Carlon Rush cites brain research on how much more powerful a story is than using facts and figures. In one experiment at Stanford's Graduate School of Business, 5 percent of an audience remembered a statistics-centered presentation versus 63 percent that remembered a story. "Research shows our brain are not hard-wired to understand logic or retain facts for very long," says Stanford professor Jennifer Aaker. "Our brains are wired to understand and retain stories. A story is a journey that moves the listener, and when the listener goes on that journey they feel different and the result is persuasion and sometimes action."

What's true in marketing and advertising is equally true for teachers who want their students to remember important knowledge and skills. Some common principles:

- Develop a true understanding of your target audience.
- Identify emotional drivers – what audience members care about, what ignites their passion.
- Use names and details from the audience. "The more relatable your story is," says Rush, "the more your audience will respond."
- Tailor your story to the medium you're using, whether it's a lecture, movie, or tweet.
- Add credible information to your story. "No one says facts and figures should be completely eliminated from your storytelling," says Aaker. "When data and story are used together, audiences are moved both emotionally and intellectually."
- Get the audience involved in the story, perhaps by using a contest or managing a hashtag.

"Science of Storytelling: Why and How to Use It In Your Marketing" by Brianne Carlon Rush in *The Guardian*, August 28, 2014, http://bit.ly/2vKVL0p

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4. Daniel Willingham on the Persistent Learning Styles Myth

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Daniel Willingham (University of Virginia) reports that 76 percent of U.S. educators (and 93 percent of all adults) still believe that students learn best when they receive information in a preferred learning style. This was discouraging for Willingham, who has been trying to debunk this myth for more than 15 years. He has four theories on why it's so tenacious:

First, the learning styles theory has achieved the status of one of those ideas that "they" (renowned experts) have figured out. Why doubt it? Textbooks in graduate schools of education don't explicitly debunk it.

Second, it would be so nice if the theory were true. "It predicts that a struggling student would find much of school work easier if we made a relatively minor change to lesson plans," says Willingham, "– make sure auditory learners are listening, the visual learners are watching, and so on."

Third, a close approximation of the learning style theory has some validity. It's true that some people are better with words, some people with space, some with listening. "The

(incorrect) twist that learning styles theory adds," says Willingham, "is to suggest that everyone can reach the same cognitive goal via these different abilities; that if I'm good with space but bad with words (or better, if I *prefer* space to words), you can rearrange a verbal task so that it plays to my spatial strength."

What's wrong about this theory is that with any intellectual task (for example, remembering a list of nouns), there is a way of accomplishing it that works much better than others, regardless of students' learning styles. Given the task of remembering words, you could use a verbal strategy (repeating the words to yourself, thinking of meaning, etc.) or a visual strategy (creating a visual image in your mind). Even for people whose learning style profile is not strong in visual imagery, says Willingham, the visual strategy still works better because that's the nature of the task. "People's alleged learning styles don't count for anything in accounting for task performance," he says, "but the effect of the strategy on a task is huge."

"3 Reasons Most Teachers Still Believe the Learning Styles Myth" by Daniel Willingham in *The Education Gadfly*, September 6, 2017 (Vol. 17, #36), http://bit.ly/2fdnr7k; Willingham can be reached at willingham@virginia.edu.

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5. Twelve Big Ideas in Science

In this *BuzzFeed* article, Tom Chivers shares the responses he got when he asked 12 prominent scientists, "If civilization was destroyed, what scientific information would you pass on to the survivors?"

• *The atomic hypothesis* – "We and everything that we see around us are made of the same three unimaginably tiny particles, born out of violently exploding stars hundreds of millions of year ago," says nuclear physicist Dr. Liam Gaffney. "Just three little particles – the proton, neutron, and electron – constitute everything that we see around us." Materials chemist Dr. Sujata Kundu adds, "These atoms are like the Lego bricks of our universe, except that there is also a game-playing element to it. There are rules that cannot be broken. Knowing the rules of the game and how the Lego bricks interact with themselves and others helps us make sense of everything – why glass is transparent, why ceramic cracks, why ice is less dense than liquid water."

• *The double-helix structure of the DNA molecule* – Found inside nearly every living cell, and made up of just four chemicals – abbreviated as A, T, C, and G – this is the stuff of life. "The DNA code," says molecular biologist Dr. Buddhini Samarasinghe, "helps us learn where we came from and who our ancestors were. It can help us understand the diseases that ail us, and how to fight them. The structure of DNA allows us to comprehend life on our planet, to learn where we fit within the natural order, and how we can best participate in the world we share."

• *The fact that energy is always conserved, never created or destroyed* – "Our state of being, of breathing, of consuming, of reproducing, is a cycle of energy transfer from chemical to heat to chemical to mass, etc.," says physicist Dr. Ceri Brenner. "All scientific experiments start with the same question: What happens when I add a bit of energy or change the energy

balance, where does the energy then go? What biological, chemical, or physical processes does that energy transfer trigger? Philosophically, this is also a very nice sentiment when thinking of those who have died. Their energy, stored up in their mass, will never be destroyed; it will be conserved and transformed into something else or will simply remain constant."

• *The germ theory of disease* – "Illness is often caused by tiny lifeforms, invisible to the naked eye, that can be transmitted by breath, touch, and body fluids," says engineer Dr. Susannah Fleming. "Transmission can be minimized by keeping waste out of water supplies, and by cleaning people and surfaces who have been in contact with a sick person or creature."

• *Electricity* – "Spin a magnet inside a loop of copper and the form of energy you create can provide you with light, heat, food, and clean water," says chemist/biophysicist/engineer Dr. Duncan Casey. Electricity has made it possible to keep houses at a controlled temperature year-round, keep food fresh much longer, communicate over long distances, and investigate the fabric of nature. It drives our farms, factories, trains, and financial transactions.

• *The harmonic oscillator model* – "The simple act of sitting on a beach and watching the ocean tide can be enough to come up with a mathematical description that describes nearly all motion around us," says optomechanics Ph.D. student Ying Lia Li. "Normally this is intuitive, and we see a lot of harmonic motion in real life: the pendulum inside a grandfather clock, the motion of a diving board, or the distinct sound of resonance when you turn up the bass on your car radio." But it's also vital to understanding electronic circuits, the motion of atoms and molecules, and the quantum field theory.

• *Euler's identity* – This encapsulates a number of deep concepts in arithmetic, including π, complex numbers, logarithms, zero, and one.

• *The counterintuitive nature of many scientific findings* – "Science does not come naturally to humans," says physics teacher Alom Shaha. "'Scientific' models are often… far removed from 'common sense' explanations of how the world works. It's remarkable to me that humans have worked out ways of modeling nature that allow us to do everything from eradicating deadly diseases to knowing how to land a probe on a comet that's flying through space at thousands of meters per second."

• *The scientific method* – "The natural world is not governed by whimsical gods," says astrobiologist Dr. Lewis Dartnell, "but is essentially mechanical and can therefore be understood and then predicted by people, using careful observation, experimentation, and measurement, and importantly by testing your explanations to try to refute them." This reiterative process is what sets science apart from any other system for explaining how the world works.

• *The importance of being a curious skeptic* – "Demand evidence for everything and expect others to demand it of you," says biochemist Dr. Samuel Godfrey. "Tell the world what you've learned, no matter how small, and if it stands up to scrutiny, then you're on the right track. Get this right and you will change the world."

• *Irrationality* – "Basically, the human brain isn't 100% rational," says psychologist Dr. Dean Burnett, "so if you want to achieve large groups of people working together, you need to know this and not assume everyone will pitch in because it's the logical thing to do. Cognitive

biases, group mentality, social hierarchies, differing motivations and experiences, these and more all mean that people can have wildly differing conclusions about what the 'correct' course of action is… See the anti-vaccination movement, climate change denial, intelligent design proponents, and more, for modern examples of this. Bottom line: people aren't logical or rational by default, and it's vitally important to remember this when trying to impart knowledge and guidance. Having some useful knowledge like atomic theory or the nature of gravity isn't going to be much use if enough people don't want to believe it."

• *The importance of imagination* – Materials chemist Sujata Kundu agrees with Einstein that "imagination is more important than knowledge." "We know what we know," says Kundu, "but our imagination takes us to places beyond that which we have already established, and on to new discoveries, theories, and explanations. If all scientific knowledge were destroyed, the next generation of creatures would find a way. They always do."

"I Asked 12 Scientists: What Is the One Fact Humanity Needs to Know?" by Tom Chivers in *BuzzFeed*, August 27, 2015, http://bzfd.it/2xqVeVy

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6. Looking At More Than Test Scores to Assess a School

In this interview with Kate Stoltzfus in *Education Week*, Jack Schneider (College of the Holy Cross) describes his dismay upon learning that the Massachusetts high school he was about to send his own children to had a zero rating in an online school quality tool. A closer look revealed that the rating was based entirely on SAT scores and teacher-student ratios. He began thinking about a better way to evaluate the quality of schools.

"Most of us in our hearts know what a good school is and does," says Schneider, "but we don't have the language ready and we haven't conceptualized it as a broader community. The way I tend to think about school quality these days is shaped by the future. Who are the kids I want to meet 10 years from now? That is not a world that is going to be made by drill-and-kill instruction in math and English. It's a world that is going to be shaped by children discovering their interests and passions and talents in the classroom. It's shaped by children going to school with people who are not always exactly like them and learning how to work together and who are given opportunities to play and create together."

Over the last few years, Schneider has worked with scores of teachers, principals, district officials, students, and families to come up with a new set of school quality criteria. Here are the five components they're working with:

- Teachers and the teaching environment;
- School culture;
- Resources;
- Academic learning;
- Citizenship and well-being.

"We've found that public perceptions of the public school actually improved when people had a wide array of performance data rather than just standardized test scores," says Schneider, "which tend to correlate strongly with family income. We've also found that educators tend to

trust data more when they see that those data align with all the things they are trying to do in the classroom."

"What Makes a School Good? It's More Than Test Scores" – An interview with Jack Schneider by Kate Stoltzfus in *Education Week*, September 6, 2017 (Vol. 37, #3, p. 19), www.edweek.org; Schneider can be reached at jschneid@holycross.edu.

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7. Insights on Adolescent Cognition

In this interview with Liz Griffin in *School Administrator*, Frances Jensen (University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine) shares recent insights on the teenage brain, which she likens to a Ferrari with weak brakes. "We used to think IQ was fixed at puberty," says Jensen. "But we have great data now that show adolescence is a window where teenagers have incredible neural plasticity, and they can increase their IQ… That means high-school teachers are teaching students at a time when their brains are being modified in really profound ways. Adolescents can be encouraged to build out synapses and become experts. This is a time they can hone academic and athletic skill sets. Teenagers love knowing this stuff."

In a sidebar in this interview, Jensen shares six misconceptions about adolescent thinking and learning:

• *Misconception #1: Adolescents are adults with fewer miles on the odometer*. Actually, teens' brains are more malleable than adults', meaning learning is quicker and easier for them.

• *Misconception #2: The brain is done developing by age 12*. Actually, it's not fully mature until the mid- to late 20s.

• *Misconception #3: Teenagers are more resilient than adults*. In fact, they're more sensitive to stress; the same hormones that make adults calmer make teens more anxious.

• *Misconception #4: Teens' IQs are established when they are children*. Actually, with at least two-thirds of people, IQ changes significantly in the teen years.

• *Misconception #5: Adolescents won't get addicted to alcohol and other drugs*. In fact, teens get addicted more easily than adults, and it's harder for them to quit. Also, cognitive impairment from smoking marijuana lasts longer in teens – up to four days.

• *Misconception #6: Teenagers are basically lazy*. Actually, they sleep late because their circadian clock is set differently, releasing sleep-inducing melatonin at 11 p.m., versus 8-9 p.m. in adults.

"The Developing Teenage Brain" by Liz Griffin in *School Administrator*, September 2017 (Vol. 74, #8, p. 20-25), http://my.aasa.org/AASA/Resources/SAMag/2017/Sep17/Griffin.aspx

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8. Life Skills to Master Before Setting Off for College

In this article in *School Administrator*, Julie Lythcott-Haims describes catching herself as she leaned over the dinner table to cut her 10-year-old's meat. Could it be that the lack of independence and agency she observed in students when she was a freshman dean at Stanford

University could be traced back to parents doing too much for their children? With that thought in mind, she compiled a list of basic competencies that every young person needs by age 18:

• *Talking to strangers* – Dealing respectfully with store clerks, landlords, bank tellers, health care providers, bus drivers, mechanics, teachers, deans, or advisers – with good eye contact – is an important life skill. Perhaps parents spend too much time warning kids not to talk to strangers, versus the more-nuanced skill of picking out the few bad strangers from all the others – and dealing appropriately with the latter.

• *Finding their way around* – Kids are driven too much, says Lythcott-Haims. They need to know how to get places, make travel plans, and deal with transportation snafus.

• *Managing assignments, workloads, and deadlines* – Adolescents must learn how to prioritize tasks and get things done without constant reminders.

• *Contributing to a household* – In addition to getting their schoolwork done and participating in extracurricular activities, kids need to do their fair share of chores and respect the needs of others.

• *Handling interpersonal conflict* – Teens shouldn't always need adults stepping in to solve misunderstandings and soothe hurt feelings.

• *Coping with life's ups and downs* – This includes dealing with tough teachers and principals, bullies, competition, and challenging academic work.

• *Earning and managing money* – Adolescents need part-time jobs with a boss who doesn't necessarily love them, to learn about completing job tasks, accountability, and appreciating the cost and value of stuff they want.

• *Persistence* – Kids need a "wise understanding that success comes only after trying and failing and trying again," says Lythcott-Haims. They need grit, thoughtful risk-taking, and resilience.

"Remember, our kids must be able to do all of these things without calling a parent on the phone," she concludes. "If they're calling us to ask how, they do not carry that life skill."

"Eight Skills Every Student Needs by 18" by Julie Lythcott-Haims in *School Administrator*, September 2017 (Vol. 74, #8, p. 14-15), http://bit.ly/2jikzuo; the author can be reached at info@deanjulie.com.

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9. Why Is Merit Pay Being Shunned by So Many Charter Schools?

In this *Boston Globe* article, James Vaznis reports that almost all of Boston's 16 charter schools are using traditional salary scales with cost-of-living increases, rather than merit pay or performance bonuses. "Across the country," says Vaznis, "there is an ongoing debate among charter schools about the best approach to teacher compensation, amid growing skepticism that connecting pay to performance actually improves student achievement."

A recent study by the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington confirmed this trend. "I thought we would see more in the way of performance-based pay because so many of these schools are big on outcomes," said Robin Lake, the center's director. But she and her colleagues found that hasn't happened. "We've been in a lot

of charters where people want to know that there is some predictability and that people are treated fairly," said Lake.

Many funders and philanthropists believed that charter schools would adopt merit pay, the theory being that this would improve teaching and student achievement. But charter leaders who initially bought into this rationale have turned against merit pay for the same reasons their colleagues in unionized public schools have:

- Merit pay can be divisive, creating a culture of one-upmanship.
- It can undermine sharing and teamwork by creating incentives for teachers to keep their best ideas to themselves.
- Compensation does not seem an effective motivator for most teachers to work harder or smarter. Sydney Chaffee, a Boston charter teacher who is the 2017 National Teacher of the Year, said, "It's not about money for me, and I don't know any teacher who would tell you they are in the job for the money."
- When merit pay has been used, there has been little or no impact on student achievement, according to studies by RAND and other researchers.
- There are equity issues since well under half of teachers teach grades or courses in which students take standardized tests (providing data for a merit-pay scale).

The Edward Brooke charter school network in Boston used merit pay in its early years, but scrapped that approach in favor of a pay scale with three categories of teachers. The top is master teachers, who have demonstrated success in boosting student performance, worked well with their colleagues, stayed with their school for a number of years, and taken on extra responsibilities like mentoring and planning professional development.

"Charter Schools Stick to Salary Scales" by James Vaznis in *The Boston Globe*, September 4, 2017, http://bit.ly/2y0H4aC

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10. How Truancy Affects Elementary School Students' Achievement

"Chronic absenteeism signals educational and developmental risk," says Michael Gottfried (University of California/Santa Barbara) in this *Elementary School Journal* article reporting his three-year study of truancy and tardiness in a district's elementary schools. Gottfried was interested in how a student's truancy plays out during a school year, how it's linked to achievement, and when educators can most effectively intervene. His findings:

- Truancy in the fall is not linked to lower achievement in spring standardized tests, but truancy in the spring is highly correlated with lower achievement in those tests.
- A high number of fall tardies predicts a high number of spring tardies.
- A student who was chronically absent in the fall term has a much higher probability of being chronically absent in the spring term than students with fewer absences.

"It appears," says Gottfried, "that the path by which fall and spring truancy negatively associate with student outcomes is that fall truant behavior influences spring truant behavior, which in turn influences exam performance. The patterns set early in the school year have ramifications, in other words, for outcomes later in the year."

Gottfried draws these conclusions. First, educators should carefully monitor truancy in the early weeks of the school year, diagnose the reasons, and work hard to change the pattern so that it doesn't continue and lead to poor performance in the spring.

Second, schools should also be on the lookout for student tardiness early in the school year. Although tardiness early in the year isn't correlated with truancy later on, it is highly correlated with continued tardiness, and being late for school has an impact on achievement and classroom environment.

Third, the study suggests that educators should track truancy and tardiness throughout the school year, watching for patterns.

Finally, Gottfried says schools should disaggregate tardiness and truancy data, watching for patterns by gender, ELL status, and other student characteristics, and customize interventions accordingly.

"Does Truancy Beget Truancy? Evidence from Elementary School" by Michael Gottfried in *The Elementary School Journal*, September 2017 (Vol. 118, #1, p. 128-148), http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/692938; Gottfried can be reached at mgottfried@education.ucsb.edu.

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11. Should Teachers Be Touting Commercial Products?

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Chester Finn, Jr. comments on a recent *New York Times* article that raised questions about the ethics and propriety of teachers promoting commercial technology products, including those created by Apple and Google. "It's not a trivial issue," says Finn, "and never is when professionals who are presumably looking after the best interests of those they serve are engaged by outside interests to promote products and services sold by those interests."

The same concern has been raised when doctors are wooed and rewarded by pharmaceutical companies, prescribe medicines that might not be medically indicated, and recommend those products to colleagues, medical students, and patients.

But Finn urges us to take a deep breath and keep three things in mind. First, there's nothing new about educators promoting commercial products and getting compensated for it. "That's what happens when salesmen for textbook companies treat school superintendents to golf games and nice lunches, after which the district buys their textbooks," he says. It's happening at education conferences that always have vast halls of promotions, freebies, and come-ons by conference sponsors. And educational magazines and websites often have endorsements of products by teachers and administrators.

Second, says Finn, "we don't do a very good job of compensating teachers in America and many find they must supplement their incomes in various ways" – from selling Tupperware to acting as "ambassadors" for Google. As long as educators are transparent about their financial ties to a particular product, he says, is this an ethical problem?

Third, says Finn, perhaps we should be just as concerned about teachers who promote "unproven or even harmful pedagogical ideas. They're not only jeopardizing the future of

children in classrooms led by other teachers who heed their counsel… they're also ill-serving their own pupils!... We have tons of rigorous research showing that some instructional strategies do improve student outcomes and others do not. How are we to view teachers who employ the latter kind – and who encourage others to employ them, too?"

"Should Teachers Have Their Own Brands?" by Chester Finn, Jr. in *The Education Gadfly*, September 6, 2017 (Vol. 17, #36), http://bit.ly/2wVP5z3; the *New York Times* article Finn comments on is "Silicon Valley Courts Brand-Name Teachers, Raising Ethics Issues" by Natasha Singer, September 2, 2017, available at http://nyti.ms/2xgHZWG.

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***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 others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 48 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, consultant, and writer, 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).

Subscriptions:

Individual subscriptions are $50 for a year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and how to pay by check, credit card, or purchase order.

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)
- Topics (with a count of articles from each)
- Article selection criteria
- Headlines for all issues
- Reader opinions
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in Word and PDF)
- All back issues and podcasts in YouTube and MP3
- An archive of all articles so far, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- A collection of "classic" articles from all issues

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
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
Literacy Today
Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Teacher
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