

Marshall Memo 602

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
September 7, 2015

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Quotes of the Week

“It’s important to dig deeply for understanding because we as teachers are so familiar with the content that we may lose track of how difficult it is for students to grasp the content. This phenomenon, called the *expert blind spot*, can be avoided with savvy prediction about where students might get stuck.”

Jaunine Fouché in “Predicting Student Misconceptions in Science” in *Educational Leadership*, September 2015 (Vol. 73, #1, p. 60-65), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/1PXuk6n>; Fouché can be reached at fouchej@mhs-pa.org.

“The available evidence, however limited, certainly suggests that it will take more than the adoption of higher standards to drive a stake through the heart of the skills-driven, paint-by-numbers approach to literacy instruction. Old habits die hard.”

Robert Pondiscio in “Do Classroom Assignments Reflect Today’s Higher Standards?” in *The Education Gadfly*, September 2, 2015 (Vol. 15, #34), <http://bit.ly/1K1mKmU> (Pondiscio’s review comments on the study summarized in item #1)

“Yes, we want to differentiate content for our students in order to help them access it in ways that work for them, but we also don’t want them working in silos, void of interaction and deprived of shared experiences.”

Paul France (see item #4)

“The highest-performing schools do not use value-added data for commendation or to name, blame, or shame, but to uncover, discover, and recover. Value-added data allow teachers and leaders to dig deeper and ask more questions about student learning.”

A Battelle for Kids white paper (see item #5)

1. A Troubling Snapshot of Classroom-Level Common Core Implementation

In this Education Trust paper, Sonja Santelises and Joan Dabrowski report on their study of how well classroom assignments in two large urban districts reflect the rigor and content of Common Core State Standards – specifically, text centrality, cognitive challenge, motivation, and engagement. “Our initial analysis raises a number of warning signals for state, district, and school leaders as they move into the next stages of implementation,” say the authors. “[T]here is much work to do” – especially in schools educating students from low-income families.

Why look at classroom assignments? Why not report on the hundreds of hours of Common Core training that principals and teachers have received in recent years? Santelises and Dabrowski believe the day-to-day work that students actually do is far more informative about curriculum implementation because it:

- Provides a clear window into classroom practices;
- Gives insights into school leaders’ and districts’ expectations on what and how to teach;
- Represents what teachers know and understand about curriculum standards;
- Shows how students interact with the curriculum;
- Reflects what teachers believe students can do independently as a result of instruction.

To compile this report, researchers collected classroom assignments in 92 middle-school classrooms (ELA, humanities, social studies, and science) in February and March of 2015. They gathered work products that students did independently, including extended writing or research projects, homework assignments, and exit tickets, all of which provided evidence of what students were given the opportunity to learn and the competencies they were asked to demonstrate. Work that students did during teacher-led practice, and assignments given by substitute teachers, were not included.

Of almost 2,000 assignments gathered, 1,591 were scored by master teachers following these criteria:

- *Alignment with the grade’s Common Core standards* – In ELA, this means regular practice with complex texts and their academic language; reading, writing, and speaking using evidence from texts, both literary and informational; and building knowledge through content information. In addition, did each assignment clearly articulate the task so students fully understood what was expected of them?
- *Centrality of text* – Students have the opportunity to display increasing expertise in interpreting and responding to material and pull out evidence to justify their responses and thinking – e.g., paraphrasing or direct citation to support a position or claim.

- *Cognitive challenge* – The assignment requires high levels of cognitive work (e.g., retelling a story, identifying facts from a text, analyzing a character using textual evidence, and applying knowledge gained from multiple texts to form a new idea) and is linked to the creation of a piece of extended writing (i.e., multiple paragraphs).
- *Motivation and engagement* – The key elements were choice (some degree of autonomy and independence) and relevance (poignant topics, use of real-world materials and experiences, with potential connections to students’ goals, interests, and values).

In addition, Santelises and Dabrowski looked at whether assignments contained a variety of text types of significant length; how much student writing was required (none, note-taking, 1-2 sentences, short responses, one paragraph, multiple paragraphs); how long the assignment took (from 15 minutes to multi-week projects); and the type of thinking students did (recall, basic application of skills and concepts, strategic thinking, and extended thinking).

What did the analysis of assignments reveal? Here are the disheartening statistics from these classrooms:

- Alignment with Common Core – Only 38 percent fully met the criteria.
- Centrality of text – 15 percent
- Cognitive challenge – 4 percent
- Motivation and engagement – 2 percent

Santelises and Dabrowski deduce six themes from these findings, all with direct implications for schools’ work with Common Core standards:

- *Superficial and partial implementation* – Teachers haven’t received enough guidance on how to use the standards, say the authors, and too many educators are adopting materials that aren’t well aligned, or implementing aligned materials in ways that don’t do the job. “The majority of assignments included keywords and phrases found in the Common Core standards,” they say, “fostering a comforting sense that ‘we are aligned.’ Unfortunately, this is not the case – much of this is window dressing... [T]he consequences for students are clear: daily work for students that still falls too far short of our goal. The honest reality is that deeper work around lesson planning and pedagogy is desperately needed.”

- *Reading interrupted* – The authors saw evidence of some movement toward students doing close reading of a range of texts across content, cultures, and centuries, as called for in the Common Core. But too often, students were reading short chunks of material rather than whole novels or longer works of non-fiction. “The frequent ‘stop and go’ nature of reading assignments,” say the authors, “requiring the whole class to mechanically annotate or take notes, may actually interrupt a more fluid and autonomous process that many young adolescent readers need to develop as they read for longer periods of time and self-monitor their comprehension... When do students have time for sustained, fluent reading of complex texts?” Santelises and Dabrowski were also concerned about annotation – did students know why they were doing it? – and the fact that much of the note-taking wasn’t used in future class work.

- *Writing without composing* – Too much of student writing consisted of taking and organizing notes (16 percent), responding in one or two sentences to text-based questions (17

percent), or providing multiple short responses (27 percent). Only 9 percent of assignments asked students to bring these discrete tasks together for the heavier lift of composing original writing that expressed their own thinking and analysis in multiple paragraphs.

- *Short assignments and heavy scaffolding* – A little over half of the assignments took 15 minutes or less, say the authors, and the vast majority involved recall, reproduction, and basic application, with very little strategic thinking (14 percent) and extended thinking (less than 1 percent). Teachers were clearly over-scaffolding. “Rarely did we see assignments that allowed early adolescents to construct their own claim statements or work through their thoughts to construct a cohesive flow of ideas,” say Santelises and Dabrowski. “Rather, the teacher kept students ‘with her’ instead of releasing them to wrestle with their ideas or with the ideas of others.” One principal who agreed with the report’s analysis said, “We are spoon-feeding them because we do not believe they can do it.” Administrators wielding observation checklists during classroom visits may inadvertently reinforce this type of pedagogy by commending teachers for short “do nows”, “entry tasks,” and “exit slips.”

- *Few class discussions* – Most assignments did not prompt students to prepare for and engage in the kinds of discussions called for in the Common Core. Rather, they asked students to “Work with your group members to...” or “Talk in your groups about...” instead of preparing text-based notes for a discussion or preparing to present claims and findings aloud. In addition, there was little evidence of developing discussion norms or structures for participation. “In debriefing these results with participating school leaders,” say Santelises and Dabrowski, “many confessed that pockets of staff were actually afraid of providing students with this level of autonomy and independence.”

- *Not enough relevance and choice* – A tiny percent of assignments – only 2 percent – met the study’s standards in these two areas. Students were asked to read and respond to material that didn’t connect with their lives and experiences, while following their teachers’ 1 lock-step structure. Some teachers tried to “hook” students by using examples from pop culture, and students sometimes made posters or displays using colorful enhancements and images. “While the argument might be that students ‘enjoy’ these types of activities,” say Santelises and Dabrowski, “the use of superficial techniques such as these often failed to promote the deeper push needed in the area of cognitive demand. Rather than relying on gimmicks or low-level materials, we can and must engage our young adolescents using challenging content.” There is no shortage of important topics in literature, history, and science, they say. “Characteristics such as perseverance, determination, and ingenuity can be powerful ‘hooks’ for students preparing to study historical figures and events,” say the authors. “And allowing students to read and discuss how science influences our daily lives can open their mind to its importance. Relevancy becomes the pathway from the known to the unknown; from the simple to the complex.”

Santelises and Dabrowski close with a ringing exhortation to district and school leaders to go beyond relying on teacher workshops, mechanical implementation, and keywords and phrases in lessons plans or written on whiteboards. They have two recommendations:

- *Leaders need to ask deeper questions* about tasks, texts, rigor, and engagement in

classrooms. Some examples:

- What does true implementation of the standards look like?
- How and when do students read, discuss, and write about texts?
- When and how often do students read without interruptions?
- When and how often do students do extended writing?
- Do we offer opportunities for students to bring their own ideas, experiences, and opinions into the work they do?
- How do we analyze student work to identify and showcase thinking that is rich in content?
- How much cognitive demand are we placing on students?
- How do we help students transition to academic independence?
- How can we ensure that science and social studies assignments reflect the standards?
- How can educators work across grade levels to get students doing extended writing?
- Are teachers being supervised and evaluated in ways that inhibit their ability to fully align with Common Core demands?

• *Look over students' shoulders at the assignments they're working on.* "Leaders need to track what their students are being asked to do on a daily basis in their classrooms," say Santelises and Dabrowski. This is where the curriculum actually happens, and looking at assignments "prompts us to question whether the status quo structures and approaches support or inhibit the true spirit of college and career readiness... This is the data we need in order to support teachers as they make their way through this complex transition and ensure greater and more sustained student learning outcomes."

"Checking In: Do Classroom Assignments Reflect Today's Higher Standards?" by Sonja Santelises and Joan Dabrowski in an Education Trust report, September 2, 2015, available at <http://edtrust.org/resource/classroomassignments>; the authors can be reached at ssantelises@edtrust.org and joandabrowski@gmail.com.

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2. Dylan Wiliam on Crafting Effective "Hinge" Questions

(Originally titled "Designing Great Hinge Questions")

"Every teacher I've ever met knows that no lesson plan survives the first contact with real students," says assessment guru Dylan Wiliam (University College, London) in this *Educational Leadership* article. "And yet most teachers plan their lessons as though they're going to go perfectly. They plan them on the basis of assumptions they know to be false." The result is that learning problems arise during the lesson and the teacher finds out only when grading the papers that night. "And then," says Wiliam, "long after the students have left the classroom, you'll have to try to get their learning back on track, in writing, one student at a time."

The solution, he says, is to "build plan B into plan A" by designing lessons with a "hinge question" somewhere in the middle. The benefits of doing this are "huge," says Wiliam. "It means that you can find out what's going wrong with students' learning when they're right in

front of you and that you can put the whole class’s learning back on track right away.” Of course checking for understanding is nothing new, but writing hinge questions is harder than it appears; he’s found that teachers typically take more than an hour to design a good one. Here are the key steps:

- *Design questions that elicit the right response for the right reason.* Students shouldn’t be able to get the correct answer for the wrong reasons, or vice-versa. The key is plausible distractors that attract students with incomplete understanding. These can be written only by educators with good pedagogical content knowledge who have been working with students for some time. Another technique for making it more difficult for students to guess the right answer is to have multiple right answers and ask students to identify all of them.

- *Get responses from every student.* Calling on students who raise their hands is obviously inadequate, and choral responses are ineffective because it’s impossible to tell who really knows and who’s mouthing an imitation of others. Some kind of all-class response system is essential – fingers on chest, colored cards, dry-erase boards, Plickers, clickers, etc. The technology used is far less important than the quality of the question, says Wiliam.

- *Make the check for understanding quick.* All students should be able to respond within two minutes, and the teacher should be able to collect and interpret the responses within 30 seconds.

- *Based on students’ responses, decide whether to go forward or re-teach.* If few students have the right answer, going back is the obvious choice. If most have it correct, moving on makes sense, perhaps with a side conversation with those who are confused. If similar numbers of students get the answer right and wrong, the teacher can get students debating in pairs (“Convince your neighbor”) or have an all-class debate.

Assessment purists might argue that one question can’t possibly assess mastery of a concept – for that you need up to 30 questions. But Wiliam says this matters only if the teacher is using the question for high-stakes decisions. With hinge questions, the teacher is trying to make a quick, low-stakes decision for the whole group. “If the response of a student to a 30-item test provides a reasonable basis for drawing conclusions about that student,” he says, “then the responses of 30 students to a single question probably provide a reasonable basis for drawing conclusions about that class.”

“Designing Great Hinge Questions” by Dylan Wiliam in *Educational Leadership*, September 2015 (Vol. 73, #1, p. 40-44), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/1NXSvEq>; Wiliam can be reached at dylanwiliam@mac.com.

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3. Encouraging a Metacognitive “Voice” Inside Students’ Heads

(Originally titled “Help Students Train Their Inner Voice”)

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Bryan Goodwin and Heather Hein of McREL say that a key objective in schools is helping make the “little voice” in students’ heads a helpful, constructive factor in their learning. This matters because students’ inner voice often undermines self-confidence (*I stink at math; I can’t draw*) and prevents them from exerting

effective effort. Goodwin and Hein report that numerous studies have shown that when students check in with themselves (for example, in the middle of a science video saying, *Wait a minute, I don't get this!*) or jot down questions during a classroom lecture (*Which king was best for England? What do I still not understand about this?*), they learn and remember better. The very best results come when students use self-questioning and then discuss the questions with peers.

The good news is that students can learn to enhance their metacognitive voice quite quickly; in one study, the intervention lasted only 90 minutes. “Even more striking, perhaps,” say Goodwin and Hein, “the technique itself seems to stick with students... In short, once students learned how to actively engage in self-questioning, they appeared to internalize the strategy – which might begin a virtuous circle. As students become better learners, they begin to see themselves as better learners, which, in turn, inspires greater confidence and engagement. As they begin to focus the voice in their heads, they replace self-doubt, distraction, and anxiety with a calm, reassuring voice that says, *I can do this*.”

“Help Students Train Their Inner Voice” by Bryan Goodwin with Heather Hein in *Educational Leadership*, September 2015 (Vol. 73, #1, p. 76-77), <http://bit.ly/1Lfw069>; the authors can be reached at bgoodwin@mcrel.org and hhein@mcrel.org.

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4. Three Myths About Differentiation

In this *Edutopia* article, San Francisco educator Paul France addresses three common beliefs that he says prevent many teachers from personalizing (a.k.a. differentiating) instruction in their classrooms. Each has a grain of truth to it, but there are strong counter-arguments:

- *Myth #1: All students should be working on their own projects with unique products.* Not only is this impossible to manage, says France, but it's not the best full-time structure for teaching and learning. “Yes, we want to differentiate content for our students in order to help them access it in ways that work for them,” he says, “but we also don't want them working in silos, void of interaction and deprived of shared experiences.” France advocates mixing individualized “passion projects” with whole-class and small-group experiences where students interact around common content through discussions, observing peer models, and participating in a learning community. Of course shared curriculum experiences shouldn't be one-size-fits-all, he says: “Instead, these activities and lessons will have multiple entry points, allowing for varied paces, without having to plan 20-30 unique activities.”

- *Myth #2: Students should be working only on what interests them.* Since students' self-identified interests may initially be quite narrow, this approach risks selling students short, says France. When he taught *Westward Expansion*, for example, it wasn't on the short list of topics that fascinated his students. But they became engaged because he used methods and materials that aroused interest and kicked involvement into high gear. “What's more,” he says, “this series of lessons was another way to debunk Myth 1, showing that if students are able to be active prosumers of information, a well-planned shared experience will personalize itself.”

• *Myth #3: Differentiation is too much work for teachers.* True, personalizing may entail extra work at first, says France. But if it's done well, there should be no net increase in teacher workload. The same amount of prep time shifts from reading the teacher's manual, making copies, and grading "benign" assignments to planning and orchestrating a student-driven, teacher-curated curriculum. "In a personalized curriculum," he says, "teachers spend time building soft skills, finding authentic materials that can be used for future students, and conducting authentic formative assessments that build momentum. Students slowly become more autonomous – more reflective – and we start to see a return on investment... This ends up actually saving us time in the classroom, as our practice becomes less reactive and more embedded into natural routines of inquiry, disequilibrium, and student-driven problem-solving."

"Three Personalization Myths" by Paul France, *Edutopia*, June 19, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1LeKyoc>
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5. Learning from the Most-Successful Ohio Districts and Schools

This Battelle for Kids report summarizes the organization's findings from several years of research on key practices in high-performing, gap-closing Ohio districts and schools:

- *Focus on improving student achievement through a small number of initiatives.*

"Leaders often talk about the importance of filtering out external noise and distractions so that teachers can maintain their focus on student learning," says the report. What this looks like in effective schools:

- Identifying five or fewer initiatives at the district level, three or fewer at the school level – for example, vocabulary acquisition, numeracy, literacy across content areas;
- Spelling out an implementation timeline for all staff;
- Providing teachers the time and support they need to master new practices;
- Focusing teacher conversations on evidence of student learning and how staff respond when students aren't learning what's taught;
- The leadership team developing rigorous rubrics to clarify what success looks like, continuously assessing performance, communicating results, and meeting at least once a year to decide which programs are working and which aren't.

A key practice is dropping practices that aren't producing results. Here are some examples from a principal's and a district leader's "not-to-do" lists:

- Collecting or having teachers post lesson plans;
- Using ineffective educational software;
- Exposing teachers to PD that is unrelated to student outcomes;
- Conducting PD based solely on teachers' interests;
- Allowing teachers to work in isolation.

"Our conversations with practitioners consistently revealed that high-growth buildings and

districts focus most of their attention on student learning, improving collaboration, and systematically reflecting on the connections between their teaching and what students are learning,” says the paper.

• *Use of time and resources strategically.* High-growth schools have procedures and schedules that include the following:

- Increased instructional time for reading and math;
- Teachers using structures and routines in classrooms to maximize learning time;
- Weekly common planning time for teacher teams and ensuring the meetings are productive through facilitation, protocols, and structures;
- Developing, implementing, and reviewing on-the-spot and interim assessments to continuously monitor student learning;
- Teachers examining student work, reviewing and analyzing data, sharing effective practices, and exploring how to differentiate instruction and implement RTI;
- Time for re-teaching curriculum areas that students haven't mastered;
- Extra time for struggling students within and outside the school day;
- Enrichment time for students who have mastered material;
- Weekly professional development focused on key initiatives.

The key is getting teacher teams working effectively in service of mutual support and continuous improvement.

• *Develop a balanced assessment system.* “No other education intervention has produced more consistent student learning gains than formative assessment, and the payoff is even greater for struggling students,” says the Battelle paper. “Frequent and timely monitoring of student learning is an essential part of every high-growth district we spoke to as part of this effort.” Some key elements:

- Clear learning targets;
- Specific criteria for mastery;
- Students understanding the targets and regularly self-assessing;
- Teachers checking for understanding and fixing learning problems in real time;
- Interim assessments every 3-6 weeks with effective follow-up;
- Teachers knowing and regularly discussing their students' progress;
- Principals frequently visiting classrooms and team meetings to monitor the process and share effective practices.

The key is immediate feedback to teachers and students so that errors and misconceptions are nipped in the bud and proficiency is developed every day.

• *Use multiple measures to inform improvement and accountability.* The Battelle report emphasizes districts' and schools' effective analysis and use of data from:

- Year-end state tests;
- Perception surveys of various constituencies;
- Student achievement results from other districts;
- Teachers' informal classroom checks for understanding;
- Value-added data from assessments.

However, says the report, “The highest-performing schools do not use value-added data for commendation or to name, blame, or shame, but to uncover, discover, and recover. Value-added data allow teachers and leaders to dig deeper and ask more questions about student learning.”

• *Empower teachers and develop leaders.* The most effective Ohio schools are successfully swimming against the national trend of teachers feeling they aren’t listened to and don’t make a difference. The best schools distribute leadership and involve teachers in setting the vision and having continuous input on school strategy and maximizing effective practices. In addition, school leaders set ambitious targets and “are never afraid of having courageous, pivotal conversations with staff when there has been a loss of focus, forgotten commitments, or a decrease in engagement.”

“Five Strategies for Creating a High-Growth School” from Battelle for Kids, August 2015, http://www.battelleforkids.org/docs/default-source/publications/soar_five_strategies_for_creating_a_high-growth_school.pdf?sfvrsn=2; the contact person at Battelle is Bobby Moore, who can be reached at bmoore@battelleforkids.org.

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6. Advice for Writers of All Ages

In this interview with Rachel Toor in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Stanford professor Sam Wineburg says he remembers to this day the comment he received on the first paper he wrote as a freshman at Brown University, for which he received an A-: “The better you are, the more imperative it becomes to rid yourself of all the evidences of amateurishness, carelessness, and flawed education that your paper, good as it is, still reveals.” This tutor, Steven Millhauser, who went on to win a Pulitzer Prize for fiction, also exhorted his students, “Never stop reading, and never be satisfied.”

Millhauser also urged students to stop trying to imitate other writers and listen to their own voice. “To write is to hear the cadence and rhythm of prose,” says Wineburg. “When my writing matters most, I sit at my desk and read it aloud. Not in a sub-vocal mumble. I enunciate the words so that someone outside my door can actually hear them.” He finds this is the best way to scrub out unclear writing and express himself clearly and authentically.

Wineburg is a stickler for topic sentences. “They should direct,” he says. “They should guide.” And he hates educational jargon. His advice to doctoral students: “[P]ut aside their abstracts, take out a sheet of paper, and rewrite the same abstract in language their next-door neighbors or great-aunts could understand.”

And he likes Mark Twain’s advice on the discipline of writing: “Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day.” In other words, sit down, get to work, and do the worst first.

“Scholars Talk Writing: Sam Wineburg” by Rachel Toor in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 4, 2015 (Vol. LXII, #1, p. A52), no e-link available

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7. Dealing with Tardy Students

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article with possible relevance for high-school teachers, Stephanie Reese Masson (Northwestern State University) describes how annoyed she was with the chronic tardiness of a significant number of her students – 10 of 27 in one class strolling in as much as 20 minutes late for her 9:30 a.m. class. She tried talking to students one on one and in small groups about responsibility, professionalism, and respect. No difference. She tried giving quizzes at the start of classes. No impact. So she decided to address the subject with the whole class.

“How many of you are bothered when one or more classmates arrive less than 10 minutes late?” she asked. To her surprise, only a couple of students raised their hands. As long as the late-comers entered quietly, most said it didn’t distract them. “How many of you are bothered when one or more classmates arrive more than 10 minutes late?” asked Masson. This time, almost all students raised their hands – even those who themselves were frequently late. Students said they were more distracted when the class was in full swing, and also felt the tardy students’ behavior was a disconcerting signal that they didn’t value the course. At the same time, students were much more understanding than Masson about possible reasons for tardiness.

Her next question: “What can instructors do to motivate you to come to class on time?” Masson was stunned by the most common answer: public shaming. Students described an instructor who stops the class when someone arrives late and says something like, “Jane, how nice that you decided to join us today.” Another effective technique: giving extra credit for performing a task in the opening minutes (for example, answering a simple question from the previous class). So why weren’t Masson’s beginning-of-class quizzes working? “Loud, negative remarks flew around the room,” she reports. “I heard comments about harassment, teacher bullying, and blackmail.” Clearly, the few extra points weren’t enough to overcome their resentment about what they saw as a Mickey Mouse tactic.

Finally, students said they tended to arrive on time for instructors who were entertaining. Boring presentations had the opposite effect, however relevant or important the material was. Students’ definition of “entertaining” was a little vague, but lectures and PowerPoint of any kind did not qualify.

Masson digested students’ comments and asked herself, “Should I morph into a shaming, extra-point-giving, sideshow act?” She was clearly uncomfortable with that avenue, but after further thought, here’s what she implemented the following semester:

- If a student was late, she recorded him or her as absent in her attendance roster, with four or more absences resulting in a deduction from the student’s final grade.
- Twice during the semester, she surprised students with simple extra-credit assignments at the beginning of class, and mentioned what had happened later in the class so late-arrivers were aware of it.

These changes improved on-time arrivals, but didn’t completely eliminate the problem. In the upcoming semester, Masson plans to implement three other changes:

- She will speak individually with tardy students and, if they don't improve, do some type of public shaming. "While that seems harsh," she says, "I am influenced by Bonnie Snyder's assertions that chronically late students 'display a passive-aggressive personality style' that plays out in disruptive ways throughout the semester."
- She'll start classes with a five-minute "freewrite" that counts for a small number of points in the final grade.
- She will make her classes "if not entertaining, at least more low-key and enjoyable."

"Late Again?" by Stephanie Reese Masson in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 4, 2015 (Vol. LXII, #1, p. A120), <http://m.chronicle.com/article/Late-Again-/232115/>

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8. Using Songs and Their Lyrics in High-School English Classes

In this *Virginia Journal of Education* article, Michael Romick describes how, years ago, his eighth-grade teacher read the poem "Richard Cory" and then put the Simon and Garfunkel album on a record player and played the song. "My favorite singing duo was harmonizing about the guy we'd just read about in the poem," says Romick. "I was totally engaged for perhaps the first time in my short academic career."

Now Romick is a high-school English teacher in Charlottesville, and once a week he plays a carefully chosen song and has students read along with the lyrics. "It's a great way to illustrate, to teach, and to make students think," he says. "I use songs to teach literary elements, figures of speech, figurative language, poetic techniques, and symbolism. I use songs to help students better understand and analyze the sometimes hidden, deeper meaning of stories, books, and poems." Romick says his students look forward to the Song of the Week, "wondering what it will be and what secrets or hidden gems it might contain."

As part of one curriculum unit, he had students read Robert Frost's "Death of a Hired Man," noting its two often-quoted definitions of home, had them listen to and read Bruce Springsteen's "My Hometown" and Simon and Garfunkel's "Homeward Bound," then asked students to write about their own definitions of "home," and led a class discussion on the many definitions of the concept.

Here's a partial list of some of the songs Romick is using to launch class discussions and reflections:

- "The Dangling Conversation" by Paul Simon, performed by Simon and Garfunkel – Metaphor and simile
- "Tunnel of Love" by Bruce Springsteen – Symbolism
- "Hey There, Delilah" by Tom Higgenson, performed by The Plain White Tees – Inversion
- "100 Years" by John Ondrasik, performed by Five for Fighting – Carpe diem
- "Ironic" by Alanis Morissette and Glen Ballard, performed by Morissette – Irony
- "All of Me" by J. Legend and T. Gad, performed by Legend – Paradox
- "Nuthin" (the lyric video) by Lecrae – Visual rhetoric

- “Gangsta’s Paradise” and “Amish Paradise” by Coolio and “Weird” Al Yankovic – Parody (show the Coolio video first, then Al’s)
- “You Learn” by Alanis Morissette and Glen Ballard, performed by Morissette – Inferences
- “I Am a Rock” by Paul Simon, performed by Simon and Garfunkel – Metaphor
- “Blackbird” by Paul McCartney and John Lennon, performed by The Beatles – Symbolism
- “Fix You” by Chris Martin, Guy Berryman, William Champion, and Jonathan Buckland, performed by Coldplay – Hidden meanings, analysis
- “Rocket Man” by Elton John and Bernie Taupin, performed by John – Hidden meanings, analysis
- “Grenade” by Bruno Mars, Ari Levine, Andrew Wyatt, Christopher Brown, Philip Lawrence, Brody Brown, et al., performed by Bruno Mars – Hyperbole

“Totally Tuned In: Using Contemporary Music to Teach Language and Literature” by Michael Romick in *Virginia Journal of Education*, April 2015 (Vol. 108, p. 14-15), spotted in *Education Digest*, September 2015 (Vol. 81, #1), <http://www.veanea.org/home/2538.htm>

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9. Short Item:

Maps showing U.S. racial segregation – These maps by Kyle Vanhemert in *Wired* show residential patterns in major U.S. cities: <http://wrd.cm/1NXrCjK>. These maps have some nifty interactive features: <http://demographics.coopercenter.org/DotMap/index.html>

“The Best Map Ever Made of America’s Racial Segregation” by Kyle Vanhemert in *Wired*, August 26, 2015

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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 others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 44 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 64 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:

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- How to subscribe or renew
- A detailed rationale for the Marshall Memo
- Publications (with a count of articles from each)
- Article selection criteria
- Topics (with a count of articles from each)
- Headlines for all issues
- Reader opinions (with results of an annual survey)
- 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 or PDF)
- All back issues (also in Word and PDF)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- A collection of "classic" articles from all 11 years

Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
AMLE Magazine
ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief/Public Education NewsBlast
Better: Evidence-Based Education
Center for Performance Assessment Newsletter
District Administration
Ed. Magazine
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher
Go Teach
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Educational Review
Independent School
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Journal of Staff Development
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Knowledge Quest
Literacy Today
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Perspectives
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/Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The District Management Journal
The Journal of the Learning Sciences
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal/Learning System/Tools for Schools
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time Magazine
Wharton Leadership Digest