Marshall Memo 216

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
January 7, 2008

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"There is a lot of sitting and listening and not a lot of thinking and doing."

Robert Pianta on his observations of more than 1,000 classrooms (see item #8)

"The key… is for teachers to take action as soon as they have information about what students do and don't understand."

Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, Maria Grant, and Christine Johnson (see item #4)

"School leaders must decide whether the strategic planning process is a tool to improve student achievement (actions that add value) or an end in itself."

Douglas Reeves (see item #5)

"The Myth of the Model Minority not only does a disservice to Asian-American diversity and identity; it serves to justify an entire system of race and class inequality… What many miss is that there are no 'positive' stereotypes because by believing in a 'positive' stereotype, as, admittedly, even many Asian Americans do, we ultimately give credence to an entire way of thinking about race and culture, one that upholds the stereotypic racial and cultural inferiority of African Americans and Latina/os and maintains white supremacy."

Benji Chang and Wayne Au (see item #1)

"Maybe sometimes I need someone to ask me to say something instead of me moving myself into the group."

An Asian-American high-school student (see item #2)

1. Debunking the Myth of the "Model Minority"

In this thoughtful article in *Rethinking Schools*, former Los Angeles and Seattle teachers Benji Chang and Wayne Au (now graduate student and professor) say they have seen many Asian-American students "do poorly in school, get actively involved in gangs, drop out, or exhibit any number of other indicators of school failure not usually associated with 'model minorities.'" Chang and Au attack the myth that developed in the 1980s, saying it grossly oversimplifies more than 50 subgroups of Asian Americans, including many people who are poor and under-educated. "From the Fukienese-Chinese student in an urban Philadelphia classroom with mostly Black or Latino/a students, to the Hmong student who sits with two or three peers in a mostly white school in rural Wisconsin, to the Pilipino student in a San Diego suburb with predominantly Pilipino classmates and some white peers, Asian-American youth do not fit neatly into the typical boxes of our educational system." The Model Minority Myth, they say, "negatively affects the classroom lives of Asian-American students and contributes to the justification of race and class inequality in schools and society."

Part of combating the myth, say Chang and Au, lies in recruiting more Asian-American educators, promoting multilingual communication in instruction and parent involvement, and developing better relationships between schools and communities. Within classrooms, the authors recommend the following:

• *Don't automatically assume that your Asian-American students are "good" students (or "bad" students, for that matter).* Get to know them. Learn about their history, make time to get acquainted with students and their families, and bring their lives into the classroom.

• *Rethink how you interpret and react to the silence of Asian-American students in your classroom.* "Asian-American student silence can mean many things, from resistance to teachers, to disengagement from work, to a lack of understanding of concepts, to thoughtful engagement and consideration, to insecurity speaking English, to insecurity in their grasp of classroom content," write Chang and Au. Don't make assumptions, they say. Check in with students personally.

• *Teach about unsung Asian-American heroes* – for example, the woman warriors Yuri Kochiyama and Grace Lee Boggs and others.

• *Illustrate shared historical, political, and cultural experiences that Asian Americans share with other groups* – for example, the role of Pilipinos in Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers and the role of Chinese-American families in the *Lau vs. Nichols* case.

• *Weave the historical struggles, culture, and art of Asian-American communities into your classroom.* This might include novels by Carlos Bulosan, John Okada, Nora Okja Keller, Le Thi Diem Thuy, Jessica Hagedorn, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Shawn Wong; poetry by Lawson Inada, Li-Young Li, Marilyn Chin, Nick Carbon, or Sesshu Foster; spoken word by Reggie Cabico, Ishle Park, Beau Sia, or I Was Born With Two Tongues; hip-hop music by Blues Scholars, Skim, Native Guns, Himalayan Project, or Kuttin Kandi; and history texts by Ron Takaki, Sucheng Chan, Peter Kwong, and Gary Okihiro.

Chang and Au close with a question they hear all the time: what's wrong with a *positive* stereotype? "What many miss is that there are no 'positive' stereotypes," they write, "because by believing in a 'positive' stereotype, as, admittedly, even many Asian Americans do, we ultimately give credence to an entire way of thinking about race and culture, one that upholds the stereotypic racial and cultural inferiority of African Americans and Latina/os and maintains white supremacy. The Myth of the Model Minority not only does a disservice to Asian-American diversity and identity, it serves to justify an entire system of race and class inequality."

"You're Asian, How Could You Fail Math? Unmasking the Myth of the Model Minority" by Benji Chang and Wayne Au in *Rethinking Schools*, Winter 2007-08 (Vol. 22, #2, p. 14-19), article available at: http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/22_02/math222.shtml .
The authors can be reached at chang_benji@hotmail.com and wayne.au@sbcglobal.net.

Back to page one

2. Getting Asian-American Students Talking More in Classrooms

In this insightful *Rethinking Schools* article, Carol Tateishi, director of the Bay Area Writing Project, analyzes the reasons behind the relative silence of Asian-American students in oral language activities in U.S. classrooms. Many teachers, says Tateishi, accept silence because these students aren't posing discipline problems, turn in their homework on time, and get passing grades. But classroom silence *is* a problem, she says; active class participation by students is a key factor in long-term achievement and, and she believes that insufficient oral-language experience in school is directly linked to the under-representation of Asian-Americans in occupations such as journalism, law, and the social sciences, all of which draw on oral language skills. "It matters if we have lawyers, writers, activists, educators, business leaders, elected officials, and ordinary citizens who understand the power of language and use it," she says.

The reasons that many Asian-American students don't speak up more are complex. Although Tateishi's own father encouraged lively dinner-table conversation among his six children, Tateishi says that in other Asian-American homes, the opposite is taught. Interviewing Asian-American students, she found four recurrent themes:

- Oral language tends to be used functionally.
- Speaking publicly about one's problems is discouraged.
- Restraint in talking is valued.
- You don't talk about feelings or personal experiences.

One boy believed that silence was linked to strength and self-reliance and had picked up a negative attitude toward verbosity and being "outspoken" ("You're not supposed to say too much," he was told).

The cultural reasons for Asian-American students' reticence in classrooms contrast with the prevailing belief system held by many U.S. teachers:

- Oral language can be used to negotiate meaning.
- Risk-taking in talk is a good thing.
- Speaking in class increases engagement.
- Classroom dialogue deepens learning.

"When compared with the students' views," writes Tateishi, "the exploratory and engaging nature of this kind of classroom talk was a far cry from the students' ways of speaking at home. In addition, the students had little opportunity to practice or learn about these other ways of speaking in public spaces except in the classroom."

So how can Asian-American students be engaged more fully in classroom discourse? One way is for them to be "authored" to speak – in other words, called upon or put in situations where there is an explicit expectation to participate verbally. As one girl put it, "Maybe sometimes I need someone to ask me to say something instead of me moving myself into the group." The usual dynamic, where you are expected to "just, like, join the conversation", is the most difficult for Asian-American students.

Another effective method is putting students in smaller discussion groups with specific tasks and roles. A third is structured settings like a debate team, which worked for a student named Dan, whom Tateishi interviewed. "It seemed that the formal structure of debate with its clear rules for speaking gave Dan the authority he needed to speak, liberated him to do so, and, perhaps, gave him the time to plan and craft his words," writes Tateishi.

"Our challenge," she concludes, "is to make the rules and purposes governing classroom talk as visible and explicit as possible so that students can acquire new literacy practices and move easily from one speech community to the next in a code-switching mode, not only for the Asian-American students but for their fellow students who need to hear their thoughts and perspectives." She offers the following pointers for teachers:

- Be aware and knowledgeable of the cultural barriers some students face in attempting to participate in classroom talk.
- Take the same kind of time and effort to teach effective classroom talk as you might for writing response groups or any kind of classroom collaborative work.
- Model strong and weak discussion groups with mock classroom enactments that highlight the why's of the talk.
- Create stable discussion groups as you would for writing groups. Take care in putting students into groups, helping them build trustful communities over time and sensitivity to cultural differences.
- Designate group leaders and develop clear guidelines and protocols with students for how the group works and how talk is conducted and why.

- Debrief the workings of small-group talk regularly to help students develop greater understanding of the dynamics of classroom talk.

"Why Are the Asian-American Kids Silent in Class? Taking a Chance with Words" by Carol Tateishi in *Rethinking Schools*, Winter 2007-08 (Vol. 22, #2, p. 20-25), article available at http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/22_02/word222.shtml. The author can be reached at tateish@berkeley.edu.

Back to page one

3. Advice on Rewarding Students for their Work

In this helpful article in *American Educator*, University of Virginia professor Daniel Willingham explores the perennial question of whether students should be rewarded for behaving and/or doing their work. It's clear that rewards are common in American classrooms; in a recent study, 70 percent of young adults remembered their elementary school teachers doling out candy to "deserving" students, and we've all seen stickers, extra recess, class parties, and other goodies used in an attempt to motivate students.

But are rewards effective? And do they constitute good practice? Opinion is sharply divided, with Alfie Kohn arguing passionately against them (1993) while other researchers contend they are harmless and even beneficial (Cameron, Bank, and Pierce, 2001; Chance, 1993). Here is Willingham's analysis of the three main arguments against rewards:

• *Rewards are immoral because they manipulate and control students*. It's true that manipulation is wrong, says Willingham, and most people prefer autonomy. But he argues that rewards are not inherently controlling: "If students are truly offered a choice – do this and get a reward, don't do it and get no reward – then the student maintains control." There is one caveat: if a reward is excessive, it's coercive – for example, if you are offered $200 to take a brief survey, are you really choosing freely? Willingham concludes that classroom rewards are not controlling as long as they are (a) voluntary, and (b) not excessive.

But aren't rewards dehumanizing, treating students like Pavlov's dog? Again, Willingham argues that if incentives are used in moderation, this needn't be so. "If a teacher dangles stickers before students like fish before a seal, most observers will likely wince," he says. "But if a teacher emphasizes that rewards are a gesture of appreciation for a job well done, that probably would not appear dehumanizing to most observers." Naturally, teachers would prefer not needing to use rewards – because they've been successful in getting students so interested in the subject matter that they are internally motivated. But what happens when some students remain stubbornly unmotivated? "After you've wracked your brain for a way to make the material interesting for students and you still can't do it," he asks, "what then? Sanctimonious advice on the evils of rewards won't get chronically failing students to have one more go at learning to read. I think it unwise to discourage teachers from using any techniques in the absolute; rather, teachers need to know what research says about the benefits and drawbacks of the techniques, so that they can draw their own conclusions about whether and when to use them."

• *Students backslide when they are no longer rewarded for a behavior*. Willingham says this is not true of animals, but it is generally true of humans. Rewarding students for doing math problems will increase their work ethic, but students will revert to their previous state once the rewards stop. Well, you say, at least they've done *some* math and perhaps learned their times tables. True, but…

• *Rewards actually decrease motivation*. Studies have shown that if students are rewarded for something they enjoy doing, it actually reduces their intrinsic desire to continue once the reward is gone. This apparently happens because the activity becomes linked to the reward, and when the reward is withdrawn, students forget that they enjoyed doing it in the first place and quit. For example, if students are promised a pizza party for reading a certain number of books, it might spur them on, but when the pizza was no longer a factor, they might conclude, "Why should I read? I'm not getting anything for it."

But this is true only if students genuinely enjoy the activity up front. If they find the task boring and difficult, rewards will increase their motivation, and when the rewards stop, their motivation will drop – but not to its original level. So there's a net positive effect.

What about grades, which are certainly extrinsic rewards? Willingham says they can work the same way as other rewards, increasing motivation – and undermining it when they are no longer given, but not totally for subjects the student finds boring or frustrating. Motivation is complex, he says, and students work hard for a variety of reasons.

Willingham sums up the research on rewards by likening them to taking out a loan: "You get an immediate benefit, but you know that you will eventually have to pay up, with interest." Following that logic, he has four pieces of advice for educators:

First, use rewards as a last resort after finding better ways to motivate students. "It is very difficult to implement rewards without incurring some cost," he says. Rewards don't work equally well for all students, they undermine motivation for some students, they're burdensome to implement – keeping track of rewards that are different for different students – and there will always be complaints of unfairness. It's better to try to make learning intrinsically motivating, and use pizza parties and other goodies as general, non-contingent congratulations for hard work.

Second, use rewards only where they will be most helpful. "One example," says Willingham, "is when students must learn or practice a task that is rather dull, but that, once mastered, leads to opportunities for greater interest and motivation" – learning times tables, for example. "Rewards might also be useful when a student has lost confidence in himself to the point that he is no longer willing to try." In this case, rewards might get the student over the hump and produce momentum and self-confidence for self-sustaining effort in the future.

Third, use rewards for a limited time. No one should make rewards a life-long habit, says Willingham. "Although the cost of using rewards may not be large," he writes, "that cost likely increases as rewards are used for a longer time." The best strategy is to build in a natural ending point – for example, once the times tables are learned, the rewards end. Students might draw a specific conclusion: "Times tables are boring, and we need to be rewarded to learn them," rather than, "Math is boring, and we need to be rewarded to learn it."

Fourth, when you use rewards, (a) make them desirable (if rewards are unappealing, students won't work for them); (b) make them certain (students need to be sure of getting the reward for it to be effective); and (c) give rewards promptly ("Rewards have more 'oomph' – that is more power to motivate – when you are going to get them soon," says Willingham).

In a sidebar to this article, Willingham says that although praising students is a kind of reward, there are key differences: praise is usually not as tightly linked to specific behavior, is usually more episodic, is much more personal, and is expected in all classrooms, whereas rewards are used in some classrooms but not in others. Willingham lists key pointers on praise: it should be genuine, specific, and keyed to effort rather than intelligence.
[See summaries of excellent articles on praise in Marshall Memos 118, 144, and 206.]

"Should Learning Be Its Own Reward?" by Daniel Willingham in *American Educator*, Winter 2007-08 (Vol. 31, #4, p. 29-35, 47)
http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/winter07_08/scientist.htm
Back to page one

4. Effective Use of Interim Assessments in a San Diego High School

(Originally titled "Taking Formative Assessments Schoolwide")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, Maria Grant, and Christine Johnson describe the implementation of interim assessments at 2,300-student Hoover High School in San Diego. Fisher and Frey taught part-time at Hoover for two years, got the principal's support for making common interim assessments a schoolwide expectation, and led teacher teams through these steps:

• *Common planning time and pacing guides* – Weekly meetings of teachers in course-alike groups were essential, say the authors (for example, all teachers teaching Algebra I or world history). Each group decided on a pacing calendar, appropriate materials and strategies, key vocabulary, and accommodations for students with disabilities, students performing above grade level, and English language learners.

• *Common assessments* – Each team developed common summative and interim assessments, mirroring state test formats but adding short-answer, constructed-response, and timed essay questions. "We know that it's best to rely on a number of strategies for determining students' understanding," say the authors.

• *Item analysis* – After each interim assessment, teams used EduSoft to tabulate the data and then studied the results looking for content or concepts that needed to be retaught and test items that needed to be rewritten.

• *Data meetings* – These were the heart of the matter, say the authors, allowing teachers to see which strategies were working, which materials were effective, and which students still needed help. The meetings, led by a team member who had been trained in facilitation, enabled teachers to return to their classrooms and follow up in areas where students weren't doing well. Here's a segment of a data meeting in which the world history team was looking at the results of an assessment item on ancient Greece. The question was:

In a(n) _____, all citizens at mass meetings make decisions for the government.

A. monarchy (7% of students chose this answer)

B. oligarchy (2% chose this answer)

C. direct democracy (61% chose this, the correct answer)

D. representative democracy (30% chose this answer)

When students took the test, they were also asked to indicate (for each answer) whether they knew it, figured it out, guessed at it, or didn't care.

Looking at the data, teachers noted that of those who answered correctly, only 38 percent said they knew it, 36 percent said they figured it out, 24 percent guessed, and 3 students said they didn't care. "I know I taught this," said one teacher. "Most of the wrong answers were still based on [students' understanding of] democracy, but not the right type of democracy. He suggested reteaching the concept using a simulation, and his colleagues agreed to try this approach.

Turning to another question on map directions (northwest, northeast, southwest, southeast), teachers were discouraged that only 58 percent of students answered correctly. "Here we go again," said one. "Our students still don't have a sense of the cardinal points." Another teacher confessed, "I don't really know how to teach this. I've shown my students the map and the directions. I don't know what to do differently." The first teacher volunteered to cover her class while she watched a colleague teaching map directions. Several other teachers admitted they were struggling with the concept, and the group decided to revise the pacing guide to allow more time for map skills.

Using interim assessments, Hoover High made gains in student achievement between 2003 and 2005. "These changes came about because all Hoover's teachers became more precise in their teaching," say the authors. "Collaborative item analyses and rich instructional conversations based on these analyses, characterized by collegiality and respect, drove these changes. The key… is for teachers to take action as soon as they have information about what students do and don't understand."

"Taking Formative Assessments Schoolwide" by Douglas Fisher, Maria Grant, Nancy Frey, and Christine Johnson in *Educational Leadership* (Vol. 65, #4, p 64-68); this article is available for purchase at http://www.ascd.org/infocon. The authors are available at: dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu, nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu, mgrant@fullerton.edu, and cjohnson@hshmc.org. See two additional articles on the work at Hoover High School summarized in Marshall Memos 126 and 207.

Back to page one

5. Can Strategic Plans Help?

In this *Educational Leadership* column, author/consultant Douglas Reeves agrees with Mike Schmoker that most strategic plans are *counterproductive* because they confuse goals, objectives, action steps, and evaluation, are incoherent collections of ideas from various committee members, and overwhelm staff with an impossible number of goals.

However, says Reeves, strategic planning *can* be done right, "linking the values, mission, and goals of a school with a set of coherent strategies and tasks designed to achieve those goals." A recent study by Reeves and Stephen White found that schools whose strategic plans met 20 criteria made solid student achievement gains. Here are the most important:

• *Monitoring* – Conducting frequent (at least monthly) analyses of student progress, teaching strategies, and leadership practices. Ineffective schools never got past looking at the previous year's test scores – what Reeves calls "educational autopsy."

• *Evaluation* – Asking of every program, initiative, and strategy, "Is it working?" – in other words, is it helping student achievement? The most effective schools actually killed programs that were not producing results.

• *Expectations* – Staff believe they are the fundamental cause of student achievement gains, not demographics.

How long should a strategic plan be? Reeves advocates *one-page* plans "that are clearly focused and simple enough that every participant in the process understands his or her role in executing the plan." An example of this is Freeport, Illinois's *Plan on a Page* (see http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/el/Reeves%20Plan.pdf), which Reeves says has been at the heart of significant achievement gains.

"School leaders must decide whether the strategic planning process is a tool to improve student achievement (actions that add value) or an end in itself," concludes Reeves. "School leaders should embrace the importance of strategy by developing plans that are focused and brief and that provide consistent monitoring and evaluation."

"Making Strategic Planning Work" by Douglas Reeves in *Educational Leadership* (Vol. 65, #4, p 86-87); this article is available at http://www.ascd.org/el. The author can be reached at DReeves@LeadandLearn.com.

Back to page one

6. How Useful Are School Walk-Throughs?

(Originally titled "What Research Says About Classroom Walk-Throughs")

In this *Educational Leadership* column, Bay Area researcher Jane David explores walk-throughs (a.k.a. learning walks, data walks, and quick visits). Walk-throughs aim to capture authentic school data, often focusing on a particular practice (e.g., how well teachers are implementing quick-writes and pair-shares).

Walk-through teams range from 2 to 12 and take a variety of forms – administrators, teachers, community members, or students. Walk-throughs are not designed to evaluate individual teachers. "Rather," says David, "the goals of a walk-through are to help administrators and teachers learn more about instruction and to identify what training and support teachers need." Ideally, teams receive training, decide in advance which classrooms they will visit and how long they will stay, whether they will question students, what they are looking for and how they will record it, make sense of it, and debrief.

Initial research indicates that administrators find walk-throughs more useful than teachers, who rarely receive individual feedback. "When the purpose is murky or when trust

among teachers, principals, and central-office staff is low," writes David, "walk-throughs are likely to be perceived as compliance checks, increasing distrust and tensions." Trust and usefulness can be increased by observing aspects of a school in which there has been training and support. When this is not true, teachers tend to see walk-throughs as "drive-bys" or "gotchas." Checklists that focus only on superficial features (e.g., classroom furniture arrangements) also reduce the chances that feedback will be helpful.

What about using Palm-type data-collection devices during walk-throughs? "Although the efficiency of electronic checklists is appealing," says David, "the kinds of data that provide the most valuable feedback are not necessarily those that are easiest to count and record." Especially when assessing the quality of instruction, she says, it's important for observers to be knowledgeable about instruction and stay for more than a few minutes.

"What Research Says About Classroom Walk-Throughs" by Jane David in *Educational Leadership* (Vol. 65, #4, p 81-82); this article is available at http://www.ascd.org/el.
The author can be reached at jld@bayarearesearch.org, and readers' comments on this column are welcome at edleadership@ascd.org.

Back to page one

7. A New Checklist for Assessing Elementary Classrooms

In this *Harvard Education Letter* interview, University of Virginia education school dean Robert Pianta discusses the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which he developed at the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning. Here are the ten classroom categories for assessing Pre-K-5 classrooms:

Emotional Support:

• *Positive climate*: the enjoyment and emotional connection that teachers have with students, as well as the nature of peer interactions.
• *Negative climate*: the level of expressed negativity such as anger, hostility, or aggression exhibited by teachers and/or students in the classroom.
• *Teacher sensitivity*: teachers' responsiveness to students' academic and emotional needs.
• *Regard for student perspectives*: the degree to which teachers' interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view.

Organizational Support:

• *Behavior management*: how well teachers monitor, prevent, and redirect behavior.
• *Productivity*: how well the classroom runs with respect to routines, how well students understand the routine, and the degree to which teachers provide activities and directions so that the maximum time can be spent in learning activities.
• *Instructional learning formats*: how teachers engage students in activities and facilitate activities so that learning opportunities are maximized.

Instructional Support:

• *Concept development*: how teachers use instructional discussions and activities to promote students' higher-order thinking skills and cognition in contrast to a focus on rote instruction.

• *Quality of feedback*: how teachers extend students' learning through their responses and participation in activities.
• *Language modeling*: the extent to which teachers facilitate and encourage students' language.

As Pianta and his colleagues have scored classrooms (more than 1,000), they have been discouraged to find low levels of instructional support and only moderate levels of emotional and organizational support. "There is a lot of sitting and listening and not a lot of thinking and doing," he says. Classrooms that score high on CLASS, on the other hand, have higher student achievement. To support teacher development, Pianta and his colleagues have created an online professional site – http://www.myteachingpartner.net - to give teachers access to videotaped examples of successful interactions in classrooms. Online coaching is also available on the site.

"Neither Art Nor Accident" – An interview with Robert Pianta by Sue Miller Wiltz in *Harvard Education Letter*, Jan./Feb. 2008 (Vol. 24, #1, p. 8, 6-7). The full interview with Pianta, as well as other recent articles, is available at http://www.hel-earlyed.org/. The CLASS website is http://www.classobservation.com.

Back to page one

8. The New Instructional Leadership

(Originally titled "What is Instructional Leadership?")

"Perhaps long ago a principal could be the resident instructional expert and offer advice to everyone," writes St. Louis principal Thomas Hoerr in *Educational Leadership*, "– but no more! In my school, quite a few teachers know far more about pedagogy, curriculum, and student learning than I do, and I'm thrilled that they do."

But principals can still be instructional leaders, he contends, by orchestrating five activities among teachers:

- Talking about students;
- Developing curriculum;
- Observing one another teach;
- Teaching one another;
- Working with administrators to solve a particular problem.

Hoerr encourages all five in his school, supporting peer observation, commenting on it in year-end evaluations, and asking questions like, "What areas are students soaring in or struggling with? Why?" After classroom observations, Hoerr stimulates dialogue with questions like:

- How did this lesson address the needs of your three strongest and three weakest students?
- What would you do differently the next time you teach this lesson? Why?
- How will you know what your students know?
- How could you create an assessment tool that would help you teach these concepts?

"What is Instructional Leadership?" by Thomas Hoerr in *Educational Leadership* (Vol. 65, #4, p 84-85); this article is available at http://www.ascd.org/el. The author can be reached at

trhoerr@newcityschool.org. Back to page one

9. The Do's and Don'ts of Principal Mentoring

This *Harvard Education Letter* article on exemplary principal-preparation and support programs cites the findings of a 2007 Wallace Foundation study (*Getting Principal Mentoring Right: Lessons from the Field*):

• Symptoms of a weak mentoring program:

- Vague or unclear goals;
- Insufficient focus on instructional leadership and/or overemphasis on managerial role;
- Weak or nonexistent training for mentors;
- Insufficient mentoring time or duration;
- Lack of data to assess the benefits of the program;
- Underfunding.

• Quality guidelines for effective mentoring:

- High-quality training for mentors;
- Meaningful information about the impact of mentoring on the candidate's leadership behaviors and dispositions;
- Mentoring for at least one year and ideally two or more years;
- Funding sufficient to provide quality training and appropriate stipends;
- A primary goal of providing principals with the knowledge and skills to become "leaders of change who put teaching and learning first in their schools."

"A Guide on the Side: Mentors Help New Leaders Prepare for Life in the Principal's Office" by Robert Rothman in *Harvard Education Letter*, Jan./Feb. 2008 (Vol. 24, #1, p. 4-6), available for purchase at http://www.edletter.org.

Back to page one

10. The Qualities of a Good Mentor

In this *Harvard Business Review* article, three experts list the characteristics that successful business people say are most desirable in a mentor. He or she:

• is absolutely credible, with integrity transcending the message, be it positive or negative.

• tells you things you may not want to hear but leaves you feeling you have been heard.

• interacts with you in a way that makes you want to become better.

• makes you feel secure enough to take risks.

• gives you the confidence to rise above your inner doubts and fears.

• supports your attempts to set stretch goals for yourself.

• presents opportunities and highlights challenges you might not have seen on your own.

"Why Mentoring Matters in a Hypercompetitive World" by Thomas DeLong, John Gabarro, and Robert Lees in *Harvard Business Review*, January 2008 (Vol. 86, #1, p. 115-121), no e-link available.

Back to page one

11. Short Items:

a. Classic children's books – This *American Educator* feature by the late Dartmouth professor, Noel Perrin, highly recommends three classic children's books:

- *Millions of Cats* by Wanda Gag (1928);
- *Mistress Masham's Repose* by T.H. White (1946)
- *Commodore Perry in the Land of the Shogun* by Rhoda Blumberg (1985)

"A Child's Delights" by Noel Perrin in *American Educator*, Winter 2007-08 (Vol. 31, #4, p. 36-41, 46), the full article is available at:
http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/winter07_08/childs_delight.htm

Back to page one

b. History of exploration websites – These websites have copious resources on the age of exploration:

- http://www.historynow.org/06_2007/index.html - essays, book reviews, lesson plans, and other resources for elementary through high school;
- http://www.historynow.org/06_2007/interactive.html - five rare maps printed between 1511 and 1651 show how the perception of American geography changed over time;
- http://historynow.org/06_2007/ask2.html - dozens of books and websites;
- http://www.mariner.org/educationalad/ageofex - an online curriculum guide.

"Navigating the Age of Exploration" by Ted Widmer in *American Educator*, Winter 2007-08 (Vol. 31, #4, p. 42-45)

Back to page one

c. A contest on growing plants on the moon – NASA is challenging students to design a chamber that can grow plants in space. Seeds will be provided to the first 100,000 students to register: http://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/plantgrowth/joinchallenge/index.html.

"A Greenhouse on the Moon" in *American Educator*, Winter 2007-08 (Vol. 31, #4, p. 6-7)
http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/winter07_08/notebook.htm

Back to page one

Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?
If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo, please e-mail: kim.marshall8@verizon.net

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 37 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 44 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 about 50 issues a year).

Subscriptions:

Individual subscriptions are $50 for the school year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and information on paying by check or credit card.

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

Marshall Memo subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in PDF or Word format)
- All back issues (also in PDF or Word)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or password

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Atlantic Monthly
Catalyst Chicago
CommonWealth Magazine
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
Language Learner (NABE)
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
NASSP Bulletin
New York Times
New Yorker
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teacher Magazine (online)
Teachers College Record
TESOL Quarterly
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools