Marshall Memo 143

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
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In This Issue:

1. A novel approach to closing the achievement gap (an "oldie but goodie" article)
2. Formative assessment: the engine of professional development and student learning
3. A Georgia teacher on the front lines of the evolution battle
4. Short items: (a) An online venue for teachers to market unit and lesson plans; (b) A consumer guide to after-school science resources; (c) Research on single-sex classes

Quotes of the Week

"The conclusion that good teaching matters will strike many as so obvious as not to be worth stating. And so it should be. But we do not *act* as if it were obvious.

Mano Singham (see item #1)

"[S]tudents taught by one of the best teachers will learn in six months what students taught by an average teacher would take a year to learn."

Dylan Wiliam and Marnie Thompson (see item #2)

"Nothing has promised so much and has been so frustratingly wasteful as the thousands of workshops and conferences that led to no significant change in practice when teachers returned to their classrooms."

Michael Fullan (see item #2)

"Because our understanding of the theoretical principles underlying successful classroom action is weak, research cannot tell teachers what to do. Indeed, given the complexity of classrooms, it seems likely that the positivist dream of an effective theory of teacher action – which would spell out the 'best' course of action given certain conditions – is not just difficult and a long way off, but impossible in principle."

Dylan Wiliam and Marnie Thompson (see item #2)

"I thought I was going crazy."

Patricia New, a Georgia science teacher attacked for teaching evolution (see item #3)

1. A Novel Approach to Closing the Achievement Gap (an "oldie but goodie" article – one of a series predating the start of the Marshall Memo)

In this important article from the April 2003 issue of *Kappan*, Case Western Reserve physicist Mano Singham makes the case for a radically different approach to closing the racial achievement gap. It's clear, he begins, "that there is nothing intrinsic about 'blackness' or 'whiteness' that can be the cause of the gap. There are no genetic or other immutable traits that could conceivably be the cause of the gap. Thus the problem is manifestly one that can and should be solved."

So what explains the achievement gap? Singham says a number of reasons have been discussed in recent years:

- Biased standardized tests;
- Tests that don't match the learning styles of African-American students;
- Less money spent educating black students;
- Socioeconomic differences;
- Lack of motivation;
- Negative peer pressure;
- Less family support for education;
- Teacher biases and expectations

Each of these explanations has an element of truth, says Singham, but none of them provides a satisfactory explanation – or a solution – for the gap. In fact, several of them have been refuted by new evidence – for example, the idea that negative peer pressure is keeping black students from achieving in school.

Singham argues that "a better way to reduce or even eliminate the gap is not to focus on the gap at all but to look elsewhere." He turns his attention to math, which acts as a "gatekeeper" to higher education and has been the hardest subject in which to close the achievement gap. Singham cites a study of math achievement among 28,000 people to see what was most important to college graduation. Although there were racial and economic gaps, a closer examination of the data revealed that race and wealth were not important factors. What predicted college completion was "academic resources," defined as the quality of the high-school curriculum, test scores, and class rank.

The study also found that a high-quality high-school math curriculum benefited black and Hispanic students more than other students. "In other words," writes Singham, "improving the high school curriculum has a *disproportionately* positive effect on students from groups that traditionally underachieve." And the higher a student reached in the course hierarchy, the

greater his or her chance of graduating from college. For example, finishing a high-school course beyond Algebra 2 more than doubled the odds that a student who entered college would graduate.

What are the keys to an effective, gap-closing high-school math curriculum? A study in the Pittsburgh schools in the 1990's found that classrooms and schools that faithfully implemented the district's new math curriculum got the best results. High-scoring students had teachers who were familiar with activities and procedures in the curriculum; used visual aids and manipulatives; gave students opportunities to work in teams and explain their work to each other; gave students curriculum-specific activities and projects; and stuck to the required curriculum. These "strong implementation" classrooms produced significant achievement gains for all students, and a dramatic closing of the achievement gap:

- On basic skills:
  - White students' scores increased from 48% to 72% (a 50% increase);
  - Black students' scores increased from 30% to 75% (a 150% increase).
- On problem solving:
  - White students' scores increased from 18% to 54% (a 200% increase);
  - Black students' scores increased from 4% to 32% (a 700% increase).
- On mathematical concepts:
  - White students' scores increased from 20% to 60% (a 200% increase);
  - Black students' scores increased from 4% to 40% (a 900% increase).

Singham says that this study shows that it's possible to greatly reduce the achievement gap "through educational measures that do not directly target the achievement gap. The educational remedies adopted were not race-specific. The reductions in the gaps were achieved by a general focus on improving the educational achievement of all students, whatever their ethnicity, gender, or SES."

Another problem with focusing directly on the achievement gap, says Singham, is that it sells many white students short. He uses the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments to make his point. NAEP tests are given to a representative sample of students across the country and graded on a 0-500 scale. In 2000, these were the average math scores of U.S. twelfth graders:

- White students – 308
- Black students – 274

The traditional approach to eliminating the achievement gap would be to find ways of raising black students' scores to 308, thus eliminating the 34-point gap.

But if this worked, what would have been accomplished? asks Singham. "I suggest that the gap we should be focusing on is the difference between where all students are now and where we believe they should be," he writes. The NAEP standard for proficiency on this math test is 336; this is the level that all students should reach to be ready for college. Using this as the standard, it's clear that both black and white students are well below the proficient level. In fact, only 20% of whites scored above proficiency, and 3% of blacks did. "So even if, after tremendous effort, we were to raise the average score of black 12th-graders to 308," says

Singham, "both ethnic groups would still have 80% of students below proficiency. In other words, their performance would be equal, but equally dismal. There is little point in eliminating the gap in this way. It may solve the political problem of inequality, but it does not solve the educational problem of student underachievement."

What would it take to have all students hit the 336 proficiency target? The Pittsburgh study suggests that it's all about providing students with "all-round good teaching." And this takes years of support and professional development, collaborative study, observation, knowledge of curriculum, and lesson refinement as part of teachers' ongoing daily responsibilities. *This is the work*, says Singham. But it's very rare that schools or districts provide a sustained, consistent focus on good teaching. All too often, he writes, new teachers are "unceremoniously dumped into classrooms and left to fend for themselves. Is it any wonder that so many novice teachers fail to develop as hoped for and even leave teaching?"

This is especially tragic because the impact of the teacher is much greater for minority students. One study showed that 81% of black females and 62% of black males want to please their teacher more than they do a parent. The comparable figures for whites are 28% of females and 32% of males. This, plus the fact that effective teachers produce as much as six times the learning gains as less-effective teachers, explains why good teaching has such a differentially positive effect on minority students.

"The conclusion that good teaching matters will strike many as so obvious as not to be worth stating," says Singham. "And so it should be. But we do not *act* as if it were obvious. If we really thought so, then the continuous professional development of teachers, especially those new to the profession, would head the list of all educational reform efforts. What's more, it wouldn't be just any kind of professional development either – and definitely not the kind of scattershot, single-session, workshop-style programs that pass for professional development in so many school districts."

Singham makes the case for a 10-year program in every district that includes the best insights on what makes students want to learn and includes concentrated development of all teachers in three key areas:

• *Content knowledge* – Without this, says Singham, teachers hide behind textbooks, worksheets, and lectures, fearing that lively discussions and active students will reveal their own ignorance. "Little learning occurs in such passive classrooms," he says.

• *Generic teaching skills* – To get students engaged as active learners, teachers need to know how to manage their classrooms, organize well-structured cooperative learning activities, use challenging materials, use "wait time" skillfully, implement hands-on and inquiry-based instruction, and create conditions that enhance intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic motivation.

• *Pedagogical content knowledge* – "In any subject," says Singham, "students arrive with preconceived knowledge that may conflict with what the instructor is trying to teach. This knowledge is often so deeply buried in the student's mind that he or she may not even be aware of it, but these discipline-specific learning obstacles drive learning nonetheless, and, if teachers do not take them into account, their best efforts can be nullified." An example from electricity: most people have a strong intuitive belief that a battery provides the same amount

of current in all situations. If a teacher tries to teach electricity without knowing about this common misconception, much of that teaching will be wasted. "The same can be said about any subject," says Singham. "No student is ever a blank slate. They all come with preconceptions, and a teacher needs to learn what the specific preconceptions are for a particular topic and, instead of ignoring them, know how to use these preconceptions to teach students more effectively."

The big point, concludes Singham, is that all these measures are good for all students – and have a disproportionate impact on black and Hispanic students. "The worst thing about much of the current discussion on closing the achievement gap is that it focuses on what should be done with minority students," he says. "This has the effect of making it look as if it is a minority problem," and it has five unfortunate side-effects:

• It carries jarring overtones of patronization and condescension toward the minority community.

• It leads many in the majority community to disengage from the discussion, feeling that it's not their problem.

• Framing the gap as a minority problem ignores the fact that many white students are also underachieving.

• The discussion becomes divisive, suggesting that there's a zero-sum competition for scarce resources and that minority gains will cause
majority losses (robbing Peter to pay Paul).

• Seeing the achievement gap as a minority problem makes some believe that narrowing the gap means "dumbing down" the curriculum for all students – achieving equality by reaching a lowest common denominator.

"We need to create an awareness that the achievement gap is a symptom of more widespread educational problems," writes Singham in his wrap-up paragraph. "We should not treat it as a black problem, with white levels of achievement as the norm. If mathematics performance is any indication, the overall performance of both groups leaves much to be desired. We need to realize that implementing remedies that are good for all can be even better for those who are currently falling behind."

"The Achievement Gap: Myths and Reality" by Mano Singham in *Phi Delta Kappan*, April 2003 (Vol. 84, #8, p. 586-591), no e-link available

2. Formative Assessment: the Engine of Professional Development and Student Learning

In this draft chapter from a forthcoming book on assessment, Dylan Wiliam (the British researcher who co-authored "Inside the Black Box" in 1998) and Marnie Thompson report on the work they have been doing at Educational Testing Service to integrate formative assessments into teaching. These are their main points:

• The impact of good teaching on student achievement is far greater than class size, school size, and other variables. In fact, say Wiliam and Thompson, "students taught by one of

the best teachers will learn in six months what students taught by an average teacher would take a year to learn."

• Therefore, say the authors, our efforts to raise student achievement should focus on "replacing the teachers we have with better teachers, or improving the teachers we have." As a practical matter, it's better to develop the capabilities of current teachers – what might be called the "love the one you're with" approach.

• Traditional professional development rarely has much impact on the quality of teaching. The authors quote Michael Fullan (1991): "Nothing has promised so much and has been so frustratingly wasteful as the thousands of workshops and conferences that led to no significant change in practice when teachers returned to their classrooms."

• Fortunately we now have much more effective models for improving classroom teaching. Wiliam and Thompson focus on one of these: teams of teachers ("professional learning communities") using formative assessments to continuously improve instruction.

• Obvious as this sounds, very few teachers use assessments to fine-tune their teaching. The overwhelming tendency is to use tests for summative purposes. Most teachers teach, test, write down the grades, and move on. Their tests are assessments *of* learning, not *for* learning.

• Some schools and districts use formative, during-the-year tests to give information on the likely performance of students on state tests – what might be called the "early-warning summative" approach to assessment. This information is formative only if the results of the practice tests are used to improve the quality of learning before the final test.

• It's not the tests themselves that are formative or summative – it's the way teachers use them. "An assessment is formative," write Wiliam and Thompson, "to the extent that information from the assessment is fed back within the system and actually used to improve the performance of the system in some way (i.e., the assessment *forms* the direction of improvement)."

• For example, if a student is told to "work harder" after a test, even if the student does work harder, this is not a formative assessment, because it doesn't tell the student *how* to "work harder" (and therefore it might not result in higher achievement).

• Another example: students who just wrote a composition are told that they need to "give more detail." This *could* be formative feedback – but only if the students know what "giving more detail" means (which is unlikely, since if they knew, they probably would have provided more detail in the first place). "To be formative," say Wiliam and Thompson, "feedback needs to contain an implicit or explicit recipe for future action. Sometimes this recipe will be explicit, for example when the feedback identifies specific activities the student is to undertake. At other times, the recipe may be implicit, such as those cases where the teacher has created a culture in the classroom whereby students know they must incorporate any feedback from the teacher into future drafts."

• Feedback from a formative assessment can be diagnostic and still not very helpful. Wiliam and Thompson illustrate this point, and add another layer, by describing three levels of feedback that might be given to a struggling softball pitcher:

- *Monitoring feedback* – The pitcher is being shelled and she has an E.R.A. of 10 – not good! (Monitoring feedback gives information on how things are going.)
- *Diagnostic feedback* – When she tries to throw a rising fastball, it's not rising, which makes it easy for batters to hit her pitches as they sail right down the middle of the strike zone. (Diagnostic feedback provides information about what is going wrong – but not necessarily on how to fix it.)
- *Formative feedback* – Her pitching coach tells her that she is not dropping her pitching shoulder sufficiently to allow her to deliver the pitch from below the knee. (Formative feedback provides information on what do to about the problem.)

• The key point: assessments are formative only if they *affect learning*. Wiliam and Thompson tease out five key steps in the broader process. Teachers need to:

- Clarify and share learning outcomes and criteria for proficient work;
- Engineer effective learning tasks, questions, and classroom discussions;
- Provide feedback that moves learners forward;
- Activate students as instructional resources for one another;
- Activate students as owners of their own learning.

"The 'big idea'," say the authors, "is that evidence of student learning is used to adjust instruction to better meet student needs – in other words that teaching is *adaptive* to students' learning needs… One of the features that makes a lesson 'formative', then, is that the lesson can change course in the light of evidence about the progress of learning."

• If the teacher has planned a learning activity well and has good ways of "dipsticking" learning along the way, the formative assessments will help the teacher (a) know how to help students learn better, and (b) help the teacher decide on better ways to present the lesson in the future.

• Here's an example of the opposite dynamic. A upper-elementary teacher begins a math class with this prompt: "Yesterday we talked about triangles, and we had a special name for triangles with three sides the same. Anyone remember what it was? … Begins with E … equi-…" Wiliam and Thompson have two observations:

- It doesn't matter to the teacher's lesson plan how students respond to this question; she just wants to hear the word "equilateral" so she can move on to the next part of her script. All incorrect answers are treated the same, telling her that students weren't listening in the previous lesson.
- The teacher's opening question had little potential for giving her insights into students' thinking, except whether they could remember the word "equilateral." This, say Wiliam and Thompson, is typical of situations where the teacher doesn't take enough time "upstream" to plan questions that will reveal whether students "get it" and provide information on how the lesson should proceed so all students learn.

• It's become a truism that teachers don't create learning; only students can create learning. Some teachers have interpreted this to mean they should stop being the "sage on the stage" and shift to being the "guide on the side." The danger here is that the teacher may feel

absolved of responsibility for making sure learning takes place! Quite the contrary, say Wiliam and Thompson, the teacher needs to "engineer" a learning environment in which students learn and, if they aren't learning, find out *soon* so learning problems can be fixed immediately.

• Many teachers tend to focus on *teaching activities* rather than intended *learning results*. For example, a primary-grade teacher, asked to describe his goal for a lesson, might reply, "I'm going to have them describe a friend." This conflates the learning goal with the activity. This teacher needs to focus more on what he intends students to *learn* – and what proficient student work looks like.

• One approach is to plan formative assessments "upstream" – proactively building "self-checking" into the lesson plan. For example, if students routinely practice math skills with real-world problems, students will see that, if their answer says that a slice of pizza costs $200, it must be wrong. Another "upstream" approach is to have students work cooperatively, consulting and supporting each other and keeping their work "on track."

• A second approach to formative assessment is the teacher checking for student understanding as the lesson unfolds. This can be done by assigning prompts or activities or asking questions (for example, "Would your mass be the same on the moon as it is on earth?"), revealing whether students are "getting it" and giving the teacher a chance to re-teach or adjust so all students learn (if students answer "Yes" to the moon question, it's time to revisit the concept of mass and weight). Good "upstream" planning of "dipstick" assessments and questions gives the teacher real-time feedback on what's being learned and creates decision points in the lesson, depending on how students respond.

• "Real-time" monitoring of student learning tends to be tighter in math and science classes, where there's a narrow definition of what it means to be "on track" with the lesson. It's somewhat looser in the humanities, where a wider range of student responses to a lesson is often permissible.

• When American teachers see a student who is not "on track" with the lesson, they tend to intervene immediately with that student. Japanese teachers, by contrast, usually walk around the whole class observing students' work and then choose one or two major misconceptions or errors to discuss with the whole class.

• It's often assumed that if a teacher gives tests more frequently, that makes the assessments formative. Not true, say Wiliam and Thompson, if the tests are used summatively. "[F]requent summative testing – we might call this micro-summative – is not formative unless the information that the tests yield is used in some way to modify instruction," they say.

• The turnaround time for feedback from formative assessments needs to be matched to the situation so that students get feedback in time to improve. Here are examples of four different time-frames:

- Short-cycle – Some teachers ask questions as they teach, using students' responses to adjust the lesson "on the fly" to correct student misconceptions and fill in missing knowledge.
- Next-day cycle – Some teachers have students fill out "exit passes" before leaving the classroom; each student jots down the answer to a question that goes to the heart of the

concept that was just taught (for example, at the end of a lesson on probability, students might be asked to answer, "Why can't a probability be greater than one?"). After students leave, the teacher looks over their responses and makes appropriate adjustments for the next class.

- Medium-cycle – A teacher gives a practice state test two weeks before the real test and, with fast correcting, still has time to re-teach and clarify what students don't understand.
- Long-cycle – A teacher takes note of things that went wrong in a curriculum unit and thinks about how to present the information differently next year.

• "The key point in all this," say Wiliam and Thompson, "is that the length of the feedback loop should be tailored according to the ability of the system to react to the feedback. Smart teachers and principals can design this in. For example, Japanese teachers typically allocate 14 lessons for a teaching unit; the content takes 10 or 11 of the lessons, students take a short test in lesson 12, and there's time in lessons 13 and 14 to re-teach aspects of the unit that weren't fully understood. The length of time needed to clarify and re-teach can also be shortened by good "upstream" planning – by anticipating students' misconceptions and errors and planning lessons that prevent students from having most problems in the first place.

• The biggest challenge, say Wiliam and Thompson, is getting teachers to put the new thinking about assessment into action. "No matter how elegantly we formulate our ideas about formative assessments," they write, "they will be moot unless we can find ways of supporting teachers in incorporating more attention to assessment in their own practice."

• Wiliam and Thompson are blunt about why teachers so rarely listen to prescriptions from the research community. "The difficulty about 'putting research into practice' is the fault neither of the teacher nor of the researcher," they write. "Because our understanding of the theoretical principles underlying successful classroom action is weak, research cannot tell teachers what to do. Indeed, given the complexity of classrooms, it seems likely that the positivist dream of an effective theory of teacher action – which would spell out the 'best' course of action given certain conditions – is not just difficult and a long way off, but impossible in principle."

• A much better strategy than asking teachers to passively adopt "good ideas" from researchers, say Wiliam and Thompson, is getting teachers actively involved in creating knowledge and insights about effective teaching themselves. And the most promising approach to this is "professional learning communities" – teams of educators who teach the same content to students at the same grade level meeting to review student work and the results of common interim assessments. The authors give five reasons that professional learning communities are especially appropriate vehicle for developing teacher expertise in formative assessment:

- Formative assessment depends on a high level of professional judgment on the part of teachers, so it's a good idea to build professional development around a teacher-as-local-expert model.

- Professional learning communities are sustained over time, which allows change to occur gradually and cumulatively.
- Professional learning communities are a non-threatening venue in which teachers can look at students' work and spot their kids' errors and misconceptions – and in the process notice weaknesses in their *own* content knowledge and remedy them in low-key conversations with their colleagues.
- Professional learning communities, say Wiliam and Thompson, "are embedded in the day-to-day realities of teachers' classrooms and schools, and thus provide a time and place where teachers can hear real-life stories from colleagues that show the benefits of adopting these techniques in situations similar to their own. These stories provide 'existence proofs' that these kinds of changes are feasible with the exact kinds of students that a teacher has in his or her classroom – which contradicts the common lament, 'Well, that's all well and good for teachers at *those* schools, but that won't work here with the kinds of students we get at this school'… As teachers adjust their practice, they are risking both disorder and less-than-accomplished performance on the part of their students and themselves. Being a member of a community of teacher-learners engaged together in a change process provides the support teachers need to take such risks."
- Professional learning communities get teachers working in teams in which they can help each other clarify the "big ideas" they are teaching and develop their subject-matter knowledge so they can ask good questions, interpret their students' responses, and provide the kind of feedback that focuses on what to do to improve student achievement. This collegial support is vital in making formative assessments successful in the classroom, since teaching and assessing make significant demands on each teacher's subject-area expertise.

• Getting professional learning communities going in schools, conclude Wiliam and Thompson, is not easy. Indeed, they write, it "challenges long-held structures and assumptions about the nature of teachers' work, teacher learning, and how time should be spent in school." But they say that nothing is more important to improving teaching and student learning.

"Integrating Assessment With Learning: What Will It Take to Make It Work?" by Dylan Wiliam and Marnie Thompson, draft book chapter for Educational Testing Service, March 2006

3. A Georgia Teacher On the Front Lines of the Evolution Battlefield

In last week's "On Education" column in the *New York Times*, Michael Winerip tells how Patricia New, an award-winning 62-year-old teacher in rural Dahlonega, Georgia, was badgered and criticized by some parents for teaching evolution in her middle-school life science classes. One parent asked that her son "bide his time elsewhere" when evolution was being taught. New explained that this would mean the boy would be out of her classroom most

of the year, since evolution is so central to biology that it comes up in practically every chapter of the textbook: Bacteria to Plants, Cells and Heredity, Animals…

New got very little support from her administrators. Her principal took a copy of the Bible from his office bookshelf and said, "Patty, I believe in everything in this book, do you?" In another encounter, the principal took her hand and said, "I accept evolution in most things but if they ever say God wasn't involved I couldn't accept that. I want you to say that, Pat." The superintendent allowed parents to question New in loud and sarcastic tones. He said, "It's a public school. In a democracy people can ask questions."

"I thought I was going crazy," said New. "It takes a lot to stand up and be willing to have people angry at you." She finally initiated a grievance, saying she was being "threatened and harassed." But New offered to tear up her grievance if her administrators would meet with her within 24 hours and look at the state standards for teaching evolution, which she said she was following.

The superintendent called an official in the Georgia Department of Education and was told that state standards indeed mandated the teaching of evolution. And suddenly the superintendent had a way of dealing with parent complaints. "I explained to parents that we're following state standards. I said, 'You can believe what you want, but we have to teach the standards.' If they're upset, they can take it up on the state level."

Throughout the 2005-06 school year, New taught her curriculum with minimal static. "What saved me," she said, "was I didn't have to argue evolution with these people. All I had to say was, 'I'm following state standards.'"

But last week, she retired a year earlier than she originally planned. The battle had taken a lot out of her.

"Evolution's Lonely Battle in a Georgia Classroom" by Michael Winerip, *New York Times*, June 28, 2006, no free e-link available

4. Short Items:

a. An online venue for teachers to market unit and lesson plans – Former New York teacher Paul Edelman has started a website for teachers to sell their original curriculum ideas to other teachers: http://www.teacherspayteachers.com. Launched in April this year, the website charges contributors a $29.95 annual fee and lets them set their own prices (most charge a dollar or so); teachers get a cut, and so does Edelman. Although lots of websites offer free lesson plans, Edelman thinks he'll get better quality using his approach, and he's recruiting teachers and professors worldwide. Among the units offered so far: the history of China, teaching the Industrial Revolution through documentary photography, and a manual for organizing a poetry slam. This might be worth checking out – and encouraging teachers to contribute.

Spotted in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, June 30, 2006

b. A consumer guide to after-school science resources – This website lists reviews by a panel of experts of high-quality, hands-on science content for after-school programs. The guide covers semester- and year-long curriculum materials, activity kits, and teachers' guides and includes descriptions and detailed commentary from reviewers.
http://news.publiceducation.org/t/502/174777/116/0/

National Partnership for Quality After-School Learning at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory website (spotted in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, June 30, 2006)

c. Research on single-sex classes – Teaching girls in single-sex schools or classrooms makes no difference to their achievement one way or the other, says an international study conducted by U.K. professor Alan Smithers. Half a century of research, he reports, "has not shown any dramatic or consistent advantages for single-sex education' for boys or girls."

"Single-Sex Schools "No Benefit for Girls" by Anushka Asthana, *Guardian Unlimited*, June 25, 2006, http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,,1805641,00.html

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 36 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 scores of 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 (with occasional breaks; there were 50 issues in 2004-05).

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Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD SmartBrief
Atlantic Monthly
Boston Globe
CommonWealth Magazine
District Administration
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Update
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
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Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
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Principal Leadership
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Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teacher Magazine
Teachers College Record
Theory Into Practice
Times Educational Supplement