Marshall Memo 361

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
November 22, 2010

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"In work, your goal should be to spend most of your time at the intersection of three spheres: what you like to do, what you do best, and what adds value to the organization."
Edward Hallowell (see item #1)

"The most useful skill we could teach is the habit of asking oneself and others, *how do we know*? If knowledge comes from intuition or anecdote, it is likely to be wrong."
Sharon Begley (see item #2)

"Research has made it abundantly clear that putting the least capable and least motivated students together in a class with a curriculum that is less challenging and moves at a slower pace increases the achievement gap and is detrimental to students."
Richard DuFour (see item #5)

"If every question is answered by the quickest or loudest students or by volunteers, other students can and will stop engaging."
Richard DuFour (*ibid*.)

"When multiple-choice becomes the valued assessment, essay-writing gets placed on the back burner, and we end up with a school system that raises multiple-choice thinkers in an essay world."
Kelly Gallagher (see item #9)

1. Five Steps to Optimal Job Performance

"Millions of workers toil fecklessly in the wrong jobs," says Massachusetts psychiatrist and author Edward Hallowell in this thoughtful *Harvard Business Review* article. "They don't want to cause problems – or risk losing their positions – by complaining, so they simply do what they are told." And yet studies have found that getting a better job fit increases work satisfaction, reduces stress, and improves attendance and performance. "From my work with patients," says Hallowell, "I have seen that job fit ranks with choice of mate in predicting success and well-being." From 30 years of work in this area, he has five pointers:

• *Select –Find the right job*. "In work, your goal should be to spend most of your time at the intersection of three spheres," says Hallowell. "What you like to do, what you do best, and what adds value to the organization." Here are questions aimed at finding this sweet spot:

- What are you best at doing?
- What do you like to do most?
- What do you wish you were better at?
- What talents do you have that you haven't developed?
- Which of your skills are you most proud of?
- What do others most often say are your greatest strengths?
- What have you gotten better at?
- What can you just not get better at no matter how hard you try?
- What do you most dislike doing?
- Which skills do you need to develop in order to perform your job?
- What sort of people do you work best with? Worst with?
- What sort of organizational culture brings out the best in you?
- What were you doing when you were happiest in your work life?
- What are your most cherished hopes for your future work life?
- How could your time be better used in your current job to add value to the organization?

"If your answers indicate that you aren't well matched to your job," says Hallowell, "you should consider talking to your manager about shifting some responsibilities. At the extreme, you might consider changing positions or even careers."

• *Connect – Tap into the power of other people*. "Working on a connected team galvanizes people in ways nothing else can," says Hallowell. "Connection is the bond an

individual experiences with another person, a group, or anything else that stirs feelings of attachment, loyalty, excitement, inspiration, comfort, and a willingness to make sacrifices."

• *Play – Imaginatively engage with work*. Once people are in the right job and have connected with colleagues, they naturally move to the next step – the kind of engagement with the work that Hallowell calls *play* and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls *flow* – the state in which people are so caught up in what they're doing that they lose self-consciousness and time seems to stand still. Neuroscientists have found that this mental state builds the human brain by stimulating the secretion of brain-derived neurotrophic factor, or BDNF, which promotes nerve growth. Play/flow also engages the part of the brain that regulates emotions and executive functions like planning, organizing, prioritizing, deciding, scheduling, anticipating, delegating, and analyzing.

• *Grapple and grow – Conquer difficult challenges*. The fourth step is tackling challenging goals. "If you've come to a point where you are imaginatively engaging with your job," says Hallowell, "you will naturally want to work harder at it." Productive, manageable stress makes the brain grow and produces great satisfaction. "Stress is not the enemy in our lives," says James Loehr, one of the leading thinkers on peak performance. "Paradoxically, it is the key to growth." Negative stress, on the other hand, is deeply damaging. "It kills good work, brain cells, heart cells, and, eventually, people," says Hallowell. "…To manage yourself properly, it is important to court the good stress, in the form of surmountable challenges, while avoiding the bad."

• *Shine – Ensure that you are recognized*. "We have known for a long time that the need for recognition is fundamental to optimal human performance," says Hallowell. It releases dopamine, a transmitter linked to pleasure and well-being, which is why praise feels good. And recognition fills "the uniquely human need to serve, to be of value, to matter." Hallowell advises people who work in organizations that chronically withhold praise and recognition to speak up and claim what is theirs – or consider finding another place of work.

"What Brain Science Tells Us About How to Excel: A Doctor's Prescription for Achieving Peak Performance" by Edward Hallowell in *Harvard Business Review*, December 2010 (Vol. 88, #12, p. 123-129), no e-link available; Hallowell can be reached at drhallowell@gmail.com.

Back to page one

2. The Bigger Goal of Science Education

In this incisive *Newsweek* column, science reporter Sharon Begley says that the science curriculum shouldn't spend so time cramming facts into students' heads. "Instead," she says, "what we need to teach is the ability to detect Bad Science – BS, if you will."

"The reason we do science in the first place," she continues, "is so that 'our own atomized experiences and prejudices' don't mislead us." (a quote from Ben Goldacre). She gives five examples.

• Believing observational studies – for example, because people who eat a lot of olive oil have one health outcome, while people who don't have a different outcome, one choice is better. Good science teaching should make people leery about drawing such conclusions.

• The infamous *Sports Illustrated* jinx – being on the cover is supposed to spell doom for an athlete based on a few cases in which this has happened. What's at work here is regression to the mean – athletes get on the cover of *SI* when they are at the peak of their game, which always involves some luck or random chance, and they inevitably fall to earth at some point.

• Attributing recovery from an illness to taking a particular medicine or having a particular operation. Most illnesses have a natural cycle, and people tend to seek treatment when their symptoms are worst. This is when they are most likely to get better, whatever they do. This belief can cause problems – pumping up the reputation of a quack remedy, unnecessary surgery, wasteful medical spending, and breeding drug-resistant bacteria.

• Distinguishing between random events and patterns – for example, is climate change occurring or are we just seeing another turn in the long-term weather cycle?

• Seeing what we want to see. In one experiment, teachers were asked to reward students' punctuality or punish their tardiness for 15 days. Then they were asked which approach was most effective. The teachers said it was punishment, but it turns out that the experiment was rigged: students were told to arrive at random times generated by a computer and punctuality had nothing to do with being punished or rewarded. Yet the teachers believed their actions were what made the difference.

"The most useful skill we could teach," says Begley, "is the habit of asking oneself and others, *how do we know*? If knowledge comes from intuition or anecdote, it is likely to be wrong… Science is not a collection of facts but a way of interrogating the world. Let's teach kids to ask smarter questions."

"Wanted: BS Detectors: What Science Ed Should Really Teach" by Sharon Begley in *Newsweek*, Nov. 8, 2010 (p. 26)
http://www.newsweek.com/2010/10/28/what-kids-should-really-learn-in-science-class.html
Back to page one

3. Milwaukee Struggles with "Learning Walks"

In this article in *The School Administrator*, University of California/Riverside professor Marsha Ing and San Bruno (CA) assistant principal Kenneth Montgomery describe some of the difficulties districts are having as they try to get a handle on what is going on in classrooms. Many districts are urging principals to get out of their offices to do "learning walks" and "walk-throughs." "Yet simply pushing principals into class visits doesn't translate into gathering useful information about what is happening instructionally," say Ing and Montgomery. "How do principals use this information to improve teaching and learning? Do the assembled data help teachers and administrators make better judgments about classroom instruction?"

They describe the efforts of the Milwaukee Public Schools to gather data on classroom practices from "learning walks" in schools. One protocol used for three-minute classroom visits (100 visits per school) was the Instructional Practices Inventory. Observers would check one of six areas that best reflected what they saw in the classroom:

- Active, engaged learning;
- Learning conversations;
- Teacher-led instruction;
- Student work with teacher engaged;
- Student work without teacher support;
- Complete disengagement.

Information from the learning walks was collected by principal coaches and given to an administrative assistant in the central office, and there was little analysis or follow-up.

Another Milwaukee protocol for learning walks was this list of the Characteristics of High-Performing Urban Classrooms:

- Active engagement of student learners;
- Strategic use of instructional choices;
- Routine use of a variety of assessments;
- Cultural responsiveness;
- High expectations based on learning targets;
- Partnerships with families and communities;
- Collaboration with colleagues;
- Impassioned, engaged adult learners.

Teams attempted to gauge the level of implementation of these eight factors at each school. The information was collected at the school level and remained there.

And there was a third Milwaukee classroom-observation protocol – Measuring What Matters.

"These learning walks represented a concerted attempt by the school district to have principals observe instructional practice through a common lens," say Ing and Montgomery. "In the view of Milwaukee's central administrators, classroom observations represented movement toward improving instruction."

But many principals and teachers thought otherwise. They saw that the information collected was often not representative of what was happening in classrooms on a day-to-day basis. One teacher said she felt like a fraud because every time there were observers in her classroom, students would act like little angels, answer all the her questions, and tell observers exactly what they were learning. "Don't worry about it," one student assured her. "I've got your back."

In addition to the questionable validity of learning-walk data, principals had three other concerns. First, the information gathered during learning walks averaged what they saw in multiple classrooms and didn't pinpoint the problems that some teachers were having. Second, individual teachers didn't get feedback on areas for improvement. And third, the protocols' emphasis on student engagement meant that observers missed other important information. In one classroom, for example, the teacher got high marks for student engagement but was providing incorrect information about a mathematical concept.

The result was that Milwaukee's learning walks "created a situation in which principals and teachers may have had a considerable amount of data about instruction but little

confidence in the quality of this data or the knowledge or skills to do anything with the data," say Ing and Montgomery. "The observations provided general information about instructional practice but failed to generate the data upon which the district or teachers could take action." The overly general data meant little to school staffs, principals rarely followed up with individual teachers, and the whole program seems to have had precious little impact on teaching and learning.

Recognizing this, Milwaukee created a new tool, Learning at a Glance (http://www2.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/rti/surveys/LAAGv1form.pdf) and is beginning to implement it citywide.

Ing and Montgomery say there are several valuable lessons to be learned from Milwaukee's experience, including:

• *Signal what is important*. Decide what is important and communicate it through a common observation protocol.

• *Draw a line from practice to performance*. In other words, make sure that observations will be used by principals and teachers to improve student learning. "If the data do not help the teachers connect their practice to work generated by the students, the information is of little use," say Ing and Montgomery.

• *Take a systemic approach*. Principals should use information from classroom observations to plan appropriate professional development or get teachers observing each others' classes.

• *Triangulate with other measures*. "Classroom observations should not be the only data used to improve instruction," say Ing and Montgomery. Principals and teachers should look at student work and classroom assessments to generate discussions about what is working and what isn't. "A rich discussion finds ways to include the observed pedagogical strategies and the content mastered by students."

"Watching the Game and Not Just Keeping Score" by Marsha Ing and Kenneth Montgomery in *The School Administrator*, November 2010 (Vol. 67, #10, p. 10-15), http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=16790. Ing can be reached at marsha.ing@ucr.edu.

Back to page one

4. Confronting a Problem Teacher

In this helpful *Journal of Staff Development* article, former elementary principal and Fierce Conversations trainer Jamie Sussel Turner suggests a model for confronting an underperforming teacher and engaging in a collaborative search for the truth. Here are the components in an opening 60-second statement, which Turner says a principal might want to rehearse in advance so it can be delivered seamlessly:

- Name the issue.
- Describe a specific example.
- Describe your emotions around the issue.
- Say what is at stake.

- Identify how you have contributed to the problem.
- Say that you want to resolve the issue.
- Invite the teacher to respond.

Here's an example with a teacher named Anne:

Anne, I want to talk about the effect your use of sarcasm is having on the emotional state of your students and also the effect your decision not to incorporate new strategies is having on your students' engagement and learning.

Last week when I was in your classroom, you snapped at John for not doing his homework. He lowered his head in his hands to hide his tears. Also, last week I was in the hallway and heard you sigh as you used a sarcastic tone to tell the class, 'I wish every class was as smart as you are.' Also, I wanted to note that during my last observation, you lectured the class for the entire period without engaging your students in any discussion or activities as our staff has been learning to do.

I am concerned about the emotional state of your students and for their learning. I want you to know I also feel concern for you. I feel sad to see these changes in your teaching since I have always known you to be a kind teacher who is positive with students, is willing to try new strategies, and holds student learning as a priority.

There is a great deal at stake for your students, for you, and for me. The daily emotional well-being and achievement of your students is at stake. Your students deserve to have a teacher who will speak to them with respect and genuine affection and teach them in a way that truly engages them in the learning process. My effectiveness as a principal is at stake because the success of our students lies squarely on my doorstep.

I recognize that I have contributed to this situation by not speaking with you about this sooner in a way that clarified my growing concerns. I apologize. You deserve better.

I hope to see you continue and eventually wrap up your career as the well-respected and beloved teacher who began this career years ago.

I want to listen now. Please tell me what's going on from where you sit.

After hearing this, the teacher responded angrily: "Are you trying to get rid of me?" The principal repeated that she wanted to understand the teacher's point of view. The teacher took a deep breath and said she needed to teach for two more years for the benefits. "You have no idea how hard it is just to make it to school every day," she said. "The constant curriculum changes are stressing me out, the kids can't pay attention like they used to, and the parents try to solve all of their problems." She asked for more time to think about the situation.

A week later, the principal and teacher met again and Anne talked about how she had struggled since her mother's death and might be mildly depressed. She said she would try to improve her interactions with students and plan more engaging lessons. They agreed to check in from time to time.

Turner says that these exchanges didn't solve all Anne's problems, but they were part of an improved pattern of communication that paid dividends through the rest of her principalship. She also says she felt less stress "as I now had the conversations that previously

weighed me down and more self-confidence in my growing ability to communicate with others in an authentic way."

"Confrontation Model of Conversations Provides Tools to Discuss and Resolve Tough Issues" by Jamie Sussel Turner in *Journal of Staff Development*, October 2010 (Vol. 31, #5, p. 63-64), http://www.learningforward.org/news/articleDetails.cfm?articleID=2155

Back to page one

5. Are Remedial Classes a Good Idea in High-School Social Studies?

In this paid "Speaking to the Issues" column in *Education Week*, author/consultant Richard DuFour answers a question from a high school's social studies department about remedial classes (the school had recently dropped low-track classes). Some teachers believed that lower-achieving students were not motivated to answer questions in heterogeneous classes, which was stifling discussion – a disservice to higher-achieving students. They argued that remedial classes should be brought back "for the good of the kids."

"If this department looks at the evidence," says DuFour, "it will not assign students to remedial tracks." Here are his reasons:

• *Tracking* – "Research has made it abundantly clear that putting the least capable and least motivated students together in a class with a curriculum that is less challenging and moves at a slower pace increases the achievement gap and is detrimental to students," he says. A recent review of over 300 studies in *Visible Learning* by John Hattie found that tracking has almost no effect on student achievement and profoundly negative effects on equity. DuFour has no problem with Advanced Placement courses, but believes a remedial track is counterproductive.

• *Expectations* – DuFour also suggests that this school look at the research on teacher expectations, which shows that lower expectations have an undeniable impact on student achievement. Students in the remedial classes are very likely to hear this message from teachers: "We don't think you have the ability to be successful in a regular class, so we have dumbed down the curriculum to meet your limited skills."

• *Questioning strategies* – As for lower-achieving students not answering questions in heterogeneous classes, DuFour suspects this may have something to do with the questioning strategies being used. Are teachers calling only on students who raise their hands? "Effective questions engage students in thinking," he says, "and to promote that engagement, the teacher must control who will answer by directing questions to students randomly. If every question is answered by the quickest or loudest students or by volunteers, other students can and will stop engaging."

Or perhaps teachers are accepting "I don't know" as an answer. "Good teachers will prompt, probe, and extend wait-time," he says. "If the student is unable to respond, the teacher will say, 'Think about it, and I'll come back to you in a minute.' They have students react to each other's answers. They make it clear that everyone will be engaged in the dialogue."

DuFour concludes by citing the achievement record of Adlai Stevenson High School in Illinois, where he used to be principal and superintendent. The school eliminated remedial

courses more than 20 years ago and every indicator of student achievement has increased every year. "Stevenson has one of the highest composite ACT scores in the nation despite the fact that the test is administered to every student in Illinois and not only to the college-bound students," he says. The school also has an active AP and honors program.

"Creating Remedial Tracks 'for the Good of the Kids'" by Richard DuFour in *Education Week*, Nov. 17, 2010 (Vol. 30, #12, p. 23), no e-link available

Back to page one

6. A Defense of Differentiation

In this response to Mike Schmoker's recent article in *Education Week* (summarized in Marshall Memo 354), University of Virginia/Charlottesville professor Carol Tomlinson identifies herself as the object of Schmoker's critique of differentiation and joins with neuroscience consultant David Sousa in rebutting the article.

But despite their obvious pique at what they call a "trash-and-burn" argument, Tomlinson and Sousa list substantial areas of agreement with Schmoker. They say that differentiation is not a silver bullet for higher student achievement and spell out essential lesson ingredients that are strikingly similar to those that Schmoker listed:

- A learning environment that provides high challenge and support;
- A high-quality curriculum that emphasizes deep understanding of content and ensures that both teachers and students recognize what is essential for students to know, understand, and do;
- Regular use of on-the-spot and interim assessments to check for understanding and adapt instruction to ensure maximum success for each child.

Tomlinson and Sousa also agree with Schmoker that slapdash attempts at differentiation – a frantically assembled collection of worksheets, coloring exercises, and specious 'kinesthetic' activities – are "regrettable and damaging." And they say the jury is still out on the efficacy of teaching to learning styles. This means that teachers shouldn't label or categorize students as a particular "type" of learner but should help students "understand themselves as learners so that they can make better learning choices."

Tomlinson and Sousa go on to defend differentiation's track record with the following points:

• Differentiation, they say, is not a single entity or strategy but "a series of guidelines for increasing the likelihood that each student has an opportunity for academic success."

• Empirical and neuroscience research says that students learn when the work is appropriately challenging – not too easy and not too hard.

• Research suggests that students learn better when the work is personally relevant and engaging and there is a positive teacher-student connection.

• Research also says that small-group learning, cooperative learning (versus competitive), and a cohesive classroom are important to student learning.

"When Pedagogical Information Trumps Reason" – a letter from Carol Tomlinson and David Sousa in *Education Week*, Nov. 17, 2010 (Vol. 30, #12, p. 28)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/11/17/12letter-b1.h30.html
Back to page one

7. Building a Strong Middle- and High-School Writing Program

In this *Principal Leadership* article, University of Michigan/Ann Arbor professor Anne Ruggles Gere begins by dispelling some myths about writing:

• *Myth #1: The purpose of writing in school is to test students on what they have learned*. True, writing can be the vehicle for demonstrating knowledge or skills, but it can also foster learning by helping students develop greater understanding of content. Informal writing (like journal entries and reflections on reading) is especially helpful.

• *Myth #2: English teachers are responsible for teaching writing*. Yes, they can provide leadership, but every teacher should also teach writing and teach the vocabulary, concepts, topics, and types of writing in their field.

• *Myth #3: Teaching writing means teaching grammar*. Conventions are important, but they are only a small part of what writing is all about. "Learning how to develop an idea, address the concerns of a specific audience, and organize ideas are much more significant," says Gere.

• *Myth #4: Good teachers of writing mark every error every time*. Gere believes that "marking every error overwhelms students so that they are unable to learn from the marks." It's better to leave fine editing until students have completed a full draft.

• *Myth #5: All responsibility for responding to student writing rests with the teacher*. Not so, says Gere. Other students, parents, and community members should share this job.

• *Myth #6: Students should learn everything about writing in elementary school*. Not true! "Each new subject and each new form of writing poses new challenges," says Gere. "Learning to write is a spiraling process that requires continuing development and extends across all educational levels."

• *Myth #7: Good writing means getting it right the first time*. Sometimes writers must produce a text in one sitting, but most of the time, good writing consists of gathering ideas, finding arguments, writing drafts, getting responses, revising for audience and purpose, polishing, and editing.

• *Myth #8: Good writers work alone*. This is rarely true. "Writing is a highly social activity," says Gere. "Good writers bounce their ideas off others as they begin a new project; they share their drafts with others so that they can revise more effectively; and they often read their work aloud to others to gauge how it will be received."

Gere goes on to suggest the following key components to a strong schoolwide writing program:

- Do a thorough needs assessment to describe the status of writing in the school.
- Set schoolwide goals for student writing achievement with clear benchmarks.

- Develop action steps that address content-area and grade-level writing. These might include:
    - Presenting writing as a process;
    - Making reading and writing connections transparent;
    - Promoting writing to learn;
    - Assigning writing in multiple, real-word venues;
    - Encouraging writing across the content areas;
    - Teaching grammar in context;
    - Providing authentic writing assessment;
    - Valuing extracurricular writing practices;
    - Investing in new media writing instruction;
    - Encouraging writing as a social practice.
- Provide appropriate professional development for teachers.
- Structure institutional support for writing, including manageable class size and use of technology.
- Assess student writing at regular intervals using common prompts, rubrics, and exemplar papers.
- Recruit effective teachers of writing and develop the writing faculty.
- Conduct regular programmatic assessment.

"Taking Initiative on Writing" by Anne Ruggles Gere in *Principal Leadership*, November 2010 (Vol. 11, #3, p. 36-42), no e-link available; Gere is at argere@umich.edu.

Back to page one

8. Learning to Write a Good College Admissions Essay

(Originally titled "Demystifying College")

"Teachers committed to closing opportunity gaps should demystify the process of writing college admissions essays," say Arizona State University/Tempe professor Jessica Singer Early and doctoral student Meredith DeCosta-Smith in this online *Educational Leadership* article. They describe the six-week writing workshop they created to teach secondary students to write college admissions essays, and say that all 41 of the low-income, predominantly ELL students who took part in a pilot of the program won acceptance to college.

A typical college essay topic goes something like this: "Evaluate a significant experience, achievement risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you," or "Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence." "To bring a potentially intimidating task down to earth," say Early and DeCosta-Smith, "we identified eight skills needed to craft a powerful personal essay."

- Select a strong topic by brainstorming and discussion.
- Write for the audience (some students were intimidated by writing for an unknown admissions officer).
- Write an effective introduction.

- Add dialogue.
- Use description.
- Step outside the narrative to emphasize the significance of the topic and lessons learned.
- Make connections with outside texts, events, or ideas.
- Write an effective conclusion.

In each of the 55-minute classes, they introduced the day's essay element or skill, showed exemplars, gave students the chance to practice that component, sometimes working with peers, had them incorporate it into their model essay, gave them feedback, and had them revise.

Early and DeCosta-Smith close with a sidebar listing tips for allaying fears about college applications:

- Encourage students to ask questions about the essay and the admissions process.
- Give students time and resources to research postsecondary institutions that match their goals and interests.
- Distribute pamphlets describing undergraduate scholarships and sample financial aid packages.
- Give students models of successful college admissions essays; see this website for two samples http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/essay-skills/index.html with critiques.
- Have students engage in individual writing conferences with peers and the teacher to receive feedback and revision suggestions.
- Give students time in class to draft, review, and polish college admissions essays.
- Invite diverse undergraduates into the classroom to answer students' questions, read students' essays, and address their fears about college.
- Have school counselors talk with the class about the admissions process, explain how to fill out financial aid forms, and describe requirements for admission.

"Demystifying College" by Jessica Singer Early and Meredith DeCosta-Smith in *Educational Leadership*, November 2010 (Vol. 68, #3, online only), http://www.ascd.org; the authors are available at Jessica.early@asu.edu and Meredith.decosta@asu.edu.

Back to page one

9. A Teacher Pleads for Better Tests

In this *Education Week* commentary article, California high-school teacher Kelly Gallagher bemoans the fact that he and many other teachers are in a "sprint and cover" mode, frantically trying to cover the curriculum and prepare students for tests that have high stakes for students – and teachers as well. He cites a study that found a slower, more thorough approach to the curriculum produced lower test scores in high school but better achievement once students were in college.

"The problem is that there are too many standards," says Gallagher. "…Because there are too many standards, and because most of these standards are assessed on the state tests,

teachers are pressured to cover everything. When everything is covered, shallow teaching and thinking occur."

A leaner set of standards is one answer, and that is what many high-achieving countries have. Another is requiring students to write. "Answers to multiple-choice questions can often be faked," says Gallagher. "Answers to essay questions cannot." He lauds the inclusion of an on-demand essay in the California High School Exit Exam. The problem, he says, is that the essay makes up such a small part of the overall score that it's possible for students to write gibberish on the essay, or skip it entirely, and still pass the test. "When multiple-choice becomes the valued assessment," he says, "essay-writing gets placed on the back burner, and we end up with a school system that raises multiple-choice thinkers in an essay world."

Gallagher believes we should emulate high-achieving countries by focusing on the skills needed to be college- and career ready in a globally competitive marketplace, surround students with interesting books, and require lots of writing. "Let's aim for creating big thinkers, not small thinkers," he says. "And let's recognize that critical thinking in many classrooms will not occur until the state assessment demands critical thinking in all our classrooms."

"Why I Will Not Teach to the Test: It's Time to Focus on In-Depth Learning, Not Shallow Answers" by Kelly Gallagher in *Education Week*, Nov. 17, 2010 (Vol. 30, #12, p. 36, 29), http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/11/17/12gallagher_ep.h30.html

Back to page one

10. An Effective Program for Advanced Middle-School Math

In this *American Educational Research Journal* article, a team of eight researchers report on a study comparing the computer-based program SimCalc, a conventional paper curriculum, and teacher professional development. The study found that SimCalc was the most effective in boosting student learning of advanced middle-school mathematics.

"Integration of Technology, Curriculum, and Professional Development for Advancing Middle School Mathematics: Three Large-Scale Studies" by Jeremy Roschelle, Nicole Shechtman, Deborah Tatar, Stephen Hegedus, Bill Hopkins, Susan Empson, Jennifer Knudsen, and Lawrence Gallagher in *American Educational Research Journal*, December 2010 (Vol. 47, #4, p. 833-878), no e-link available

Back to page one

11. Short Items:

a. More student writing with less teacher grading – Here are Mike Schmoker's recommendations for how teachers can deal with the three-headed monster of student writing: overload, infrequent writing assignments, and slow turnaround. This is good stuff! http://www.mikeschmoker.com/write-more.html

Back to page one

b. Historical documents online – Fordham University's Modern History Sourcebook has lots of great historical documents: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html

Back to page one

c. Clickers in college classrooms – This *New York Times* article by Jacques Steinberg describes how more and more college professors are using "clickers" (wireless audience response devices) to check for student understanding – and take attendance.

"More Professors Give Out Hand-Held Devices to Monitor Students and Engage Them" by Jacques Steinberg in *The New York Times*, Nov. 16, 2010 (p. A12)
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/16/education/16clickers.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=%22More%20Professors%20Give%20Out%20Hand-Held&st=cse

Back to page one

d. A TED lecture on math education – This intriguing lecture by Conrad Wolfram suggests that we should de-emphasize computation and boost the other three parts of math in the classroom:
http://www.ted.com/talks/conrad_wolfram_teaching_kids_real_math_with_computers.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 41 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 log-in

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
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
New York Times
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
Teachers College Record
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
The School Administrator
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools