

# Marshall Memo 219

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education  
January 28, 2008

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## Quotes of the Week

"Our education system is not keeping pace with our kids' aspirations."

Gene Carter, Executive Director of ASCD, in *Education Week* (Vol. 27, #10, p. 19)

"Successful readers are not developed merely by having young children practice reading texts that have transparent, innocuous, or sometimes rather inane ideas. Good books are a key to creating good readers."

William Teale, Kathleen Paciga, and Jessica Hoffman (see item #3)

"When the curriculum is narrowed down to test-preparation worksheets and skills and drills, teachers lose the heart and soul of what they should be focusing on in their classrooms."

Liz Hollingworth (see item #2)

"Language learning cannot occur if a teacher focuses only on content, and content knowledge cannot grow if we focus solely on English language acquisition."

Kathleen Flynn and Kirsten Miller in "Learning the Language of the Classroom: Academic English for Nonnative Speakers" in *Principal's Research Review*, January 2008 (Vol. 3, #1, p. 3)

"We have strong evidence that high-quality classroom assessments improve learning tremendously, possibly more effectively than any other teaching intervention."

Karen Bromley, Amy Vandenberg, and Jennifer White in *The Reading Teacher*, Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 (Vol. 61, #4, p. 284), citing Shepard (2000, p. 7)

"Attitude is the mind's paintbrush: It can color any situation."

Liz Hollingworth (*ibid.*)

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## 1. Malcolm Gladwell Looks at Intelligence and I.Q. Tests

In this fascinating *New Yorker* article, author Malcolm Gladwell begins by describing what he calls the I.Q. fundamentalists – those who believe that (a) intelligence tests measure an identifiable mental trait that predicts the quality of our thinking, and (b) that intelligence is innate – it’s determined by our genes and can’t be changed after birth. Among the fundamentalists are H. H. Goddard (who coined the word *moron* and wrote, “The people who are doing the drudgery are, as a rule, in their proper places”); Lewis Terman (who predicted that California children with the highest I.Q. scores would grow up to be the most successful in every profession); Arthur Jensen (who said that Head Start wouldn’t work because I.Q. was mostly genetic); Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray (authors of *The Bell Curve*); Richard Lynn (who believes that Asians are the most intelligent race because of the Himalayas, really cold weather, pre-modern hunting practices, brain size, and specialized vowel sounds); and James Watson (who recently told an English newspaper that he was “inherently gloomy” about the prospects for Africa because its people consistently score lower than Europeans on intelligence tests).

But those who believe that intelligence is inborn and fixed, says Gladwell, haven’t contended with some stubborn facts. The most important is that I.Q. improves steadily from one generation to the next. For example, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the children of U.S. immigrants from southern Italy scored in the high 70s and low 80s on I.Q. tests – a full standard deviation below American and Western European children. Gladwell reports that “there was much concerned talk at the time about the genetic inferiority of Italian stock, of the inadvisability of letting so many second-class immigrants into the United States, and of the squalor that seemed endemic to Italian urban neighborhoods.” But in the decades that followed, something happened that allowed Italian-Americans to rapidly become “more intelligent” and assimilate into the undifferentiated mass of Americans, leaving no trace of this enormous I.Q. gap. Had their genes been magically altered?

James Flynn, a social scientist from New Zealand, has shown conclusively that I.Q. scores increase about three points a decade worldwide, and recently published a book on the subject, *What Is Intelligence?* (Cambridge, 2007). Flynn estimates that an American with an I.Q. of 100 will have children with I.Q.s around 108 and grandchildren with I.Q.s close to 120. “If whatever the thing is that I.Q. tests measure can jump so much in a generation,” says Gladwell, “it can’t be all that immutable and it doesn’t look all that innate.” Or could it be that I.Q. tests aren’t a very good measure of intelligence?

To explore these questions, Flynn looked closely at actual intelligence tests. On the ten-part WISC (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children), the steepest intergenerational rise in scores has been in the section on similarities – questions like, “In what way are dogs and rabbits alike?” The correct answer to this question is that dogs and rabbits are both mammals, but Flynn points out that a nineteenth-century American would have said, “You use dogs to hunt rabbits.” Gladwell explains: “Our great-grandparents may have been perfectly intelligent. But they would have done poorly on I.Q. tests because they did not participate in the twentieth century’s great cognitive revolution, in which we learned to sort experience according to a new set of abstract categories.” We have progressed from a concrete, experiential world and put on “scientific spectacles” (Flynn’s term), enabling us to answer more abstract questions. “An I.Q., in other words, measures not so much how smart we are as how *modern* we are,” says Gladwell.

An example from Africa: psychologists gave members of the Kpelle tribe in Liberia a version of the WISC in which they were asked to sort a basketful of food, tools, containers, and clothing into appropriate categories. The Kpelle chose functional pairings, for example, putting a potato together with a knife because you use a knife to cut a potato. A wise man would have no choice but to make this pairing, they explained. To the researchers, these were the wrong answers, but they asked, “How would a fool do it?” The Kpelle immediately rearranged the objects into what the scientists considered the right groupings.

“It could be argued,” says Gladwell, “that taxonomical categories are a developmental improvement – that is, that the Kpelle would be more likely to advance, technologically and scientifically, if they started to see the world that way. But to label them less intelligent than Westerners on the basis of their performance on that test, is merely to state that they have different cognitive preferences and habits. And if I.Q. varies with habits of mind, which can be adopted or discarded in a generation, what, exactly, is all the fuss about?”

Gladwell gives a third example from his own childhood: on long car trips, his family used to play Twenty Questions, but Gladwell’s father added a fourth category to the usual animal, vegetable, and mineral: abstract. This made the game more challenging, but Gladwell and his brothers caught on. “Flynn would say that my father was teaching his three sons how to put on scientific spectacles,” says Gladwell, “and that extra practice probably bumped up all of our I.Q. scores a few notches. But let’s be clear about what this means. There’s a world of difference between an I.Q. advantage that’s genetic and one that depends on extended car time with Graham Gladwell.”

Because everyone’s I.Q. is constantly creeping upward for these environmental reasons – and because I.Q. tests are periodically re-normed – Flynn says we should be very careful about using I.Q. scores to make important decisions. One such area is deciding if a child is mentally retarded, 70 being the usual cut-off score. In the 1970s and 80s, most states used the WISC-R to determine mental retardation – but since all children, even those with disabilities, score a little higher with every passing year, the percent considered mentally retarded was lower each year. Then in 1991, a re-normed version of the test, the WISC III, was introduced, and the percentage of “retarded” children shot up. One study estimated that if every state had

switched to the new test simultaneously, the number of “retarded” children in the U.S. would have doubled overnight. “That is an extraordinary number,” writes Gladwell. “The diagnosis of mental disability is one of the most stigmatizing of all educational and occupational classifications – and yet, apparently, the chances of being burdened with that label are in no small degree a function of the point, in the life cycle of the WISC, at which a child happens to sit for his evaluation.”

Back to the supposed I.Q. advantage of Asians. Flynn looked closely at the work of Richard Lynn, and found that in his study supposedly proving superior Japanese intelligence, Lynn had compared average American schoolchildren with upper-income, urban Japanese children. Recalculated, the Japanese average fell from 106.6 to 99.2. When Flynn looked at Lynn’s study of Chinese-American intelligence, it turned out that Lynn had looked at 1975 Asian-ancestry San Franciscans using an intelligence test normed in the 1950s. When the subjects were reanalyzed using up-to-date intelligence metrics, their scores were 97 verbal and 100 nonverbal. “The Asian-American success story had suddenly been turned on its head,” says Gladwell. The Chinese-Americans had succeeded “not because of their *higher* I.Q.s, but despite their *lower* I.Q.s.”

Flynn then measured the I.Q.s of the children of the first, overachieving wave of Chinese-Americans – and it turned out that the next generation really did have I.Q.s higher than average – about 103. Why? Flynn believes it’s because the parents took note of how much the professions valued abstract thinking and made sure their children “wore scientific spectacles.” With Chinese-Americans, he argues, high achievement *preceded* high I.Q. It’s all about belonging to a culture that stresses hard work, higher education, and professional success, says Gladwell. “To ascribe Asian success to some abstract number is to trivialize it.”

So what about the black-white “intelligence gap”? Flynn recently debated Charles Murray at a forum in New York City, focusing on the question of why the I.Q. gap between African-Americans and whites narrowed considerably between 1945 and 1970, but then stopped narrowing with a chasm still remaining. Murray expressed pessimism that the gap would ever be closed.

Flynn took a different tack. The black-white gap is virtually non-existent for infants and much narrower among four-year-olds, he said (African-Americans score only 4.6 points below whites). But between the ages of 4 and 24, the gap widens steadily, with blacks losing .6 of a point each year until their scores settle at an average of 83.4. Flynn attributes this entirely to the different cognitive environment in which many African-American children grow up – more single-parent homes (which are less cognitively complex than two-parent homes), less-demanding peer groups and classrooms, and a teenage culture that is often more negative about academic achievement. Flynn backs up his findings with adoption studies, which show clearly that the quality of the environment in which children grow up is key, not genes.

“The mind is much more like a muscle than we’ve ever realized,” Flynn concludes. “It needs to get cognitive exercise. It’s not some piece of clay on which you put an indelible mark.”

“None of the Above: What I.Q. Doesn’t Tell You About Race” by Malcolm Gladwell in *The New Yorker*, Dec. 17, 2007

[http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2007/12/17/071217crbo\\_books\\_gladwell?printable=true](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2007/12/17/071217crbo_books_gladwell?printable=true)

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## 2. Holding Our Ground Against Achievement-Lowering Test Prep

In this powerful article in *The Reading Teacher*, University of Iowa professor Liz Hollingworth laments the fact that so many teachers abandon sound literacy practices to prepare their students (supposedly) for standardized reading tests. “Why are educators so ready to turn over their professional voices and expertise?” she asks. Sure, there’s pressure to raise scores on high-stakes reading tests, but Hollingworth says there are far, far better ways to improve student achievement. Her suggestions:

- *Align instruction with state academic content standards.* “There is a difference between teaching to the test and teaching what is going to be on the test,” says Hollingworth, quoting James Popham saying that the latter is simply good teaching. “Gaps between the intended curriculum (what the state department of education expects is being taught) and the enacted curriculum (what actually is being taught) can sometimes explain low test scores.” In many schools, it might only be necessary to make a few minor tweaks in the reading curriculum to fill gaps and deal with discrepancies. But Hollingworth cautions against skimping on important literacy activities that are neglected by the state test (writing, for example, and reading real books). Students should get the tested curriculum – plus any missing pieces.

- *Give students frequent feedback on high-quality dipstick/formative assessments.* “Good teaching requires frequent feedback from students to check not only their progress as learners but also teacher progress,” says Hollingworth. But it’s important that these assessments require students to think about what they have read, not just recall the text, and that teachers hold individual conferences with students, share the data with them, and get them involved in the process of continuous improvement.

- *Connect reading to real-world contexts.* “When the curriculum is narrowed down to test-preparation worksheets and skills and drills,” says Hollingworth, “teachers lose the heart and soul of what they should be focusing on in their classrooms.” The kind of reading that students must do on standardized tests is a genre all its own, she says, and the way to prepare students for it is *not* to drill short, decontextualized passages with multiple-choice questions. This actually depresses test scores. The way to improve achievement is for students to be actively engaged in reading, thinking about, discussing, and writing about real books and other texts that interest them. The skills and knowledge that students gain from these literacy experiences transfer directly to standardized tests.

- *Set a positive tone.* When she was a teacher, Hollingworth had a poster in her classroom that read, “Attitude is the mind’s paintbrush: It can color any situation.” Principals and teachers need to be upbeat about tests, she says. “If teachers and students regard the testing program as an extra burden, then most of its potential value will be lost. The role of the school administrator is to help teachers understand how good tests can contribute to the effectiveness

of teaching and how scores can aid in individualizing instruction.” As we prepare students for tests, she says, we should work to build up their confidence, not their anxiety.

• *Don't compromise best practices.* Hollingworth says she worked in a school where fear of not making AYP led teachers to switch from an effective literacy program to a daily dose of two hours of test-preparation materials in the weeks before the state test. “For both the students and the teachers,” she says, “the worksheets were like a nasty, bad-tasting medicine.” Hollingworth was baffled by this counterproductive, self-destructive approach. “If what you’ve been doing during the year is what you know to be the best way to teach,” she says, “how are skill-and-drill worksheets better right before the test? Have confidence in yourself as a professional. Best practice is best practice year round.”

“Five Ways to Prepare for Standardized Tests Without Sacrificing Best Practice” by Liz Hollingworth in *The Reading Teacher*, Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 (Vol. 61, #4, p. 339-342). The author can be reached at [liz-Hollingworth@uiowa.edu](mailto:liz-Hollingworth@uiowa.edu). To purchase this article, go to [http://www.reading.org/Library/Retrieve.cfm?D=10.1598/RT.61.4.7&F=RT-61-4\\_Hollingworth.html](http://www.reading.org/Library/Retrieve.cfm?D=10.1598/RT.61.4.7&F=RT-61-4_Hollingworth.html)

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### **3. The Curriculum Gap That Widens the Achievement Gap**

In this important article in *The Reading Teacher*, University of Illinois at Chicago professor William Teale and UIC graduate students Kathleen Paciga and Jessica Hoffman say that in their visits to urban primary-grade classrooms in the No Child Left Behind era, they see a disturbing curriculum gap in three areas:

- Comprehension instruction;
- Building students’ knowledge about the world, especially core concepts in science and social studies;
- Writing instruction.

The message that urban educators seem be hearing from NCLB and Reading First is that reading instruction in the early grade is exclusively about phonological awareness, decoding, accuracy, and fluency. This translates into the follow logic statement for building children’s reading skills:

- Reading words accurately and fluently is the key to comprehension.
- Lots of practice with grade-level text is the key to developing fluent word recognition.
- The conceptual load in K-3 grade-level texts is simple.
- Therefore, as long as one teaches word recognition skills, comprehension will pretty much take care of itself.

“There is quite a bit of truth in the first three points,” say Teale, Paciga, and Hoffman. “But the final point is problematic, and using all four as the guiding principles for a beginning reading program means that teachers get the message that comprehension instruction is something that can (or even should) be put off until later grades.” This, they say, is a recipe for widening the achievement gap.

True, a lot of low-SES children are having trouble mastering phonics and fluency, say the authors. “But these skills are not all that is necessary to help children become successful

readers. During the primary grades it is also essential to teach children appropriate comprehension strategies and skills that enable them to understand texts that are more complex than those made of everyday words they already know and conversations they routinely hear.”

And how are students going to develop those comprehension strategies? By reading real books! The authors believe we are fortunate to have an abundance of good children’s literature in the U.S., “but that literature gets little more than lip service because of the prevailing Reading First emphasis on short-term reading achievement goals coupled with the relative lack of attention to long-term goals.” Reading First, indeed, emphasizes *reading* first.

What are meaningful long-term goals? The most important question, say Teale, Paciga, and Hoffman, is: What will make young children into readers, now and when they are teenagers and adults? “The answer to that question,” they say, “lies solidly in the realm of ideas – the stories and information in the pages of books and magazines and on the screens of computers. Successful readers are not developed merely by having young children practice reading texts that have transparent, innocuous, or sometimes rather inane ideas. Good books are a key to creating good readers.” For children who do not have these experiences at home, schools hold the key to lifelong literacy.

All fifty states have K-12 standards for science, social studies, and writing, and most teachers know the importance of writing and background knowledge to reading, say the authors. Yet many urban primary-grade teachers are shortchanging science and social studies, failing to make the knowledge-reading connection, and spending very little time having their students write. A heavy emphasis on phonics, decoding, accuracy, and fluency may produce impressive-looking test scores in the early grades. “But what happens in fourth or seventh or tenth grade when what it takes to be a good reader depends on vocabulary knowledge, domain knowledge, and the ability to comprehend a variety of genres of text at a deep level?” ask the authors. “Our prediction is that the initial ‘bump’ will at best fade away by fifth or sixth grade and at worst translate into an even larger achievement gap.”

“The curriculum gap must be bridged,” conclude Teale, Paciga, and Hoffman, “if we hope to ameliorate the achievement gap.”

“Beginning Reading Instruction in Urban Schools: The Curriculum Gap Ensures a Continuing Achievement Gap” by William Teale, Kathleen Paciga, and Jessica Hoffman in *The Reading Teacher*, Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 (Vol. 61, #4, p. 344-348). To purchase this article, go to [http://www.reading.org/Library/Retrieve.cfm?D=10.1598/RT.61.4.8&F=RT-61-4\\_Teale.html](http://www.reading.org/Library/Retrieve.cfm?D=10.1598/RT.61.4.8&F=RT-61-4_Teale.html). Teale can be reached at [wteale@uic.edu](mailto:wteale@uic.edu).

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#### **4. Ways to Get Students Reading at Home**

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, Kent State University professors Nancy Padak and Timothy Rasinski bemoan the fact that, even in the midst of wild enthusiasm across the U.S. for each new Harry Potter book, the percent of students who say they read for fun every day drops from 43 percent in fourth grade to 19 percent in eighth grade. Clearly leisure-time reading is important to improving literacy achievement, but a lot of it takes place (or doesn’t

take place) outside teachers' direct control. It's not enough to tell parents, "Read to your child" or "Encourage your child to read at home." Padak and Rasinski suggest some additional strategies:

- *Keep it simple.* At-home reading activities must be easy to implement and time-efficient, say the authors, and parents must be convinced that the activities will improve their children's reading achievement.

- *Encourage parents to keep reading aloud.* Many parents think that once their children can read independently, they're on their own. Not so! say Padak and Rasinski. Parents should continue to read aloud, read alternating pages with their children, or encourage kids to read aloud to them – or to a pet or a stuffed animal. All this helps develop reading proficiency.

- *Teach parents the five-finger rule.* Parents should know how to decide if a book is "just right" for their child: have the child read a page and raise a finger every time there's an unknown word; if five fingers have been raised by the end of a page, the book is probably too hard. Some parents want to know if it's okay for children to re-read a favorite book or read a book that's "too easy." No problem, say Padak and Rasinski – but not as a steady diet.

- *Help parents see and use print everywhere.* Newspapers, magazines, letters, junk mail, notes, shopping lists, bumper stickers, street signs, signs in stores, religious texts, hymnals, captioned television shows – children should be encouraged to read all the print around them.

- *Provide extra support to ELLs and their families.* Volunteers can record texts in English for children to take home, listen to with their families, and then read aloud along with the recording while reading the written text.

- *Keep up with children's literature and use children's interests to make book recommendations.* Padak and Rasinski suggest the *Children's Choices* lists published each October, and the following websites:

- American Library Association's list of notable children's books:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/awardsscholarships/childrensnoteable/notablebooklist/currentnotable.htm>

- Books selected by children: [http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices\\_childrens.html](http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_childrens.html).

- Teachers' top 100 books, compiled by the National Education Association:

<http://www.nea.org/readacross/resources/catalist.html>.

- Carol Hurst's children's literature site: <http://www.carolhurst.com/titles/allreviewed.html>.

- The *Horn Book's* list of recommended children's literature:

<http://www.hbook.com/booklists/default.asp>.

- The Children's Book Council book lists:

<http://www.cbcbooks.org/readinglists/childrenschoices/booklists.html>.

- This one claims to be the most comprehensive guide to English-language children's books on the Internet: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/awards.html>.

- Book Spot, a site listing dozens of others: <http://www.bookspot.com/readinglists/childrens.htm>

"Is Being Wild About Harry Enough? Encouraging Independent Reading At Home" by Nancy Padak and Timothy Rasinski in *The Reading Teacher*, Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 (Vol. 61, #4, p. 350-353). To purchase this article, go to

## 5. Can One Urban School's Success Be Transferred to Other Schools?

In this thoughtful *Education Week* article, Los Angeles schools educational-policy director Randy Ross reflects on the frequently repeated dictum, dating back to Ron Edmonds in the 1970s: if there is even one highly effective urban school, all that stands in the way of replicating its success is a lack of will. So why, asks Ross, are there only a few “bright dots on a dull gray horizon?” Although lack of commitment is sometimes the problem, he’s come to believe that “our failure to transform underperforming urban schools on a broad scale is fueled first... by cluelessness.” Our recipe for improving urban schools is missing something critical, he says. We don’t know exactly what produces high achievement, and we don’t know how to transfer it from a successful school to a struggling school. In fact, says Ross, our level of sophistication isn’t much better than his mother’s method for telling if a watermelon is ripe: listening to the sound when you thump it. “I can’t explain it,” she said, “but I know it when I hear it.”

But then Ross happened to hear about Bunche Elementary, a high-poverty school in Compton, CA, that made dramatic gains between 1999 and 2006, showing the highest growth of any public school in the state and reaching the student performance levels of schools in wealthy communities. Was the school’s success for real, wondered Ross, or was it a fluke attributable to qualities that couldn’t be adopted by other schools? He subjected Bunche’s data to a series of questions: Did student achievement compare favorably to other schools with similar demographics? Yes. Did all subgroups within the school do well? Yes. Did shifts in the school’s student population explain the gains? No. Were there any problems with the data? No.

So what explained the school’s phenomenal success? Ross delved deeper and came up with the following:

- *Leadership* – In the summer of 2000, 27-year-old Mikara Solomon Davis became principal. She was clearly a remarkable leader from the word go.
- *Hiring* – Davis was fortunate to be able to fill six teaching vacancies that summer, and she had clear criteria in mind. “When I hire teachers,” she said, “the only thing I care about is if they love kids. I can teach them how to teach, but if they don’t love kids, I don’t want them here.”
- *Strategic staffing* – After making her initial assessment, Davis made sure that the school’s strongest teachers were in kindergarten and first grade.
- *Supervision and support* – Once the year began, Davis spent most of her time in classrooms observing, assisting, developing, and cheerleading her teachers and communicating the message that every minute counted.
- *Cleaning house* – Davis evaluated all teachers twice that year, and found major areas for improvement. She dismissed several ineffective teachers, and others left voluntarily.
- *Frequent assessment with follow-up* – Davis required teachers to give skills tests every Friday, submit the results to her, and meet with grade-level colleagues each week to

discuss the results, look at student work, create the next round of skills tests, plan for the upcoming week, and address weaknesses in instruction and discipline.

- *Student accountability* – Davis put great emphasis on students meeting grade-level standards, especially in kindergarten and first grade; students were retained if they didn't clear the bar.

- *Student study team* – Davis formed a schoolwide group to map out individualized plans for each underperforming child.

What provided the impetus to these highly strategic initiatives? Some of it came from Davis herself, who seems to have had an intuitive grasp of the “big rocks” of school improvement. But she also received intensive mentoring during her first year from Nancy Ichinaga, a retired principal who had done similar work in nearby Inglewood. Ichinaga visited one day a month for 2-3 hours and offered candid advice – advice that was sometimes hard for Davis and her teachers to hear. What made them listen and act on Ichinaga's advice was that she had real credibility, having been a highly successful principal in a demographically similar school. Among her pointers: put the best teachers in kindergarten and first grade and make absolutely sure that students know how to read and compute before being promoted.

So is this kind of mentoring relationship transferable to other struggling urban schools? Ross believes it is.

“Is School Success Transferable?” by Randy Ross in *Education Week*, Jan. 23, 2008 (Vol. 27, #20, p. 26-27) <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/23/20ross.h27.html>. The author can be reached at [randy.ross@lausd.net](mailto:randy.ross@lausd.net).

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## **6. “Response to Intervention” in Iowa**

In this *Education Week* article, reporter Christina Samuels explores Iowa's aggressive implementation of “Response to Intervention.” The state has wisely decided to change this confusing name to “Instructional Decisionmaking” and clarified what it's really all about: spelling out learning objectives for each grade level; doing the best possible job teaching each unit to all students; giving frequent, short assessments; making immediate adjustments in instruction based on what the assessments show about students' mastery; doing follow-up progress monitoring with students who are struggling (10-15 percent of students); and finally, referring students who are still not making progress after various “interventions” (5-10 percent of the student body) for special-education services.

The adoption of Instructional Decisionmaking has necessitated important changes within schools: carving out common planning time for grade-level teacher teams, juggling teachers' duties so they have time to work closely with students who are having difficulty, and reconfiguring professional development. The key questions raised in a six-day training workshop in one district were:

- Is the core instruction given to all students the best that it can be?
- How will we know which students require interventions?
- What interventions will be used?

- How will we monitor effectiveness?

Once a month, the principal, reading-support teachers, and classroom teams meet to discuss the data they are collecting on students. Three times a year, the school has “data days” to look more deeply at the overall curriculum and how students are doing.

Iowa schools don’t have summative data yet, but interim assessments show significant progress in student achievement. In particular, teachers feel much more attuned to the needs of students who would not have been on their radar screens before – marginal students who wouldn’t have received help because of more pressing needs.

“Embracing ‘Response to Intervention’” by Christina Samuels in *Education Week*, Jan. 23, 2008 (Vol. 27, #20, p. 22-24) <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/23/20rti.h27.html>

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## 7. Short Items:

**a. Another incredible Hans Rosling video** – In this 15-minute film giving a historical perspective on developing nations, Swedish economist Hans Rosling uses a dynamic adaptation of PowerPoint to show the relationship between income, family size, and carbon dioxide emissions in all the world’s countries over the last century, and also demonstrates some new capabilities in his graphic package. Be sure to watch through to the jaw-dropping finale of his presentation, which goes to the issue of making the seemingly impossible possible:

<http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/140>. For an earlier Rosling presentation (a little more detail, a little less drama), see Marshall Memo 196.

Many thanks to Katherine Marshall for pointing out this website.

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**b. Primary-grade literacy website** – This free, Wikipedia-like website sponsored by the Florida Department of Education contains open-source curriculum materials, instructional plans, and at least one video for grades K-3. Teachers can contribute their own lessons. Check it out at <http://www.free-reading.net>.

“Florida Approves Free, Web-Based Program for Struggling Readers” by Kathleen Kennedy Manzo in *Education Week*, Jan. 23, 2008 (Vol. 27, #20, p. 5). Also in *Edutopia*, February/March 2008 (Vol. 4, #1, p 19)

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**c. Website for teaching the First Amendment** – This website has articles, lesson plans, and other resources for teaching about free speech, including a First Amendment quiz (with instant feedback) and a special section for student journalists:

<http://www.teachfirstamendment.org>.

Spotted in *Edutopia*, February/March 2008 (Vol. 4, #1, p 19)

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***d. Website with NBC News archives*** – This website gives K-12 teachers and their students access to news clips back to the 1930s, with an emphasis on U.S. history. It's free after registration: <http://www.hotchalk.com>.

Spotted in *Edutopia*, February/March 2008 (Vol. 4, #1, p 19)

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***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](mailto: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