Marshall Memo 422

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
February 6, 2012

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"It seemed daunting – even impossible – to regularly accommodate the wide range of readiness needs exhibited by their diverse student body. Some faculty members believed that weaving differentiation into daily lesson plans was simply not a realistic possibility because they feared pigeonholing students, were confused about how to incorporate additional scaffolding and challenges, and were frustrated with the ever-present pressures of time constraints."

Kristina Doubet (see item #1)

"Discussions are a central component of mathematics instruction. Successful discussions require substantial teaching skill."

Timothy Boerst, Laurie Sleep, Deborah Ball, and Hyman Bass (see item #2)

"Young adolescents have a fundamental need to find relevance in the work they do in school."

Deborah Yost and Robert Vogel (see item #4)

"When students have a mission related to a personally meaningful task, motivation to 'get it right' drastically increases."

Deborah Yost and Robert Vogel (*ibid.*)

"We believe an error in high school should not define the rest of your life, but how you respond could shape you forever."

Angel Pérez, college admissions dean (see item #7)

"I learned to let go of shame. I realized that I can't let a grade define my success. I also learned that if you want something bad enough, you can achieve it."

A high-school student after failing precalculus and then passing it (*ibid.*)

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1. A Middle School Uses On-the-Spot Assessments to Differentiate

In this important *Middle School Journal* article, James Madison University (VA) professor Kristina Doubet describes a rural middle school that was not making adequate progress despite a heavy training focus on differentiation. Teachers were pushing back on differentiation, says Doubet: "It seemed daunting – even impossible – to regularly accommodate the wide range of readiness needs exhibited by their diverse student body. Some faculty members believed that weaving differentiation into daily lesson plans was simply not a realistic possibility because they feared pigeonholing students, were confused about how to incorporate additional scaffolding and challenges, and were frustrated with the ever-present pressures of time constraints."

The principal and instructional coach decided to make a tactical shift from focusing on differentiation to focusing on on-the-spot (a.k.a. formative) assessment – checking on students' learning in bite-sized chunks during instruction. Teachers had previously been trained to plan lessons around KUD – know, understand, and be able to do – so when this was presented in an end-of-summer PD session, teachers saw it as a logical next step. However, while they had no problem coming up with assessment questions on K and D – factual knowledge and skills – they struggled with formulating good assessment questions on U – understanding the big ideas and essential concepts of a lesson.

What to do now? The leadership team asked teachers to practice crafting all three types of on-the-spot assessment questions and then, at the next grade-level meeting time, bring an assessment they'd used and discuss how it had gone. Trial and error crafting questions turned out to be an excellent "coach." What was most valuable was looking at actual student responses to the various exit tickets, quick quizzes, and short written responses teachers had used. "I loved seeing everyone else's examples," said one teacher. Teams zeroed in on glitches in some of the assessments as revealed by students' less-than-perfect responses. "The need to choose questions carefully is critical in order to get the information you need," said another teacher.

The instructional coach was pleased with how these teacher discussions went: "They asked genuine, trying-to-figure-it-all-out questions, took notes, and shared a lot of information and tips among themselves."

The leadership team's next step was asking teachers to give another quick assessment and bring the instrument and the results to a grade-level team meeting. Teachers arrived with a wide variety of assessments, and in the conversations that ensued, helped each other improve the prompts so they focused specifically on what they wanted to measure. For example, this

3-2-1 exit ticket…

- 3 ways to prevent global warming
- 2 possible effects of global warming
- 1 question you still have

was revised to more accurately measure the intended learning outcomes:

- 3 *causes* of global warming
- 2 things you can do to *prevent* global warming
- 1 possible *negative effect* global warming may have on your health

"At the same time," says Doubet, "teachers were realizing the importance of articulating the know (K), understand (U), and be-able-to-do (D) objectives before designing assessments." An eighth-grade teacher said, "Using the KUDs really helps me stay focused in my planning."

Teachers were impressed by the wealth of information they got from short assessments – how quickly and clearly they identified student misunderstanding and confusion and how much more timely and efficient these assessments were than traditional 25-question unit tests. The time devoted to constructing and reviewing these assessments was time well spent.

Up to this point, however, teachers were using on-the-spot assessment data to make decisions about *whole-class* instruction – not to differentiate according to the varying needs of their students. "It was time for teachers to start looking at assessment results in terms of the patterns they saw emerging within each class," says Doubet, "and then to use these patterns to determine groups and tasks to address learning gaps and strides revealed in these patterns." The instructional coach asked teachers to give another formative assessment and come to team meetings prepared to discuss how they had used the results to form groups and provide different tasks for those groups.

To the coach's delight, teachers immediately made the leap of connecting quick assessments to differentiation. "In essence," says Doubet, "the faculty had reintroduced themselves to differentiation, and they seemed quite pleased with the connection… Differentiation was no longer a nebulous and hypothetical concept; rather, it was a natural response to actual student needs as revealed by non-threatening assessment measures… [T]hese teachers had inductively and independently come to adopt and even embrace the philosophy of assessment that is held by teachers in regularly differentiated classrooms." At the end of the year, teachers were eager to expand their repertoire of on-the-spot assessment techniques and learn more about how to scaffold instruction and follow up with subgroups of students.

"For a faculty that was 'differentiation weary,'" concludes Doubet, "this year of staff development had provided growth, motivation, and direction. Through focusing on formative assessment, they had come to see that differentiation is not a big, scary monster; rather, it naturally occurs when teachers set goals, see where students are in relationship to those goals, and respond accordingly. This realization opened teachers' eyes to the possibility that differentiation could, indeed, be part of their daily instruction rather than a strategy reserved for large, cumulative projects. It helped them know their students better and made them want to respond to their students' needs appropriately. It also helped them know themselves better as

teachers and see themselves as learners."

This initiative seems to have been a contributing factor in significant gains in student achievement at the school that year.

"Formative Assessment Jump-Starts a Middle-Grades Differentiation Initiative" by Kristina Doubet in *Middle School Journal*, January 2012 (Vol. 43, #3, p. 32-38), no e-link available; Doubet can be reached at doubetkj@jmu.edu.

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2. Leading Effective Math Discussions with Students

"Discussions are a central component of mathematics instruction," say University of Michigan researchers Timothy Boerst, Laurie Sleep, Deborah Ball, and Hyman Bass in this *Teachers College Record* article. "Successful discussions require substantial teaching skill. This is because students must be helped to engage in complex mathematical practices such as giving explanations, making connections, and using representations, and, at the same time, teachers' moves must be contingent on what students say and do. Furthermore, leading a discussion requires mathematical knowledge for teaching, given that teachers need to size up mathematical ideas flexibly, frame strategic questions, and keep an eye on core mathematical points."

The authors go on to suggest ways to help new teachers understand the how and why of improving classroom math discussions. They suggest that teachers choose problems carefully (not all are amenable to discussion), have students work on the problems themselves, and then launch a discussion. Here are the suggested steps:

• Identify the mathematical content and instructional purpose:
  - Do the problem yourself.
  - What is the math that students are supposed to be working on?
  - What is your instructional purpose for using the problem?

• Anticipate student thinking:
  - What knowledge and skills will students need in order to do the problem?
  - What methods are students likely to use? What solutions or responses are students likely to generate?
  - What misconceptions are students likely to have? What errors do you anticipate they will make?

• Set up the problem:
  - How will you present the problem to students?
  - What materials will you and students need?
  - How will you familiarize students with representations used in the problem?

• Launch and orchestrate the discussion: initial eliciting of students' thinking:
  - Does anyone have a solution they would like to share?
  - How did you begin working on this problem?
  - Does someone have a different idea?
  - What have you found so far?

- Did anyone approach the problem in a different way?

• Prove students' answers, try to figure out what a student means or is thinking, check whether right answers are supported by correct understanding, probe wrong answers to understand student thinking:

- How do you know?
- So what you're saying is ____
- When you say ____, do you mean ____?
- Could you explain a little more about what you are thinking?
- Why did you ____?
- How did you get ____?
- Could you use some concrete materials to show us how that works?

• Focus students to listen and respond to others' ideas:

- What do other people think?
- How does what ____ said go along with what you were thinking?
- Who can explain this using ____'s idea?
- Would someone be willing to add on to what ____ said?

• Support students to make connections, for example, between a model and a mathematical idea or a specific notation:

- How is ____'s method similar to (or different from) ____'s?
- How does one representation correspond to another representation?
- Can you think of another problem that is similar to this one?
- How does that match what you wrote on the board?

• Guide students to reason mathematically – making conjectures, stating definitions, generalizing, proving:

- Can you explain why this is true?
- Does this method always work?
- What do these solutions have in common?
- Have we found all the possible answers?
- How do you know it works in all cases?

• Extend students' current thinking and assess how far it can be stretched:

- Can you think of another way to solve this problem?
- What would happen if the numbers were changed to ____?
- Can you use this same method to solve ____?

"Preparing Teachers to Lead Mathematics Discussions" by Timothy Boerst, Laurie Sleep, Deborah Ball, and Hyman Bass in *Teachers College Record*, December 2011 (Vol. 113, #12, p. 2844-2877), purchase at http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=16496

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3. Using Multiple-Choice Questions and Clickers in Math Classes

In *this Middle School Journal* article, Angela Barlow (Middle Tennessee State University) and Amy Marolt (Northeast Mississippi Community College) note that some math

teachers grumble about being required to start every class with several quick multiple-choice test items intended to brush up their students' skills and prepare them for state tests. Barlow and Marolt believe this practice is a poor use of a potentially powerful classroom tool. They suggest three ways that sophisticated multiple-choice items (coupled with clickers) can be used to deliver a potent instructional punch:

• *Diagnosis to guide instructional decisions* – At the beginning of a lesson on addition of rational numbers, a teacher might give students the following problem:

What is the least common multiple (LCM) of 4 and 6?

a. 2
b. 4
c. 6
d. 12

By looking at students' responses, the teacher can see which if any misconceptions students have about LCM and decide whether to move ahead or clarify and reteach.

• *Communicating important learning goals* – There's more to mathematics than computation and procedures, and this can be conveyed with assessment items like this one:

Students in Mrs. Garcia's classroom were asked to write a word problem that could be represented by 6 ÷ ½. Which of these student responses is correct?

a. There were 6 players on a volleyball team. Coach David told the players to divide into two teams. How many players will each team have?
b. I have 6 bottles of water. I drank ½ of them. How many bottles do I have left?
c. Allen had 6 apples and cut them in half. Now he wants to know how many apple halves he has. Tell Allen how many halves he has.
d. There were 6 cakes. If each of the cakes were cut in half, and you added up all the halves, how many whole cakes would there be?

An item like this – and the discussion that would ensue – conveys a teacher's expectations about a conceptual level that goes beyond computation.

• *Establishing social and socio-mathematical norms* – For example, a teacher might want students to be able to explain their thinking, listen to others, think about others' work, and understand what mathematical argument looks like. Here's an item that would probe this area:

Mrs. Smith asked her students to simplify x + y and justify their work. Several student responses are provided below. Which student gave an accurate mathematical argument to support his or her answer?

a. Sam said the answer is 2x because the rule says to add the coefficients.
b. Mary said the answer is 2x because adding a number to itself is the same as doubling it.
c. Marco said that since there are two xs in the problem, the answer must be 2x.
d. Frank explained that he learned that rule last year and the answer is 2x.

The discussion generated by this item would enable the teacher to establish a norm about what constitutes a valid justification, while simultaneously teaching the concept of combining like terms.

Whether students respond to these questions with clickers, holding up index cards labeled A, B, C, or D, or raising their hands, the teacher has several options on how to use the results. If many students got incorrect answers, the teacher might reteach the concept to the whole class or ask students to explain their answers. If most students got the right answer, the teacher might have students explain why the wrong answers are incorrect. "These discussions hold the potential for engaging students in mathematical disagreements," say Barlow and Marolt, "which allow mathematical understanding to be gained. In either situation, the discussion that ensues provides a means for the teacher to understand his or her students better, further supporting the goals of differentiated instruction."

"Effective Use of Multiple-Choice Items in the Mathematics Classroom" by Angela Barlow and Amy Marolt in *Middle School Journal*, January 2012 (Vol. 43, #3, p. 50-55), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at abarlow@mtsu.edu and ammarolt@nemcc.edu.

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4. Making School Writing Real for Young Adolescents

In this *Middle School Journal* article, La Salle University (PA) professors Deborah Yost and Robert Vogel say that "most young adolescents engage in out-of-school writing every day for hours on end with great enthusiasm" – through texting, social media, and blogs. But there's rarely a connection between all this fervid after-hours communication and classroom writing. That's a shame, say Yost and Vogel, because, "Young adolescents have a fundamental need to find relevance in the work they do in school."

The authors go on to describe Writing Matters, a Pennsylvania program based on teacher Erin Gruwell's work with high-school students (featured in the movie *Freedom Writers*). Writing Matters gets students writing about their innermost thoughts and dreams and making connections with their peers across racial and cultural lines. Students do informational, narrative, and persuasive journal writing in response to prompts. Here are some of the Writing Matters themes:

- I am from…
- Teen challenges…
- Family matters…
- Living life…
- Dreams, aspirations, and the future…
- The things people do to be popular…
- Proving to people that they are wrong about you…
- Going through a difficult time with a friend…

The Writing Matters program guides students through these steps:

- Choose or create an idea.
- Brainstorm your ideas.
- Play back your ideas.
- Write a first draft.
- Share with others.

- Consider your listeners' comments, then rewrite.
- Publish your work.

This kind of intensely personal writing allows young adolescents to make sense of their social worlds, seek shelter from harsh realities, develop their inner voices, express their views on important topics, shape their identities, and hear others' stories. "A large number of students wrote about fear and risk-taking," say Yost and Vogel. These appear to be universal, not situational issues.

As teachers go through the year-long Writing Matters training and meet every month to share impressions, they are struck by how much more they learn about their students. "Every time I collect a batch of journals," said one teacher, "I am always struck by the power of my students' words. They become more than just 'Erica, who never hands in her homework,' or 'Jeff who plays baseball.' They suddenly become very real, developed young men and women who have the same self-doubts, insecurities, family problems, stress, and dreams that I do."

Writing Matters links students' writing to field trips, service projects, and works of literature like *The Diary of Anne Frank*, all of which stretches students beyond their immediate world and provides meaningful contexts for writing. "When students have a mission related to a personally meaningful task," say Yost and Vogel, "motivation to 'get it right' drastically increases." A teacher remarked, "Students who moan and groan about writing a paragraph and rarely hand in assignments will write four- to five-page journal entries with higher-level skills than they've ever displayed before."

After seeing the film *Freedom Writers*, one student wrote, "It's not only me who goes through this, it's other kids. Then I thought to myself – this is not only in Philadelphia, this is around the country. Kids got their issues, too. Before the program, I always thought that these were my problems. If anyone got in the way with me, there was going to be a problem. Now, I understand them more. They are going through problems and issues just like me, so I have to cool it."

Has the Writing Matters program improved students' writing proficiency? Each year, students have been pre- and post-assessed on the Pennsylvania Writing Assessment Rubric, which measures focus, content, organization, and style on a 4-3-2-1 scale. Overall, students made solid progress each year – for example, from 2.26 to 2.89 in 2006-07, from 1.53 to 2.37 in 2007-08 and from 1.62 to 2.64 in 2009-10. The areas in which students made the most growth were focus, content, and organization, and students' confidence also improved. "At first, I hated writing and telling people what I had in my mind. It was difficult for me at first. But now I feel like I [want to] write a novel."

"Writing Matters to Urban Middle Level Students" by Deborah Yost and Robert Vogel in *Middle School Journal*, January 2012 (Vol. 43, #3, p. 40-48), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at yost@lasalle.edu and vogel@lasalle.edu.

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5. The Challenge of Teaching Academic Language

"There is a growing body of work showing the importance of academic language proficiency for accessing the content of academic texts and academic talk, learning to think and learn like a scientist, historian, mathematician, or writer, and overall academic achievement," say William Nagy (Seattle Pacific University) and Dianna Townsend (University of Nevada/Reno) in this *Reading Research Quarterly* article. Nagy and Townsend review the research and list several ways that academic English differs from everyday spoken language:

- Latin and Greek roots;
- Morphologically complex – more prefixes and suffixes;
- Nouns, adjectives, and prepositions – Written language has more of these than spoken;
- Grammatical metaphor, including nominalizations – For example, using the phrase *boils down to* in a situation where there's no water actually boiling;
- More meaning packed into fewer words – "Academic language is dense," say the authors; there are more ideas per word;
- Abstractness – Academic language is more removed from the concrete than spoken language.

Here's a comparison of academic and everyday language:

- Academic: *The correlation between amount of reading and reading ability does not imply a causal relationship*.
- Oral language: *Just because people who read more can read better doesn't mean that if you read more this will make you read better*.

The authors stress that it's not just about teaching students harder vocabulary. Words are part of conceptual networks, and learning academic words is not enough. Words are tools in a larger enterprise.

Nagy and Townsend review a number of academic language programs and conclude that none are highly effective. "There is still little evidence that existing interventions lead to generalized gains in academic vocabulary or to improved performance on standardized measures of reading comprehension," they say, and end their article with a series of recommendations on how future research should proceed.

"Words as Tools: Learning Academic Vocabulary as Language Acquisition" by William Nagy and Dianna Townsend in *Reading Research Quarterly*, January/February/March 2012 (Vol. 47, #1, p. 91-108), http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/RRQ.011/full

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6. Stop Wasting Time with Low-Yield Interview Questions

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, English professor Rob Jenkins (Georgia Perimeter College) criticizes the kinds of questions often asked in faculty hiring interviews:

• Canned questions – For example, *Tell us about your experience with diverse student populations* or *Tell us about your experience using instructional technology*. Such questions are so predictable, he says, "that any applicant who has done the bare minimum of homework can concoct an answer that will sound just fine – a canned answer to a canned question."

Instead, Jenkins suggests, interviewers should ask broader, more open-ended questions, for example: *Tell us about the student body at the last place you taught* or *Tell us a little about your teaching methods*. "Such questions invite the candidates to bring up topics like diversity and technology," he says, "and if a given candidate doesn't bring them up, then we have our answer. We also open the door for candidates to talk about much more than just ethnic diversity and Smart Boards – and we might very well get a telling answer to a question we didn't even know we were asking."

• Impersonal questions – Hiring committees are told to avoid questions about age, marital status, and children, but some over-interpret this to mean they can't delve into a candidate's work background. Jenkins believes it's important to read the applicant's cover letter and resume and ask specific questions, for example: *I see from your cover letter that you helped to launch a book festival in the Atlanta area. Tell us more about the festival and about the role you played in it as a representative of the college*.

• Two-part questions – Candidates often end up asking, "Can you repeat the second part of the question, please?" Better to ask the first question and, if the second hasn't been covered in the answer, ask it as a follow-up. This won't take any more time and it's fairer to applicants.

• Questions with no good answer – For example, *What do you see as your greatest weakness?* What candidates usually come up with is "a bunch of prepackaged bull," says Jenkins: *I tend to put too much pressure on myself to perform at a high level*. "The worst-case scenario," says Jenkins, "if you actually catch someone off guard, is some sort of awkward confession that leaves everyone in the room feeling uncomfortable."

Another example: *What do you see yourself doing 10 years from now?* What are they supposed to say? They'll still be teaching, which might indicate a lack of ambition? They'll be running the place, which might sound arrogant. "Again," says Jenkins, "the best we can hope for is some weaselly, canned answer that leaves no one satisfied."

"I understand that the 'business model' of hiring says we ought to be asking those sorts of questions," he concludes, "but they really don't work in a higher-education setting – if, indeed, they work anywhere. I say throw them out." Here are the attributes that Jenkins believes good interview questions possess:

- They are open-ended and require a short narrative;
- They are specifically tailored to the candidate's background and experience;
- They are clear, concise, and easy to remember;
- They actually provide interviewers with useful information;
- Some of them are case studies in which candidates are given realistic scenarios and asked how they would respond.

"We Need a New Interview Script: Why Do We Keep Asking Questions That Yield Little But Vague, Canned Answers?" by Rob Jenkins in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Feb. 3, 2012 (Vol. LVIII, #22, p. A26), no e-link available

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7. Learning from Failure

In this *Education Week* article, Pitzer College admissions dean Angel Pérez says that as he and his colleagues read thousands of applications each year, they dig deeper "to find out who students really are outside of their trophies, medals, and test scores." One of the most telling things is when students describe a significant failure and how they dealt with it. "We get the most excited when we read an application that seems real," he says. "It's so rare to hear stories of defeat and triumph that when we do, we cheer. If their perspectives are of lessons learned or challenges overcome, these applicants tend to jump to the top of the heap at highly selective colleges. We believe an error in high school should not define the rest of your life, but how you respond could shape you forever."

Pérez describes an interview in which the applicant said he was ashamed to admit he'd failed precalculus. He took it again and got a B+. "I'm now taking calculus," he said, "and even though I don't love it, I'm glad I pushed through!" Pérez asked him what he'd learned from the experience. "I learned to let go of shame," said the young man. "I realized that I can't let a grade define my success. I also learned that if you want something bad enough, you can achieve it."

"I smiled as I wrote his words down on the application-review form," Pérez says. "This kid will thrive on my campus. Not only will the faculty love him, but he has the coping skills he needs to adjust to the rigors of life in a residential college setting. Failure is about growth, learning, overcoming, and moving on. Let's allow young people to fail. Not only will they learn something, it might even get them into college."

"Want to Get Into College? Learn to Fail" by Angel Pérez in *Education Week*, Feb. 1, 2012 (Vol. 31, #19, p. 23), http://www.edweek.org

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8. Parents Who Choose Not to Collaborate with Their Children's Schools

In this thoughtful *Teachers College Record* article, New York University professor Fabienne Doucet explores the relationship between newly-arrived Haitian immigrant parents and the Boston-area schools their adolescent children attend. In her study of 54 families, Doucet (herself a Haitian immigrant to the U.S.) found that parents engage in "tactical resistance to Americanization" and "play an active and deliberate role in creating distance between the world of the home and school… [A]t the heart of parents' concern was the fear of losing their children." There are three ways parents resist building bridges with educators:

• *Protecting the home terrain* – This is displayed as a concern with family privacy, parental strictness, and discouraging children's friendships with other students; parents are anxious to maintain the ability to discipline their children as they see fit.

• *Equating schools with Americanization* – This is shown through criticisms of U.S. schools and schooling, which parents see as quite different from the French/Haitian system. Parents are particularly concerned with what they see as lax discipline in schools and too-early introduction of sex education. They are also perplexed when teachers constantly seek their

input and feedback about their children's school performance (weren't they the experts?) and find teachers too intrusive and pushy (again, the concern with family privacy).

• *Negotiating a seat at the table* – This is shown through occasional parental advocacy, especially when they feel their children have been treated unfairly, and through seeking out reciprocal partnerships, as opposed to the more typical school-centric "partnership." Many Haitian parents feel ill at ease in schools because of language barriers and the sheer unfamiliarity of American classrooms.

"The findings I have presented here," says Doucet, "question the pervasive notion in educational literature and practice that close links between home and school should be the goal of both teachers and families… Bridging is not value neutral… Bridge-building assumes that both sides have come together and agreed to the bridge… Educators at every level need a model of family-school relations that acknowledges power and the potential loss of it (for both sides) through bridging… Resistance to bridging must be understood in this context, and those in power must be willing to share that power if they truly desire parents' voices to inform and shape their work."

"(Re)Constructing Home and School: Immigrant Parents, Agency, and the (Un)Desirability of Bridging Multiple Worlds" by Fabienne Doucet in *Teachers College Record*, December 2011 (Vol. 113, #12, p. 2705-2738), available for purchase at http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=16203

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9. Short Items:

a. NYC small schools report – A January 2012 MDRC report by Howard Bloom and Rebecca Unterman found that students attending 123 newly created small high schools in New York City had better graduation rates than students who applied to these schools, didn't get in, and attended traditional large schools: http://www.mdrc.org/publications/614/policybrief.pdf. One question is whether size was the key variable – or was it the fact that New York's small schools were designed and staffed specifically to address issues of achievement and student retention?

"Sustained Positive Effects of Graduation Rates Produced by New York City's Small Public High Schools of Choice" by Layla Bonnot in *The Education Gadfly*, Feb. 2, 2012

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b. Association for the Study of African-American Life and History – This website encourages educators to explore how black women contributed to U.S. history and culture: http://www.asalh.org

"Bulletin Board" in *Principal Leadership*, February 2012 (Vol. 12, #6, p. 7)

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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).

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Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs, Daily EdNews
Better Evidence-Based Education
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
Kappa Delta Pi Record
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
Teaching Children Mathematics
The Atlantic Monthly
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Language Educator
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
The School Administrator
Theory Into Practice