

Marshall Memo 358

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
November 1, 2010

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Quotes of the Week

“Military work is risky, pressured, and fast-changing. It calls for seemingly contradictory capabilities: absolute clarity about the mission at a high level, extraordinary adaptability on the ground, and a knack for managing complex, technically precise systems.”

Harvard Business Review – Overview quote, November 2010 (Vol. 88, #11, p. 65)

“As a middle and high school English teacher, I can say unequivocally that nothing has made me more uncomfortable than having a supervisor sitting in my classroom, scribbling away on his or her legal pad as I teach.”

Alexis Wiggins (see item 5)

“A part of all of us wants only to hear good things about what we do. But that part is not the teacher, but the child in us.”

Alexis Wiggins (*ibid.*)

“Collaboration is not a frill; it is an essential element of professional practice.”

Richard DuFour (see item #3)

“The debate must be about *what* is right, not *who* is right.”

Robert Simons in “Stress-Test Your Strategy: The 7 Questions to Ask” in *Harvard Business Review*, November 2010 (Vol. 88, #11, p. 97), no e-link available

“The standards might be posted on the wall, but they’re like wallpaper to students: a decoration that really doesn’t have anything to do with the day’s work.”

Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (see item #6)

1. Four Leadership Lessons from the Military

In this powerful *Harvard Business Review* article, Wharton professor Michael Useem explains four precepts drawn from the frequent interactions he and his business students have with U.S. Army, Marine Corps, and Department of Defense leaders. “Personally observing microcosms in which we can appreciate the precepts in action enables us to carry them with us for application when we face our own times of great ambiguity, urgency, and stress,” he says. “We fight very different battles in business. But the armed services provide exceptionally powerful schooling for engagements that are likely to make a difference. By looking far afield, we can often better see what is close to home.”

Here are the four leadership ideas. As you read these, ask yourself how many are applicable in K-12 schools.

- *Meet the troops.* “Creating a personal link is crucial to leading people through challenging times,” says Useem, describing how a general in charge of 92,000 troops made a point of having a personal interaction with everyone under his command every year (some in a small venue, some in groups of thousands in an airport hanger). “A handshake, a brief look in the eyes: those small actions make an indelible impression,” says Useem, “serving to focus attention and ensure retention of the mission and message that a leader seeks to convey.”

- *Make decisions.* “Making good and timely calls is the crux of responsibility in a leadership position,” he writes. “The ability to make fast and effective decisions that draw quickly upon the insights of all those on the front lines is among the defining qualities of combat-ready leadership.”

- *Focus on mission.* “Establish a common purpose, buttress those who will help you achieve it, and eschew personal gain,” said Useem. “Mission first, then team, then self.” His MBA students go through a challenging obstacle course at West Point in which some are “killed” when they step on splotches of red paint (which signify hidden explosive devices). In the after-action review (the military’s standard format for assessing a mission to improve future performance), some of the MBA students realize that in the business world, they sometimes secretly delight in the misfortune of a colleague because it means they will benefit. “They came home with a strengthened resolve to forewarn one another when they are getting close to making a career error, even when others’ errors may result in their own gain,” says Useem.

- *Convey strategic intent.* “Make the objectives clear, but avoid micromanaging those who will execute on them,” says Useem. Every year he takes Wharton students to the Gettysburg battlefield and has a guide walk them through one of the turning points of this

pivotal battle. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain had 400 soldiers and was told by his commander that it was absolutely critical that he hold the end point on the Union line. If this flank was overrun by Confederate attackers, the entire Union army would disintegrate. “The commander did not say *how*, but he unequivocally conveyed *what*,” says Useem. After two hours of intense combat, Chamberlain’s troops were nearly out of ammunition and the Confederates were preparing for another attack. Chamberlain ordered a daring and highly unorthodox move: his troops fixed bayonets, charged down the hill, and overran the startled Confederate attackers. Chamberlain was awarded the Medal of Honor for his valor and inventiveness. “Without his commander’s compelling communication of what must be done and without the freedom to decide how to do it,” says Useem, “Chamberlain’s actions on that history-making hill might have taken a very different turn.”

“Four Lessons in Adaptive Leadership” by Michael Useem in *Harvard Business Review*, November 2010 (Vol. 88, #11, p. 86-90), no e-link available

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2. What the U.S. Army Can Teach Us About Negotiation

In this insightful *Harvard Business Review* article, West Point professors Jeff Weiss and Aram Donigian and consultant Jonathan Hughes unpack the negotiation challenges of U.S. Army soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq and draw lessons for the business world. They contend that “in the very context where one feels the most pressure to act fast and stake out an unwavering position, it is best to do neither. Control and power can be asserted most effectively by slowing down the pace of negotiation, actively leading counterparts into a constructive dialogue, and demonstrating genuine openness to others’ perspectives. That isn’t giving in. It is being strategic rather than reactive.” Does this apply to the world of K-12 education – for example, contentious dealings with stubborn colleagues, angry parents, or difficult superiors?

Weiss, Donigian, and Hughes suggest five strategies, with caveats and effective courses of action in each:

- *Get the big picture.* Start by soliciting the other person’s or group’s point of view and use what you learn to shape your objectives and how you’ll achieve them. Avoid assuming that you have all the facts, that the other side is biased (and you’re not), and that the other side’s motives and intentions are nefarious. Instead, be curious (*Help me understand how you see the situation*), be humble (*What do I have wrong?*), and be open-minded (*Is there another way to explain this?*).

- *Uncover and collaborate.* Learn the other party’s motivations and concerns. Propose multiple solutions and invite your counterparts to improve on them. Avoid making open-ended offers (*What do you want?*), making unilateral offers (*I’d be willing to...*), and simply agreeing to (or refusing) the other side’s demands. Instead, ask *Why is that important to you?* and propose solutions for critique – *Here’s a possibility; what might be wrong with it?*

- *Elicit genuine buy-in.* Use facts and the principles of fairness, rather than brute force, to persuade others. Arm them with ways to defend their decisions to their critics, and create

useful precedents for future negotiations. Avoid threats (*You'd better agree, or else...*), arbitrariness (*I want it because I want it*), and close-mindedness (*Under no circumstances will I agree to, or even consider, that proposal*). Instead, appeal to fairness (*What should we do?*), appeal to logic and legitimacy (*I think this makes sense because...*), and consider constituent perspectives (*How can each of us explain this agreement to our colleagues?*).

- *Build trust first.* Deal with relationship issues head-on. Make incremental commitments to encourage trust and cooperation. Avoid trying to “buy” a good relationship and offering concessions to repair breaches of trust, whether actual or only perceived. Instead, explore how a breakdown in trust may have occurred and how to remedy it, make concessions only if they are a legitimate way to compensate for losses owing to your nonperformance or broken commitments, and treat counterparts with respect and act in ways that will command theirs.

- *Focus on process.* Consciously change the game by not reacting to the other side. Take steps to shape the negotiation process as well as the outcome. Avoid acting without gauging how your actions will be perceived and what the response will be, and don't ignore the consequences of a given action for future as well as current negotiations. Instead, talk not just about the issues but about the negotiation process (*We seem to be at an impasse; perhaps we should spend some more time exploring our respective objectives and constraints*), slow down the pace (*I'm not ready to agree, but I'd prefer not to walk away either. I think this warrants further exploration*), and issue warnings without making threats (*Unless you're willing to work with me toward a mutually acceptable outcome, I can't afford to spend more time negotiating*).

“Extreme Negotiations” by Jeff Weiss, Aram Donigian, and Jonathan Hughes in *Harvard Business Review*, November 2010 (Vol. 88, #11, p. 66-75), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at jweiss@vantagepartners.com, aram.donigian@usma.edu, and jhughes@vantagepartners.com.

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3. Teacher Teams Need Time for High-Quality Collaboration

In this advertisement in *Education Week*, author/consultant Richard DuFour disagrees with a school board that said teachers should collaborate on their own time, not during the contractual day. Here are his points:

- *Collaboration with colleagues is essential in other professions.* Law firms require attorneys to meet on a weekly basis to review issues and strategies in their cases. Architects, engineers, and construction managers meet weekly to track progress and solve problems as a building takes shape. “Educators are professionals,” says DuFour, “and they too benefit from the insights, expertise, and collective efforts of a team of colleagues. Collaboration is not a frill; it is an essential element of professional practice.”

- *Research supports the importance of collaboration.* “The collaborative team has been called the fundamental building block of any learning organization,” says DuFour, “the best structure for achieving challenging goals, and the most productive organizational structure...”

No district should disregard the compelling evidence that a collaborative culture represents a more promising strategy than teachers working in isolation.”

- *Teachers in high-achieving countries spend more time on collaboration.* A study of OECD countries found that most provide 15-25 hours a week for veteran teachers to work collaboratively and significantly less time for actual teaching (798 hours a year in elementary schools versus 1,080 hours in the U.S.). The non-teaching time in these countries includes observing colleagues teaching, analyzing student learning, and engaging in lesson study and action research. “These countries understand that a teacher who is working with colleagues to perfect a lesson or review examples of student work is engaged in highly productive activities that can have a positive impact upon student achievement,” says DuFour.

- *Our current track record is not impressive.* Thirty percent of students in the U.S. fail to complete their K-12 education. “Rather than insisting teachers work harder and longer to compensate for an ineffective system,” says DuFour, “districts should be seeking ways to help educators work smarter by providing time for them to work together to address the challenges they face.”

- *Professional time is a precious resource.* School boards reveal their priorities by how they allocate resources. “In light of the strong correlation between meaningful collaboration and improved student achievement,” says DuFour, “it would be disingenuous for any Board to argue that it wants better results but it is unwilling to provide this important cost-neutral resource to achieve that goal.”

Of course collaboration must be done right. Schools need to be clear on what good collaboration looks like and be disciplined in keeping to those precepts. “District leaders have every right to expect collaborative time to be used well,” DuFour concludes, “and they should ensure that processes are in place to monitor the work of collaborative teams.”

“Why Educators Should Be Given Time to Collaborate” by Richard DuFour in *Education Week*, Oct. 27, 2010 (Vol. 30, #9, p. 15)

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4. Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s Turnaround Leadership Strategy

In this *Newsweek* article, Pat Wingert describes how Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) superintendent Peter Gorman got top-tier leadership into the district’s underperforming schools, including four high schools that a local judge said were guilty of “academic genocide.” In 2008, he announced an annual competition – the Strategic Staffing Initiative – to identify the district’s most effective principals based on growth in their students’ achievement scores and other hard data. After the winners were chosen, but before they were made public, Gorman met privately with each one and dangled the “opportunity” to turn around one of the district’s failing schools. Principals who accepted were promised a 10-percent raise, some freedom from district rules, the chance to pick an eight-person transformation team (who would also get raises), and the power to transfer out as many as five teachers who were identified as obstructionists, underperformers, and leaders of “the toxic lunchroom.” Every

winner accepted the challenge, and by late 2009, student proficiency in all seven targeted schools had risen, with some gaining more than 20 points.

The \$3 million program is now in its third year and has taken on 20 schools. One of Gorman's worries was blowback from teachers, students, and parents in schools losing highly effective principals. Surprisingly, this hasn't materialized – in fact, people have been supportive of principals who take on the challenge. “I think they could see that I was excited about this opportunity, that this was where my heart was,” says Steve Hall, one of the first Strategic Staffing Initiative winners. “I told them that I considered this to be one of the most moral and ethical things I'd ever done in my life.” One student said to him, “I'm proud of you.”

“An Offer They Wouldn't Refuse: How One District Lured Top Principals to Rescue Its Failing Schools” by Pat Wingert in *Newsweek*, Oct. 18, 2010

<http://www.newsweek.com/2010/10/12/how-one-district-fixed-its-failing-schools.html>

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5. A High-School Teacher Discovers How to Get Truly Helpful Feedback

“As a middle and high school English teacher, I can say unequivocally that nothing has made me more uncomfortable than having a supervisor sitting in my classroom, scribbling away on his or her legal pad as I teach,” says Alexis Wiggins in this thoughtful *Education Week* article. Although she sometimes got helpful insights from administrators' comments, Wiggins says the most helpful feedback she's received over the years has come from students.

But Wiggins didn't get truly helpful feedback from students until she had learned two lessons. First, there was limited utility in standard end-of-course feedback forms and questionnaires. She learned that *mid-course* feedback allowed her to make improvements in real time. “I've found this feedback infinitely more honest, detailed, and helpful than end-of-course reviews, which come at a time when students have less incentive to be constructive in their criticism,” says Wiggins.

Second, not all students were really open in the hand-written mid-course evaluation surveys she used at first. The “aha” moment came when Wiggins's principal asked the staff to fill out a questionnaire evaluating a new-faculty orientation program. “Will they recognize my handwriting?” Wiggins fretted. “In the end, I was too afraid to be as honest as I wanted to be, because I worried that the administration would single me out later.”

This experience persuaded her to have students fill out their mid-course evaluations in the computer lab while she stepped out of the room, with one student designated to collect the anonymous printed-out copies and deliver them to her. The first time Wiggins tried this, she was surprised by the number of students who had concerns about grading, favoritism, and the appropriateness of the course materials. “I realized that I had been kidding myself all these years,” she said. “I hadn't been getting truly honest feedback, just slightly honest feedback.” From then on she used the anonymous computer method and engaged students in honest discussions afterward: “A lot of you felt this way, and I hear you. Let's see if we can change that aspect of the course.”

“A part of all of us wants only to hear good things about what we do,” Wiggins concludes. “But that part is not the teacher, but the child in us. The teacher truly wants to keep learning how to be better, and feedback is a mechanism for doing that. Regular, authentic feedback is one of the best forms of professional development. It’s free, easy, not time-consuming, and it pays big dividends. Teachers should shake off their fear and welcome it into their classrooms. If we want to be serious about students’ learning, we need to be serious about our own. We need to continually seek and accept ideas, help, and criticism. Feedback works.”

“The Courage to Seek Authentic Feedback” by Alexis Wiggins in *Education Week*, Oct. 20, 2010 (Vol. 30, #8, p. 19) <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/10/20/08wiggins.h30.html>

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6. Effective Lesson Purpose Statements

“Each lesson should have a purpose,” say San Diego State professors Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in this *Principal Leadership* article. An obvious point, you might think, but they have found that in “too many classrooms, students are left to intuit the purpose of the lesson.”

“A quality purpose statement gives students information about what they will learn and how they might demonstrate that understanding,” say the authors. “A quality purpose statement also helps the teacher plan the lesson, because the tasks students are asked to complete should align with the expected understanding... [P]urpose drives instruction, differentiation, and assessment.”

Fisher and Frey suggest the following components of effective lesson purpose statements:

- They should focus on the understandings that students will gain as a result of engaging in the lesson’s components, not the tasks that students will complete.
- They should be anchored in appropriate grade-level expectations. “Planning an amazing lesson for ninth graders that is based on seventh-grade standards will not ensure that the students reach high levels of achievement,” say Fisher and Frey.
- They shouldn’t just restate standards, which tend to be much broader than what can be learned in just one lesson (for example, understanding the causes of World War II). “When standards are not analyzed for their component parts and instead are used as the purpose, students stop paying attention to them,” say Fisher and Frey. “The standards might be posted on the wall, but they’re like wallpaper to students, a decoration that really doesn’t have anything to do with the day’s work.”
- Purpose statements should make clear how students will demonstrate their understanding – for example, justifying their math answers in writing, or, in other subjects, persuading, informing, entertaining, debating, hypothesizing.

And of course purpose statements need to be effectively communicated to students, either posted at the front of the class, spoken to students, or elicited from students after an initial discussion.

Fisher and Frey close with these examples of good purpose statements:

- A secondary art class: “Today, we’re going to consider the role that perspective plays in fine art, and to do that we’ll use specific technical vocabulary.”
- A math class: “Today, we’re going to identify the properties of a quadratic equation and explain how we know whether equations are quadratic or not.”

For videos of teachers conveying effective purpose statements, see the video in the first link below.

Fisher and Frey note that the questions classroom visitors whisper to students as they observe a class can subtly influence the way teachers frame lessons. When visitors ask, *What are you doing?* they put the focus on the tasks students are asked to complete. A better question is, *What are you learning?* This directs students (and teachers) toward the deeper purpose and the enduring understandings of the lesson and unit.

“Purpose: The Foundation of High-Quality Teaching” by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in *Principal Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 11, 32, p. 58-61), <http://www.principals.org/pl1010fisher>; the authors can be reached at dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu and nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu.

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7. Four Strategies to Help Struggling 7-12 Students

In this *Principal Leadership* article, University of Texas/Tyler professors Frank Dykes and Suzanne Thomas suggest four intervention strategies that middle- and high-school principals can promote to improve instruction for students with learning challenges:

- *Word walls* – A systematically organized collection of key content vocabulary words displayed in large letters on the classroom wall is just as powerful at the secondary level as it is in elementary classrooms. “Word walls help students learn to use words to construct knowledge in conversation and activities,” say Dykes and Thomas. “They also are a visual record of skills taught and content studied.” English teachers might use word walls to display frequently misspelled words; math teachers to illustrate mathematical symbols and formulas; and history teachers to present historical terms and timelines. Floating teachers can carry their word walls on poster boards from classroom to classroom.

- *Guided notes* – Struggling students are often weak in visual and auditory processing, which makes it difficult for them to take notes and retain information. Guided notes are an outline to the content (perhaps PowerPoint slides) that students write notes on as the class unfolds. They serve as a bridge to help these students develop note-taking skills. Studies have shown that students at all achievement levels consistently do better when they work with guided notes.

- *Graphic organizers* – One of the best ways to learn is to transform new information in some manner – for example, if it’s verbal, create a diagram or a picture. Graphic displays are helpful with science concepts, historical dates, Venn diagrams in literature, and advance organizers to pre-teach math concepts.

- *Mnemonics* – Countless people remember the sequence of the rainbow’s colors with the mnemonic *ROY G BIV* (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet). Mnemonics are

well established in the psychological literature as an effective strategy for immediate and delayed recall of information.

“Strategies for Every Teacher’s Toolbox” by Frank Dykes and Suzanne Thomas in *Principal Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 11, #2, p. 26-2930 no e-link available; the authors can be reached at fdykes@uttyler.edu and stthomas@uttyler.edu.

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8. Reducing Suspensions in Montgomery County

In this *Principal Leadership* article, Montgomery County (MD) central office leaders Frank Stetson and Betty Collins describe the district’s initiative to reduce the number and racial disproportionality of suspensions (previously, black and Hispanic students received four times as many suspensions as white and Asian students). From 2006-07 to 2008-09, the number of out-of-school suspensions declined 52% in elementary schools, 50% in middle schools, and 38% in high schools and the percentage of African-American students suspended declined 56%, Asian students 44%, Hispanic students 52%, and white students 55%.

This district’s plan of action flowed from two concepts: (a) Focusing on how teaching and learning affect student engagement and behavior, and (b) Identifying alternative responses to inappropriate behavior. Here are Stetson’s and Collins’s recommendations:

- *Limit the types of offenses that receive suspensions.* The criterion became behavior that is both disruptive and detrimental to the operation of the school.
- *Identify alternatives to out-of-school suspensions.* These included a three-hour Friday afternoon detention, community service, and a positive behavior intervention system to teach and support appropriate student behaviors and create a positive school environment.
- *Address patterns of poor behavior among high-risk students.* Staff used functional behavior assessments to identify triggers and help staff members head off problematic situations.
- *Integrate equity targets and action plans with the school’s improvement plan.* The district defined equity as high expectations and access to effective learning for all students so outcomes were not predicated by race, ethnicity, sex, SES, language proficiency, or disability.
- *Engage parents and community stakeholders as partners in students success.* Teachers and other staff members worked to build trust in the community and engaged parents in activities that would help students stay out of trouble.
- *Use professional development.* The goal was to increase cultural competence, high expectations, positive relationships, and instruction.
- *Train administrators.* School leaders were brought up to speed on behavior management, data analysis, decision-making, cultural sensitivity, investigative procedures, considerations for students with disabilities, and classroom management.
- *Set goals and track suspensions.* Numerical targets were set for elementary, middle, and high schools to eliminate racial disparities in suspensions.

- *Continuously analyze suspension data.* This meant looking at the number and type of suspensions, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, disability, sex, types of infractions, and the location and time of incidents.

“Rethinking Suspensions” by Frank Stetson and Betty Collins in *Principal Leadership*, October 2010 (Vol. 11, #2, p. 40-44), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at frank_h_stetson@mcpsmd.org and betty_j_collins@mcpsmd.org.

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9. Unintended Consequences with Open-Ended Math Questions

In this *Teachers College Record* article, University of Georgia professor Amy Noelle Parks reports on her year-long study of mathematical question-asking in an urban third-grade classroom. Her focus was on how the types of math questions the teacher, Diana, asked affected different students’ ability to participate successfully.

It’s commonly assumed that open-ended, probing, higher-order questions are better for student learning than narrow, directive questions with right-or-wrong answers. This is one of the key distinctions between “reform” and “traditional” math instruction. Parks found that the teacher’s questions could be placed on two continua:

- From traditional to reform
- From explicit to implicit

Here are examples of questions in each of the four quadrants created by this:

- Traditional and explicit:
 - What is four groups of two?
 - What digit is in the one’s place, everybody?
 - What do we call the name of this coin?
 - Okay, in Celsius, what temperature does water freeze at?
- Traditional and implicit:
 - What do we do to add two-digit numbers with regrouping?
 - If you haven’t memorized your facts, what can you do to get the answer?
- Reform and explicit:
 - Caitlin, can you say why you disagree with Sienna’s answer?
 - Tell me why you’re adding 32 and 33.
 - Why would 26 not make any sense as an answer?
- Reform and implicit:
 - Why?
 - What do you notice about this?
 - Why does this make sense?
 - What’s a prediction you could make?
 - What can you tell me about this?
 - What do you think?

Diana worked hard to enact the values of reform mathematics as she understood them, trying to ask reform and implicit questions as often as possible.

But here's what happened. "By far, reform-implicit questions were the most likely to be met with silence when asked during whole-class lessons," says Parks – or by a single student, Ben, volunteering a correct answer (he was a Caucasian child who was regarded by other students as being "good at math").

Ben frequently became the center of attention when challenging, open-ended questions were asked, and he was "often in the position of rescuing the class when no one else would raise his or her hand to speak," says Parks. After one of these interactions, Diana asked the class to listen carefully to Ben's explanation and then asked, "Why should you listen to Ben?" "Because you think he's smart," called out another boy. "You think he's right," added another boy. Diana corrected them (it was because others should learn to answer these kinds of questions) may have fallen on deaf ears. "Ben's ability to routinely interpret the meaning of Diana's questions supported students' view of him as 'good at math' as much as his explanations of his thinking did," says Parks. "Just as classroom exchanges often worked to frame Ben as a good math student, they also worked to frame other students as struggling, at least in the public discourse."

Parks's troubling conclusion is that reform/implicit questions privilege some children, particularly those who share the language and cultural practices of the teacher, whereas explicit questions allow a wider range of students to participate competently in math lessons. "Open, ambiguous questions such as 'What do you notice?' may be appropriate for students who do not have to work to interpret the teacher's language or cultural practices but may present an obstacle for students who must think about language in addition to mathematics," says Parks. "In addition, students who are not fluent in the register of school speech... may need more explicit clues about the timing, syntax, and content of their responses."

"Explicit Versus Implicit Questioning: Inviting All Children to Think Mathematically" by Amy Noelle Parks in *Teachers College Record*, July 2010 (Vol. 112, #7, p. 1871-1896), no e-link available

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10. Doubts About the Impact of Character-Education Programs

In an *Education Week* item by Sarah Sparks and an *Education Gadfly* item by Amber Winkler, both comment on a three-year, 84-school Institute of Education Sciences study of the social and academic outcomes for a cohort of 6,000 third graders involved in seven popular schoolwide character-education programs:

- Academic and Behavioral Competencies Program
- Competence Support Program
- Love in a Big World
- Positive Action
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)
- 4Rs (Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution)
- Second Step

The study looked at 20 indicators and found no overall evidence of improvement in students' behavior, students' social and emotional competence, students' and teachers' perception of school climate, teachers' attitudes, teachers' use of routine classroom practices (e.g., engaging students in decision-making), and schoolwide character-building strategies. Teachers reported that students were more positive in the first two years but that effect faded by the third year. There were even some negative effects – less student engagement in learning and reduced perceptions of safety.

This study raises serious questions about the efficacy of discrete character-development programs versus efforts to create (as Winkler puts it) “an overall school culture that seamlessly fosters good behavior and sound values along with academics.”

“Study Finds Few Benefits in Character Education” by Sarah Sparks in *Education Week*, Oct. 27, 2010 (Vol. 30, #9, p. 4) and “Short Reviews” by Amber Winkler in *The Education Gadfly*, Oct. 28, 2010 (Vol. 10, #40); the full study, “Efficacy of Schoolwide Programs to Promote Social and Character Development and Reduce Problem Behavior in Elementary School Children”, is available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncер/pubs/20112001/pdf/20112001.pdf>

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11. Does a Teacher Have a Free-Speech Right to Decide *What* to Teach?

In this *Education Week* item, Mark Walsh summarizes a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit (Cincinnati). The case involved an Ohio teacher, Shelley Evans-Marshall, whose contract wasn't renewed after she assigned controversial literature to her high-school students and stirred up a hornet's nest among parents. Evans-Marshall sued the district for violating her First Amendment rights.

The court ruled unanimously against the teacher, saying, “When a teacher teaches, the school system does not regulate that speech as much as it hires that speech. Expression is a teacher's stock in trade, the commodity she sells to her employer in exchange for a salary. And if it is the school board that hires that speech, it can surely regulate the content of what is or is not expressed, what is expressed in other words on its behalf... Only the school board has ultimate responsibility for what goes on in the classroom, legitimately giving it a say over what teachers may (or may not) teach...”

“Teacher Speech Rights on Curriculum Rejected” by Mark Walsh in *Education Week*, Oct. 27, 2010 (Vol. 30, #9, p. 5) <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/10/27/09brief-b1.h30.html>

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12. Problems with the English Curriculum in Grades 9-11

In this *Education Week* item, Debra Viadero summarizes a survey of 400 U.S. English teachers handling standard and honors classes in grades 9-11. The study found that teachers' choice of fiction and non-fiction books is idiosyncratic (there is no longer a standard canon) and the books selected aren't more challenging as students move from grade 9 to 11. The authors bemoan the fact that many teachers don't ask their students to engage in close,

analytical reading of texts; rather, teachers have students draft a personal response or focus on a work's historical, cultural, or biographical content. The authors believe this contributes to the high rate of academic remediation that students need in college.

“Literature Curriculum Found to Be Flawed” by Debra Viadero in *Education Week*, Oct. 20, 2010 (Vol. 30, #8, p. 4); the full document, entitled “Literary Study in Grades 9, 10, and 11: A National Survey” by Sandra Stotsky with Joan Traffas and James Woodworth (from the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers), is available at <http://www.bu.edu/literary/publications/Forum4.pdf>

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s13. Short Item:

Children's Book Choices – This link will give you access to a list of recently published books selected by children from hundreds of options, and are organized in three levels: Grade K-2, 3-4, and 5-6.

<http://www.reading.org/Publish.aspx?page=RT-64-2-ChildrensChoices.pdf&mode=retrieve&D=10.1598/RT.64.2.9&F=RT-64-2-ChildrensChoices.pdf&key=ABACC926-58CE-49E7-86D9-0C4896CEAAA8>

“Children's Choices 2010” in *The Reading Teacher*, October 2010 (Vol. 64, #2, p. C1-C10)

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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

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
Catalyst Chicago
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
Theory Into Practice
Tools for Schools