Marshall Memo 772

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
February 4, 2019

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"Girls who were the subjects of their own lives become the objects of others' lives. Girls stop *being* and start *seeming*."

Simone de Beauvoir (quoted in item #1)

"In every interaction, you either increase or decrease trust."

David Horsager (see item #4)

"If kids believe their character is in question, they get stuck in shame. A little guilt can be productive, but shame is paralyzing."

Phyllis Fagell in "Four Ways to Help Students Be Their Best Selves" in *AMLE Magazine*, February 2019 (Vol. 7, #1, p. 40-42), no free e-link

"People who are good at relationships are always scanning the scene for things they can thank somebody for."

David Brooks (see item #2)

"[Are the men who make women uncomfortable] 'clueless, creepy, or criminal'?... If you think they are clueless, you can coach them. Clueless can become creepy very quickly if you don't address it. If they are creepy, you have to act."

Mercer consultant Pat Milligan, quoted in "Citing #MeToo, Davos Elites Express Fears About Mentoring Women" by Katrin Bennhold in *The New York Times*, January 28, 2019, https://nyti.ms/2Th10A9

1. The Challenges Faced by Young Adolescent Girls

"After years of social gains and with bright futures within reach, why are things still so difficult for middle-school girls?" asks editor Lory Hough in this article in *Ed. Magazine*. Despite significant progress in K-12 achievement, college and graduate school enrollment, and science, sports, and leadership, there's a troubling rise in depression and anxiety and decline in confidence among girls, especially as they leave elementary school. Some of this was captured in the movie *Eighth Grade*, which follows 13-year-old Kayla through her last week in middle school.

Bo Burnham, the film's director, says, "There's been a lot of progress made, but the cultural pressures are still insane. And culture is what leads you at that age, I think." As he prepared to make the film, Burnham viewed hundreds of teen vlogs and was struck that boys' videos tended to be about video games while girls' were about their souls. "I think our culture forces girls to ask deeper questions of themselves earlier than boys," he says. With boys, it's *What do you like to do?,* with girls, it's *Who are you?*

This forces a transition from being confident, spunky, perhaps bossy at age 8, 9, and 10, to something less sure in the early teens. As Simone de Beauvoir wrote in 1949, "Girls who were the subjects of their own lives become the objects of others' lives. Girls stop *being* and start *seeming*." A recent study showed that 67 percent of boys and 60 percent of girls said they were happy with the way they were in elementary school, but that fell to 56 percent of boys and 37 percent of girls in middle school.

Interestingly, African-American and Latinx girls fared better in this study, with 59 and 54 percent, respectively, saying they were happy with their middle-school selves. Girls of color seem less prone to anxiety, self-doubt, depression, and self-harm, having built up a strong support group for one another.

Author Rachel Simmons believes white girls' middle-school troubles may stem, paradoxically, from the progress that's been made. "We hope for girls to be smart and brave and interested in STEM fields," she says, "but we still expect them to be sexually attractive and have a witty and appealing online presence. No matter how many achievements they accrue, they feel that they are not enough as they are… Girls are still raised with a psychology that is trained to think about other people before themselves. This all is a real recipe for unhappiness."

There's another dimension to this uncertainty and self-doubt. An international study of 1,000 girls age 14-19 found that three-quarters said they felt judged as a sexual object or felt unsafe as a young woman. Half said they'd heard daily sexual comments and jokes from boys, and one-third said similar comments came from men in their families. These messages also bombard girls from the media. School counselor Joey Waddy says girls struggle "to match the person they felt they were or wanted to be with the examples of celebrities and social media influencers."

Starting in the early teens, says Lyn Mikel Brown (Colby College) "girls' bodies become associated with risk and constraint and warnings. Don't walk home alone at night. Don't be alone with boys or drink with boys; be sure you know what's in that cup; be the sexual gatekeeper; don't dress like a slut." The messages boys receive are quite different.

The other new factor in recent years is social media, which amplify uncertainty and peer issues. This is especially true for girls, who spend more than 90 minutes a day on their phones communicating with peers (compared with boys' 52 minutes, mostly chatting about playing *Fortnite*, not group dynamics). "Feeling excluded certainly isn't new," says Hough, "but back when I was that age, if you weren't invited to the mall, you rarely found out, or you found out days after. And perhaps most crucial: No one else shared your humiliation because only the people involved knew about the slight (or perceived slight). Nowadays, seeing photos online of your friends at Starbucks without you is immediate and very public. All of your other friends see it, too."

With Instagram, Twitter, and other platforms, says *Eighth Grade* director Burnham, kids are posting photos and material revolving around *What do I look like?* and *What am I thinking?* "Those are really baser, deeper, stranger questions," he says. "And the way kids interface with it, I think, changes the way they feel about the world and themselves." With idealized, carefully curated photos and content, social media create "better" personas that cause problems in real-life interactions.

"Most boys would never ask girls to lift up their shirts in real life," says school counselor Chessie Shaw. "However, plenty do online. Most girls would never say such mean things about a classmate to their face, but they do online… Because the poster has a much larger audience on social media, any little mean joke can balloon into a much bigger event and can quickly go from involving five or six girls to almost the whole grade… The chat is too much a part of their social life. If they left it, they feel like they wouldn't have any friends, so they endure the comments and constant fights." They're driven by FOMO – Fear of Missing Out.

The good news is that things get better for many girls in high school, as they learn to handle social media and gain in confidence and maturity. Social media can also be a platform for shy and socially awkward girls to develop their voice, as *Eighth Grade* protagonist Kayla did with her YouTube self-help videos. There's also a surge of social activism exemplified by Parkland shooting survivor Emma Gonzalez and by many in the #MeToo movement. "The one encouraging thing I've seen," says Brown, "is more and more of my students becoming passionate about these types of social justice issues… [M]ore than ever, we see women having one another's backs, and that's a huge shift. Girls are watching and trying to make sense of it all. The important thing is that they see there are different perspectives and points of view and the power is shifting. That's freeing."

"Girlhood" by Lory Hough in *Ed. Magazine*, Winter 2019 (#162), https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/19/01/girlhood; Hough is at lory_hough@harvard.edu.

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2. David Brooks on Talking Through Disagreements

In this *New York Times* column, David Brooks offers advice on dealing with workplace and political conflicts:

• *Be strategic about how many people you invite*. Brooks says six is a good number for an in-depth conversation, 12 for diversity of viewpoints, and 120 "to create a larger organism that can move as one."

• *Pile the chairs in the middle of the room*. This forces everyone to engage in a cooperative physical activity setting up for the meeting, and scrambles power dynamics as people figure out where to sit.

• *Use good icebreakers*. Brooks suggests going around asking people how they got their names, which promotes talking about their families, taking a long view, and noticing common values. To break awkward silences, inquire, "Tell me about the challenges you are facing."

• *Avoid surfacing "tribal" identities*. The best strategy is to avoid casting blame, starting with a "one down" posture: "I know I'm a piece of work, but I'm trying to do better, and I hope you can help me out."

• *Avoid discussing problems*. That involves looking backwards and assigning blame. "Instead, have a possibility conversation," says Brooks. "Discuss how you can use the assets you have together to create something good."

• *Let go of your narrative*. In intractable conflicts, each side wants the other to admit it's wrong and adopt its narrative. "This will never happen," says Brooks. "Get over it. Find a new narrative."

• *Don't tell people to calm down, be reasonable, or grow up*. All these threaten their autonomy and freedom of action and won't move the discussion forward.

• *Identify what's going on*. "In a neutral voice, name the emotions people are feeling and the dynamic that is in play," says Brooks. "Treat the emotions as cool, objective facts we all have to deal with."

• *Agree on something*. Find a small win so both sides "can at least take a step into a world of shared reality."

• *Find something to be grateful for*. "People who are good at relationships are always scanning the scene for things they can thank somebody for," says Brooks.

• *Never sulk, withdraw, or insist on either/or*. There are usually plenty of other options to consider.

• *Presume the good*. "Any disagreement will go better if you assume the other person has good intentions and if you demonstrate how much you over all admire him or her," says Brooks. "Fake this, in all but extreme cases."

"Kindness Is a Skill" by David Brooks in *The New York Times*, January 29, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/opinion/kindness-politics.html

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3. Jennifer Gonzalez on Choosing Words Wisely in Classrooms

In this *Cult of Pedagogy* article, Jennifer Gonzalez imagines two different strategies for dealing with students who are goofing off in class:

- *Get back to work or you'll be staying in for recess.*
- *This is not like you. What's the problem? … How can you solve it?*

Both strategies might get students back on task, but the second conveys a very different affect. "The first teacher is threatening a consequence," says Gonzalez, "sending the message that the activity's only real value is avoiding punishment. By contrast, the second approach affirms students' identities as kids who normally behave pretty well, then follows that by inviting them to solve their own problem… sending the message that their classroom is a respectful place, and fostering a climate where students actively participate in their learning, rather than simply complying with a teacher's demands."

Drawing on ideas from *Choice Words* by Peter Johnston and *How to Talk So Kids Can Learn* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, Gonzalez describes several classroom scenarios and effective – and not-so-effective – ways to deal with them.

• *Student self-concept* – A student hands in a piece of writing where the dialogue seems a bit flat. The teacher might say:

- *Your next step would be to revise some of the dialogue to make it sound more realistic.*
- *I wonder if, as a writer, you're ready for more-advanced dialogue techniques.*

The second approach sets the student up for growth, using words to shape the student's identity as a writer.

• *Academic safety* – A teacher has just finished giving students directions for an assignment. Two possible ways of following up:

- *Do you have any questions?*
- *What questions do you have?*

The first, quite common in classrooms, often gets no response; the answer would seem to be Yes or No, and students may not have a question yet, or may think it's safer not to ask anything – or they may just want the teacher to move on. The second approach subtly suggests that questions are a natural part of learning, so why not ask one.

Another scenario: during a discussion, a student makes a comment that's slightly off-topic. Two possible responses:

- *That's not what we're focusing on right now; let's stick to the topic.*
- *That's an interesting idea. I'll have to think about it some more.*

The student's reaction to the first might be embarrassment, whereas with the second, the student might feel somewhat affirmed even as the teacher shifts back to the main topic.

• *Student agency* – Students have been working in groups for most of the period, and although some groups worked well together, several didn't finish because students were off task or disagreed on how to complete the assignment. Two possible reactions when the class comes together at the end of the period:

- *Some groups did very well today, but I was very disappointed by what I saw in other groups. Tomorrow I need to see a big improvement.*

- *What problems did you come across today? How did you solve them? What will you do differently tomorrow?*

"The first option prioritizes the teacher's feelings over the learning process," says Gonzalez, "and it communicates the belief that working as a group should be easy: any problems that occurred were simply due to bad behavior." The second says that problems are a natural part of learning, and students can fix them.

• *Self-discipline* – Several boys are working on a group project down the corridor and making enough noise to be heard in a neighboring classroom. The teacher in that room has two ways of dealing with the distraction:

- *Boys! Stop making all that noise! If you can't work quietly I'm going to have to ask your teacher to bring you back inside.*
- *Boys, you can be heard clear down the hall.*

The first approach gives an order, conveys anger and blame, and threatens a consequence. The second simply states the facts and conveys the message, "We're all trying to learn here and I'm sure you wouldn't want to make that hard for others." It's much more likely to get the desired result and help the students consider others' needs in the future.

Gonzalez suggests several strategies for fine-tuning these skills: a faculty study group reading the two books mentioned above; keeping a list of useful turns of phrase; devoting a brief segment in every staff meeting to sharing ideas on classroom communication; and using video to capture and discuss effective dialogues. "Fine-tuning your classroom talk isn't something that happens overnight," she concludes, "and once you've begun the process, you'll probably never feel done. But just being aware of the impact is a huge first step, and with every small tweak you make, you'll get closer to true mastery and more satisfying, powerful teaching."

"Let's Give Our Teaching Language a Makeover" by Jennifer Gonzalez in *The Cult of Pedagogy*, February 3, 2019, https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/language-makeover/

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4. Trust 101

"In every interaction, you either increase or decrease trust," said consultant/speaker David Horsager (Trust Edge) in a keynote address at a recent national School Administration Manager (SAM) conference. Horsager argued that trust (defined as a confident belief in a person, product, or organization) is the single biggest factor in group morale, respect, relationships, productivity, innovation, and output. Here are the eight pillars of trust he and his colleagues have distilled from the research and their work in a variety of organizations:

- Character – Doing what is right over what is easy;
- Consistency – Having a standard that doesn't change;
- Commitment – Standing through adversity;
- Compassion – Caring for others;
- Clarity – A shared understanding that is not complex or confusing;
- Contribution – Getting results and being an important part of a team;

- Competency – Staying fresh, relevant, and capable;
- Connection – Making and keeping friends.

The link below has the results of a 2016 survey of U.S. adults on attitudes, perceptions, and drivers of trust. Some highlights:

- Across generations, most people learn about trust from their mothers – except for men, for whom Dad is the most important teacher.
- Assessing their own trustworthiness, most people say the key factors are keeping promises made to themselves and others, and telling the truth.
- Asked what actions build trust in others, most people named telling the truth, owning mistakes and fixing them as quickly and openly as possible, doing what is right over what is easy, and keeping promises.
- Asked about factors that make them trustworthy to others, most said they needed to have a moral compass or a standard separating right from wrong.
- Asked for the quickest way to decrease trust, most people named breaking private or public promises and claiming to have good morals or values while doing the opposite.
- For new employees, the biggest factor in building trust was meeting one-on-one with the boss and co-workers.
- Honest, open communication from the top was the biggest factor in employees serving longer in an organization.

"The Trust Edge" by David Horsager at the National SAM Conference, February 2, 2019, and the "2017 Trust Outlook: Highlighted National Research Findings" https://bit.ly/2GnJlTU

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5. The Characteristics of an Effective Professional Learning Community

In this *All Things PLC* article, author/consultant Mike Mattos frames the characteristics of an ideal professional learning community:

- Our team meetings are professional, respectful, and productive.
- Our team norms are vital commitments that promote mutual respect and keep our meetings positive and productive.
- Our decisions are based on research, evidence of student learning, and what is best for our kids.
- The Four Critical Questions focus us on the work that ensures all our students learn.
- We identify a limited number of absolutely essential learning outcomes, and we are committed to working together to ensure that all of our students master them.
- We create common assessments to measure student learning on every one of our essential standards.
- We compare results on our common assessments to determine which instructional practices are most effective and what next steps we need to take.
- We share students across our classrooms for interventions and extensions, taking collective responsibility for every student's success.

- When I leave a team meeting, I feel like we've accomplished important work that is essential to getting all our students learning at high levels.
- If our team had a motto it would be *Learning for all, whatever it takes*!

"Are We a Group or a Team?" by Mike Mattos in *All Things PLC*, Winter 2019 (p. 17-20), no e-link available

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6. Making Paraprofessionals an Integral Part of PLCs

In this *All Things PLC* article, Virginia principal Nathaniel Provencio suggests six ways to include instructional assistants in grade-level teacher teams:

• *Make sure all staff members know the school's vision and mission*. "We cannot take it for granted that our teams and staff understand our main purpose," says Provencio, "and we should reiterate our vision and mission at every opportunity." This gives purpose and relevance to assistants' daily work.

• *Reprise the DuFour questions*. Instructional aides should know student learning targets, assessments, strategies for struggling students, and enrichment activities.

• *Schedule for collaboration*. Paraprofessionals should be at the table whenever PLC teams meet.

• *Include aides on the leadership team*. "Assistants have amazing insights into many instructional and non-instructional aspects of a school," says Provencio.

• *Include aides in training*. "Showing that you are willing to invest in your assistants' professional growth may also be the spark that inspires them to work toward becoming a certified teacher," he says.

• *Set meaningful goals*. "Co-creating reasonable SMART goals that are instructionally based will show assistants they truly play a vital role in the instructional process and are integral to ensuring each student is making progress and being successful," says Provencio.

"Growing an Ecosystem of Excellence: The Role of Instructional Assistants in a PLC" by Nathaniel Provencio in *All Things PLC*, Winter 2019 (p. 10-15), no e-link available; Provencio can be reached at PROVENNR@pwcs.edu.

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7. Helping Students Read Biographies with a Critical Eye

In this article in *Language Arts*, Myra Zarnowski (Queens College, CUNY) says many students believe that the biography of a notable person is "a single story, free of personal interest and perspective… not only true, but also completely free of author input." A related misconception is that a biography with the most pages is the best, most complete source. Disabusing students of these beliefs, and teaching them how to look for each biographer's slant on their subject, is an important piece of college readiness, says Zarnowski, as well as part of developing a social-justice consciousness.

"Finding the author's perspective requires taking a questioning stance," she says. "It

means not only envisioning the author as a person sharing unique ideas, but also weighing and questioning those ideas." Here are three clues students should use:

• Look for the author's perspective. In some books, how the biographer sees the subject is explicit, and students need to identify and evaluate it.

• Compare different biographies. Reading two or more biographies of the same person will reveal how different authors see their subject. Students can look for clues about their differing viewpoints.

• Carefully read authors' biographical notes. These often say why an author was interested in a particular person, providing clues about the perspective he or she might bring to the biography.

"'How One Person Sees Another Person': Focusing on the Author's Perspective in Picturebook Biographies" by Myra Zarnowski in *Language Arts*, January 2019 (Vol. 96, #3, p. 145-152), https://bit.ly/2TslIgt; Zarnowski can be reached at Myra.Zarnowski@qc.cuny.edu.

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8. Recommended Biographies and Memoirs

In this *Language Arts* article, Grace Enriquez, Mary Ann Cappiello, and Erika Thulin Dawes (Lesley University) and Katie Egan Cunningham (Manhattanville University) review and recommend these books (see the link below for images of the covers and more detailed information on each book):

- *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* by Vashti Harrison
- *Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor: The Woman Who Loved Reptiles* by Patricia Valdez, illustrated by Felicita Sala
- *Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday and the Power of a Protest Song* by Gary Golio, illustrated by Charlotte Riley-Webb
- *The Flying Girl: How Aida de Acosta Learned to Soar* by Margarita Engle, illustrated by Sara Palacios
- *The Secret Kingdom: Nek Chand, a Changing India, and a Hidden World of Art* by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Claire Nivola
- *Brave Jane Austen: Reader, Writer, Author, Rebel* by Lisa Pliscou, illustrated by Jen Corace
- *Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Eric Velasquez
- *Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli* by Kyo Maclear, illustrated by Julie Morstad
- *Between the Lines: How Ernie Barnes Went from the Football Field to the Art Gallery* by Sandra Neil Wallace, illustrated by Bryan Collier
- *Midnight Teacher: Lilly Ann Granderson and Her Secret School* by Janet Halfmann, illustrated by London Ladd
- *Library on Wheels: Mary Lemist Titcomb and America's First Bookmobile* by Sharlee Glenn

- *Silent Days, Silent Dreams* by Allen Say
- *The Girl Who Drew Butterflies: How Maria Merian's Art Changed Science* by Joyce Sidman
- *Martin Rising: Requiem for a King* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney
- *Becoming Madeleine: A Biography of the Author of* A Wrinkle in Time *by Her Granddaughters* by Charlotte Jones Voiklis and Lena Roy
- *Pathfinders: The Journeys of 16 Extraordinary Black Souls* by Tonya Bolden

"Biographies and Memoir: Life Lessons and Stories in Literature for Readers in Grades K-8" by Grace Enriquez, Mary Ann Cappiello, Katie Egan Cunningham, and Erika Thulin Dawes in *Language Arts*, January 2019 (Vol. 96, #3, p. 191-201), https://bit.ly/2StGFKT;

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9. Pointed Questions About Classroom Technology

(Originally titled "Smart Classroom-Tech Integration")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Liz Kolb (University of Michigan) shares the framework she developed to help educators assess the instructional value of classroom technology products. Her focus is on (a) maximizing human interaction among students; (b) ensuring that technology engages students in worthwhile learning goals; (c) getting students working on relevant curriculum at higher cognitive levels: creating, analyzing, evaluating, gathering, and synthesizing knowledge; (d) using technology to check for understanding and make students' thinking and learning visible; and (e) using technology as a bridge to the real world.

Here are nine questions Kolb suggests that teachers and administrators ask about any technology product:

- Does the technology allow students to focus on the task of the assignment or activity with little distraction?
- Does the technology motivate students to start the learning process?
- Does the technology cause a shift in students' behavior, so they move from passive to active social learners?
- Does the technology aid students in developing or demonstrating a more-sophisticated understanding of the content, creating opportunities for creation/production over consumption?
- Does the technology create scaffolds to make it easier to understand concepts or ideas?
- Does the technology create paths for students to demonstrate their understanding of the learning goals in a way that they could not do with traditional tools?
- Does the technology create opportunities for students to learn outside of their typical school day?
- Does the technology create a bridge between school learning and everyday life experiences?

- Does the technology allow students to build skills they can use in their everyday lives?

"The right questions and coaching from a school leader," Kolb concludes, "can ensure that students are learning *through* the tools provided to them – not in spite of them."

"Smart Classroom-Tech Integration" by Liz Kolb in *Educational Leadership*, February 2019 (Vol. 76, #5, p. 20-26), https://bit.ly/2GaAwNU; Kolb is at elikeren@umich.edu.

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10. Short Item:

Consumer information on classroom software – CommonSense Media uses a 15-point rubric to evaluate the learning potential of ed-tech products and tools. Their reviews, and teacher ratings, are available free at https://www.commonsense.org/education/reviews/all.

Spotted in "School Tools" in *Educational Leadership*, February 2019 (Vol. 76, #5, p. 11)

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If you have feedback or suggestions,
please e-mail kim.marshall48@gmail.com

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and other educators very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 48 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, writer, and consultant lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 60 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 50 issues a year). Every week there's a podcast and HTML version as well.

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Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

All Things PLC
American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
AMLE Magazine
ASCA School Counselor
District Management Journal
Ed. Magazine
Education Digest
Education Next
Education Update
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
English Journal
Essential Teacher
Exceptional Children
Go Teach
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Educational Review
Independent School
Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Knowledge Quest
Language Arts
Literacy Today (formerly Reading Today)
Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Reading Research Quarterly
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Social Education
Social Studies and the Young Learner
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The Education Gadfly
The Journal of the Learning Sciences
The Language Educator
The Learning Professional (formerly Journal of Staff Development)
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time Magazine