Marshall Memo 474

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
February 25, 2013

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"The creative scientist needs an *artistic* imagination."

Max Planck (quoted in item #7)

"As fewer and fewer students take art, music, and crafts classes in school, with some students even failing to learn cursive writing, fine motor control and simple manipulative skills that were taken for granted 50 years ago are today increasingly absent. Many of our students are truly 'all thumbs.'"

Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein (*ibid*.)

"If you consider both the idea that curiosity is a powerful elixir for learning and the idea that as children age their curiosity requires more nurturing, it's clear teachers should pay serious attention to helping students acquire or retain a thirst to find out about the world… Curiosity needs more than stimulation and freedom. For children to develop and satisfy the urge to know, they need role models, opportunities to practice, and guidance."

Susan Engel in "The Case for Curiosity" in *Educational Leadership*, February 2013 (Vol. 70, #5, p. 36-40), www.ascd.org

"I want people to want to be scientifically literate because they feel empowered by it, enlightened by it, and it's something that will stimulate a curiosity in them that they once had, or never knew they had, in their youth."

Neil deGrasse Tyson (see item #3)

1. Three Approaches to Dealing with Cyberbullying

In this important article in *The Atlantic*, author and *Slate* editor Emily Bazelon reports on how an anonymous student at a Middletown, Connecticut middle school bullied fellow students and stirred up trouble using a Facebook page titled "Let's Start Drama." Calling herself Drama Queen, this student "knew exactly how to use the Internet to rile her audience," says Bazelon. "She hovered over them in cyberspace like a bad fairy, with the power to needle kids into ending friendships and starting feuds and fistfights… Wrapped in her cloak of anonymity, she was free to pass along cruel gossip without personal consequences. She started by posting a few idle rumors, and when that gained her followers, she asked them to send her private messages relaying more gossip, promising not to disclose the source. Which girl had just lost her virginity? What boy had asked a girl to sext him a nude photo?" Before long, Drama Queen had an audience of 500, many of whom had follow-up comments on the rumors. She pitted students against each other by posting side-by-side photos of girls and asking who was hotter and photos of boys asking, "Who would win a fight?" (this post resulted in an actual punch-out after school).

Two social workers based in the school heard about Let's Start Drama and the conflict it was causing. A quick Internet search revealed that there were two dozen imitator Facebook pages hosted by other anonymous students at the school with titles like Middletown Hos and Middletown Trash Talk. All this was a clear violation of Facebook's rules on anonymity and bullying, and the social workers followed Facebook's policy for filing a complaint. No response. They filed another complaint. Again, no follow-up. Months passed and Let's Start Drama and the other Facebook pages continued to wreak havoc in the school.

The summer after her visits to the school, Bazelon traveled to Facebook headquarters in California to see how the company was dealing with problems like this among its more than one billion members (2.5 billion pieces of content are posted daily). She spoke with the 27-year-old manager of the Hate and Harassment Team and watched as workers scrolled through hundreds of reports about bullying and hate speech on their computers. Their policy was to accept first-person complaints by victims of bullying and harassment. "If the content is about you, and you're not famous, we don't try to decide whether it's actually mean," he explained. "We just take it down." Third-party reports, such as the ones made by the social workers in Connecticut or by parents who believe their children are being bullied, are treated on a case-by-case basis.

Bazelon watched one team member at work. He took only a second or two to decide whether to honor a complaint or ignore it. Asked whether it might be a good idea to take longer on a particularly tricky complaint, he raised his eyebrows and said, "Your average decision time is a second or two, so 30 seconds would be a really long time." Bazelon had him locate the Let's Start Drama page and look at the history of complaints, especially the fact that the page was anonymous – a clear violation of Facebook rules. They could see the multiple complaints that had been filed, all correctly entered, yet there was a notation on the screen that future reports about the content should be ignored. "Someone made a mistake," said the Facebook worker. "This profile should have been disabled. Actually, two different reps made the same mistake, two different times." With a click of his cursor, he deleted Let's Start Drama.

In fairness, Facebook is trying to do better at handling third-party complaints, but it's difficult to devise algorithms that spot offensive content – and the volume of complaints is staggering. Facebook is also trying to build into its complain process suggestions to young people to reach out to adults in the real world for support, and also to complain directly to the people posting the objectionable material (they typically take down posts and photos if asked).

Bazelon's next visit was to Henry Lieberman, an M.I.T. computer scientist with expertise in artificial intelligence. Lieberman, who was bullied for being overweight when he was in middle school ("Hank the Tank"), has analyzed online harassment and found that bullies are remarkably uncreative: 95 percent of insults deal with just six issues: appearance, intelligence, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and social acceptance/rejection. He and his colleagues have created a knowledge base, BullySpace, that can successfully flag 80 percent of offensive language in social media websites. It can also spot when a post is going viral and when there's a pileup of comments aimed at one person (this often happens to LGBT students around prom time). The software can also trace a viral message back to its originator.

Lieberman's software has great potential, but no sites have picked it up yet. He's somewhat ambivalent about using BullySpace to report students to the authorities or ban them from using social media. It might be better, he believes, to use the software to spot offensive messages and, when the kid tries to send one, have pop-up messages saying, "Waiting for 60 seconds to post" with an X for delete, or "That sounds harsh! Are you sure you want to send that?" or a reminder that the message is about to go to thousands of people. Lieberman is also exploring automated messages that link victims of cyberbullying to pages with suggestions and help – for example, "Wow! That sounds nasty! Click here for help", or an explanation of how sexual harassment works and strategies for dealing with it. (Facebook has messages like this for students who post suicidal messages.)

"My position is that technology can't stop bullying," Lieberman concludes. "This is a people problem. But technology can make a difference, either for the negative or the positive. And we're behind in paying attention to how to make the social-network universe a better place, from a technological standpoint." Facebook is moving toward a Lieberman-type approach: instead of banishing kids, they're warning rule-breakers and temporarily disabling their pages. It turns out that young people's Facebook pages have real value to them and

starting a new page means starting all over with the process of building up "friends." Asked whether they'd rather be suspended from school or from Facebook, most middle- and high-school students say the former.

Bazelon's next line of research was Anonymous, a shadowy group of hackers who act as vigilantes on the Internet. Best known for attacks on the Syrian Ministry of Defense, the Vatican, the FBI, the CIA, MasterCard, Visa, and PayPal, Anonymous recently came to the rescue of a 12-year-old girl who was being viciously attacked on Twitter by a group of older boys. This started when the girl followed the Twitter feed of a 17-year-old boy she didn't know and then stopped following him because he posted remarks she found rude. The boy took offense and he and three other boys went after the girl, repeatedly threatening to rape her and telling her to commit suicide.

Although the girl lived some distance from the boys, she was genuinely scared, and her cry for help over Twitter reached a young woman named Katherine. This was around the time a Canadian teenager named Amanda Todd killed herself after vicious cyberbullying, and Katherine contacted "Ash", an Anonymous operative, who was repulsed by the boys' tweets. Ash was able to find the boy's identities and pinpoint the high schools they attended in Abilene, Texas. He gathered up their tweets to the girl and released them on the Web, along with the boys' names and the schools they attended (this is called a "dox"), accompanied by this message: "I am sick of seeing people who think they can get away with breaking someone's confidence and planting seeds of self-hate into someone's head. What gives you the f------ right to attack someone to such a breaking point? If you are vile enough to do so and stupid enough to do so on a public forum, such as a social website, then you should know this… We will find you and we will highlight your despicable behavior for all to see." Ash also sent the material to Abilene school officials.

At first, the boys railed at Anonymous on Twitter, and one denied his involvement in the most vicious messages. But soon two of the boys began sending remorseful tweets that seemed genuine. Bazelon contacted one of the boys to ask him how he felt about the encounter with Anonymous. After some initial denial and push-back (why hadn't the girl blocked the messages?), he wrote in an e-mail, "When i found out she was hurt by it i had felt horrible. I honestly don't want to put anyone down. i just like to laugh and it was horrible to know just how hurt she was… It was shocking to see how big [Anonymous was] and what they do."

What did Abilene school officials do? One local superintendent said he had been uncertain about the Anonymous material at first, but when he received an anonymous local phone call urging him to take action against the boys, he turned the material over to the police. An officer investigated and concluded that the boys couldn't have harmed the girl (because she lived far away). "If you can't show a disruption at school, the courts tell us, that's none of our business," he said. The superintendent, however, was grateful for what Anonymous had done. "I don't have the technical expertise or the time to keep track of every kid on Facebook or Twitter or whatever," he said. "It was unusual, sure, but we would have never done anything if they hadn't notified us."

Bazelon notes that Katherine and Ash don't have professional experience working with teens. "But reading through the hate-filled tweets, I couldn't help thinking that justice Anonymous-style is better than no justice at all," she says. "And while sites like Facebook and Twitter are still working out ways to address harassment comprehensively, I find myself agreeing with Ash that 'someone needs to teach these kids to be mindful, and anyone doing that is a good thing.'" Ash and Katherine have set up #OpAntiBully, which provides resource lists and links to abuse-report forms and allows people to come together to report an abusive user, bombard the offender with angry tweets, or offer support to the victim.

"In a better online world," concludes Bazelon, "it wouldn't be up to Anonymous hackers to swoop in on behalf of vulnerable teenagers. But social networks still present tricky terrain for young people, with traps that other kids spring for them. My own view is that, as parents, we should demand more from these sites, by holding them accountable for enforcing their own rules. After all, collectively, we have consumer power here – along with our kids, we're the site's customers."

"How to Stop the Bullies" by Emily Bazelon in *The Atlantic*, March 2013 (Vol. 311, #2, p. 82-90), http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/03/how-to-stop-bullies/309217/

Back to page one

2. The Death of Logic in a College Classroom

In this troubling *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Brooke Hildebrand Clubbs, a professor at Southern Missouri State University, describes a recent change in her classroom. For the last twelve years, her public-speaking course has provided a delightful (if exhausting) forum for ideas, provocative exchanges, clarification, and redirection. But in a discussion this semester about demagoguery and the ethical obligations of public speaking (telling the truth and taking responsibility for what you say) a young woman raised her hand and said that Barack Obama was a perfect example of a demagogue because he wanted to "take all our guns away because of Sandy Hook – which may or may not be a hoax – and he had little kids sit on his lap, and that was just like what Hitler did to get people's support." When challenged on her facts, the student just looked defiantly at the professor.

In a different class, a young man argued that Obama was trying to "take away" guns when a semiautomatic weapon wasn't even used at Sandy Hook. Clubbs countered with a detailed list of the three weapons that were used by the killer, and the student said the police had found the rifle in Lanza's car. Clubbs corrected him: a *shotgun* was found in his car. The student shook his head dismissively. Another student suggested that Sandy Hook might be a hoax because "there was a little girl who was supposed to be dead, and she showed up alive."

Clubbs was stunned: "I realized in that moment that class discussion as I knew it may have come to an end. I would still hold discussions, of course, but I knew that I would never be able to go into them with the same attitude I had previously – I would always fear this descent into a non-evidence-based reality. Previously, although we may have disagreed, we had what I told my classes was 'civil discourse.' But we had to agree on the facts. We could all have different opinions, but we couldn't be basing our opinions on different facts. Now I realized

that in the age of Facebook memes and YouTube conspiracy videos, my students had somehow got the idea that facts were subjective and supporting material unnecessary. They seem to be following 'opinion leaders' who model how to respond when they are challenged: vilify and name-call."

Clubbs considers herself an optimist – why else would she be teaching? "But despite my optimism," she concludes, "even I had to admit that 16 weeks wasn't long enough to provide the lessons some students would need to repair their critical thinking."

"No, You Can't Say Whatever You Want" by Brooke Hildebrand Clubbs in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Feb. 22, 2013 (Vol. LIX, #24, p. B20), e-link for subscribers only

Back to page one

3. An Astrophysicist Sounds Off

In this interview in *American School Board Journal*, editor Lawrence Hardy questions astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson (director of the Hayden Planetarium in New York City and former NOVA scienceNOW host) about the level of scientific literacy in the nation. "Now I don't want a law saying someone has to be scientifically literate," says Tyson. "I want people to want to be scientifically literate because they feel empowered by it, enlightened by it, and it's something that will stimulate a curiosity in them that they once had, or never knew they had, in their youth."

What about head-in-the-sand positions on evolution by prominent Americans? asks Hardy. "It's the combination of being a scientifically illiterate person and gaining cultural or political power," says Tyson. "That's a combustible combination, because then you end up making decisions that affect countless other people based on ideas and thoughts that are missing the fundamentals of how the natural world works."

Tyson also hears from students. After the Hayden Planetarium declared that Pluto was not a planet, Tyson received a torrent of mail. One third grader wrote, "Dear Scientest [sic], Why did you make Pluto not a planet anymore? If that's people's favorite planet, then they'll no longer have a favorite planet. And if there's people on Pluto, then they'll no longer exist."

"Q&A with Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson" by Lawrence Hardy in *American School Board Journal*, March 2013 (Vol. 200, 33, p. 6), www.asbj.com

Back to page one

4. Which Students Get Into Eighth-Grade Algebra?

In this thoughtful article in *Exceptional Children*, Valerie Faulkner, Cathy Crossland, and Lee Stiff (North Carolina State University) report on their study of factors that affect the placement of students with special needs in eighth-grade algebra classes (which are widely regarded as a gateway to higher-level courses in high school and access to college). The researchers examined:

- Fifth-grade math performance;
- Fifth-grade teachers' rating of students' ability;

- Students' IEP status.

What Faulkner, Crossland, and Stiff wanted to know was how these three factors influenced students' sixth-grade class placements when they moved to middle school, and how those placements influenced whether students were assigned to algebra in eighth grade. "The essential question we raise," they say, "is whether the fifth-grade teacher perception of student mathematical ability and the actual student mathematical performance indicators affect these placement outcomes differently for different groups of students."

The study found that students with IEPs were less likely to be assigned to algebra in eighth grade – even when their math performance was equal to that of non-IEP students who did wind up in eighth-grade algebra. "Students with IEPs who demonstrated inconsistently high performance were the group of students hardest hit," say the researchers. "Their odds of placement in algebra by eighth grade were one fifth those of their inconsistently high-performing peers without IEPs."

What's going on here? Faulkner, Crossland, and Stiff speculate that the way these students present – inappropriate behavior and use of language – causes teachers to form lower expectations. "Perhaps for students with IEPs, behaviors other than math performance play a larger role in teacher perception and eventual class placement than for their peers," say the researchers. They are particularly concerned that special-education teachers seem to defer to the judgment of regular-education teachers when it comes to course placement, don't advocate strongly enough for their higher-performing students, and don't seem to understand the importance of algebra placement for students' futures.

The bottom line: math performance, not behavior or special-education status, should determine access to higher-level courses.

"Predicting Eighth-Grade Algebra Placement for Students with Individualized Education Programs" by Valerie Faulkner, Cathy Crossland, and Lee Stiff in *Exceptional Children*, Spring 2013 (Vol. 79, #3, p. 329-345), http://cec.metapress.com/content/c8j1702611086177/

Back to page one

5. How Can Teachers Encourage and Assess Creativity?

(Originally titled "Assessing Creativity")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Montana-based author/consultant Susan Brookhart asks which student's work is more creative: asked to write an acrostic poem on a small poster, a girl writes a school spirit poem using the letters of the school's name (S for "super", N for "nice", etc.) and draws a perfect replica of the school mascot. A boy writes a poem using the first letters of his name: A for "agressive" (spelled wrong), N for "nutty", and so on, and doesn't draw a picture. The teacher praises the girl's poster as excellent work and criticizes the boy's because of the misspelled word and the fact that his lines sloped downward on the poster.

"The assignment was a giant missed opportunity for both students," says Brookhart. Her definition of creativity is *original work of high quality*. The girl's poster was workmanlike but lacked originality (simple words, a carbon copy of the mascot). The boy's work was

original, giving a real sense of who he was, but needed work on quality (spelling and using a ruler to draw straight lines).

"Myriad opportunities for fostering creativity are right under our noses in school," says Brookhart, "because learning is a generative act. However, what's missing in many classrooms is deliberately noticing and naming opportunities for creativity when they occur, giving feedback on the creative process, and teaching students that creativity is a valued quality." Brainstorming is a great opportunity for creativity. So is coming up with a list of hypotheses in a science class. So is figuring out why a cup of coffee cools down and devising ways to keep it hot. So is composing an original song in music class or imagining how *Tom Sawyer* would be different if Huck were the main character.

Brookhart presents a rubric for creativity based on students' use of these key characteristics:

- Variety of ideas and contexts – Recognizing the importance of deep knowledge and continually working to learn new things; open to new ideas and actively seeking them out;
- Variety of sources – Looking for material from a wide range of media, people, and events;
- Combining ideas – Organizing and reorganizing ideas into different categories or combinations and then evaluating whether the results are interesting, new, or helpful;
- Communicating something new – Making an original contribution.

In addition, it's important to be flexible and adaptive, using trial and error when unsure how to proceed, and viewing failure as an opportunity to learn.

"Assessing Creativity" by Susan Brookhart in *Educational Leadership*, February 2013 (Vol. 70, #5, p. 28-34), www.ascd.org

Back to page one

6. What Makes the Most Difference in Sustaining a Good Program?

In this article in *Exceptional Children*, Kent McIntosh (University of Oregon), Sterett Mercer, Amanda Hume, Mary Turri, and Susanna Mathews (University of British Columbia), and Jennifer Frank (Pennsylvania State University) report on their study of the sustainability of the Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SPBS) program in 217 schools in 14 states. They analyzed four factors they hypothesized would make a difference:

- Whether the program was a priority within the school – Staff commitment and buy-in, administrative support, integration with existing and new efforts, and perceptions of effectiveness and efficiency within the school;
- Whether teacher teams used data – Teams' skill level, meeting regularly, use of student behavior data to adjust practices, and sharing data with colleagues within the school;
- Whether the program was a priority in the district – Funding, commitment, visibility, and integration with district initiatives;
- Capacity building – Coaching, technical assistance, regular professional development, and connections to a community of practice.

The researchers found that team use of data was by far the most important factor in sustained, successful implementation of the SPBS program. Capacity building came in second, district support third, and school priority a distant fourth.

"The results indicate that the most directly influential role in sustainability is not the administrator, but the school team," conclude the authors. "The finding that neither school nor district priority made a significant independent contribution to sustained implementation was somewhat surprising. Results seem to go counter to existing literature describing the importance of these aspects." But perhaps school support manifests itself in teams that meet regularly, are skilled, and use data for decision making – and indeed, the schools that implemented SPBS most successfully had strong, data-using teams and supportive administrators.

"Factors Related to Sustained Implementation of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support" by Kent McIntosh, Sterett Mercer, Amanda Hume, Jennifer Frank, Mary Turri, and Susanna Mathews in *Exceptional Children*, Spring 2013 (Vol. 79, #3, p. 293-311), http://cec.metapress.com/content/v062875460165216/

Back to page one

7. The Arts Are Essential to STEM Progress

(Originally titled "The Art and Craft of Science")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Robert Root-Bernstein and Michele Root-Bernstein (Michigan State University) argue that the arts aren't a curriculum luxury; they are integrally involved in scientific thinking and deliver the biggest bang for the buck when it comes to improving test scores in areas unrelated to the arts – and the benefits persist well beyond high school. In fact, Nobel Prize winners are 15 to 25 times more likely than the average scientist to engage as adults in painting, sculpting, print making, wood- and metalworking, performance arts, photography, music, creative writing, and poetry. Einstein attributed some of his most important insights to his violin and piano playing.

Why? Because the arts develop observation, visual thinking, the ability to recognize and form patterns, and manipulative ability, and habits like practicing, persevering, and trial-and-error problem solving. "For these reasons," say the Root-Bernsteins, "finding ways to foster arts education alongside science education – and, even better, finding ways to *integrate* the two – must become a high priority for any school that wants to produce students capable of creative participation in a science-dominated society like ours." Here's how:

• *Observation* – Drawing enhances seeing, say the authors, and other forms of sensory observation hone students' powers of observation. It's not surprising that doctors who have had musical training are much better at understanding what they hear through a stethoscope.

• *Visual thinking* – "It turns out that one of the best predictors of success in scientific subjects in grades K-16 is visual imaging ability," say the Root-Bernsteins. "Conversely, students who have poor visual memory and imaging ability often do poorly in science and mathematics." The good news is that these abilities can be developed by drawing and painting classes.

• *Recognizing and forming patterns* – Every scientific and mathematical hypothesis involves seeing a pattern, say the authors. "For this reason, artists, choreographers, and musicians, whose works invariably invent and play with patterns, have a great deal to teach scientists."

• *Manipulative ability* – Craftsmanship and fine motor control are vital to scientific success, especially when working with experiments. "As fewer and fewer students take art, music, and crafts classes in school, with some students even failing to learn cursive writing, fine motor control and simple manipulative skills that were taken for granted 50 years ago are today increasingly absent," say the authors. "Many of our students are truly 'all thumbs'… We teachers need to remember that implementing knowledge, even in the information age, must still be accomplished through inventions first constructed by hand."

"The skills, knowledge, techniques, models, concepts, and inventions that artists and craftspeople develop sculpt the imagination, making new sciences and technologies possible," conclude the Root-Bernsteins. "The best scientists have always known this." In fact, Max Planck, a Nobel Prize winner and accomplished pianist, said, "The creative scientist needs an *artistic* imagination."

"The Art and Craft of Science" by Robert Root-Bernstein and Michele Root-Bernstein in *Educational Leadership*, February 2013 (Vol. 70, #5, p. 16-21), www.ascd.org; the authors can be reached at rootbern@msu.edu and rootber3@msu.edu.

Back to page one

8. Helping Students with Specific Learning Disabilities Learn Vocabulary

"The average adolescent encounters an average of 10,000 new words a year," say Michael Kennedy (University of Virginia) and Jade Wexler (University of Maryland) in this article in *Teaching Exceptional Children*. "Most of these new and unfamiliar words are multisyllabic, and carry the meaning of the passages they appear in." How are students supposed to learn all those words, especially students with specific learning disabilities who may be reading several grades below level? Certainly not through endless PowerPoint lectures by STEM teachers, and certainly not when content demands overwhelm students' background knowledge and processing ability.

Kennedy and Wexler recommend CAPs – Content Acquisition Podcasts. CAPs are short, multimedia instructional vignettes that teach one vocabulary term, concept, fact, event, or piece of information. Here is one example, followed by links to several explanatory videos:

• Photosynthesis: https://vimeo.com/49191997

• How to create a CAP using PowerPoint (part 1): http://vimeo.com/24179998

• How to create a CAP using PowerPoint (part 2): http://vimeo.com/24182724

• A short video on how CAPs can work: http://www.vimeo.com/37764041

• An example of the keyword mnemonic strategy: http://www.vimeo.com/37765820

CAPs focus on one vocabulary word or concept at a time and deliver content using an explicit four-part strategy:

- Identify word parts that contribute to the term's meaning (morphemes and any root words).
- Find student-friendly definitions for the word's parts.
- Determine a student-friendly definition for the whole term in the STEM context.
- Find clear, vivid images students can use to remember the meanings of word parts and the term itself.

"Helping Students Succeed Within Secondary-Level STEM Content" by Michael Kennedy and Jade Wexler in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, March/April 2013 (Vol. 45, #4, p. 26-33); Kennedy can be reached at MKennedy@Virginia.edu.

Back to page one

9. Keys to Learning a New Language

"It's a myth that intelligent people are better at learning languages," says Anne Merritt in this article in *The Telegraph* (summarized in *The Language Educator*). "Most language learning skills… are in fact habits, which can be formed through a bit of discipline and self-awareness." She lists five ways language learners can soar:

• *Listen a lot*. Find music, podcasts, TV shows, and movies in the target language and "listen, listen, listen as often as possible," says Merritt.

• *Be curious about the culture*. "The culturally curious students will be more receptive to the language and more open to forming relationships with native speakers," she says.

• *Guess and have fun*. Clutching a dictionary and trying to understand every grammar rule won't work. "Find a song or text in the target language and practice figuring out the gist, even if a few words are unknown," says Merritt.

• *Use a variety of methods*. Don't get stuck in a learning rut. Practice different skills and see concepts explained in different ways.

• *Don't be afraid of making mistakes*. "The more learners speak, the quicker they improve," concludes Merritt.

"Five Common Mistakes Language Learners Make" by Anne Merritt in *The Telegraph* (UK), December 19, 2012, summarized in *The Language Educator*, February 2013 (Vol. 8, #2, p. 10), www.tinyurl.com/five-mistakes-merritt

Back to page one

10. The "Social Contagion" Theory of Good and Bad Grades

Does who you hang out with in school affect your grades? wondered a group of high-school students. In partnership with the National Science Foundation, they conducted a two-year study of 160 juniors in an Endwell (NY) high school and found that students' grades gravitate toward the average of the social circle in which they move. In other words, if a student hangs out with friends whose average GPA is higher, that student's GPA is likely to improve. And if a student hangs with friends whose GPA is lower, his or her GPA tends to drop.

"Researchers Want to Know: Are Good Grades Contagious?" by Sarah Sparks in *Education Week*, Feb. 20, 2013 (Vol. 32, #21, p. 5), www.edweek.org; the full article, "Spread of Academic Success in a High School Social Network" by Deanna Blansky et al., in *PLOS One*, is available at http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0055944.

Back to page one

11. Short Items:

a. An online game about germs – "You Make Me Sick" is a game from Filament in which students take on the role of a pathogen and custom-design their disease to infiltrate a variety of unique target hosts. As they progress, they must improve their infectious properties in order to infect hosts that have progressively stronger defenses (like antibiotics and excellent hygiene), ultimately learning about the anatomy and function of bacteria and viruses and how they are spread. The game is available free at:
http://www.filamentgames.com/projects/you-make-me-sick

Spotted in "Understanding STEM Education and Supporting Students Through Universal Design for Learning" by James Basham and Matthew Marino in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, March/April 2013 (Vol. 45, #4, p. 8-15); Basham is at jbasham@ku.edu.

Back to page one

b. Dual-language and two-way immersion programs – This comprehensive site has resources from the Center for Applied Linguistics: http://www.cal.org/twi

"A Turn-Around Plan in Two Languages: How Dual Language Immersion Helps Save a School" in *The Language Educator*, February 2013 (Vol. 8, #2, p. 32-35), no e-link available

Back to page one

c. A Latin assessment – ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) has developed a Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment, available to members: http://www.actfl.org/aappl/latin.

"Learn About the ACTFL Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment" in *The Language Educator*, February 2013 (Vol. 8, #2, p. 47)

Back to page one

d. Language-learning games – MindSnacks teach up to 25 vocabulary words in Chinese, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish with audio clips by native speakers: www.mindsnacks.com. There are also SAT, PSAT, and GRE vocabulary games.

"Web Watch" in *The Language Educator*, February 2013 (Vol. 8, #2, p. 58)

Back to page one

e. Translating from any language – The PanLex Project is working to make it possible to translate words in every language on Earth into any other language, and has already entered half a billion translations. Check it out at www.panlex.org.

"Web Watch" in *The Language Educator*, February 2013 (Vol. 8, #2, p. 58)

Back to page one

f. The White House website in Spanish – This site has articles, news, and blogs that are of special interest to Hispanic Americans: www.whitehouse.gov/espanol.

"Web Watch" in *The Language Educator*, February 2013 (Vol. 8, #2, p. 59)

Back to page one

g. Language learning website – The Nulu website has news stories about sports, entertainment, business, science and technology, politics, travel, and Spanish/Latin culture, and has instant translation and questions and review: www.nulu.com

"Web Watch" in *The Language Educator*, February 2013 (Vol. 8, #2, p. 58)

Back to page one

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.marshall48@gmail.com

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 42 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 64 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).

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
- Reader opinions (with results of an annual survey)
- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
- A free sample issue

Subscribers have access to the Members' Area of the website, which has:

- The current issue (in Word or PDF)
- All back issues (also in Word and PDF)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or log-in

Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educational Research Journal
American Educator
American Journal of Education
American School Board Journal
ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief
Better Evidence-Based Education
Center for Performance Assessment Newsletter
District Administration
ED Magazine
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Update/Curriculum Update
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher
Go Teach
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)
Journal of Staff Development
Kappa Delta Pi Record
Knowledge Quest
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
NASSP Journal
Newsweek
NJEA Review
Perspectives
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
Teacher
Teachers College Record
Teaching Children Mathematics
Teaching Exceptional Children/Exceptional Children
The Atlantic
The Chronicle of Higher Education
The District Management Journal
The Language Educator
The Learning Principal/Learning System/Tools for Schools
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Wharton Leadership Digest