Marshall Memo 687

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
May 22, 2017

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"It is now official. Scholars have analyzed the data and confirmed what we already knew in our hearts. Social media is making us miserable. We are all dimly aware that everybody else can't possibly be as successful, rich, attractive, relaxed, intellectual, and joyous as they appear to be on Facebook. Yet we can't help comparing our inner lives with the curated lives of our friends."

Seth Stephens-Davidowitz in "Don't Let Facebook Make You Miserable" in *The New York Times*, May 7, 2017, http://nyti.ms/2pTubM4

"Our students are always giving us clues for detecting areas for improvement, as long as we remain open to hearing them."

Suzanne Sannwald (see item #3)

"Very different teaching behaviors can lead to equally powerful learning outcomes, and the same teaching behavior can be effective in one context but not in another. In the end, what matters most isn't the specific set of moves a teacher employs but the learning that occurs among the given students."

Bradley Ermeling, Ronald Gallimore, and James Hiebert (see item #1)

"Successful charter schools and traditional schools have the same characteristics: high expectations for what students need to know and be able to do; a powerful curriculum that matches those expectations; instruction aligned to the curriculum that is substantive and creative; and a way to measure student performance and intervene if students fall behind expectations. Educators' and policy makers' time is better spent implementing known successful elements of good schools rather than debating what form they should take."

James Kadamus in a letter to *The New York Times*, May 26, 2017, no e-link

"Summer is the most unequal time of the year for millions of students who lose access to critical services and learning opportunities when the school doors close for summer vacation."

Matthew Boulay quoted in "Curbing the 'Summer Slide'" by Michelle Healy in *American School Board Journal*, June 2017 (Vol. 204, #3, p. 54), no e-link

1. Classroom Observations That Really Make a Difference

"To the untrained eye, classroom instruction often looks better than it really is," say Bradley Ermeling (a writer/consultant based in Shanghai), Ronald Gallimore (University of California/Los Angeles), and James Hiebert (University of Delaware/Newark) in this *Kappan* article. An affable teacher, engaged students, and smoothly orchestrated activities may give the illusion of effective instruction, but there may not be much deep learning going on. Ermeling, Gallimore, and Hiebert say classroom observers need to "bracket off the more superficial aspects of instruction" and answer these questions:

- How does the instruction facilitate or fail to facilitate productive learning opportunities?
- What evidence is there that students achieve the intended learning goals?
- How can instruction be revised to provide stronger opportunities for students to achieve the learning goals?

The authors give an example of a well-planned, well-orchestrated math lesson for fifth graders:

The teacher's goal is for students to understand why fractions need a common denominator when they are added together. She reviews adding fractions with the same denominator and then presents this problem: 2/3 + 1/4 = ? She challenges students to come up with their own solutions. They can use color-coded fraction cut-outs from previous lessons, and the only rule is that answers need to make sense. Students work alone for five minutes and then compare ideas with their partners while the teacher circulates, jotting notes on the different methods being explored and asking questions: "Can you check to make sure your answer makes sense to you?" "Is there another way you can think of to add these fractions?"

The teacher then has students share their methods (strategically waiting till the end to call on students with the most-advanced solutions). After each presentation, she asks the class to discuss why that method did or did not make sense. Different approaches are floated – adding both numerator and denominator, combining the one-third and one-fourth colored pieces to make "a little less than one," finding a one-twelfth fraction piece that fits into the remaining space and concluding that the answer is eleven twelfths, and others. The class considers each method and the teacher prods them, finally asking, "Why did some groups choose twelfths? Would sixths work?" She then asks students to solve 1/3 + 1/2 = ? to see if the best method would work with new numbers.

Ermeling, Gallimore, and Hiebert love this lesson. "Asking students to work out their own methods for adding fractions encouraged them to notice that if pieces of different sizes are added, it can be difficult to determine the exact size of the total," they say. "This is the key

concept needed to achieve the learning goal, and the teacher created opportunities for students to develop this concept by asking them first to grapple with this idea and then to participate in a class discussion about why some methods worked better than others. If the teacher had moved directly to showing students how to find common denominators and then asked them to practice this method, the opportunity to understand why such a method is needed would have been lost."

Observing and discussing a lesson like this is difficult – unless it's captured on video. That's why video is such an effective way of helping teachers and supervisors focus on the finer points of a great lesson – and less-than-stellar lessons – and hone their observational skills. "Better and cheaper video technologies have opened the doors of classrooms," say the authors, "putting an end to the old joke about how teaching is the second most private act. Ordinary classroom teaching can easily be recorded, observed, analyzed, and – thanks to the Internet – shared and compiled into video libraries of instruction."

There are challenges with video – having a single viewpoint (often the back of the classroom), not being able to see the instructional task, and not hearing overlapping conversations and following the learning pathways of multiple groups of students. But the advantages of video far outweigh its limitations. It's a lot easier to record lessons than to organize live observations, and far more-detailed and more-helpful discussions can take place. Groups of educators can watch the same lesson together, replay particular segments, and actively debate ideas as they watch. "Ordinary, everyday teaching offers as many opportunities as ideal teaching to practice seeing learning opportunities in the midst of the typical, unscripted, sometimes untidy nature of classrooms," say Ermeling, Gallimore, and Hiebert. "Lessons need not to be taught by acknowledged teaching stars; lessons taught by colleagues provide as many opportunities to learn critical observation skills."

There are three considerations for getting the most out of classroom videos: high-quality audio (the teacher should wear a lavaliere microphone); moving the camera around the classroom to capture different students at work and show what they're working on; and viewers having access to unit and lesson plans and broader learning objectives.

"Rather than investing large amounts of time, effort, and money in formulaic methods of evaluating teachers," conclude Ermeling, Gallimore, and Hiebert, "school systems should invest in helping teachers learn to analyze learning opportunities carefully and integrate focused observation into their ongoing professional routines." The authors are especially critical of superficial, checklist-driven evaluation visits to classrooms, since there isn't one right way to teach. "Very different teaching behaviors can lead to equally powerful learning outcomes," they say, "and the same teaching behavior can be effective in one context but not in another. In the end, what matters most isn't the specific set of moves a teacher employs but the learning that occurs among the given students. To 'see' such opportunities requires careful analysis of lesson features that cannot be anticipated and reduced to a checklist. Meaningful data come from looking at what unfolds in a lesson, not from counting the number of times a teacher makes one move or another."

"Making Teaching Visible Through Learning Opportunities" by Bradley Ermeling, Ronald Gallimore, and James Hiebert in *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 2017 (Vol. 98, #8, p. 54-58), www.kappanmagazine.org; the authors can be reached at brad.ermeling@teachingbetter.com, ronaldg@ucla.edu, and hiebert@udel.edu.

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2. A School Leader Gets a Lesson in Empathy

In this article in *Independent School*, Minnesota administrator Tom Taylor describes being asked by his school's orchestra director to play a toy instrument – the ratchet – in the string ensemble's winter concert. "This won't take too much time and won't be too hard," said the director, and talked him into it. Eight weeks later, Taylor was on stage in a full tuxedo surrounded by grade 7-9 students and thinking, "I should have practiced more. I'm not ready for this. I'm not even a musician, what am I doing here?" But the performance went well and Taylor made only a few mistakes that weren't obvious to the audience.

For weeks afterward, he found himself reflecting on the experience. "What I discovered," he says, "is just how much I can learn about teaching, about schools, and mostly about learning from my short time spent with the intermediate orchestra." The lessons:

• *Step away from expertise*. Compared to the serious student musicians in the ensemble, Taylor was clearly a novice, and it reminded him how rarely adults feel this way. "How often do we allow ourselves the insecurity that comes with being bad at something – or at least not being good at something?" he asks. "The longer we teach, the further and further we move from that state of uncertainty that accompanies learning something for the first time… Sitting where my students sit gave me a much-needed booster shot of empathy for the student experience. It was also a concrete and effective reminder that learning often starts from a place of not knowing and that we as teachers need to value this." Taylor had always thought of himself as a lifelong learner… "But then I had to perform a piece of music. I was asked to sit where my students sit, and it was only then that I realized just how much I had to learn."

• *Be mindful of feedback*. "Playing with the orchestra reminded me not only of what good, effective feedback looks like," he says; "it also helped me remember what it feels like to *receive* it." Taylor needed a lot of coaching to perform creditably, and the feedback the conductor gave him – immediate, specific, direct, clear, and performance-based – was completely different from what he'd received as a teacher and administrator. It went beyond praise and criticism, following a well-defined pattern: first observation, then suggested action – for example, "I noticed that you entered right on the mark; try to replicate that next time." "I hear that you played your part a bit late; watch me more closely, and I'll signal when you enter." The affirmations and criticisms were delivered in a caring tone; although they sometimes stung (the whole ensemble was listening!), Taylor knew they weren't personal. It made him think about students getting feedback in classrooms and how important the tone and environment are to teachers' comments being heard and acted on.

• *Listen and collaborate*. Taylor was struck by how dependent he was on the other players in the ensemble, simultaneously listening to each other and contributing to the music being played, and how this relates to regular teaching. "In the classroom," he says, "a peer

group can provide the motivation to challenge oneself, a context for new ideas, a sounding board for a burgeoning argument, and moral support for continued growth. Learning is, after all, an ensemble performance, and children often learn much better when the learning is done collaboratively."

This also applies to adult relationships in schools: "As teachers and administrators in schools, we would do well to remember the value of listening and contributing in equal measure. Our schools are notoriously full of very busy people, and despite our best efforts to reach out to colleagues to connect and discuss recent work, new courses, or new opportunities to collaborate, it is hard to carve out the time for meaningful listening and partnership to occur in our schools… Just as I needed to recognize and rely on the expertise of those around me in the orchestra, we must ask our students and teachers to do the same."

"I'd Rather Learn" by Tom Taylor in *Independent School*, Summer 2017 (Vol. 76, #4, p. 12-16), no e-link available; Taylor can be reached at thomas.taylor@breckschool.org.

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3. Continuously Improving the "User Experience" in a School Library

In this article in *Knowledge Quest*, California librarian Suzanne Sannwald recalls a student asking (with some embarrassment) whether Alaska was part of the U.S. or Canada. Another student chimed in, "Yeah, I've always found it confusing, because isn't Alaska an island?" The first student's confusion was understandable, but how could the second think Alaska was an island? But when Sannwald looked at a standard U.S. map, she understood: Alaska and Hawaii are tucked into the southwest of the 48 continental states to save space – a mapmaking convention that the second student hadn't yet learned. Moments like this "reminded me of how easy it is to make assumptions about what students do and should understand," says Sannwald. "I am forced to question what I consider to be common knowledge and to recognize that what makes sense to me may not make sense to others."

This epiphany, along with insights she gained working in the corporate world when she was pink-slipped from teaching, helped Sannwald think about her library in terms of *user experience design*. She quotes user experience guru Austin Knight: "If there's anything that design has taught me, it's that my assumptions, while generally well-founded, are almost always wrong." With this in mind, Sannwald puts herself in the shoes of students and how they'll relate to the library's physical space, personnel, instructions, website, and search parameters: is everything accessible, usable, findable, credible, valuable, useful, and desirable?

"An argument I sometimes hear," says Sannwald, "is that, rather than making changes to accommodate students, we should view gaps in understanding as teachable moments, helping them learn how to decipher, navigate, and use various systems." To be sure, there are teachable moments – for example, cluing in that student to the mapmaker's shortcut for Alaska and Hawaii. But Sannwald believes school librarians are different from regular classroom teachers, who see students every day. Her goal, she believes, "is to make sure the library is as user-friendly to students walking in for the first time as it is for those who use it daily. I cannot

rely on others learning my way; I aim to make my library work for them so that they have a positive experience and choose to stay and return." She shares five practical tips:

• *Listen to yourself*. "What irritates you during your daily work?" Sannwald asks. For example, it drove her crazy that, despite being told again and again, students filled out a form to get their computers repaired and wrote in the *For Staff Use Only* boxes. Once she got in touch with her frustration, she shifted her thinking from "These darn students never listen to my instructions!" to "Hmm. There is a common issue with students not following my instructions. How can I deliver them more effectively?" She solved the problem by putting a colored piece of paper on top of the *Staff Only* part of the form with a bold-faced message: *Staff will complete the rest*. Similarly, she shifted the library sign-in from a paper system, which many students ignored, to computer sign-in kiosks, which they readily used.

• *Listen to your users*. Sannwald initially employed the traditional system of stamping the due date on a card in the pocket at the back of each library book. She was perplexed when a student asked, "Can I return my book before the due date?" Did the student really think he needed to return the book on the exact date? Actually, yes – he didn't understand how due dates work. So Sannwald put a new message of the cards: *Return or renew this book at the library before the date on this card*. "Lesson of this story," she says: "Our students are always giving us clues for detecting areas for improvement, as long as we remain open to hearing them."

• *Be explicit*. Just because students aren't asking questions or lodging complaints doesn't mean everything is running smoothly. Sannwald has learned to answer unasked questions and preemptively direct students. At her desk, a sign says, *If I am not at this desk, then I am working somewhere in the library. Please find me, and I will be happy to help you! Ms. Sannwald, Librarian* (with her photograph). This answers the potential question, *Where is the librarian?* and empowers students to find her, aided by her name and photo. Another example: students may think that books displayed with their covers facing outward are merely decorative, so she put bookmarks in each one saying, *Check me out!* "Whenever possible," she says, "I try to remove doubt and guesswork so that users have agency to act independently."

• *Avoid being overly explicit*. Sannwald admits that she's sometimes too verbose with written instructions and students ignore them – TL-DR (too long, didn't read). She's learned to post simpler, bold-faced instructions (for example, on how students can print something they've written on their computers), accompanied by graphic images.

• *Be comfortable being in beta*. "Inspired by the technology industry, I frame my work as being in perpetual beta state," says Sannwald. "In other words, I am to *RERO* (Release Early, Release Often). Translation: Start now and do not expect perfection." For example, when she launched computer sign-in kiosks, she watched what was slowing down students as they signed in and what was inviting mischief and tweaked the interface. And when she introduced new paper forms, she built in an incentive to fix problems. "If I were to have a large stack of copies," she says, "I might be less motivated to make improvements because of the convenience of having copies readily available and not wanting to waste paper. When I am forced to run new batches, I use the task as an opportunity to make edits at the same time."

"The effort is not about what I know or how I think," Sannwald concludes. "It is about validating my users and what will work best for them." Good design is humble, she says. "No matter how much training and experience we may have, we must design our school libraries with our users at the center. It is not about us being wrong, but about making our libraries work right for users."

"Practical User Experience Design for School Libraries" by Suzanne Sannwald in *Knowledge Quest*, May/June 2017 (Vol. 45, #5, p. 38-47), no free e-link; Sannwald can be reached at suzannesannwald@gmail.com.

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4. A Private School in Salt Lake City Changes How Students Are Graded

In this article in *Independent School*, administrators Annie Barton and Wendell Thomas describe their school's 2½-year revolution in grading. A committee took an initial look at the current system and concluded that it wasn't successfully identifying learning needs, supporting student learning, or communicating data. Committee members scoured the research and found their concerns echoed in critiques of traditional percentage-based, A-B-C-D-F student assessment:

- Such grades are often subjective and inconsistent from class to class, while giving the illusion of being precise and objective.
- Grades are designed to rank students, not to report on or support student learning.
- Grades often include attendance, on-time completion of work, class participation, behavior, and other factors, masking learning and academic achievement.
- Grades are often used to promote compliance rather than stimulate creativity, critical thinking, and learning.
- Including zeros in grade calculations skews grades downwards, since 60 is usually the cut-off for failure.
- A-F grades encourage students to think in terms of task completion, ego fulfillment, and competing with others versus a learning orientation.

The grading committee's next step was looking at the school's mission statement – *To inspire students to lead ethical and productive lives through a college preparatory program that promotes the pursuit of academic and personal excellence*. This led them to identify three key grading areas: Academic mastery (course content and skills), productivity (work ethic, resourcefulness, mindset, and tenacity), and contributions (making the school a safer, more inclusive place for others).

Next the committee drafted and circulated a rubric for each of the areas, with descriptions of student proficiency at four levels: Exceeding, Meeting, Approaching, and Unsatisfactory (there was flexibility to add + to grades). Teachers weighed in with numerous suggestions, and at the start of the 2015-16 school year, the sixth-grade team launched the new grading system. There were still lots of questions: Should homework count? How often should students get feedback and grades? How fine-grained should feedback be on the subcategories of the rubric? How should formative and summative grades be weighed? Could the rubrics be

made kid-friendly so students could take more responsibility for guiding themselves to mastery?

During the pilot year, sixth-grade teachers noticed several changes: There were fewer discipline issues, with ongoing feedback on personal productivity and community contributions playing a key role. Students were less focused on points and percentages and more on getting specific feedback from teachers to improve their learning. And teachers reported being "more thoughtful and reflective themselves," say Barton and Thomas, "more fully aware of where their students are and how they may best support their continued learning." Encouraged, the school decided to roll out the new policy for seventh and eighth graders, one grade each year.

There was pushback on the changes. Barton and Thomas say that the grading reformers "may have underestimated how deeply the traditional grading paradigm pervades people's understanding of school and student learning." Dissenters' main concerns:

- The rubric-based grades were more subjective than traditional A-F grades.
- The new grades were less rigorous.
- The new grades might hinder students' college prospects, especially if they were implemented in high-school classes.

"We feel well-equipped to respond to the first two concerns," say Barton and Thomas. "Numerous studies dating back to the early 20th century reveal the lack of objectivity in traditional percentage-based grading." The four-tier grades seemed far superior to the pseudo-precise 100-point scale, and the rubrics contained rich language on student learning and behaviors at each level. On the question of rigor, fewer students were getting straight "Exceeding" grades compared to the number of straight A's before. "In addition," say Barton and Thomas, "teachers are moving beyond extra credit and focusing more on depth than on breadth, resulting in more intentional efforts to provide students with opportunities to challenge themselves and demonstrate true mastery of learning goals."

What about some parents' concerns that their children might not get into highly selective colleges? School leaders are holding off on implementing the new approach in grades 9-12 until they get a full report from all three middle-school grades at the end of the 2017-18 school year. But the new approach shows promise. It's tilting students away from gaming the system for high grades and instead getting everyone thinking about developing the skills needed to be effective learners – the ultimate prerequisite for top grades in high school and college success. What's more, many college admissions officers say they're receptive to proficiency-based transcripts.

"Remaking the Grade" by Annie Barton and Wendell Thomas in *Independent School*, Summer 2017 (Vol. 76, #4, p. 92-100), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at anniebarton@rowlandhall.org and wendellthomas@rowlandhall.org.

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5. What Should Students Memorize and What Should They Google?

In this *New York Times* article, cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham (University of Virginia) pushes back on the notion that because students can find pretty much any piece of

information online (for example, the capital of Ohio or the quadratic equation), there's no point in having them memorize stuff. Google is certainly good at finding information, says Willingham, but the human brain is superior in four ways. For starters, it can quickly determine context and decide if a particular word is the right one for the situation at hand. For example, a student might Google *meticulous*, find that it means "very careful," and write, *I was meticulous about not falling off the cliff*. Context and background knowledge supply what an Internet search cannot.

Second, in many situation our brains are faster than Google. Retrieving a memorized piece of information – for example, 4 x 9 – is much quicker than opening a browser and accessing the times table. In addition, when students go to the Internet for information, they can lose the thread of solving a problem. That's why the National Mathematics Advisory Panel advocates "quick and effortless recall of facts" as essential to math proficiency. Speedy recall is also vital to reading comprehension. We read best when we know at least 95 percent of the words in a text. "Pausing to find a word definition is disruptive," says Willingham. "Online, the mere presence of hyperlinks compromises reading comprehension because the decision of whether or not to click disrupts the flow of understanding."

Third, our brains are adept at functioning with partial information – for example, we have the idea of *someone who owes money* but not the word (*debtor*). We store the meaning, spelling, and sound or words in separate areas, which is why it's possible to recall one without the others. "Good readers have reliable, speedy connections among the brain representations of spelling, sound, and meaning," says Willingham. "Speed matters because it allows other important work – for example, puzzling out the meaning of phrases – to proceed."

Finally, the brain has a built-in self-improvement function. Every time we retrieve something from memory or use a skill, the connection becomes more robust and the information or skill is easier to access next time. That's why quizzing yourself is the best way to study for a test, and why using GPS will not help you remember your way around an unfamiliar city if at a later date you have to navigate without GPS.

For these reasons, says Willingham, "It's a grave mistake to think Google can replace your memory. It can, however, complement it, if we keep in mind what each does best." The Internet is clearly superior when we need to quickly find arcane or not-worth-remembering information. A rule of thumb: we should commit to memory the facts that we will often need to access quickly – the sounds of letters, core vocabulary, important science, health, and history facts, times tables, the quadratic equation – while taking advantage of the Internet to find random stuff, widen our knowledge and skills, and continuously broaden our memory bank.

"You Still Need Your Brain" by Daniel Willingham in *The New York Times*, May 21, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/19/opinion/sunday/you-still-need-your-brain.html

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6. Putting Students in the Driver's Seat for Close Reading

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, Diane Santori (West Chester University) and Monica Belfatti (Elizabethtown College) say the Common Core ELA standards encourage

teachers to do close reading with their students and ask lots of text-dependent questions. But do those questions need to be asked by the teacher? Working with third and fourth graders, Santori and Belfatti found that students were capable of asking excellent text-dependent questions. When teachers orchestrate that dynamic, students are more engaged in reading and discussions, and the quality of learning improves.

For student-generated questions on close text reading to work well, the authors suggest the following steps:

- Select complex texts that will foster students' curiosity.
- The teacher is not the "primary knower" – rather, evaluating the text is shared between teacher and students and the students are encouraged to come up with questions.
- Students jot down their questions as they read the text before all-class discussion.
- The teacher enters the conversation to probe, scaffold, clarify, or collect additional student responses.
- Students have "textual agency" – that is, they can control topics for discussion and exercise interpretive authority.
- Students listen to each other's questions, cite evidence from the text, and draw on prior knowledge.
- Students collaboratively construct meaning.

"Children are naturally curious beings," conclude Santori and Belfatti; "thus, we did not need to teach them how to ask text-dependent questions."

"Do Text-Dependent Questions Need to Be Teacher-Dependent? Close Reading from Another Angle" by Diane Santori and Monica Belfatti in *The Reading Teacher*, May/June 2017 (Vol. 70, #6, p. 649-657), http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/trtr.1555/abstract; the authors can be reached at dsantori@wcupa.edu and belfattim@etown.edu.

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7. The Power of Nonverbal Signals

"One of the greatest challenges in teaching a classroom of diverse learners is determining what students are thinking and how they are feeling about the concepts being introduced or processed," says math specialist Ellie Cowen in this article in *Edutopia*, "Many of the thoughts that pass through students' minds would be of great value for their teachers to know, but opportunities to hear them can feel few and far between." Cowen suggests six nonverbal signals that students can use to quickly communicate key information to their teacher:

- "Me, too" – This ASL sign signifies that the student's thinking matches what's being discussed or suggested.
- "I have a point of interest" – Holding up a single index finger says the student disagrees with a statement or needs to hear more to follow the speaker's reasoning.
- "I have something to add" – Placing one fist on top of the other means the student wants to build on a classmate's idea.

- "I can paraphrase" – The student makes air quotes to indicate that he or she can express what's just been said in other words.
- "Complete the thought" – Touching the fingertips of both hands together in an A shape can be used to remind a speaker to use a complete sentence or include a unit or label.
- "I have a conjecture" – Students putting a fist on top of their head (representing a light bulb) indicates they have an idea or suggestion to share.

"One word of caution," Cowen adds: "All nonverbals, including raised hands, are most impactful when they reflect a classroom focus on *reasoning*, not *getting the answer*. Teachers may have to monitor students' use of signals to ensure that their integrity as communicators of critical thinking is always preserved."

"6 Hand Signals That Bring Learning to Life" by Ellie Cowen in *Edutopia*, April 21, 2016, https://www.edutopia.org/blog/hand-signals-bring-learning-to-life-ellie-cowen

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8. When Students Should Ask for Help

In this article in *Teachers College Record*, Victoria Almeda and Ryan Baker (Columbia University) and Albert Corbett (Carnegie Mellon University) report on their study of students asking for help when they need it – or not asking. "Help avoidance," as the authors call it, is a widespread classroom problem, and this study focused on "whether there is an optimal point for deciding when a student needs help."

Previous research has shown that there are four variables affecting students needing help in the classroom: prior knowledge (this is the most important), motivational orientation, self-regulation, and cognitive load. Almeda, Baker, and Corbett were able to analyze help-seeking and avoidance by carefully tracking college students' learning behaviors as they went through a computerized learning program on genetics.

The results? Except for situations where students had extremely low levels of prior knowledge, not asking for (and getting) help was strongly correlated with poor learning outcomes. Help avoidance was most damaging in the earliest stages of the learning progression; waiting until later lessons to get help was increasingly unproductive. The message for students: when you don't understand, don't spin your wheels; get help immediately.

"Help Avoidance: When Students Should Seek Help, and the Consequences of Failing to Do So" by Victoria Almeda, Ryan Baker, and Albert Corbett in *Teachers College Record*, March 2017 (Vol. 119, #3, p. 1-24), http://www.columbia.edu/~rsb2162/Helpavoidance_TCRsubmission.pdf

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About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 48 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, consultant, and writer, 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).

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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
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ASCA School Counselor
ASCD SmartBrief
Communiqué
District Management Journal
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Education Digest
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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
Literacy Today
Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
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Review of Educational Research
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School Library Journal
Teacher
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 New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time Magazine