

Marshall Memo 487

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
May 27, 2013

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Quotes of the Week

“The book I remember most clearly was *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle. That was the book that made me say, ‘Wow, reading is fun.’”

Author Dan Brown in an interview with Belinda Luscombe in *Time*, May 27, 2013 (p. 64), <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2143565,00.html>

“What do you think we should do?”

J.W. Marriott Jr. on the most important question managers should ask subordinates, in “What Eisenhower Taught Me About Decision-Making”, an interview by Adam Bryant in *The New York Times*, May 26, 2013, <http://nyti.ms/11rxavs>

“Three-quarters of all e-mail is junk, and we're wasting lots of time dealing with less important messages. But it remains the mule of the information age – stubborn and strong.”

Barry Gill in “E-Mail: Not Dead, Evolving” in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2013 (Vol. 91, #6, p. 32-33), no e-link available

“When I lost, I always learned something to help me in the next situation. I used that to take away the insult.”

Arnold Palmer in a “Life's Work” interview with Alison Beard in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2013 (Vol. 91, #6, p. 144), no e-link available

“It's easy to get trapped in a hamster wheel of doing, doing, doing. But to learn and develop, you must set aside time to reflect on what's going well and what isn't. Some top leaders block off two hours every week to do this.”

Suzanne de Janasz, Kees van der Graaf, and Michael Watkins (see item #2)

“A search for candidates who have a track record of keeping everyone happy is a search for an appeaser.”

Dennis Barden (see item #3)

1. The Nuts and Bolts of Giving a Good Speech

In this helpful *Harvard Business Review* article, Chris Anderson offers advice on how to give an effective presentation. Drawing on his experience as curator of TED talks (which have been viewed more than one billion times over the last 30 years), he says that public speaking is eminently coachable. “In a matter of hours, a speaker’s content and delivery can be transformed from muddled to mesmerizing,” he says. Here’s how:

- *Frame a good story.* “There’s no way you can give a good talk unless you have something worth talking about,” says Anderson. “Conceptualizing and framing what you want to say is the most vital part of preparation.” The most common problem he and his colleagues see in first drafts of TED talks is trying to cover too much ground. Less is more: deep versus broad, with vivid anecdotes and examples. Humans are wired to enjoy stories, and a good presentation takes listeners on a journey and helps them see the world differently. It’s important to know where the story begins, how much people already know about it, and why it means so much to you. The best talks are like a mystery novel – posing a problem, leading listeners toward the solution, and letting them do a lot of thinking for themselves.

- *Plan your delivery.* The goal is to sound natural and conversational rather than scripted and awkward. Anderson says there are three ways people try to pull this off: read from a script or teleprompter, refer to bullet points, or memorize the whole thing. For TED talks, he recommends memorization, but acknowledges that this is too time-consuming for most presentations. Note cards with bullet points are a good second-best, with plenty of rehearsing to master the material and the transitions from one card to the next. Reading a speech is the worst option; it changes the whole dynamic, distancing the speaker from the audience and creating a formal aura that can be deadly.

- *Develop stage presence.* The most common mistake is moving one’s body too much – shifting from one leg to the other or pacing around. “People do this naturally when they’re nervous,” says Anderson, “but it’s distracting and makes the speaker seem weak. Simply getting a person to keep his or her lower body motionless can dramatically improve stage presence.” It’s important to realize that being nervous is a natural reaction and can win an audience over as long as it comes across as genuine. The best way to control nervousness is to breathe deeply before walking in front of the audience. “It works,” says Anderson. During the talk, looking directly at listeners is essential – finding five friendly-looking people and speaking directly to them as if they were friends you haven’t seen in a year and you’re bringing them up to date on your latest ideas. “That eye contact is incredibly powerful,” he says, “and will do more than anything to make your talk land.”

- *Plan the multimedia.* The do's and do not's for PowerPoint are well known by now, he says: keep it simple, don't read what's on the slides, don't use a deck as notes, and make effective use of photos, illustrations and short videos. Some talks don't need slides at all.

- *Get feedback – but not too much.* Rehearsing in front of a live audience is important, but if you get conflicting advice on what to change, it can paralyze you. It's important to practice with people who know you well and to have confidence in what you prepare.

“Presentations rise and fall on the quality of the idea, the narrative, and the passion of the speaker,” Anderson concludes. “It's about substance, not speaking style or multimedia pyrotechnics. It's fairly easy to ‘coach out’ the problems of a talk, but there's no way to ‘coach in’ the basic story – the presenter has to have the raw material. If you have something to say, you can build a great talk... The single most important thing to remember is that there is no one good way to do a talk. The most memorable talks offer something fresh, something no one has seen before.”

“How to Give a Killer Presentation: Lessons from TED” by Chris Anderson in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2013 (Vol. 91, #6, p. 121-125); the executive summary of this article is available at <http://hbr.org/2013/06/how-to-give-a-killer-presentation/>

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2. Getting Off to a Good Start as the Boss

“The appointment of a new leader is a defining moment for an organization,” say Suzanne de Janasz (professor at IMD in Switzerland), Kees van der Graaf (director of several companies), and Michael Watkins (IMD professor and chairman of Genesis Advisers) in this *Harvard Business Review* article. “Leaders find transitioning into new roles the most challenging times in their professional lives, when they either build credibility and create momentum or stumble and sow doubts about their effectiveness.”

A new leader can be set up for failure if the introduction isn't handled well, say the authors (one from bitter personal experience). The hiring organization should help a new leader get off to a good start by answering four questions:

- What message is this appointment meant to convey – i.e., time for a change?
- Why is this person the right one for the job?
- Which members of the organization need to be informed?
- What should they be told and when?

The organization's support “must be consistent, enthusiastic, credible, and authentic,” say the authors. “There are always people who look for signs of weakness in a story or hesitation in the speaker's body language.”

In addition, it's important that the new leader prepare professionally, emotionally, and personally. The authors offer the following advice:

- *Reflect on what this new role means in terms of how you see yourself.* How does this job connect with your personal values and interests? What do you want from it?

- *Manage your own expectations.* “Think in advance about what matters to you, what you're prepared to do, and what you're not,” they say.

- *Consider what this means for your family.* “Attempts to justify unwelcome surprises by pointing out the increase in your prestige, opportunity, or salary will only heighten your loved ones’ perception that you’re benefiting at their expense,” say the authors.

- *Expect conflict*, both professional and personal. It’s important to plan for difficult conversations at work and at home.

- *Engage in periodic assessments and offer (or negotiate) adjustments if necessary.* “It’s easy to get trapped in a hamster wheel of doing, doing, doing,” say de Janasz, van der Graaf, and Watkins. “But to learn and develop, you must set aside time to reflect on what’s going well and what isn’t. Some top leaders block off two hours every week to do this.”

“It’s All About Day One” by Suzanne de Janasz, Kees van der Graaf, and Michael Watkins in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2013 (Vol. 91, #6, p. 98-104), no e-link available

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3. Do’s and Don’ts of Running a Hiring Committee

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Chicago executive-searcher Dennis Barden has ten suggestions for search committees as they interview candidates:

- *Understand the job.* It’s vital to know the day-to-day responsibilities of the position in question before conducting interviews.

- *Prepare.* Read candidates’ materials and decide on the structure and guiding principles. “Group interviews work better when the panel agrees on a line of questioning that is intended to elicit substantive, useful responses and that can be replicated for every candidate...” says Barden.

- *Keep the purpose of preliminary interviews in mind.* That is, to take an expansive view of possibilities and expand options, not decide on the best candidate.

- *Don’t represent just a narrow constituency.* Every committee member should keep the good of the whole organization in mind.

- *Loosen up.* “It is deadly when a panel is so focused on process that it feels that it must ask the same questions, using the same words, in the same order, with every candidate,” says Barden. “Interview conversations go better, and institutions get a far better sense of the personality of the candidate, when they flow naturally, like a conversation.”

- *Talk about the elephant in the room.* People are sometimes too polite. “For goodness sake, just ask!” says Barden. It’s important to address difficult or contentious issues while the candidate is there.

- *Recruit as well as interview.* “In an optimal search, the institution and the candidate find themselves at the same stage of mutual consideration at the same time,” he says. “So, not only should the candidates be telling the institution that they want the job, but the institution should be telling them how interested it is in them.”

- *Don’t treat candidates like supplicants.* “Talent is hard to find,” says Barden. “It needs to be invited in and to be given a reason to stay.”

- *Understand that leaders don’t make everyone happy.* “A search for candidates who have a track record of keeping everyone happy is a search for an appeaser,” he says.

- *Don't let the process become more important than the outcome.* “Process is intended to serve result, not be a result itself,” he concludes. “When institutions become so immersed in the process that they come to believe that it’s more valuable than the outcome (the hire itself), things tend to go awry – and they do so very, very slowly.”

“Treating Candidates Like Applicants, and 9 Other Recruiting Mistakes” by Dennis Barden in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 24, 2013 (Vol. LIX, #37, p. A36-37), <http://chronicle.com/article/Top-10-Mistakes-in-Recruiting/139351/>

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4. Is It Demoralization or Is It Burnout?

In this thoughtful article in *American Journal of Education*, Doris Santoro draws a distinction between teacher demoralization and teacher burnout. The symptoms may be the same – apathy, bitterness, depression, exhaustion, and isolation – but the causes are different, and so are the remedies.

- *Burnout* happens when a teacher’s personal store of resources is depleted. This may happen because of a particularly demanding situation colliding with the teacher’s personality – or naiveté. Teachers “may subscribe to a misguided hero-mentality that positions them as the saviors of students and fail to preserve their own well-being,” says Santoro. “Working for years in a toxic and unsupportive environment can lead to the erosion of personal resources in even the most hardy teacher.” Burnout calls for individual, psychological interventions.

- *Demoralization*, on the other hand, happens “when the job changes to such a degree that what teachers previously found good about their work is no longer available,” says Santoro. “Moral rewards are what bring many of us to teaching: finding ways to connect meaningfully with students, designing lessons that address students’ needs, using our talents to improve the lives of others.” When the source of moral rewards is cut off, for example by a highly scripted curriculum, teachers become demoralized. This kind of situation “demands a collective and structural response,” says Santoro. “There is no shame in demoralization – it is the work that has changed, not the failure of an individual to tough it out. Teachers can ask themselves, colleagues, school leaders, policy makers, parents, whoever will listen: How are we able to access the moral rewards of our work? What do we need to do to ‘remoralize’ our teaching?”

“Teacher Demoralization and Teacher Burnout: Why the Distinction Matters” by Doris Santoro in *American Journal of Education*, May 2013 (Vol. 119, #3, p. 346-347), <http://www.ajeforum.com/?p=145>

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5. Are Value-Added Scores for Teachers Accurate?

In this *American Journal of Education* article, Pam Grossman, Susanna Loeb, and Julie Cohen (Stanford University) and James Wyckoff (University of Virginia) explore the relationship between effective teaching practices and teachers’ value-added scores. Their

research question as they examined data on New York City middle-school ELA teachers: Does value-added analysis of teachers accurately describe differences in instructional quality as measured by extensive classroom observations using the PLATO and CLASS rubrics and scrutinizing teachers' instructional logs?

The result: a mixed bag. Some teaching qualities, especially explicit strategy instruction, correlate quite well with value-added scores. Others, including the teaching of writing, reasoning, and conceptual understanding, do not. Discrepancies stem from the narrow scope of New York's standardized tests (which don't measure certain aspects of learning) and the limitations of the classroom observation process. And the authors point out that correlation doesn't imply causality: "Teachers who effectively engage in explicit strategy instruction may contribute to increased achievement in their students for many other reasons," they say. More research is needed to determine causality, and if there is a causal connection, researchers need to determine if professional development can improve the quality of teachers' use of explicit strategy instruction.

Grossman, Loeb, Cohen, and Wyckoff conclude by saying they "share the concern that none of the measures of teacher effectiveness are ready for the high-stakes uses to which they are being put... Ultimately, before such measures are used to make high-stakes decisions about individual teachers, we need a much better understanding of how measures of effectiveness perform, both individually and in combination with other measures, and how they can best be employed to improve the quality of classroom teaching."

"Measure for Measure: The Relationship Between Measures of Instructional Practice in Middle School English Language Arts and Teachers' Value-Added Scores" by Pam Grossman, Susanna Loeb, Julie Cohen, and James Wyckoff in *American Journal of Education*, May 2013 (Vol. 119, #3, p. 445-470), <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16015>

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6. Superheroes Help Students Read with Fluency

In this charming article in *The Reading Teacher*, Illinois elementary teachers Barclay Marcell and Christine Ferraro describe a second-grade girl who "reads 100 words per minute with a flat voice and a mind that's focused on what's for lunch," a boy who reads 120 words a minute and cares more about his reading-rate graph than the content of the story, and students who ask, "Are you timing me?" and "Did I beat my last score?" Most upsetting of all are students who can't provide an accurate retelling of what they read.

Marcell and Ferraro recall how fluency became an obsession in elementary classrooms after the National Reading Panel's 2000 report and RTI's focus on measurable data. Somehow the emphasis on reading fast and saying words accurately eclipsed expression and comprehension. Why? "It seems that, amid the well-intentioned use of timers, graphs, and programs devoted to repeated readings, fluency practice was being distilled to 'race reading,'" they say. Authentic fluency should be "reading with and for meaning," but it was lost in many classrooms. "Although we believe that automaticity is indeed a hallmark of reading fluency," they say, "we needed our students to grasp fluency's multifaceted features and related

strategies – to adjust pace, to add expression, to connect and summarize. We also wanted to make fluency instruction more engaging for kids.”

To accomplish this, Marcell and Ferraro created a series of evil characters that personified bad reading habits, made character cards of each one, and pasted them to the back of popsicle sticks:

- Robot Reader, who wants you to read like an automaton and keeps you from understanding;
- Choppy Boy, who wants you to chop words;
- Alien Dude, who wants you to read like a Martian without understanding the words (“Hmmm, what did I just read?”)
- Flat Man, who makes sure your voice doesn’t go up or down.

Who would deal with these characters? “It’s time for Poetry Power Man and his superhero friends – Super Scooper, Expression Man, and Captain Comprehension – to enter our reading blocks,” say Marcell and Ferraro. “Their mission? To fight for fluency and *all* its facets – rate, expression, accuracy, and learning...”

Why poetry? Because reading poems enlists all the skills students need to read fluently – rate, expression, accuracy, and learning – as well as phrasing, metaphors, similes, personifications, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and, of course, comprehension. Marcell and Ferraro created a fluency development sequence that stretched through each week and had these components:

- Introducing a short passage (usually a poem)
- Reading it aloud
- Discussing the content
- Choral reading
- Paired reading
- Word study
- Home practice
- Performance
- Final re-reading

During each week, students did Practice #1 with Super Scooper fighting Choppy Boy for good phrasing, Practice #2 with Expression Man fighting Flat Man for lively voice inflection (as measured by the Expression-O-Meter), and Practice #3 with Captain Comprehension fighting Alien Dude for summarizing and connecting to deeper understanding. The final day included performances.

The results? Over four years of implementation, all dimensions of students’ fluency have improved markedly, as has their enjoyment of poetry and reading.

“So Long, Robot Reader! A Superhero Intervention Plan for Improving Fluency” by Barclay Marcell and Christine Ferraro in *The Reading Teacher*, May 2013 (Vol. 66, #8, p. 607-614), <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/trtr.1165/abstract>; the authors can be reached at macell@aol.com and cferraro@d64.org.

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7. Improving Reading Skills in Grades 4-12

In this article in *Review of Educational Research*, Jeanne Wanzek (Florida State University), Sharon Vaughn, Nancy Scammacca, Kristina Metz, Christy Murray, and Greg Roberts (University of Texas/Austin), and Louise Danielson (American Institutes for Research) report on their synthesis of ten studies on extensive reading interventions (75 or more sessions) for students above grade 3. They found that interventions had small but positive effects (from 0.10 to 0.16) on comprehension, word reading, fluency, and spelling. In other words, they say, “accelerating reading growth in the upper grades may be more challenging than in the earliest grades, even when extensive interventions are implemented.” They found no significant differences in student achievement with different class sizes and hours of interventions,

Why such small effect sizes? First, upper-grade students have well-established deficits that have persisted despite earlier interventions. Second, upper-grade reading is more cognitively demanding and requires background knowledge, vocabulary, and ability to deal with complex texts.

“Nonetheless,” conclude the authors, “...adolescence is not too late to intervene in reading.”

“Extensive Reading Interventions for Students with Reading Difficulties After Grade 3” by Jeanne Wanzek, Sharon Vaughn, Nancy Scammacca, Kristina Metz, Christy Murray, Greg Roberts, and Louise Danielson in *Review of Educational Research*, June 2013 (Vol. 83, #2, p. 163-195), <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/02/11/0034654313477212.abstract>; Wanzek can be reached at jwanzek@ferr.org.

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8. Another Reason to Doubt the Efficacy of Retention

In this *American Journal of Education* article, Michael Gottfried (Loyola Marymount University) describes his multi-year study of the spillover effect that retained students had on their classmates in five Philadelphia elementary schools. His conclusion: classrooms with more retained students had consistently lower educational outcomes than classrooms with fewer retained students. “This effect remained negative and significant,” says Gottfried, “even after controlling for student, residential neighborhood, teacher, and classroom characteristics (including average peer ability and class size) and after modeling for school, year, grade, and student fixed effects.” Some details:

- Math achievement was more severely affected than reading.
- Girls were more negatively affected than boys.
- Minority and low-SES students were more negatively affected than their white and higher-SES peers.

Why the spillover effect? Gottfried suggests two explanations. First, the peer effect documented in the 1966 Coleman Report means that higher-achieving students pull their classmates up and lower-achieving students do the opposite. Second, retained students, whose achievement is pulled down even further by being retained, are more demanding of teachers’ attention, which means their peers are getting less instructional time.

“The Spillover Effects of Grade-Retained Classmates: Evidence from Urban Elementary Schools” by Michael Gottfried in *American Journal of Education*, May 2013 (Vol. 119, #3, p. 405-444), <http://bit.ly/18uYcSP>;

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9. Bibliocounseling in a Pennsylvania Middle School

In this *ASCA School Counselor* article, retired counselor Christy Clapper describes how school can become an unfriendly place for socially awkward middle-school students:

“Frustrated with how others treat them, they often cannot explain what they do not understand. They miss the nuances of relating and interpret many things literally, so their confusion is both evident and real. It gets in the way of their functioning in the classroom, the cafeteria, and in every social experience. It sets them apart from others and makes them targets of untoward behaviors and comments. They feel rejected and hurt; they inappropriately respond, often making themselves bigger targets and more vulnerable to a cycle of mistreatment.”

After years of working to help students with these issues, Clapper chanced upon a book titled *Jarvis Clutch, Social Spy* (EPS School Specialty, 2001) by Melvin Levine, Jarvis Clutch, and Ed Shems. In the book, Jarvis decides to become a “social spy” in his school, noting what he sees in others in different social situations and keeping a journal. Clapper decided to use the book for an eight-week social skills group for seven students (six boys and one girl), using the “self-spying” survey that comes with the book (students identify their strengths and areas of need on four scales: fitting in and feeling good about it; seeming right; talking right; and acting right). Each weekly class focused on some of the social skills that emerged in the book and students drew parallels to their own experiences

How did the sessions go? “By developing an understanding of social concepts, practicing interactive skills, considering examples and models and incorporating them into real-life experiences, these students were able to improve the quality of their relationships,” Clapper reports.

“Social Spies” by Christy Clapper in *ASCA School Counselor*, May/June 2013 (Vol. 50, #5, p. 22-25), www.schoolcounselor.org; Clapper can be reached at christyclapper@gmail.com.

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10. Advice on Bibliocounseling Programs

In this item, *ASCA School Counselor* prints suggestions from readers on how to handle bibliocounseling. Some excerpts:

- “Read the book, and get to know it well before you make any effort to present it to kids,” recommends Paula Stewart of Mountain City, Tennessee.
- “Choose good stories with embedded lessons rather than those that deliver predictable or moralized lessons,” says Karen Griffith from Duluth, Georgia. “We want students to unearth and discover the lessons rather than having them forced upon them.”

- “Do not lead the students,” advises Julie Merriman of Stephenville, Texas. “Allow the students to garner their own meaning from the reading.”

- “Don’t be so intent on getting the book read that you don’t allow discussion as you read,” says Susan Siegrist of Allentown, Pennsylvania. “Some things will be sparked that need to be explored. The book can always be finished later; conversations cannot.”

- “Students learn more from book characters than they ever do from ‘listening’ to you,” quips Laura Lee Kinard of Bryceville, Florida.

“What Works” in *ASCA School Counselor*, May/June 2013 (Vol. 50, #5, p. 32),
www.schoolcounselor.org;

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11. Short Item:

App reviews – In this *Education Week* article on consumer information for digital learning products, Sean Cavanagh mentions Common Sense Media, which does thoughtful reviews of a variety of learning apps: <http://www.common sense media.org/app-reviews>

“Evaluating Quality in Digital Learning” by Sean Cavanagh in *Education Week*, May 22, 2013 (Vol. 3, #32, p. S20-S23),
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/05/22/32el-digitalreading.h32.html>

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Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo, please e-mail: kim.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 a year. Rates decline steeply for multiple readers within the same organization. See the website for these rates and how to pay by check, credit card, or purchase order.

Website:

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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/Public Education NewsBlast
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
NAASP Journal
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
Time
Wharton Leadership Digest