Marshall Memo 955

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education October 3, 2022

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Quotes of the Week

"The standard for excellence in teaching should always be student growth."

Jim Knight (see item #5)

"Although social-emotional competence promotes academic proficiency, the converse is also true: academic proficiency is associated with a lower risk of being identified as emotionally disturbed."

Valerie von Bargen in "Cultural Responsivity in Working with Indigenous Youth" in *Communiqué*, October 2022 (Vol. 51, #2, pp. 4-8)

"It boils down to how do I enable people to feel effective in what they're doing."

Atul Gawande (see item #1)

"Just say yes until you're 40, and after 40, just say no." Career advice (quoted in *ibid*.)

"Neuroscientists have taught us for a decade and a half now that it's actually not expressing compassion that exhausts people; it's empathetic distress. It's the feeling of concern, but being unable to help."

Adam Grant (*ibid*.)

"How can we order society in such a way that increases human flourishing and limits suffering? What is the good, the true, and the beautiful? How do we make sense of the sins of the past and the way the legacies of those failures follow us to the present? What is justice? What is love and why does it hurt us so? What is the good life? Is there a God who orders the galaxies, or did we come from chaos, destined to return to it?"

Esau McCaulley's suggested Essential Questions in <u>"What Mrs. Bailey Taught Me in A.P. History Changed My Life"</u> in *The New York Times*, September 21, 2022

1. Atul Gawande on Career Advice, Burnout, Leadership, and Feedback

In this interview with Adam Grant (University of Pennsylvania), Atul Gawande talks about his early desire to become a musician and his career as a surgeon, writer, and now White House administrator of USAID's Bureau of Global Health. A few excerpts:

- Career advice he got from a colleague: *Just say yes until you're 40, and after 40, just say no.* Gawande's commentary: "When you're young, you don't know what actually energizes you and what you will prove to be good at. You don't have a sample size to know." He said yes to music, then medical school, then surgery, then writing (while practicing medicine). But he didn't follow this after-40 advice when he gave up surgery and writing to join the U.S. government's effort to prevent worldwide pandemics.
- Stress and burnout "Neuroscientists have taught us for a decade and a half now," says Adam Grant, "that it's actually not expressing compassion that exhausts people; it's empathetic distress. It's the feeling of concern, but being unable to help."
- Leadership "It boils down to how do I enable people to feel effective in what they're doing," says Gawande.
- Coaching As a world-renowned thoracic surgeon, Gawande took the example of athletes and singers and hired a surgeon/professor to observe him in the operating room and give him detailed advice on how to improve his technique and teamwork. "Effective coaching is different from teaching in that it involves an external view of your own reality," he says. "And then ideally it orients around the goals that you set for when you want to advance."
- After-action reviews When he was a surgeon, Gawande and his colleagues would gather every Wednesday morning, review the complications and deaths that occurred the previous week, and discuss how to reduce and eliminate individual and system failures.
- Taking feedback A 360-degree survey of the people Gawande worked with revealed that he tended to interrupt as colleagues talked. To address this flaw, Gawande set up a candy jar to which he contributed \$10 each time he was called out for interrupting. His goal was to have an empty candy jar, but that was difficult because he's an energetic and enthusiastic leader and is impatient to follow up on what people are saying. But he's working on it and interrupts less and the candy jar rewards the whole team when he slips.
- Organizational culture "The culture of an organization is the worst behavior you tolerate," says Gawande. "We will have failures, we have risks we absolutely have to take, and we have to drum out the worst behaviors that set us behind and identify where we can attack them."

"Surgeon Atul Gawande Wants Everyone to Have a Coach" An Interview with Adam Grant in *Re:Thinking*, September 27, 2022; see Memo summaries of Gawande's articles on coaching (#405), teamwork (#596), and parallels between medical practice and K-12 schools (#671).

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2. Distinguishing Between Growth Mindset and Intellectual Risk-Taking

In this *Phi Delta Kappan* article, Shelby Clark (Harvard University) and Madora Soutter (Villanova University) report that more than three-quarters of U.S. teachers say they're familiar or very familiar with the concept of growth mindset. But many educators conflate it with other concepts and are unclear on how to promote students' belief that it's possible to grow their intelligence and abilities. Related to growth mindset, but separate from it, is intellectual risk-taking: when students, despite the risk of making a mistake or being judged by a peer or teacher, are willing to contribute ideas, questions, or creative thoughts.

Clark and Soutter observed 52 full-length classes in a secondary school that prided itself on egalitarian classroom discussions and fostering growth mindset and intellectual risk-taking. Their goal was to tease out the differences and overlaps between the two and understand what kinds of classroom environments foster these valuable attributes.

One distinction is that growth mindset is a *belief* about the malleability of intelligence, whereas intellectual risk-taking is engaging in *actions and behaviors* regardless of potential errors or judgment. A growth mindset is associated with a wide variety of positive academic outcomes, including curiosity, resilience, and improved achievement. Intellectual risk-taking – which can include speaking up in class, sharing ideas, asking questions, exploring viewpoints contrary to one's own, and attempting to learn something new – also has a positive track record, improving students' problem-solving skills, study habits, engagement, motivation, enjoyment of learning, and perseverance through difficulties.

It's clear that growth mindset and intellectual risk-taking operate in tandem, but what's the relationship? Does fostering a growth mindset help students take intellectual risks? Carol Dweck said that "people's ideas about risk and effort grow out of their most basic mindset." Or is it the other way around, with successfully taking risks in the classroom fostering a belief that one can get smarter? Clark and Soutter try to disentangle the two and suggest pedagogical practices for developing each.

- Fostering a growth mindset by normalizing confusion Teachers in the school they observed made a point of not avoiding disagreements and confusion. "Rather than seeking to hastily move past problems to come to a solution," say Clark and Soutter, "to squash disagreements in order to arrive at a compromise, or to create shame around confusion, teachers encouraged students to fully embrace and work through these crucial elements of learning." Teachers also gave students multiple opportunities to solve problems on their own.
- Fostering risk-taking through explicit instruction Students were coached and prodded on how to engage in productive dialogue, especially by posing good questions in class. "Question-asking is the safest way to enter a conversation," said one teacher. "It's the lowest risk." Teachers also had students observe a discussion and then say what they noticed and what surprised them for example, a class where students didn't need to raise their hands,

or a classroom culture where a student would let a classmate speak first.

• Creating a psychologically safe environment — Teachers worked on getting students to support one another and understand that mistakes are genuinely valued. "This is, of course, easier said than done," say Clark and Soutter. "The teachers approached this critical and complex task by employing specific strategies to build a sense of camaraderie and trust among students." One teacher said, "I begin every class with some sort of activity that requires them to physically stand up, change seats, and engage with somebody in the class. I do a lot of very brief exercises that have nothing to do with the text but everything to do with eye contact and conversation and expression of self, because these are for me the nonnegotiables." Teachers stayed in the background of class discussions as much as possible so students could build on one another's ideas.

What if a student hardly ever engages in discussions? Is it because they don't have a growth mindset, or are they unwilling to engage in intellectual risk-taking? Clark and Soutter believe it's important for teachers to know which, so you can respond appropriately. In a private conversation with the student, the teacher might ask how they think about learning and discover that the student doesn't understand the mind can grow and change; they've always been told that intelligence is innate. This student needs to be taught that confusion is a normal part of learning, not a sign that they'll never understand a concept.

Or the teacher might find that the student does have a growth mindset but is still reluctant to participate in class. Why? A conversation might reveal that they don't have the skills to engage, or need help formulating questions, or need a better understanding of the subject matter. "Or perhaps they are quieter than their classmates," say the authors, "and need their teacher to serve as a 'linebacker' by creating space for them in the conversation."

"Growth Mindset and Intellectual Risk-Taking: Disentangling Conflated Concepts" by Shelby Clark and Madora Soutter in *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 2022 (Vol. 104, #1, pp. 50-55); the authors can be reached at Shelby_clark@gse.harvard.edu and madora.soutter@villanova.edu.

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3. Should Calculus Be the Terminus for Advanced High-School Math?

In this *Education Week* article, Sarah Schwartz reports that while there's been advocacy for a greater emphasis on statistics and data analysis in the math curriculum, "one course still reigns supreme when it comes to college admissions: calculus." Recent surveys of high-school counselors found that 93 percent tell students that taking calculus gives them an edge applying to selective colleges, and almost three-quarters say that not taking the course will narrow their college options. When parents and educators hear this, they get nervous about changes in the high-school math curriculum that de-emphasize calculus.

Schwartz reports on five issues raised by the strong emphasis on calculus in high schools:

• *Equity* – The push for calculus is more pronounced for students vying for admission to elite colleges; however, the perception of calculus as a must-have course trickles down to all schools, influencing which students end up majoring in math. "The fact that calculus is seen as

a golden ticket to better schools is deeply inequitable," says Dave Kung (University of Texas). "If you look at U.S. high schools, only half of them even offer calculus" – and those numbers are even lower for high schools serving many students of color.

- Actual college requirements Very few universities require students to take calculus in high school; in fact, Harvard, Stanford, and other highly selective universities have recently stressed that calculus is not a requirement for admission. But high-school counselors continue to push students to take the course, believing it's still an unspoken, covert expectation and will help students get in.
- Premature acceleration High-school calculus is the tail that wags the secondary math curriculum. To be on track to take calculus before college, students need to take Algebra 1 in eighth grade, and then in high school march through geometry, Algebra 2, precalculus, and finally calculus. Critics of this sequence say it pushes some students to accelerate too early, undercutting the development of foundational skills in middle and elementary schools. It also blocks the development of an alternative high-school sequence that emphasizes real-world skills in statistics, data analysis, and quantitative reasoning.
- *Tracking* The traditional sequence also results in "higher" and "lower" math groups in middle and high schools; students who don't take Algebra 1 in middle school will probably not make it to calculus. "This tracking disproportionately disadvantages students of color and low-income students," says Schwartz.
- The intrinsic value of calculus While calculus is important for students who will take advanced STEM courses in college, many educators doubt that high-school calculus prepares students for college-level work that is less specialized. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) have both issued statements saying there should be other gateways from high school to college math. But when California floated an alternative sequence, with all students taking Algebra 1 in ninth grade, there was a lot of pushback, much of it from the parents of high-achieving students concerned that their children wouldn't get to take calculus and wouldn't get into prestigious universities.

"Why Elite College Admissions May Play An Outsized Role in K-12 Math Programs" by Sarah Schwartz in *Education Week*, September 21, 2022 (Vol. 42, #6, pp. 8-9); see Memo #897 for an article on the degree to which advanced math course content is used in real-world occupations.

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4. Debunking Three Common Myths About Adolescent Sleep

In this *Harvard Gazette* article, the Brigham and Women's Communications Team reports that as a result of misinformation on social media and the Internet, many parents and caregivers have these misconceptions about their teens' sleep habits:

• Myth #1: Going to bed later and sleeping in on weekends is not a problem (74 percent of parents and caregivers in a recent study believed this to be true). In fact, varying sleep schedules on weekends (known as *social jetlag*) can have a negative impact on sleep, doesn't

make up for a during-the-week deficit, and has been linked to lower academic performance, risky behaviors, and increased mental health symptoms.

- Myth #2: If school starts later, adolescents will stay up later (69 percent agree with this). In fact, when middle and high schools start later, teens get significantly more sleep, with minimal impact on when they go to bed.
- Myth #3: Melatonin is natural and therefore safe for adolescents to take for sleep problems (two-thirds believe this). "While melatonin has become a common supplement for adults and adolescents," say the authors, "longer-term studies on its use are lacking, particularly when it comes to melatonin's effects on puberty and development." For this reason, and because the quality of these supplements varies greatly, it's wise for teens to have a medical consultation before taking melatonin.

"Parents Are So Wrong About Teenage Sleep and Health" by Brigham and Women's Communications in *Harvard Gazette*, September 28, 2022

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5. Professional Judgment Versus "Fidelity"

(Originally titled "High-Quality Teaching > High-Fidelity Teaching")

Too much emphasis on fidelity implementing programs "diminishes teachers," says coaching expert Jim Knight (University of Kansas) in this *Educational Leadership* article. "Telling teachers exactly how they are supposed to teach leaves little room for them to share their own ideas, knowledge, and expertise. At worst, too much focus on fidelity can lead teachers to feel like they're working on an assembly line putting widgets together rather than engaging in the complex, important art of inspiring and educating tomorrow's leaders." As an antidote, Knight suggests:

- Listen to teachers. As they implement a program, ask teachers to reflect deeply on how they teach and set learning goals for their students. An instructional coach might ask: "What are your students not doing now that you want them to do?" or "When you implement this strategy, what should be different for your students?"
- Encourage teachers to customize programs to their students. "Complex tasks like teaching require adaptive responses," says Knight. "Adapting practices is often fairer to students and teachers because we all have diverse needs."
- Focus on student learning. "The standard for excellence in teaching should always be student growth," says Knight, "... not teachers hitting the boxes on a checklist." Goals should be student-focused, not strategy-focused.

"High-Quality Teaching > High-Fidelity Teaching" by Jim Knight in Educational Leadership, October 2022 (Vol. 80, #2, pp. 76-77); Knight can be reached at jimknight@mac.com.

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6. Working Smarter and Working Less in Three Key Areas of Teaching (Originally titled "Grasping for Less")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, instructional coach/author/consultant Chase Mielke says K-12 educators have "excessive workloads," often producing stress, exhaustion, and burnout. When school leaders micromanage, dictate a scripted curriculum, and demand more, he says, things get worse: lower morale, higher turnover, and mediocre teaching and learning.

Mielke cites a major 2020 study in the U.K. that explored 112 workload-reducing strategies. Researchers identified specific ways to increase teachers' agency in three burdensome and over-managed areas: lesson planning, grading and feedback to students, and data monitoring. Teachers experimented with:

- Simplified lesson plan templates;
- Having students grade their own work during class time, or using peer grading and whole-class verbal feedback;
- Reducing the frequency of benchmark tests, with more emphasis on in-the-moment assessment of learning.

These and other changes had a dramatic impact, significantly reducing the average teacher's after-school workload, decreasing feelings of workaholism, and boosting teachers' reported well-being, self-efficacy, optimism, enthusiasm, and love of teaching. The changes had a positive or neutral effect on student performance.

"That's right," says Mielke: "At worst, empowering educators to decrease their workload had zero effect on student achievement. At best, students actually improved their performance as they experienced efficiencies like more-specific, immediate feedback; more time learning and practicing content as opposed to weekly testing; and less-stressed and overworked teachers."

"Grasping for Less" by Chase Mielke in *Educational Leadership*, October 2022 (Vol. 80, #2, pp. 76-77); Mielke can be reached at chase.affectiveliving@gmail.com.

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7. An Arizona Elementary School Tries a Team-Based Model

In this *Phi Delta Kappan* article, Brent Maddin (Arizona State University) and Randy Mahlerwein (Mesa Public Schools) say the traditional staffing model used by most schools asks one teacher to be all things to one group of students at all times. Even with grade-level teams and PLCs, say Maddin and Mahlerwein, "the day-to-day work of being a classroom educator is incredibly isolating." And the professional requirements of the job remain basically the same from the first day to the 3,000th day.

In addition, being a classroom teacher with this model is inflexible – for many, unsustainable – when it comes to pursuing professional development outside of school, attending to family needs, and dealing with personal illness. "The one-classroom model of staffing schools creates 3.5 million points of possible failure each day," say the authors, "one point for every educator who may not show up to work." The design flaws of the system have been even more visible during the pandemic.

To address these challenges, one elementary school in Mesa, Arizona experimented with a different staffing model. Supported by the district and researchers from Arizona State University, the school's third-grade teachers worked as a team with all its students. Rather than having four teachers each working with 25 students, the team took collective responsibility for 100 students with these roles:

- A lead teacher;
- Three other certified teachers;
- One student teacher.

The team had four interconnected classrooms, with specific purposes:

- A gathering space for all 100 students;
- A reading hub;
- A math hub;
- A writing hub;
- An inquiry-based room for science and social studies.

The classroom spaces were flexible and served different purposes as each day's schedule unfolded. See here for details.

This plan opened up the following as the five educators collaborated through the 2021-22 school year:

- A lead teacher This veteran educator (who receives an extra stipend) continues to teach and is also responsible for calling on the expertise of team members, adjusting the schedule, and coaching colleagues.
- Protected team planning time There's a daily planning block and two hours during the school's weekly early-dismissal time, which the principal protected from interruptions.
- Distributed expertise and task shifting Members of the team divided up various tasks: unit and lesson planning for math, ELA, science, and social studies; communicating with families; and implementing a restorative justice program.
- A flexible schedule Team members could modify the day to meet students' needs and adjust if a team member was absent.
- Supporting novice teachers Teacher candidates and first-year teachers were part of grade-level teams and benefited from direct teaching experience and support from more-experienced colleagues.

The school expanded the model to other grade levels, and teams were supplemented by specials teachers (music, art, and physical education), special educators, paraprofessionals, a reading interventionist, and community educators.

A survey of teachers implementing this model at the elementary school showed deep appreciation for the flexibility, collegial support, and possibilities for project-based learning and other innovations. "Teachers were happier and more motivated," report Maddin and Mahlerwein, "and welcomed visitors interested in learning about what they had designed." At last report, the idea of team scheduling was spreading to more than 30 of the schools in the Mesa district.

<u>"Empowering Educators Through Team-Based Staffing Models"</u> by Brent Maddin and Randy Mahlerwein in *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 2022 (Vol. 104, #1, pp. 33-37); the authors can be reached at bmaddin@asu.edu and rmahlerwein@mpsaz.org.

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8. Stretching Students' Reading Proficiency with Partner Reading at Home

In this article in *The Reading Teacher*, Kindel Turner Nash, Joshua Michael, Jennifer Mata-McMahon, Jiyoon Lee, and Kris'tina Ackerman (University of Maryland/Baltimore County) report on their study of R2I+ (Read Two Impress Plus), a strategy to get adult family members of 7-12-year-old students helping to improve children's reading proficiency. Designed for students who are reading significantly below level, here's how it works:

- A culturally and linguistically relevant text is chosen that is above the student's current reading level at the outer levels of the student's zone of proximal development.
- The family member (usually a parent) sits on the student's dominant side and, tracking the text with a finger, reads expressively and slightly faster than the child.
- The child reads slightly behind the adult, echoing their words.
- After finishing echo-reading the text, the child re-reads each page independently.
- The family member asks comprehension questions about what's been read.

First developed in 1966, R2I+ has been modified several times and accumulated a positive track record.

The researchers studied the strategy as it was launched in two elementary schools. Family members worked with children in two-hour family literacy engagement nights at the schools, "affirming community space and providing family members with technical skills needed to implement the routine" (stipends and child care were provided). The time opened with a meal and gathering, then an hour-long training session (just adults), and a 30-minute family-child R2I+ practice session.

Adults practiced the four steps in the routine. Afterward, families took home the two books they'd worked with, along with a folder, a reading log, and instructions to practice the routine at least 40 minutes a week, noting the books read and time spent reading (10-15 minutes was the recommended time).

What did the researchers find? Students significantly improved their reading proficiency and family members "felt like experts or partners, empowered with a useful tool that fostered bonding time, rich discussions about language, and reading at home."

"When families in urban schools," conclude the authors, "are invited into spaces that receive and honor their local, cultural, linguistic, and community knowledge and position them as experts, they can become partners with schools, singing the same song."

"Singing the Same Song: Engaging Families in Read Two Impress Plus" by Kindel Turner Nash, Joshua Michael, Jennifer Mata-McMahon, Jiyoon Lee, and Kris'tina Ackerman in *The Reading Teacher*, July/August 2022 (Vol. 76, #1, pp. 34-41); the authors can be reached at nashkt@appstate.edu, joshmichael@umbc.edu, jmatamcm@umbc.edu, jiyoon@umbc.edu, and kackerman@curemelanoma.org.

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9. What Happens When Urban Graduates End Up Teaching Back Home?

In this *American Educational Research Journal* article, Christopher Redding (University of Florida) reports on his study of "homegrown" teachers in urban districts – those who graduated from a city high school and went on to teach in that district's schools. Redding's three findings: these teachers were more representative of the student body than other district teachers; they were slightly more effective at improving students' test scores; and homegrown teachers were less likely to move to teaching positions in other districts.

"Are Homegrown Teachers Who Graduate from Urban Districts More Racially Diverse, More Effective, and Less Likely to Exit Teaching?" by Christopher Redding in *American Educational Research Journal*, October 2022 (Vol. 59, #5, pp. 939-974); Redding can be reached at c.redding@coe.ufl.edu.

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10. Twenty-Five Contemporary Books for Adolescents

In this *Edutopia* article, Paige Tutt shares a crowdsourced list of contemporary books that people wish they had read in high school. This replaces a list similarly generated in 2016 that included *Of Mice and Men, The Catcher in the Rye,* and *The Great Gatsby*. The new list was limited to books published in the last decade. Here they are (click the link below for a short synopsis of each):

- The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas
- Educated: A Memoir by Tara Westover
- Dear Martin by Nic Stone
- The Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo
- Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds
- Refugee by Alan Gratz
- Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi
- Firekeeper's Daughter by Angeline Boulley
- All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr
- Beartown by Fredrik Backman
- I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter by Erika Sánchez
- Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson
- Patron Saints of Nothing by Randy Ribay
- The Invention of Wings by Sue Monk Kidd
- The Midnight Library by Matt Haig
- The Nickel Boys by Colson Whitehead
- The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row by Anthony Ray Hinton
- The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris
- Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood by Trevor Noah

- I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban by Malala Yousafzai
- The Marrow Thieves by Cherie Dimaline
- Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Sáenz
- Sing, Unburied, Sing: A Novel by Jesmyn Ward
- The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime That Changed Their Lives by Dashka Slater
- The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human-Centered Planet by John Green

"25 Essential High-School Reads from the Last Decade" by Paige Tutt in Edutopia, September 9, 2022

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About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly publication keeps principals, teachers, instructional coaches, superintendents, and other educators well-informed on current K-12 research and ideas. Kim Marshall, drawing on 53 years as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, writer, and consultant, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 60 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through more than 150 articles each week, and selects 8-10 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 elinks to full articles when available, and e-mails the Memo to subscribers every Tuesday (with occasional breaks; there are 50 issues a year). Every week there's also a podcast and HTML version.

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Core list of publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

All Things PLC

American Educational Research Journal

American Educator

American Journal of Education

American School Board Journal

AMLE Magazine

ASCA School Counselor

ASCD Express

Cult of Pedagogy

District Management Journal

Ed. Magazine

Education Digest

Education Gadfly

Education Next

Education Week

Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis

Educational Horizons

Educational Leadership

Educational Researcher

Edutopia

Elementary School Journal

English Journal

Exceptional Children

Harvard Business Review

Harvard Educational Review

Independent School

Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy

Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR)

Kappa Delta Pi Record

Knowledge Quest

Language Arts

Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance)

Literacy Today (formerly Reading Today)

Mathematics Teacher: Learning & Teaching PK-12

Middle School Journal

Peabody Journal of Education

Phi Delta Kappan

Principal

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Psychology Today

Reading Research Quarterly

Rethinking Schools

Review of Educational Research

School Administrator

School Library Journal

Social Education

Social Studies and the Young Learner

Teachers College Record

Teaching Exceptional Children

The Atlantic

The Chronicle of Higher Education

The Journal of the Learning Sciences

The Language Educator

The Learning Professional (formerly Journal of Staff Development)

The New York Times

The New Yorker

The Reading Teacher

Theory Into Practice

<u>Time</u>

Urban Education