

PETER HERZBERG
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Albuquerque, NM

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Study, University of Toronto, Canada

BRUCE SHAW
Principal, Bruce A. Shaw Consulting, LLC
Essex, MA

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San Francisco, CA

ADELE TONGE
Communications Manager, Klingenstein Center,
New York, NY

STEPHEN J. VALENTINE
Coordinating Editor, Assistant Head, Upper
School, Montclair Kimberley Academy, Montclair,
NJ

Dear Reader: The editors of Klingbrief would like to begin this edition by thanking our contributors and readers for a wonderful year. Thanks to you, the publication continues to widen its reach in schools around the globe. We look forward to kicking off our fifth anniversary year with our September issue. Until then, have a great summer, read a lot, and please share your discoveries with us during the upcoming school year.

OF NOTE

MOOCs and U: The Good, the Bad, and the Open

Laptop U: Has the Future of College Moved Online? by Nathan Heller

In a beautifully crafted essay about Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), particularly at some top tier colleges, author Nathan Heller explores both the efficacy and practicality of this burgeoning education delivery system. Looking back, he sketches a slight MOOC genealogy, including correspondence courses, educational radio, and the failed Western Governors University; looking forward, he predicts the potential problems with the format, including intellectual property issues, excessive centralization of higher education, and the peeling off of the college workforce. The balance and nuance of his analysis leads naturally to questions useful to our own institutions as they explore online learning. For example: Can we assess writing with a computer program? How do we know that students are learning what we want them to learn? And what is the educational price of giving up the high touch world of a small seminar classroom experience for the online experience? Heller offers no clear answers to these complex questions, but embedded in his prose is an affinity for the interpersonal experiences he had with his teachers as a core part of learning. Whether you have embraced or avoided the increasingly ubiquitous topic of MOOCs, this article will help you begin to unpack its myriad complexities.

Eric Temple, Lick-Wilmerding High School
San Francisco, CA

The New Yorker, 2013

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ARTICLES, BLOGS, AND OTHER MEDIA



Summer Reading Assignment

A Positively Final Appearance: And an exhortation to read, read, read, by Michael Dirda

A short read with a long reach, this essay lightly but firmly nudges us to build some new habits when making our piles of books to savor in summer. Not a particular fan of bestseller lists, Michael Dirda makes no recommendations of titles and no promises of instruction or predictable enlightenment. Instead, Dirda, a Pulitzer Prize winning book critic at *The Washington Post* and for the past year a regular *American Scholar* blog columnist on the pleasures of a bookish life, encourages three enticing, even bracing, approaches to reading. While he unapologetically advocates for reading that is rewarding, exciting, and a complete pleasure, he also channels Kafka by urging us to try the unexpected, the upsetting, or the neglected book. And finally, he promotes the ownership of actual, physical books since they become a "reflection of who you are and who you want to be." A genuine reading advocate, Dirda knows readers will find joy not only in books they have always wanted to read, but also in the outlier on the bookshelf that catches their fancy. "Go on", he says, "Be bold, be insatiable, be restlessly, unashamedly promiscuous." Those are good words to read by this summer.

Elizabeth Morley, Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School,
University of Toronto, Canada

The American Scholar Blog, Winter 2013



Clarifying the Noncognitive

Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance, Camille A. Farrington, Melissa Roderick, Elaine Allensworth, Jenny Nagaoka, Tasha Seneca Keyes, David W. Johnson, and Nicole O. Beechum

This University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research report meticulously and comprehensively reviews the research on the role noncognitive factors play in school performance for middle and high school students. Teachers eager to make sense of growth mindsets, grit, and stereotype threat (to name but a few ideas floating in the current educational landscape) will find this report immensely useful. The authors hone in on academic behaviors, academic perseverance, academic mindsets, learning strategies, and social skills, and they then offer real clarity about what is known (and what is not) about how these factors interact to affect student learning and performance. Since the measure of student performance, grades, is a much clearer predictor of success in subsequent educational settings, getting a handle on which of these positive, noncognitive factors are malleable, and whether classroom routines and teacher behaviors have an impact on them, is crucial for any educator. The report is easily and usefully broken up into chapters, which could provide interesting fodder for a leadership team to consider ways to improve their students' experience of, and success in, school.

Stephanie Lipkowitz, Albuquerque Academy, NM

Consortium on Chicago School Research, April 4, 2013



Parenting in the Digital Age: Legitimate Anxiety or Shortsighted Worry?

The Touch Screen Generation, by Hanna Rosin

A mother of three, essayist Hanna Rosin sets out on a personal and professional quest to learn more about how to navigate the increasingly sophisticated technological landscape that our children inhabit as natives. Practically speaking, she hopes to ascertain what experts deem the "domestic ground rules for screen time." Using the strict guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics as a contrast, Rosin seeks out people who she hopes will articulate the assets of technologies that more negatively biased experts cannot address. Despite consultations with numerous researchers from well-known universities (e.g., Georgetown, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Vanderbilt), Rosin unsurprisingly does not alight on a magic answer. She describes the "alarming transformation" of American childhood that has left well-meaning parents wary and anxious and is causing a kind of neurosis borne of the conflict between our prejudice about technology and our recognition that our kids are fully immersed in it. This precise juncture provides an opportunity for our schools. We can sit quietly by, or we can seek to provide leadership in the form of intentional parent education. By pursuing the latter option, we will not only be able to calm fears, but also stimulate thinking about the incredible potential such technology brings to education.

Katie Bergin, Marymount School of New York, NY

The Atlantic Magazine, April 2013



Racial Isolation in Independent Schools

Admitted, but Left Out, by Jenny Anderson

Like their university counterparts, independent schools have made efforts to bolster their enrollments of students of color, raising significantly this demographic in NAIS schools. Negative racial attitudes persist, however, when whites complain about seats lost to them in some highly selective schools, and enrolled students of color find themselves isolated both at school and in their neighborhoods. A New York Times exposé entitled "Admitted, but Left Out," reveals the continuing problem of securing social acceptance at some independent schools. A portion of the article focuses on documentary filmmakers who have created videos about the difficult experiences of students of color at schools like Calhoun, Dalton, Trinity and Germantown Friends. These filmmakers are trying to move conversations below a placid, but specious, surface to offer insight into how our schools continue to struggle to meet all students' needs and to chronicle the complex, often alienated lives too many students of color lead. As for the article, it is a forceful reminder that many students in our schools still feel like guests who can "stay and look" but who "don't belong."

Bruce Shaw, Bruce A Shaw Consulting, MA

New York Times, October 19, 2012



Why Private Schools are Dying Out

by Chester Finn

How do we convince our Faculties and Boards that the context surrounding independent education is changing so rapidly that the whole notion of not-for-profit private schools may be in jeopardy? That may be the take home question generated by this article, which documents the myriad and familiar trends undermining the reach of private education. It would be easy to dismiss Finn, former Assistant Secretary of Education and conservative educational policy wonk, but his analysis documents a bipartisan issue. Some of the competitive realities he notes are familiar (the rise of charter schools, unsustainable tuitions, the explosion of customized, online education) and some are not yet fully on our radar (urban housing costs, the increasing convergence of public funding, and private enterprise). And the most elite schools, Finn claims, are in no danger - yet. In these schools, cost-benefit analysis and affluent, status-seeking families still fill seats easily; drop down a tier or two, though, and problems become more widespread, even though private schools work hard to promote a rosier picture. If anything, articles like Finn's remind us all, even those of us nestled confidently in the corner offices of tier 1 schools, that the water is rising and that it would be wise to rethink, with less lip service, the architecture of what and how we deliver.

Peter Herzberg, The Brearley School
Colin Smith, Change for Kids

The Atlantic Monthly, May, 2013



If You've Ever Told Students to Underline or Highlight Their Texts...

Improving Students' Learning With Effective Learning Techniques: Promising Directions From Cognitive and Educational Psychology, John Dunlosky, Katherine A. Rawson, Elizabeth J. Marsh, Mitchell J. Nathan, and Daniel T. Willingham

In efforts to improve student learning, teachers may suggest highlighting or underlining, but according to this well researched article, there are more effective strategies to consider. The authors describe and evaluate ten study techniques, selected because they are relatively low cost, easy to use and could be adopted by students at various grade levels. While scholarly and thorough, the report is accessible and useful for practitioners. What the authors call "elaborative interrogation," for example, is unfamiliar only because of its label. In practice, it is the act of asking students to generate an explanation for why a concept is true, a strategy many teachers have undoubtedly shared with their students. Each technique is evaluated by considering learning conditions (studying alone vs. studying in a group), student qualities (age or ability), materials (scientific concepts, historical facts, mathematical problems), and the tasks on which learning is measured. The article would provide excellent material for department or faculty meetings where small groups of teachers could consider applications for the students and subjects they teach, and eventually report on their use. Additionally, it is a useful reminder that even our most natural moves in the classroom have a research base that may or may not support their use.

Pearl Rock Kane, Klingenstein Center, NY

Psychological Science in the Public Interest, January 2013 vol. 14 no. 14-58

BOOKS



Teaching Strategies That Rely on Cognitive Research

Understanding How Young Children Learn: Bringing the Science of Child Development to the Classroom, by Wendy Ostroff

This book contributes to a growing body of educational literature that grounds classroom strategies in an understanding of the cognitive functioning of young learners. Prominent cognitive psychologist Wendy Ostroff outlines relevant research on the dominant functions that contribute to learning, such as motivation, attention and memory. She argues convincingly that educational settings are optimized when they take advantage of the natural inner workings of young minds. The advice is pertinent and precise. In an informative chapter on attention, for example, Ostroff shares the finding that the attention level of most children will decline if an adult persistently redirects their focus. She suggests employing the "learning stations" model often associated with pre-school and kindergarten: set up stations related to a central topic and allow children control over their attention spans. If they want to move or stay put, they should be able to do so at their own pace. By combining cognitive research with corresponding examples of classroom strategies, Ostroff crafts a practical and trustworthy guide that will resonate with primary grade educators.

Rebekah Sollitto
Ed.M Candidate, The Klingenstein Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, NY

Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2012



Dignity in Retrospect

The Letter Q: Queer Writers' Notes to Their Younger Selves, edited by Sarah Moon

Sarah Moon's collection aims to ensure that our queer students' dancing years are just that, ones used for laughing, living, and loving instead of being bullied and harassed. Bringing together an impressive cadre, from writers of color to transgender authors, Moon curates a collection that affirms the complexity and beauty of gay youth and love. Gay literary luminaries such as Michael Cunningham, David Levithan, Terrence McNally, and Paul Rudnick contribute, but Moon does not highlight any of her authors in particular; instead, each letter stands alone as an epistolary shot to the heart. In addition, authors such as LaShonda Katrice Barnett, Jewelle Gomez, Jasika Nicole, Rakesh Satyal, Tony Valenzuela, Linda Villarsa, Jacqueline Woodson, and others share their stories of growing up gay and brown. A survivor of bullying in middle and high school, Moon has published a book that we can add not only to our school libraries and curricula, but also to our growing list of favorite texts that remind us of both the fragility and sadness, both the humor and creativity, of our gay students and friends. (This brief is excerpted from a longer interview at [feministteacher.com](#), by Ileana Jimenez.)

Ileana Jiménez, Little Red School House & Elisabeth Irwin High School (LREI), NY

Arthur A. Levine, an imprint of Scholastic, 2012

To submit comments or suggestions, or to request that the newsletter be sent to a colleague, contact Adele Tonge, Communications Manager at klingbrief@tc.columbia.edu.

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The Klingenstein Center
for Independent School Leadership
Teachers College, Columbia University
Box 125
525 West 120th Street
New York, New York 10027
212-678-3156
<http://www.klingenstein.org/>

