



Educator Update – December 17, 2020

Keeping Huron County Educators Informed

This Educator Update includes just ONE article, but it's a great one!

1. The Year's Most Important Education Research Findings — From Marshall Memo 866

In this *Edutopia* article, Youki Terada and Stephen Miller identify what they believe are the ten most significant education studies of 2020 (see the full article below for links to the studies):

- Technology and ease of access to content are key to successful remote learning. Students must have a good Internet connection, a workable device, a single, dedicated hub for curriculum content and assignments, and clear communication from teachers via e-mail or text. It's also helpful to reduce visual clutter, hard-to-read fonts, and unnecessary decorations in virtual spaces. Students should be regularly asked questions like, *Have you encountered any technical issues?* and *Can you easily locate your assignments?*
- When students generate questions about the content they're studying, they are more engaged, think more deeply, and have better retention. Asking questions is significantly more effective than conventional study strategies like re-reading, highlighting, and underlining key sentences.
- Vocabulary "sticks" when students act words out. When students are learning new vocabulary, retention doubles when they use their hands and bodies to dramatize the words. Drawing or looking at pictures is also helpful.
- Once students master decoding, they will become better readers if they spend more time learning about the world – especially social studies (history, geography, civics, and law). Focusing on reading skills (like finding the main idea) is not a good use of students' time.
- Writing by hand (or drawing) produces deeper learning than typing or tracing words. However, keyboarding is a useful skill, especially for students with dyslexia.
- The Lucy Calkins *Units of Study* literacy program is insufficiently explicit and systematic in teaching young readers how to decode and encode written words. Calkins is reported to have conceded the point and is working on "rebalancing" the program.

- Clear standards and a scoring rubric mitigate implicit biases that teachers may have. Vague, holistic grading criteria, on the other hand, allow biases to work against students of color. [See Marshall Memo 850 for a summary of this study.]

- High-school grades are better predictors of college success than ACT and SAT scores, and spending time prepping for those tests does not guarantee doing well in college. One study found that students with very high ACT scores, but indifferent high-school grades, often flamed out in college. Why? Researchers believe it's because grades are a better indicator of key skills like perseverance, time management, and the ability to deal with distractions.

- When learning to code, mathematical prowess is less important than language skills. This suggests that passing advanced math tests should not be a criterion for admission to programming classes.

- Pollution is linked to students' school attendance and asthma problems. When three coal-fired plants near Chicago were shuttered, student absences went down, as did emergency room visits for asthma-related crises. About 2.3 million public school children live close to coal-fired plants, and many of these students are economically disadvantaged.

[“The 10 Most Significant Education Studies of 2020”](#) by Youki Terada and Stephen Merrill in *Edutopia*, December 4, 2020

Feedback about the Educator Update is welcome! Email curriekm@huronisd.org with comments or suggestions.