

Marshall Memo 764

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
December 3, 2018

7. The Effect of Year-to-Year Classmate Continuity on Student Attendance

In this *Elementary School Journal* article, Jacob Kirksey and Michael Gottfried (University of California, Santa Barbara) report on their study on whether elementary students who have more classmates from the preceding year might have better school attendance. Kirksey and Gottfried looked at three years of data from 13 public elementary schools in a small, diverse, urban district and compared the percent of classmates who carried over from the previous year to the number of unexcused student absences and the level of chronic absenteeism (missing 10 percent or more of school days for any reason). The percent of familiar faces varied from zero (for students who transferred in from another school and those who were promoted and placed in a different classroom than previous classmates) to 100 percent (for situations where an entire class moved up together).

The results? Having more of the same classmates from the previous year was correlated with slightly fewer unexcused absences. On chronic absenteeism, the correlation was much stronger: students with more familiar faces from the previous year had much lower odds of being chronically absent – as much as 62 percentage points lower and on average 18 points lower.

“Familiar faces may serve as a reference for children attending school from one year to the next,” conclude Kirksey and Gottfried. “Such consistency may influence positive attendance behaviors in elementary children, as these children begin to value peers and assign a higher value to schooling. Additionally, familiar faces may act as an added layer of peer networks that serve as a buffer for other changing aspects to the learning context for young children. Within this base of familiarity, children could experience stronger connections to school amid changing grades and changing teachers.” The implications are clear: schools and districts should maximize year-to-year continuity of student groups as one of a number of ways to improve student attendance.

“Familiar Faces: Can Having Similar Classmates from Last Year Link to Better School Attendance This Year?” by Jacob Kirksey and Michael Gottfried in *Elementary School Journal*, December 2018 (Vol. 119, #2, p. 223-243), <https://bit.ly/2Q1IWxH>; the authors can be reached at mgottfried@education.ucsb.edu and jjkirksey@ucsb.edu.

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About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and other educators 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, 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 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). Every week there's a podcast and HTML version as well.

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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
District Management Journal
Ed. Magazine
Education Digest
Education Next
Education Update
Education Week
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Educational Horizons
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
English Journal
Essential Teacher
Exceptional Children
Go Teach
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
Literacy Today (formerly Reading Today)
Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School
Middle School Journal
Peabody Journal of Education
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Reading Research Quarterly
Responsive Classroom Newsletter
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
School Administrator
School Library Journal
Social Education
Social Studies and the Young Learner
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 Learning Professional (formerly Journal of Staff Development)
The New York Times
The New Yorker
The Reading Teacher
Theory Into Practice
Time Magazine