

Dear Readers and Contributors,

The editors of *Klingbrief* are signing off until September. We thank you for your interest in our continuing venture - one we started in February of 2009 - and look forward to continuing to distill relevant and timely ideas for the independent school community after a restful summer. This past school year, by the numbers, we have published eight new volumes, offering synopses of over seventy articles, books, and videos. Our subscription list has topped four thousand educators, and we have attracted over three hundred followers to our new twitter account (@klingbriefer). We hope you will consider submitting to *Klingbrief*, again or for the first time, in September.

Please send feedback, queries, or submissions to klingbrief@tc.columbia.edu, and have a wonderful summer.

Warmly,

The *Klingbrief* Editorial Staff

OF NOTE

[A Sense of the Complicated](#)

It's Complicated: the Social Lives of Networked Teens, by Danah Boyd

Danah Boyd describes her new book as an attempt to convince adults that, even though it's complicated, what teens are doing online makes sense. With chapters organized around hot topics related to teens in the digital age (e.g., identity, privacy, and bullying), Boyd's book is a counterweight to Catherine Steiner-Adair's *The Big Disconnect*. In her curious, positive, generally pro-technology, and definitely pro-teenager book, Boyd offers a "descriptive portrait" of "contemporary American youth as they try to find themselves in a networked world." In accessible, smart prose, mixing anecdotes and formal research, Boyd provides an overview of the last decade online for teens. Writing for a broad audience, Boyd toggles between what's new and not new, what's gained and lost, and how we can embrace evolving social media and diminish abuses. While challenging the "utopian or dystopian rhetoric," and thus our instinct to polarize the conversation, Boyd understands that what is normal for teens can be disconcerting for adults. Connecting current modes of communication to traditional ones and helping us make sense of the trends, Boyd explores how being "geographically unbounded" transforms the teenaged social world - a world just a few keystrokes away from our increasingly connected classrooms.

Meghan Tally, American School in London, England

Yale University Press, 2014

Klingbrief is a free, monthly publication of recommended articles, books, research reports and media selected by and for independent school educators. The Klingenstein Center for Independent School Leadership provides graduate programs and professional development for independent school educators throughout their careers. For information about submitting to *Klingbrief*, please click [here](#).

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ARTICLES, BLOGS, AND OTHER MEDIA



[Between Reading the Lines](#)

"Children, Teens, and Reading: A Commonsense Media Research Brief"

In their most recent research brief, *Children, Teens, and Reading*, Commonsense Media reviews the research literature on reading habits and rates in children and adolescents, and their key findings are quite startling. Daily reading rates, as well as reading for pleasure, have dropped dramatically since 1984. Though the drops are less pronounced for very young children, the statistics for middle and high school students should catch the attention of parents and educators. The report also looks at the significant reading achievement gap that still exists among racial groupings, as well as the differences in reading habits between boys and girls. Though the authors review potential contributing factors to the steady decline in reading, they do not rush to judgment about the influences of electronic media since more research needs to be done in this area. The strongest factor that seems to influence reading rates has to do with parental modeling. Unsurprisingly, children in families where reading is a priority for parents evince much higher reading rates. The consequences of these changes in reading habits have enormous implications for student outcomes in all kinds of academic areas. This report, in combination with Commonsense Media's report on the use of digital devices among children ages zero to eight (reviewed in the January 2014 volume of *Klingbrief*), is essential reading for educators as we seek to target our curriculum, determine reasonable expectations for students, and devise appropriate assessments to measure student growth.

Stephanie Lipkowitz, Albuquerque Academy, NM

Common Sense Media, May 12, 2014



[Next Steps in the Grit Wars](#)

Fostering and Measuring Skills: Interventions that Improve Character and Cognition, by James Heckman and Tim Kautz

The role of grit, conscientiousness, and other non-cognitive skills in determining future success for our students has been a trending topic in the independent school world. James Heckman, known for his research on the value of quality teaching in early education, and University of Chicago Senior Research Assistant and Ph.D student Tim Kautz, aim to measure the effectiveness of programs that try to instill these character skills. Their key conclusions are that programs targeting early childhood interventions and ones modeled on the mentoring environment of successful families are the most effective. The authors also assert that programs built on attachment to teachers and mentors give children a safe base for exploration and learning. For adolescents, meanwhile, programs that break down the traditional separation between work and school generate the most lasting effects on character skills. Programs that are patterned after apprenticeships or include mentoring components also have success based on their replication of elements of the parent-child attachment bond. As we develop a better understanding of the importance of non-cognitive skills, the next frontier in research is to explore the creative ways that we can best enhance those skills in our students.

Michael Arjona, The Walker School, GA

National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series, November, 2013



[Walking in Their Digital Footprints](#)

How I Talk to My High-School Students About the Internet, by David Cutler

Have you ever asked students to Google themselves and then helped them examine their digital footprints? David Cutler has, and in this online *Atlantic* posting he provides a quick overview of his approach to teaching Internet use and cyber safety. Some of his work involves lesson designs that provoke thoughtful questions in students: "Do I treat others online with the same respect I would accord them in person?" And, "Does my behavior accurately reflect who I am away from the computer?" Cutler, a journalism and history teacher at Palmer Trinity School, is also the founder and executive editor of the Spin Education blog. He advocates for teachers to become more familiar with social media tools in order to model their effective use. He practices what he preaches seamlessly in his work as both an educator and a content creator, highlighting that as a blended role, such as his, allows teachers a unique perspective on how to use social media as a proactive tool for connecting people. He also explores the common, at times contentious, practice of filtering Internet access in school and wonders whether this is realistic training for what students encounter outside of a school setting. Educators across the disciplines will glean useful insights from Cutler's accounts of brokering conversations about social media.

Christopher Lauricella, The Park School of Buffalo, NY

The Atlantic, 2013



[Dismantling Enchantment](#)

Young Minds in Critical Condition, by Michael S. Roth

In this thoughtful essay, Michael Roth, president of Wesleyan University, offers a nuanced admonition: in our commitment to teaching "critical thinking," we should not lose sight of the possibility that the ability to "debunk" can sometimes come at the expense of honing students' ability to find meaning. Dismantling the assertions of others can, perhaps, become a habit of inquiry that actively works against a student's ability to inhabit fully and empathetically the world of an author. Roth sees in his own classroom students who have excellent training in unmasking false assumptions, in problematizing assertions made by others, and in seeing the holes in arguments. Though students possessing these skills will be able to confront the world as active readers and avoid being duped or manipulated, they may also become cynical and start to define themselves as dismantlers rather than builders. Roth calls for classrooms where there is room also to become absorbed, enchanted, and persuaded by another person's formulation of truth or belief in the good. President Roth's admonition will resonate with secondary school teachers who provide the training ground that enables students to arrive at their college seminars armed with critical thinking tools; at the same time, in the intimacy of our independent school seminars, we too could do with a reminder that making and finding meaning is as important as unmasking false truths.

Stephanie Lipkowitz, Albuquerque Academy, NM

New York Times, May 10, 2014



[Saying No to Women and Minorities](#)

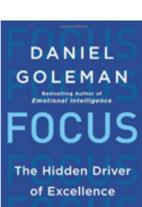
Evidence of Racial/Gender Biases Found in Faculty Mentoring, by Shankar Vedantam

When three researchers pretending to be students sent thousands of emails requesting meetings with professors in a variety of departments at top universities, they wondered if they would encounter bias in the responses. Individual professors didn't know their fictitious emailer; the writer simply wanted advice about obtaining a doctorate in the professor's field. The emails were identical and well written, except the researchers gave clear signals about both gender and ethnicity. Those with white, male-sounding names were far more successful in obtaining meetings, especially in private universities or in departments whose graduates went into lucrative professions. Just as dismaying, professors belonging to the same minority group were as likely to refuse a meeting with students of their own ethnicity, as were female professors when the writer was a woman. This NPR report draws on the scholarly work of Katherine Milkman, Modupe Akinola, and Dolly Chugh. These researchers note that the difficulty for minorities and women to gain entry to organizations or to advance in their careers is compounded by the even greater difficulty of navigating the pathway that gets one to the entry point itself. Those of us who work in academia, the first entry point for every individual's professional life, must take note.

Bruce Shaw, Bruce A Shaw Consulting, MA

Wbur.org, April 22, 2014

BOOKS



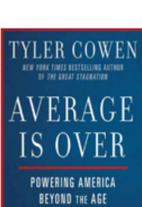
[The Anatomy of Attention](#)

Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence, by Daniel Goleman

Attention is difficult to maintain in today's faster paced society that values instant results, multi-tasking, and constant stimuli. Daniel Goleman, well known for his research on emotional intelligence, argues in his new book that we must attend to how we pay attention in order to thrive in environments rattled by constant interruption. Focus begins by explaining the anatomy of attention, which provides the foundation for understanding attention that is focused on the self, on others, and on the "big picture." After reading easily digestible explanations rooted in neuroscience and examples from medicine, education, business, sports and entertainment, we learn that self-awareness is the key to comprehending our own reactions, being empathetic, and finding patterns that will guide our decisions. Goleman acknowledges that leaders, like our leaders in independent schools, must focus simultaneously on details and the big picture. Such balance is not easily achieved alone. Therefore, good leaders will be mindful and foster mindfulness in others. More important perhaps, good leaders will create mindful organizations by looking to fill them with other attention-focused leaders.

Lisa Culbertson, Ed.M. Candidate
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HarperCollins, 2013



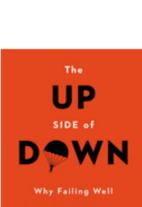
[Trouble with the Curve](#)

Average is Over: Powering America Beyond the Age of the Great Stagnation, by Tyler Cowen

Economist Tyler Cowen explores the implications of our changing global labor market: demand is increasing for low-skill, low-wage jobs and high-skill, high-wage jobs. The white collar, clerical jobs in the middle are disappearing. This trend is a common topic, but the difference in Dr. Cowen's book is that he goes a step further to predict implications for the nature of work, science, and education. He notes that man-machine collaborations are the way forward in many industries; the key, from an educational standpoint, is not for students to have a deep understanding of technology or a CS degree, but rather just enough IT skill to enhance the productivity of certain machines. Dr. Cowen also notes that online education will increase opportunities for highly motivated students who will be increasingly guided by computer programs and periodic human contact. The role of teachers will focus on instilling intellectual discipline and motivating students to learn. As Dr. Cowen observes, "it will become increasingly apparent how much of current education is driven by . . . the inability of most students to simply sit down and try to learn something new on their own." Much like Thomas Friedman's work in the previous decade, Tyler Cowen's insights bring clarity to the rapidly changing economy and provides insights into the impact those changes will have on educating students.

Michael Arjona, The Walker School, GA

Dutton, 2013



[Risk Rewards](#)

The Up Side of Down: Why Failing Well Is The Key to Success, by Megan McArdle

Now that our mistakes and failures can be broadcasted to the world in an instant, our willingness to take risks has been diminished. Megan McArdle argues that, in order to move our society forward, we must embrace our mistakes. Using examples from engineering, entertainment, medicine, economics, the car industry in the United States, the legal system, and entrepreneurship, McArdle explains the ways our mistakes can become catastrophes through loss aversion and normalcy bias. She also offers the viewpoint that our mistakes can be springboards to success when we employ methods to avoid confirmation bias and embrace forgiveness. The book offers details of McArdle's personal mistakes and failures, and throughout she offers some important take-aways for independent school leaders willing to stretch to meet them. Like it or not, our schools have been set up to reinforce that mistakes and failure are dangerous and intolerable, rather than simply a step in the process of innovation, iteration, and improvement. At a time when many schools are exploring how design thinking fits into their work, another look at what it takes to learn from mistakes and failure, and what both might contribute to an iterative approach to innovation, seems worthwhile, if not eminently valuable.

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Viking Penguin, 2014

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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