a short, interesting distraction that reinvigorates. One of my favorites for all these purposes is Annie Murphy Paul’s Brilliant Blog, http://anniemurphypaul.com/. The best of the blog is provided as a weekly newsletter—The Brilliant Report—which shows up in my Inbox bright and early every Monday morning. Monday always seems to bring a deluge of e-mail that must be waded into and deleted or dealt with, so I save the Brilliant Report for last. It’s the reward for my perseverance and almost always provides a thought-provoking start to a new week. Occasionally it also provides or leads to an “Ah-Ha moment.”

Annie Murphy Paul describes herself as an author, journalist, consultant and speaker “who helps people understand how we learn and how we can do it better.” Her blog is a smorgasbord of topics related to teaching and learning. Some are of general interest to those of us with an interest in cognitive neuroscience as it relates to learning. Others are more directly applicable to what we do on a daily basis as teachers (and sometimes as parents). The topics are extraordinarily diverse. Examples include the myth of student learning styles, student accountability (yes, STUDENT accountability), and the role of metacognition in learning. A few posts are clearly more applicable to K–12 teachers but, even then, I invariably find something directly relevant to teaching undergraduate and professional students. And I have had several of those Ah-Ha moments—the very ones we all seek for our students.

Ms. Paul does not shy away from controversial topics so there are posts that readers are sure to disagree with. However, you won’t be able to deny that you were stimulated to react and think further. And you’re likely to find that you’ve carried many of the posts forward into discussions with your local colleagues. The posts are almost always based on peer-reviewed studies, which are cited. I find we often share these locally as we dig deeper and contemplate how the studies might inform our own pedagogies. I’ve used several posts as the basis for the “Food for Thought” e-mails we send out sporadically in our college Teaching Academy. Without question, one of the joys of following the blog has been discovering educational scholars like Dan Willingham and then becoming immersed in their work. The blog has contributed mightily to my nighttime reading list.

The Brilliant Report can also help educators improve student learning. For me the posts on so-called learning styles and the concept of developing deep learners have been particularly useful. They led me deeper into the literature on practices that promote engagement and hence retention. It’s changed the way I structure my teaching and provided much needed tools when a struggling student comes for help. I feel much better prepared to troubleshoot his/her current practices, and provide evidence-based alternatives.

Each Brilliant Report ends with “This Week’s Brilliant Quote.” These are not the short quotes we are accustomed to, but typically entire paragraphs excerpted from

WEBSITES/ONLINE RESOURCES

A Weekly Spark for Progressive Educators: Annie Murphy Paul’s Brilliant Blog and Newsletter
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.v15i1.716


If you’re anything like me and my community of practice colleagues, you’re always looking for a fresh idea, a spark that leads to some new insight, or (some weeks) just

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books, research reports, or other Internet postings. Unlike the blog posts, I find these a bit dense and in general less helpful.

All in all, Annie Murphy Paul’s Brilliant Blog is a stimulating, effective, and evidence-based way to ride the front wave of educational thinking and cognitive neuroscience. The weekly Brilliant Report is also a quick and easy tool for cultivating a growth mindset when it comes to our jobs as educators.

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