



## ***ASQ Primary and Secondary Education Brief***

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Editor's Note: Mind Over Gray Matter

By Megan Schmidt, editor

Scientists say that the human brain hasn't changed for more than 100,000 years. Yet its exposure to information—especially screen-based communication—has increased exponentially.

Researchers at Nielsen NeuroFocus, an organization that studies consumer neuroscience, are analyzing brainwaves to understand how the mind is adapting in the information age. One key cranial function observed is more "filtering." The prefrontal cortex of the brain continuously coordinates and prioritizes incoming stimuli, deciding what is essential and what can be ignored or filed away. More stimuli requires more filtering, they've found.<sup>1</sup>

While it may be too soon to know what effect increased filtering will have on learning, Lee Jenkins, an education quality expert, has known about "brain drain" for quite some time.

At the National Quality Education Conference held in Milwaukee in November, I had the opportunity to meet Jenkins and [interview him about the wasteful education practices](#) detailed in his seminal book, *Permission to Forget*.



Learning is the process of acquiring new, or modifying and reinforcing existing knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Yet each school year, large portions of textbooks and classroom time is devoted to re-teaching and re-learning material.<sup>3</sup> In his book, Jenkins explains that students learn by the first grade that they have permission to forget much of what their teachers are teaching. (An excerpt from Jenkins' book is featured in this edition of the *Primary and Secondary Education Brief*.)

Forgetting isn't the fault of students or teachers—it's a systemic epidemic. The education system must take away the permission to forget by establishing a model that doesn't support the "cram-take test-get graded-forget" cycle, according to Jenkins.

Jenkins' insight on why it's crucial to increase focus on students' abilities to build on previous knowledge especially makes it an interview you won't want to miss—or forget.

## References

1. Tim Ash, "How Neuroscience Is Key to Successful Marketing Strategies," Mashable, Nov. 27, 2013, <http://mashable.com/2013/11/27/neuroscience-marketing-strategies>.
2. "Learning," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/learning>.
3. Lee Jenkins, "Permission to Forget," *Journal for Quality and Participation*, July 2013, <http://asq.org/quality-participation/2013/07/leadership/permission-to-forget.pdf>.