



Pathways

A Weekly Collection of Information, Thoughts, Reflections and Accolades for the Reading Public School Community

September 28, 2014

Volume 6, Number 6

Upcoming Dates

- September 29 – (3:00 p.m.) Joshua Eaton School Council Meeting
- September 30-(3:15 p.m.) RMHS "Volley for the Cure" event at RMHS Field House
- September 30 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS "Welcome to Drama" Night
- October 1 – (6:30 p.m.) RCASA Annual Meeting; (5:00 p.m.) Parker School Council Meeting; (7:00 p.m.) Parker PTO Meeting
- October 1 & 2 – School Reform Institute Workshop in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- October 2 – School Picture Day at Coolidge & Killam; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Session 1 in the RMHS Distance Learning Room
- October 3-Barrows 50th Anniversary parade and tree planting
- October 4 – Observance of Yom Kippur
- October 5 - RMHS Band Competition @ Framingham

Reading Receives Three Grants Totaling 1.975 Million Dollars

The Town of Reading and the Reading Public Schools is pleased to announce that they have received three Federal grants totaling \$1,975,000 to address the health, wellness, and social emotional well-being of our students.

The first grant is a Drug Free Communities Grant which is a five year grant at \$125,000 per year. This grant was awarded to the Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse (RCASA). The goals and strategies of this grant are as follows:

- Reduce barriers for underrepresented individuals to participate in the coalition.
- Train Leaders in the Strategic Prevention Framework and Environmental Strategies.
- Provide opportunities for Leaders to apply skills learned at training.
- Enhance staff and Board's capacity to build the coalition's financial infrastructure.
- Increase access to culturally and therapeutically diverse pain management sites.
- Provide an easy access point for residents to turn in unwanted medications 24/7.
- Increase skill-building opportunities for students in grades 6-12 on prescription drug and underage drinking prevention.
- Improve local medication safety and prescription drug based monitoring practices
- Improve Educators, School Specialists, Clergy and Youth Workers ability to address youth that are in crisis and/or under the influence of prescription drugs
- Reduce youth access to alcohol through enhanced Alcohol Compliance Program.
- Enhance parental monitoring of adolescents in grades 6-12
- Provide disincentives to use alcohol on Reading Memorial High School grounds.

The second grant is awarded to the Reading Public Schools and is a two year, \$50,000 per year grant to provide mental health first aid training to staff. This grant will allow the Reading Public Schools to train eight instructors that will certify 584 school educators, school support staff, first responders, youth workers, and faith leaders in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) and Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) in Reading, where the prevalence of untreated mental health and substance abuse is significant. Data gathered through the 2013 Reading Youth Risk Behavior Survey (grades 6-8) indicated high rates of prevalence involving self-injury, bullying, binge drinking and prescription drug misuse. High school (grades 9-12) rates for underage drinking, illegal drug use and eating disorders were 2-6% higher than state and national averages. About 23% reported bullying at school, much higher than the state rate (18%) and U.S. rate (20%) and students were 4% more likely to experience cyber-bullying than the state average. Twenty-one percent reported self-injury higher than the state rate of 18% (U.S. rate not available). Thirteen percent reported suicide attempts,

- October 6 – (3:15 p.m.) Expanding the Boundaries in the Superintendent's Conference Room; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Administrator Course in the RMHS Library Conference Room; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- October 7 – Joshua Eaton Picture Day
- October 8 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (6:30 p.m.) Birch Meadow PTO Meeting
- October 9 – (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Session 2 in the RMHS Distance Learning Room
- October 10 - (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Football vs. Lexington in the Stadium
- October 11 - (8:00 a.m.) SAT Testing @ RMHS; (12:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build; RMHS Band Competition @ Medford

much higher than the state rate (7%) and U.S. rate (8%), of which 45 students attempted suicide two or more times. Behavioral health community forums conducted in 2012 involved residents who expressed concern about teens dealing with “stress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, drug-related violence, untreated mental illness”. In the past two years, the district has experienced a sharp increase in students hospitalized for mood disorders, personality disorders, self-injury, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, and substance abuse. At the high school, since September of 2012, there have been 40 psychiatric hospitalizations recorded by administrators. The proposed YMHFA and MHFA training will greatly improve early identification of mental health needs and increase referrals to local community agencies. A part-time paid grant coordinator will organize training, monitor certification, enhance pathways to mental health referral, and support recommended mental health assessment and/or treatment.

The third and final grant is also awarded to the Reading Public Schools and is a School Climate Transformation grant. This grant is for \$250,000 per year for five years. The purpose of this grant is to implement a full service, high quality, multi-tiered system of supports for all PreK-12 students. The following are the goals or projected outcomes for this project:

Goal 1: Build capacity for supporting the sustained and broad-scale implementation of a multi-tiered behavioral framework (MTSS) in each school across the district through the successful creation of district, building leadership and collaborative teams.

Goal 2: Enhance sustainability of continued data-driven decision making and communication through the successful alignment and implementation of a school wide information system, Baseline Edge, in every school district-wide.

Goal 3: Enhance each school's ability to offer comprehensive behavioral health supports through the creation of a high-quality, full service multi-tiered system of supports, consisting of extensive offerings of supports and interventions at every level and school.

Goal 4: Build continued capacity of school-based staff through the successful integration of an aggressive professional development and coaching program focused on building teachers' skills and competencies in the use of a multi-tiered system of supports and behavioral health topics.

Goal 5: Evaluate the effectiveness of project activities at the school and district level in meeting the needs of students and in improving outcomes for students using quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods.

Reading was only one of 72 school districts in the country, and only three in Massachusetts, to receive this grant. In addition, we were only one of 22 school districts in the country to receive both the Mental Health First Aid and School Transformation grants.

For further information, please go to the [U.S. Department of Education Link](#). Congratulations to RCASA Executive Director Erica McNamara and Administrator for Student Support Services Sara Burd for their efforts in applying for these grants.

Kudos and Accolades

- To Birch Meadow Teacher Patti Beckman for leading the New Mentor Training Program last week.
- To RCASA Executive Director Erica McNamara and Administrator for Student Support Services Sara Burd for their efforts in applying for and receiving three Federal grants totaling 1.95 million dollars. These grants will help us continue to implement the MTSS process, provide mental health first aid training for our staff, and continue to provide a strong RCASA community for our students.

Insights on Self-Control

In this *New York Times* article, author Pamela Druckerman reports on a conversation with Walter Mischel, the Columbia University psychologist who conducted the “marshmallow” experiments in the 1950s. His well-known finding was that five-year-olds who could defer gratification – resisting the urge to gobble down a marshmallow or cookie so they could get two when the researcher returned – grew up to be thinner, have higher SAT scores, earn more advanced degrees, use cocaine less, and cope better with stress.

But Mischel (pronounced me-SHELL) says lots of people have drawn the wrong conclusion from his research, believing erroneously that young children’s inability to resist temptation is their lifelong destiny. Self-control can be taught, he says, and that’s especially important for those who are helping low-SES children succeed in school. It also applies to grown-ups trying to resist checking e-mail every few minutes, eating too much bread, yelling at their spouse, or going to bed too late.

“Part of what adults need to learn about self-control is in those videos of 5-year-olds,” says Druckerman. “The children who succeed turn their backs on the cookie, push it away, pretend it’s something inedible like a piece of wood, or invent a song. Instead of staring down the cookie, they transform it into something with less of a throbbing pull on them.” Adults can use similar strategies: Take the bread off the dinner table. When a waiter offers a chocolate mousse, imagine that a cockroach has just crawled across it. When you’re upset, imagine viewing yourself from the outside.

Our brains have two warring parts, explains Mischel. The limbic system demands instant gratification; the prefrontal cortex is rational and goal-oriented. “We don’t need to be victims of our emotions,” he says. “We have a prefrontal cortex that allows us to evaluate whether or not we like the emotions that are running us.” The secret to self-control is training the prefrontal cortex to take control. Specific if-then plans work best: *If it’s before noon, I won’t check e-mail or If I feel angry, I will count backward from 10.* This is more difficult for children who’ve been exposed to chronic stress – their limbic system is in overdrive. But if their environment changes, their self-control can improve.

Sitzfleisch alone doesn’t guarantee success, says Mischel. To achieve, people need a “burning goal” that gives them a reason to use their distraction skills. Mischel’s burning goal from childhood was to “make a life that would help my family recover from the trauma of suddenly becoming homeless refugees” (they fled Vienna when the Nazis took over). His current goal is to find coping skills for children suffering from trauma. At 84, he distracts himself from the afflictions of advancing age. “Melancholy is not one of my emotions,” he says. “Quite seriously, I don’t do melancholy. It’s a miserable way to be.”

“Learning How to Exert Self-Control” by Pamela Druckerman in *The New York Times*, September 14, 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1x2vckj>; Mischel’s about-to-be

Quote of the Week....



"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

John F. Kennedy

released book (with Alan Alda) is *The Marshmallow Test: Mastering Self-Control*. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 553.

Advice for Parents on Homework

"Homework has a branding problem," says author Bruce Feiler in this *New York Times* article. "Or, to be a little less pointy-headed about it, everybody hates homework." But this hasn't always been so. "Parents have been having these battles since before electric lighting," he says. In the 19th century, homework was popular because people viewed the brain as a muscle that needed to be strengthened by nightly exertion. At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a backlash against repetitive drills, and by the 1940s, homework was out of favor. Then Sputnik got people panicked about the U.S. falling behind the Soviets and lots of homework was part of the solution. There was another dip in the 1960s, and then *A Nation at Risk* caused yet another surge in the 1980s. Today we're hearing from both sides: Chinese kids are doing six hours of homework before breakfast! No, play is more important than make-work and Google wants employees who are creative.

In Feiler's own household, the homework wars come down to squabbles over several questions, and he went looking for answers from experts:

- *Do children need to work at their own desks or is the kitchen table okay?* Eva Pomerantz, a specialist on parent involvement at the University of Illinois, likes the kitchen table because a parent is usually around, increasing the chance of connections, but is busy preparing meals, which makes it less likely they'll do the homework themselves. But it depends on your house, she says: "If you have a crazy, noisy kitchen, that's probably not the place for your kids to be doing homework unless they have amazing concentration."

- *Is it okay for children to do homework sprawled on their beds?* "It's not about the kid being on their bed while they do their homework," says Erika Patall, a University of Texas expert on motivation and achievement. "It's about the extent to which they're really engaged and attentive to their work." Young people vary in their preference for bright or dim lighting and sitting up or lying down. If the kid is falling asleep, looking out the window, or on the phone, then bed homework is a problem.

- *How about listening to music or doing FaceTime with friends?* Patall says the research on multitasking is pretty clear: "People tend to be very bad multitaskers, even people who say, 'I'm a great multitasker.'" Doing other things extends the time homework takes and erodes the quality of work.

- *Should parents go over homework to check for errors?* "If you're concerned that imperfect homework makes you look bad, that's problematic," says Pomerantz. But regularly looking over homework may help students put in more effort and catch their own mistakes.

- *Should parents criticize sloppy homework or stick to encouragement?* "You don't always have to be upbeat," says Patall. "You don't want to deliver critical messages that imply things can't be fixed. So you never want to say things like, 'You're stupid.' But pointing out a situation where they should try harder would certainly be justified."

- *What will make children more self-motivated?* The key is to give them as much control over their homework as possible, says Pomerantz, who has to fight her own tendency to be controlling. She tells her children how hard she works and says she expects them to do the same. "If you give them space to be self-reliant," she says, "they usually will take it."

"The Homework Squabbles" by Bruce Feiler in *The New York Times*, September 14, 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1rs2juA>

RMHS Volleyball To Host 6th Annual Volleyball Match & Awareness Rally to Benefit Breast Cancer Awareness

RMHS Varsity Volleyball Coach Michelle Hopkinson is pleased to announce that Reading will host Winchester High School on Tuesday, September 30th, 2014, at the Hawkes Field House. Rocket Volleyball will challenge the Sachems in a league match that also includes raising funds for breast cancer awareness. Proceeds from the "Volley for the Cure" event will be donated to the ESSCO-MGH Breast Cancer Research Fund at Massachusetts General Hospital.

The schedule will include: an exhibition game featuring RMHS teachers at 3:15 p.m., followed by the freshmen and JV teams both playing at 4:30, JV team at 5:15 and varsity at 6:30 p.m. Suggested donation for students is just \$1 and adults \$5. In addition to RMHS students, all members of the community are invited to cheer on the teams while donating to a worthy cause during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Varsity Senior Captains Julia Driscoll, Katie Daley, and Megan Littlehale are excited about hosting this event, "We encourage everyone to wear pink, have fun and enjoy some great volleyball at RMHS on September 30th."

Reading Public School Happenings

On September 18 and 19, Parker Middle School Grade 6 students attended Project Adventure in Beverly for a day of team building activities. The photos below show some of the students engaged in those activities. A special thanks goes out to the Parker staff who coordinated and chaperoned the trip.





Disney Tweet of the Week



"Sometimes life requires a little bit extra creativity."

Mickey Mouse



Recently, the RMHS Class of 1964 held its 50th Class Reunion. As part of that reunion, they received a tour of Reading Memorial High School. Below is a picture of the Class of 1964 who attended the tour. Thanks to Tom Zaya for conducting the tour.



Stepping Stones....

- **We welcome the** following new hires to our school district:
 - ✓ George "Marty" McWilliams, District Substitute
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Maternity Leave, Grade 1 Teacher, Birch Meadow Elementary School	JOB ID #1073202
Maternity Leave, Co-Teacher in Kindergarten Classroom, Birch Meadow Elementary School	JOB ID #1073232
35 hours biweekly Paraeducator, Joshua Eaton Elementary School	JOB ID #1073222
Custodial Substitute, Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #1078712
Theater Technician, Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #1077752

- **Reading Chronicle seeking interesting educational stories**-Melissa Russell, who writes the School Notes column for The Reading Chronicle, is seeking interesting stories that don't always make the papers. If you know a staff member, teacher, paraprofessional or student who has an accomplishment that should be recognized, an innovative approach to teaching or learning, or a particular life passion, talent or skill to share, please contact readingchronicle@comcast.net or email her at melruss23@yahoo.com.
- **Enterovirus Advisory**-As you may or may not know, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) announced a confirmed case of Enterovirus D68 on September 23, 2014. The patient is a school aged child with a history of asthma who became ill in early September and has since been treated and released from an area hospital. **Please see the new CDC infographic about preventing the spread of enterovirus D68 suitable for printing and posting.** If you have any questions, please contact your school nurse or Director of Nurses Lynn Dunn at lynn.dunn@reading.k12.ma.us.
- **Harvard's Usable Knowledge website** – This site, <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/uk>, sponsored by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, includes research updates by faculty members. Currently there are links to articles and videos on early education, creating caring classroom environments, and Common Core, among others.
- **The University of Lowell Graduate School of Education** is inviting K-12 students to submit artwork to their Third Annual Cool Science Climate Change Art Competition.

Cool Science is a statewide K-12 student art competition designed to foster learning about climate change. Students (and their teachers) are encouraged to develop a visual work of art that addresses one of three questions about climate change. Winning entries will receive a monetary prize and have their work put on public display throughout the Lowell Regional Transit Authority during the first half of 2015. Deadline for submissions is November 21st.

The contest offers:

- Streamlined submission process—either by mail or electronically
- Online learning module about climate change science
- Discussion forum for teachers and parents
- New resources for incorporating Cool Science into the classroom

You can read all about the details of the project and see our short video at www.coolspace.net.

- **WGBH Event**-Periodically, WGBH will share information about upcoming educational events that we believe may be of interest to you. WGBH is collaborating with the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on one such event. We are delighted to invite high school teachers and students to participate in “Change-Makers for a Better World,” an exciting and interactive forum to be held in the Rockwell Cage on the MIT campus on October 31, 2014 from 11 AM to 3:30 PM. The event will feature interactive discussions with a number of prominent public figures, including a conversation with the Dalai Lama, via video-link from Kresge Auditorium on the MIT campus. The Dalai Lama Center is waiving the registration fee, so participation in this event is free of charge.

Pre-registration for the event is now open: <http://thecenter.mit.edu/spark-youth-registration/> . Each high school teacher that registers may bring up to five students to this event. Seats are limited, so we encourage teachers to register early. Use password: sparktt2014.

For any questions, please contact spark@thecenter.mit.edu .

- **Reading Cultural Council Grant Opportunities**-To all Principals, Teachers and PTOs in Reading: READING CULTURAL COUNCIL has funds for you, but you must apply to get them! Do you have a great idea for an arts, humanities or science program that you are eager to try, but need some help with funding?

The Reading Cultural Council is here to help you!

Reading Cultural Council is looking for great programs to fund and yours could be one of them. The Massachusetts Cultural Council has set an October 15, 2014 postmark deadline for organizations, schools and individuals to apply for grants that support cultural activities in the community. These grants can support a variety of artistic projects and activities in Reading -- including exhibits, festivals, field trips, short-term artist residencies or performances, workshops and lectures. This year, the Reading Cultural Council will distribute about \$5700.00 in grants. Some of this money could be yours. Application forms and more information about the Local Cultural Council Program are available online at http://www.mass-culture.org/lcc_public.aspx . Application forms are also available at Reading Public Library and Reading Town Hall. You may also contact Donna Schenkel, Chair or Nancy Snow, Co-Chair for more information at readingculturalcouncil@gmail.com .

- **Jeans for Troops Initiative**-Now that summer is over and school is back and session, The GI Go Fund is getting ready for Veterans Day and we need your help. I know in the past you have taken part in our *Jeans for Troops* program and we are so thankful for the support of your school to help all of our veterans. With your participation in this program along with thousands of other schools and districts, you have given us the capacity to provide so many of our veterans with healthcare, employment, job training, housing, and even a suit they can wear for a job interview.

It is easy to help and support our troops!

We enlist the help of YOU, our schools and districts throughout the country, to hold a dress down day in honor of Veterans Day where each participant donates just \$5 for our cause and to wear jeans to work on November 12 in support of The GI Go Fund. **Please consider taking part in Jeans for Troops by organizing this program for your school.** This year's national *Jeans for Troops* day is November 12,

but you can change it while registering if another day fits your schedule better.

It's simple to register your school or district. All you have to do is sign up through our [Jeans for Troops registration page](#) and you will receive all the program information/stickers to host a great *Jeans for Troops* Day! Please be sure to include the main point of contact that is helping to organize the day for your school along with contact information so we can be fully engaged in serving the needs of our veterans.

For further information, call Alex Manis, Deputy Director of the GI Go Fund at 866-389-4446.

Blazing Trails....

"Seven Considerations When Developing Adolescent Literacy." "Improving basic literacy skills in adolescent learners is no doubt a huge challenge, but it is not an impossible task," writes educator Beth Morrow. In a recent ASCD Inservice post, Morrow discusses the challenges of balancing the need to build literacy in older students with the need to increase content knowledge and shares seven points educators should consider when developing adolescent literacy. [Read More](#)

"Study Attempts to Explain Why Students Leave High School Before Graduation." A recent study finds there is no single reason that students leave high school before graduation, but rather there are various factors, including toxic environments, poor relationships with teachers, parents and others, and a lack of support. The report highlights ways schools can help retain students. [Read More](#)

"Five Questions Every PLC Should Consider." Education blogger and high-school teacher Paul Barnwell in this blog post poses five questions he says teachers and administrators should ask about the professional-learning communities model. "When the collaboration is efficient, PLC cycles provide a focused method to dissect student work and hopefully improve results," he writes. [Read More](#)

"Schools Using Twitter to Provide Immediate Updates." A New York educator is taking the lead in making recommendations for how other athletic directors can use Twitter to communicate quickly and effectively. The district's Twitter account for athletics was launched about four years ago, and in that time 5,000 tweets have been sent about everything from game updates to scores and pictures. [Read More](#)

"What's the Best Language for Learning Math? Hint: You're Not Reading It." English speaking children have a harder time learning arithmetic and counting skills, compared with Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Turkish speakers, because of a greater variety of unique number names, according to a recent study. Researchers say Anglophone parents can use counting and board games to bring children up to speed with international peers before they enter kindergarten. [Read More](#)

Contact Us

The Pathways newsletter is published weekly for Reading Public School Staff and Community. If you have anything that you would like to share, please email your information to John Doherty at

john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us

Have a great week!