



Pathways Newsletter

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

September 8, 2014

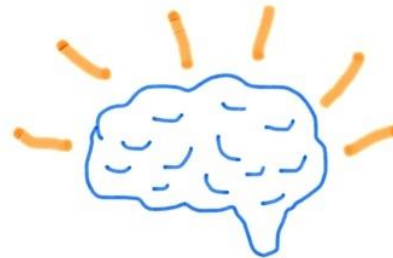
Volume 1, Number 1

Upcoming Dates

- September 7 (12:00 – 4:00 p.m.)
Reading Street Faire
- September 8 – (3:15 p.m.) Expanding the Boundaries in the Superintendent's Conference Room;
(7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- September 9 – State Primary; (6:30 p.m.) Wood End Open House Grades K – 2
- September 10 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (6:30 p.m.) Birch meadow Curriculum Night; Wood End Open House Grades 3 – 5; (7:30 p.m.) Financial Forum in the Coolidge Multipurpose Room
- September 11 – (6:00 p.m.) Joshua Eaton Open House; (6:30 p.m.) Coolidge Open House
- September 15 & 16 – Camp Bournedale for Barrows & Eaton
- September 16 – (7:00 p.m.) Parker back to School Night
- September 17 – (5:00 p.m.) Birch Meadow PTO Picnic
- September 18 – (5:30 pm) RMHS Jr.

First Lesson of the School Year: Your Brain Can Grow

Posted by Erin Walsh • August 27 at <http://drdavewalsh.com/posts/193>



Students will enter school this year with all sorts of supplies and feelings. The pens, notebooks, books and class schedules will fit neatly inside their backpacks. The feelings, including excitement, fear, enthusiasm, and misgivings, can be confusing, shifting, and harder to pin down. They will also bring something intangible but very important for their success: a set of beliefs about their ability to learn - about their capacity and potential. This mindset is more powerful than their test scores or class rank, and it isn't always self-evident or obvious. It shows up when we listen closely to how young people talk about school:

"I DON'T WANT TO TAKE THAT CLASS. I AM BAD AT MATH."

OR

"I KNOW I SAID I WAS EXCITED ABOUT IT BUT I ACTUALLY DON'T THINK I AM GOING TO TAKE AP HISTORY, IT'S A STUPID CLASS ANYWAY."

The impact of mindset

We might miss the importance of statements that our kids make, but **Carol Dweck** doesn't. She's the world's leading researcher on *mindsets*, and her work gives us a lot of insights about our kids' beliefs about themselves and their ability to learn.

Professor Dweck has worked with thousands of students across the country to explore the divergent impacts of what she calls "growth" and "fixed" mindsets on academic achievement. According to Dweck, students with a *fixed mindset*

believe that their intelligence and abilities are hardwired traits and that talent is what leads to success, not effort. In contrast, students with a *growth mindset* believe that abilities can be developed through persistence and hard work. They understand that their brain is like a muscle and that exercise and practice can strengthen it. Students with a growth mindset see mistakes as part of living and learning. Their motto is, "Never give up."

Here is the difference between how a fixed mindset and a growth mindset might interpret a poor score on a physics exam:

"I AM NOT GOOD AT SCIENCE, WHY BOTHER TRYING?"

VS.

"I DIDN'T PREPARE ENOUGH FOR THAT EXAM. I NEED EXTRA HELP AND MORE STUDY TIME AND I'LL BE READY FOR THE NEXT ONE."

Learning from mistakes

Research shows that students with a fixed mindset see mistakes as a sign of failure. Students with a growth mindset see mistakes as an opportunity to learn. When students start to avoid making mistakes they aren't just stepping back from risk and challenge, they are stepping back from new learning and knowledge.

Of course these beliefs don't come out of nowhere. Stereotypes (e.g. "**girls are bad at math**"), **educator's mindsets**, cultural narratives about success, praise, and our own assumptions all influence young people's mindsets.

The good news? Not surprisingly, mindsets themselves aren't fixed either. Evidence shows that even small interventions can shift a student's beliefs and boost achievement. We've written before about the impact of **praise** and nurturing real self-esteem. Another secret to fostering the growth mindset in students is to teach them about the brain itself.

"Whatever the brain does a lot of, is what the brain gets good at."

While compelling evidence has been building for years now Dweck and her team are conducting large scale, randomized, and controlled trials to substantiate their claims that learning about the brain shifts the way that students think about their education and ultimately impacts achievement. For example, in one study students read an article explaining how the brain grows and develops and then were asked to write a letter of advice to a "struggling" student. Even this small exercise yielded positive results. The **intervention** increased the rate at which underperforming students achieved satisfactory grades when compared to the control group.

This isn't to say that teaching a growth mindset is going to solve all of our

Kudos and Accolades

- To the Reading High School Football Team under the direction of RMHS Head Coach and Social Studies Teacher John Fiore, who won their opening game on Friday evening with a 27-20 victory over the Masconomet Chieftains.
- To RMHS Marching Band Director Dave Bunten who was highlighted in a September 3rd article on Friday Night Football. You can access the article [here](#).

problems in education. We need to be wary of any theory that simplifies the issue. Don't believe any "expert" who says, "If students just believed in themselves there wouldn't be an achievement gap." It's more complicated than that. Solving the achievement gap is going to require a hard look at systemic barriers to learning like poverty, toxic stress, and inequitable access to resources. But in the meantime, we should make sure that every student knows that their brain has the capacity to grow.

Make the first lesson of this school year be about growth:

- ✓ Recognize hard work and perseverance instead of "natural" gifts and talents.
- ✓ Normalize mistakes and model ways to learn from them.
- ✓ Reveal the "hidden stories" of success. For example, how much practice it takes for world class athletes to get to the top of their game.
- ✓ Express pride and praise your student takes on new challenges.
- ✓ Talk to your child's teacher. How are exams treated? As judgement or an opportunity to learn? How are mistakes treated?
- ✓ Teach your student about their brain. **It is like a muscle** - exercise it and it gets stronger.

National Suicide Awareness and Prevention Week

By Sara Burd

September 5-11 is National Suicide Awareness and Prevention Week with September 10th being World Suicide Prevention Day. Youth suicidal behavior is a significant national problem. Saving young lives at risk involves a diverse range of interventions including effective assessment and treatment of those with mental disorders, promotion of help-seeking, early detection of and support for youth in crisis, preventive training in life skills, and reduction of access to lethal means. Everyone can lend an hand by increasing their knowledge and awareness of how to identify a person at-risk and how to get them help.

Know the Warning Signs of Suicide

How do you remember the Warning Signs of Suicide?

Here's an easy-to-remember mnemonic:

IS PATH WARM?

- | | |
|----------|-----------------|
| I | Ideation |
| S | Substance Abuse |
| P | Purposelessness |
| A | Anxiety |

Quote of the Week....



“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.”

Helen Keller

T	Trapped
H	Hopelessness
W	Withdrawal
A	Anger
R	Recklessness
M	Mood Changes

A person in acute risk for suicidal behavior most often will show:

Warning Signs of Acute Risk:

Threatening to hurt or kill him or herself, or talking of wanting to hurt or kill him/herself; and or,

Looking for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means; and/or,

Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary.

These might be remembered as expressed or communicated ideation. If observed, seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for a referral.

Additional Warning Signs:

- Increased **substance** (alcohol or drug) **use**
- No reason for living; no sense of **purpose** in life
- **Anxiety**, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all of the time
- Feeling **trapped** - like there's no way out
- **Hopelessness**
- **Withdrawal** from friends, family and society
- Rage, uncontrolled **anger**, seeking revenge
- Acting **reckless** or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Dramatic **mood changes**

If observed, seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for a referral.

These warning signs were compiled by a task force of expert clinical-researchers and 'translated' for the general public.

If you are concerned about the health of a student, please see your building psychologist or counselor, or contact Sara Burd at sara.burd@reading.k12.ma.us or (781) 670-2851. Additionally, if you or a loved one are showing symptoms listed above or are in need of support, call 1-800-273-TALK or speak to your primary care physician. Let's build a healthier community and world one person at a time.

Reading Public School Happenings

On Wednesday, Massachusetts Secretary of Education Matthew Malone visited classrooms at Parker Middle School. During his visit, Secretary Malone had an opportunity to talk to teachers, administrators and students about what is

working and the challenges that they are facing. Secretary Malone and some students also taped a short message which will be broadcast on the Channel 5 eyeopener news on Monday morning (see picture below). Secretary Malone commented several times on the level of student engagement that he saw in the classrooms. He commented about the thoughtful use of technology as a way to shift the learning to the student.

Special thanks to Principal Doug Lyons and the Parker staff and students for hosting the Secretary's visit.



On Friday evening, the RMHS Football team opened the 2014 season with a 27-20 victory over Masconomet Chieftains. In the photo below, RMHS Junior Paul Gargano proudly serves at the Rocket Mascot.



Stepping Stones....

- **We welcome to our school district** Micheala Saunders, who is the new Human Resources Administrator. Michaela's office is located in the Reading Public Schools Administration Offices next to RISE. Her phone extension is 882.
- **Reading Public Schools is pleased to announce** the start of a mental health internship program across the district. Graduate students pursuing licensure as school social workers, adjustment counselors, guidance counselors and licensed mental health counselors will be completing their required practicum and internships hours at various buildings across the district throughout the school year. The district is thrilled to offer this program as we believe providing an internship at Reading Public Schools will help to build a highly qualified pool of mental health professionals in our community. More importantly, our students will have the benefit of additional mental health staff to support them in their learning and healthy development. Interns will be working with students in and out of the classroom and will contact parents/guardians personally before

Disney Tweet of the Week



“Remember the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.”

Rafiki (The Lion King 1 1/2)

beginning any individual work with a student. If you would like to learn more about the program or have additional questions, please contact Sara Burd, District Administrator of Support Services at sara.burd@reading.k12.ma.us or (781)670-2851. Please welcome the following interns to Reading:

- Andrea Pietragallo: Birch Meadow (Wednesdays) Barrows (Tuesdays/Thursdays)
 - Cambridge College- School Guidance Counselor K-8
- Alexandra Campione: RMHS (Monday/Wednesday/Friday)
 - Boston University - LMHC
- Lauren Johnson: RISE (Wednesday) Woodend (Tuesday/Thursday)
 - Boston College - LMHC
- Valerie Albano: Eaton (Tuesday/ Friday)
 - Lesley University – LMHC/ Dance Therapist
- Tanya Faria-Yeomans: RMHS (Tuesday) Coolidge (Wednesday/Thursday)
 - Cambridge College – LMHC / School Adjustment Counselor K-12
- **We welcome the** following new hires to our school district:
 - ✓ Marguerite Fahey, Regular Education Paraeducator, Eaton
 - ✓ Carol Galluzzo-Hamilton, Regular Education Paraeducator, Eaton
 - ✓ Ilene Gautreau, Regular Education Paraeducator, Eaton
 - ✓ Caroline King, Special Education Paraeducator, Coolidge
 - ✓ Kristin Mahoney, Special Education Paraeducator, Parker
 - ✓ Molly O’Donnell, Special Education Paraeducator, Birch Meadow
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Regular Education Para, Parker Middle School	JOB ID #1036502
0.6 FTE Long-term substitute social studies/ history teacher; Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #1038082
Girls Junior Varsity Basketball Coach, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID# 1042242
Anticipated Girls Basketball Coaching Assistant, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #1042262
Volunteer Volleyball Coaching Assistant, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #1042272
Volunteer Girls Soccer Coaching Assistant, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #1042292

Blazing Trails....

"Duncan: 'No Teacher or School Should Be Judged on Any One Test.'" Education Secretary Arne Duncan in this blog post addresses key education issues, including teacher evaluations and test preparation. "Growth is what matters," he writes. "No teacher or school should be judged on any one test, or tests alone -- always on a mix of measures -- which could range from classroom observations to family engagement indicators." [Read More](#)

"Let Them Sleep: AAP Recommends Later Start to the School Day." Starting classes no earlier than 8:30 AM would help students, particularly teens, catch up on their nighttime sleep and boost their motivation and mood, the American Academy of Pediatrics said in a policy statement published in the journal "Pediatrics." The statement is aimed at middle schools and high schools. [Read More](#)

"Eight of the Toughest Challenges Schools Still Face." Reaching the threescore-and-ten milestone recently, and embarking on a new role at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, Chester Finn did some stocktaking on the state of American education in 2014. "I've been at this for ages, notably since Diane Ravitch and I launched the Educational Excellence Network in 1981. Two years before A Nation at Risk, we-and a handful of fellow travelers-had concluded that American education needed a kick in the pants, a kick toward greater quality, primarily in the form of stronger student learning. That was before many of today's ed reformers were born-a growing army of compatriots with whom I still march. What has been accomplished in three decades-plus?" [Read More](#)

"Better Scores, Better Economy? ... Test Scores ≠ Economic Performance." Each time new national and international assessment results show that U.S. students are performing at mediocre levels, education pundits make dire claims about the nation's education system and economic competitiveness-asserting that stagnant scores foretell an impending economic decline. But is this truly the case? ASCD's latest Policy Points (PDF) examines the connection between student performance and economic measures such as productivity and gross domestic product (GDP) and finds that, despite unexceptional test scores, the U.S. remains an economic leader. For example, although scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have not varied by more than 3 percent since the test was first administered approximately 40 years ago, U.S. productivity levels have spiked during that same time. And while Canada, Finland, Japan, and Singapore consistently outperform the United States on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the United States' lead in GDP over these countries has increased, with the exception of Singapore. [Read More](#)

7 Qs Teachers Can Ask Parents-Partner with parents with these simple but powerful Are you a parent? Don't miss these [19 meaningful questions](#) you could ask.

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!