



Pathways

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

October 5, 2014

Volume 1, Number 5

Upcoming Dates

- October 5 - RMHS Band Competition @ Framingham
- 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; Joshua Eaton Jaguar Jog
- 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
- October 13 – Columbus Day – No School

Bullying Prevention-Students Share Do's and Don'ts

By: *Maurice Elias (Prof. of Psychology, Director, Rutgers Social-Emotional Learning Lab, Director, the Collaborative Center for Community-Based Research and Service)*

Stan Davis has devoted a long career to the well-being of youth, in particular their empowerment through voice and their safety and dignity through bullying prevention. With Charisse L. Nixon, Davis recently published a study of 13,177 students in fifth through twelfth grades from 31 schools and in 12 states, focusing on giving students a chance to speak about school connection, peer mistreatment, and student and adult actions.

The Findings

Writing in the report of their work, *Youth Voice Project: Student Insights into Bullying and Peer Mistreatment*, they state:

"We are concerned that too much work in this field has focused on adults telling youth what bullying is and what to do to address bullying behavior. In reality, youth are the primary experts on what is happening at school and on what works best to prevent peer maltreatment....We see authentic youth involvement as key to success in bullying prevention."

Lessons learned from surveying the students can be summarized in the following don'ts and dos:

Don'ts:

#1: Don't try to help youth differentiate between "tattling" and "telling." They key is to have trusting relationships between adults and youth and that means expressing their concerns about what their peers are doing.

#2: Don't imply that a mistreated youth "has it coming" to him or her. No one "deserves" to be bullied or harassed, regardless of their provocations.

#3: Don't overuse the term, "bullying." There are many peer misbehaviors that may not conform to the formal definition of bullying but still have no place in schools. Actions that harm, or potentially harm, others should be the targets, not finding the "bullies."

Dos:

#1: Work collaborative with students to build clear definitions of respectful behavior and respond promptly and consistently, with care and concern, when respectful behavior is not shown.

#2: Encourage youth to reflect on their own behavior and how it relates to their

- October 14 – Districtwide Teacher In-Service Day – No School for Students; (3:30 p.m.) Killam School Council Meeting; (7:00 p.m.) Killam PTO Meeting; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS PTO Meeting
- October 16 – (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Session #3 in the Distance Learning Room
- October 17 – Coolidge Daytime Open House; (3:00 p.m.) RMHS & Middle School Band Day; (7:00 p.m.) Football vs. Belmont in the Stadium
- October 18 – RMHS Marching Band Competition in Billerica; (8:00 a.m.) PSAT testing @ RMHS; (12:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build

personal aspirations and the school's code of conduct or core values. Students perceive this as showing them considerable trust.

#3: Place a high priority on activities that connect students with one another and school staff, including adviser-advisee times, advisory periods and class meetings, cross-age, interest-based activities in and after school, and meaningful service projects.

#4: Adults must communicate "unconditional positive regard to all students" (p. 142) without exception or hesitation. Students must believe that the adults in the school believe in them and their potential to achieve in the classroom and in life.

#5: All students should be taught "the cognitive skills of social problem solving so they can try different solutions instead of giving up when they experience failure" (p. 142). These skills have the potential to support alternatives to bullying, considering consequences before cyberbullying, determining how to be an upstander, and how to respond with determination if one is victimized or threatened. Social problem solving skills also help youth to evaluate what is said about them and better equip them to "choose how they feel about themselves" (p. 143).

#6: Youth want to see adults respond proactively (i.e., actively discourage hurtful speech and actions), promptly when an incident is reported, and to follow up afterwards. They want to see enduring caring.

Even if the Glass is Half Full, It Needs Filling Up

Looking at general trends across a large number of youth leads to three observations that must be viewed with great caution:

First, the data at times are not "so bad." Fifty-five percent of students who are mistreated because of sexual orientation feel that adults listen to them; 42 percent of the time, they maintain ongoing supervision for a meaningful period of time -- more than happens for other kinds of mistreatment (37 percent). There are many findings like this and one can be tempted to think things are not as dire as one might have predicted. However, why the figures are not 90 percent or more is the real question. Every child deserves to be heard and supported after an incident, whether for reasons of sexual orientation, physical disability, special education status, etc.

Second, students receiving special education services are mistreated by peers more often than their peers and feel noticeably more supported by adults (though not by peers) than other students who are mistreated. While this seems like good news, it is very likely a consequence of social exclusion. These students tend to have a narrower range of contacts with adults than most other student groups, but do feel supported by those adults they do see. On the other hand, their school day will often bring them into contact with a wide range of peers, often without inclusive supports, and those contacts tend to be unsupportive.

Third, general trends mean little in the context of specific schools. Each school must gather and analyze data on incidents of mistreatment and victimization, and tap student voice and involvement and student and staff perception of climate,

Kudos and Accolades

- To RCASA Executive Director Erica McNamara for facilitating the RCASA Annual Meeting on Wednesday night. The annual meeting featured a showing of a very powerful movie on Opiate addiction called *The Hungry Heart*.
- To the Barrows PTO and Barrows Principal Heather Leonard for their efforts in planning an outstanding tree dedication ceremony.

using anonymous surveys that allow for disaggregation of data while protecting confidentiality. Many schools would find the surveys in *Youth Voice* to be helpful, at least as starting points for gathering information.

Next Steps

The action implications of these findings, as well as some of the *dos* noted earlier, are to promote a genuine and broad sense of inclusiveness by educating for true understanding of diversity, especially as manifest in one's own school, to ensure that school codes of conduct and core values are integrated into everyday routines, including opportunities for student reflection and feedback on student report cards (*versus* being relegated to statements in handbooks or on web sites), and to require that all students are given systematic training in social problem solving or related social-emotional skills and encouraged specifically to use those skills in finding alternatives to mistreating others, seeking help effectively, and upstanding in the presence of injustice and inequity.

Eight 8-Minute Talks by Harvard Education Professors

At a recent event at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, eight faculty members gave super-brief talks on a variety of hot topics. You can view the talks in full at this link:

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/14/09/8x8-hgse-faculty-share-their-bold-ideas-improve-education>

- Paul Reville: *Getting to "All Means All"* – What can we learn from the failure of education reform, so far, to deliver on the promise to bring high-quality education to all? asks Reville. How can we get past demography being destiny?

- Karen Brennan: *Getting Unstuck* – Helping students and teachers move beyond using social media and use computers more powerfully. Brennan describes using ScratchEd, a platform for creating projects, and students' problem-solving strategies when they're stuck.

- Todd Rose: *The End of Average* – What neuroscientists have found about how differently people remember and process information, leading to the conclusion that we can't understand individual brains by using group averages. The same goes for how we deal with students; we must treat them as individuals, which we now can do better with recent advances in classroom technology.

- Bridget Terry Long: *Nudging Students to Success* – The gaps between low-income and higher-income students being admitted to and succeeding in college are still as wide as they were 40 years ago, says Long. She describes strategies for giving disadvantaged students the information they need for college success, starting years before they apply.

- Tom Kane: *Learning What Works* – The U.S. labor market has changed in recent decades, and schools haven't kept up with the task of preparing students for the changed world. What strategies will work, and how can we develop them quickly? asks Kane.

- Karen Mapp: *Linking Family Engagement to Learning* – Relationships between schools and families have to be relational, interactive, collaborative, developmental, and linked to what students are learning, says Mapp, so that families can be more effective supporting learning at home. In particular, Mapp is critical of traditional open-house meetings in schools.

- Nonie Lesaux: *A Matter of Talk* – "Today's 'science of talk' tells us, then, that it's not about how much talk children and youth hear that influences their reading development," says Lesaux, "but the substance, the *matter* of that talk. This is actually in stark contrast to what we used to think – that it was all about how many words parents

Quote of the Week....



**"Try to be a rainbow in
someone's cloud."**

Maya Angelou

used with young children. And now we know that this is about educators, too." The words that teachers use in classrooms are essential to developing students' vocabulary and conceptual knowledge, she says, yet the use of complex vocabulary varies greatly from teacher to teacher. Her research shows that teachers who use a greater number of conceptual words per day boost their students' reading achievement significantly more than teachers who use simpler words – and then many programs and curriculum packages. What's more, teachers can rapidly improve their use of more-conceptual words once they are made aware of this insight.

- Howard Gardner: *Beyond Wit and Grit* – Our understanding of "wit" has been expanded to include multiple intelligences, says Gardner, and we now realize the importance of "grit" – the cluster of non-cognitive skills. But these are not enough. Gardner believes we also need a moral dimension. "You can have plenty of grit, and multiple wits," he says, "but they need to be directed towards becoming a good person, a good worker, and a good citizen... There's a 'triple helix' of good work and good citizenship: excellence, ethics, and engagement."

"8x8: HGSE Faculty Members Share Their Bold Ideas to Improve Education" September 19, 2014 (see above for the link). Reprinted from Marshall Memo 554.

Reading Public School Happenings

On Friday, the Barrows Elementary School began their year-long 50th Anniversary celebration with a parade of the decades and a tree dedication ceremony. The photos below show some of the highlights of the day. Special thanks go out to the Barrows PTO for coordinating the event and to the Young Women's League of Reading for donating the tree.







Stepping Stones....

- **We welcome the** following new hires to our school district:
 - ✓ Erin Tierney, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Cathy Juliano, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Julie Haley, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Kimberly Shanley, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Richard Lindsey, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Michael Suntken, Regular Education Tutor, Coolidge
 - ✓ Helen Nett, Regular Education Para, Parker
 - ✓ Joseph Giorlando, Long Term Social Studies Sub, RMHS

Disney Tweet of the Week



"It is good to have a failure while you're young because it teaches you so much."

Walt Disney

- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Regular Education Tutor (2), Barrows Elementary School	JOB ID #1039132
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- **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.
- **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.

- **The Out of Eden walk** – Journalist Paul Salopek is retracing the route taken by early humans from East Africa through the Middle East, across Asia, and down the Americas to Terra de Fuego. "Moving at the slow beat of his footsteps," says his website, "Paul is engaging with the major stories of our time – from climate change to technological innovation, from mass migration to cultural survival – by walking alongside the people who inhabit them every day." See <http://outofedenwalk.nationalgeographic.com> to share the adventure. "Walking the World" in *Educational Leadership*, October 2014 (Vol. 72, #2, p. 8)
- **Three TED-Ed Talks** – *Educational Leadership* recommends these curated educational videos as classroom resources:

- "What Makes a Hero?" by Matthew Winkler, for English teachers, available at:

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/what-makes-a-hero-matthew-winkler>

- "A Digital Reimagining of Gettysburg" by Anne Knowles, for history teachers,

available at: <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/a-digital-reimagining-of-gettysburg-anne>

knowles

- "The Infinite Life of Pi" by Reynaldo Lopes, for math teachers, available at <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-infinite-life-of-pi-reynaldo-lopes>
"ScreenGrabs" in *Educational Leadership*, October 2014 (Vol. 72, #2, p. 9)

Blazing Trails....

"Massachusetts Education Board Leader Questions Testing Practices." The new head of the Massachusetts state Board of Education, Margaret McKenna, is questioning whether some school districts are spending too much time preparing students for standardized tests. McKenna noted some districts test students up to 25 days per year, including pretests and practice tests. [Read More](#)

"Why Girls Tend to Get Better Grades Than Boys Do." Research suggests girls earn higher grades than boys in school, while boys often perform better on tests. This article explores gender-based differences in learning styles and performance and highlights a Minnesota middle school that revamped its grading system to include separate "life skills" grades for turning in homework and arriving to class on time, and "knowledge grades" focused solely on performance of key tests. [Read More](#)

"Empowering Motivation Through Service Learning." "What if learning was also measured by students' ability to transfer knowledge and skills in a constructive manner that influences their world?" ask educators Maureen Connolly and Alison Buske. In their recent ASCD Express article, Connolly and Buske explain how experiencing the impact of service learning efforts can engage students in their own education. [Read More](#)

"Relevance and Purpose = Engagement, Motivation, and Persistence." In this blog post by educator writer, Annie Murphy Paul seeks to answer one of education's biggest question: "Why does this matter? Teachers are often called upon to answer this question about an academic subject, and computer science instructors may face this demand more frequently than most." [Read More](#)

"First Lady Urges Leaders to Show Courage in Fight for Education." Michelle Obama urged international leaders to show the courage and commitment of girls who make sacrifices to go to school - like the abducted Nigerian schoolgirls - to provide children around the world the quality education they deserve. Obama gave the keynote speech at an event dedicated to fighting a global learning crisis and held on the sidelines of the United Nations' General Assembly. Universal education for every child in the world is one of several millennium development goals the United Nations has committed to achieving by next year - but which is expected to slip away. [Read More](#)

Have a great week!

Contact Us

The Journey 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