



Pathways Newsletter

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

October 19, 2014

Volume 1, Number 7

Upcoming Dates

- October 20 & 21 – Birch Meadow, Wood End & Killam Grade 5 to Camp Bourndale
- October 20 - (3:15 p.m.) Expanding the Boundaries in the Superintendent's Conference Room; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Administrator Course in the Distance Learning Room; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room;
- October 21-(6:30 p.m.)Coolidge MCAS Presentation
- October 22/23-District PLC
- October 22 – Grade 6-8 Early Release Day; (6:30 p.m.) Early Childhood Working Group Meeting at Superintendent's Office
- October 23 – (3:00 p.m.) Home Grown Writers PLC; (7:00 p.m.) Regional World Café on Opiate and Substance Abuse in RMHS Field House; (7:00 p.m.) Special Education PAC Meeting at Birch Meadow Library
- October 24 – Parker Picture Make-Up Day; (6:30 p.m.)

Overcoming Perfectionism: Helping Your Child Get Past Perfect

by Dr. Dave Walsh

"I'm not going to basketball practice next week," Troy announced to his dad just before leaving for school. "The coach is stupid and I don't like the other guys that much anyway."

"But you've been excited to play on the high school team for years and you just made the team!" he replied.

"Well I changed my mind. I just don't feel like it!" Troy said and stormed off to school.

Troy's room was plastered with basketball posters, ribbons and a championship jersey pinned to the wall. Basketball had always been the love of his out-of-school time. His dad couldn't figure out why the change of heart. He was especially

worried because the transition to high school wasn't going well on the academic front either. His son's grades were a lot lower than they had been in middle school.

Sheyla walked into the living room with tears in her eyes. "What's the matter?" her grandpa asked.

"I've been studying all night for my chemistry test tomorrow and there's no way I'm going to pass," she responded, sounding panicked.

"But you've been getting A's in the class all year! What makes you think this exam is going to be so different?"

"It just is! There is so much to memorize. I've gone through it a hundred times, but I'm sure I am missing something. This is going to be a disaster."

Sheyla didn't sleep at all the night before the exam and woke up early to study more for the test. She got through the exam, albeit with an intense stomach ache. When the tests were handed back the following week Sheyla had the highest grade in the class.

RMHS Drama's Shocktoberfest @ RMHS

- October 25 – (10:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build; (5:00 p.m.) RMHS Band & Color Guard Hosts NESBA Show @ Reading; (4:00 p.m.) Birch Meadow Spooky Fun Fair & Monster Mash
- October 27 - RETELL Administrator Course in the Distance Learning Room
- October 28 – (6:30 p.m.) Cooperative College Fair @ Shriners Auditorium in Wilmington
- October 29 – (7:30 p.m.) Financial Forum @ Senior Center
- October 30 – (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Session 4 in Distance Learning Room
- October 31 – Halloween
- November 1 – (8:00 a.m.) School Committee Retreat in the Superintendent's Conference Room; (10:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build

The cost of trying to be perfect

While there might be multiple reasons for Troy to want to quit the basketball team or Sheyla to panic before every exam, they likely have something in common: fear.

Sheyla's fear shows up as relentless overachieving and an almost desperate commitment to avoid mistakes. Troy's shows up as discouraged withdrawal and increasing levels of underachievement.

Perfectionism has many faces. Some perfectionist people, like Sheyla, are highly motivated, though highly stressed, "overachievers." Others, like Troy, shut down in the face of self-doubt and indecision. Both experience a profound fear of failure, judgement and mistakes.

If these scenarios sound familiar to you, it may be time to start learning more about perfectionism. While many think of perfectionism as hard wired, it is clear that positive change is possible.

That's why we are so grateful for the work of **Dr. Tom Greenspon**. Check out his book *Moving Past Perfect*, for an easy-to-read and comprehensive overview of what perfectionism is, where it comes from, and what we can do to move beyond it. His "**Perfectionism at a Glance Checklist**" can be a helpful starting place to reflect on your child's (and your own!) actions and thinking.

What is perfectionism?

Many successful people attribute their success and drive to perfectionism. Yet it is clear that people can be persistent, hardworking, and driven to succeed without experiencing the emotional burden of perfectionism. Moreover, perfectionism tends to undermine success over the long term.

So what distinguishes perfectionism from striving for excellence? The profound fear of mistakes.

It's not that nonperfectionists aren't disappointed or hurt by failure, but perfectionistic people are often devastated by it. Greenspon reminds us that,

"Striving for excellence is vitalizing and energizing, and it opens the possibility of continued growth. Perfectionism, by contrast, is deadening, bringing with it feelings of hopelessness and personal failure."

While we all want our children to succeed, we don't want that to come at the cost of their wellness and mental health. A Buddhist proverb reminds us "There are two kinds of fear. One keeps us alive. The other keeps us from living." We learn best and achieve the most when we can be resilient enough to learn from our mistakes.

Kudos and Accolades

- To the staff who were involved in MCAS presentations throughout the district this past week. Thank you for taking part in these discussions.
- To Kim Peterson, Alex Ballantyne, and Sarah Gilbert for their work in preparing the students for the Project Lead the Way Presentations at WPI last week.
- To the RMHS Football Team, under the direction of RMHS Head Coach and Teacher John Fiore, for their victory over Belmont, 42-0, on Friday evening.

What can you do?

If you think that you or your child is suffering from perfectionism, Greenspon suggest four elements of creating a "culture of acceptance" that will help your child move past perfect:

Empathy. It can be tempting to interpret your child's behavior through your own experience. For example, you might mistake your child's unwillingness to put in effort as laziness. Instead it might be a fear of failure behind the withdrawal. Work to better understand your child's emotions and experiences.

Encouragement. Reflect back to your child what you value about them and appreciate. Tie praise to your child's observable strengths and effort and normalize mistakes. Our **tips for effective praise** might be helpful.

Self-Reflection. Encourage your child to start reflecting on how they feel about mistakes, success, and judgment. Try using questions like, "What are your greatest fears in school?" or "What does a mistake mean to you?" or "Do you get anxious about the possibility of making mistakes?"

Dialogue within your family. It may become clear that your own perfectionism or inadvertent modeling is part of your child's challenge. This can be vulnerable for you too. Once you are engaged in dialogue you can start problem solving solutions together.

Another powerful antidote to debilitating fear of failure is the **growth mindset**. Check out our post about it here and let us know what you think!

You Think You Know What Teachers Do, Right? Wrong.

By: Valerie Strauss, *Washington Post*

You went to school so you think you know what teachers do, right? You are wrong. Here's a piece explaining all of this from Sarah Blaine, a mom, former teacher and full-time practicing attorney in New Jersey who writes at her [parentingthecore](#) blog, where this first appeared.

By Sarah Blaine

We all know what teachers do, right? After all, we were all students. Each one of us, each product of public education, we each sat through class after class for thirteen years. We encountered dozens of teachers. We had our kindergarten teachers and our first grade teachers and our fifth grade teachers and our gym teachers and our art teachers and our music teachers. We had our science teachers and our social studies teachers and our English teachers and our math teachers. If we were lucky, we might even have had our Latin teachers or our Spanish teachers or our physics teachers or our psychology teachers. Heck, I even had a seventh grade "Communications Skills" teacher. We had our guidance counselors and our principals and some of us had our special education teachers and our study hall monitors.

So we know teachers. We get teachers. We know what happens in classrooms, and we know what teachers do. We know which teachers are effective, we know

Quote of the Week....



"Don't limit yourself. Many people limit themselves to what they think they can do. You can go as far as your mind lets you. What you believe, remember, you can achieve."

Mary Kay Ash

which teachers left lasting impressions, we know which teachers changed our lives, and we know which teachers sucked. We know. We know which teachers changed lives for the better. We know which teachers changed lives for the worse.

Teaching as a profession has no mystery. It has no mystique. It has no respect. We were students, and therefore we know teachers. We denigrate teachers. We criticize teachers. We can do better than teachers. After all: We do. They teach. We are wrong.

We need to honor teachers. We need to respect teachers. We need to listen to teachers. We need to stop reducing teachers to arbitrary measurements of student growth on so-called objective exams.

Most of all, we need to stop thinking that we know anything about teaching merely by virtue of having once been students.

We don't know.

I spent a little over a year earning a master of arts in teaching degree. Then I spent two years teaching English Language Arts in a rural public high school. And I learned that my 13 years as a public school student, my 4 years as a college student at a highly selective college, and even a great deal of my year as a master's degree student in the education school of a flagship public university hadn't taught me how to manage a classroom, how to reach students, how to inspire a love of learning, how to teach. Eighteen years as a student (and a year of preschool before that), and I didn't know anything about teaching. Only years of practicing my skills and honing my skills would have rendered me a true professional. An expert. Someone who knows about the business of inspiring children. Of reaching students. Of making a difference. Of teaching. I didn't stay. I copped out. I left. I went home to suburban New Jersey, and a year later I enrolled in law school.

I passed the bar. I began to practice law at a prestigious large law firm. Three years as a law student had no more prepared me for the practice of law than 18 years of experience as a student had previously prepared me to teach. But even in my first year as a practicing attorney, I earned five times what a first-year teacher made in the district where I'd taught.

I worked hard in my first year of practicing law. But I didn't work five times harder than I'd worked in my first year of teaching. In fact, I didn't work any harder.

Maybe I worked a little less.

But I continued to practice. I continued to learn. Nine years after my law school graduation, I think I have some idea of how to litigate a case. But I am not a perfect lawyer. There is still more I could learn, more I could do, better legal instincts I could develop over time. I could hone my strategic sense. I could do better, be better. Learn more law. Learn more procedure. But law is a practice, law is a profession. Lawyers are expected to evolve over the course of their careers. Lawyers are given more responsibility as they earn it.

New teachers take on full responsibility the day they set foot in their first classrooms.

The people I encounter out in the world now respect me as a lawyer, as a professional, in part because the vast majority of them have absolutely no idea what I really do.

All of you former students who are not teachers and not lawyers, you have no more idea of what it is to teach than you do of what it is to practice law.

All of you former students: you did not design curricula, plan lessons, attend faculty meetings, assess papers, design rubrics, create exams, prepare report cards, and monitor attendance. You did not tutor students, review rough drafts, and create study questions. You did not assign homework. You did not write daily lesson objectives on the white board. You did not write poems of the week on the white board. You did not write homework on the white board. You did not learn to write legibly on the white board while simultaneously making sure that none of your students threw a chair out a window.

You did not design lessons that succeeded. You did not design lessons that failed.

You did not learn to keep your students quiet during lock down drills.

You did not learn that your 15-year-old students were pregnant from their answers to vocabulary quizzes. You did not learn how to teach functionally illiterate high school students to appreciate Shakespeare. You did not design lessons to teach students close reading skills by starting with the lyrics to pop songs. You did not miserably fail your honors level students at least in part because you had no books to give them. You did not struggle to teach your students how to develop a thesis for their essays, and bask in the joy of having taught a successful lesson, of having gotten through to them, even for five minutes. You did not struggle with trying to make SAT-level vocabulary relevant to students who did not have a single college in their county. You did not laugh — because you so desperately wanted to cry — when you read some of the absurdities on their final exams. You did not struggle to reach students who proudly announced that they only came to school so that their mom's food stamps didn't get reduced.

You did not spend all of New Years' Day crying five years after you'd left the classroom because you reviewed The New York Times' graphic of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan and learned that one of your very favorite students had been killed in Iraq two years before. And you didn't know. Because you copped out and left. So you cried, helplessly, and the next day you returned to the practice of law.

You did not. And you don't know. You observed. Maybe you learned. But you didn't teach.

The problem with teaching as a profession is that every single adult citizen of this country thinks that they know what teachers do. And they don't. So they prescribe solutions, and they develop public policy, and they editorialize, and they politicize. And they don't listen to those who do know. Those who could teach. The teachers.

It's Flu Season

The following information has been shared with school districts about the enterovirus, flu season, and Ebola virus from the United States Department of Education. If you have any questions, please contact the your child's school nurse or the Reading Public School's Director of Nurses Lynn Dunn at lynn.dunn@reading.k12.ma.us.

Enterovirus

Every year, millions of children in the United States get enterovirus infections that can cause coughing, sneezing, and fever. This year, children throughout the country have gotten sick with respiratory illnesses caused by enterovirus D-68 (EV-D68). EV-D68 is one of many enteroviruses that often spread in the summer and fall. It's not a new virus, but it hasn't been very common in the past. However, this year, EV-D68 is the most common enterovirus that's going around.

Since you may not have heard of EV-D68 before, better understanding of how to prevent the virus and the symptoms that this virus can cause can help you protect your children.

What are the signs and symptoms of EV-D68?

Most children who get infected with EV-D68 may have cold-like symptoms, like fever, runny nose, sneezing, coughing, and body and muscle aches. More severe symptoms include wheezing and difficulty breathing. Children with asthma are at risk for severe symptoms from EV-D68.

How can I protect my children/students?

You can help protect yourself and others from respiratory illnesses, including EV-D68, by following these steps:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils, with people who are sick, or when you are sick
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or shirt sleeve, not your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick
- Stay home when you are sick and keep sick children home from school

Could my child get EV-D68?

EV-D68 spreads when people infected with the virus cough, sneeze, or touch surfaces that are then touched by others. In general, infants, children, and teenagers are at higher risk than adults for getting infected and sick with enteroviruses like EV-D68. That's because they have not been exposed to these types of viruses before, and they do not yet have immunity (protection) built up to fight the disease. If your child has asthma, he or she may be at greater risk for severe respiratory illness from EV-D68.

If your child has asthma, CDC recommends you do the following to help maintain control of your child's asthma during this time:

- Discuss and update your child's asthma action plan with your child's doctor (usually pulmonologist or pediatrician).

Disney Tweet of the Week



"Never look back. If Cinderella went back to pick up her shoe, she wouldn't have become a princess."

Walt Disney

- Make sure your child takes prescribed asthma medications as directed, especially long term control medication(s).
- Make sure your child knows to keep asthma reliever medication with him or her or has access to it at all times.
- Get your child a flu vaccine, since flu can trigger an asthma attack.
- If your child develops new or worsening asthma symptoms, follow the steps in his or her asthma action plan. If your symptoms do not go away, call your child's doctor right away.
- Make sure caregiver(s) and/or teacher(s) are aware of the child's condition, and that they know how to help if the he or she experiences any symptoms related to asthma.
- Call your child's doctor if he or she is having difficulty breathing, if you feel you are unable to control symptoms, or if symptoms are getting worse.

Summary for EV-D68

There is no specific treatment for EV-D68. Talk to your child's doctor about the best way to control his or her symptoms.

Remember, that while this has been a big year for EV-D68 infections, CDC expects the number of cases to taper off by late fall. But even after cases of EV-D68 begin to decrease, parents and children should continue to follow basic steps to stay healthy, such as frequent hand washing and avoiding touching their faces with unwashed hands. To help your family stay healthy this fall and winter, CDC recommends that everyone age 6 months and older get an annual flu vaccine. For more information on:

- EV-D68, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/about/EV-D68.html>
- Enteroviruses, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/>
- EV-D68 in the U.S., visit <http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/outbreaks/EV-D68-outbreaks.html>

Flu Season is Upon Us

Remember too, as enterovirus season is expected to taper off, flu activity usually begins to increase in October. While there is not a vaccine to prevent illness from enteroviruses, the single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year. Many resources for parents and others can be found on the [CDC flu web site](#). CDC recommends that **ALL** children 6 months old or older get a flu vaccine.

Ebola Virus

Finally, we know your communities may also have questions about what schools can do to keep students and adults safe from the Ebola virus. The CDC is continually updating its information on Ebola, information that can be found here: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>.

The Office of Safe and Healthy Students has a number of materials available regarding Readiness and Emergency Management of Schools in crisis situations, and those materials can be found here: <http://rem.sde.gov/>. One resource at this web link is steps the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) has taken to keep parents and community partners continually updated on the Ebola situation there, including establishing a web site: <http://www.dallasisd.org/healthupdates>.

Additional materials developed by the DISD Communications Team included there are:

Parent Letter — English

Parent Letter — Spanish

Ebola FAQ

Talking with Children about Ebola

Recognizing and Reducing Signs of Anxiety in Times of Crisis

Reading Public School Happenings

Last Sunday, Wood End Grade 2 Teacher Isabella Jordan completed the BAA Half Marathon to support the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. Congratulations to Isabella for raising over \$1700 to support cancer research and for running the half marathon in 1:56:12.



With courage and hope, the goal is a cure.

The Varsity and Junior Varsity Field Hockey teams (See picture below) hosted their 25th annual Homecoming Event against the Lexington Minute maids. Reading Varsity won 3 to 1. Lexington JV won 2 to 0. Following the games a cookout was enjoyed by all players and fans.

The event was held in memory of Patrice Ahearn. Patrice was a member of the 1994 Division 1 north section field hockey championship team. As the starting right back, Patrice was a steady player who in her senior year earned the team's Most Improved Award. Leaving high school behind, Patrice majored in elementary education and was teaching fourth grade when, at the age of 27, her breast cancer was first diagnosed. Patrice, the teammate who always had a smile in every timeout, who always could be depended on to be there when needed, fought like a champion. Five days before her 33rd birthday, Patrice succumbed to breast cancer.

We ask that all women remember. Breast cancer is not just a disease of mothers and grandmothers. Young women must also be educated and vigilant.

Photo and Story by Brian Mahoney



Reading PLTW Presentations

On Friday, October 17, 2014, Worcester Polytechnic Institute hosted a Project Lead The Way Conference for 160 educators in the New England states. Reading Public Schools' Gateway to Engineering (MS) and Pathways to Engineering (HS) programs were showcased at this year's conference. Sarah Gilbert and Kim Peterson presented with Abigail Bacci, Nathan Cannon, Mareck Damiano, Sam Faulkner, Molly Jones, Jacob Lim, and Andrew Yatsuhashi in a session titled "Engineering in Action: a School's Perspective on this Middle School PLTW Curriculum". Alex Ballantyne presented with students Tim Fitzgerald, Colin Hetherington, Shaylyn Kelly, Caitlin Mahoney, Will Myers, Chirag Patel and Douglas Wilson in a session titled "Engineering in Action: a School's Perspective on this High School PLTW Curriculum". RMHS engineering students were the primary speakers for these two presentations, showcasing the PLTW programs in Reading Schools by talking about their experience, presenting work from their courses and discussing how their engineering coursework has influenced their choices of extracurricular activities and personal projects.



Contact Us

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

john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us



Stepping Stones....

- **We welcome the** following new hires to our school district:
 - ✓ Vittoria Penna, Regular Education Tutor, Barrows
 - ✓ Christopher Clements, Long-Term Substitute, Coolidge
 - ✓ Benjamin Owens, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Richard Lindsey, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Joan Ferranti, Subsitute, District
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Stipend Position, ELL Coordinator, Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #1106042
Regular Education Tutor (2), Barrows Elementary School	JOB ID #1108192

- **RCASA World Café Discussion on Opiates-** The Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse, the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition, and Senator Jason Lewis are co-hosting an important conversation about the serious issues surrounding substance abuse in our cities and towns. This discussion will take place on **October 23rd at 7pm at the Reading Memorial High School Field House**. The goal of this World Café is to facilitate an open conversation with individuals from all sectors who have been impacted by or who have an interest in the issue of substance abuse and prevention. The feedback we gather through this event promises to be incredibly useful for the community as we explore ways to more effectively address this serious and growing issue on multiple levels. Please RSVP by emailing Erica McNamara at emcnamara@ci.reading.ma.us or contact Ally Kuriloff at (617) 722-1206 or allison.kuriloff@masenate.gov with questions.
- **Reading Adopt a Family Program-**Reading neighbors have been generously helping to create happier holidays for each other for over 28 years through the Adopt-A-Family Program. Donors are anonymously matched with families in need of holiday food and/or gifts. Recipient families must have a child under 18 years old and be able to demonstrate financial need to participate. To be a part of this great program, call 781-942-6658 or email ReadingAAF@gmail.com . This program is coordinated by Reading Cares and the Reading Rotary.

Blazing Trails....

"13 Questions All Curriculum Leaders Should Be Asking." "Surely leadership in curriculum differs from management in curriculum, yet I suspect that few people with curricular responsibilities appreciate how different the two really are -- and why real curriculum leadership is sorely needed," writes ASCD author Grant Wiggins. In a recent ASCD Inservice post, Wiggins provides a sneak peek into his upcoming Conference on Educational Leadership session and shares 13 questions curriculum leaders should be asking before, during and after curriculum writing. [Read More](#)

"How School Leaders Can Use a Survey to Assess Learning Team Success." School leaders using survey data to improve teacher practice must ensure results are open and nonjudgmental, educator and author Bill Ferriter advises. In this blog post, Ferriter offers a sample professional-learning survey administrators can use to gather data on learning teams to measure what's working and which areas need improvement. [Read More](#)

"Engagement Rises When Students Research Their Own Topics." Middle-grades educator Sarah Cooper in this blog post describes how allowing students time to research potential topics for a project before selecting one improved their engagement and work quality. She also includes the steps of her lesson and links to resources. "This initial investment of time paid off in student engagement throughout the several weeks of the project," she writes. [Read More](#)

"Ideas on Teaching News Literacy." Educators at a New York City middle school are using their summer training with Stony Brook University's Center for News Literacy to teach students how to evaluate and find credible news articles for cross-curricular assignments. Rory O'Connor, director of the Digital Resource Center there, in this blog post describes the schoolwide news literacy program, and offers sample lessons and links to resources for teaching news literacy. [Read More](#)

"Writing Six-Word Memoirs with a Comics Twist." Kevin Hodgson assumed his students would enjoy writing Six Word Memoirs, particularly using the tools at their classroom comics website. What he didn't expect was the level of enthusiasm. Even struggling writers dove into the concept, creating a wide range of (very) short stories. Hodgson includes resources other teachers can check out as they consider the activity. [Read More](#)

"Why Finland's Schools are Top-Notch." For some, education in Finland is utopia: a dreamland where teaching is the most desired profession, authorities trust schools and political parties agree on the direction of educational reforms. For others, they are surprised to hear that in Finland children don't start school until they are 7 years old. They have less homework than their peers in other countries. A child's socioeconomic background is less of an impediment to academic performance. And there is only one standardized test, which is administered in the final year of high school. What are the main factors that prevent American students from achieving the kind of success that Finnish students attain? In this CNN article, Pasi Sahlberg will explain why and more. [Read More](#)

Have a great week!