



# Pathways

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

January 18, 2015

Volume 1, Number 21

## Upcoming Dates

- January 18 - (2:00 p.m.) Coolidge Middle School Drama Production - Anne of Green Gables in the Endsow PAC
- January 19 - (10:00 a.m.) Martin Luther King Day Celebration at RMHS
- January 20 - 23 RMHS Mid-Terms/Real World Problem Solving
- January 20 - Kindergarten Changeover; (7:00 p.m. Reading Special Education PAC Workshop in the CMS Multipurpose Room
- January 21 - (2:30 p.m.) Secondary Building Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Capston Session 1 in Distance Learning Room; (6:30 p.m.) RETELL Capston Session 2 in Distance Learning Room;
- January 22 - (3:00 p.m.) Home Grown Writers Institute; Elementary Building Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Capston Session 3 in Distance Learning Room; (6:30 p.m.) RETELL Capston Session 4 in Distance Learning

## FY16 Budget Update

Last Monday and Thursday evenings, Superintendent of Schools John Doherty and Director of Finance and Operations Martha Sybert presented the remaining cost centers (Regular Day, Special Education, District Wide Services, School/Town Facilities) of the FY16 Superintendent's Recommended Budget. The power point for the presentations is located below. On Thursday this week, there will be a Public Hearing (7:00 p.m., School Committee Conference Room) on the FY16 budget, followed by questions and discussions by the School Committee. All are invited to attend. On Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, the School Committee is scheduled to vote on the FY16 Budget. Once the budget has been approved by the School Committee, the budget is given to the Town Manager. The Town Manager's role is to develop an overall Town budget that is within the fiscal realities of the community. In March, the School Committee presents their budget to the Finance Committee, who has the role of advising Town Meeting on the financial aspects of the budget. Town Meeting will convene in late April to vote on all of the Town budgets. By statute, Town Meeting can only vote on the bottom line of the School Committee budget and cannot change individual line items. They can add or remove funding from the bottom line.



FY16  
Superintendents Bud



**ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY CELEBRATION  
MONDAY, JANUARY 19TH, MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY**

- Room; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting FY16 Budget Public Hearing & Discussion; (7:00 p.m.) Grade 8 Music Department Orientation in the Endslow PAC
- January 24 – SAT Test Day – Reading is NOT a test center; (10:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build; (2:30 p.m.) RMHS Music – All-State Auditions in Shrewsbury
- January 25 – Start of the Second Semester – High and Middle Schools; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting FY16 Budget School Committee Vote
- January 27 - (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Make-Up Session 1 in Distance Learning Room
- January 28 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (1:15 p.m.) Elementary PLC Meetings; (1:25 p.m.) High School PLC Meetings; (1:30 p.m.) Middle School PLC Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Make-Up Session 2 in Distance Learning Room; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Future Freshman Night
- January 29 – (3:00 p.m.) Home Grown Writers in Reading; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Make-Up Session 3 in Distance Learning Room
- January 30 – (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Band

**READING MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
LIGHT BREAKFAST STARTING AT 9:30; PERFORMANCE STARTING AT 10.  
FREE; ALL AGES WELCOME!**

Please join us as the Reading Human Relations Advisory Committee and the Reading Public Schools host a free multi-community celebration and light breakfast on Martin Luther King Day. The celebration will include exhibits of student and community outreach, as well as the performances of community and school groups. An exciting addition to this year's event will be an energizing multi-media presentation by Rob Surette of [amazingheroart.com](http://amazingheroart.com). This nationally acclaimed local portrait artist will perform as he has for Oprah and the White House, painting historic role models such as Martin Luther King and Leonard Zakim. He will inspire the audience to "Be Somebody" and "Stand Together for Justice." Bring your families to "Stand Together" and enjoy this free celebration!

Please write an experience in the footprints below of a time someone has helped you or you have helped someone else. Bring your stories with you to the celebration and post them alongside others. Join our effort to illustrate how we all "Stand Together" for justice and against hate!

Many thanks to Eastern Bank, The Reading and Massachusetts Cultural Councils, and Moynihan Lumber for funding this event.

For more information, check out the Facebook Page: [Annual Martin Luther King Day Celebration 2015 Reading, MA](http://Annual Martin Luther King Day Celebration 2015 Reading, MA) or email: [rhrac867@gmail.com](mailto:rhrac867@gmail.com)

### Don't Wait

*Recently, Kelly Johnson, an 18 year old Senior at Recovery High School in Beverly and a Reading resident, passed away from her battle with substance abuse. Diana Levacheur, a parent of a student at Recovery High School, and a Reading resident, wrote this emotional and powerful set of thoughts and has given us permission to share it with the greater Reading Community.*

*Our thoughts go out to the Johnson family on the loss of her daughter.*

By: Diana LaVancher

Last Saturday I attended 18 year old Kelly Johnson's funeral at St. Augustine Chapel in Andover, MA. Bless her parents for speaking openly in her obituary of her battle with substance abuse. Bless the priest Reverend Gori for commanding them and going further saying in a voice reverberating through the church and in me still, "If you think that you or your family and friends are immune to the disease of substance abuse- you are sadly mistaken."

Bless all the children and their families who are at this moment struggling with any and all the issues relating to substance abuse.

Anyone who's been around the recovery block knows kids don't start off shooting

## Coffee House

- January 31 – (10:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build; RMHS Music – Jr. District Auditions in Methuen

heroin. It would be one thing if we had an MCAS test to discern which kids were going to dabble in pot and alcohol and go down the slippery path towards heroin and opiate abuse. Nor can we predict with impunity which kids will struggle with depression, anxiety, be diagnosed as bi polar, or what type of medication and/or therapy might be effective with which kid.

But here are a few thoughts I've had this new year.

First of all- to parents and kids- we are NOT alone. Walk down any street in any town/city and if you are willing to engage someone in a conversation about substance abuse you will find almost everyone knows somebody who knows somebody.....if they haven't already experienced its consequences firsthand.

What we DO know is that rehab and treatment are no guarantee for recovery, nor is counseling, nor are medications, nor of course is anyone's denial. It's clear there is some type of downward trajectory that seems to happen over a period of time. And that we are no longer talking high school age, we're talking junior high and sometimes elementary school- These are kids who haven't yet dealt straight up with the "normal" issues facing adolescents - They never got to navigate their way through to the other side of those issues sans drugs- So if your son or daughter becomes sober and is trying to maintain sobriety- remember - they are having to learn to negotiate their way through an entire emotional landscape without the usual "tools".... they relied on. Don't be deceived by numerical age.

On the other hand these kids have lived through more of the suffering of life than we can imagine- or at times even bear to consider. When they do battle with this disease it is a full-fledged war against demons without and within.

Maybe you've had tastes of what I'm referring to- or even whole entire meals.... Your kid is more withdrawn, school attendance and grades drop off, there's less accountability for time, not enough checking in, "disappearing", angry outbursts, lots of lying. There's pot/alcohol use- not just a weekend here and there, but every weekend, and then weekdays-There's the standard intractable denial on all sides- it's really not a "problem", you're aware of it, it's just a phase, maybe you don't want to intrude on "privacy" and check their room, check their texts, call other parents and verify where they are.....

And then begins the stealing at which point there's more going on than we ever imagined.

Of course there's the trajectory of parents' responses-eventually leading to trying every kind of treatment you can afford (and those you "can't", but do anyway)- There's of course the MGH Arms Program and Children's Hospital's ASAP Program, there's McLean's 2 week in patient- if you can get a bed there, wilderness programs, residential treatment programs if you are lucky enough to have insurance that will cover them-- and with money you can even hire someone to the tune of \$5,000-10,000 to help you choose which treatment program might work for your kid. There's also the chance you will find a decent adolescent psychiatrist- not private pay, and even a counselor or social worker that connects with your kid

## **Kudos and Accolades**

- To the cast and crew of the Coolidge Middle School production of Anne of Green Gables for an outstanding performance this past weekend. Also, to Producer/Director, Lori Loussedes, Assistant Director Stephen MacDonald, and Music Director Samantha Prindiville on a job well done.
- RMHS Sports Teams were busy this past week, with Boys Swimming, Girls Hockey, Boys Track, Gymnastics and Wrestling all winning. Boys Track came in 3rd at the Division 2 Relays at Reggie Lewis on Sunday. Boys Hockey earned a tie against Woburn on a last second goal.
- To all of the teachers, parents and administrators who participated in the School Committee budget meetings this past week. Your presence and participation is appreciated.

(which is worth more than can be measured).

There's also Alanon, COPE, Smart Recovery- all of which can provide needed support and resources but maybe even more significantly- places where parents can see tangibly how many others are affected by this also--that they and their kids aren't "the only ones" in this boat.

Maintaining sobriety is so damn difficult at any age, but think about what it must be like for a teen to first acknowledge problem, consider a lifetime of sobriety- it's too huge to wrap your head around. Not to mention- there must be things that make sobriety worth battling for. If we aren't encouraging other interests and activities- meaning literally FUNDING them, how can we truly be fostering sobriety?

There are so many angles to the disease of substance abuse and just as many varied approaches to addressing it. It's easy to get completely lost in any one aspect- anywhere along the continuum- There is so much to think about and often we are too busy treading water to really step back and have a bigger perspective, it's too personal and for so long we seem to be right in the thick of it.

My final point here is to illuminate one fairly underutilized option right under our noses which deserves recognition AND assistance. Recovery High Schools-There are 3 in this state-Amen for those of us living in Massachusetts, because many states don't have the funding for this option. Recovery High Schools aren't panaceas, but they are often a hope, a last hope, a first hope- that a kid can get help in the community- or nearby. They are a sorely neglected option in the recovery repertoire. They are in need of our help.

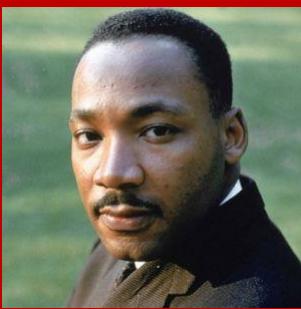
I say this having a teenager who has attended the North Shore Recovery High School for the past 2 years- I say this despite all my previous fears of lower academic standards, of- oh no he'll be surrounded by other kids using who knows what. I say this because anyone who has been desperately searching for something to help their kids have a chance, is willing to try almost anything.

Good news-There are a group of people working there committed heart and soul to helping our kids- specifically with dealing with substance abuse. One doesn't see this kind of thing every day of the week- and when kids are getting lost in the shuffle in huge mega high schools this is a place where everyone from the school janitor to teachers, support staff, counselors, and principal- all know your kid and are trying to have his/her back.

All this is no guarantee for sobriety- but it is comforting and has a shot at helping. Providing daily structure, compassion, support, small individualized classes, fostering kid's interests in the arts while also addressing the substance abuse and mental health issues does have an impact- not to mention being in a school where you can't quite disappear- or if you do- people go looking.

When Reverend Gori spoke about love of neighbor- that's what North Shore Recovery High doesn't just espouse. It lives it- in sickness and in health, in life and death. These are people who will be there to rejoice at your kid's graduation and yes- be there to tell their story- to be their witness if that is what is required. They

## Quote of the Week....



**“There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor political, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.”**

**Martin Luther King**

cannot do it alone- They need our support and funding.

One can't help but be inspired by the brave struggle of so many of these kids and those around them. Kelly Johnson and all our kids deserve our love, compassion, and help-if not now, when.

Diana LaVancher

Reading, MA

## **Helping Students Identify a Moral Fork in the Road**

In this article in *Education Week*, veteran educator Thomas Bonnell describes a conversation he had when he was a middle-school principal with a student who was caught cheating on a history test. Asked to walk through the sequence of events leading up to this choice, the boy said he'd been busy studying for other tests, had an English paper due the day before, and was so exhausted from a basketball game that evening that he fell asleep rather than studying for the history test. "So why not just tell your history teacher at the beginning of class that you weren't prepared for the test and why?" asked Bonnell. "Maybe he would have allowed you to postpone it and maybe he wouldn't, but at least he would have known why you didn't do well."

The boy replied, "I guess I was just too afraid to fail." Bonnell: "Did you realize that, when you decided to cheat, you took a problem which was fairly limited – an F on one test, in one subject – and raised it to a much more serious problem, one which has to do with your character and integrity?" The boy said he was so concerned about failing the test that he didn't think about crossing this moral threshold.

During this conversation, Bonnell made a mental note to check with the eighth-grade coordinator, who was supposed to keep students from being overwhelmed with academic and other demands. "Surely part of our professional obligation as a school is to be mindful of the total workload we place upon our students' shoulders," he says. "When we are mindless about this, we set students up for failure and for making mistakes of moral judgment." Yet, inevitably, students will confront moral forks in the road. How can we best prepare them to take the right path?

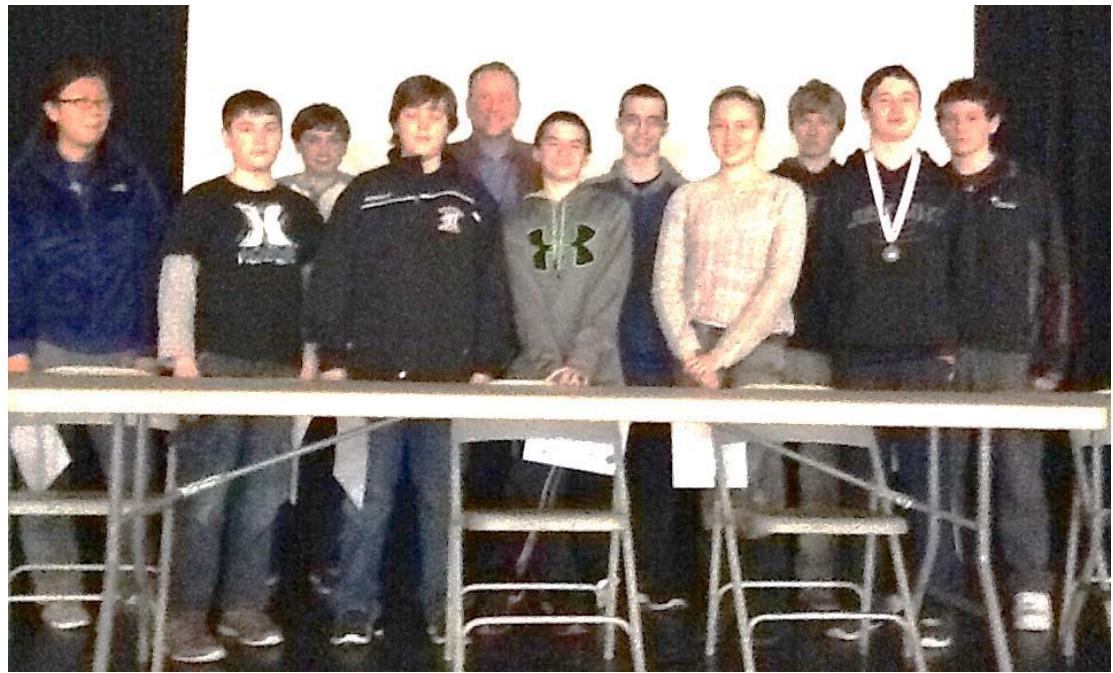
"The Importance of Grasping the Moral Threshold" by Thomas Bonnell in *Education Week*, January 7, 2015 (Vol. 34, #15, p. 26-27), [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org). Reprinted from Marshall Memo 569.

## **Reading Public School Happenings**

### **Coolidge Geography Bee**

The Coolidge Annual Geography Bee took place on Tuesday, January 13th. The photo below shows the ten finalists, who were Matt Ream, James Rigney, Zach Abruzzese, Youngwon Choi, Nick Brown, Brett Senders, Matt Koury, Michael

Donnelly, Sarah Murphy and Coltan Tangney. The winner of the school-wide bee was Michael Donnelly. A special thanks goes out to Assistant Superintendent Craig Martin for moderating the Geography Bee.



### Parker Footprints Activity to be displayed at MLK Event

Last week, Parker students participated in the "Footprint Activity" as a Core Values activity where students wrote about times that they stood up for someone, or someone stood up for them. They will be displayed at the MLK Day event on Monday. Special thanks to Parker Teacher Julie Merrill for coordinating this event.



## Disney Tweet of the Week



**“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift, that’s why it’s called the present.”**

**Winnie the Pooh**

## **RMHS Robotics Team News and Information**

This past week, FRC Team 4761, “The Robockets” moved into their new larger space in the basement of RMHS. This space is about three times larger than the small room that the team has occupied for the past 2 years, which The Robuckets are very thankful for. The move was just in time for the team’s kickoff event and the start of the team’s build season. Along with the move, as a result of increased team sponsorship, we were able to get many new tools and equipment to build this year’s new robot, for the new game including a CNC router from our fellow FRC Team 125 The Nutrons. We are very excited to begin working on this year’s challenge in our new space with all our new tools! Many thanks to everyone who has supported us!

The 2015 FIRST Robotics game challenge is called Recycle Rush. The game is a recycling-themed game played by two Alliances of three robotics teams each. Alliances compete simultaneously to score points by stacking Totes on Scoring Platforms, topping those stacks with Recycling Containers, and properly disposing of Litter (represented by pool noodles), in designated locations. The game is played in two parts; Autonomous Period (when the robots operate on code alone) and Teleoperated Period (when the student drive team controls the robot). Teams on an Alliance work together to place as many Totes on their Scoring Platforms as possible. Alliances earn additional points for Recycling Containers placed on the scored Totes, with Recycling Containers at greater heights earning more points. Alliances also earn points for disposing of their Litter in either their Landfill Zone or placing Litter in or on scored Recycling Containers. To earn the most points, Alliances must be versatile and work together in this Recycle Rush.

Reading Memorial High School looks forward to hosting an official FIRST Robotics Event in the fieldhouse on March 6th-8th. At this event, 40 New England FIRST Robotics teams will come to Reading to compete in the Recycle Rush game challenge. The whole community is welcome to attend this free event. Matches will be occurring throughout each day. As a huge STEM and community outreach opportunity, this is an exciting event for the Robuckets and we hope to see you there! To follow our team and to learn more about the upcoming season, please visit our website ([www.robuckets.org](http://www.robuckets.org)), like us on Facebook (FRC Team 4761 “The Robuckets”), and/or follow us on Twitter (@FRC4761).



## Stepping Stones....

- Our thoughts go out to RMHS Teacher Paula Graham on the loss of a close family member this past week.
- We welcome the following new hires to our school district:
  - ✓ Meghan Picanco, 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher, RMHS
- We have posted a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit [www.schoolspring.com](http://www.schoolspring.com) to view the job details.

0.5 FTE Assistant Boys Ice Hockey Coach, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #1222172
Special Education Paraeducator Long-Term Substitute, Wood End Elementary School	JOB ID #1220282
0.9 FTE Physical Education Teacher, Wood End Elementary School	JOB ID #1220312
0.5 FTE Assistant Girls Spring Track Coach, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #1228612

- **BASIC RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**-A Workshop for Parents and Professionals on January 20th at 7:00 p.m. at the Coolidge Middle School. For flyer click on this link: [http://www.edline.net/files/\\_AFIZ0/\\_62f6a918fd0324ef3745a49013852ec4/Flyer\\_Basic\\_Rights\\_2.pdf](http://www.edline.net/files/_AFIZ0/_62f6a918fd0324ef3745a49013852ec4/Flyer_Basic_Rights_2.pdf)
- **RMHS GYMNASTICS TEAM ZINGA FUNDRAISER - JANUARY 24<sup>TH</sup>**-For flyer click on this link: [http://www.edline.net/files/\\_AOAdn/\\_8d56d04bd570d8e53745a49013852ec4/RMHS\\_Gymnastics\\_-\\_Zinga\\_1.24\\_15.pdf](http://www.edline.net/files/_AOAdn/_8d56d04bd570d8e53745a49013852ec4/RMHS_Gymnastics_-_Zinga_1.24_15.pdf)
- **RMHS CHORUS AND CLUB MINI GOLF FUNDRAISER - FEBRUARY 27<sup>TH</sup>**-Join us for a round of mini golf RMHS style. Click on link for flyer: [http://www.edline.net/files/\\_AOAXq/\\_cdb96d1fb845552e3745a49013852ec4/RMHS\\_Chorus\\_-\\_minigolf\\_flyer\\_2\\_27\\_2015.pdf](http://www.edline.net/files/_AOAXq/_cdb96d1fb845552e3745a49013852ec4/RMHS_Chorus_-_minigolf_flyer_2_27_2015.pdf)
- **READING PUBLIC LIBRARY IS TEAMING UP WITH THE RMHS FRENCH CLUB - FRENCH FOR KIDS**-A four week French program for children in grades K - 3. Click on this link for flyer: [http://www.edline.net/files/\\_AFIY0/\\_4b710062b04e0b133745a49013852ec4/RPL\\_-\\_French\\_Class\\_flyer\\_2015.pdf](http://www.edline.net/files/_AFIY0/_4b710062b04e0b133745a49013852ec4/RPL_-_French_Class_flyer_2015.pdf)
- **RMHS BAND & WINTER GUARD BERTUCCI'S FUNDRAISER**-January 25th. Present flyer that can be found at this link: [http://www.edline.net/files/\\_AIJtZ/\\_c592ce19f11f46f13745a49013852ec4/RMHS\\_band\\_-\\_bertuccis\\_fundraiser\\_2015.pdf](http://www.edline.net/files/_AIJtZ/_c592ce19f11f46f13745a49013852ec4/RMHS_band_-_bertuccis_fundraiser_2015.pdf)
- **GIRLS ICE HOCKEY FUNDRAISER - JANUARY 30<sup>TH</sup>**-Come to Candlewood Lanes for an afternoon of fun with the girls ice hockey team. For more information click on this link: [http://www.edline.net/files/\\_APKz4/\\_dc24862c42e27d9b3745a49013852ec4/RMHS\\_-\\_Girls\\_Hockey.pdf](http://www.edline.net/files/_APKz4/_dc24862c42e27d9b3745a49013852ec4/RMHS_-_Girls_Hockey.pdf)
- **2015-16 SCHOOL YEAR RISE PRESCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS** -R.I.S.E. Preschool - Reading Integrated Preschool Experience  
Enrolling for the Fall of 2015 (from 1/15/2015 - 1/30/2015)
  - \* Three-Day and Five-Day Programs Available
  - \* Before & After Care Options at the High School site

Please contact 781-942-9179 for more information or visit our website  
[http://www.edline.net/pages/Rise\\_Preschool](http://www.edline.net/pages/Rise_Preschool)

## Blazing Trails....

**"ASCD EDge Top 10 Blog Posts of 2014."** As 2014 came to a close, it was time to look back and reflect upon yet another year. Each year on ASCD EDge, community members share new ideas and innovations to support each other in their practice. In this blog post, they count down the top 10 ASCD EDge blog posts of 2014. [Read More](#)

**"Focus on Skills, Not Tools, in the Classroom."** Schools must invest in technology in order to remain relevant, 21st-century learning spaces, according to National Board Certified Teacher Bill Ferriter. He writes in this blog post that teachers must have a plan to use the technology tools to help students build the skills needed to enhance their learning. [Read More](#)

**"Collaboration is Key for this New Massachusetts Principal."** Visiting classes, revamping curriculum and promoting a collaborative workplace for teachers and staff are the new leadership strategies Massachusetts middle-school principal Helder Angelo is employing ten weeks into his new job. Angelo says he will work with teachers and administrators to improve instruction and seek to increase parent involvement in school activities. [Read More](#)

**"Encourage Engineered Learning."** "Any learning experience can become an opportunity to reflect and improve -- not just an opportunity to simply get the work done," writes instructional support specialist Denise Hudson. In a recent ASCD Express article, Hudson explains when teachers experience the engineering design process first hand, they see how it can apply to and refine their approach to any lesson or unit. [Read More](#)

**"How to Move from Teaching Content to Teaching Learning."** "Despite being a fairly universal goal of educators and education systems, producing lifelong learners is not a process that has a set of concrete steps," writes ASCD Inservice guest blogger Kelly Morgan Dempewolf. In a recent Inservice post, Dempewolf shares ways educators can help students move from teaching content to teaching learning. She also discusses the benefits of student-paced mastery. [Read More](#)

**"Students Learn about International Culture by Connecting with Peers Online."** Illinois middle schoolers in an international studies class connect with their peers in Norway, France and Canada through free videoconferencing software and social media. Recently, eighth-graders talked with their "keypals" in Norway, asking about holiday traditions, favorite sports, YouTube videos and Norwegian language and customs. [Read More](#)

***Have a Great Week!***

### Contact Us

The Pathways newsletter is published weekly for the Reading Public School 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