



Pathways

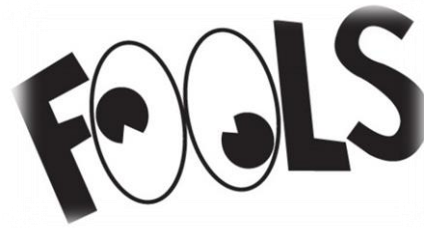
A Weekly Collection of Information, Thoughts, Reflections and Accolades for the Reading Public School Community

February 1, 2015

Volume 1, Number 21

Upcoming Dates

- February 1 – (12:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Q2Q in the Endslo PAC
- February 2 – (3:15 p.m.) Expanding the Boundaries of Teaching and Learning Class; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting
- February 3 – (7:00 p.m.) PARCC Community Information Session @ Coolidge
- February 4 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (1:30 p.m.) District PLC Meetings at Middle School Level; (2:30 p.m.) District PLC Meetings at High School Level; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Session 1 in Distance Learning Room; (5:00 p.m.) Parker School Council Meeting; (7:00 p.m.) Parker PTO Meeting; (7:00 p.m.) PARCC Community Information Session @ Parker
- February 5 – (3:00 p.m.) Elementary Staff Meetings
- February 6 – (6:00 p.m.) Birch Meadow Intercultural Potluck Dinner; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Production – Fools –



A Comic Fable

By Neil Simon

Dear Colleagues,

On February 6th, 7th, and 8th the Drama Club of Reading Memorial High School will present Neil Simon's **Fools**. Set in the small village of Kulyenchikov, the story follows Leon Steponovich Tolchinsky, a charming schoolteacher who takes a new job educating Sophia, the daughter of the village doctor. Leon soon learns that there is a curse on the village that makes everyone 'foolish', but complications ensue when Leon falls in love with his pupil! Many of your current and former students are among the cast and crew of this fast paced, high energy, slap stick, farce. The Drama Club is glad to welcome guest director Mr. Jeff Mitchell as the directing force behind **Fools**. With only one weekend of shows, be sure not to miss out on this year's comedic offering!

As always, we would love to invite you to a performance to support our students.

If you would like to purchase a ticket, please go to our website **www.ticketstage.com**.

You could also contact me at **natalie.cunha@reading.k12.ma.us** to reserve tickets and they could be held for you at the box office.

Thank you for your continued support of the Drama Club as your commitment and enthusiasm helps to make each show a positive experience for our students.

Natalie Cunha

Drama Club Advisor

in the Endslo PAC

- February 7 – (8:00 a.m.) First Lego League Competition @ Coolidge; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Production – Fools – in the Endslo PAC
- February 8 – (2:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Production – Fools – in the Endslo PAC
- February 9 – (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Choral Department Game Night in Music Suite; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- February 10 – (7:00 p.m.) Future freshman Night in the RMHS PAC; (7:00 p.m.) Joshua Eaton World Café
- February 11 – (2:30 p.m.) RMHS District Level PLC Meetings; (3:00 p.m.) Middle School District Level PLC Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Session 2 in Distance Learning Room;
- February 12 - (3:15 p.m.) Elementary District Level PLC Meetings; RMHS Jazz Band Festival in Norwood
- February 14 – (10:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build

FY16 Budget Approved by School Committee

On Thursday evening, the Reading School Committee approved the Superintendent's Recommended Budget, totaling \$41,472,367. This budget is now the School Committee budget and will be given to the Town Manager who will present the Town Manager's budget to the Reading Finance Committee and Town Meeting.

The approved budget is 2.75% above the current FY15 budget. The amount of funding available is due to the limited financial revenue available to the Town of Reading. Because of costs increased higher than 2.75%, the level serviced FY16 budget contains \$774,620 in reductions and offset increases from the FY15 budget. This budget avoided reductions to classroom teachers by increasing offsets from revolving accounts, restructuring and reducing services in other areas. The reductions in this budget are as follows:

Area	Amount
Grant Writing	\$8,500
Regular Day Bus Transportation	\$23,000
Substitute Teachers	\$137,000
Per Pupil Building Budgets	\$26,000
Virtual High School	\$18,120
EMARC Restructuring	\$30,000
Increase METCO Offset	\$25,000
Increase Extended Day Offset	\$50,000
Increase Athletic and Extracurricular User Fee	\$60,000
Increase offsets in special education tuition and RISE to accommodate decrease in circuit breaker	\$277,000
Reduction in Regular Education Paraeducators	\$60,000

In addition, the following positions/programs were added through restructuring of existing budget resources. No additional funding was used for these positions.

Addition	Restructured Area to Fund Addition
Grade 1 Teacher at Joshua Eaton	Class Size Paraeducators at Joshua Eaton
K-8 Mathematics Coach	Professional Development Funds
K-8 Literacy Coach	Professional Development Funds
Technician	School Transformation Grant Savings
Technology Replenishment	Per Pupil Building Budgets
Program Director for Student Support Program and Therapeutic Support Program	Behavioral Health Staff Restructuring
Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)	Special Education Consulting

Kudos and Accolades

- RMHS Sports Teams were hampered by the weather this past week, but Girls & Boys Hockey won. Boys Swimming came in second in the Middlesex League meet and Boys Track finished second in the Middlesex League.
- Boys & Girls Basketball will participate in the Coaches vs. Cancer fundraiser on February 6th vs. Arlington.
- To the Killam and Parker staff for participating in the NAEP Testing

The next step in the process is that the School Committee and the Administration will be presenting the budget to the Finance Committee on March 11th and to Town Meeting in late April. Town Meeting has the final approval of the School Committee budget.

Thanks goes out to the Teachers, Administrators, Directors, and Budget Parents who were involved in this process. A special thanks goes to Director of Finance and Operations Martha Sybert who created the budget book and developed the numbers behind the story.

“Lifeworthy” Learning

In this *Ed. Magazine* article, editor Lory Hough reports on the recent thinking of David Perkins (Harvard Graduate School of Education) on what’s worth learning in school. Perkins says there’s often a skeptical student at the back of the class who asks, “Why do we need to know this?” Lots of teachers, including Perkins, find this an uncomfortable moment: “When that ballistic missile comes from the back of the room, it’s a good reminder that the question doesn’t just belong to state school boards, authors of textbooks, writers of curriculum standards, and other elites. It’s on the minds of our students.”

The fact is that we teach a lot that isn’t going to matter in students’ lives, says Perkins – and we don’t teach a lot of stuff that really will matter. Why? Because of three rival learning agendas:

- *Information* – Students are asked to master a vast body of *stuff*, even though much of it won’t matter, in any meaningful way, to their lives. “It’s nice to know things,” says Perkins. “I like to know things. You like to know things. But there are issues of balance, particularly in the digital age... [T]he world we are educating learners for is something of a moving target.” The problem is that the conventional curriculum is “chained to the bicycle rack,” he says – parents demand it, textbooks convey it, teachers are required to teach it, and we don’t feel comfortable throwing it out. But knowledge without utility has a short half-life. “The hard fact is that our minds hold on only to knowledge we have occasion to use in some corner of our lives,” he says. “Overwhelmingly, knowledge unused is forgotten. It’s gone.”

- *Achievement* – The pressure to do well on high-stakes summative tests is a life-support system for the conventional curriculum, but this type of testing “makes for shallow learning and understanding,” says Perkins. “You cram and do well on the test but may not have the understanding. It unravels.” Besides, is it important to know state capitals and major rivers? Perkins argues that what matters is *how* the location of rivers and harbors and other features of the land have been shaped by and continue to shape the course of history. Better than learning facts about the French Revolution, understand *how* those events relate to world conflict, poverty, and the struggle between church and state. “All that talk about achievement leaves little room for discussion about what’s being achieved,” says Perkins. Besides, less-formal, more frequent formative assessment produces much better learning.

- *Expertise* – The Holy Grail of education is becoming an expert – for example, in math, moving through algebra, geometry, and reaching the pinnacle, calculus, “an entire subject that hardly anybody ever uses,” says Perkins. But any time there’s push-back on the conventional curriculum, supporters claim, “We’re

Quote of the Week....



"A strong positive mental attitude will create more miracles than any wonder drug."

Patricia Neal

sacrificing rigor!" Perkins would rather that schools prepare students to be "expert amateurs" in, for example, statistics, appreciating art, understanding insurance rates, filing taxes, raising children – areas with immediate relevance to daily life.

In short, Perkins believes we need to rethink curriculum content in a radical way. Historically, we've focused K-12 schooling on educating for the known, "the tried and true, the established canon," he says. "This made very good sense in the many periods and places where most children's lives were likely to be more or less like their parents' lives. However, wagering that tomorrow will be pretty much like yesterday does not seem to be a very good bet today. Perhaps we need a different vision of education, a vision that foregrounds educating for the unknown as much as for the known."

Perkins likes to tell the story of Mahatma Gandhi losing one of his sandals as he boarded a moving train in India. There wasn't time to retrieve the sandal on the ground, and without hesitation, Gandhi took off his other sandal and threw it toward the first. Asked by a colleague what he was thinking, Gandhi said one sandal wouldn't do him any good, but two would certainly help someone else. Gandhi "showed wisdom about what to keep and what to let go of," says Perkins. "Those are both central questions for education as we choose for today's learners the sandals they need for tomorrow's journey."

"What's Worth Learning in School?" by Lory Hough in *Ed. Magazine*, Winter 2015 (p. 36-41), www.gse.harvard.edu/ed. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 571.

Reading Public School Happenings

Parker Heroes Among Us Assembly

This past week, students from Parker Middle School participated in the *Heroes Among Us* Assembly where they asked their own thoughtfully designed questions to Ned Coltman, a former Parker student and recent graduate from Tufts University with a degree in Environmental Engineering. Ned challenged student to reach out to include another student who may not be part of their friends group. Special thanks to Parker Teacher Leah Cristi (seen below with Ned Coltman) for coordinating the event.



Information Please: Needs, Want, Love

The flyer below advertises a for a Parent workshop, “Information Please: Need, Want, Love” that was also held in the fall. RMHS Librarian Sharon Burke will introduce parents to some of the powerful online resources available to students and staff via RMHS and our public libraries, alternatives to Google, and to the new competencies that have emerged in the information age. These are many of the same research and learning tools found at the best public, college, and university libraries in the world. The format of the workshop will be a demonstration of the resources, with time at the end for you to play around.

If you’d like to reserve a spot, please email Sharon Burke at Sharon.burke@reading.k12.ma.us.



Killam Linguists

Killam Reading Specialist Alison Currier is working with students who are using an online reading program.



Disney Tweet of the Week



"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you, so you know, thanks for not giving up on me."

Hiro (Big Hero 6)

Stepping Stones...

- **Congratulations** to former Central Office Administrative Assistant **Mary Ellen Begonis** on the birth of her granddaughter Claire on January 22nd.
- **We welcome the** following new hires to our school district:
 - ✓ Alison Stager, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Michele Sweet, Substitute, District
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Regular Education Paraeducator, Parker Middle School	JOB ID #1245732
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- **Fingerprint Background Check Reminder**-This is a reminder to all staff members of their obligation to submit to a fingerprint-based background check as a condition of their employment. Employees must make an appointment at a MorphoTrust fingerprinting location (<http://www.identogo.com/FP/Massachusetts.aspx>). Many of you may have tried to make an appointment in the past but were discouraged by the limited appointment availability. We are happy to report that the backlog has been cleared and that in many cases, you may be able to get an appointment for the same day. Appointments are available during evening hours and several locations also offer Saturday appointments. All newly hired staff members are required to be fingerprinted prior to beginning work in the district. Staff members hired prior to September 2013 must complete their fingerprinting appointments by the time period listed below:
 - a. **Those current teachers with ten years or less employment** within the Reading Public Schools will be required to complete the process **before the start of the 2015-2016 school year**. In addition, all administrators, custodians/maintenance, food service, substitute teachers, coaches, advisors, paraeducators, and secretaries will also be required to complete the process at this time.
 - b. **All remaining teachers will be required to complete the process by the end of June 2016.**

Inserted below you will find a memo with instructions detailing how to schedule an appointment to be fingerprinted. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.



Updated SAFIS
memo for staff_11-24

- **Just in Time for a Blizzard**-See the following You Tube video from Head of School Matt Glendinning who has a special snow day message for his kids.

<http://youtu.be/OjE72Q8s8wo>

Blazing Trails....

"Einstein's 55 Minutes." "Questions and their solutions are the basis of all learning. A good question generates energy and invites exploration," writes teacher Donna Shrum. In a recent ASCD Express article, Shrum explains that an instructor who has mastered when and how to ask questions can create learning situations that build confidence for all students. She also shares tips for successful questioning. [Read More](#)

"Support During the School Day Can Help Prevent Truancy." Students are less likely to skip school if they feel safe and secure and receive support during the school day, said Sean Slade, ASCD's director of Whole Child programs. "What we're finding is something teachers have known for a long time -- knowing your students, making sure they feel valued and wanted. Those things matter," Slade said. [Read More](#)

"Imagine What School Could Be" "In his book Out of Our Minds, Sir Ken Robinson challenges readers to 'shift...from fixing what we have towards creating the public education system we need.' So EdtoSaveTheWorld decided to take on the challenge on this blog post. They ask and try to answer, "What might a school look like that was created from scratch, based on what we need?" [Read More](#)

"Farm-to-School Movement Reaches the Commonwealth." School nutrition professionals, policymakers, parents and others recently attended the Massachusetts Farm to Cafeteria Conference, where they discussed nutrition, school gardens and learned new recipes. Attendees celebrated their accomplishments -- 75% of schools in the state are participating in some type of local food effort -- and the progress that still needs to be made. [Read More](#)

"Building Independent Learners by Fostering Grit." In this Education Week post by teacher Starr Sackstein, she discusses helping our students build academic grit and how it might be considered different than athletic grit. She says, "Grit is more than stamina. It's a drive that perpetuates growth and fosters success. Shouldn't students develop this quality?" [Read More](#)

"The Eight Essentials of Good Student Feedback." Whether you provide it orally or in written form -- in a sit-down meeting or during a busy classroom activity -- quality feedback is crucial for students to continuously improve their work. Author and consultant Barbara Blackburn summarizes eight characteristics of good feedback that she believes "are essential practices for effective teaching." [Read More](#)

"School Reforms Globally Undermined by Failure to Track Success or Failure, says OECD." Countries worldwide are increasing investments in education and undertaking a number of reforms intended to improve teaching and learning, according to this article. However, recent research by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development finds that in many cases, countries are not tracking the success or failure of those reforms. [Read More](#)

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

Have a Great Week!