



# Pathways

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

February 8, 2015

Volume 1, Number 22

## Upcoming Dates

- 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 Building Level Meetings; (3:00 p.m.) Middle School Building Level Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Session 2 in Distance Learning Room;
- February 12 - (3:15 p.m.) Elementary Building Level Meetings; RMHS Jazz Band Festival in Norwood
- February 14 – (10:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build
- February 16 – Presidents' Day
- February 17 – 20 – February Vacation
- February 21 – (12:00 p.m.) RMHS

## Globe Scholastic Art and Writing Awards Announced

The Reading Memorial High School Fine Arts Department is pleased to announce that several students were recognized as 2015 Boston Globe Scholastic Art Award Winners. Congratulations to Gold Key Winners Benjamin Lynch and Lauren Walsh and Honorable Mention Winners Lizzie Alexander, Julie Herman, Emily Narahara, Cullen Pu, Natalie Short, Samuel Wagner, and Sydney Willwerth. Congratulations to RMHS Art Teachers Veronique Latimer, Kathy Dailey, Susan Gilbert, and Michael Radvany for all of their support of these students.

In addition, Coolidge Middle School is pleased to announce that Six Coolidge Middle School seventh graders were recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Contest for their personal essays/memoirs. Meghan Farwell and Ashley Spear were awarded Silver Keys. David Columba, Colin DuRoss, Jennifer Harden and Renee Haley received honorable mention.

---

## Beginning and Ending Lessons Effectively

In this *Edutopia* article, English teacher Brian Sztabnik says that lesson planning should follow the time-honored maxims of good writing: start with the end in mind, plan effective beginnings and endings, and grab students' attention. "That is the crux of lesson planning right there," he says, "endings and beginnings. If we fail to engage students at the start, we may never get them back. If we don't know the end result, we risk moving haphazardly from one activity to the next. Every moment in a lesson plan should tell." Sztabnik suggests four key elements for lesson launches and four for wrapping up (the full article has numerous links):

### Lesson beginnings:

- *Use video clips.* Well-chosen YouTube nuggets are a great way to create an anticipatory set. For example, Sztabnik asked students to draw comparisons between Carl Sandburg's poem "[Chicago](#)" and the Chrysler Super Bowl [commercial](#) featuring Eminem.

- *Start with good news.* "If you want to create a safe space for students to take risks, you won't get there with a pry bar," says Sztabnik. One alternative is spending the first two minutes of class having students share positive thoughts.

- *Forge links to other subject areas.* "Integrating other disciplines teaches students that ideas and concepts do not stand alone but rather exist within a wider web of knowledge," he says. For example, have math students measure the angles of a Picasso painting, play a song that makes a classical allusion in a unit on mythology, or toss a football around the class before teaching the physics of a

## Drama Set Build

### **Kudos and Accolades**

- RMHS Sports Teams were, once again, hampered by the weather this past week, but Boys Basketball had a big win vs. Belmont
- To Reading Public School Principals Doug Lyons, Sarah Marchant, Eric Sprung, Cathy Giles, Joanne King, Heather Leonard, and Karen Feeney for all of their efforts in preparing and giving the PARCC parent presentations last week.

quarterback's spiral.

- *Write for five.* Students need to write a lot if they are to improve and build stamina – five times more than the teacher can grade, says Sztabnik. One idea is to have students spend the first five minutes of class writing in response to an essential question.

#### Lesson endings:

- *Level up.* Emulate this compelling feature of video games by having students chart their own progress toward mastery of standards, perhaps challenging them to move from Beginner to Heroic to Legendary to Mythic.
- *Use exit tickets.* These can provide on-the-spot assessment information, ask students to analyze their own performance, give the teacher feedback on the lesson, and provide a channel for communication. “However they are used,” says Sztabnik, “they provide quick and comprehensive bits of data and feedback.”
- *Harness social media.* Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram can be used in positive ways in the classroom, especially for wrapping up lessons – for example, challenging students to compose a tweet or find an image that best captures what they just learned.
- *Make peer learning visible.* Sztabnik suggests that a few minutes before the closing bell, students should write one thing they learned from someone else in the class on a sticky note and put it on the board – then start the next lesson by reading the notes aloud.

“The 8 Minutes That Matter Most” by Brian Sztabnik in *Edutopia*, January 5, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1BUCIDq>. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 572.

---

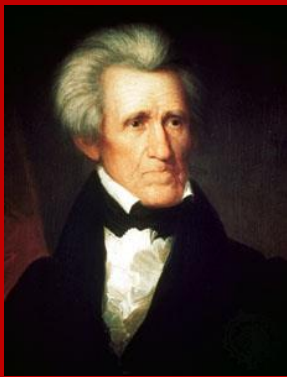
## The Role of Classroom Discussions in High-Level Learning

In this *Teachers College Record* article, Ronald Gallimore (UCLA), James Hiebert (University of Delaware), and Bradley Ermeling (Pearson Research and Innovation Network) question the “clarion call” of many education reformers for teachers to increase the amount of “rich classroom discussion.” A key assumption behind this goal is that good discussions produce higher-quality student thinking, expression, and achievement. Reformers’ aim is to replace traditional teacher-dominated discussions with “students talking in class about their ideas, asking questions of peers, engaging in debates with peers, explaining their reasoning, and sharing some roles traditionally assumed by teachers.”

This push seems justified in light of sobering statistics about classroom interactions over the years. A 1912 study found that teachers across all grades and subjects talked an average of 64 percent of the time, and nearly 80 percent of classroom discourse involved rote memory or superficial comprehension. And apparently things have not changed much since then: A 1997 study of 9<sup>th</sup>-grade ELA classes found that 85 percent of classroom time was lecture, recitation, and seatwork.

The curious thing is that, according to the 1999 TIMSS Video Study of

### Quote of the Week....



**"Take time to deliberate;  
but when the time for  
action arrives, stop  
thinking and go in."**

**Andrew Jackson**

Mathematics, countries with better student achievement than the U.S. are not better when it comes to the amount of rich classroom discussions. If anything, American classrooms have more opportunities for student talk than those in higher-achieving countries. So are rich classroom discussions not the key variable in classrooms that foster truly impressive learning? Gallimore, Hiebert, and Ermeling believe this is a good question and suspect that something deeper is involved.

"What distinguished higher-achieving countries from the U.S. was the nature of learning opportunities provided to students," they say. "With varying degrees of frequency, all higher-achieving countries slowed down instruction at some point in some lessons to ensure that students had *rich opportunities to learn* – time to grapple with the key mathematics ideas and connect them." These moments seemed to be the "critical and significant distinction between the U.S. and higher-achieving countries."

The authors have come to believe that these slowed-down, concentrated, students-grappling moments are the goal, and rich classroom discussion is one tool among many others for making them happen. In other words, principals and other supervisors shouldn't be looking so much for rich classroom discussions in classrooms as for those rich learning opportunities that "nurture the advanced competencies and more-ambitious achievements U.S. reformers seek."

John Dewey was not against teachers "telling" students important information, say the authors. But Dewey warned that students are unlikely to hear things they are unprepared to hear. How do we get students to the point where they hear what we're telling them? This question needs lots of study, say Gallimore, Hiebert, and Ermeling, and it's closely tied to another one: How do we create rich opportunities to learn advanced concepts? They identify three key elements:

- High-quality, sustained collaboration between teachers and researchers;
- Studying curriculum and classroom practice to pinpoint the key learning opportunities in each unit that might benefit from rich classroom discussions;
- Helping teachers as they get better and better at managing complex decisions and making the best instructional choices.

The authors believe rich classroom discussion is much more likely to be productive if it's seen as a means to that end, rather than an end in itself. This, they say, "seems a more realistic vision than advocating for its greater use without respect for why, when, and for whom."

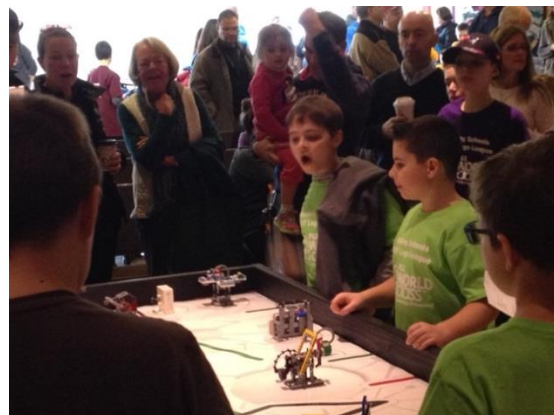
"The pathway to improvement," conclude Gallimore, Hiebert, and Ermeling, "lies not in the increased use of a single compelling instructional method, but in building of a full repertoire of effective methods, and a nuanced understanding of how and when each will propel a teacher's students toward ambitious learning goals."

"Rich Classroom Discussion: One Way to Get Rich Learning" by Ronald Gallimore, James Hiebert, and Bradley Ermeling in *Teachers College Record*, October 9, 2014; to

## Reading Public School Happenings

### First Lego League Event

Last Saturday at Coolidge, 12 elementary and middle school teams participated in the annual First Lego League Competition. Student developed Lego robots which completed a series of predetermined task and presented on a current problem in the STEM area. The pictures below show different segments of the event. Special thanks to the RMHS Robotics Team for assisting in the coaching of these students and all of the parent volunteers who help run the teams and the event.



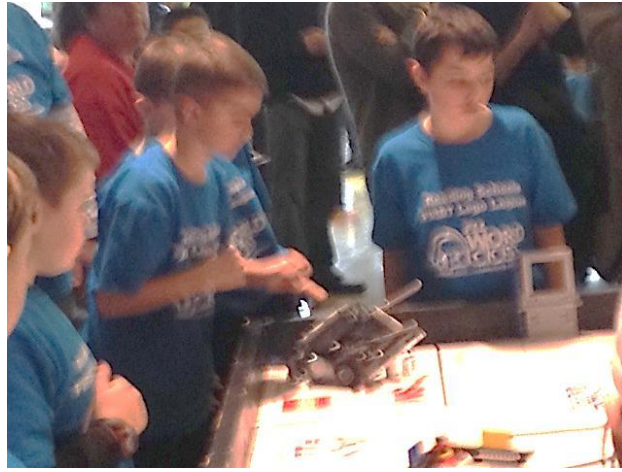


## Disney Tweet of the Week



"When things are getting crazy and you don't know where to start, keep on believing. Just be true to your heart."

**Mulan**



### **Women in STEM Innovation Event**

Last Friday, several RMHS students attended a luncheon in the Distance Learning Room that focused on a lunch time dialogue with a set of panelists who are in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). The keynote speaker of the event was Lorraine M. Martin, Lockheed Martin Executive Vice President and General Manager of F-35 Lightning II Program. Other panelists included:

Katherine Darveau (RMHS '08) – GE Aviation, Tufts University

Jessica Patel – Raytheon, Northeastern University

Paula Perry – Applied Materials, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Jolly Pradhan – Applied Materials, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Ashley Testa (RMHS ') – Northeastern University

Stacia Theriault – Applied Materials, UMass

Erin Wirch – The MITRE Corporation

Jennifer Zimmerman – Keurig Green Mountain, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

The moderators for the event were Elaine Webb and Morgan Evans, Applied Materials. Special thanks to RMHS Department Head Mary Anne Lynn for coordinating the event.





### **Fools**

Over the last few days, the RMHS Drama Club presented the hilarious Neil Simon Comedy, *Fools* at the William Endsloew Performing Arts Center. The photos below show scenes from Wednesday's dress rehearsal. Congratulations to the RMHS Drama Club under the direction of Director Jeff Mitchell, on a job well done!





## Stepping Stones...

- **We welcome the** following new hires to our school district:  
Dianne Kendall, Substitute, District  
Claire Golden, 0.5 Assistant Girls Spring Track Coach  
Tim Lane, Boys Assistant Spring Track Coach  
Scott Price, Boys Head Spring Track Coach
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit [www.schoolspring.com](http://www.schoolspring.com) to view the job details.

Custodial Substitute (3), Reading Public Schools	JOB ID # 1251002
Extended School Year – School Psychologist, Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #1258002
Extended School Year – Occupations Therapist/Occupations Therapist Assistant (2), Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #1257862
Extended School Year – Speech and Language Pathologist, Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #1257892
Extended School Year – Special Education Teachers (18), Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #1248702
Extended School Year – Physical Therapist, Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #1257932
Extended School Year – Paraprofessionals (25), Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #1257982



## Reading and North Reading Rotary Clubs Present Taste of Metro North on February 25<sup>th</sup>-RMHS Field House

The Rotary Clubs of Reading and North Reading have joined forces for the fourth year to bring the *Taste of Metro North* to the Reading Memorial High School Field House (62 Oakdale Road) on Wednesday, February 25, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. This year's presenting sponsor is The Savings Bank in North Reading. Platinum sponsor is Reading Cooperative Bank. The gold sponsors are Linnane Insurance, Winter Hill Bank and Sanborn Place, Home Care and Day Services.

"The event will feature the area's best dining establishments in North Reading and Reading, as well as those from surrounding towns, who will present samplings from their menus," said Committee Co-Chair and North Reading Rotary Public Relations Chair Priscilla Gottwald.

Some restaurants that will make a presence are Laurie's 9:09 and Sakura in Wakefield, Chopps, Tavern in the Square and Burton's in Burlington, Davio's in Lynnfield, Red Heat Tavern in Wilmington, Bertucci's, Chili's, D'Amici's Bakery, Fuddrucker's, Harrows, The Olde Redding Butcher Shoppe, Portland Pie Company, Reading and Wakefield Public Schools, Sanborn Place-Home Care and Day Services in Reading, Dunkin' Donuts, Heav'nly Donuts, Hillview Country Club, Joe Fish and Kitty's in North Reading.

"We are happy to provide this venue for another night of fun and delight to hundreds of people," said Co-Chair and Reading Rotarian Gregg Johnson.

Tickets for the Taste of Metro North are \$25 (\$30 at the door) or \$50 for a family of two adults and children under 18 (\$60 at the door). They can be purchased on the Taste's website [www.tasteofmetronorth.com](http://www.tasteofmetronorth.com) or from committee members and at Reading Municipal Light Department and at the Superintendent's office at Reading Memorial High School. Those who purchase tickets online will be entered into a drawing to win a \$100 gas card from Commonwealth Oil in North Reading.

Area restaurants who would like to participate and non-restaurants who are interested in sponsoring or donating a raffle to the event can contact Priscilla Gottwald or Gregg Johnson or visit the website at [www.tasteofmetronorth.com](http://www.tasteofmetronorth.com). Tickets can also be purchased online or from any of the following committee members:

Jon Bernard, [jbernard@north-reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:jbernard@north-reading.k12.ma.us), 978-664-7810

Chuck Carucci, [c.carucci@comcast.net](mailto:c.carucci@comcast.net), 978-423-9593

Jacque Carson, [jcarson824@aol.com](mailto:jcarson824@aol.com), 781-944-6262

Irene Collins, [icollins@ymcaboston.org](mailto:icollins@ymcaboston.org), 781-944-9622

John Doherty, [john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us), 781-944-5800

Priscilla Gottwald, [pgottwald@rml.com](mailto:pgottwald@rml.com), 781-942-6419

Don Green, [gred43@comcast.net](mailto:gred43@comcast.net), 781-944-8455

Bob Hayes, [Bob@HayesResource.com](mailto:Bob@HayesResource.com), 781-779-1434

Gregg Johnson, [gjohnson@leekimball.com](mailto:gjohnson@leekimball.com), 617-719-8551

Michael Linnane, [mike@linnaneinsurance.com](mailto:mike@linnaneinsurance.com), 978-664-2000

Peter Majane, [peter.majane@gmail.com](mailto:peter.majane@gmail.com), 781-443-5148

Molly O'Neill, [moneill@tsbawake24.com](mailto:moneill@tsbawake24.com), 978-664-3872

Kathi Spurr, [kathi40@msn.com](mailto:kathi40@msn.com), 781-944-4920

Michael Walbourne, [mwalbourne@readingcoop.com](mailto:mwalbourne@readingcoop.com), 781-942-5000 x 400

The Rotary Club is a civic organization dedicated to giving back to the community. Proceeds from this event will be donated the Rotary causes.



## Blazing Trails....

**"Learn to Avoid or Overcome Leadership Obstacles."** In this Kappan article, Teachers21 President John D'Auria asserts that "Leadership is increasingly recognized as an important factor in moving schools forward, yet we have been relatively random in how we prepare and support them. Four obstacles often block or diminish their effectiveness. Avoiding or overcoming each of these requires an underlying set of skills and knowledge that we believe can be learned and practiced to improve leaders' impact." [Read More](#)

**"The Keys to Differentiating is All about 'Knowing.'"** "Meeting the needs of all the students in a classroom is extremely challenging. But if teachers "know" their students, their teaching and their colleagues, the task will become much more manageable and the students will all benefit," writes ASCD EDge community member Matt Wachel. In a recent ASCD blog post, Wachel shares what he believes to be the keys of differentiation. [Read More](#)

**"10 Ideas to Help Teachers Reflect on their Practice."** The New Year offers new teachers time to reflect on and retool some of their teaching practices that may or may not have worked earlier in the school year, instructional mentor Stacy Davison writes in this blog post. She offers 10 ideas for implementing a reset, including replacing classroom routines that aren't working and focusing on closure for lessons. [Read More](#)

**"What If Assessment Was Used to Elevate Learning Rather than to Rank Students?"** Ron Berger, educator, author, and Chief Program Officer for Expeditionary Learning writes in this TeachingChannel blog post that we need use assessment to help our students to see where they are with their learning. "If we hope to improve student learning, we need to get inside student minds and turn up the dial for quality. Most importantly, we need to build into every student a growth mindset - the confidence that he or she can improve through hard work - and a passion for becoming a better student and a better person." [Read More](#)

**"Unexpected Tools That are Influencing the Future of Education."** Education has reached a turning point, says John Abbott, director of the 21st Century Learning Initiative. Abbott says education is facing the challenge of how to prepare students for an interconnected world. This blog post highlights ideas for putting students in the driver's seat. [Read More](#)

**"Joy: A Subject Schools Lack."** Teachers should build on students' joy to make the learning process a more pleasurable experience, writes Susan Engel, who teaches psychology and directs the Program in Teaching at Williams College. In this The Atlantic article, Engel writes that for students to learn, "you have to help the child find pleasure in learning -- to see school as a source of joy." [Read More](#)

**"#OccupyPlayGround."** In Kenya, private developers sometimes illegally seize public land. Last week, students at the Lang'ata school in Nairobi returned to school to find their playground (public land) fenced off as the result of such a land-grab. However, the students of Lang'ata protested and even pushed down the fence the developer put around their playground. And then - and this is tough - the police began to tear-gas the protesters, some as young as 7. Read what happens next. [Read More](#)

***Have a Great Week and a Fabulous February Vacation!***

**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](mailto:john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us)

