



# Pathways

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

February 22, 2015

Volume 1, Number 23

## Upcoming Dates

- February 21 – (12:00 pm) RMHS Drama Set Build
- February 22 - (3:15 p.m.) Expanding the Boundaries of Teaching and Learning Class; (7:30 p.m.) Special Town Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- February 23 – (6:00 p.m.) Kindergarten Lottery (if needed); (6:30 p.m.) RISE Parent Program; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- February 25 – Grades 6 – 12 Early Release; (1:15 p.m.) Elementary District PLC Meetings; (1:30 p.m.) Middle & High School District PLC Meetings; (1:30 p.m.) Special Education Vertical Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Session 3 in Distance Learning Room; (5:30 p.m.) Taste of Metro North in the Hawkes Field House
- February 26 – (1:00 p.m.) Elementary Building Meetings; (7:00 p.m.) Future Freshman Night in the Endslo PAC;

## Rest and Connect to Get Most Out of Your (Digital) Life

By Erin Walsh



When it comes to media and technology, naming the things that we do not want our children to do comes naturally to many of us parents. The urge to protect our children is strong, and as we gaze out into the digital wilderness it is no surprise that the risks, pitfalls, and challenges can loom large. Many of our concerns are warranted. There is a growing body of evidence linking excessive technology use with all kinds of negative outcomes for kids. I guess that's why Taiwan just joined China and South Korea making it a crime for parents to "over-expose" their children to technology.

This is not to say that parents don't experience profound ambivalence when it comes to technology. On the one hand, we want our kids to take advantage of and enjoy the powerful technology that can help them learn, connect, create, and participate fully in 21st century life. On the other hand, we worry. We have power struggles. We reminisce about the good old days.

Navigating this ambivalence is part and parcel of getting beyond the "lock down" or "hands off" approach and charting a parenting path towards digital citizenship. I've written before about how important it is to name and celebrate our children's digital strengths, a helpful exercise to combat the lock down impulse.

It might also help us strike the right balance to name and celebrate what we do want our children and teens to plug into besides computers, tablets and smart phones. A couple of recent studies point to two things we should pay attention to.

(7:00 p.m.) Joshua  
Eaton World Café

- February 28 (10:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build

### **Kudos and Accolades**

- RMHS Sports Teams were, once again, hampered by the weather this past week, but Boys Basketball, Boys and Girls Hockey and Wrestling all had wins last week.
- RMHS runner Abby Allardi had a great night at the D2 State Track meet. She finished second in the high jump clearing 5' and third in the long jump, jumping 16' 9". She has qualified to compete in the All-State meet in both events on Sat., Feb. 21.
- To the following 18 Parker Middle School students who were accepted for Junior Districts for band/chorus/orchestra based on this past Saturday's auditions. They'll be attending the rehearsals/performance on 4/8, 4/10, & 4/11. Congratulations to Ryan Assarian, Matt Curtin, Ryan Dieselman, Larry Gao, Luke Hollenbeck, Malia Howe Peter Iannuzzo, Owen Lannon, Emily Marcotte, Lydia May, Wyatt Mittnight, Antonio Ruiz-Nokes, Billy Ryan, Philip Satterthwaite, Antonio Sieron, Phoebe Singer, Andrew Sweeney and Amy Xia.

### **1. Opportunities to "look in"**

"I just feel exhausted" a 9th grader told me after a talk a couple of months ago. "There are always things to be doing, updated, responding to. I mean don't get me wrong I love it...Most of the time. But it is exhausting."

Children and youth today are consuming and responding to streams of information at unprecedented rates and some young people are starting to articulate just how tiring it can be to be "always on, always connected." We would be wise to listen to them. The cost of an always-connected life is not limited to fatigue.

Many of us think that we are either paying attention or we aren't. Research over the last ten years, however, has revealed that we have two different attention systems: a "looking out" system and a "looking in" system. One we use when we play video games or read a text from a friend, the other when we reflect, remember, feel social emotions, or daydream. The challenge for us humans is that we can't use both attention systems at once. Instead, we toggle back and forth between them.

It turns out that "looking in" is important for our emotional and psychological health. We are just beginning to understand the incredible brain benefits that come from a rest state, but it is clear that this is inextricably linked to our social, emotional, and ethical lives. For example, the more often we reflectively pause when confronted with an emotional story, the better we are at abstracting the emotions and morals from one specific event and applying them to others. The challenge today is that in a media rich world, our attention is increasingly pulled outward towards sound bites, snippets, and clicks.

The takeaway from this research is not that media and technology inherently corrupt our psychological lives. On the contrary we can gain incredibly valuable information, perspectives, and relationships through technology that can enrich our social and emotional lives.

The takeaway is that processing the moral and emotional consequences of what we experience both online and offline requires rest and reflection. Far from being a waste of time, "looking in" may enable us to look back out in ways that are more intentional, thoughtful, and just.

### **2. Opportunities to look up.**

We've known for a long time that little children need live social interactions to learn effectively. Dr. Marjorie Hogan, a spokesperson for the American Academy of Pediatrics, reminds us "that need doesn't go away" as children grow up.

Indeed, we've written before about the late Clifford Nass' research with heavy media multitaskers. He found that face-to-face time acted as a clear antidote to the negative social and emotional impacts of heavy media use among tween girls. Our kids might be born into this world hardwired for empathy and connection, but research shows that they need a lot of in-person interactions with peers to fully develop these skills. Indeed, learning to read emotions and respond to them is hard work and takes lots of practice. Girls ages 8-12 are in a critical period in their development where they are learning to navigate the tricky contours of relational emotions on their own. It is no surprise that if they turn towards screens instead of each other, they won't do it as well.

Researchers with the Children's Media Center @ Los Angeles likewise found that pre-teens who spent five days at an overnight nature camp without access to technology showed significant improvement over that time in recognizing nonverbal emotion cues compared to the control group that retained normal media habits. While study design made it impossible to make a causal conclusion, the authors make a convincing argument that the increase in in-person communication was likely responsible for these changes. Time in the natural world, an experience known to have cognitive benefits, may have laid a productive stage for more meaningful interactions but this factor alone doesn't explain improvements in emotional communication.

The takeaway here is not that spending time with screens makes our kids sad or emotionally illiterate. The takeaway is that they plenty of opportunities to look up from their screens and into the eyes of a friend.

The digital world in which our children are growing up is complex and changing quickly. During times of great change it is tempting to fall into the "lock down" and "turn off" approach. So how do we resist this impulse? It's all about balance. I hope that my children's digital lives are engaging, entertaining, connecting, and full of new learning. It is in support of this vision of technology, not in resistance to it, that we need to defend the unplugged spaces that enable them to look in and look up as well.

Here are a few practical tips to get you started:

**7 ways to get face-to-face with your tween**

**Parenting teenagers: Getting creative with connection**

About Erin Walsh: *Erin Walsh, M.A. is a dynamic, knowledgeable speaker who has addressed a wide range of audiences on topics related to brain development and raising resilient young people in the digital age. Erin was instrumental to the development of the MediaWise movement and enjoyed working with her father, Dr. David Walsh, for 10 years at the National Institute on Media and the Family before creating Mind Positive Parenting together in 2010. You can access their blog [here](#).*

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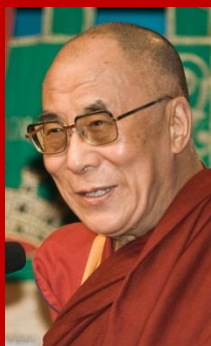
## Globe Scholastic Art and Writing Awards Announced

*Updated from last week*

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, we had middle school winners as well. 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. In addition, Coolidge Middle School student Brandon Fogerty received a

### Quote of the Week....



**"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."**

**Dalai Lama**

Gold Key for his art project. Parker Middle School had four winners with Samantha Imrich and Ashley Rienzo, receiving Silver Key Awards, and Matteo Coelho receiving both a Gold Key and an honorable mention.

## How "American Idol" Identifies and Cultivates Talent

In this *Kappan* article, David Slomp (University of Lethbridge, Canada) pushes back on what he believes is the overly rigid and mechanistic way assessment rubrics are being used in many schools. Good assessments should be "contextual, designed in accordance with expert knowledge, and derived from and responsive to the contexts in which they are employed," he says. Slomp draws seven lessons from the way the judges in "American Idol" assess performance in a very different arena:

- *Lesson #1: Multiple performances to demonstrate quality and growth* – "American Idol" contestants perform many times in front of a variety of audiences across a range of styles and musical periods. "Seldom are students given multiple opportunities across a range of genres and contexts and over a sustained period of time to demonstrate growth and competence," says Slomp.
- *Lesson #2: The primacy of expert knowledge* – "American Idol" judges are some of the most successful artists in the business, but they are unabashedly subjective in their assessments of contestants. "They view each performance through the lens of their own experiences, values, and perspectives," says Slomp. "They disagree with one another almost as much as they agree. They don't defer to a producer's rubric or some predetermined scoring criteria." But somehow the judges decide on a winner. K-12 teachers should depend less on rubrics and more on developing expertise and debating with colleagues.
- *Lesson #3: Defining what's being assessed* – "We need to be clear about what we are trying to measure," says Slomp. "An effective e-mail is very different from a well-crafted academic paper or a beautifully shaped poem. And, within each of these genres, the markers of quality vastly differ." It's interesting that in "The Voice," a program similar to "American Idol" but with more of a focus on vocal quality, the judges are initially seated with their backs to the performers and rate them only on what they hear.
- *Lesson #4: The role of dialogue in consistency* – "Expert judgment is not always reliable," says Slomp. Schools' response to this problem has often been to train teachers to rubric-score objectively, striving for inter-rater reliability. The "American Idol" approach is quite different: the judges engage in passionate debates about their assessments. "The check on idiosyncratic judgments is not achieved through a process of norming but rather through a process of dialogue," says Slomp. "Unlike the process of norming, which tends to strip away qualities that are contentious or difficult to measure, this process ensures that a more complete examination of the construct being assessed is undertaken."
- *Lesson #5: The role of the audience* – School assessments usually judge students' work in a vacuum, on its own merits. "The problem with this approach."

says Slomp, “is that writing, like music, by its very nature is designed to affect an audience in some way. Part of the success of a written text or a musical performance is always related to whether the piece successfully evokes the desired response in the reader or listener... Taking that element out of the equation, as so many writing assessments do, necessarily limits the construct being measured. Most writing assignments are written for the teacher or the assessor rather than for real, authentic audiences.” Using computer scoring will make this even more problematic.

- *Lesson #6: Attending to consequences* – There is almost no research on the downstream effects of high-stakes writing assessments, says Slomp. “This needs to change, even if that means taking our cue from reality television.”

“Writing Assessment in Six Lessons – from ‘American Idol’” by David Slomp in *Phi Delta Kappan*, February 2015 (Vol. 96, #5, p. 62-67), [www.kappanmagazine.org](http://www.kappanmagazine.org); Slomp can be reached at [david.slomp@uleth.ca](mailto:david.slomp@uleth.ca). Reprinted from Marshall Memo 574.

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## Reading Public School Happenings

### Where do we put all the snow?

This winter, our region has seen over 100 inches of snow, resulting in 6 snow days, and several disruptions in learning. As you can see from the photos below, where we put the snow is a challenge at some of our schools. Due to the diligence of our facilities staff and the Department of Public Works, the snow has been removed as much as possible. Can you guess the schools below? Thanks to Martha Sybert for contributing the photos.





**Disney Tweet of the Week**



**"Remember to smile."**

**Donald Duck**



**Parker Students in Costa Rica**

During this past week, Parker Middle School students who are involved in the Eco-Club travelled to the much warmer climate of Costa Rica. Below are some pictures of the students enjoying the warmth and cultural activities of Costa Rica. Pura Vida!





### **Award Winning Photograph from RMHS Student**

Congratulations to RMHS Student, Lauren Walsh who was recognized for her amazing accomplishment in the 35th Annual College & High School Photography Contest co-sponsored by Nikon. Over 17,000 photographs were entered from the U.S., Canada and around the world. Lauren won fourth place and will be inducted into Nikon's Emerging Photographers Hall of Fame. In addition, Lauren's winning photo will be published in the May 2015 issue of Photographer's Forum magazine and in the hardcover book, Best of College & High School Photography 2015. Lauren has also won a cash prize. Below is the award winning photograph of her parents at 5:00 a.m. one morning. Lauren's photography teacher is RMHS Art Teacher Kathleen Dailey.



## Stepping Stones...

- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit [www.schoolspring.com](http://www.schoolspring.com) to view the job details.

Long-Term Substitute High School Biology Teacher, Reading Memorial High School
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JOB ID #1261982
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## 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

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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.

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## Blazing Trails....

**"ASCD Demands Two-Year Moratorium on High-Stakes Testing."** ASCD calls on policymakers to institute a two-year moratorium on using new state standardized assessments for accountability purposes. Learn how your voice can be heard on high-stakes testing by participating in the ASCD Forum -- a series of online and face-to-face discussions between educators at all levels -- on next-generation accountability systems. [Read More](#)

**"Duncan: 'NCLB Should Be Scrapped for Better Education Law.'"** Federal lawmakers should replace No Child Left Behind with a new and better law, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan writes in this blog post. "It's long past time to move past that law, and replace it with one that expands opportunity, increases flexibility and gives schools and educators more of the resources they need," he writes. [Read More](#)

**"Hybrid Learning Successfully Blends High-Tech, Small Group Instruction."** Officials at a Pennsylvania elementary school say that test scores at the once-struggling school have soared following a decision three years ago to adopt a hybrid learning model, in which teachers blend high-tech learning and small group instruction. Officials now are planning to pilot the approach at another low-performing school. [Read More](#)

**"Differentiated Instruction Works: How and Why to do DI."** Differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching in which educators actively plan and adjust for students' differences so that instruction suits and supports all students' strengths and needs. On this episode of the Whole Child Podcast, Sean Slade, ASCD's director of whole child programs, differentiation expert Carol Ann Tomlinson, and more explore what differentiated instruction is and explain how real teachers are applying differentiation principles and strategies to respond to the needs of all learners. [Read More](#)

**"Finland to Remove Cursive Handwriting from Education Curriculum."** Finland will remove cursive handwriting instruction from its curriculum and teach keyboard typing skills instead. Officials say the decision reflects an increased demand for typing skills. [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](mailto:john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us)