



Pathways

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

May 24, 2015

Volume 1, Number 35

Upcoming Dates

- May 25 – Memorial Day – No School; Thank you to all who have served.
- May 26 & 27 Senior Exams
- May 26 – (6:30 p.m.) Community Forum @ Coolidge Middle School (The focus of this forum will be on our middle schools.
- May 27 – (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Capston Session 1 in Distance Learning Room; (6:15 p.m.) RETELL Capston Session 2 in Distance Learning Room; (6:30 p.m.) Senior Prom @ House of Blues; (6:30 p.m.) Birch Meadow Open House and Choral Concert
- May 28 - (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Capston Session 3 in Distance Learning Room; (6:15 p.m.) RETELL Capston Session 4 in Distance Learning Room; (6:00 p.m.) Instrument Rental @ Coolidge; (6:30 p.m.) Community Forum @ Barrows (The focus of this forum will be on our elementary schools)
- June 1 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee meeting in the

Dear Dr. Mom and Dr. Dad: An Open Letter to My Educator Parents

By: Micaela Nicol, Student for [Edutopia Blog](#)

Dear Dr. Mom and Dr. Dad,

As you know, stereotypically, preachers are viewed as stringent parents who typically shield their children from the outside world. And more often than not, it is to prevent the ideals of society from corrupting their engrained morals and to navigate them towards their desired path of life. Mom, as you reminisced and shared with me your experiences as a young girl with two sets of parents involved in ministry, I couldn't help but think of myself. Replacing my grandparents with you and dad to better represent my scenario, I came to the realization that both teachers' and preachers' kids live a fairly identical life.



As a 16 year-old high school teen, I am gradually developing into adulthood. I have reached the age where I feel compelled to pursue all areas of interest as I dive in to what my reality will soon be as I transition into the college life. Being a teen of two well-established educators, the pressure to portray an exact model of your existence is undoubtedly present. There is always fear of creating disappointment for failing to be a replica of you, an expectation I feel the need to exceed every day I step foot into the classroom. I am not only a daughter of two educators, but I am a daughter

Superintendent's Conference Room

- June 2 & 3 – MCAS Testing
- June 2 – (5:00 p.m.) RMHS Senior Cruise and All Night Party
- June 3 – (1:11 p.m.) Grade 9 – 12 Early Release; (1:30 p.m.) High School District PLC Meetings; (3:00 p.m.) Middle school District PLC Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Make-Up Session 1 in Distance Learning Room; (7:00 p.m.) Coolidge Chorus Concert @ RMHS; (7:00 p.m.) Reading Scholarship Foundation Night @ Parker; (7:00 p.m.) Parker PTO Meeting
- June 4 – (10:00 a.m.) Mandatory Graduation Practice; (3:15 p.m.) Elementary District PLC Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL Make-Up Session 2 in Distance Learning Room; (7:00 p.m.) Parker Open House: (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Baccalaureate @ Congregational Church
- June 5 – (7:30 a.m.) RMHS Senior Class Day in the Endslo PAC; (8:00 a.m.) Volunteer Breakfast @ Birch Meadow; (10:00 a.m.) RMHS Mandatory Graduation Practice; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Choral Celebration @ RMHS

of two African-American educators who attends a majority white-populated high school. This in itself takes pressure to excel to a whole other level, as I feel the obligation to represent myself and my family, socially and academically.

- *Mom and Dad, are you proud of who I am becoming?*
- *Dr. Mom and Dr. Dad, how do I successfully balance the pressure of performing academically with my social life, sports, and extracurricular activities?*

Your Loving Daughter,

Micaela

As I wait for a response, I would like to provide some tips and suggestions for other kids with educator-parents (Teacher's Kids) on how to deal with the pressures of performing.

1. **Communication is key.** Don't be afraid to approach your parents when something is bothering you. If you're beginning to feel stressed, instead of bottling it up, talk to them. At the end of the day, they will become more aware of your feelings.
2. **Remember your parents are there to help.** They're educators, right? That means they are some pretty intelligent people! If you're struggling socially or academically, don't forget that they are available to provide support. All you have to do is ask.
3. **Embrace who you are.** Although being a child of an educator has its consequences, it is important to recognize that you are fortunate to have a prime example in your life of what it means and what it takes to succeed. The pressures and expectations they place on you symbolize how much they care for you and your future.
4. **Set yourself apart from others.** Don't let the pressure hinder you, turn it into something positive. Your parents have raised you to be a determined, disciplined, and well-rounded individual, so use those qualities to your full advantage. Take your determination and focus your attention to not only the academic expectations they have, but the extra curricular and community involvements that interest you. Maybe you've always wanted to grow a garden in your backyard, or volunteer at your local hospital, maybe even start a book club, or organize a community walk/run to raise money for a charity of your choice. The options are endless, and you will be benefitting yourself and others with your unique qualities.
5. **Relax.** It is okay to take a break. When you feel the need to get away from all the stress, do something that makes you smile. When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I love to run to clear my mind. Find what makes you feel at ease, and pursue it.

This post was created by a member of Edutopia's community. If you have your own #eduawesome tips, strategies, and ideas for improving education, [share them with us](#).

How to Engage Middle-School Students

“What is active learning and what does it look like in the classroom?” asks Susan Edwards (Georgia Regents University) in this *Middle School Journal* article. Some key ingredients:

- Students are intellectually involved in learning through problem-solving activities, creating multimedia presentations, synthesizing research for presentations or papers, inquiry activities, and concept maps.
- They are socially engaged through whole-group discussions, small-group discussions, and small-group projects.
- They are physically engaged through hands-on projects, manipulatives, games, building models, and lab experiments.
- They aren’t overly reliant on the teacher
- They reflect on ideas and how they are using those ideas.
- They regularly assess their own understanding of subject matter and skills.

“The goal is not activity for activity’s sake or to make the lesson fun,” says Edwards. “It is not achieved by simply incorporating some games or fun activities into a lesson plan. Clearly, every activity in a lesson should lead to purposeful learning of the lesson objectives and the standard to be met.”

Edwards goes on to compare three lessons taught in a traditional, passive mode and then in an active mode:

• *Fifth grade: Solving problems on a coordinate plane in Quadrant 1 – Traditional mode:*

- Bell-ringer: students write the coordinates of 3 points on a coordinate plane.
- The teacher goes over the answer with the class.
- The teacher uses PowerPoint to introduce solving problems on the coordinate plane.
- Students copy key vocabulary terms and definitions into their notebooks.
- The teacher demonstrates several problems.
- Students do an example problem and the teacher explains the correct answer.
- Students practice 20 problems of varying levels of difficulty in their workbooks.
- The teacher goes over the answers and gives students a chance to ask questions.

• *Same content, active mode:*

- The whole class plays an interactive game on the Promethean board with students taking turns coming up front. The game asks students to think logically, for example, “Which direction will the point move if I make the x-coordinate bigger?”
- Students get out their math journals and come up with student-friendly definitions of vocabulary terms based on the teacher’s explanations.
- Students rotate through four stations in small groups:

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the Boys Lacrosse, Baseball and Softball who all posted wins recently.
- Congratulations to the girl's lacrosse team for clinching the Middlesex League Liberty Division Co-Championship.
- Thanks to all who worked tirelessly coordinating the RMHS Spring Awards Night.
- A special congratulations to all of the members of the Coolidge Science Olympiad Team! The team, led by head coach Karawan Meade, traveled to the University of Nebraska and competed in 23 events against teams from all over the nation (one per state). The opportunity to compete in the national tournament reflects a year of hard work and determination as well as a win at the state level. The rigor and caliber of teams at nationals is extremely high; a place of 36th out of 60 teams is something students, coaches, and parents should be extremely proud of.

- ✓ Station A – Students plot 4 points on a coordinate grid, connect the points, and say what geometric figure is formed, which line segments are parallel, and which line segments are perpendicular.
- ✓ Station B – Students work together to solve word problems on a worksheet.
- ✓ Station C – Students explain a path from the school to the town library, using points on a coordinate plane. They can move magnets around on a giant coordinate plane with pictures of town buildings superimposed on the plane.
- ✓ Station D – Students play an interactive game on the Promethean board.
- *Eighth grade ELA: Gerunds, Participles, and Infinitives – Traditional mode:*
 - The teacher introduces new vocabulary terms.
 - The teacher displays sample sentences and asks students to identify different terms – for example, “What is the gerund in this sentence?”
 - Students complete a worksheet with 20-25 sentences and identify vocabulary terms.
 - The teacher goes over the answers with the whole class.
 - Students are assigned a page in the grammar book for homework.
- *Same content, active mode:*
 - The teacher uses PowerPoint to introduce vocabulary terms.
 - The teacher displays sentences on the board related to the vocabulary terms and students give their answers by holding up one finger if it's a gerund and two if it's an infinitive.
 - The teacher does a multimedia presentation with videos and pictures of students, each accompanied by a sentence – for example, “The sleeping boy was suddenly awakened by his teacher.” Students have to identify verbals in each example, individually and in their notebooks.
 - The class discusses the answers, with the teacher calling on students to change sentences as he calls on them – for example, change this sentence from passive to active voice.
 - Students work in small groups to create their own video with sentences using verbals.
- *Eighth-grade social studies: Key issues leading to the Civil War – Traditional mode:*
 - The teacher lectures using PowerPoint.
 - Students take guided notes.
 - Students read a section in the textbook.
 - Students answer questions at the end of the section.
- *Same content, active mode:*
 - The class plays a quiz bowl game using buzzers. Everyone rotates through two teams of five facing each other. The teacher asks questions involving understanding, applying, and analyzing and calls on the student who buzzes first.

- The teacher requires students to explain their answers and probes with follow-ups: Expand on your definition of *campaign*. Use the word *battle* in your definition. This is where I need you to think and make connections.
- The teacher interrupts the game several times with two activities: Heads-Down Quick Poll (a quick self-assessment) and repeating the correct answer three times.
- Students work with partners on projects in which they create newsletters with articles and illustrations.
- Students get a homework “Brag Sheet” assignment: they must explain to parents what they know about a list of topics (parents receive the answer sheet from the teacher and must sign off that their children knew the material).

“Active Learning in the Middle Grades” by Susan Edwards in *Middle School Journal*, May 2015 (Vol. 46, #5, p. 26-32), www.amle.org; Edwards can be reached at sedwar12@gru.edu. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 587.

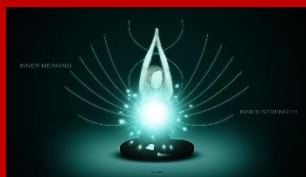
Reading Public School Happenings

Journey for Sight Road Race

On Saturday, May 16th, Coolidge Teacher Mary Anne Cuscuna and members of the RMHS Girls Track Team participated in the Journey for Sight Road Race where the students were running guides for the visually impaired. Special thanks to Mary Ann and the students for participating in this inspirational event.



Quote of the Week....



**" I was always looking
outside myself for
strength and confidence
but it comes from within.
It was there all the time."**

- Anna Freud

AP Art Show

Last Tuesday Evening, the RMHS Art Department held an Art Show featuring several of our talented AP and PreAP Art Students. Below are some of their work. Congratulations to the following AP students who participated in the event: Emily Chen, Julie Herman, Sabine Michaud, Kendall Richardson, Carolyn Vanasse, Samuel Wagner, Sydney Willwerth. In addition, the following Pre-AP students participated: Melanie La, Brenna Farley, Emily Narahara, Natalie Krowitz, Sammi Dowe, Samantha Kramer, Molly McInerney, Owen Murphy, and Emily Rhein. Special thanks goes to Art Teachers Veronique Latimer and Susan Gilbert for all of their efforts in working with these talented students.



Disney Tweet of the Week



I never gave up so easily,
and neither should you.

—Mulan (Sofia the First)





RMHS Spring Award Evening

Last Wednesday evening, RMHS held its second recognition event of the Spring with the annual Spring Award Evening. This evening honors Seniors and Juniors in a variety of academic, athletic, and community areas. Below are some of the students who were recognized. In the immediate photo below, RMHS Senior James Bedingfield was recognized by the United States Army for his U.S. Military Academy Appointment to West Point. In the next photo, RMHS Senior Caitlin Mahoney received the Physics Award. In the final photo, RMHS Senior Joshua Caruso received the Garth Scott Hockey Award. Congratulations to all of the students who were recognized that evening!





MVSA Academic Scholars Dinner

Last Tuesday, over 80 High School Seniors from the Merrimack Valley Superintendent's Association were recognized as outstanding Academic Scholars. RMHS Seniors Kate Mignosa and Ryan Friedmann (shown below) were recognized.



Coolidge Greek Day Event

On Friday, Grade 6 students culminated their unit study of Ancient Greece with the annual Coolidge Greek Day Event. Below are some photos of the event.



Stepping Stones...

- We welcome the following new hires to our school district:
 - ✓ Kaitlyn Nugent, Girls Lacrosse Coaching Assistant, RMHS

- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Associate Elementary Principal, Birch Meadow Elementary School	JOB ID #1565332
1.0 FTE High School Physics Teacher, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #1572882

Blazing Trails....

"Characteristics of a Culture of Learning." "Schooling focuses on teaching, while a culture of learning focuses on the whole child and student understanding," writes ASCD Edge community member Steven Weber. In a recent blog post, Weber explains why educators should be focusing on designing a culture of learning rather than trying to tweak education. He shares the characteristics of a culture of learning to help get you started. [Read More](#)

"Why Teach Digital Communication?" "In the field of education today, it sometimes feels as though a relentless stream flows only in one direction. Teachers are asked to teach more, but with the same number of hours and days," writes Educational Leadership author Elizabeth Englander. In a recent ASCD Inservice post, Englander expands upon her May Educational Leadership article and examines teachers' role in helping students think about their online behavior. [Read More](#)

"Do Students Have Too Much Homework?" Parents profiled in this article discuss the state of homework in some areas, including in Tennessee and New York. Some say homework has become more difficult for students and parents. A free hotline in Nashville, Tenn., has received 12,000 calls from parents and students needing help with homework this year alone. [Read More](#)

"Why Grit Isn't an Accurate Measure of Educational Success." Some schools bolstered by research connecting personal qualities to performance are seeking to tie such characteristics to teacher and school accountability, say two researchers who helped popularize the link between student grit and performance. They now are sounding off on why these factors are not accurate measures of educational success. [Read More](#)

"Grant Wiggins: Some Excerpts from PISA Math Results." Students in the United States have particular weaknesses in performing mathematics tasks with higher cognitive demands, such as taking real-world situations, translating them into mathematical terms, and interpreting mathematical aspects in real-world problems. An alignment study between the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and PISA suggests that a successful implementation of the Common Core Standards would yield significant performance gains also in PISA. [Read More](#)

Contact Us

The Journey 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

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Have a Great Week!