



# Pathways

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

September 20, 2015

Volume 2, Number 3

## Upcoming Dates

- September 21 – 22 – Joshua Eaton & Barrows Grade 5 Trip to Camp Bournedale
- September 21 – (2:45 p.m.) Middle School Choir Auditions @ Parker; (2:45 p.m.) Middle School Jazz Band Auditions @ Coolidge; (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Singers First Rehearsal in Rm. 239; (6:30 p.m.) Reading School Committee Office Hours; (7:00 p.m.) Reading School Committee Meeting in Superintendent's Conference Room
- September 22 – Yom Kippur begins at Sundown – No Evening Activities; (2:45 p.m.) Middle School Choir Auditions @ Coolidge; (2:45 p.m.) Middle School Jazz Band Auditions @ Parker
- September 23 – Yom Kippur; (3:00 p.m.) District MTSS Team Meeting
- September 24 – (Afterschool) Elementary Building Meetings; (5:00 p.m.) RMHS Junior Class Buffet in Café; (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Back to School

## High School Students Need 'Webs' of Supportive Adults, Study Says

By Catherine Gewertz on September 16, 2015 7:18 AM | at [Education Week High School and Beyond Blog](#)

We've long known that adolescents need supportive relationships to help them stay in school through tough times. A new study, published Wednesday, argues that having an "anchor" and a "web" of support—rather than one person to act as a "hero"—can boost adolescents' chances of staying in school.

Like other researchers who have probed the dynamics that prompt students to leave school, [America's Promise Alliance](#) has consistently seen that the presence of caring adults is pivotal. Following up its 2014 report, "[Don't Call Them Dropouts](#)," the organization decided to focus on finding out more about what students need from those relationships. The result is "[Don't Quit on Me](#)," released today.

The bottom line? Relationships matter. But the type, source, and intensity matter, too, if they're going to serve as effective buffers against leaving school.

"They told us they need respect, not judgment. They need resources—bus passes, a ride to school, a meal, a job, a chance. They need people to show care through actions, not advice. They need an anchor, not a hero. And they need a web of support, a healthy, supportive community of their own," America's Promise Alliance President and CEO John Gomperts writes in the introduction to the report.

The survey is not nationally representative. It's based on an online survey of 2,800 teenagers, about 40 percent of whom had disconnected from school at some point. It also draws on interviews with 120 young people in eight cities. The adolescents who inform the report are a mix of those who had left school and those who hadn't. Some of those who left were re-engaging; others weren't.

Among the most powerful predictors of staying in school were the emotional support of parents and of adults in their schools, "instrumental" support from adults in and out of school—tangible help, such as providing babysitting so a student can come to school, or introducing the student to a potential employer—and "informational" support from friends, such as how to apply to college or where to find a job.

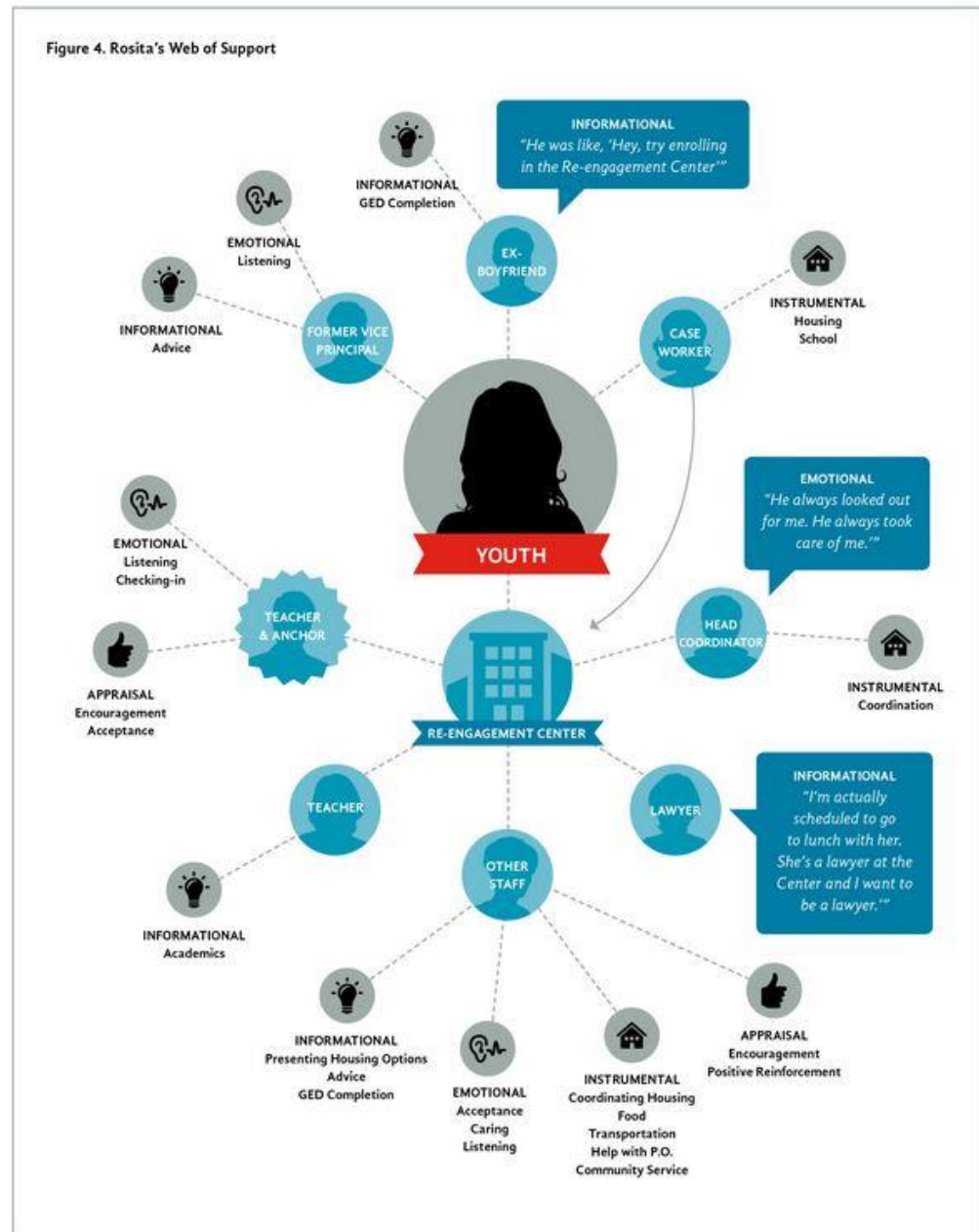
The report describes an "anchor and web" model of support that distributes a student's needs across friends, parents, adults in school, and adults in the community. A teacher might serve as an anchor for a troubled young student, but a

Night; RISE  
Preschool Open  
House

- September 26 – (8:00 a.m.) School Committee Retreat in Superintendent's Conference Room
- September 28 – (7:00 p.m.) Reading School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- September 29 – (3:30 p.m.) RTA General Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- September 30 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (1:15 p.m.) Elementary District PLC Meetings (1:30 p.m.) Middle and High School District PLC Meetings; (6:30 p.m.) RCASA Annual Meeting and Presentation of "If Only" at Jordan's Furniture
- October 1 – (8:30 p.m.) Coffee & Conversation – Elementary Level @ Joshua Eaton; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS
- October 3 – (8:00 a.m.) SAT Testing – RMHS is a test site

half-dozen or more others in her life also play critical roles in weaving a web of support.

"It's not fair to mentors or to parents to put it all on their shoulders," Jonathan Zaff, who oversaw the research for the new report, said during a meeting about it at *Education Week*. "When you put it all on one person, you break that person's back, and the student won't succeed."



The study includes some disheartening data that reflects what we already know about the staggering odds some students face. Their chances of leaving school correlate with the number of "adverse life experiences" they're experiencing, such as major mental health issues, becoming parents, becoming homeless, or feeling unprepared for school. For instance, more than half of the teenagers who left school had experienced five or more such things, compared with only 2 in 10 of those who stayed enrolled.

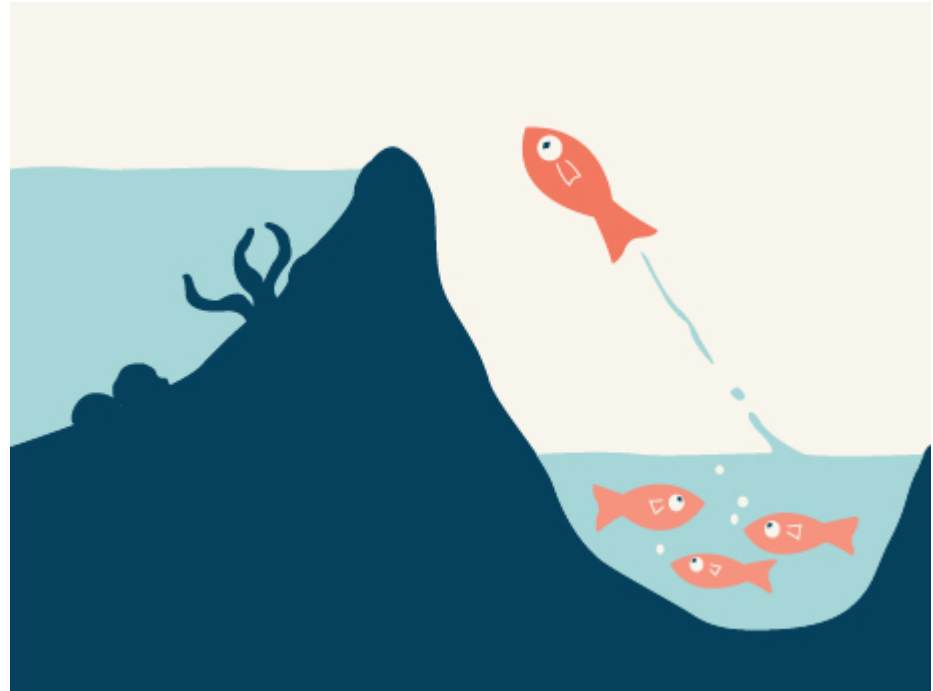
### **Kudos and Accolades**

- Thank you to our building teachers and staff from Wood End, Parker, and Coolidge for hosting the annual back to school nights and open houses for parents.
- Thank you to the high school guidance staff for hosting the annual Senior Parents Night.
- Congratulations to the boys & girls soccer, golf, field hockey swimming and volleyball with wins this week.
- Congratulations to Swim Coach Lois Margeson on her 200<sup>th</sup> career win.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Football team on their first win of the seasons, a 40-6 victory over Masconomet.
- Thank you to our modular kindergarten teachers at Killam and Barrows and our facilities, technology, and custodial staff for all of their efforts in transitioning into our new kindergarten modular classrooms.

"It's more the straw that broke the camel's back than one incident that made [students] go off the rails," Gomperts said in discussing the report with *EdWeek* staffers.

## Strategies for Helping Students Motivate Themselves

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED: MARCH 25, 2015 | UPDATED: SEPTEMBER 14, 2015 BY LARRY FERLAZZO ON [EDUTOPIA BLOG](#)



**Editor's Note:** This piece was adapted from [Building a Community of Self-Motivated Learners: Strategies to Help Students Thrive in School and Beyond](#) by Larry Ferlazzo, available March 21, 2015 from [Routledge](#).

[My previous post](#) reviewed research on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and described the four qualities that have been identified as critical to helping students motivate themselves: autonomy, competence, relatedness, and relevance.

In this post, I'll discuss practical classroom strategies to reinforce each of these four qualities.

### **Autonomy**

Providing students with freedom of choice is one strategy for promoting learner autonomy. Educators commonly view this idea of choice through the lens of **organizational and procedural choice**. Organizational choice, for example, might mean students having a voice in seating assignments or members of their small learning groups. Procedural choice could include a choice from a list of homework assignments and what form a final project might take -- a book, poster, or skit.

[Some researchers](#), however, believe that a third option, **cognitive choice**, is a more effective way to promote longer-lasting student autonomy. This kind of cognitive

### Quote of the Week....



**"It's true that we don't know what we've got until we lose it, but it's also true that we don't know what we've been missing until it arrives"**

**Unknown**

autonomy support, which is also related to the idea of ensuring relevance, could include:

- Problem-based learning, where small groups need to determine their own solutions to teacher-suggested and/or student-solicited issues -- ways to organize school lunchtime more effectively, what it would take to have a human colony on Mars, strategies to get more healthy food choices available in the neighborhood, etc.
- Students developing their own ideas for homework assignments related to what is being studied in class
- Students publicly sharing their different thinking processes behind solving the same problem or a similar one
- Teachers using **thinking routines** like one developed by Project Zero at Harvard and consisting of a simple formula: the teacher regularly asking, "What is going on here?" and, after a student response, continuing with, "What do you see that makes you say so?"

### Competence

Feedback, done well, is ranked by education researcher [John Hattie](#) as number 10 out of 150 influences on student achievement.

As [Carol Dweck](#) has found, praising intelligence makes people less willing to risk "their newly-minted genius status," while praising effort encourages the idea that we primarily learn through our hard work: "Ben, it's impressive that you wrote two drafts of that essay instead of one, and had your friend review it, too. How do you feel it turned out, and what made you want to put the extra work into it?"

But how do you handle providing critical feedback to students when it's necessary? Since **extensive research shows** that a ratio of positive-to-negative feedback of between 3-1 and 5-1 is necessary for healthy learning to occur, teachers might consider a strategy called **plussing** that is used by Pixar animation studios with great success. *The New York Times* interviewed author Peter Sims about the concept:

*The point, he said, is to "build and improve on ideas without using judgmental language." . . . An animator working on **Toy Story 3** shares her rough sketches and ideas with the director. "Instead of criticizing the sketch or saying 'no,' the director will build on the starting point by saying something like, 'I like Woody's eyes, and what if his eyes rolled left?' Using words like "and" or "what if" rather than "but" is a way to offer suggestions and allow creative juices to flow without fear, Mr. Sims said.*

"And" and "what if" could easily become often-used words in an educator's vocabulary!

### Relatedness

A high-quality relationship with a teacher whom they respect is a key element of helping students develop intrinsic motivation. What are some actions that teachers can take to strengthen these relationships?

## Disney Tweet of the Week



Violet: "I feel different. Is different okay?" | Tony: "Different is great."

—The Incredibles

Here are four simple suggestions adapted from **Robert Marzano's ideas**:

### **1. Take a genuine interest in your students.**

Learn their interests, hopes, and dreams. Ask them about what is happening in their lives. In other words, lead with your ears and not your mouth. Don't, however, just make it a one-way street -- share some of your own stories, too.

### **2. Act friendly in other ways.**

Smile, joke, and sometimes make a light, supportive touch on a student's shoulder.

### **3. Be flexible, and keep our eyes on the learning goal prize.**

One of my students had never written an essay in his school career. He was intent on maintaining that record during an assignment of writing a persuasive essay about what students thought was the worst natural disaster. Because I knew two of his passions were football and video games, I told him that as long as he used the writing techniques we'd studied, he could write an essay on why his favorite football team was better than its rival or on why he particularly liked one video game. He ended up writing an essay on both topics.

### **4. Don't give up on students.**

Be positive (as much as humanly possible) and encourage a [growth mindset](#).

## **Relevance**

Have students write about how they see what they are learning as relevant to their lives. [Researchers](#) had students write one paragraph after a lesson sharing how they thought what they had learned would be useful to their lives. Writing 1-8 of these during a semester led to positive learning gains, especially for those students who had previously been "low performers."

It is not uncommon for teachers to explicitly make those kinds of real-life connections. However, [research](#) has also found that this kind of teacher-centered approach can actually be de-motivating to some students with low skills. A student who is having a very difficult time understanding math or does just not find it interesting, for example, can feel threatened by hearing regularly from a teacher how important math is to his or her future. Instead of becoming more engaged in class, he or she may experience more negative feelings. These same researchers write:

*[A] more effective approach would be to encourage students to generate their own connections and discover for themselves the relevance of course material to their lives. This method gives students the opportunity to make connections to topics and areas of greatest interest to their lives.*

What other strategies do you use in the classroom to reinforce any of these four critical elements of intrinsic motivation?

**LARRY FERLAZZO'S PROFILE**



## Reading Public School Happenings

### **Killam Modular Classroom Grand Opening**

On Monday, Killam kindergarten students began classes for the first time in their new modular classrooms. The photo below show Principal Cathy Giles and kindergarten staff welcoming the students and parents to the new modular classrooms with a golden ribbon cutting ceremony. Other photos show the new modular classroom from the outside and inside.

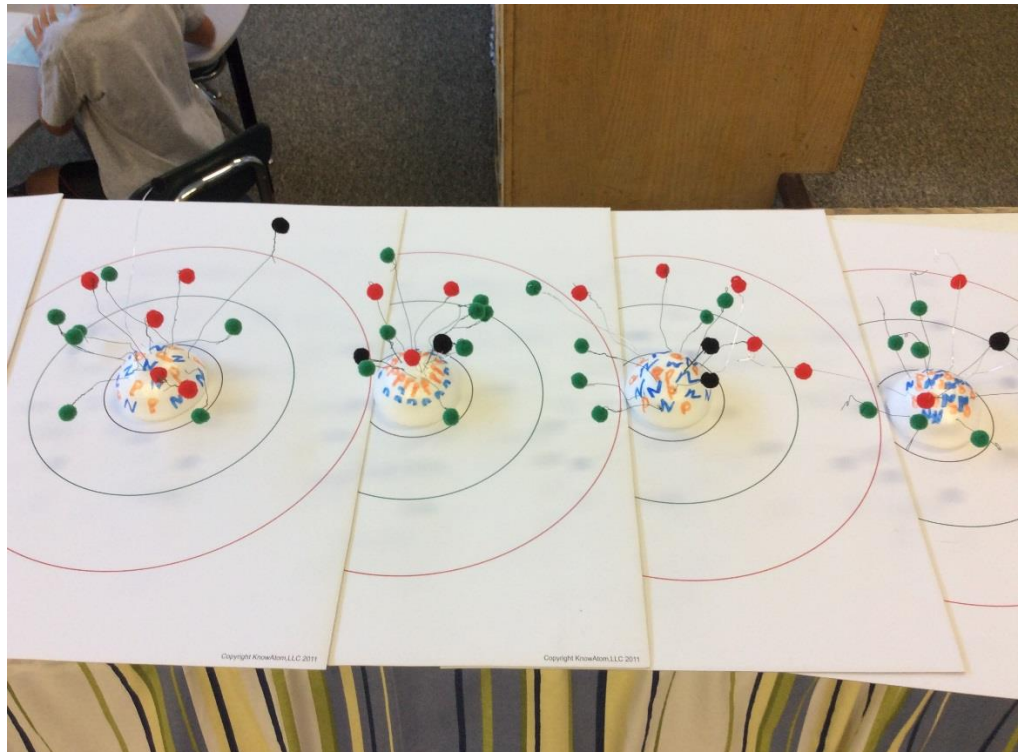
The Barrows modular classrooms will be opening tomorrow (Monday). Special thanks goes out to everyone who helped make this transition to the modular classrooms possible.





### **Know Atom Science**

This year, the Reading Public Schools are piloting the Know Atom Science Curriculum in several K-5 classrooms throughout the district. This program is hands on, emphasizes problem solving and the scientific method, and is aligned with the new Massachusetts Science Curriculum Frameworks. In the photo below students in Grade 3 at Killam have developed models of the atom to help understand this important concept.



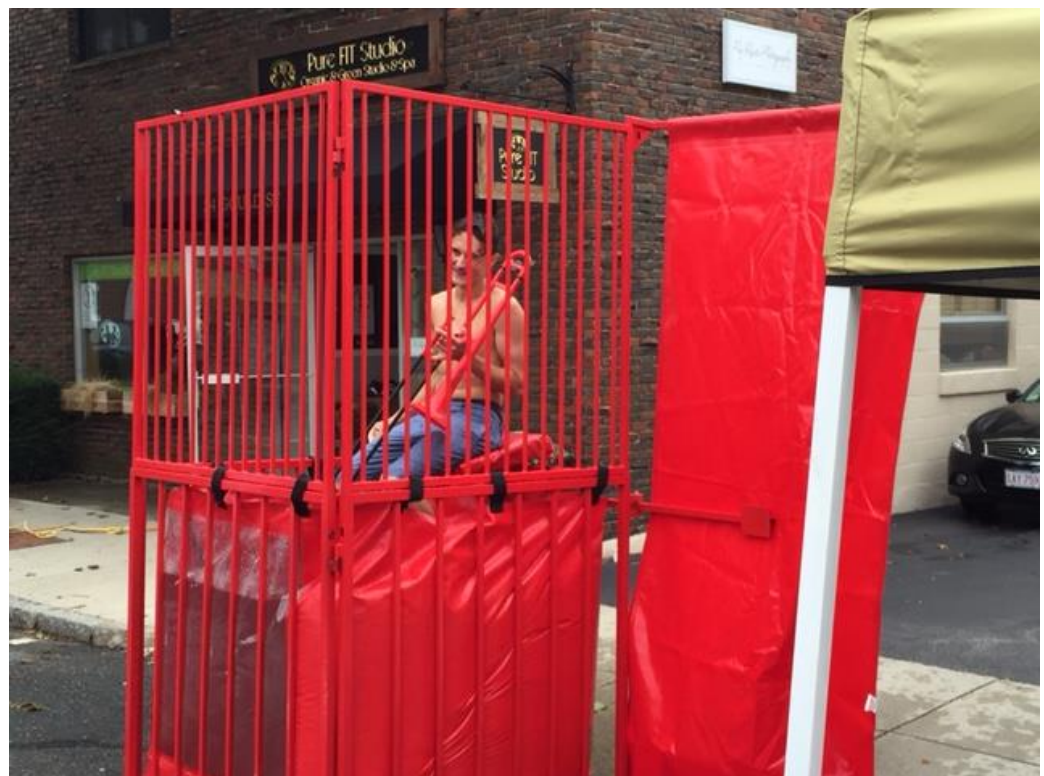


### Fall Street Faire

Last Sunday was the annual Town of Reading Fall Street Faire. The Reading Public Schools was a very active participant at the Faire. Below, several teachers from Joshua Eaton and Wood End participated in the annual Understanding Disabilities Jail for Bail fundraiser. In the next photo, students from the RMHS Drama Club impersonated the characters Joy, Sadness, Anger, Disgust, and Fear from the Disney Movie, *Inside Out*. Finally, members of the RMHS Interact Club ran a Dunk Tank to raise funds for community service activities.







### 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.

Kindergarten Paraprofessional, Joshua Eaton Elementary School	JOB ID #2014034
Title 1 Elementary Math Tutors, 38 hours biweekly (Anticipated Opening) (2), Joshua Eaton Elementary School	Job ID #2020374
Title 1 Elementary Math Tutor, 15.5 hours biweekly (Anticipated Opening), Joshua Eaton Elementary School	JOB ID #2020384
Title 1 Elementary Math Tutors, 38 hours biweekly (Anticipated Opening) (2), Killam Elementary School	JOB ID #2020314
After School Care Head Teacher, RISE @ Wood End Elementary School	JOB ID #2025104
Before School Care Head Teacher, RISE @ Wood End Elementary School	JOB ID #2025124
After School Care Assistant Teacher, Wood End Elementary School	JOB ID #2025144
Administrative Assistant to Director of Student Services, Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #2030764
District Wide Evaluator (Elementary), Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #2030784

- Invitation for Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest**-Schools are invited to participate in the Samsung's Solve for Tomorrow contest– a STEM-based education competition in which schools have a chance to win a share of **\$2 million in technology and prizes!** The challenge is for teachers and students to use STEM creativity and ingenuity to solve a problem within their community. Prizes will be awarded at each stage of the competition; from the 255 State Finalists to the final five National Winners. **To enter, just answer a few short questions on our website:** [www.Samsung.com/Solve](http://www.Samsung.com/Solve)

In addition to the above mentioned, Samsung will be awarding **five teachers in every state including D.C., two Galaxy tablets**. There will also be **one winner from each state that will receive a \$20,000 technology package** for their school.

Fifteen National Finalists will receive a trip to attend our pitch event, where they will present their video to a panel of judges and will win a minimum of \$40,000 in technology. Finally, the five National Winners will also be invited to attend a celebratory event in Washington D.C. in addition to winning \$120,000 technology package for their school.

As an additional bonus this year, our supporters at **BrainPOP** are contributing a free collection of **STEM-themed content** that teachers can utilize as they craft their submissions around their regularly-scheduled curriculum!

- Families for Depression Awareness is presenting a free, 1-hour Teen Depression webinar (with additional 15 minute Q&A) on Wednesday, September 30 at 7:00 PM ET / 4:00 PM PT.** Designed for parents, teachers, school counselors and staff, youth workers, and other caring adults, the webinar covers
  - How to distinguish between depression and teen angst
  - What you should know about self-injury, bullying, and other concerns
  - How to talk to teens about depression
  - How to get help for a struggling teen

- What to do when a teen refuses help

The expert presenter is Dr. Michael Tsappis, the psychiatrist for the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital and a member of the faculty of Harvard Medical School in the Department of Psychiatry. His post-graduate specialty training is in general psychiatry as well as child and adolescent psychiatry. Dr. Tsappis is particularly interested in understanding psychiatric illness in the context of human development and a changing social environment.

Watch the webinar live to submit questions to Dr. Tsappis! Complete the online evaluation form after the webinar to receive a free set of Parent and Teen Depression and Bipolar Disorder Wellness Guides in English or Spanish.

Can't attend the live webcast? Register today and watch the recorded webinar later at your convenience.

Register at [www.familyaware.org/trainings](http://www.familyaware.org/trainings).

- **Massachusetts FOCUS Academy Offerings**-The Massachusetts FOCUS Academy (MFA) offers cost-free, online, three (3) credit graduate courses that provide educators with the skills, knowledge and instructional strategies to improve outcomes for all students in safe and supportive inclusive environments. MFA was created as a statewide professional development system designed to improve the outcomes for all students while increasing the retention of highly qualified personnel. MFA was developed through a State Personnel Development Grant from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education and is being offered at no cost to schools and districts. Schools and districts will be responsible for the cost of stipends, travel, etc.

#### **Courses to Be Offered This Semester:**

- Creating and Sustaining Positive School-Wide Learning Environments
- Assessment of Students with Disabilities who are English Language Learners
- Collaborative Co-teaching: Meeting the Needs of All Students
- Differentiated Instruction
- Partnering with Families of Middle School and High School Students with Disabilities
- Partnering with Families of Preschool and Elementary School Students with Disabilities
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Student Affect and Engagement
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL):: Addressing Learner Variability
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL):: Addressing Learner Variability in Mathematics Instruction

For more information and a link to the online application go to [Massachusetts FOCUS Academy](#). **PLEASE NOTE THE APPLICATION DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23<sup>rd</sup>**.

Please send questions to [mtss@doe.mass.edu](mailto:mtss@doe.mass.edu). Thank you.



## Blazing Trails....

**"The Dos and Don'ts of Classroom Management: Your 25 Best Tips."** Classroom management is a delicate balancing act often learned through experience and trial-and-error experimentation. Whether you're a new or experienced teacher, having strategies for effective classroom management is essential for creating positive, successful learning spaces (and staying sane!). In this presentation you'll find 25 tips for managing your classroom. They were contributed by educators from Edutopia's community in response to a discussion by blogger Larry Ferlazzo asking users to share their most valuable classroom management advice. [Read More](#)

**"Tips and Tricks for Back to School."** In this ASCD blog post on Inservice, Tisha Shipley offers her favorite tips and tricks for teachers to make this a successful school year. Her tips include how to organize your classroom; how to build your classroom culture; procedures, routines, and transitions you must teach your students; and more. This is an exciting time of year for teachers everywhere, and these ideas are sure to help you make the most of it! [Read More](#)

**"Beyond ESEA."** Efforts to rewrite the nation's main education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), have made frequent headlines recently, but there are other key education issues that Congress needs to address. Laws regarding student data privacy, child nutrition, higher education access and affordability, and federal education funding will all be up for discussion as members of Congress return to work this week. This week's ASCD Capitol Connection has the scoop. [Read More](#)

**"First Annual Global Collaboration Day Hopes to Connect Every School."** The first Global Collaboration Day will be held the 17th of September. The daylong event will include activities, such as professional development for teachers, international discussions, mystery Skype calls and Twitter chats. [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

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

### Three Tips to Pump Up Student Voice in Your Classroom

How collaboration and digital media can make students more empowered in their learning and engaged in the classroom. [Read on](#)

### Boston Superintendent Tommy Chang Gets Down To Business

New Boston Public Schools Superintendent Tommy Chang wants to put students on career paths in high school with relevant classes and internships, but he'll need the expertise of the business community to weigh in.

### Ken Wagner: Stronger Education, Greater Opportunity

Ken Wagner, Rhode Island's Commissioner of Education, looks forward to the upcoming schools year and highlights personalized learning as a key component to high quality education.

**Have a Great Week!**