



Pathways

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

October 4, 2015

Volume 2, Number 5

Upcoming Dates

- October 5 - (8:00 p.m.) Coffee & Conversation – Secondary Level @ RMHS Distance Learning Room; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting @ Killam
- October 6 – Joshua Eaton Picture Day; (6:30 p.m.) Presentation of Spring Data Collection Meetings (7:00 p.m.) Killam PTO Meeting in the Media Center; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS PTO Meeting in the Media Center; (7:30 p.m.) Barrows PTO Meeting
- October 7 – (8:30 a.m.) Joshua Eaton PTO Meeting & Principal's Coffee; Joshua Eaton Walk to School Day; (after school) Secondary Building Meetings; (6:30 p.m.) Community Forum Presentation @ RMHS; (7:00 p.m.) Parker PTO Meeting
- October 8 – (8:30 a.m.) Wood End PTO Meeting; (after school) Elementary Building Meetings; (3:00 p.m.) Joshua Eaton Jaguar Jog; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS; (6:30 p.m.) Community

In Times of Tragedy, Educators Can Offer Hope

By: Sara Burd, District Leader for Social Emotional Learning

Our nation has suffered too much at the hands of dangerous people who use guns to commit horrific acts of violence. As President Obama said following the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy, "We won't be able to stop every violent act, but if there is even one thing that we can do to prevent any of these events, we have a deep obligation, all of us, to try." – Now Is The Time

This week our country witnessed the loss of 9 young lives and the injury of many others as a result of yet another college shooting. It is incredulous that this story, these sentiments are no longer rare or unique. Our young people and our families are carrying mental health burdens beyond conceptualization and when help is not provided, lives are lost. We see ourselves, our neighbors, our students, our children and ourselves in these stories and we are shaken and saddened.

We are educators. We come to work to provide optimal learning environments for our students and hope to encourage new understandings and life-long skills. Today, creating these optimal learning environments means **we need to make schools safe places for our students and ourselves**. The life-long skills we teach and model must be those of social emotional competence; the ability to know ourselves and find wellness.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

"Teachers enter the profession to provide a well-rounded education and support the whole student, which includes social and emotional skills development. SEL is a critical part of every child's growth, both as students and as contributing members of society. Teachers have shared with us how important this is — now it's up to all of us to support them in this essential work." — Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

Forum Presentation @ Coolidge; (7:00 p.m.) Birch Meadow PTO Meeting

- October 9 – RMHS Choral Department Karaoke Night in the RMHS Cafeteria
- October 11 – RMHS Band North End Parade
- October 12 – Columbus Day – No School
- October 13 – No School - Prek- 12 In-Service Day; (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build; (6:30 p.m.) Community Forum Presentation @ Killam
- October 14 – (8:00 a.m.) PSAT Testing at RMHS; (after school) Secondary Building Meetings; (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Light Hang; (6:30 p.m.) Community Forum Presentation @ Birch Meadow
- October 15 – (8:45 a.m.) Community Forum Presentation @ Eaton; (after school) Elementary District PLC Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS
- October 17 – RMHS Marching Band – Billerica Show; (10:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Set Build

CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies. The definitions of the five competency clusters for students are:

Self-awareness: The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

Self-management: The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

Social awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

Responsible decision making: The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

We can each find opportunities every day to integrate the SEL competencies into our work with students. In all of our **Elementary schools**, students are learning social awareness and self-awareness through their Open Circle lessons, and practicing responsible decision making through demonstration of their Core Values. **Middle school students** are practicing relationship skills and social awareness in their advisories. Coolidge 8th grade students are expanding their practice of these skills through Team Polaris' focus on eating with a social conscience to understand where and how food makes it to their table. In the **High School**, students are examining the hero's journey in Mr. McVety's English course to explore the collective unconscious of humanity and what actions a hero takes to serve as a model to others and make a positive impact on society. Even **our staff** are taking time to be mindful and practice their SEL skills of self-awareness and self-management during Mindful Moments.

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the volleyball, golf, field hockey and swimming with wins this week.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Football Team who defeated Lexington on Friday, 45-7. The Rockets are now 3-1.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Marching Band who placed second in two NESBA Marching Band Competitions last weekend, one in Melrose and one in Randolph.

Reading was fortunate to receive funding through the *Now Is The Time* program to build our MTSS framework and provide equal and early access to mental health services for all of our students. In these moments of tragedy we are reminded of why we do this work and how high the stakes are for our students and our communities. But we should also be encouraged that every one of us can do something today to promote wellness in our students; as President Obama said, **“We won’t be able to stop every violent act, but if there is even one thing that we can do to prevent any of these events, we have a deep obligation, all of us, to try.”**

Teen Panel on Social Media to Take Place on October 15

This year the technology integration specialists of the Reading Public Schools will be working with a Common Sense Education program called Connecting Families. Common Sense is the nation's leading independent non-profit organization dedicated to empowering kids to thrive in a world of media and technology. We feel it is important for parents to be aware of what’s going on and/or what’s to come in their children’s digital lives and to help support them in discussing how to make good digital choices. This program is well designed with lots of support from Common Sense Education and has been successful in many districts.

The kickoff to this program will be an evening with a “Teen Panel”, a group of selected Reading High School students who will share their digital lives with parents across the district. This is a great opportunity for parents of students of all ages to learn firsthand what to expect and how to support their children throughout the coming years.

The program will continue throughout the year with a series of Conversation Cases for small groups of parents with topics such as Cyberbullying, Digital Footprints and Photo Sharing, and many more relevant topics.

We have chosen **October 15, at 7:00 p.m., at the Joshua Eaton School** for the Teen Panel Night.

In addition, this Monday evening at 9:00 p.m. on CNN, Anderson Cooper 360, there will be a program titled, “#Being13 Inside the Secret World of Teens,” Here is the link from CNN: <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2015/09/10/cnns-anderson-cooper-360-breaks-news-about-teens-and-social-media-in-provocative-two-year-long-investigation/>

We hope you will be able to join us on October 15th for this exciting program! If you have any questions, please contact Instructional Technology Integration Specialist Kathy Santilli at Kathleen.Santilli@reading.k12.ma.us

Emotional Health and Self-Renewal in Classrooms

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, author/consultant Rick Wormeli imagines some monologues that might be running through students’ minds in an average classroom:

Quote of the Week....



"You can only try your best. And if they can't appreciate that, it's their fault, not yours."

– Unknown

- *This stuff is stupid.*
- *This stuff is awesome.*
- *This stuff is beyond me.*
- *I'm not comfortable with this.*
- *Finally, something I'm good at.*
- *Maybe somebody will notice I can't read.*
- *Let's see her find a mistake in that one – it's perfect!*
- *Does the teacher know I didn't study last night?*

Students are by turns "anxious, overconfident, curious, indifferent, angry, amused, lonely, hopeful, embarrassed, empowered, afraid, excited, diminished," says Wormeli. Their emotions are often out of synch with the teacher's and with the school's expectation of conformity and compliance. Wormeli believes that when teachers ignore these emotional disconnects, they're jeopardizing teaching and learning – and their own mental health.

Wormeli suggests seven habits that teachers can use to foster a healthy emotional climate in their classrooms – and maintain their own sanity and humanity:

- *Find joy in others' success.* Celebrate students' intellectual milestones, says Wormeli. Give students an encouraging smile when they show improvement.
- *Cultivate perspective and reframe.* Don't take certain behaviors personally. Be kind rather than right some of the time. Try to see the big picture. "Teachers who have seen formerly frustrating students come back to visit as successful adults trust in the whole enterprise of schooling and growing up," says Wormeli. "Hall duty between classes isn't such a hardship when we realize it's an opportunity to connect with students outside class."
- *Look beyond stereotypes.* There's a tendency to pigeonhole students: a class clown, a geek, a mean girl, a drama queen. "When we see people as fully developed thinkers, they become more to us than our quick categorization reveals," says Wormeli. Visiting students' homes or watching them play soccer, paint a landscape, perform in a concert, or celebrate a religious milestone, we see a different side of them. "They are not just one more paper to grade. We think of them specifically as we plan our lessons, and we look forward to watching them progress."
- *Candidly discuss pedagogical issues.* Research tells us that certain practices are less than effective, says Wormeli: worksheet packets, lectures without opportunities to process content, oral dictation spelling tests as a measure of spelling, counting homework as 50 percent of a report card grade, percentage grades averaged together. Do we have frank discussions with colleagues about changing such practices? Do we work to persuade parents who push for outmoded practices?
- *Embrace humility.* "If someone critiques our teaching, if feels like they're critiquing us," says Wormeli. "In humility, however, we grow comfortable with the idea that we may be wrong... Let's invite administrators, parents, and students to evaluate us at any time."
- *Value intellect.* Teaching the same material year after year can be deadening. Wormeli suggests mixing things up curriculum-wise; attending an Edcamp; writing for publication; rethinking one's goals; writing a personal grading philosophy statement to make sure grades truly measure student learning.
- *Maintain passion and playfulness.* "Having fun with your subject and your students will give students permission to engage, even invest, in their learning," says Wormeli, "and it will elevate your spirits." Use props in lessons; play the part of different historical or literary characters; be a contestant in a review game; insert

Disney Tweet of the Week



"Remember, laughter is 10 times more powerful than screams."

—Mike (Monsters, Inc.)

funny slides into presentations; make fun of your own errors; use students' names in test questions; get a colleague to burst into the classroom with a random piece of information; put a mystery box in the middle of the classroom with yellow police tape around it and a sign saying, *Warning: Open one week from today, only in the presence of an adult.*

"All these habits together create a feeling of emotional wellness," Wormeli concludes, "but they are habits, not incidents. Like muscles that atrophy in disuse, these habits have to be used frequently to achieve emotional health benefits."

"The 7 Habits of Highly Affective Teachers" by Rick Wormeli in *Educational Leadership*, October 2015 (Vol. 73, #2, p. 10-15), <http://bit.ly/1VjnUpp>; Wormeli can be reached at rwormeli@cox.net. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 605.

Reading Public School Happenings

Joshua Eaton Modular Classroom Grand Opening

On Monday, Joshua Eaton kindergarten students began classes for the first time in their new modular classrooms. The photos below show the outside of the modular classrooms and the ribbon cutting ceremony. Special thanks goes out to everyone who helped make this transition to the modular classrooms possible.

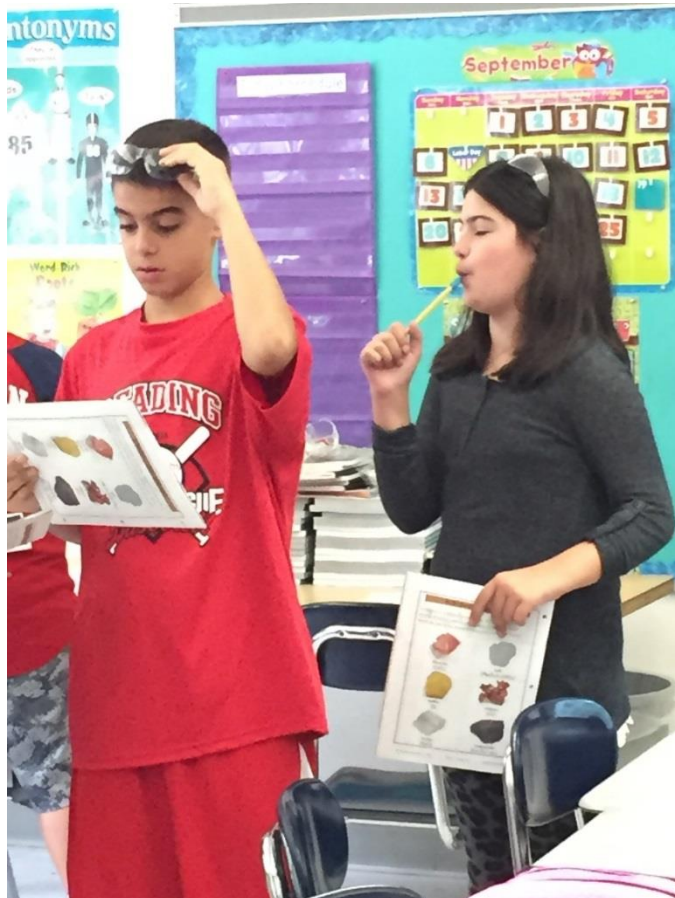
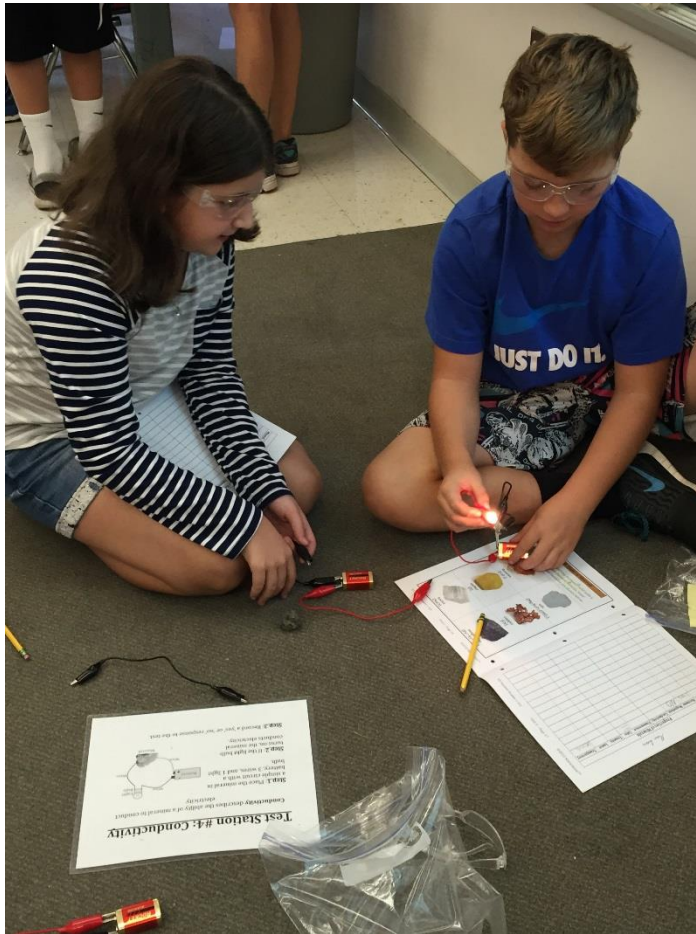




Birch Meadow Classroom Happenings

Below are some photos of different classroom activities that were going on this week at Birch Meadow. In the first photo, Literacy Coach Tricia Stodden is working with a group of students on a lesson that she is modeling for teachers. In the next two photos, students in Grades 3 and 5 are working on their Know Atom Science Activities





RCASA Shows the Movie "If Only"-Last Wednesday, the Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse presented the movie, *If Only*, produced by James Wahlberg and Mike Yebba, in front of over 450 people at the Jordan's Furniture iMax Theater. The film, which focuses on opiate addiction, paints a sad picture of denial and death. As children grow to be teenagers and communication seems to diminish, parents are more at a loss for words, and for how to determine if their child will be the next victim.

The film was co-written and produced by Jim Wahlberg and Mike Yebba with the purpose of building awareness of the ever-growing opiate addiction problem.

The issue of drug abuse has been exacerbated by prescription drugs being provided to teenagers by either easy access to their parents' medications, or being treated for pain typically caused by a sports or some other type of injury. The prescribed drugs, which were originally meant to be 'end-of-life' pain medications, have been liberally prescribed to young people, and when the addiction takes hold, there's no going back. Many have died. The prescription drugs, no longer available or too expensive, are easily replaced by heroin, and the consequences have been dire.

At the conclusion of the film, a panel was set up with local experts (seen below) for questions and comments. In addition, produce James Wahlberg made a special appearance (top left photo) and discussed his rationale for making the film.

A special thanks goes out to RCASA Executive Director Erica McNamara and Counselor Julianne DeAngelis for coordinating this presentation.



Contact Us

The Journey newsletter is published weekly for Reading Public School Community Members. If you have anything that you would like to share, please email your information to John Doherty at

john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us

Stepping Stones...

- **Network Manager Appointment**-We are pleased to announce that Julian Carr will become our new Network Manager, effective October 5th. Julian has replaced Lou Caputo, who resigned in August. Julian has over 23 years experience in Information Technology and over 17 years experience as a manager of desktop, network, and telecommunications support staff and systems. Julian's previous work experience includes EBSCO Information Services where he was a Manager End User Services Engineering and Qiagen, where he was a Senior Manager of Network Operations. Julian's office will be located in Central Office. Please welcome Julian to the Reading Public Schools!
- **We welcome** the following new hires to our school district:
 - ✓ Stefanie Sack – Student Tech
 - ✓ Walter Lutter – Para Substitute
 - ✓ Nicole Davis – Extended Day After School Head Teacher, Birch Meadow
 - ✓ Nathan Trubiano – Special Education SSP Program Teacher, Coolidge
 - ✓ Robert Deane – Custodian, Parker
 - ✓ Paula Ajemian – Special Education Program Para, Birch Meadow
 - ✓ Donald Cook, Daily Teacher Sub
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

2015-2016 Substance Abuse Prevention Chapter Advisorship (8), Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #2057204
38 hours biweekly Title 1 Instructional Interventionist-Mathematics (Anticipated Opening) (2), Joshua Eaton Elementary School	JOB ID #2052384
15.5 hours biweekly Title 1 Instructional Interventionist-Mathematics (Anticipated Opening), Joshua Eaton Elementary School	JOB ID #2052404
38 hours biweekly Title 1 Instructional Interventionist-Mathematics (Anticipated Opening) (2), Killam Elementary School	JOB ID #2052414
Girls Field Hockey Coaching Assistant, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #2065544
Girls Ice Hockey Assistant Coach, Reading Memorial High School (Repost)	JOB ID #1973754

- **COFFEE & CONVERSATION - Facilitated by the District Leader of Social Emotional Learning**-Over the past few years, parents in the community have been asking for a forum where they can meet and share with and hear from other parents how they are navigating various issues with their students. Topics such as how to responsibly use technology, navigate social media, talk about substance use and anxiety, gender identity, grief, and so many other issues. This year, we are excited to be offering COFFEE & CONVERSATION! Once a month at the elementary level and once a month at the secondary level, we will host a morning parent coffee where families can drop in and engage in facilitated conversation with other parents. We will have a topic of focus each month but will welcome conversation on any relevant issues that families bring to the table. Flyers with information (one for elementary, one for secondary) can be found by clicking the link below:

[Elementary Link](#)
[Secondary Link](#)

- **Sights of Reading Calendar Now On Sale**-Reading Girl Scout Troop 71290 and the Reading Girl Scout Achievement Award Committee have partnered to produce another Sights of Reading Calendar. The 2016 calendar includes photos of Joshua Eaton School and the RMHS Victory Bell. Please consider purchasing one for your home or classroom, or as a gift for someone who no longer lives in Reading. For more information, see www.sightsofreading.com or by now by clicking on [here](#).

Blazing Trails....

"Boston Superintendent Wants Less Testing, Broader Assessments." Boston Public Schools students will spend less time this year taking standardized tests and could soon move toward an assessment system that captures a fuller view of critical thinking and performance, Superintendent Tommy Chang says. "We're cutting back on multiple-choice interim assessments - period," Chang said Tuesday in a meeting with Globe editors and reporters. District schools, Chang said, are curtailing the use of so-called predictive exams - those aimed at forecasting performance on year-end multiple-choice tests, such as the MCAS. Chang said such tests are not good measures of students' reasoning ability. [Read More](#)

"Improving Schools: Avoiding Student Burnout." "Living in the sports-obsessed area of Northern Virginia," Sean Slade writes in this ASCD Inservice blog post, "the topic of burnout comes up a lot in parental and community discussions." Slade takes this observation about burnout in youth sports -- in which the kids with high commitment levels end up with increased skills and understanding, but those who don't feel as engaged end up with too much stress, not enough positive experiences, and not enough fun -- and applies it to education. [Read More](#)

"What to Question in a Question?" In this blog on ASCD Inservice, 2015 ASCD Emerging Leader Umair Quereshi, a physics teacher in Islamabad, Pakistan, explains why questioning is considered one of the most powerful instructional techniques. He explains that questioning is vital to gaining more information and communicating effectively as we all ask and are asked questions when engaging in conversation. Quereshi walks readers through five steps he has learned over the last 15 years that can help teachers refine the skill of questioning each day. [Read More](#)

"Later Start Times are not Feasible for All Schools." School districts nationwide are considering later school start times, citing research showing that students need more sleep. However, some districts have had to abandon such plans or not consider later starts at all for various reasons, including logistical issues with schedules and transportation as well as criticism from some parents. [Read More](#)

"Extracurricular Activities Help Meet Needs of the Whole Child in Britain." UK students enrolled in independent schools can explore extracurricular activities, ranging from dance to conservation science. "Education is the making of the whole person," says Andrew Fleck, headmaster at Sedbergh in Cumbria, who notes that such activities can inspire lifelong interests. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!