



# Pathways

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

October 18, 2015

Volume 2, Number 7

## Upcoming Dates

- October 19 – 20 – Birch Meadow, Killam and Wood End Grade 5 Trip to Camp Bournedale
- October 19 – (2:30 p.m.) Staff Presentation by Dr. Doherty in RMHS Distance Learning Room; (6:30 p.m.) School Committee Office Half-Hour; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- October 21 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release Day; (1:15 p.m.) Elementary PLC Meetings; (1:30 p.m.) Secondary PLC Meetings
- October 22 – (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS
- October 23 – RMHS Drama – Elementary School Tours; (6:00 p.m.) Killam Halloween Bash
- October 24 – (4:30 p.m.) Birch Meadow Spooky Fun Faire; (7:30 p.m.) Birch Meadow Monster Mash
- October 26 – (7:00 p.m.) Special Education Parent Advisory Council Meeting in the

## Ruby Payne on Connection and Belonging in Schools

"In the past 20 years, the push for high achievement, along with a very narrow definition of achievement at the federal level, has forced many schools to neglect the very foundation of learning: safety and belonging," says author/consultant Ruby Payne in this article in *AMLE Magazine*. Payne says she's heard increased concern among educators around the country about "cutting" – various forms of self-harm. She believes the "hurt" that drives adolescents to cut themselves has to do with a lack of connections, safety, and belonging.

Generation K (teens 13-20, many under the spell of *Hunger Games* icon Katniss Everdeen) "has a deep distrust of institutions – especially governments and corporations," says Payne. "They watched the Great Recession and the spike in terrorism... Today's adolescents generally perceive their external environment as harsh, unpredictable, and unsafe. Terrorism, Facebook envy, and cyberbullying are all part of their daily reality. The school environment has become harsher under the pressures of state assessments (you make it or you don't) and zero tolerance in discipline. And in middle school, students often are bullied in school and out of school – in person and via social media. No place is safe." According to one study of American and British Generation K girls, 30 percent are unsure or negative about marriage, 31 percent feel the same way about having children, 86 percent are concerned about getting a job, 77 percent about going into debt, and 22 percent have considered suicide.

In this environment, human connections and belonging are essential, and if those are absent, some teens harm themselves, while others engage in avoidance behaviors. One study found that the average American teenage boy watches 50 violent and other risky behavior clips a week and, by 21, has played more than 10,000 hours of video games, mostly alone. Activities like these rewire boys' brains for constant arousal, novelty, and excitement, says Payne, and instill a preference for being isolated from social contact.

"Schools cannot change the external world nor the perception that the world is 'not safe,'" says Payne, "but they can address the issue of 'belonging.'" Her suggestions:

- Have students volunteer or engage in community service. "Volunteering is a powerful way to gain a broader perspective and get outside one's own fears and concerns," she says.
- Have students do academic tasks in pairs. This is particularly helpful to keep boys from becoming isolated from others.
- Connect students to people in another country, particularly in Third World countries, via Skype or Google Hangouts.
- Never allow a student to eat lunch alone. "Assign student ambassadors whose explicit responsibility is to befriend," says Payne.
- Survey students about their best friends and the topics they discuss, and

## Superintendent's Conference Room

- October 27 – (6:30 p.m.) Annual College Fair at Shriner's Auditorium, Wilmington, MA
- October 28 – (3:00 p.m.) District MTSS Meeting; (7:00 p.m.) Performing & Fine Arts College Fair at Boston University
- October 29 – (3:00 p.m.) Staff Presentation by Dr. Doherty at Joshua Eaton; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS; (7:00 p.m.) RCASA Guest Speaker – Dr. Kevin Hill in the Endslow Performing Arts Center
- October 31 – Happy Halloween

then counsel them on how to be “better friends” who ask questions rather than giving advice and who alert adults when they hear troubling references to pornography, cutting, heavy drug use, and suicide.

“Your students may not thank you,” says Payne of such interventions, “but they will be the beneficiaries.”

“Keeping Students Safe from Harm” by Ruby Payne in *AMLE Magazine*, October 2015 (Vol. 4, #3, p. 36-37), no free e-link available; Payne can be reached at [rpayne@ahaprocess.com](mailto:rpayne@ahaprocess.com). Reprinted from Marshall Memo 607.

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## Carol Dweck on Glitches in the Implementation of Mindsets Thinking

In this *Education Week* article, Carol Dweck says that as she and her colleagues at Stanford University have watched the theory of fixed and growth mindsets become more and more popular among educators, “we’ve become much wiser about how to implement it.” Here are her thoughts about one major misunderstanding.

*Growth mindset isn’t just about effort.* “Certainly, effort is key for students’ achievement,” says Dweck, “but it’s not the only thing. Students need to try new strategies and seek input from others when they’re stuck.” After all, the goal is learning, and if they’re not learning, they need to be strategic about how to get there. Praising effort can help keep them in the game, but an adult should say something like this when dealing with a striving but unsuccessful student: “Let’s talk about what you’ve tried, and what you can try next.”

Dweck says she is haunted by the possibility that some educators and parents haven’t fully understood the mindset concepts and are misapplying them in the following ways:

- Trying to boost students’ self-esteem by praising effort;
- Trying to make children feel better by saying, “Everyone is smart!”
- Explaining students’ failure by saying they have a *fixed* mindset.
- Treating children’s mistakes as problematic or harmful rather than pathways to success.

In these cases, children can actually be pushed toward a fixed mindset about their intelligence. “Must it always come back to finding a reason why some children just can’t learn,” asks Dweck, “as opposed to finding a way to help them learn? Teachers who understand the growth mindset do everything in their power to unlock that learning.”

Dweck wonders whether she and her colleagues put too much emphasis on sheer effort, making it sound as though developing a growth mindset is easy. “Maybe we talked too much about people having one mindset or the other,” she says, “rather than portraying people as mixtures. We are on a growth-mindset journey, too.”

So how can educators move to a deeper understanding of the growth mindset? Dweck says we need to acknowledge that (a) We’re all a mixture of fixed and growth mindsets, (b) We will probably always be that way, and (c) “If we want to

### Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the volleyball, boys & girls soccer, boys cross country, field hockey and swimming with wins this week.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Football Team who defeated Woburn on Friday, 42-0. The Rockets are now 5-1.
- Thank you to those staff, parents, and community members that participated in the Communication Audit Focus Group sessions that occurred last week.
- To our technology integration specialists Kathy Santilli, Marcia Grant, Janet Dee, and Meg Powers for the great job that they did in coordinating the teen panel on social media last Thursday evening. Special kudos goes to Kathy Santilli for moderating the panel discussion.

move closer to a growth mindset in our thoughts and practices, we need to stay in touch with our fixed-mindset thoughts and deeds.” Two sure routes to a *false* growth-mindset are to stigmatize and “ban” the fixed mindset and to attach high stakes to children’s mindset status. Adults also need to be aware of own their triggers. Dweck’s suggestions:

- When faced with challenges: “Do you feel overly anxious? Does a voice in your head warn you away?”
- When you have a teaching setback, or when students aren’t listening or learning: “Do you feel incompetent or defeated? Do you look for an excuse?”
- When we’re criticized: “Do you become defensive, angry, or crushed instead of interested in learning from the feedback?”
- Watching an educator who’s better at something we value: “Do you feel envious and threatened, or do you feel eager to learn?”

“Accept those thoughts and feelings and work with and through them,” she says.

“And keep working with and through them.”

“Growth Mindset, Revisited” by Carol Dweck in *Education Week*, September 23, 2015 (Vol. 35, #5, p. 4, 20), [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org) Reprinted from Marshall Memo 607.

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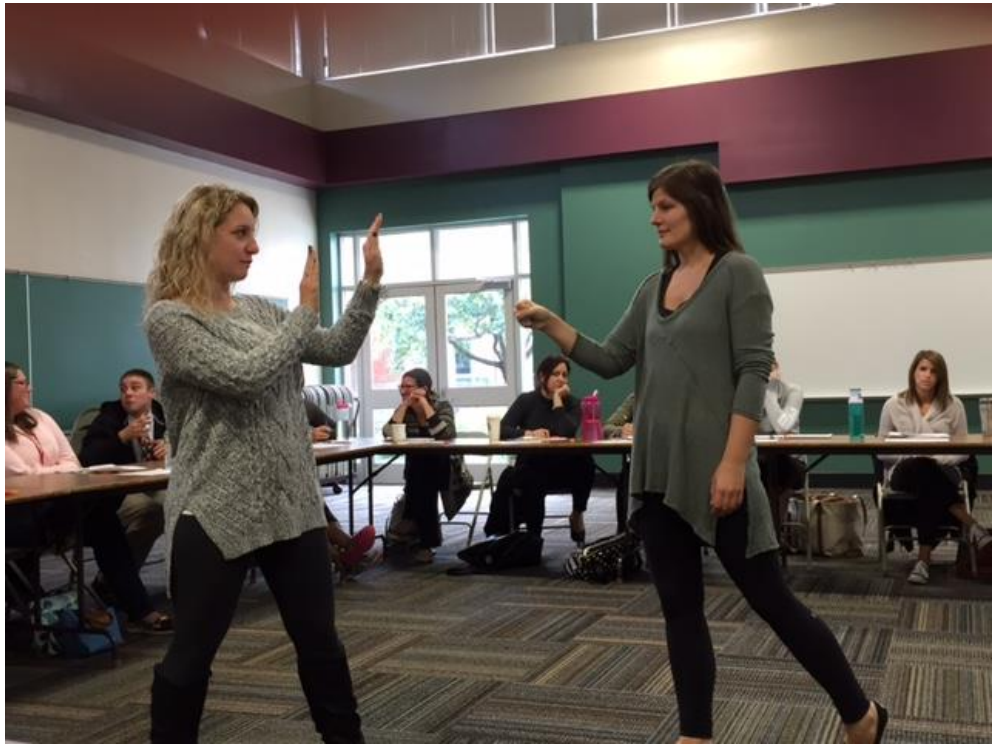
## Reading Public School Happenings

### **October 13 Professional Development Day**

Last Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, was a professional development day for teachers, paraeducators, food service and school secretaries. Below are some photos from the day. Special thanks to all of the presenters and to Director of Student Services Carolyn Wilson and Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Teaching Craig Martin for organizing the event.



***Landmark Training***



***QBS Training***



***Benchmark Testing Training***



**Quote of the Week....**



**"Learn from yesterday,  
live for today, hope for  
tomorrow. The important  
thing is not to stop  
questioning."**

**– Albert Einstein**



***Youth Mental Health First Aid Training***



***Effective Inclusion Practices***





***METCO Director Jason Cross***



***K-8 Literacy Coach Tricia Stodden***



***K-8 Math Coach Caren Brown***

### **Teen Panel**

Last Thursday, a group of selected High School Students participated in a panel discussion where they shared their digital lives with parents across the district. Over 75 parents attended this outstanding session. This was 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. Special thanks to our technology integration specialists, Marcia Grant, Kathy Santilli, Meg Powers, and Janet Dee, and our teen panelists for their thoughtful and candid comments.



***RMHS Teen Panel***





*Teen Panel Moderator Kathy Santilli*



*RMHS Sophomore Kathleen Walsh Comments on a Question*



### Disney Tweet of the Week



Just follow your heart. Go as far as your dreams.

—Cinderella (Cinderella II)

### RMHS Volleyball Team Hosts Dig Pink Game

Recently, the RMHS Volleyball Team hosted their Annual Dig Pink Game to raise funds for breast cancer research. A picture of the team is below.



### Stepping Stones...

- **We welcome** the following new hires to our school district:
  - Olivia Romano – Substitute
  - Matthew De Barros - Substitute
  - Faiza Baig – Substitute
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit [www.schoolspring.com](http://www.schoolspring.com) to view the job details.

Middle School: School Psychologist Long-Term Substitute, Coolidge Middle School	JOB ID #2096294
Anticipated Boys Indoor Track Assistant Coach, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #2096424

- **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](#)

- **Helping Traumatized Children Learn** We are excited to announce we are once again hosting the *Helping Traumatized Children Learn* graduate level course co-sponsored by Lesley University and Reading Public Schools. Many of our staff took this course previously and had great things to say about it! This course has been highlighted in the New York Times and you can read a little bit more about what makes this course and understanding so crucial to helping students.

[http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/13/separating-the-child-from-the-trauma/?smid=fb-share&\\_r=0](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/13/separating-the-child-from-the-trauma/?smid=fb-share&_r=0)

The class is open to twenty-five participants and costs \$500, however upon successful completion of the course participants will be eligible for tuition reimbursement per the collective bargaining agreement. If you are interested in tuition reimbursement, please submit the attached Form 1 and return it to Central Office. Registration is open until October 30<sup>th</sup> and the classes will be on-site at the Reading Memorial High School Distance Learning Room room on November 13<sup>th</sup>, December 11<sup>th</sup> and January 15<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. In order to register for the course, please send to the Student Services Office your completed Lesley University Registration form (attached here) and check for \$500 written out to Lesley University. Substitute coverage will be provided by the School Climate Transformation Grant (MTSS), though you will need to secure a substitute through Aesop if you require one. This course is open to all educators, including related service providers and paraprofessionals.

For staff who completed this course previously, please stay tuned as *we plan to offer Part 2 of the course program in the Spring!*

Please see attachments for registration and more information. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Sara Burd at [Sara.Burd@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:Sara.Burd@reading.k12.ma.us).

- **Reading Education Foundation Festival of Trees-** The **Reading Education Foundation** is preparing for its **14th Annual Festival of Trees!** Thank you for your support in the past, which has helped make this this wonderful holiday fundraiser possible. This year, the Festival of Trees will be held on **Saturday, December 5th, and Sunday, December 6th**, at Parker Middle School. We need your help to make this signature event better than ever! Please consider donating a decorated tree! Creativity is encouraged! In the past, donors have decorated a tree in memory of a loved one, as a family project, to promote a cause or to advertise a business, etc. Neighborhood trees have also been popular. Trees must be artificial and tree size may range from tabletop to 11 feet. Visit our [website](#) for more ideas! Set up is Friday, December 4th at 3pm Parker Middle School. Please [email](#) us if you are interested, with the name of your tree and the name and email address of the contact person that will be dropping off the tree during set up on Friday, Dec 4th. Thank you for your continued support!

## Blazing Trails....

**"Test Scores Under Common Core Show That 'Proficient' Varies by State."** Ohio seems to have taken a page from Lake Wobegon, where all the children are above average. Last month, state officials releasing an early batch of test scores declared that two-thirds of students at most grade levels were proficient on reading and math tests given last spring under the new Common Core requirements. Yet similar scores on the same tests meant something quite different in Illinois, where education officials said only about a third of students were on track. And in Massachusetts, typically one of the strongest academic performers, the state said about half of the students who took the same tests as Ohio's children met expectations. [Read More](#)

**"Homework and Responsibility."** One of the ideas that often seems to come up when discussing homework is that of "teaching responsibility." As in, "I assign homework to my students to help them learn to be responsible!" In this blog post from educator Dave Mulder, he talks about how, despite great intentions, "this is a pretty rotten purpose to assign homework. Often times, this kind of homework really only burdens the parents, and doesn't actually help develop responsibility in the kids anyway." [Read More](#)

**"Six Ways You Can Get Comfortable with Blended Learning."** There are many ways that teachers are using blended learning experiences in their classrooms, but these hybrid experiences don't need to begin and end with students. In the spirit of Connected Educator Month, ASCD author William Kist shares many different blended experiences that can enrich educator PD in this ASCD Inservice blog post. When you use these yourself, you'll also be discovering the best ways to take advantage of these kinds of opportunities with your students. [Read More](#)

**"State Test Reviews Now In Session."** After a three-year hiatus, states administering new or significantly changed assessment systems now need to resume use of a technical peer review process to ensure that their statewide assessments meet federal requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Most states will have to undergo the review because they have updated their assessments to align with new college- and career-ready standards. The latest ASCD Core Connection newsletter has more info, plus additional resources. [Read More](#)

**"Why Singapore has the Smartest Kids in the World."** Singapore has become a leader in education due, in part, to a focus on preparing children for the country's changing economy, says Andreas Schleicher, education director for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. This article highlights lessons other countries can learn from Singapore. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!

### 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)