



Pathways

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

November 1, 2015

Volume 2, Number 9

Upcoming Dates

- November 1 - Return to Standard Time. Turn clocks back on Saturday night.
- November 2 - (8:00 a.m.) Coffee & Conversation @ Coolidge Middle School; (3:00 p.m.) School Presentation on Community Forum Data at Wood End; (6:30 p.m.) School Committee Office Half Hour; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- November 3 - (9:00 a.m.) Annual Joshua Eaton Veterans Day Assembly; (3:00 p.m.) School Presentation on Community Forum data at Killam.
- November 4 - Grade 6 - 12 Early Release Day; (1:15 p.m.) Elementary PLC Meetings; (1:30 p.m.) Secondary PLC Meetings
- November 5 - (8:30 a.m.) Coffee & Conversation @ Birch Meadow; (2:45 p.m.) Elementary Building Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS

PARCC Results To Be Released Week of November 9th

Last week, Massachusetts released statewide PARCC results from spring 2015 and it was announced that school and district results will be released during the week of November 9th.

Our district had the opportunity to choose between giving MCAS (our existing state assessment, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) or PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) assessments for the 2014-2015 school year in grades 3-8. We, like most Massachusetts districts, chose PARCC. We saw it as a chance to see where students stood on an assessment specifically designed to test the curriculum standards we use and to become acclimated to a more rigorous assessment. We also saw it as a chance to see how students interact with technology, and to hear feedback from our teachers and administrators on a next-generation assessment.

Results from PARCC are likely to be different than prior years' MCAS results. That is not unexpected. PARCC is a different measuring stick, and the assessment includes challenging questions designed to measure critical-thinking, writing and multi-step problem solving. These questions are designed to be aligned with the instructional and assessment practices that are emphasized in the Massachusetts Literacy and Mathematics frameworks.

Most Massachusetts students who took PARCC did so on a computer. Students who took the test on a computer and responded to a PARCC survey reported that they had enough time to finish, that the test was easier than or the same level of difficulty as their school work, and that they preferred taking a computer-based test. Our own experience was similar to the state. Although the first round of testing last year provided some logistical issues for us (similar to the first round of any new implementation), we learned from our challenges and made several changes which resulted in a smoother second round implementation.

We will update you again when we receive our school and district results in two weeks, followed by parent reports. Parents will receive a copy of their child's detailed score report in late November (An example of what parent score reports will look like is available online at <http://understandthescore.org/> .), while educators will receive summary data of students' scores. We will make a presentation of our district scores at the November 23rd Reading School Committee meeting and during December, each building principal will be making school based presentations at their PTO and School Council meetings.

In the coming weeks, Massachusetts will be evaluating PARCC, and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will decide on November 17th whether to

- November 6 – (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslow PAC
- November 7 – (8:00 a.m.) SAT Testing – RMHS is a Test Center; (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslow PAC
- November 8 – (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslow PAC
- November 9 – Grade 6 – 12 Second Quarter Begins; (9:00 a.m.) Math Workshop; (7:30 p.m.) Annual Town Meeting in the Endslow PAC
- November 11 – Veterans Day No School. Thank you to all that have served.
- November 12 - (2:45 p.m.) Elementary Building Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS; (7:30 p.m.) Annual Town Meeting in the Endslow PAC
- November 13 - (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslow PAC
- November 14 - (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslow PAC

replace MCAS with PARCC or look for other ways to upgrade our assessment system. (MCAS was never designed to be an indicator of college or career readiness and is entirely paper-and-pencil-based.)

Regardless of the Board's vote, we will use the spring 2015 data to reflect on our students' strengths and on areas where they may need additional support. For more information on PARCC, please see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/parcc/> or www.parcconline.org.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to your building principal.

Students Can Learn From Their Mistakes If We Let Them

By Peter DeWitt on October 25, 2015 9:10 AM from Ed Week [Common Ground Blog](#).



We've all done it. Ask a question...wait for our students to answer...and get nothing. In an effort to bring about some dialogue with our classes, we ask one particular student a question. The student struggles to answer, so we give them the answer and move on. Within that moment that we decided to give the answer, we sent some serious messages to our students.

- **Message #1** - If you remain quiet when I ask you a question, I will ultimately give you the answer.
- **Message #2** - Struggling to give an answer is not ok, which is why I provide the answer.
- **Message #3** - Participation in your own learning is voluntary.
- **Message #4** - When learning is hard, shut down because an adult will take care of it, and you don't have any responsibility in the situation.

As adults, we talk a lot about learning from failure and making sure we have the growth mindset. Unfortunately, the growth mindset doesn't work ([Why the Growth Mindset Doesn't Work](#)) as well as it should because we treat our students in a fixed way. Error provides the opportunity for growth, but we treat students in a fixed way by providing them with an answer so they never really have the opportunity to learn to the depth that they could. Remember the Chinese proverb...

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the volleyball, boys and girls soccer, and swimming with wins this week.
- Congratulations to the girls swimming, volleyball and football teams for winning the Middlesex League Championships.
- Congratulations to football, swimming, volleyball and boys soccer for qualifying for post season tournament play.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Football Team who defeated Malden Catholic in the quarterfinal round of the playoffs on Friday, 42-0. The Rockets are now 7-1 and will be in the semifinals against Westford Academy this week.
- Thank you to Guidance Director Lynna Williams and the RMHS Guidance Department for organizing and hosting the annual College Fair held at the Shriner's Auditorium.
- To the following staff who received Serv Safe certification recently;
RMHS-Christina Barraford and Linda Ott-Palmisano; Barrows-Dianne Ferguson & Karen Bryant; Birch Meadow-Katrina Ferrari; Coolidge-Hilary McCarthy; Wood End-Charlene McManus; Central Office-John Doherty

"Tell me, I'll forget.

Show me, I'll remember.

Involve me, I'll understand."

We're good at reciting the proverb but not so good at making it happen.

John Hattie, someone I work with as a Visible Learning Trainer, says that 40% to 50% of the time that our students make errors, we correct them. They're never given the opportunity to struggle because we give them the answer before it gets too hard.

As a former first grade teacher, I understand the pain we feel when students struggle. No one wants to see students at that age struggle too much, which is why the Goldilock's Principle is so important. We need to make sure we ask questions that aren't too hard or too easy, but spend our time asking questions that are just right.

That may look different for each student and each grade level.

The Power of Errors

Through his decades of research, Hattie found that an effect size of .40 (also known as Hinge Point) was where students achieved at least one year's progress after one year's input. Out of the 150 influences on learning that Hattie's research brought to light, he found many that have a positive effect on learning; some that do not provide much of a bang for our buck, and others that have a negative effect on learning.

One area that has a positive effect is when *"Errors and trust are welcomed as opportunities to learn,"* which has an effect size of .72. At an ILASCD event in Woodbridge, Illinois last week Hattie asked, *"How do we teach kids that effort really makes a difference?"* Jim Knight, someone I work with as an instructional coaching trainer, often says, *"Effort is where the action is."*

It's a balance really, which is why the Goldilock's Principle is so important. Compounding the complication has to do with the kind of questions we are asking in the classroom which should inspire engagement and not extinguish it. Are we asking too many close-ended questions? Do we need to ask more open-ended questions?

The other thing to think about is what do we do when students can't, or choose not to, answer our questions? Some ideas, which many teachers have used for a long time and I did not create, are the following:

- **Think, Pair, Share** - get students to work in groups of 2 or 3. Give them a question and time for dialogue. This, of course, takes modeling on the front end so they know how to engage in dialogue. Through dialogue with their peers they will feel safe (in the right classroom climate) and be less concerned about making an error. Additionally, if there is still an error, it is on the part of the pair or group and not on the individual student.

- **Get up, talk with someone in the class, share your answer** - This provides students with the opportunity to get up and talk with a classmate about the question.
- **Phone-a-Friend** - I got this from Jim Knight. If a student cannot answer the question after a bit of wait time, give them the opportunity to call on a friend in the classroom.
- **Popsicle Can** - Every student has to write their name on a popsicle stick. The teacher puts them in a can and shakes them before or after asking a question. All students sit up because they know they may be called upon, and then the teacher pulls a popsicle stick out of the can.
- **Provide wait time** - We don't like wait time. We have so much to get through, so we just want students to answer the questions. It becomes a case of being more about answering the question than whether all students are learning.

In the End

There are many other ways to build student engagement in the classroom. What we need to get away from is the adult in the classroom answering their own questions, and fostering an atmosphere where students can rely on each other and work in collaboration. As with anything, this requires balance because we want to make sure the student who doesn't want to answer questions actually takes the opportunity to do so.

As Hattie says learning is hard work and it offers us challenges. We know that as adults but want to prevent our students from seeing the challenge because it doesn't always feel good. We need to change our expectations to make sure that students understand they do have to take ownership over their own learning, and not giving them the answers sometimes may be the place to start.

[Connect with Peter on Twitter.](#)

Creative Commons photo courtesy of [Opensource.com](#).

4 strategies for remembering everything you learn

By: Drake Baer for [Business Insider Blog](#)

If you're going to learn anything, you need **two kinds of prior knowledge**:

- Knowledge about the subject at hand, like math, history, or programming
- Knowledge about how learning actually works

The bad news: Our education system kind of skips one of them, which is problematic, given that your ability to learn is such a huge predictor of success in life, from achieving in academics to getting ahead at work. It all requires [mastering skill after skill](#).

"Parents and educators are pretty good at imparting the first kind of knowledge," [shares psychology writer Annie Murphy Paul](#). "We're comfortable talking about concrete information: names, dates, numbers, facts. But the guidance we offer on the act of learning itself — the 'metacognitive' aspects of learning — is more hit-or-miss, and it shows."

Quote of the Week....



"No act of kindness, no matter how small is ever wasted.."

Aesop

To wit, education research shows that low-achieving students have "substantial deficits" in their understanding of the cognitive strategies that allow people to learn well. This, Paul [says](#), suggests that part of the reason students perform poorly is that they don't know a lot about how learning actually works.

It's a cultural issue.

Henry Roediger and Mark McDaniel, psychologists at Washington University in St. Louis and coauthors of "[Make It Stick: The Science Of Successful Learning](#)," say that "how we teach and study is largely a mix of theory, lore, and intuition."

So let's cut through that lore. Here are learning strategies that really work.

Force yourself to recall.

Flashcards force you to really think.

The least-fun part of effective learning is that it's hard. In fact, the "[Make It Stick](#)" authors contend that when learning is difficult, you're doing your *best* learning, in the same way that lifting a weight at the limit of your capacity makes you strongest.

It's simple, though not easy, to take advantage of this: Force yourself to recall a fact. [Flashcards](#) are a great ally in this, since they force you to supply answers.

Don't fall for fluency.

Test your recall before you move on and forget important information, like your gate number.

When you're reading something and it feels easy, what you're experiencing is *fluency*.

It'll only get you in trouble.

Example: Say, for instance, you're at the airport and you're trying to remember which gate your flight to Chicago is waiting for you at. You look at the terminal monitors — it's B44. You think to yourself, *Oh, B44, that's easy*. Then you walk away, idly check your phone, and instantly forget where you're going.

The alternative: You read the gate number. Then you turn away from the monitor and ask yourself, *What's the gate?* If you can *recall* that it's B44, you're good to go.

Connect the new thing to the old things.

Relate abstract concepts, like heat transfer, to something more tangible, like hot coffee.

"The more you can explain about the way your new learning relates to prior knowledge," the "[Make It Stick](#)" authors write, "the stronger your grasp of the new learning will be, and the more connections you create that will help you remember it later."

When you're weaving in new threads into your pre-existing web of knowledge, you're *elaborating*.

One killer technique is to come up with real-life examples of principles you've just uncovered. If you've just learned about [slant rhyme](#), you could [read poems that exhibit it](#). If you've just discovered heat transfer, you could think of the way a warm cup of coffee disperses warmth into your hands on a cold winter's day.

Reflect, reflect, reflect.

Reflect on what you've learned so that it soaks in.

Disney Tweet of the Week



We have nothing to fear as long as we believe, for when we do believe, anything is possible.

—Oz (Oz the Great and Powerful)

Looking back helps. In a Harvard Business School [study](#), employees who were onboarded to a call center had 22.8% higher performance than the control group when they spent just 15 minutes reflecting on their work at the end of the day.

"When people have the opportunity to reflect, they experience a boost in self-efficacy," [HBS professor Francesca Gino tells us](#). "They feel more confident that they can achieve things. As a result, they put more effort into what they're doing and what they learn."

While reflecting may seem like it leads to working less, it leads to achieving more.

Reading Public School Happenings

RMHS Volleyball Achievements

The RMHS Volleyball team (see photo below), under the leadership of Coach and Health Teacher Michelle Hopkinson is having a terrific season, both on and off of the court. Here are some of the season highlights:

- **Middlesex League Liberty Champs!** The team defeated Belmont on Friday and clinched the Middlesex League Liberty Title after a two year absence.
- **Parent Appreciation Night-** On Friday, the girls honored their parents with their first annual 'Parent Appreciation Night'. The parents were truly surprised when each player handed them a flower to say thank you for all they do!
- **Volley for the Cure Event-** Was a big success. In addition to spreading awareness of breast cancer (look at all the ribbons when you go to the field house), the team partnered with the MGH-ESSCO Breast Cancer Research Fund and raised over \$1600. They were acknowledged by the organization at its 20th Anniversary event as a BRONZE Benefactor.
- **Senior Night, Tuesday, October 27-** On October 27th, the team honored 5 seniors before their match against Lynnfield - Captain, Morgan Flynn; Captain, Paige Donahue; Simone Zuchowski; Rachel Brown; Jaclyn Lomanno.

Congratulations to the team and good luck in the tournament!



Barrows World of Jump Rope

This past week, students at Barrows were treated to an outstanding presentation that focused on the World of Jump Rope. See the pictures below. Thanks to the Barrows PTO for sponsoring the event.



Welcome to our new Title 1 Interventionists

We are pleased to announce that we have been able to hire, through our Title 1 grant, four Title 1 Interventionists who will be working closely with our coaches, parents, and students to provide math and literacy instructional support to our students. Below is a picture of the Title 1 Interventionists, Sue D'Ambrosio, Alyson Ritondo, Donna Bruno and Maria Shkolnik working with Math Instructional Coach, Caren Brown.



Stepping Stones...

- **We welcome** the following new hires to our school district:
 - ✓ Annmarie Foley – Administrative Assistant to the Director of Student Services
 - ✓ Alyson Ritondo – Instructional Interventionist
 - ✓ Sue D'Ambrosio – Instructional Interventionist
 - ✓ Donna Bruno – Instructional Interventionist
 - ✓ Maria Shkolnik – Instructional Interventionist
 - ✓ Matt DeBarros – Daily Substitute
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Regular Education Paraeducator, Killam Elementary School	JOB ID #2119944
Regular Education Paraeducator, Barrows Elementary School	JOB ID #2119954
Regular Education Paraeducator, Joshua Eaton Elementary School	JOB ID #2119964
Regular Education Paraeducator, Birch Meadow Elementary School	JOB ID #2119984
Regular Education Paraeducator, Wood End Elementary School	JOB ID #2120014
Full time Special Education Program Paraeducator, Wood End Elementary School	JOB ID #2118034

- **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](#)

- **SAVE THE DATE** - Saturday Nov. 21st. It's that time of year again for Joshua Eaton families to come together for a great cause. Plans are well underway for day of activities including a Kids Cornhole Tournament to be held at IF in the morning

followed by a Parents Cornhole Tournament to be held on the patio at Biltmore & Main from 1-4pm. As many of you know, our beloved teacher Jody Carregal is courageously battling cancer while her medical expenses are piling up. Families are encouraged to attend this event, have lunch at Biltmore, play some Cornhole and donate to an amazing cause. Many more details to follow, but in the meantime, put the day on the calendar and start practicing! Email questions to jeff@nauticalneeds.net

Blazing Trails....

From Edutopia Blogs

Modeling Constructive Online Behavior-Help students understand their digital footprint -- and how to take charge of it.

The BIG List of Digital Citizenship Resources-Dive into this cornucopia of ideas to help your students be safer and more responsible internet denizens.

Teaching Internet Safety to Younger Elementary Students-Give the little ones tools to understand internet privacy and navigate the virtual world safely.

9 Videos on News Literacy- **VIDEO** Tips to help your students learn to separate fact from fiction in the wily world of daily news.

Social Media & Students' Communication Skills- **COMMUNITY** This educator looks at the positive impacts social media can have on student communication skills.

Classroom Management: The Intervention Two-Step- All of us have had major classroom disruptions that try our patience and push our limits. These incidents can threaten our sense of control and generate fear of looking weak to other students. We fear that other students might do the same thing if we don't take a strong stance. Couple these feelings with the possibility of taking the disruption personally, and we have a recipe for disaster

The Responsive Classroom: "Why Is Everyone So Nice Here?"- In the fall of 2007, a new fifth-grade student arrived at Symonds Elementary School. His demeanor was reserved, and his attitude about attending a new school was skeptical. For this 11-year-old, life started in an orphanage, and many of his learning, social, and emotional challenges stemmed from this deprived early experience. Maintaining positive relationships with peers and adults was difficult.

5 Resources for Parent-Teacher Conferences- For many educators, conferences are coming up soon, and it can be a stressful time of the school year. To help parents and educators prepare for parent-teacher conferences, we've rounded up a variety of web resources.

"Reaching Every Student: 14 Tips to Do So." Content, classroom climate and the teacher-student relationship are three areas where educators can engage all students, educator Cheryl Mizerny writes. In this blog post, Mizerny shares tips based on practices often used by master teachers. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!

Contact Us

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

john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us