



Pathways

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

November 8, 2015

Volume 2, Number 10

Upcoming Dates

- November 8 – (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslo PAC
- November 9 – Grade 6 – 12 Second Quarter Begins; (9:00 a.m.) Math Workshop; (7:30 p.m.) Annual Town Meeting in the Endslo 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 Endslo PAC
- November 13 - (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslo PAC
- November 14 - (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslo PAC
- November 15 - (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslo PAC
- November 16 – (7:30 p.m.) Annual

Mary Poppins

An Amazing Show by the RMHS Drama Club

This weekend, the RMHS Drama Club, under the direction of Director Natalie Cunha, Music Director Kristin Killian, Choreographer Nancy Katz-Stone, and Technical Director Stephen MacDonald, performed in front of packed crowds with an amazing production of *Mary Poppins*. Each cast and crew member did an amazing job with the show as talented students danced, sang, and acted to the familiar songs of the show including, *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, *A Spoonful of Sugar*, and *Let's Go Fly a Kite*.



Margaret Sweeney as Mary Poppins

The sets, costumes and makeup made us all think we had lived at Cherry Tree Lane during this time our entire lives.

Town Meeting in the Endslo PAC

- November 17 – (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Auditions
- November 18 – 20 Elementary Parent Conferences
- November 18 – (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Auditions; (7:00 p.m.) Incoming Kindergarten Parent Information Night @ Killam; (7:00 p.m.) SEPAC Meeting at the Senior Center (after school) Secondary Building Meetings
- November 19 – (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Callbacks; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS; (7:30 p.m.) Annual Town Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- November 20 – No School; Middle School Teacher In-Service Day; RMHS Parent Conferences
- November 21 – (1:00 p.m.) Joshua Eaton Science Expo

This year's theme of the RMHS Drama Club is "the Unexpected Guest" and as Director Natalie Cunha puts it, "In general I find that the majority of us have a hesitation or fear of the unexpected. We are always on the lookout for potential



Bert, played by Matt Miller

danger, and we grow protective of that which we believe we do understand like our careers, our roles, our purpose. It is this fear that shows us the true gift of childhood, because children look at the unexpected with fearless eyes. The whole world is unexpected to a child and therefore it is filled with opportunity, ambitions, and dreams. As we get older we lose this sense of hope in what we do not yet understand. Perhaps this is why Jane and Michael must learn Mary Poppins lessons before George Banks even realizes he is the one who needs the lessons most." So true.

If you have not seen the show yet, there are three more shows this upcoming weekend. Friday, November 13 and 14 and 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, November

15th at 3:00 p.m. You don't want to miss it!



Cast and Crew of Mary Poppins

[Richard DuFour on Effective Professional Learning Communities](#)

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, PLC guru Richard DuFour looks back ruefully on his rookie teaching years in the 1970s. He remembers giving unit tests on Friday, marking them over the weekend, and giving them back to students on

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the volleyball and football with wins this week.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Cheerleaders for winning the Middlesex League Championships.
- Congratulations to swimming for finishing second in the League Meet.
- Congratulations to the Cast and Crew of *Mary Poppins* for an amazing job that they did this past weekend.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Football Team who defeated Westford Academy 14-3 on Friday. The Rockets are now 8-1 and will be in the Division 2A North Finals against Billerica this week.
- Congratulations to RMHS Head Football Coach and History Teacher John Fiore who won his 100th career victory with the win on Friday night.

Monday. “I had a sense of smug self-satisfaction,” he says, “because I believed that my challenging assessments, my willingness to devote hours to grading papers, and my commitment to returning tests promptly was proof positive that I was a great teacher.”

As students looked over their papers, DuFour would go over problem areas. He then gathered up the tests, clearly signaling that the unit was over, grades were final, and he was moving on. “It never even occurred to me to review the results with colleagues, to use this evidence of student learning to inform and improve my teaching, or to provide students with additional time and support to master the content.” The bell-shaped curve of grades was what it was. Students who performed well were a testament to his terrific teaching, and students who didn’t do well either lacked ability or hadn’t worked hard enough.

DuFour believes that over the last 40 years, we’ve made significant strides, shifting “from an era in which what was taught, how learning was assessed, what instructional materials were used, and how grades were assigned were all determined by the individual teacher to whom a student was randomly assigned. Now we’re asking teachers to work in collaborative teams to achieve common goals for which they are mutually accountable.” At the heart of the PLC process is teams analyzing the results of common interim assessments and asking themselves four questions:

- *Which students were unable to demonstrate proficiency on this assessment?*

The team identifies these students by name and need and gets them into a “system of intervention” that is timely (immediately after the assessment), directive (students don’t have a choice), diagnostic (e.g., unable to subtract two-digit integers), and systematic (the school has a plan for additional time and help until all students reach proficiency).

- *Which students are highly proficient and would benefit from extended or accelerated learning?* Research has shown that these opportunities (as opposed to tracking) greatly improve learning. During the intervention/enrichment block in one school in Illinois, 3-5 additional teachers flood into the grade level to provide additional support and keep group sizes small.

- *What can I learn from colleagues who got excellent results in an area where my students struggled?* Transparency and candor are important at this point, making it possible for teachers to admit instructional failures and ask for help. The transfer of successful practices can take place through meetings, viewing videos, sharing lesson plans, or observing classes.

- *What are we going to do about areas where none of us achieved the results we expected?* Effective teams take a hard look at the data, reach out for ideas, set goals, and check back with subsequent assessments to see what’s working best.

DuFour is encouraged by the way PLCs are taking hold, but he’s concerned about one missing element. Many schools agree on appropriate curriculum goals, give common assessments, and give students additional time and support. “What they fail to do, however, is to use the evidence of student learning to improve

instruction,” he says. “They are more prone to attribute students’ difficulties to the students themselves” – they need to study harder, do a better job on homework, or ask for help. “Rather than listing what students need to do to correct the problem,” says DuFour, “educators need to address what *they* can do better collectively.”

“How PLCs Do Data Right” by Richard DuFour in *Educational Leadership*, November 2015 (Vol. 73, #3, p. 22-26), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/1MttlYw>; DuFour can be reached at rdufour923@gmail.com. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 610.

John Hattie on the True Purpose of Assessments

A lot of educational testing is an “expensive distraction,” says researcher John Hattie (University of Melbourne, Australia) in this article in *Education Week*. He believes the purpose of assessments is not to measure precisely how much students know at a given moment. Rather, it’s to “provide interpretive information to teachers and school leaders about their impact on students, so that these educators have the best information possible about what steps to take with instruction and how they need to change and adapt.” Assessments are powerful tools for improving teaching and learning, says Hattie, when they provide timely, informative reports directly related to what teachers have taught. This allows teachers to constantly monitor their impact on students and get feedback about their teaching and how it can be tweaked to get the best possible results. The best teachers also get their students self-assessing and taking responsibility for continuous improvement. After all, says Hattie, “it is their schooling, their lives, their futures that are at stake in classrooms.”

On the difference between formative and summative assessments, Hattie quotes Bob Stake of the University of Illinois: “When the cook tastes the soup, it is formative; when the guests taste the soup, it is summative.” Hattie doesn’t think teachers need to be immersed in jargon and heavily schooled in assessment literacy. “Instead,” he says, “we measurement people should learn how to speak in the language of learning and teaching and provide interpretations that are in turn correctly interpreted by teachers, with consequential actions and decisions. Similarly, we need reports from student assessments that help students understand their own progress in learning – what they can do, what they cannot yet do, where to go next.” “The Effective Use of Testing: What the Research Says” by John Hattie in *Education Week*, October 28, 2015 (Vol. 35, #10, p. 28, 23), www.edweek.org

Mr. Ryan's Commuting Madness

By Dr. Jeffrey Ryan, RMHS History Teacher

(From a recent blog post about a not so normal commute to school)

I left my house at 5:30 this morning, fully armed with umbrella, book bag, and coffee thermos. In spite of a driving, torrential rain, the roads were not at all bad, and the few fellow commuters I passed were driving in a civilized manner. I buzzed along the Charles River roads without incident, and was on the bumpy stretch of Route 93 in Somerville, and all

seemed to be wet but far from ominous. I passed through Medford, Winchester, Stoneham, and was happy with the normality of it all.

Until I was halfway through Woburn, and my windshield wipers stopped working. Instantly. The left one was hanging off the side of the car; the right one lay inert like metal and rubber road kill. I was in the center lane going about 55; I turned on my hazard lights and tried weave through the lanes to the breakdown area as people blared horns at me in a cacophony of commuter rage. I wanted to explain that I, of course had planned the event for their personal inconvenience, but time did not allow for such flippancy. I reached the breakdown lane and then recalled that my ongoing argument with my dear friends at Verizon meant that I had no phone. I waited for a few minutes to see if those Good Samaritans from Commerce Insurance might happen by and take pity on me. I thought, perhaps, that a State Police cruiser might notice me. No luck.

Then I remembered numerous accounts of traffic fatalities that occurred when besotted dipsomaniacs bashed into disabled vehicles in breakdown lanes and realized that I had to move. I had a choice of waiting by the side of the road for a drunkard to kill me, or pulling out into traffic and driving without being able to see whither I was going. Scylla vs. Charybdis on Route 93.

So I waited for a slight let up in the rain and a bit of light traffic and pulled out onto the highway. Sheets of rain pelted down, all I could do was follow red taillights and try not to move into a ditch. As I approached the turn off for 128, I realized that I couldn't see around the curve at all. So I rolled down my window and navigated while sticking my head out the window. It worked surprisingly well. Fortuitously, there were no Mack Trucks or 56 wheel trailers on 128, and I sailed along with my head out the window, praying that I'd be able to see the Reading exit through the cascading torrents that were splashing all around. I saw the exit sign and careened around the clover leaf, delighted that I was alone on the road. As I entered Main Street, Reading I noticed that the street lights weren't on yet. Looking through my windshield was like reading a book through a waterfall. So I kept track of the lights of other vehicles. I couldn't see the road at all, but I could see white lights coming the other way. Avoid those, I told myself; follow the red ones. When there were no other lights I just kept the steering wheel straight and hoped for the best.

A die-hard coffee addict, I stopped at Starbucks, and then drove on to the High School, arriving in my customary spot, alive, and thankful for it at 6:15.

I am always glad to see my students. I told them that today I was especially thrilled to see them, as that meant I had survived the most horrifying driving experience of my life, and that I was alive to tell them about it. And then to teach them, which is my favorite thing in the world to do.

So AAA and Superior Auto and a new Windshield Wiper Transmission and about \$300.00 poorer, I am gloriously happy and grateful to be vertical, alert, and breathing all at the same time.

So, my friends, Happy Thursday! We all made it.

Quote of the Week....



The best road to progress
is freedom's road.

— John F. Kennedy

Barrows Teacher Runs and Completes New York City Marathon

Congratulations to Barrows 4th Grade Teacher Heather Murphy who ran and completed the New York City Marathon last weekend. Great job!



RMHS Cheerleading Team-Middlesex League Champions!

Congratulations to the RMHS Cheerleading Team, under the direction of Coach and RMHS Math Teacher Kylie Kane for placing first in the Middlesex League Cheerleading Competition last week. The team will now compete in the State Competition on November 15.



Coolidge Science Olympiad Day

Last Wednesday, Coolidge Middle School held its annual Science Olympiad Day. This year, the school renamed the Olympiad Day, *The John McCarthy Olympiad Day*, after Retired Coolidge Science Teacher John F. McCarthy who recently passed away after a courageous battle with cancer.

As part of the award ceremonies, teachers nominated students for the new John McCarthy Olympiad Day Award, which was awarded to students who exemplified John's qualities of caring, kindness, teamwork, and passion. Approximately 35 students received the first annual award.



Disney Tweet of the Week



"Anything can happen if you let it!"

—Mary Poppins



Stepping Stones...

- **We welcome** the following new hires to our school district:
- Mark Bouyer – Daily Substitute
- Keri Ensminger – Daily Substitute
- Dina Cail – Daily Substitute
- Florence Johnson – District Wide School Psychologist
- Christine Gallagher – Field Hockey Coaching Assistant
- Francine Rubano-Jones – ELL Teacher
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

- **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 JE 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
- **Get involved: Public comment sought on revised science and technology/engineering standards:** The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted on October 20 to solicit public comment on the Revised Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) standards. Full STE standards were last developed in 2001, and the high school standards had a minor revision in 2006. The standards released for comment reflect the need for students to develop both a conceptual understanding as well as science and engineering practices that will help them apply learning and be analytical thinkers. The public comment period is open through **November 20, 2015**. [The revised standards, a survey to submit comment, and related resources](#) are available online. Comments can also be submitted to mathsciencetech@doe.mass.edu.
- **FYI: Webinar on social and emotional learning**-At **3 p.m. November 18**, the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy and ASCD are hosting a webinar on social and emotional learning. The webinar will feature information about state-level and district-level policies that support social and emotional learning practices in the classroom. Learn more and register [here](#).
- **Frequently Asked Question: Will PARCC items be released to teachers and the public?** Yes! Some of the items from the spring 2015 PARCC tests have been [publicly released online](#). They can be sorted by subject and grade

level. A [guide to the released items](#) is also available and highlights the components (items, rubrics, student examples, etc.) that are now available.

Blazing Trails....

"A Shift in the K-12 Edtech Conversation." This LearnLaunch blog post is co-authored by Eileen Rudden, Co-Founder of LearnLaunch, Martin Geoghegan, MASCD President, and Ann Koufman-Frederick, MASCD and LearnLaunch Board Member. The three hosted a workshop session at MassCUE to hear the "teacher voice" in what is needed in classrooms edtech-wise. [Read More](#)

"Mass. Students are Again Tops in National Testing." Massachusetts ranked first in the country in student performance on a closely watched national test, and Boston scored near the top among large cities, according to results being released Wednesday. US Education Secretary Arne Duncan held up Massachusetts as an example to the nation, praising 20 years of efforts by Bay State educators to boost performance. [Read More](#)

"U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan Announces ASCD as New Partner in Teach to Lead." In case you missed the news -- ASCD is partnering with the National Board & U.S. Department of Education on Teach to Lead! It's an exciting partnership as all continue working with educators to expand opportunities for teacher leadership nationwide. [Read More](#)

"Some Schools Institute Bans on Homework." For decades, homework's value has been hotly debated. But now a growing legion of critics say the notion that America can close the learning gap with China or India by stuffing kids' backpacks with math worksheets as early as kindergarten is backfiring - creating a nation of stressed-out, sleep-deprived children, despite scant scientific evidence they are actually learning more from the reams of homework. Some school administrators are starting to listen. [Read More](#)

"How to Share Data with Families." Regularly sharing data with families contributes to student performance. A recent study suggests that educators can leverage new technologies, like text messaging, to communicate regularly with families. In this ASCD "Educational Leadership" article, Lorette McWilliams and Christine Patton of the Harvard Family Research Project explain that accessible, understandable, and actionable data empowers families. They describe the three attributes of effective data-sharing programs and give four tips for sharing data with families. [Read More](#)

"China and Britain Partner to Improve Education." Britain and China recently have partnered to learn about each other's approach to education. Officials say the efforts have sparked calls for Britain to boost mathematics education, while educators in China have learned about the importance of soft skills. [Read More](#)

Contact Us
The Pathways newsletter is published weekly for the Reading Public Schools 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

Have a Great Week!