



Pathways

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

November 15, 2015

Volume 2, Number 11

Upcoming Dates

- November 15 - (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Fall Musical – Mary Poppins in the Endslo PAC
- November 16 – (7:30 p.m.) Annual 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 – (8:00 a.m.) School Committee – MASC Governance Program Session #3 in the Superintendent's Conference Room;

Superintendent's State of the School Address

Last Monday evening, Superintendent of Schools John Doherty spoke at Town Meeting to give the annual State of the Schools address. The entire address can be accessed on the Pathways Blog located [here](#). Here are some of the highlights of the Superintendent's remarks:

- RMHS Seniors **Paul Chong** and **Isabel Azevedo** were awarded the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendent's (MASS) Award for Academic Excellence and Community Service. The criteria include having a strong three year cumulative academic average, participate in extracurricular and community service activities, and are currently in the top 5% of their graduating class.

Several district achievements were recognized including:

- Strong 2015 High School MCAS scores, Advanced Placement and SAT results, and graduation rates and college acceptances.
- The variety and quality of our clubs, after school programs, extra-curricular activities, and athletic programs throughout the district. In addition, the fact that RMHS has won a state championship each year for the last four years.
- Our Fine Arts Programs and the quality of our art, music, and drama students throughout the school district.
- The collaboration that we have with Town Officials in projects related to finance, facilities, technology, and human resources.

The remarks focused a significant amount of time on the behavioral and social and emotional well-being of our students. Most notably:

- Positive downward trends in the use of alcohol, marijuana, and heroin by our students as described in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- Some concerning upward trends in the use of synthetic marijuana, prescription drugs and electronic cigarettes, in addition to, the continuing concerns and increases in student hospitalizations, anxiety and depression among High School students and the growing number of hospitalizations with our middle and elementary school students.

The final part of the remarks focused on resources and per pupil expenditure

- The need for additional resources in our school district to attract and retain the best educators, as well as to fund the programs and supports that we need in our district.

State Assessment Recommendation by Commissioner

After a two-year tryout of PARCC, Commissioner Chester [announced November 12](#) that he is recommending that the state transition to a next-generation MCAS that would build from the extensive PARCC development that Massachusetts has been a part of and incorporate items specific to the Commonwealth. The new assessment would be given for the first time in 2017. [His recommendation](#) also calls for the state to move

(1:00 p.m.) Joshua
Eaton Science Expo

- November 23 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- November 25 – (10:15 a.m.) RMHS Pep Rally; (11:00 a.m.) Early Release PreK – 12
- November 26 – Happy Thanksgiving; (8:00 a.m.) Thanksgiving Pancake Breakfast at RMHS Cafeteria; (10:00 a.m.) Stoneham at Reading Football game
- November 27 – No School
- November 29 – (3:00 p.m.) Downtown Tree Lighting
- December 3 – (8:30 a.m.) Coffee & Conversation @ Barrows; (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Informal Recital in the Endslo PAC; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS; (7:00 p.m.) Parker Grade 8 Choral & Jazz Band Winter Concert
- December 5 – (8:00 a.m.) SAT Testing – RMHS is NOT a test center; (10:00 a.m.) Festival of Trees @ Parker

to computerized testing in 2019 and to convene groups of K-12 teachers, higher education faculty and assessment experts to advise ESE on the content, length and scheduling of statewide tests; testing policies for students with disabilities and for English language learners; the requirements for the high school competency determination (currently the 10th grade MCAS); and the timeline for reinstating a history and social science test.

Under Commissioner Chester's recommendation, any districts that administer PARCC in spring 2016 for the first time would be held harmless for any negative changes in their school and district accountability levels, which is consistent with the state's approach to districts that used PARCC for the first time in spring 2015. The commissioner proposes that every district would be subject to accountability levels in 2017, when all of the state's districts would use a single test.

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will vote on the commissioner's recommendation at the Board's **November 17 meeting**. The Board is holding a **public comment session** on statewide assessments from 4-7 p.m. on **November 16** at Malden High School.

How Is the New SAT Different?

In this *New York Times Education Life* article, Eric Hoover (a writer for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*) reports on the changes in the revised SAT that will debut in March 2016. The new test, which now more closely resembles the ACT, strives to align with high-school curriculums and draws heavily on the Common Core State Standards. It will have two sections (the writing test is now optional):

- Evidence-Based Reading and Writing
- Mathematics

Each section will be scored on a 200-800 scale, with no penalty for guessing and four rather than five answer choices for each question. There will be less emphasis on obscure words and students won't be asked to complete sentences. Instead, they'll have to derive the meaning of words with multiple meanings from the context in which they are used. There's also more emphasis on evidence and citing specific examples; students won't be able to get by just with deft writing.

What's the best way for students to prepare for the new tests? For starters, by reading widely in a variety of texts, especially nonfiction. "Habitual reading can also help on the writing section, which will demand prolonged concentration," says Hoover. "To answer questions about grammar, punctuation, and usage, students will have to wade through extended passages relating to history, humanities, and science." In general, there's a lot more reading involved. "If you don't read well and happily," says test-prep expert Aaron Golumbskie, "this test isn't going to be your friend." The mathematics test also has lots of reading, with more word problems, multi-step problems, and real-life applications. In terms of content, the math test includes more statistics and less geometry, and there's a section where students will have to solve problems without a calculator.

Kudos and Accolades

- 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 Billerica, 22-0 on Friday. The Rockets are now 9-1 and will be in the Division 2A Sectional Finals against Marshfield this week.
- Congratulations to Coolidge students James Donahue (seventh grade), Steven Jackson (eighth grade), Jeremy Bowman (eighth grade), Tyler Gonick (eighth grade), Jackson Johnson (seventh grade), Colin Mulvey (seventh grade) and Sean Melanson (eighth grade) who won the Division 2 state championship last Saturday in the seventh annual Middle School Invitational Meet at Willard Field, Devens.

The optional writing section has prompts similar to those in AP English, asking for a critical response to a specific argument. For example, students might be asked to read part of a 1967 speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. and explain how he used evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic elements to support his argument about the Vietnam War.

What hasn't changed is the SAT's length, totaling 3 hours and 50 minutes with the optional writing section. "Besides measuring what students have learned," says Hoover, "it will measure how they perform under pressure in a high-stakes situation – just like the old model." He adds that despite the College Board's promises that there are "no more mysteries," there are still plenty of "quirks and trap doors" designed to spread students out on a bell-shaped curve, which is what selective colleges want.

Is the new SAT harder than the old one? Not in substance, say several experts, but the amount of reading and analysis will definitely prove challenging for students who haven't had effective teaching and done extensive reading. "There's a new body style on the Chevrolet," says Jay Rosner of the Princeton Review Foundation, "but it has zero to do with performance – the engine's the same. It's going to generate the same hierarchy of scores that exists now."

"Inside the New SAT" by Eric Hoover in *The New York Times Education Life*, November 1, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1GYewRB>. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 610.

Understanding the Fundamental Attribution Error

"Humans instinctively judge other humans," say Kristen Swanson, Gayle Allen, and Rob Mancabelli (The Research Institute at Bright-Bytes) in this article in *Educational Leadership*; "it's a survival trait." Researchers in the 1960s identified and named the fundamental attribution error – a strong tendency to fault people, not systems. For example, when another driver cuts in front of us or goes through a red light, we immediately conclude the person is rude and reckless – even though there could be a medical emergency, or perhaps the person's car is malfunctioning. "But it's unlikely that our first instinct would be to consider these possibilities," say the authors. "You'd assume the person is the problem... Essentially, we're hardwired to overemphasize people's internal characteristics and minimize the impact of the system or situation at hand."

Our tendencies when driving in traffic can also surface when looking at student achievement data. "In an effort to act swiftly and decisively, we focus on what *people* are doing wrong," say Swanson, Allen, and Mancabelli – the blame game. They have three suggestions to counteract this habit:

- *Teach colleagues about the fundamental attribution error.* Help them catch themselves before they jump to conclusions and blame students or colleagues when other factors are at work. "Combating biases around data begins with awareness," say the authors. "When we simply make colleagues aware of these underlying human tendencies, they become more likely to catch themselves engaging in ineffective, judgmental behavior."
- *Search for root causes.* One well-known strategy is to ask *Why?* at least five times.
- *Maintain a formative outlook.* "Celebrating improvement and growth, not just success, helps everyone maintain momentum," say Swanson, Allen, and Mancabelli. "When

we honor people's work and assume positive intent, innovative solutions follow." This goes for the vocabulary we use when talking about data – for example, *not there yet*, *beginning*, *emerging*.

"Eliminating the Blame Game" by Kristen Swanson, Gayle Allen, and Rob Mancabelli in *Educational Leadership*, November 2015 (Vol. 73, #3, p. 68-71), <http://bit.ly/1O05d3h>; the authors can be reached at KristenNicoleSwanson@gmail.com, gayle@gayleallen.net, and rob@mancabelli.com. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 611.

School Presentations to Hear Results of Last Year's Forums

Last year, Superintendent of Schools John Doherty conducted a series of community and staff forums to get feedback from stakeholders about the strengths of the school district, areas to strengthen, new programs and initiatives that should be introduced into the district, and current programs or initiatives that need to be changed or stopped.

Over the next several weeks, we will be presenting the results of the forums and include other related data. For staff, the presentation dates are as follows (**Please note that there are some date changes**):

11/16-(3:00 p.m.)-Parker

11/23-(3:00 p.m.)-RISE

11/30-(3:00 p.m.)-Killam

12/1-(2:30 p.m.)-RMHS

The presentations will last approximately 1 hour and attendance is voluntary. The presentation will be similar at each school, so if you cannot make your school's meeting, feel free to attend an alternate date. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Superintendent of Schools John Doherty at john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us.

Reading Public School Happenings

Wood End Veteran's Day Assembly

This past week, the Wood End Elementary School held its annual Veteran's Day Assembly honoring our men and women who have served our country. Below are several pictures from the event. Special thanks to the Wood End staff for organizing this event.





Joshua Eaton Veterans Day Assembly

Recently, the Joshua Eaton Elementary School held its 17th Annual Veteran's Day Assembly to honor our Veteran's. Several photos from the get-together are below. Special thanks to the Joshua Eaton staff for organizing this tremendous assembly.

Quote of the Week....



"It is hard to fail, but it is worse never have tried to succeed. "

- Theodore Roosevelt





Coolidge Book Fair Fundraiser at Barnes and Noble

Recently, Coolidge Middle School held a fundraiser at Barnes and Noble. The purpose was to raise money for more interdisciplinary projects, such as last year's "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind". Below are some pictures from the evening, which was organized by Coolidge teachers Chris Steinhauser and MaryAnne Cuscuna. Four students presented on how to build a wind turbine and maximize voltage output. Those students were Dan Weston, Taylor Marchant, Katie Stathaloupoulis, and Ashley Spear (other students also attended to support). Coolidge students also designed a drink featured at Starbucks for the evening (A Cup of Coolidge).

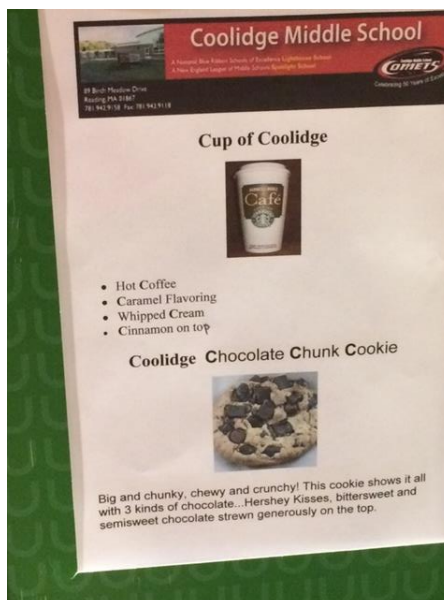


Disney Tweet of the Week



““You know, you can say it backwards, which is docious-ali-expi-istic-fragil-cali-rupus, but that’s going a bit too far, don’t you think?”

—Mary Poppins



Stepping Stones...

- **We welcome** the following new hires to our school district:
 - Lori Weston – Daily Substitute
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Long Term Substitute, Grade 2 Classroom; Barrows Elementary School	JOB ID #2146644
Boys Freshman Lacrosse Coach, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #2160284

- **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....

"Teachers Share Their Mistakes and What They've Learned from Them." Teachers share their biggest teaching mistakes and what they learned from them in this blog post by teacher Larry Ferlazzo. Among the teachers is National Board Certified Teacher Roxanna Elden, who recalls a situation during her first year when she mishandled a situation with an English-language learner, using what she believed to be the training she had received. "Often, the mistakes we make are not from ignoring what we've learned, but from earnestly applying it before we really know how it works," she writes. [Read More](#)

"Beyond Test Scores: Using Other Data to Support Student Success." On the latest Whole Child Podcast episode, ASCD's public policy director David Griffith leads a panel that explores the types of data schools and districts collect, their purpose, and how to translate them into meaningful action. Panelists include Marc Brackett, director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence; well-known educator, writer, and public speaker Anthony Cody; and Joshua Starr, CEO of PDK International. Learn whether schools are collecting the right data, if we're collecting too much data, and more. [Read More](#)

"Springfield PD Collaboration Among Teachers 'A Model for the Nation.'" A Massachusetts school has used funding from the National Education Association to provide professional learning for teachers and foster more -- and deeper -- collaboration among them. That collaboration can serve as a national model, said Lily Eskelsen Garcia, NEA president. [Read More](#)

"Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child." The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model for learning and health combines and builds on elements of the traditional coordinated school health approach and the whole child framework by responding to the call for greater alignment, integration and collaboration between education and health to improve each child's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. Take a deeper dive in the November 2015 issue of the Journal of School Health, linked from this page. [Read More](#)

"Survey Explores Opinions about Global Career Readiness." Four in ten education experts representing 149 countries in nine global regions believe schools are preparing students for the world of work in sub-Saharan Africa, the EU and the former Soviet Union, according to a recent Gallup survey. Six in 10 surveyed believe the same for schools in the US, New Zealand, Australia and Canada. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!

Contact Us

The Pathways 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