



Pathways

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

November 29, 2015

Volume 2, Number 13

Upcoming Dates

- November 29 – (2:00 p.m.) Downtown Tree Lighting
- December 2 – (after school) Secondary Building Meetings
- December 3 – (8:30 a.m.) Coffee & Conversation @ Barrows; (after school) Elementary Building Meetings; (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
- December 6 – Chanukkah Begins; (12:00 p.m.) Festival of Trees @ Parker
- December 7 – (8:00 a.m.) Coffee & Conversation @ Parker; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in Superintendent's Conference Room
- December 8 – (6:00 p.m.) Parker Winter Grade 6 Concert; (7:30 p.m.) Parker Winter Grade 7 Concert

4 Ways to Refuel Your Gratitude

By Rebecca Alber for Edutopia Magazine

As a public school educator, there were so many things that could lure me into a daily habit of focusing on the far-from-positive realities of this work: broken copiers and desks, not enough novel sets in the book room that I desperately want to read with my students, and pretty much limited supplies of everything. Anyone who works in a public school knows what I'm talking about. There's a lot that needs fixing.

So how do we stay out of the negative minefield and focus on what works, on the miracles of it all?

#1. Laugh with Your Students

Our profession has become highly politicized these days which can be very troubling (public vs. charter, teacher bashing in the media, standards-based rhetoric overkill, etc.) It takes extra energy and effort to keep up boundaries from getting over-involved in these sometimes-crass battles.

So I say, more than ever, humor is a crucial element that can keep us motivated, grateful, and positive.

There's the middle school science teacher who begins every class period each day with corny science jokes. ("Where do astronauts park their spaceships? At parking meteors!") There's the high school world history teacher who dresses up *every single day* in a period costume. And there's the third grade teacher who chuckles alongside her students when the opportunity arises. Make time and space in your classroom for humor. Create a comic strip corner or invite students to share funny stories and jokes the last minute or two of class.

#2. Stick with the Motivators

You know these colleagues. Keep them close. These are the teachers who may gripe on occasion or do a twenty-second vent session but then quickly turn to a funny story about something a student told them or tell you about a great teaching strategy or inspiring TED talk they just watched. Perhaps this person is you? If so, keep spreading the hope and the positive, and take on the goal of motivating a colleague who you've observed in a rut.

#3. Seek New Inspiration

When was the last time you went and observed a colleague teaching? We can spend 15 minutes in someone else's classroom and pick up a new reading activity, method for grouping students, teacher move or saying, or even an idea for a whole unit

- December 9 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; District PLC Meetings; (6:30 p.m.) Elementary All-District Chorus in the Endslo PAC
- December 10 – (after school) Elementary Building Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS (6:00/7:30 p.m.) Coolidge Winter Concert in the Endslo PAC
- December 11 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Improvosaurus in the Endslo PAC
- December 12 – (8:00 a.m.) PSST Dickens Marketplace @ RMHS; (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Select Chorus Caroling
- December 14 – 17 – Challenge Day @ Parker & Coolidge
- December 15 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Guidance Financial Aid Night in the Endslo PAC
- December 16 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Winter Band Concert in the Endslo PAC
- December 17 – (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Winter Songfest in the Endslo PAC
- December 18 – (8:30 a.m.) Joshua Eaton Holiday Concert; (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Select Chorus Caroling
- December 19 – (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Select Chorus Caroling

plan. Don't underestimate the power of leaving the four walls of your classroom! How about visiting an elective class or a club? You can enter the room as observer, advisor for the day, or as a participant. Go check out the art class or the lunchtime computer club. Putting ourselves in the learner's seat can surprise us, serving to inspire in ways we didn't expect.

#4. Look for the Light

"Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings." -- William Arthur Ward

This noble profession is full of surprises. Be grateful for the grand and not so grand moments. Sometimes a smile from a shy student, or observing a child ardently pen a paragraph will awaken and warm your heart.

When I'm feeling a little lost and uncertain in this work, I'll take out the letters from over the years students have written to me and recall each of their faces as I read their kind words. Sometimes we have no idea the effects we are having on our students when we take those extra seconds to check in on them, or nudge them to trust their abilities on those low days, or when we just sit and listen. Those letters, notes, and cards remind me that when I pause and act from my heart, it matters.

If you're having trouble resourcing the gratitude from within, check out [Gratitude Revealed](#), a site that offers short, inspiring videos with beautiful imagery, ethereal melodies, and motivating words that can fire up your appreciation for this very moment.

REBECCA ALBER'S PROFILE

Four Types of Assessment and How They Can Be Used

In this *Education Week* item, Sarah Sparks compares the key characteristics of different approaches to gathering and using student learning data:

- *Formative learning assessment* – Teaching students how to set goals for their learning, identify their growth toward those goals, evaluate the quality of their work, and identify strategies to improve.
- *Formative diagnostic assessment* – Frequent on-the-spot checks of students' progress to pinpoint learning problems and identify strategies to improve teaching and learning.
- *Benchmark or interim assessment* – Periodic during-the-year tests (perhaps quarterly) to compare students' understanding or performance in a curriculum unit (or a semester) against a set of uniform standards.
- *Summative assessment* – Year-end (or end-of-course) tests to compare students' performance against a set of uniform standards.

"Types of Assessments: A Head-to-Head Comparison" by Sarah Sparks in *Education Week*, November 11, 2015 (Vol. 35, #12, p. S3), <http://bit.ly/1QHx4aV>; these two *Education Week* videos <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/formative-assessment->

[videos.html](#) show fourth-grade teachers modeling formative assessment strategies. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 612.

Online Tools for Homework and Study Skills

In this *New York Times* article, Tara Parker-Pope recommends a series of online homework and study aids:

- www.Easybib.com – Students can type in a website or source name and Easybib will automatically generate a citation in whatever style format the teacher requires.
- www.Prezi.com – A cloud-based presentation tool that allows for zooming and panning and can make presentations more dynamic and fun.
- www.Quizlet.com – Students can create flashcards and study guides to review material online or on a mobile device. Created by high-school students in 2007, the site has more than 40 million study sets generated by users.
- www.Storybird.com – This site helps students create a story or poem or present material using a variety of illustrations.
- www.Sparknotes.com – Summaries of literary works with analyses of important quotes, key facts, study questions, essay topics, and quizzes.
- www.HowLongToReadThis.com – Students enter the name of a written work, a timer determines their reading speed as they read a sample paragraph, and they're told how long it will take to finish the book.
- www.KhanAcademy.org – Brief tutorials on a wide array of topics and grade levels.
- Kindle books – Features include highlighting, vocabulary help, and being able to search a long book for a key passage.
- Google Docs – A group of students can create, edit, collaborate on, and store documents, which can be opened on any computer with an Internet connection. Teachers can add notes and comment on drafts.

“Help with Homework, Pixel by Pixel” by Tara Parker-Pope in *The New York Times*, November 17, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1XaaOM2>. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 613.

Hard Isn't Bad

In this *Mathematics Teacher* article, North Carolina educator Dan Teague remembers how in 1963 he was part of a group of middle-school students chosen to take an accelerated math class. “As far as we knew, we were the first kids in the history of the world allowed to take Algebra 1 in eighth grade,” he says. “We thought we were hot stuff.”

But the teacher gave them some sage advice: “You guys are good, and math is easy for you. But always remember this: Everyone has their Green’s theorem.” He described how he had sailed effortlessly through Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, and Calculus – and then he hit Green’s theorem in Multivariable Calculus and found it really, really challenging. Even though he was just as good at math as he’d always been, from that point on, he had to work hard to be successful. “His meaning for us,” says Teague, “was that, at some point, mathematics becomes difficult – for everyone. And when we hit our personal Green’s theorem, as we all eventually will, we need to learn to work at it like everyone else.”

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the RMHS Football Team who defeated Stoneham, 35-0 on Thursday in the annual Thanksgiving Day Football Game. The Rockets are now 11-1 and will be in the Division 2A Super Bowl against Nashoba on Saturday, December 5th at 6:00 p.m. at Gillette Stadium.
- To Director of Food Service Kristin Morello and Barrows Cafeteria Employee Martina O'Keeffe for helping out at the Interact Pancake Breakfast on Thursday.

The problem is that many students believe that if something is easy, they're good at it, and if they have to work hard to be successful, they're not. "Moreover," says Teague, "and this is the dangerous part of this thought, if a subject isn't easy for you, then you just aren't cut out for it." Even if you enjoy working hard at it and are ultimately successful, you won't consider it as a major or a career option.

This misconception needs to be addressed head-on, he says: "For *everyone*, mathematics becomes challenging. Mathematics is one of the greatest intellectual achievements of humankind. Of course, it will be challenging. Everyone has to work at it – some earlier than others and some later than others. But everyone has a personal Green's theorem."

Teague believes this applies to other subjects as well: "It is important for students to understand that, whatever their area of interest, the subject will eventually become challenging... The real question isn't whether a student finds a subject easy or hard; all subjects will be hard eventually. The real question is, Do you enjoy that challenge? That's how to decide what career path to pursue. You actually don't want an 'easy' job. You want to be challenged by your work and to draw joy and contentment from accepting the challenges it offers and working hard to meet them."

"Everyone Has a Personal Green's Theorem" by Dan Teague in *Mathematics Teacher*, November 9, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1RZ0lqE>; Teague can be reached at teague@ncssm.edu.

Reading Public School Happenings

RMHS High School Rally

Last Wednesday, Reading Memorial High School held its annual pep rally prior to the Thanksgiving Football game between Reading and Stoneham. Below are some highlights of the spirited pep rally.



High School Principal Adam Bakr with the RMHS Football Team



RMHS Chorus Singing National Anthem



RMHS Students Preparing for Rally



RMHS Band

Quote of the Week....

"THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS TO REPLACE
AN EMPTY MIND WITH AN OPEN ONE."
- MALCOLM FORBES



**"The purpose of education
is to replace an empty
mind with an open one."**

– Malcolm Forbes



Rocket Mascot battles the Spartan Mascot



Middlesex League Champion RMHS Cheerleaders



RMHS Color Guard



Teachers vs. Senior Class Tug of War

Two RMHS Students Highlighted at Art Show

Congratulations to RMHS students Aimee Casavant and Matt Baynes, who were showcased at the Reading Art Association Art Show last weekend. Aimee and Matt are taught by RMHS Art Teacher Veronique Latimer.



Disney Tweet of the Week



"Many of the things that seem impossible now will become realities tomorrow."

—Walt Disney

Caring for Carregal

Last weekend was the annual flag football tournament with the proceeds going towards a special charity. This year the proceeds went to help support the family of Grade 3 teacher Jody Carregal, who is courageously battling cancer. In the photo below, the winning team from Joshua Eaton is presented the Trophy by Jody Carregal. Our thoughts continue to go out to Jody and her family during this difficult time.



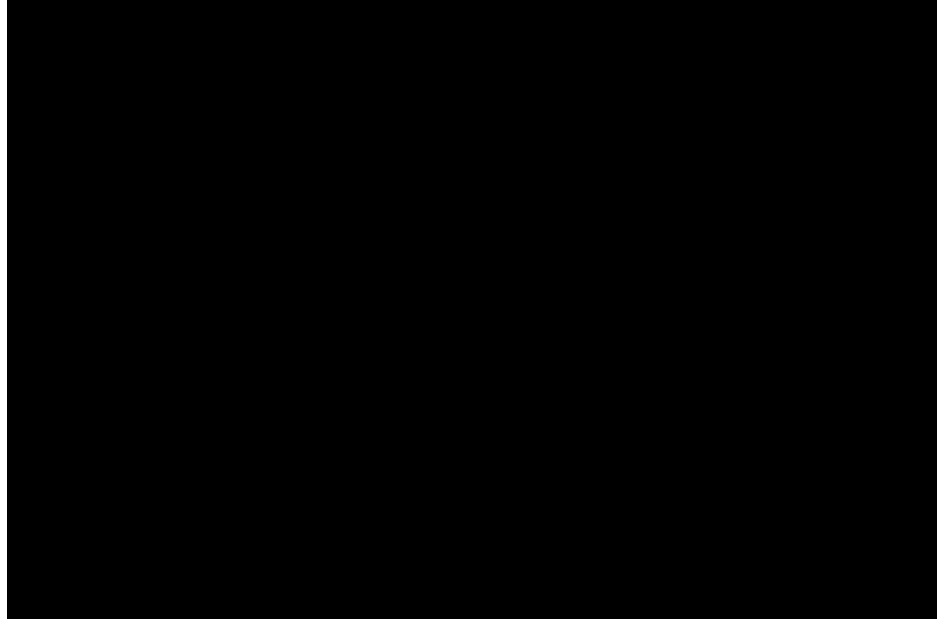
RMHS Interact Club Thanksgiving Day Pancake Breakfast

On Thursday, the RMHS Interact Club reintroduced a Thanksgiving tradition and held a Thanksgiving pancake breakfast for the community. Over 250 people attended the event prior to the Reading/Stoneham Thanksgiving game. Below is a photo of some of the Interact students preparing the breakfast in the RMHS kitchen.



Wood End Core Values Video

Recently, Wood End produced a video about their Core Values. The video is below.



Stepping Stones...

- Welcome to **Patricia Dady-Guarino** who will become the new RMHS Cafeteria Manager, effective December 1, 2015.
- Congratulations to Parker Food Service employee Karleen Sayman, who will be the School Nutrition Coordinator for the Reading Public Schools.
- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Athletics & Student Activities Secretary, Reading Memorial High School	JOB ID #2187844
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- ✓ **REF Grant Information Writing Session**-Just a friendly reminder that the second Grant Writing Information Session will take place this Tuesday Dec 1st, 3-4pm in Library Conference Room at the High School. If you have never translated an idea into a grant, overwhelmed by the process or just curious, please join us at this informal session. We will cover a variety of topics, including:
 - **Application process and acceptance criteria**
 - **Filling out the application**
 - **Brainstorming your ideas with a committee member**

Past grant recipients are encouraged to come! Potential applicants would love to hear about your experience with the process and about the implementation of your grants! **If you are unable to attend but have questions, please feel free to visit our website readingef.org or contact us at grantcommittee@readingef.org.**

- ✓ **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](#)

✓ **Families for Depression Awareness is presenting a free, 1-hour Coping with Stress and Depression webinar on Tuesday, December 8 at 7:00 PM ET / 4:00 PM PT.**

Designed for family caregivers, human resources managers, EAP professionals, and adults concerned about themselves or others, the webinar covers

- Practical ways to reduce the effects of stress
- How to recognize signs of depression
- What to do if you or someone you know is suffering from depression
- What resources are available to you and your family

Register at www.familyaware.org/trainings.

Blazing Trails....

New Era Near For No Child Left Behind

The House and Senate undertake a massive bipartisan rewrite of No Child Left Behind in the coming weeks, allowing states to set and enforce their own K-12 academic standards. [Read More](#)

"Doing Data Right." Educators receive mounds of data they're not sure what to do with, yet can't always get the information they need. This issue of ASCD's Educational Leadership looks at how educators can extract useful data from the flood of information available, as well as strategies to use data to benefit-not blame-students, teachers, families, and schools. [Read More](#)

"Seeing Beyond the Glass Half-Full." How can we create more optimistic learners? First, we have to see optimism through a new lens. The latest issue of ASCD's Education Update describes practical ways to help students reach beyond the concept of "positive thinking" to realistically work through challenges. [Read More](#)

"Staying Centered." Does your motivation wane between new school year optimism and holiday breaks? Reconnect with what sustains you and eliminate what drains you in this ASCD Express issue on "Staying Centered." [Read More](#)

"Research: Empathy Helps Kids Learn in Finland." Empathy may help improve students' test scores more than class size and educational materials, according to a recent study by researchers at the University of Eastern Finland, the University of Jyväskylä and the University of Turku. Researchers found that empathetic teachers may help boost students' motivation and academic skills. [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

