



# Pathways

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

December 6, 2015

Volume 2, Number 14

## Upcoming Dates

- 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
- 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; (6:00 p.m.) Informational Meeting on Special Education Transportation at Superintendent's Conference Room; (7:00 p.m.) SEPAC Meeting at Superintendent's Conference Room

## 30 Techniques to Quiet a Noisy Class

*By Todd Finley for Edutopia Magazine*

One day, in front 36 riotous sophomores, I clutched my chest and dropped to my knees like Sergeant Elias at the end of *Platoon*. Instantly, dead silence and open mouths replaced classroom Armageddon. Standing up like nothing had happened, I said, "Thanks for your attention -- let's talk about love poems."

I never used that stunt again. After all, should a real emergency occur, it would be better if students call 911 rather than post my motionless body on YouTube. I've thought this through.

Most teachers use silencing methods, such as flicking the lights, ringing a call bell (see Teacher Tipster's [charming video](#) on the subject), raising two fingers, saying "Attention, class," or using Harry Wong's [Give Me 5](#) -- a command for students to:

1. Focus their eyes on the speaker
2. Be quiet
3. Be still
4. Empty their hands
5. Listen.

There is also the "three fingers" version, which stands for stop, look, and listen. Fortunately, none of these involve medical hoaxes.

Lesser known techniques are described below and categorized by grade bands:

### **How to Quiet Kindergarten and Early Elementary School Children**

Novelty successfully captures young students' attention, such as the sound of a wind chime or [rain stick](#). Beth O., in [Cornerstone for Teachers](#), tells her students, "Pop a marshmallow in." Next she puffs up her cheeks, and the kids follow suit. It's hard to speak with an imaginary marshmallow filling your mouth.

An equally imaginative approach involves filling an empty Windex bottle with lavender mineral oil, then relabeling the bottle "[Quiet Spray](#)." Or you can blow magic "hush-bubbles" for a similar impact.

If you want to go electronic, check out [Traffic Light](#) by ICT Magic, which is simply a stoplight for talkers. Other digital methods include the [Super Sound Box](#), [Class Dojo](#), or the [Too Noisy App](#) -- an Apple and Android tool that determines noise level and produces an auditory signal when voices become too loud.

### **Late Elementary and Middle Grade Attention Getters**

Back when I taught middle school students, I would announce, "Silent 20," as a way to conclude an activity. If students returned to their seats and were completely quiet in 20

- 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
- December 23 – Winter Break begins at the end of School.
- December 25 – Merry Christmas
- December 26 – Happy Kwanzaa
- January 1 – Happy New Year
- January 4 – Welcome Back

seconds, I advanced them one space on a giant facsimile of [Game of Life](#). When they reached the last square (which took approximately one month), we held a popcorn party.

One of the best ways to maintain a quiet classroom is to catch students at the door before they enter. During these encounters, behavior management expert Rob Plevin recommends using "non-confrontational statements" and "informal chit-chat" to socialize kids into productive behaviors, as modeled in [Plevin's video](#).

Two approaches for securing "100 percent attention" are modeled in [a short video narrated by Teach Like a Champion author Doug Lemov](#) -- a minimally invasive hand gesture and countdown technique ("I need two people. You know who you are. I need one person . . .").

Another idea is to use a content "word of the week" to signal that it's time for silence. Examples: integer, renaissance, or circuit.

### Quieting High School Students

Sometimes, rambunctious high school classrooms need a little longer to comply. In [An ELT Notebook](#) article, Rob Johnson recommends that teachers write the following instructions in bold letters on the chalkboard:

*If you wish to continue talking during my lesson, I will have to take time off you at break. By the time I've written the title on the board you need to be sitting in silence. Anyone who is still talking after that will be kept behind for five minutes.*

The strategy always, always works, says Johnson, because it gives students adequate warning.

Another technique, playing classical music (Bach, not Mahler) on low volume when learners enter the room, sets a professional tone. I played music with positive subliminal messages to ninth graders until they complained that it gave them headaches.

### Call and Response

Below is a collection of catchy sayings that work as cues to be quiet, the first ones appropriate for early and middle grade students, and the later ones field tested to work with high school kids.

Teacher says . . .	Students Respond with . . .
Holy . . .	. . . macaroni.
1, 2, 3, eyes on me . . .	. . . 1, 2, eyes on you.
I'm incredible . . .	. . . like the Hulk. Grrrrrr. (Kids flex during the last sound)
Ayyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy . . .	. . . macarena.
I get knocked down . . .	. . . but I get up again, you're never going to keep me down.
Oh Mickey, you're so fine . . .	. . . you're so fine, you blow my mind -- hey Mickey.
The only easy day . . .	. . . was yesterday. (A Navy Seals slogan)

## Implementation Suggestions

For maximum effect, teach your quiet signal and procedure, as demonstrated in these **elementary** and **high school** classroom videos. Next, have kids rehearse being noisy until you give the signal for silence. Don't accept anything less than 100 percent compliance. Then describe appropriate levels of noise for different contexts, such as when you're talking (zero noise) or during a writing workshop (quiet voices), etc.

If a rough class intimidates you (we've all been there), privately practice stating the following in an authoritative voice: "My words are important. Students will listen to me." Say it until you believe it. Finally, take comfort in the knowledge that, out of three million U.S. educators who taught today, two or three might have struggled to silence a rowdy class.

How do you get your students' attention?

**TODD FINLEY'S PROFILE**

## Deadlines and Redos

*By: Courtney BeLolan*

One of the goals of learner-centered proficiency based education is to create authentic, real-life experiences for our students. Traditionally, the way school has been structured does not really mimic the experience people have outside of school. Do you categorize tasks into subject specific chunks? When is that last time you did just "math?" Have you ever said to yourself, or someone else, something like "Hold on, I'm doing science right now. That writing will have to wait until later." I doubt it. How strange would that be!?

Or how about other real-life competencies? What happens when you are planning a group presentation, and one member doesn't do their part? The presentation stinks, or is clearly lopsided. Perhaps the group members get annoyed with one another, and the slacker never gets invited to be a part of that kind of opportunity again. Maybe your supervisor expresses disappointment, and now you feel extra pressure at work. What about if you are late paying a bill? Maybe now you have to pay more. Depending on who you owe the money to, it can be a real hassle to correct the late payment. On the whole, however, we always have a second opportunity or a chance to fix the problem in real life. Even if we mess up royally and end up in prison, there is typically a way to work towards fixing the issue and getting back on track. What generally motivates us to do our best work, and get things paid on time is the hassle involved if we don't. If we want to create some of the real-world-esque scenarios around things like deadlines and retakes, we have to start thinking about setting up comparable hassles for our students. Giving students multiple opportunities to show what they know means giving second chances, maybe even third chances, but not without some work on their end. Here are two ways to build the hassle in so that students begin to learn that doing it well, and on time, on the first chance is worth the effort:

**1. Require students to do an error analysis before resubmitting work, a project, or an assessment.** In an error analysis, students need to identify what they got wrong, why they got it wrong, and then do whatever it takes to show they can do it. Here is an example of an error analysis for a math assessment:

Item	Topic or Proficiency	Right	Wrong	Simple Mistake?	Really Don't Understand
1	Dividing fractions		✓		✓
2	Dividing Fractions		✓		✓
3	Multiplying Fractions		✓	✓	
4	Multiplying fractions	✓			
5	Reducing to Simplest terms	✓			
6	Reducing to Simplest terms	✓			
7	Reciprocals	✓			
8	Reciprocals		✓	✓	
9	Reciprocals		✓	✓	

## **Kudos and Accolades**

- Congratulations to our Food Service Departments at Coolidge, Parker, RMHS, Barrows, and Wood End who had flawless inspections from the Reading Board of Health last week.
- Congratulations to RMHS Head Football Coach and Social Studies Teacher John Fiore who was named this week's New England Patriots Head Coach of the week. A link to the article is [here](#).
- Thank you to the following Parker teachers who opened up their classrooms for District Leadership Team walkthroughs last week- Connie Quackenbush, Jess Brehaut, Andrew Spinali, and Brian Cormier.

**2. Be honest with them about their performance and give them a second opportunity later on, not right away.** This works well with more complex tasks, like presentations or other projects that take a significant amount of time. Support students to keep track of what went well, and what went wrong in their process. At the start of the next project, have kids take that feedback out and set some goals about how to go about things differently this time. Over the course of a semester, or a year, students will have wonderful evidence of their growth in these abilities, and future projects will be stronger.

**3. Make the redo something different.** Do make sure the assessment is at the same reasoning level as the initial task, otherwise it is an unfair assessment. Changing up the task requires students to continue to think, rather than just regurgitate. Mixing up the question order is a start, and not quite what I mean. Ask a different essay question. Give a task in a different output mode (visual representation rather than an essay). Have them hold a discussion with you on the spot.

School can absolutely mimic the real life hassles we face when we don't do our best the first time. We just have to think a little differently. Will there be times when a student decides to just deal with the consequences of late work or redos anyway? Sure. Sometimes we all do.

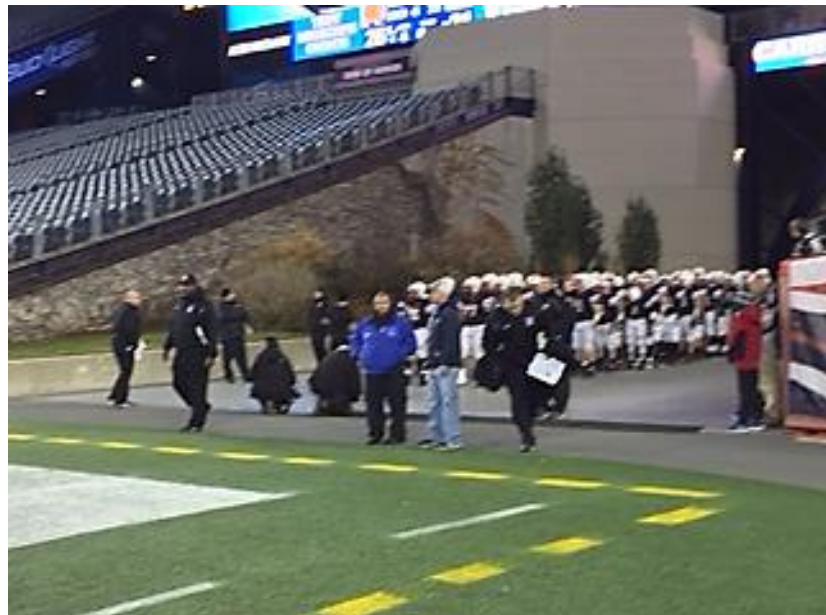
*Courtney is the Instructional Coach for KIDS RSU#2 in Maine.*

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## **Reading Public School Happenings**

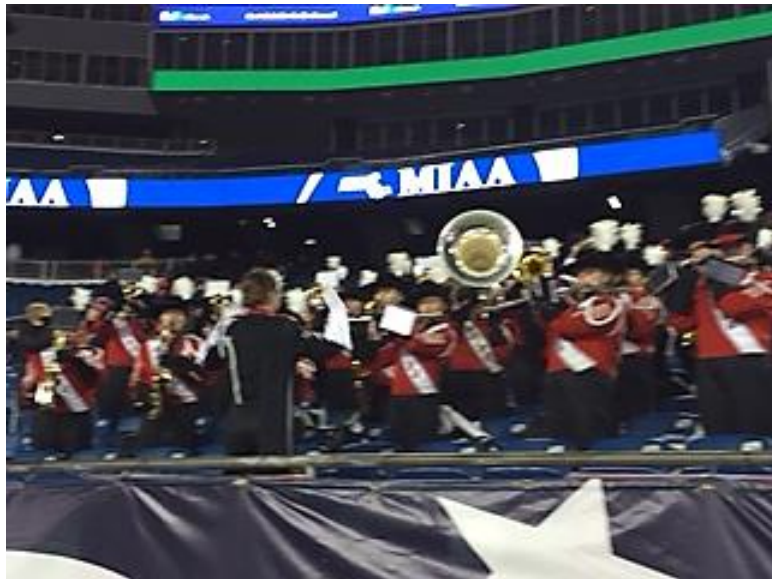
### **RMHS Football Team Loses a Tough Game Versus Nashoba**

On Saturday, the RMHS Football Team lost to a resilient Nashoba Valley Regional High School Team, 27-13 in the Division 2 Super Bowl held at Gillette Stadium. Below are some pictures of the game where over 20,000 attended. Congratulations to the Rockets on a successful season. Although the ending was not what anyone wanted, the team has a lot to be proud of with a final record of 11-2 and a win over previously unbeaten Marshfield in the State Semi-Finals.



***RMHS Football Team Prior to the Game Entering Gillette***





***RMHS Band***



***RMHS Cheerleaders and the Rocket Mascot***

### **Coolidge Participates in Economic Summit**

On Thursday, three teams from Coolidge Middle School competed in the 4th annual International Economic Summit at the Reggie Lewis Arena in Roxbury. The purpose of the Summit Program is to prepare students to live, work and thrive in our rapidly changing world. This is an after school activity that culminates in a final simulation of the global economy: an International Economic Summit. Student teams represent countries from around the world and use skills acquired in the classroom to negotiate trade alliances, develop economic policies, and debate real world issues. The photo below shows the 3 teams represented.

Team Italy won best costume

Team Vietnam won best table display

Congratulations to Dan Chin, Katie Stathouloupoulos, Alex Pscichos, Thomas Cahill, Catherine Kerr, Abby LeTerza, Jen Harden, Fillipa Arvidsson, Ashley Spear, Scott Spear, Julia Johnston Lynch, Katie Delaney, and Gabby DiDonato.

### Quote of the Week....



**“Doing the right thing is more important than doing the thing right.”**

**– Peter Drucker**



*Coolidge Students participating in International Economic Summit*

### **Reading Education Foundation Festival of Trees**

This past week, the Reading Education Foundation held its annual Festival of Trees at Parker Middle School. Several school and community groups participate in this annual event with the proceeds going to help fund teacher grants from the Reading Education Foundation. A special thanks goes to the Reading Education Foundation and Festival of Trees Coordinator Michael Foley for coordinating this event. In addition, thank you to all of the groups who sponsored a tree this year.







*RMHS Interact Club Tree-Superheroes*



*Parker Teacher Leah Cristi's Homeroom's Tree-Chocolate*

### **New Parker Auditorium TV Screens**

During the recent Food Drive assembly, where the Parker community collected over 1700 items to donate to the Reading Food Pantry, Ms. Quackenbush thanked the Google Geek Squad who helped her write a grant to the Reading Educational Foundation (REF) for the auditorium TVs. The REF generously awarded Parker a grant for \$4,000 towards the larger

## Disney Tweet of the Week



"Life can be surprising.  
Don't just expect the  
unexpected. Embrace it."

—Pooh

price tagged project. With the added essential donations of the Young Women's League of Reading, the Drama Club and many, many other contributors, Parker was able to complete the project. Now the entire balcony audience can see what is happening on stage, which means that current and future 6<sup>th</sup> graders will finally enjoy the full stage experience.

The Google Geek Squad includes Julian Wise, Luke Hollenbeck, Shaina Fusco, Sarah Bacci, Mathew Newman, Hailey Wadell, Aidan Hereoux, Shaun McKee, William Xia, Paddy Atwell, Kenneth Froment, Charlotte Lee, Luke Kilduff, Cam Breslin and Tess Rhodes. As seventh graders they were invited to the balcony to experience what they had worked so hard to create. Great job!



### **Reading Rotary Club reads and distributes book bags to Kindergarten Students**

This past week, the Reading Rotary Club, a community service organization, visited all of our kindergarten classrooms, read to the students, and distributed book bags with reading books. Below are some pictures of some of the classes. A special thanks to the Reading Rotary Club and our Library Media Specialists for organizing the event.





*Rotarian Brian Tobin at Wood End*



*Rotarian David Traniello at Joshua Eaton*



*Rotarian Tim Kelley at Joshua Eaton*

### 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](mailto:john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us)

## Stepping Stones...

- **We have posted** a position on School Spring. If interested, please visit [www.schoolspring.com](http://www.schoolspring.com) to view the job details.

School Business Assistant, Reading Public Schools	JOB ID #2183184
Special Education Paraeducator, Barrows Elementary School	JOB ID #2178944
RISE Preschool/Special Education Secretary, RISE Preschool	JOB ID #2200284

- ✓ **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](#)
- ✓ **FYI: Apply to be a Teaching Ambassador with the U.S. Department of Education**  
The U.S. Department of Education's [Teaching Ambassador Fellowship](#) selects teachers for a year-long commitment to learn about and impact federal education policy and collaborate with a cohort of teachers from across the country. There are two options: a full-time fellowship based in Washington, D.C. and a part-time fellowship based in a teacher's home community that takes place in conjunction with his/her teaching responsibilities.  
**Applications for the 2016-17 cohort are due December 14, 2015.** As part of the application, interested teachers must respond to five short essay prompts and submit a letter of recommendation and a resume. More information about the program is available online (including a [program overview](#) and bios of [previous Teaching Ambassadors](#)). The [Principal Ambassador Fellowship](#) is also accepting applications.
- ✓ **Teacher Reflection: How student surveys can transform student engagement in the classroom.** *Aaron Stone, a high school biology teacher at Boston Day and Evening Academy and member of ESE's Teacher Advisory Cabinet, reflects on his experience using student surveys to help inform his goals. For more information on student feedback and free model surveys, visit ESE's [Student and Staff Feedback webpage](#).*

I am entering my 10th year of teaching high school biology, and my biggest fears are perspective and growth. Having evaluated and reflected on my practice the last nine years, I am beginning to lose a critical eye to evaluate areas in which I need to grow as an educator. To bring a fresh, relevant perspective into my practice, I incorporated student surveys last year and this year using a survey instrument designed by Tripod. The 40 survey questions cover seven areas that help gauge student engagement: care confer, captivate, clarify, consolidate, challenge, and control.

For the first time in my career, goal setting actually meant something, because I was able to connect it directly to feedback from my students, those who know best about my day-to-day practice. Equally, if not more important, however, was the process. While confident in my practice, I was anxious about the feedback. I was asking my students about many aspects of my practice. I viewed the results with my students. Transparency in my desire to reflect and grow created a powerful partnership, yielding higher-quality learning by both student and teacher. After reviewing survey data, there was an unscripted, palpable moment in which the class and I took a moment to thank one another, I for their time and feedback, and they for incorporating their voices into my practice.

My areas of strength and growth are no mystery to my students. Opting to let students discuss my practice through an anonymous survey allowed me to use relevant evidence, while, most importantly, increasing the intangible — student respect and engagement.

*Use the hashtag #Top3from#ESE on Twitter to share how you use student feedback to help inform your practice.*

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## Blazing Trails....

### **The definition of bullying in 2016 -TeachThought**

Preventing bullying is just as likely as preventing poverty, racism or violence. If we can start from this kind of humility, we may be able to improve our efficiency in dealing with and responding to it as a problem. Of course, there is no "it." Bullying is an output and a symptom — the result of a variety of factors that manifest themselves well beyond the school. Celebration of aggressiveness and violence, pack mentalities, peer pressure, lack of empathy, violence at home, insecurity, social media, a lack of role models and more all combine with scores of other factors to produce the ugliness that is bullying. [READ MORE](#)

### **How the latest wireless presentation solutions are increasing student engagement K-12 TechDecisions**

Technology has significantly changed how we present, discuss, share and interact with information. With what used to involve numerous wires, cords and hardware, teachers can now present media from their laptops to a large presentation screen through the wireless pairing of devices. Wireless presentation solutions have made a significant impact on the way teachers and students share information, and the latest wireless presentation systems not only help to enhance the way students and teachers present information, but also share and interact with content and media. [READ MORE](#)

### **5 easy digital tools to assess student learning**

**By: Savanna Flakes**

The goal of assessment is to improve instruction and provide student feedback. However, many assessments take so much time to administer and grade that teachers aren't able to use the data immediately. Studies have been conducted on the benefits of using assessment as a resource to help students learn and self-monitor their growth. Thus, assessment doesn't just help teachers, it also supports students in understanding their learning. Enter tech tools and resources. [READ MORE](#)

### **Kids on ADHD medication are more likely to be bullied, study says**

**TIME**

Children who take commonly-prescribed stimulants to treat their attention disorders are more likely to be victimized at school than children who do not have ADHD, according to a new study. The findings come from a survey of almost 5,000 children in five public schools across four years, comparing those who had ADHD; those who had recently been prescribed medication for it; those whose medication had ever been "diverted," meaning it didn't get to its intended recipient; and kids with no diagnosis. [READ MORE](#)

**Have a Great Week!**