



# Pathways

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

January 3, 2016

Volume 7, Number 17

## Upcoming Dates

- January 4 – Welcome Back; (8:00 a.m.) Coffee & Conversation @ RMHS
- January 5 – RMHS Alumni Day in the Endslo PAC; (7:00 p.m.) Killam PTO Meeting in the Media Center
- January 6 – (after school) Secondary Building Meetings
- January 7 – Parker Parent Visitation Day; (8:30 a.m.) Coffee & Conversation @ Killam; (after school) Elementary Building Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Guidance Sophomore Night; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- January 9 – (2:00 p.m.) Coolidge Science Team Reunion @ CMS to honor and remember longtime coach John McCarthy
- January 11 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room

## A Sad Time for our School Community



The Reading Public Schools and the Joshua Eaton Community have lost a great teacher, mentor, and friend this past week with the passing of Grade 3 Teacher Jody Carregal. Jody passed away on January 1<sup>st</sup> after a courageous battle with cancer.

Jody was a caring and compassionate teacher who touched the lives of hundreds of students during her 11 year Reading Public School teaching career at Birch Meadow and Joshua Eaton. She was strong teacher leader in the district serving in several roles, including as an Elementary Assistant Principal, School Council Member, and a member of the TAP Committee. In addition, Jody received two teacher tribute awards from the Reading Education Foundation for her outstanding work with students. Her positive attitude, compassion towards her students, and dedication to her profession will be fondly remembered and sorely missed.

Please keep the Carregal Family and the Joshua Eaton Community in your thoughts and prayers during this time of sadness. May she rest in peace.

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## Community Budget Meetings

In preparation for the FY17 Budget Presentations to the Reading School Committee, Superintendent of Schools John Doherty will be holding two community budget meetings next week to discuss the Superintendent's FY17 Recommended Budget. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints that the Community is facing, the FY17 budget does not have the revenues necessary to sustain current programs and services. As a result, there will be a reduction in personnel at all levels.

The meetings will be held at the following dates and times. Child Care services will be provided at each meeting.

**Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m., at Coolidge Middle School Multipurpose Room**

**Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at Parker Middle School Multipurpose Room**

- January 12 – (6:30 p.m.) PTO Budget Meeting at Parker
- January 13 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release (9:00 a.m.) Joshua Eaton Principal's Coffee; (1:00 p.m.) District PLC Meetings; (6:30 p.m.) PTO Budget Meeting @ Coolidge
- January 14 – (after school) Elementary Building Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) RETELL in Rooms 321 & 320 @ RMHS; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in Superintendent's Conference Room; (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Acting Class Showcase in the Endslo PAC
- January 15 & 16 – (7:30 p.m.) Coolidge Musical in the Endslo PAC

If you have any questions, please contact Superintendent of Schools John Doherty at [john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us).

## A Teacher Shadows a Struggling High-School Student

In this *Kappan* article, Margery Ginsberg (University of Illinois/Chicago) describes how a high-school math teacher observed Ahmed, one of her students, for his morning classes and then followed up with a home visit. Ahmed loves soccer and his dream is to play on the Somali Olympic team. He is in supportive ELL classes and his conversational English is better than that of his mostly Latino classmates, but he continues to struggle with academic work. Each year, teachers have been frustrated with Ahmed's chronic tardiness, lack of effort, and goofing off and have pushed for him to be evaluated for special education. However, Ahmed's family won't allow it – they want him to be strong and work hard to achieve success.

Observing Ahmed in the first three classes of a regular school day, Ahmed's teacher took careful notes. In the first-period language arts class, the teacher said that it was Valentine's Day and asked students to read several quotations about love, select one, and draw a visual image of what the quote expressed. At first, Ahmed seemed happy, joking with the other boys, but then he stared at his paper in silence, clearly unsure of his drawing ability. The teacher spoke to him about completing the assignment, but by the time the bell rang, Ahmed had produced virtually nothing. His second-period writing teacher had a similar reading and drawing assignment, and as soon as Ahmed began to make mistakes, he slid lower in his chair, crumpled up his paper, asked for a new one, tried to get another student to draw for him, but was told by the teacher to do his own work. Things didn't go any better in the third class.

What struck the teacher/observer was how Ahmed managed to stay busy and out of trouble and yet remain disengaged from the learning activity and produce virtually no work. During one 15-minute period, she saw Ahmed organize the papers on his desk, ask to go to the bathroom three times (denied), ask a series of questions ("How many minutes do we have?" "How many words do we need to write?"), open and close his notebook four times, put the date on his paper, stare out the window, stare at the clock, speak Somali with a classmate, stare at the overhead and copy the quotations, ask "We have to write 200 words?", flip through his notebook, read previous entries, put dates on future papers, look at his watch, talk to the student next to him, ask more questions, and write, "Half way is good enough for me." She wondered, *How can Ahmed stand this day after day? How can he remain so agreeable?*

The teacher's home visit filled out the picture. Ahmed's family of five boys and six girls is very close, bound together by their Muslim faith. The parents rarely speak about their lives in Somalia and the dangers they escaped. They owned their own home and had a store that sold food and other merchandise, but lost everything when they fled the country. Now they are having financial difficulty – the father can't work because of a back injury and the mother is incapacitated by diabetes. Ahmed's education is very important to his parents and they hope he will become a doctor or engineer. As they talk, it becomes apparent that Ahmed has been successful in hiding his academic problems from his parents – they believe despite some skill problems, he's on track to graduate from high school on time. Ahmed knows this isn't true and that he's not in mainstream classes, but he doesn't want to let his parents down and is intentionally positive (though vague) about what's going on in school.

The teacher comes away from the shadowing and home visit deeply troubled. How can a student who is enrolled in classes designed specifically to provide extra help learn so little? "In spite of rich life experiences," says Ginsberg, "the education of immigrant and refugee youth who have not had comparable educational experience in their country of origin is a ticking clock. Once they age out of the school system and are adults, their options for a job that is rewarding and pays a living wage for a family are limited." Ahmed's teachers

believe the problem is his own lack of motivation, but it's clearly much deeper. The school is not providing four key elements essential to academic success:

- Inclusion – A learning environment in which students feel respected by and connected to teachers and classmates;
- Mindset – Creating or affirming a favorable disposition toward learning through personal and cultural relevance and student choice;
- Meaning – Creating engaging and challenging learning experiences that include students' perspectives and values and potentially serve the broader community;
- Competence – Helping students understand that they are becoming proficient in ways that further their personal goals.

Chastened by this realization, the math teacher resolves to pass along key insights to her colleagues and improve her own classes in several ways: incorporating skills involved in owning a small business; using project-based learning to scaffold Ahmed's thinking about the uses of mathematical reasoning (perhaps using his interest in soccer); and getting Ahmed doing a self-assessment so he can realistically communicate about his development as a student, especially with his parents. She also plans to suggest questions for other teachers who make visits to the homes of their immigrant students, including:

- What aspects of school has your child enjoyed thus far?
- What do you see as your child's greatest strengths or skills? Can you tell me about a time when you saw your child demonstrating these skills?
- What are some of the skills, talents, and interests that your family has developed over time?
- At the end of the year, what do you hope your child says about his or her experience in school? What's the story you hope to hear?
- How and when would you like me to be in touch this year? What would you like me to communicate about?
- What are some of the things that are different in schools in the U.S. and schools in your home country?
- What is something you have learned since coming to the U.S. or moving to the community that you might not have imagined?
- Are there members of your family who were not able to come with you when you moved here and to whom you hope your child will remain close?
- What gives your family strength?

"More than ever," Ginsberg concludes, "students need teachers who are stewards of deep and respectful learning and who are hopeful and critically curious learners themselves."

"Shadowing a Student Shows How to Make Learning More Relevant" by Margery Ginsberg in *Phi Delta Kappan*, December 2015/January 2016 (Vol. 97, #4, p. 26-30), <http://pdk.sagepub.com/content/97/4/26.full>; Ginsberg can be reached at [margeryginsberg@gmail.com](mailto:margeryginsberg@gmail.com). Reprinted from Marshall Memo 617.

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## Share This With All Schools Please!

A Blog Post by Glennon Doyle Melton

A few weeks ago, I went into Chase's class for tutoring.

I'd emailed Chase's teacher one evening and said, "Chase keeps telling me that this stuff you're sending home is math – but I'm not sure I believe him. Help, please." She emailed right back and said, "No problem! I can tutor Chase after school anytime." And I said, "No, not him. Me. He *gets it*. **Help me.**" And that's how I ended up standing at a chalkboard in an empty fifth grade classroom staring at rows of shapes that Chase's teacher kept referring to as "numbers."

## **Kudos and Accolades**

- To our Facilities staff for all of the work that they did this past week in minor improvements and enhancements for our schools.

I stood a little shakily at the chalkboard while Chase's teacher sat behind me, perched on her desk, using a soothing voice to try to help me understand the "new way we teach long division." Luckily for me, I didn't have to unlearn much because I never really understood the "old way we taught long division." It took me a solid hour to complete one problem, but I could tell that Chase's teacher liked me anyway. She used to work with NASA, so obviously we have a whole lot in common.

Afterwards, we sat for a few minutes and talked about teaching children and what a sacred trust and responsibility it is. We agreed that subjects like math and reading are the least important things that are learned in a classroom. We talked about shaping little hearts to become contributors to a larger community – and we discussed our mutual dream that those communities might be made up of individuals who are Kind and Brave above all. And then she told me this.

Every Friday afternoon Chase's teacher asks her students to take out a piece of paper and write down the names of four children with whom they'd like to sit the following week. The children know that these requests may or may not be honored. She also asks the students to nominate one student whom they believe has been an exceptional classroom citizen that week. All ballots are privately submitted to her.

And every single Friday afternoon, after the students go home, Chase's teacher takes out those slips of paper, places them in front of her and studies them. She looks for patterns.

*Who is not getting requested by anyone else?*

*Who doesn't even know who to request?*

*Who never gets noticed enough to be nominated?*

*Who had a million friends last week and none this week?*

You see, Chase's teacher is not looking for a new seating chart or "exceptional citizens." Chase's teacher is looking for lonely children. She's looking for children who are struggling to connect with other children. She's identifying the little ones who are falling through the cracks of the class's social life. She is discovering whose gifts are going unnoticed by their peers. And she's pinning down- right away- who's being bullied and who is doing the bullying.

As a teacher, parent, and lover of all children – I think that this is the most brilliant Love Ninja strategy I have ever encountered. It's like taking an X-ray of a classroom to see beneath the surface of things and into the hearts of students. It is like mining for gold – the gold being those little ones who need a little help – who need adults to step in and TEACH them how to make friends, how to ask others to play, how to join a group, or how to share their gifts with others. And it's a bully deterrent because every teacher knows that bullying usually happens outside of her eyeshot – and that often kids being bullied are too intimidated to share. *But as she said – the truth comes out on those safe, private, little sheets of paper.*

As Chase's teacher explained this simple, ingenious idea – I stared at her with my mouth hanging open. "How long have you been using this system?" I said.

*Ever since Columbine, she said. Every single Friday afternoon since Columbine. Good Lord.*

This brilliant woman watched Columbine knowing that ALL VIOLENCE BEGINS WITH DISCONNECTION. All outward violence begins as inner loneliness. She watched that tragedy KNOWING that children who aren't being noticed will eventually resort to being noticed by any means necessary.

### Quote of the Week....



**"Laugh when you can,  
apologize when you  
should, and let go of what  
you can't change."**

**– Unknown**

And so she decided to start fighting violence early and often, and with the world within her reach. What Chase's teacher is doing when she sits in her empty classroom studying those lists written with shaky 11 year old hands – is **SAVING LIVES**. I am convinced of it. She is saving lives.

And what this mathematician has learned while using this system is something she really already knew: that everything – even love, even belonging – has a pattern to it. And she finds those patterns through those lists – she breaks the codes of disconnection. And then she gets lonely kids the help they need. It's math to her. It's **MATH**.

All is love- even **math**. Amazing.

Chase's teacher retires this year – after *decades of saving lives*. What a way to spend a life: looking for patterns of love and loneliness. Stepping in, every single day- and altering the trajectory of our world.

**TEACH ON, WARRIORS.** You are the first responders, the front line, the disconnection detectives, and the best and **ONLY** hope we've got for a better world. What you do in those classrooms when no one is watching- it's our best hope.

Teachers- you've got a million parents behind you whispering together: "We don't care about the damn standardized tests. We only care that you teach our children to be Brave and Kind. And we thank you. We thank you for saving lives."

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## High Schools That Combine Academic and Social-Emotional Learning

In this *American Educational Research Journal* article, Stacey Rutledge, La'Tara Osborne-Lampkin, and Ronnie Roberts (Florida State University) and Lora Cohen-Vogel (University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill) compare four urban high schools in Broward County, Florida, two with impressive student achievement and two with lower results. The researchers' goal was to identify the programs, policies, and practices that produced better results for these schools' mostly poor, minority, and ELL students.

There were many similarities among the schools in curriculum alignment, classroom instruction, and parent outreach, but the researchers identified some key differences. They believe the secret sauce of successful schools is the way they combine academic and social-emotional programs. This, they say, allows students to "effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions." Here are the key differences among the schools:

- *Organizational structures* – The higher-performing schools had several programs that enhanced personalization by supporting interaction between adults and students. The key features: looping of guidance counselors and administrators over several years; comprehensive and consistently enforced behavior management structures; and educators' ready access to a rich array of data on students.

- *Administrators' involvement* – In one of the high-performing schools, the principal met regularly with students to inquire about their classroom experiences. In one of the less successful schools, teachers expressed deep frustration at the lack of useful feedback after administrators' frequent classroom visits.

- *Connecting with students* – Adults in the higher-performing schools made deliberate efforts to personalize learning – for example, making sure all students were involved in at least one extracurricular activity. Students in these schools described teachers and administrators as "caring" and "involved."



- *Academic supports* – Higher-performing schools inculcated a culture of learning and college attendance for all students, while the lower-performing schools focused this message mostly on high-achieving students. The more-successful schools used advanced courses as a way to institutionalize rigor; made the guidance department the “hub” for academic support (in one school, counselors made a point of visiting classes at every grade level); and explicitly taught academic and social-emotional skills in classrooms and tutorials.
- *Use of data* – All four schools were systematic in this domain, but the higher-performing schools had a more positive attitude about how student learning results could be used to improve students’ schedules and educators’ practices.
- *Social-emotional supports* – The more-successful schools frequently used the language of personalization and pushed staff to know students and connect with them. There were also more formal and informal adult-student connections, which included being present during lunch periods and intentionally checking in with students. “You can talk to anybody if you have trouble or something,” said one student.

“Understanding Effective High Schools: Evidence for Personalization for Academic and Social Emotional Learning” by Stacey Rutledge, Lora Cohen-Vogel, La’Tara Osborne-Lampkin, and Ronnie Roberts in *American Educational Research Journal*, December 2015 (Vol. 52, #6, p. 1060-1092), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/1QUZEW4>; Rutledge can be reached at [sarutledge@fsu.edu](mailto:sarutledge@fsu.edu). Reprinted from Marshall Memo 617.

## Reading Public School Happenings

### RMHS Girls Hockey Team Raise State Championship Banner

Last week the Reading Memorial High School Girls Hockey Team raised the 2015 State Championship Banner that they won last year. Below is a picture of this year’s team with the banner above.



## Disney Tweet of the Week



"Just change your perspective, your point of view. The magic of your dreams is right inside of you."

—Peter Pan (Disney Dreams)

## **Reading Police Chief James Cormier Retires**

Last week, Police Chief James Cormier retired after over 30 years of service in the Reading Police Department. Below are pictures from the Chief's final exit from the Police Station as Chief of Police and his retirement celebration. Chief Cormier's leadership over the years has been instrumental in making our schools safer places for our students. On behalf of the Reading Public Schools, we wish Chief Cormier the best of good health in his retirement!





### **Mark Segalla Sworn In As New Chief of Police**

Last week, Mark Segalla was sworn in as Reading Chief of Police. Chief Segalla, who most recently held the title of Deputy Chief, officially began as Chief of Police on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Below is Chief Segalla getting sworn in by Town Clerk, Laura Gemme. Congratulations to Chief Segalla!





## Stepping Stones...

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

Long Term Substitute – Joshua Eaton	Job ID# 2242904
School Nurse – Killam	Job ID# 2243304
Special Education Paraeducator – RISE	Job ID# 2246864
Special Education Paraeducator – Barrows	Job ID# 2251184

- ✓ **Coolidge Middle School Science Team Reunion to Remember and Honor John McCarthy on January 9<sup>th</sup>**-The Coolidge Middle School Science Olympiad Team will be having a reunion of past and current team members, parents, and coaches on Saturday, January 9th, beginning at 2:00 p.m., in the Coolidge Middle School Multipurpose Room. The Reunion welcomes anyone who has been involved in the Coolidge Science Olympiad Team over the past 23 years and will remember and honor long time Coolidge Science Teacher and Science Olympiad Coach John McCarthy who passed away on October 19th following a courageous battle with cancer. Participants are encouraged to bring any stories or memories that you would like to share about John McCarthy or Science Team in general. Food will be served and it will provide us with the opportunity to reminisce about the Coolidge Science Team experience. Dress is casual and you are welcome to wear any Science Team shirts/hats/pins/etc. from your time on the team.

A google survey form has been created (see link below) so that the organizers can get an accurate count on who is attending. If you have been involved in the Coolidge Science Team in any capacity since 1992, please complete the Google Doc below, even if you are not able to attend.

<http://bit.ly/1U1NdXP>

Please share this information with as many alumni that you know through every means that you know so that we can try to get everyone the message. We hope to see you at this event. If you have any questions, please contact John Doherty at [john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us)

- ✓ **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](#)

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## Blazing Trails....

**"Questioning for Classroom Discussion."** What type of questioning invigorates and sustains productive discussions? That's what Jackie Acree Walsh and Beth Dankert Sattes ask in their book, "Questioning for Classroom Discussion: Purposeful Speaking, Engaged Listening, Deep Thinking," a passionate exploration of questioning as the beating heart of thoughtful discussions. Walsh and Sattes argue that the skills students develop through questioning and discussion are critical to academic achievement, career success, and active citizenship in a democratic society. [Read More](#)

**"Three Ways to Promote Noticeable Progress."** In introducing the concept of this blog post on ASCD EDge, Ross Cooper asks, "If you were to take a five-year vacation from your current school district, you would hope that 'things' would look noticeably different upon your return ... But would they?" He states that the level of progress achieved is based on our level of intentionality in making it happen, not how much time is spent on managerial tasks, and suggests ways to make progress happen. [Read More](#)

**"To Clone or Not To Clone?"** In this Educational Leadership article, Anne Beninghof writes that, instead of making co-teachers indistinguishable, good co-teaching partnerships celebrate and embrace the differences they bring to the classroom. She shares the common misconception that good co-teachers become clones of each other and why that misunderstanding can result in poor outcomes for students. In effective co-teaching, two teachers with different areas of expertise partner to provide more comprehensive instruction to students. [Read More](#)

**"Field Notes: Forging a Flexible Partnership."** Co-teaching is an instructional delivery where the mainstream teacher and specialist share teaching responsibilities within a single classroom to benefit all students' needs. In this ASCD Express article, Pooja Patel and Emily Abdallah share their co-teaching experience. They decided to combine an intermediate English language learners (ELL) class with the mainstream sixth-grade English class, which allowed the ELL teacher time to teach necessary language skills to her students. [Read More](#)

**"A Shifting Education Model in China."** China is shifting its approach to education, in part by overhauling its exams to consider cognitive skills and analytical skills. The initiative is in response to what some have said is a lack of innovation and creativity among graduates in China. [Read More](#)

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

Have a Great Week!