



Pathways

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

January 31, 2016

Volume 2, Number 21

Upcoming Dates

- February 1 & 2 – RMHS MCAS Testing (Biology)
- February 1 – (8:00 a.m.) Coffee & Conversation @ Coolidge
- February 3 – (after school) Secondary Building Meetings
- February 4 – (8:30 a.m.) Coffee & Conversation @ Wood End; (after school) Elementary Building Meetings
- February 5 – (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Winter Play Around the World in 80 Days
- February 6 – (8:30 a.m.) First Lego League Competition @ Coolidge; (3:30 p.m.) RMHS Winter Guard Competition @ Melrose High (scheduled to perform at 3:56 p.m.); (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Winter Play Around the World in 80 Days
- February 7 - (2:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Winter Play Around the World in 80 Days
- February 8 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- February 9 – (6:30p.m.) RMHS

RMHS Scholastic Art and Writing Award Winners Announced

Last week, the Scholastic Art and Writing Award winners were announced. Many of our art students at RMHS were recognized (see list below). The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are presented by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers. The Alliance is an organization whose mission is to identify students with exceptional artistic and literary talent and present their remarkable work to the world through the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Through the Awards, students receive opportunities for recognition, exhibition, publication, and scholarships. Students across America submitted 300,000 original works during our 2015 program year across 28 different categories of art and writing. Congratulations to all of the students and to the RMHS Art Teachers Kathy Dailey, Sue Gilbert, Veronique Latimer, and Mike Radvany for all of their hard work in supporting these students.

2016 Scholastic Art and Writing Award winners from RMHS

Marissa	Adams	Dailey	Honorable Mention	Photography	Contorted Nature
Samuel	Ayer	Dailey	Gold Key	Photography	Never "Here"
Matt	Baynes	Latimer	Gold Key	Drawing and Illustration	654,000
Samantha	Brussard	Dailey	Gold Key	Photography	Dad
Samantha	Brussard	Dailey	Honorable Mention	Photography	Flower
Samantha	Brussard	Dailey	Honorable Mention	Photography	Lamp
Aimee	Casavant	Latimer	Gold Key	Painting	Fried Egg
Aimee	Casavant	Gilbert	Gold Key	Sculpture	Self-portrait
Aimee	Casavant	Radvany	Honorable Mention	Drawing and Illustration	Fading Memories
Rachel	Galante	Dailey	Honorable Mention	Photography	Summertime Sadness
Courtney	Hardy	Dailey	Silver Key	Photography	Perspective in the Sky
Natalie	Krowitz	Latimer	Silver Key	Painting	Patterned Still Life
Julianne	LeBlanc	Kim	Gold Key	Mixed Media	Stained.
Julianne	LeBlanc	Coenen	Gold Key	Painting	Eden
Julianne	LeBlanc	Kim	Honorable Mention	Ceramics & Glass	Glass Coasters
Julianne	LeBlanc	Coenen	Honorable Mention	Drawing and Illustration	Glass
Julianne	LeBlanc	Radvany	Silver Key	Design	Fibers
Julianne	LeBlanc	Kim	Silver Key	Mixed Media	Expansion
Julianne	LeBlanc	Kim	Silver Key	Mixed Media	Porcelain
Julianne	LeBlanc	Kim	Silver Key	Painting	Longevity
Julianne	LeBlanc	Kim	Silver Key	Art Portfolio	Synergy
Ricky	Patel	Dailey	Silver Key	Photography	Working
Sophia	Regazzini	Radvany	Honorable Mention	Drawing and Illustration	My Room
Jessica	Squires	Gilbert	Silver Key	Mixed Media	Hansel and Gretel
Julia	Sullivan	Dailey	Honorable Mention	Photography	Breakfast Time
Justin	Tu	Radvany	Honorable Mention	Printmaking	Too Cold (reduction Print)

FY17 Budget Update

Last Monday, the Reading School Committee voted to approve the FY17 Superintendent's Recommended budget of \$40,887,665, which is a 3.5% increase from last year's budget. Unfortunately, this budget is not a level service budget and \$403,693 in personnel reductions and \$244,500 in non-personnel reductions/offset

Guidance Junior Parent Night

- February 10 – Grade 6 – 8 Early Release; (after school) Secondary PLC Meetings
- February 11 – (after school) Elementary PLC Meetings
- February 12 – (during day) Coolidge Hoops for Heart

increases had to be made to reach the Finance Committee's Recommended budget. This budget is \$150,000 higher than the FINCOM Recommended Budget and that increase is to fund the first year of a three year K-12 Science Curriculum Implementation. The personnel reductions include 2 Elementary Teachers, 3.4 High School Teachers, a .5 Middle School Reading Specialist, a .4 Speech and Language Pathologist, two leadership stipends at RMHS, and 1 RMHS Regular Education Paraeducator. The impact of this is the loss of 7.3 FTE positions (6.3 FTE Teachers), the elimination of the High School Advisory Program, Class Sizes of 24 and 25 in six elementary classes in Grades 3-5, higher class sizes, restructuring of courses, and reduction of some classes in Grades 9-12, elimination of a department head and consolidation of departments at RMHS, restructuring of speech and language services at the elementary level, and restructuring of reading services at the middle school level.

By Town Charter, the budget must be submitted to the Town Manager no later than February 1st. Once the Town Manager receives the School Committee's budget, he will submit a budget, inclusive of Town departments and School Department to the Finance Committee, which is an advisory board to Town Meeting. The Town Manager, by statute, is required to submit a budget that is fiscally sound and aligns with the projected revenues available to the Town of Reading. During the month of March, the Finance Committee will review the Town Manager's budget and vote on each department's budget, including the School Department budget. They will make a recommendation on each department at Town Meeting. Town Meeting will take a final vote on the budget and may amend it, where they feel it is appropriate. Once Town Meeting votes on the School Department budget, it becomes the final School Department budget, which will take effect on July 1, 2016.

If you have any questions about the budget or the process, please do not hesitate to contact Superintendent of Schools John Doherty at john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us or the Reading Public Schools Administration Offices at 781-944-5800.

The Curse of Knowledge – A Failure of Empathy in the Classroom

In this *Edutopia* article, Christopher Reddy explores the "curse" of a teacher knowing content really well and forgetting how difficult it was to learn it in the first place. This creates an empathy gap with students who are having difficulty learning – the teacher can't get into students' state of mind, making it much more difficult to teach effectively. A teacher suffering from the curse of knowledge may assume that the lesson's content is "easy, clear, and straightforward," says Reddy. "We assume that connections are apparent and will be made effortlessly. Assumptions are the root cause of poor instruction. And acknowledgement is the first step to recovery." Reddy suggests these steps to counteract the curse of knowledge:

- *Fill in background knowledge.* It's very difficult for students to understand new content without a foundation of facts and concepts, says Reddy: "Conceptual knowledge in the form of facts is the scaffolding for the synthesis of new ideas." Teachers should not assume that students have all the prerequisite puzzle pieces to understand what's being taught.

- *Tell stories.* Vivid narratives are one of the most powerful ways for students to make a personal connection to curriculum content, says Reddy: “Everyone loves a great story because our ancestral past was full of them. Stories were the dominant medium to transmit information. They rely on our innate narcissistic self to be effective learning tools – we enjoy stories because we immediately inject ourselves into the story, considering our own actions and behavior when placed in the situation being described.”

- *Inject emotion.* Psychologist Barbara Fredrickson has found that playing a short, humorous film clip or making a quick joke can change the emotional valence of a classroom, creating emotional links between teacher and students.

- *Use more than one learning modality.* Students are attuned by a variety of learning styles and intelligences, and presenting visually, kinesthetically, orally, musically, etc. connects with more students.

- *Use analogies and examples.* An effective analogy highlights a connection, and getting students to form connections is at the core of learning. Similarly, giving lots of examples helps students scan their knowledge inventory for possible connections.

- *Use novelty.* “New challenges ignite the risk-reward dopamine system in our brains,” says Reddy. “Something that is novel is interesting, and something interesting is learned more easily because it is attended to.” Teachers should look for ways of presenting content with a different spin.

- *Have students retrieve what’s been learned.* Effective teachers check for understanding at regular intervals, strategically spacing the mini-tests to maximize long-term retention and provide feedback to teacher and students on what’s being learned and what continues to be a struggle.

“The Teacher Curse No One Wants to Talk About” by Christopher Reddy in *Edutopia*, December 18, 2015, <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/the-curse-of-knowledge-chris-reddy>. Source-Marshall Memo 621.

“I’m Just Not a Math Person”

In this *Usable Knowledge* article from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Leah Shafer explores the all-too-common dynamic of a student struggling with a math problems, giving up, and saying: “I just can’t get this. I’m not a math person.” Of course the idea that there are “math people” and “not math people” is a social construct, says Shafer: “It stems from the belief that math intelligence is a fixed trait, rather than something that grows and develops with hard work and opportunities to learn.” Students who believe they are not “math people” feel outside mathematics – that math doesn’t belong to them, that it’s not useful to interpreting and navigating the world; it’s just something they have to memorize for tests.

The good news is that it’s possible to change a student’s negative attitudes toward math. Some key steps:

- *Shift from a fixed to a growth mindset.* Students can be taught to make this shift – that through determination and hard work they can be good at math.

Kudos and Accolades

- To Boys & Girls Basketball, Boys & Girls Hockey, Gymnastics and Swimming who all had wins this week.
- Congratulations to the Boys 4 x 200 Relay Team (Jack Geiger, Kevin Shannon, Eric Webb & Kevin Hoyt) finishing 2nd in the State Coaches Elite Meet. Also performing well were Paul Chong in the hurdles and Chris Doncaster in the shot put.
- Congratulations to the girls and boys track participants in the State Coaches Invitational Meet.
- Congratulations to RMHS Seniors Morgan Flynn and Connor Mullin who were this week's High Five.
- To RMHS students Emma Penifiel (2nd place Short Fiction) and Margaret Sweeney (2nd place Poetry and 3rd Place Art) for receiving recognition in the Mental Health Writing Contest, sponsored by Somerville Speaks

• *Create opportunities for cooperative learning.* "When students learn from each other by discussing problem-solving strategies," says Shafer, "they discover new techniques for approaching problems and new attitudes that help them persevere."

• *Give students the chance to productively struggle.* Rather than simple right/wrong computational problems, teachers should assign meaty problems that invite students to find their own solutions. Teachers should give students enough time to wrestle with problems and try a new approach if they reach a dead end.

• *Encourage participation, even if the student doesn't have the right answer yet.* "If there's a threat of being wrong every time I raise my hand, and being wrong is a bad thing, then very quickly I decide math isn't for me, I don't like this, I'm not a smart person," says Noah Heller of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Teachers need to frame wrong answers as opportunities for learning and get students sharing tentative answers without fear of failure.

• *Re-envision math as a language.* Math students should feel they can claim ownership over the language of math in the same way that English language learners claim ownership over English. Math students need to feel they are insiders, able to construct knowledge, and can gain access to skills and tools that will be truly useful in their lives.

"Becoming a Math Person: Why Students Develop an Aversion to Mathematics – and How Teachers Can Help Change Their Minds" by Leah Shafer in *Usable Knowledge*, January 16, 2016, <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/01/becoming-math-person> Source: Marshall Memo 621

Reading Public School Happenings

Wood End Grade 5 Assembly

Last week, Grade 5 students at the Wood End Elementary School hosted a school wide assembly on the core value of honesty. Pictures of the assembly are below.





Wood End Makerspace

Below is a picture of the newest area of innovation in our library media centers, which is our makerspaces. Below is a picture of Wood End students enjoying the Makerspace.



Quote of the Week....



"I have learned to use the word impossible with the greatest caution."

-Wernher von Braun

Coolidge Students Participate in the China/US Economic Summit

On Friday and Saturday, students from Coolidge Middle School attended a China/US International Economic Summit at the Harvard Graduate School in Cambridge. Coolidge students, Thomas Cahill, Scott Spear, Daniel Chin, Katie Delaney, Jennifer Harden, Julia Johnston-Lynch, Catherine Kerr, Abigail LaTerza, Ashley Spear, and Katie Stathouloupoulos, along with Coolidge teachers Marcia Grant and MaryAnne Cuscuna attended this two day event. Coolidge represented the countries of Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, and Kazakhstan at the event. Below are a picture of Coolidge students and students from China at the event.



Stepping Stones...

- **We have posted** new positions on School Spring. If interested, please visit www.schoolspring.com to view the job details.

Long-Term Substitute Special Education Paraeducator, Wood End	JOB ID # 2305384
Special Education Paraeducator, Birch Meadow	JOB ID # 2305374
Long-Term Substitute Grade 5 Special Education Co-Teacher, Barrows	JOB ID # 2300404
Principal, Birch Meadow	JOB ID # 2312104

Disney Tweet of the Week



"The water's always changing, always flowing. But people, I guess, can't live like that."

—Pocahontas

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

Blazing Trails....

"Ten Ways to Engage All Students in the Classroom." "Each day as the students leave and you sit and think about the day, do you reflect on how you can make your lessons more engaging or hands-on?" asks Tisha Shipley in a new blog on ASCD Inservice. Shipley shares that she not only reflects on her own teaching each day, but explains that she also observes colleagues and asks for new ideas. In this post, she goes through 10 different ways to engage students that worked for her. [Read More](#)

"How to be Purposeful About Audience." At the end of a project, students typically share what they have learned or discovered with an audience. Depending on the project, students might publish their work online, make presentations at a public event, or pitch their ideas to a panel of judges. In this ASCD Express article, author and project-based learning expert Suzie Boss shares tips to connect students with an authentic audience. [Read More](#)

"Schools Turn Snow Days into Learning Days." Some schools along the East Coast already have closed in preparation for a historic winter storm. Many teachers are encouraging students not to take a break from learning, with some sending students homework packets or posting assignments online. [Read More](#)

"Classroom/School Redesigns Make Students a Top Priority." Some schools are redesigning education spaces and re-imagining how students -- and educators -- learn. One school profiled in this article created an Innovation, Discovery and Engagement Area, and another launched a Design Build Lab. [Read More](#)

"ESSA May Put More Financial Pressure on States." States have more authority under the Every Student Succeeds Act, but some experts predict challenges because of staffing and funding shortfalls in recent years. "It's the shift back to, yes, you're in the driver's seat," consultant Kathy Cox said. "But you're the one paying for the gas." Education Week (tiered subscription model)

"Students in China Submit Video Interviews for US Colleges." Some students in China are doing video interviews with a third party as part of the application process for US colleges and universities. The videos, viewed online by the schools, aim to help prevent fraud and test students' ability to communicate in a classroom. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!