



Pathways

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

September 11, 2016

Volume 8, Number 2

Upcoming Dates

- Sept. 11 – (12:00 p.m.) Reading Street Faire
- Sept. 12 – (7:30 p.m.) Special Town Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- Sept. 13 – (6:00 p.m.) Wood End Curriculum Night for Grades 3 – 5
- Sept. 14 – (after school) Secondary Building Meetings – Collaborative Proposal Time; (5:00 p.m.) Joshua Eaton Book Fair and Picnic; (6:00 p.m.) Wood End Curriculum Night for Grades K – 2 & RISE @ Wood End; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Senior Parents Night in the Endslo PAC
- Sept. 15 – (after school) RISE & Elementary Building Meetings – Principal Determined; (7:00 p.m.) Parker & Coolidge Open Houses; (7:30 p.m.) Special Town Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- Sept. 16 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Football vs Acton Boxborough
- Sept. 19 – Camp Bournedale Trip – Eaton & Barrows Grade 5; (6:30 p.m.) Michael Fowlin presentation in the Endslo PAC; (7:00

Reading Public Schools Provides Budget Information

The Town of Reading is currently considering a 7.5 million dollar override ballot question which will be voted on by the community on October 18th. As part of these discussions, the Reading School Committee and Reading Public Schools Administration have been reviewing budget scenarios given the current revenue projections for FY18 (.7% increase for municipal and school operating budgets if \$2,000,000 of free cash is used and a -.3% increase for municipal and school operating budgets if no free cash is used). In addition, for over a year, there have been discussions with the Reading Public School Community on the educational needs for the school district that are aligned with the challenges that the school district is currently facing and the goals of the school district. Like many other communities in the state, the Reading Public Schools is facing these challenges:

1. Retaining and Attracting Staff
2. Developing well-balanced and prepared students for college, career, and life
3. Supporting teachers and administrators as we transition to more rigorous standards and curriculum
4. Continuing to improve our special education services and in district programs
5. Identifying long term space needs to address program changes
6. Remaining comparable and competitive with other towns and school districts

As a means to inform the Reading Community of these challenges that the School District is currently facing and the resources needed to begin to address those challenges, the Reading Public Schools has developed a document called, *Rationale for FY18 Budget Discussion Items*. This document, which can be accessed on the [District Reading Public School Website](#), gives data and information regarding what will happen if the Town of Reading approves a 7.5 million dollar override ballot on October 18th, and what will happen if the ballot question does not pass.

If you have any questions, regarding the document, please contact the Reading Public Schools Administration Offices at 781-944-5800.

Reading Public Schools Invited To Participate In Conference at White House

The Reading Public Schools has been invited to attend a Conference on *Trauma-Informed Approaches in School: Supporting Girls of Color and Rethinking Discipline* on **Monday, September 19th** at the **White House**. The Conference is being sponsored by The White House Council on Women and Girls (CWG), the U.S.

p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room

- Sept. 20 - Camp Bournedale Trip – Eaton & Barrows Grade 5; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Guidance Financial Aid Presentation in the Endslo PAC
- Sept. 22 – (5:00 p.m.) RMHS Junior Class Buffet Fundraiser; (6:00 p.m.) RISE Preschool @ RMHS Open House; (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Back to School Night
- Sept. 23 – RMHS Football vs. Winchester (Arts Spirit Night)
- Sept. 26 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- Sept. 27 – (3:30 p.m.) RTA General Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- Sept. 28 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (District PLC Meetings (Elem – 1:15 p.m.; HS & MS – 1:30 p.m.)
- Sept. 29 – (after school) Elementary Building Meetings; (6:30 p.m.) RCASA Annual Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- Sept. 30 – (8:00 a.m.) Mentor Training; Football vs. Lexington
- October 1 – (8:00 a.m.) SAT Testing – RMHS is a test center

Department of Education (ED), the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality (Center on Poverty), and The National Crittenton Foundation (TNCF). Our district was invited to attend because of the work that we have doing with trauma-sensitive schools, school discipline, and/or health supports (including mental health supports). This convening will bring together a number of select states and districts, as well as key researchers and experts in this topic, and nonprofit partners who have demonstrated a strong commitment to improving supports and outcomes for this vulnerable population. Superintendent of Schools John Doherty, Director of Student Services Carolyn Wilson, and District Leader of Social and Emotional Learning Sara Burd will be representing the district at the Conference.

Successfully Educating Boys: What Works

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, Michael Reichert (University of Pennsylvania) ponders his international research on teachers' and coaches' work with challenging boys – those who are defiant, disruptive, reticent, shy, passive, depressed, or rally peers against the teacher's purpose. Back in Renaissance times, schools were specifically designed for boys, but today cultural beliefs about masculinity clash with what it takes to "do school" successfully. Those beliefs convey that "'real' boys are tough and emotionally stoic, independent and autonomous, keen to compete, and eager to prove themselves in feats of risk-taking and aggression," says Reichert. "In every school I have visited, social competition and hierarchy, bullying and maltreatment, peer policing, and the marginalization of less-preferred types of boys characterize cultures that even wonderfully committed faculty and staff cannot control."

Many schools have responded by bringing in "boy-friendly" subject matter, kinesthetic activities, technology, and more, but the results have been disappointing. Meanwhile girls are surging ahead, creating a widening gender gap. What is to be done?

The answer is right under our noses, says Reichert – in the practices of our successful teachers. These teachers report that, "contrary to the stereotypes of young men as diffident, disruptive, or dangerous, most boys care deeply about being successful and simply long for instructors... capable of connecting personally with them and believing in them, even when they may not believe in themselves and struggle with behavior, effort, or attention problems... Relationship is the very *medium* through which successful teaching and learning is performed with boys."

On the flip side, boys often refuse to learn from adults who don't connect with them. When boys have a problem with an adult – a personality clash, difficulty with work, not getting their needs met – they are much more likely than girls to misbehave or check out, and they seem unable to engage in repairing the relationship. One boy said of an unhelpful teacher, "I *hate* him. I'm not doing anything in that class. He can flunk me, they can kick me out – I'm not doing anything."

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to girls soccer, swimming, golf, and field hockey teams for opening the season with wins this week.
- Special thanks to the Barrows, Birch Meadow, Joshua Eaton, and Killam for holding successful curriculum/back to school nights.
- Congratulations to the staff of the Extended Day Program, under the direction of Director Sandy Calandrella, who currently have an enrollment of over 500 students in their Elementary Extended Day Program. This is a testament to the quality of the program and the dedication of the staff. Great job!
- Please welcome to RMHS this week two student cultural exchange groups. The fifth Spanish Exchange will be in Reading from September 10-21st and the Swiss Cultural Exchange Group will be in Reading for two weeks, beginning September 19th. Special thanks to RMHS teachers Joanne Alvarez and Brian McVety for helping to coordinate these exchanges.
- To Food Service managers, Pat Dady-Guarino (RMHS) and Laura O'Brien (Killam) who passed the required and challenging Serv Safe Food Safety Certification exam.

Reichert's interviews and focus groups with teachers and students revealed seven strategies that build connections with boys. His conclusion: "It appears that every boy can be reached."

- *Demonstrate mastery of subject matter.* "Teachers must be seen as competent, as invested in their subjects and their pedagogy, and as reliable guides for the learning journey," says Reichert.
- *Maintain high standards.* This goes for content, quality of work, and behavior.
- *Respond to a student's personal interest or talent.* Does the teacher *know* the student?
- *Share a common interest.* This can be athletic, musical, mechanical.
- *Acknowledge a common characteristic.* Sharing background, ethnicity, a problem overcome "can be a reliable, if serendipitous, relationship builder," says Reichert.
- *Accommodate a measure of opposition.* Successful teachers don't take oppositional behavior personally but respond with civility.
- *Be willing to reveal vulnerability.* This could take the form of a teacher apologizing to boys with whom he or she had been harsh or made a mistake.

"When these relational gestures are offered and a learning relationship is struck, teachers can make a profound difference for boys," says Reichert. "When they develop new abilities, boys' self-concepts shift as they come to see possibilities they could not imagine previously. Even more basic, though, is the life-altering lesson that boys absorb from teachers who demonstrate a willingness to go an extra mile on their behalf. They discover that there is help."

"Unlocking Boys' Potential" by Michael Reichert in *Educational Leadership*, September 2016 (Vol. 74, #1, p. 22-26), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2bSwTvT>; Reichert can be reached at michreich@comcast.net. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 651.

Ring Their Bells: A New Way to Deliver Bell Work

By **Dr. Lori Desautels** for *Edutopia Magazine*
September 7, 2016

This is the most frequent challenge that I hear from educators in all grade levels (including higher education): "How do I create and sustain engagement?" When we engage our students from the onset, we reduce negative behaviors while creating experiences that are emotion-packed, drive curiosity, and deliver brain states of anticipation and intrigue. It sounds simple, but for those of us who greet students each day or class period, we encounter a variety of personal experiences, private logics, stressors, learning profiles, and mindsets as intricate and diverse as fingerprints.

During the past few years, as I've reentered K-12 classrooms in addition to my undergraduate coursework, I'm learning that how I begin the day or class sets the tone for how well the instruction will be received and the content will be remembered. Traditionally, educators have implemented **bell work** – shortened

assignments that begin class with content reviews, silent reading, or completion of assignments -- as the students trickle in carrying backpacks and a broad variety of needs and emotions.

This past year, I began looking at research about the **primary/recency effect** and how I could better engage students the minute they walked through the door each day. Bell work rang my bell! I was reminded how content and experiences in the first few minutes of a lecture, teaching episode, or assignment have the best chance of staying in working memory, where new thoughts and ideas connect to what students already consider relevant or meaningful. Brain-aligned bell work captured the engagement that I desired for longer-term learning. Not all bell work has to be tied to whatever standards or topics we're teaching that day or week. Sometimes, it activates powerful ways to explore perceptual data from the students with regard to their interests, passions, feelings, insights, and bundles of beliefs.

10 Bell Work Activities

The following activities have been successful in my classrooms.

1. Fantasy Interview: When students enter the class, they choose a half sheet of colored paper with a set of instructions displayed the smart board. In the front of class is an empty chair and a few props to create a comfortable setting. I begin with a question: "If you could spend 15 minutes with any person in the whole world discussing, questioning, and sharing, who would this be and why did you choose him or her?" The students can write or draw their responses and, if they choose, share them following the exercise. When I implemented this experience with middle school and undergraduate students, the sharing and empathy in the room was palpable, and I learned so much about the emotional and social profiles of these students!

2. The Things I Carry: At the front of the room is a backpack containing five or six items, pictures, or words that I identify with or hold close to my mind and heart. As I model for my students the contents of my own backpack, I begin sharing who I am as a person. This is a powerful way of not only getting to know your students, but also tying in the backpack's contents with a class novel, science experiment, or any standard that you're teaching -- simply by aligning items in the bag with what students need to know. Students can guess what items might be in the backpack before you reveal them. Prediction is an effective brain state which increases the brain's dopamine levels that are responsible for **pleasure- and goal-seeking behaviors**.

3. Just Ten Words: Write or draw a ten-word story on a specific topic that you're teaching, or have students write a ten-word story describing their strengths and expertise. Another option for those who don't want to write is creating an infographic.

4. Predict an Outcome: Choose a short TED Talk or documentary and watch the first minute. Following this one-minute presentation, students will predict two or three outcomes as to how this presentation will end. This can be related to subject matter

Quote of the Week....



**I slept and dreamt that life
was joy. I awoke and saw
that life was service. I
acted and behold, service
was joy.**

– Rabindranath Tagore

that you're teaching, or it could be a motivational video addressing social and emotional skillsets.

5. Beliefs Infomercial: Using images, words, colors, or technology, have students design an infomercial about a strong belief that they hold. It could be a longtime personal belief, one that they've developed through recent experiences, or one that they're beginning to question.

6. Reinventing Gum: Place a stick of gum on every desk as students walk in. On five notecards, have them design five new inventions for chewing gum. Students can share and compare at the end of the bell work.

7. Meeting of the Minds: Students will select characters from a book, historical figures, or any author, inventor, scientist, or individual whom they've been studying. Given a 21st-century challenge, how would these individuals solve it? What would their discussion look like, and how would they relate to one another?

8. The Traveling Pants: Place an old pair of trousers or blue jeans on a table in the front of the room. Present a variety of questions and activities about these pants, such as:

- Where have they been?
- Where would you travel?
- Describe three places you'd travel or goals you'd accomplish while wearing these pants.
- What will it take for you to get there?
- How can you begin creating these destinations or goals today?

9. Invent a New Language: Either individually or with a partner, have students create a new language that we need today. It could be a language of feelings, kindness, service, or just a silly variation by adding or deleting words, parts of words, vowels, or consonants.

10. Legibility Test: With their opposite hand or blindfolded, students write a short review paragraph about a topic on the upcoming test or something that needs to be remembered. Then they trade papers with a classmate to see if they can read and understand what was written.

The environments that our students bring into our classrooms often reflect a mindset that has developed without effort or awareness. For many of students, attending school is an adverse experience because school hasn't been a place where they've felt emotionally safe or academically successful. They would rather act out or look like rebels than appear "dumb" -- especially in front of their peers! As educators, we can start counteracting that negative experience the moment they enter our classrooms. I hope that these bell work activities will inspire your students and set their brain state for feeling capable and engaged at the start of each day.

Disney Tweet of the Week



**We can't focus on
what's going wrong.
There's always a way to
turn things around**

—Joy (Inside Out)

How do you use bell work in your practice?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Reading Public Schools Happenings

Joshua Eaton Sign In Honor of Jody Carregal

Last week, a sign was installed outside of the Joshua Eaton Main Office in honor of Joshua Eaton Teacher Jody Carregal, who passed away in January. I just wanted to share some pictures with you of the Joshua Eaton sign that was hung outside our office today. Every student and staff member made a disc (or multiple) for this mosaic, as well as Jody's own children. There are many significant things hidden within the sign. Special thanks to Joshua Eaton parents, Paul & Lianne Stoddard, Amy Hennessy and Mike Hennessy for coordinating this project.



Important Websites

Help Desk (To submit a ticket)
help.desk@reading.k12.ma.us

RPS District Website
www.reading.k12.ma.us

Access Your Email
<https://login.microsoftonline.com/>

Baseline Edge
<https://baseline.ioeducation.com/Site/login>



Killam First All School Assembly

Last week, Killam held their first All School Assembly. At the presentation, the Killam MTSS Leadership Team reviewed the school core values with the help of some TRRFCC student superheroes.



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



National Day of Service

On Friday, Coolidge Middle School students participated in community service day activities as part of a National Day of Service that coincides with the 15th Anniversary of the September 11th attacks on the United States. Below is a picture of some students participating in the activity.



Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts and prayers go out to central Office Administrative Assistant **Kristyn Cohen** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- Congratulations to Wood End Teacher **Jacquelyn Pelusi (Parker)** who got married last week.
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Special Education Learning Center Paraeducator, 60 hours biweekly
Coolidge Middle School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=158>

Special Education Teacher, 1.0FTE Reading Memorial High School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=159>

Long-Term Substitute Special Education Learning Center Teacher, Parker
Middle School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=160>

Speech and Language Pathologist, 0.8FTE Barrows Elementary School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=161>

Team Chairperson, Elementary School Level

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=162>

Blazing Trails....

"#BringingJoyBack: Make This Your Year." At the beginning of the school year, there's an energy that's hard to match. It's a reminder about why we got into the education game in the first place. In this Inservice post, Kevin Scott, ASCD's director of member engagement shares why it's important to challenge yourself to find the joy of education this year. [Read More](#)

"The One Word That Prevents Real Educational Reform From Happening." Read this post from educational speaker, writer and consultant Will Richardson. He explains, "If we're honest, it's not about 'can't.' Instead, it's about 'won't.' We *won't* do those things, even though common sense says we ought to, because we don't have the conviction or the courage or, importantly, the conscience to do them. And so, we introduce cosmetic changes meant to soften the disconnect between what we believe and what we do all the while knowing deep in our learning minds that we're trying to do the wrong thing right." [Read More](#)

"When Homework Is Useless." The Atlantic asked prominent voices in education-from policy makers and teachers to activists and parents-to look beyond laws, politics, and funding and imagine a utopian system of learning. They went back to the drawing board-and the chalkboard-to build an educational Garden of Eden. Here are their answers. [Read More](#)

"The Complete Guide To Twitter Hashtags For Education." Twitter can be a busy place with *lots* of tweets-and thus lots of "noise." A #hashtag is a way to aggregate tweets that are appended with a hashtag. Picture it like a magnet that attracts all messages categorized by that topical word or phrase. When you tweet and want your message to be part of a larger conversation beyond your followers, add a relevant hashtag from the list below to the end of your message, and you'll automatically reach anyone who is monitoring the same hashtag. Cool, yes? [Read More](#)

"England Finds Success with Universal Preschool." Divided by Brexit, Britain is nonetheless united around offering universal preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds. Parents of preschool-age children in England have access to free universal preschool, and about 94% of such parents enroll their children in the program. Some say universal preschool helps reduce stigma and ensure quality. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!