



Pathways

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

October 16, 2016

Volume 3, Number 7

Upcoming Dates

- October 17 – 18 – Camp Bournedale Trip for Grade 5 students @ Wood End, Birch Meadow and Killam; (8:00 am – 2:30 p.m.) Challenge Day @ Coolidge; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- October 18 – Special Election in the Field House
- October 19 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release Day; (after school) District PLC Meetings
- October 20 – 21 - (8:00 am – 2:30 p.m.) Challenge Day @ Parker
- October 20 – (after school) Elementary Building Meetings
- October 21 – RMHS Drama Elementary School Visits
- October 22 – (5:00 p.m.) Killam Halloween Bash
- October 24 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- October 26 – (after school) Secondary Building Meetings; (6:00 p.m.) Joshua Eaton Halloween Howl; (6:30 p.m.) RMHS College Fair at the Shriners Auditorium in Wilmington
- October 27 – (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings
- October 31 – Happy Halloween
- November 2 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (District PLC Meetings (Elem – 1:15 p.m.; HS & MS – 1:30 p.m.); (7:30 p.m.)

School Committee votes to request that Board of Selectmen call for Special Town Meeting to address High School Construction Litigation

Tentative settlement to be reviewed between Town of Reading and TLT Construction

At a joint meeting of the Reading Board of Selectmen and School Committee on October 13th, the Reading School Committee voted to request that the Board of Selectmen vote to call a Special Town Meeting during November Town Meeting to address the High School construction litigation with TLT Construction Corporation that began in 2007. The Board of Selectmen will vote on this request at their next meeting on October 25th. At the Special Town Meeting, the timeline of events over the last decade will be reviewed, a funding vote will be requested, and the settlement process will be outlined in order to ensure that no funds from operating budgets will be impacted.

The Reading Memorial High School construction project began in 2004, and TLT Construction Corporation was the general contractor for the project. In the fall of 2007, TLT filed a lawsuit in Middlesex Superior Court against the Town of Reading, claiming that the Town owed additional money for work performed under the contract. In response, the Town filed a counterclaim, alleging that TLT did not complete the contract work on time and that the Town had to correct various parts of the project work TLT did perform.

In 2013, after several years of the litigation discovery process and attempts at reaching a settlement with TLT, the court referred the case to a Special Master, a retired judge, who conducted a hearing process in lieu of a trial in the Superior Court. The hearings began in December of 2013 and concluded in March of 2015. Closing arguments were presented in July of 2015. Since that time, the Master has been preparing, and issuing to the parties, draft decisions on the various issues that make up the matters in dispute. These issues included payment to TLT for asbestos abatement work, the Town's replacement of the outdoor track, compensation to TLT for additional work outside the scope of the contract, correction of site work, and liquidated damages for failure to complete the work on time. The first draft ruling was issued in January of 2016, and the most recent ruling, which left only a small portion of the claims still to be decided, was issued in September of 2016. The net result of the rulings to date is approximately 3 million dollars, in TLT's favor.

Financial Forum @ Senior Center

- November 3 – (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings; (7:00 p.m.) Killam PTO Meeting
- November 4 – (9:00 a.m.) Joshua Eaton Veterans Day Assembly
- November 5 – (8:00 a.m.) RMHS SAT Testing – Reading is a test center; (2:00 p.m.) 2nd Annual RPS Science Expo at Coolidge

If the process continued, each party would have the opportunity to respond to the draft rulings with proposed revisions, and the Special Master would then prepare a final report to the Superior Court. Under the applicable legal procedure, the court would review the Master's final report and may adopt it, reject it in whole or in part, or send it back to the Master with instructions for additional action. Ultimately, the Superior Court would enter a judgement in the case, whether on its first receipt of the Special Master's report or after such additional action by the Master as it may order. On account of the volume of material to be reviewed, a Superior Court judgment would not be expected until sometime well into 2017. By Massachusetts statute, a court judgment is subject to 12% annual interest, and interest would apply from the date the complaint was filed in November, 2007. As a result, the amount of the judgment would now more than double. If the final court judgment were issued in late 2017, it is expected that the total amount could be close to \$7,000,000 in TLTs favor.

Given these circumstances, the School Committee and TLT have reached a tentative settlement agreement in the amount of \$ 6 million, subject to Town Meeting approval. If approved by Town Meeting, the settlement would be paid through three sources of funding: remaining funds from the RMHS building project (approximately \$800,000), certified free cash, and borrowing—with the debt being paid off over a period of several years. No operating budget funds would be utilized, and the result of the override election will *not* have an impact on the funding sources for the settlement. It should also be noted that the override vote scheduled for October 18th is to support the operating budgets for the town and schools, and has no real impact on the capital plan. The override was not required because of this legal settlement.

As a result of the settlement, it is expected that capital projects currently on the 10-year capital plan (i.e. roof replacements, field replacements, and capital equipment) would be pushed out additional years into the future in order to disperse the impact. Town officials are also exploring the possibility of additional MSBA reimbursement funding for the High School project. As several people have understandably inquired, town and school officials want to also clarify and emphasize again that this issue is *not* related in any way to the need for an override ballot question. Even if the litigation had been resolved years ago, an operational override would be necessary at this time to sustain current services of the town and schools—and to address the structural deficit in the operating budgets that has been developing over the last several years. Revenue from an override would successfully address these identified deficits. Although litigation has taken years, it was a process that legal counsel at the time believed was the best course of action. After almost a decade-long process, however, the School Committee supports moving forward on a settlement in order to bring the litigation process to a necessary close and to best position our Town and schools for the future.

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to field hockey, boys soccer, volleyball, golf, football and swimming for wins this week.
- Special thanks to Barrows Secretary Donna Walsh, Barrows Teacher Heather Murphy, School Resource Officer Mike Muolo, and Barrows Principal Heather Leonard for their quick action in addressing a challenging situation recently.
- Congratulations to RMHS Seniors Liam Dwyer and Jacquelyn Iannuzzo who are this week's High Five.

Hidden in Plain Site at Reading Police Station This Week

The Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse will be sponsoring, *Hidden in Plain Sight* at the Reading Police Community Room from October 17th-19th. Specific times are listed on the flier below.

This event is an actual simulation of a teen's bedroom that contains common household items that can be substance abuse warning signs. This event is for adults only.

More information is on the flier below. For further information, contact Julie DeAngelis at jdeangelis@ci.reading.ma.us.

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Don't Miss The Warning Signs of Substance Misuse



The HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT display helps parents spot signs of risk behavior.

The Open House will feature an educational display of a teen's bedroom to test parents' awareness of common household items that can be substance abuse warning signs.

The display is designed to encourage honest and candid discussion of the topics of underage drinking and substance abuse.

This free event is sponsored by Burbank YMCA, RCASA and the Reading Police.

RCASA staff will guide participants through the exhibit and answer questions.

Learn more at www.reading.k12.ma.us/rcasa
Or email jdeangelis@ci.reading.ma.us

OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULE



Reading Police Community Room
15 Union St. Reading

Mon. Oct 17th 6:00-8:00pm

Tues. Oct 18th 2:30-4:30pm

Tues. Oct 18th 6:00-8:00pm

Wed. Oct 19th 8:00-11:00am

This exhibit is intended for adults only.



**Reading
Coalition
Against
Substance
Abuse**

Special thanks to Mission of Deeds for exhibit donations.

Quote of the Week....



Do what you feel in your heart to be right - for you'll be criticized anyway.

-Eleanor Roosevelt

Getting Students Reading and Responding at

Four Levels of Rigor

“Good teachers resist the idea of ‘teaching to the test,’” says Nancy Boyles (Southern Connecticut State University) in this article in *Educational Leadership*. “But aligning literacy instruction with assessment isn’t teaching to the test if that assessment is a valid measure of our students’ performance. If the test is rigorous – if it demands deep levels of knowledge – then alignment means asking ourselves, ‘How can we plan for this rigor in our instruction?’”

Teachers’ challenge is preparing students for the kind of rigor in Common Core-era assessments. Looking at the six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy – *remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create* – is unhelpful, says Boyles. That approach has even resulted in creative but decidedly non-rigorous projects like “Draw a map of your ideal bedroom.” A better approach, says Boyles, is using Webb’s depth-of-knowledge levels, all four of which are important to rigorous comprehension:

- **Level 1: Recall and reproduction** – Recalling facts and locating information in the text to answer questions about *who, what, when, where, why, and how*. Answers at this level are either right or wrong. Some sample PARCC and Smarter Balanced test items:

- What is the meaning of *trudged* as it is used in paragraph 10 of this folk tale?
- Which sentence from the folk tale helps the reader understanding the meaning of *trudged*?

What most commonly goes wrong at this level is students not going back to the text and finding the exact information. Rigor at this level, says Boyles, is “in maintaining high expectations for all learners and in providing honest, specific, and immediate feedback.”

- **Level 2: Skills and concepts** – Students need to make some decisions about how to approach the problem or activity, for example:

- What is the meaning of the quote, “One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind”?
- Which words *best* describe the character _____?

The rigor here is teachers explaining, modeling, and practicing. For students, the rigor is achieving independence, which involves the teacher gradually releasing responsibility.

- **Level 3: Strategic thinking and reasoning** – This involves using logic and evidence to think more abstractly about a text. Sample questions:

- What is the theme (or main idea) of the passage? Use details from the text to support your answer.
- What effect does the author create by using the phrase _____?
- What is the most likely reason the author included a map of _____?
- Which details from the text are irrelevant to the author’s claim?

Disney Tweet of the Week



The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.

—Walt Disney

Many students need practice at inferring – zeroing in on the main idea as they start reading, thinking about the author’s intent, understanding the external and internal structure of texts, and thinking critically about what they’re reading.

• *Level 4: Extended thinking* – Integrating information from multiple sources. Some sample items:

- A central idea of these articles is _____. Provide two pieces of evidence from different sources that support this idea and explain how each example supports it.
- Which source most likely has the most useful information about _____? Explain why this source is likely to be more helpful.
- Compare and contrast the way the author develops the central idea of _____ in the two texts we read. Use details from both sources to support your explanation.

To prepare students for questions like these, teachers need to plan lessons that ask students to make connections between two or more sources – including video, audio recordings, illustrations, and more. “But just including text-to-text lessons is not enough,” says Boyles. “A good text connection lesson will ask students to tap into a key similarity or difference between the sources, raising a question that brings students to a deeper knowledge of both texts through that connection point.”

“Pursuing the Depths of Knowledge” by Nancy Boyles in *Educational Leadership*, October 2016 (Vol. 74, #2, p. 46-50), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2dVtRsl>; Boyles can be reached at nancyboyles@comcast.net. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 656.

Mindfulness in Schools

In this *Time Magazine* article, Mandy Oaklander reports on the spread of mindfulness programs in U.S. schools. “That mindfulness is taking place alongside math in elementary school says something about the stressed-out state of kids’ brains these days,” says Oaklander. “Educators increasingly believe that mindfulness can be an antidote to three of the biggest mental-health challenges that kids face: anxiety, trouble paying attention, and bullying.” A robust body of research shows that for adults, practicing yoga, meditation, and deep-breathing exercises can reduce stress, ease anxiety, improve sleep, prevent illness, reduce depression, and even mitigate pain. Can there be similar benefits when K-12 students learn how to monitor their bodies and emotions and better communicate their feelings to others – especially young people afflicted by ADHD, anxiety, and depression?

“These are not niceties,” contends Patrick Tolan of the University of Virginia. “These are critical capabilities. If children today don’t learn how to take care of themselves, it’s going to have an enormous impact on our health care costs and the health of our nation.” Lisa Flook of the University of Wisconsin has done preliminary research showing the positive effects of mindfulness training in schools. “A body of work shows there are these innate pro-social and altruistic qualities present from a very early age in children,” she says. “This is a way of nurturing

Important Websites

[Help Desk \(To submit a ticket\)](mailto:help.desk@reading.k12.ma.us)
help.desk@reading.k12.ma.us

[RPS District Website](http://www.reading.k12.ma.us)
www.reading.k12.ma.us

[Access Your Email](https://login.microsoftonline.com/)
<https://login.microsoftonline.com/>

[Baseline Edge](https://baseline.ioeducation.com/Site/login)
<https://baseline.ioeducation.com/Site/login>

the seeds of kindness in children.” Randye Semple of the University of Southern California’s Keck School of Medicine agrees: “There’s an almost immediate calming effect of mindfulness practice. Essentially, mindfulness is attention training. We’re showing them that attention can be increased, that it can be ramped up and it can be trained.” Researchers are finding that calm breathing triggers the part of the nervous system that’s the opposite of the fight-or-flight response, slowing heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and getting kids to focus on what is happening in the moment.

There’s been pushback on mindfulness, with some parents complaining that it’s teaching Buddhism and has no place in schools. One program in Canton, Ohio was discontinued because of parental objections. “I don’t think any of us deny that most of these general practices and concepts come from Buddhism,” says Semple. “But we’re not teaching Buddhism. We’re teaching kids how to pay attention.” Jennings believes these programs are “100% secular” and hopes they’ll be widely implemented.

“The Mindful Classroom” by Mandy Oaklander in *Time Magazine*, October 3, 2016 (Vol. 188, #13, p. 44-47), no e-link available. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 466.

Reading Public Schools Happenings

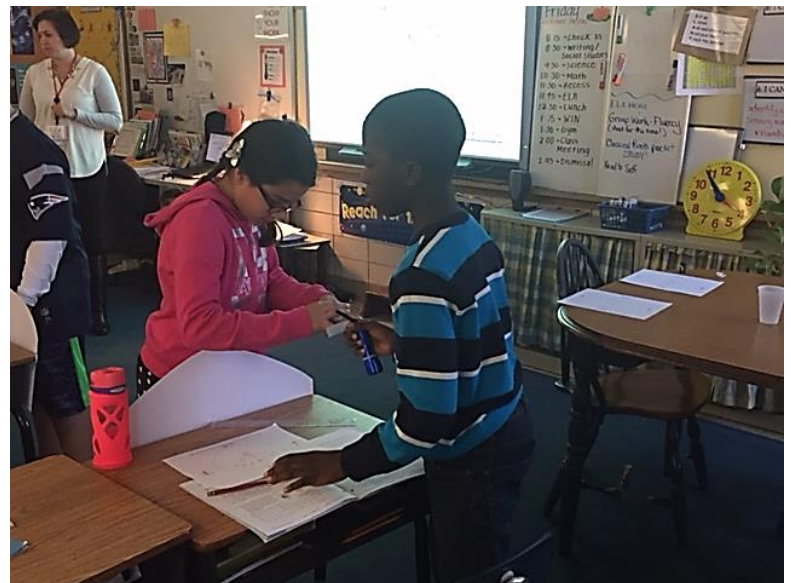
RMHS Field Hockey Team’s Quest To “Stick in to Cancer”

Recently, the RMHS Field Hockey Team participated in a “Stick it to Cancer” game to raise funds to support breast cancer research. Special thanks to the team for making this a priority. Below is picture of the team.



Killam Students Learn About Shadows

This past week, Killam students in JoEllen McGinnity’s Grade 5 Science Class were investigating the effect the time of day has on shadows. Below are several photos from this Know Atom Science activity.



Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Killam paraeducator **Erline Trites** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Joshua Eaton teacher Reading Tutor **Stacy Kress** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Joshua Eaton teacher **Susie Libby** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Killam Reading Tutor **Carol Galluzzo-Hamilton** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Jane Finger, Team Chairperson, RMHS
 - ✓ Joanne Russo, Cafeteria Sub, District
 - ✓ Darkling Rameau, Cafeteria Sub, District
 - ✓ Jennifer Murphy, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Steven Guerrette, Custodian Sub, District
 - ✓ Sheila Krekorian Tully, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Michael Stackhouse, Substitute, District
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Special Education Program Paraeducator, 56 hours biweekly Birch Meadow Elementary School
<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=174>

Blazing Trails....

- **The Buzz: October is Connected Educator Month**
October is **Connected Educator Month**, which means lots of organizations and individuals have resources to share about additional ways to thoughtfully integrate technology into your classroom or use it to connect with peers or communicate with parents. **Connected Educators** offers a full **calendar** of events; **Massachusetts Computer Using Educators** has their **fall conference** coming up in Foxborough on Oct. 19 and 20; and ESE's **Office of Digital Learning** offers a variety of resources, including a recent blog post **on blended learning**. In addition, two members of ESE's Teacher Advisory Cabinet recently published pieces about ways they use technology: In Harvard Graduate School of Education's Usable Knowledge blog, Jessica Lander writes about how an app lets her **text parents in their own language** to keep them up to date with what's happening the classroom, and in SmartBrief, Maureen Devlin writes how **interacting with other educators through online networks** increased her confidence in trying new ideas and strengthened her teaching.

On a related note, district teams are invited to the free **Boston Future Ready Summit** on Nov. 14-15 at the Education Development Center, 43 Foundry Ave, Waltham. Future Ready Schools, an organization supported by the U.S. Department of Education and the Alliance for Excellent Education, assists districts implement digital learning strategies to help personalize education. **Registration** is open online.

If you have other resources to share related to Connected Educator Month, tweet them and include the #Top3fromESE hashtag!

- **Teacher Reflection: Connecting Students to the Globe**

Jeffrey Shea, a social studies teacher at Belmont High School and the 2015 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, has used a variety of projects to build on his students' interest in addressing global challenges. Here's one example:

I start every school year excited about the prospect of working toward my lifelong goal of providing all students with global competencies. They need these more than ever in the increasingly interconnected world in which we live. The endlessly curious students I teach are the reason for my excitement, as it is fun to see them trying to figure out how they will make a difference in the world.

Tapping into student eagerness to explore global problems, I connect the curriculum in the Global Leadership elective I teach to the United Nations' **Sustainable Development Goals**. These 17 goals, which the UN put forth a year ago, can be connected to any discipline and to any age group. The goals range from ending poverty to creating sustainable cities. Students love to debate the degree to which achieving these goals is realistic, to explain how certain goals relate to other goals, and to consider how global issues like gender inequality relate to their own lives.

To foster student creativity and problem-solving, I decided to host a social business un-conference in January 2016 for all 55 students in my Global Leadership classes. Via Skype, they heard from Kimberly Jung, an Afghan war veteran and co-founder and CEO of Rumi Spice, a Chicago-based company run by veterans that sells saffron directly from Afghan farmers to order to spur economic development in that country. Afterward, students proposed their own ideas for social businesses before finally forming social business teams. Over the next two weeks, they wrote business plans, coming up with innovative solutions to local and global problems alike. The students' ideas included concepts like Liberation Station, a restaurant that would be located at UMass Boston and would hire former criminals and provide them with an education. Students had to identify a problem to solve, develop a budget, and create a marketing plan and social media campaign. It was inspiring to see what they were able to accomplish in such a short amount of time, and it left me thinking that I must seek even more opportunities to make learning more student-centered.

I always love hearing about the innovative ways that other teachers are breaking down traditional classroom walls and engaging students in real-world learning. Please join the conversation and share your ideas on Twitter using the hashtag #Top3fromESE!

- **Engagement Strategies for Students and Teachers**

Routines are important, but sometimes our routines turn into ruts.

Jonathan Eckert describes how **changing wait time, altering discussion protocols, and returning to our teaching roots** can help energize the classroom for kids and teachers themselves. Eckert says, "Never lose your sense of humor -- it will make you less boring and is probably essential to maintaining your sanity," (**Eckert, Edutopia**).

"Bottle Flipping Becomes the Rage with Middle Schoolers." It's not hard these days to find kids flipping bottles: at bus stops, at middle-school lunchroom tables, inside Little League dugouts, even on national television. At one point during last week's Patriots broadcast, a camera cut to some kids in the Gillette Stadium stands, absent-mindedly bottle flipping as the home team rolled to victory. For kids, the draw is simple. Even in an age of digital distractions, this diversion is quick, it's portable, and while the science behind it is actually fairly elaborate - water, angular momentum, and gravity paving the way for a soft landing - it requires no training. [Read More](#)

"'Push In' Model Helps Turn Around Massachusetts Elementary School." The AP reports that Hyannis West Elementary in Hyannis, Massachusetts has a history of trailing the district in standardized test scores due to the fact that "nearly half the children in the K-3 school are considered English language learners, and 85 percent of the children are on a free or reduced school meal plan." But Hyannis West Principal Kathi Amato has helped implement "a 'push-in' model that sends specialists, including Title 1, special education and English language learner teachers, into the regular classroom to work with students in small groups." The AP says "the school's standardized test scores on PARCC examinations in the spring of 2016 resulted in 62 percent of third-graders meeting or exceeding expectations in math." The AP explains that "it was a 13 percent jump over the year before, a leap that was even more significant in English language arts, where the percentage of students who scored at the top two levels climbed 21 percent to 59 percent." [Read More](#)

"Scary clown rumors, threats feed hysteria, leading to school lockdowns, arrests." There have been hundreds of clown frights that have erupted this week at colleges, high schools and grade schools across the country, forcing learning institutions to respond seriously to a growing national hysteria that many had previously regarded as a laughing matter. Many of the clown posts on social media have included threatening language that specifically targets individual schools. [Read More](#)

"Teaching Theme Through Art." Theme is a broad concept that proves difficult to teach at all grade levels. ASCD Emerging Leader Amanda Koonlaba shares an arts-integrated lesson for teachers to add to their theme-teaching arsenal. She shares how she used self-portraits and a Frida Kahlo study to teach theme to fifth-graders in her visual arts classroom. The lesson was developed while she participated in Harvard University's Making Thinking Visible online professional development course. [Read More](#)

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

Have a Great Week!