



Pathways

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

October 23, 2016

Volume 3, Number 8

Upcoming Dates

- October 24 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- October 25 - (7:00 p.m.) SEPAC hosts "Anxiety & School Performance" in the RMHS Library Media Center
- October 26 – (after school) Secondary Building Meetings; (4:00 p.m.) Downtown Trick or Treat; (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.) 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
- November 6 – (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama SITZPROBE in the Endslo PAC
- November 7 – 9 – Art for the Sky @ Killam

Moving Forward after the Override Vote

As you probably know by now, the ballot question for a Proposition 2 ½ override did not pass at last Tuesday's town election. On behalf of the students and staff of the Reading Public Schools, I certainly want to thank all the staff, parents, and community members who worked tirelessly during their personal time in an effort to support the schools and to engage in discussions regarding this important town issue.

As we now look ahead, I want to first reassure everyone that the result of Tuesday's election does not have a financial impact on this current school year. We are continuing to work diligently to provide the best education possible for our students and to support our staff with the resources that are available. In preparation for next year's FY18 School Department budget, we will follow the normal budget process over the next several weeks and work closely with administrators, town officials, and School Committee members to determine the financial impact of this vote and how it will affect our schools. The School Committee will review the recommended FY18 budget in January, the Town Manager will receive and review the budget in February, and Town Meeting will vote on a final budget in April. As a team, we will of course do everything we can to optimize available resources and develop a budget that supports the learning and teaching in our schools and that continues to prioritize the achievement and development of all students.

Throughout this process, we will keep you informed with timely information. I will use this Newsletter and the [Pathways Blog](#) as the primary communication tool to disseminate district information. In the near future, I will also be communicating *Superintendent's Office Hours* during which staff and/or community members can come and discuss questions or concerns about our school district. If you hear or read information from other sources and you have questions or need clarification, please always feel free to contact me, your school principal, or central office administrators. It is important that the information we communicate is timely and accurate, and we will do everything possible to keep lines of communication open.

I realize that many staff and parents in our district are very disappointed by Tuesday's outcome, and are concerned that our current district goals and student outcomes will be impacted by the failed override. I also realize, however, that we can persevere in our unfailing commitment to

- November 8 – PreK – 12 Inservice Day – No School; (7:00 am – 8:00 p.m.) Presidential Election in the Hawkes Field House
- November 11 – Veterans Day – No School/Offices Closed; (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Presents "The Wedding Singer in the Endslo PAC
- November 12 - (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Presents "The Wedding Singer in the Endslo PAC

provide the best possible education for our students, regardless of the challenges. I want to thank the community members who have already contacted our schools in the last few days to offer support and gratitude to our staff and administrators. I know the encouragement is so appreciated. The dedication of our entire staff is amazing, and I am inspired by our staff's tireless commitment to children that can be witnessed on a daily basis at every school.

If you have any questions, comments, or thoughts, please do not hesitate to contact me. And most importantly, thank you all for what you do every day for the children of the Reading Public Schools.

John Doherty

Superintendent of Schools

RMHS Senior Laura Richards Speaks to Joshua Eaton Students About the Life of Joshua Eaton

On Thursday, RMHS Senior Laura Richards presented to Joshua Eaton students at a school wide assembly about the life of Sergeant Joshua Eaton. For more than a year and a half, Laura has been working on her Gold Scout Gold Award project which has culminated in a published historical fiction children's book on the life of Sergeant Joshua Eaton, who at age twenty was only Reading man to die in the American Revolutionary War. RMHS Social Studies Teacher Kara Gleason served as the project advisor for Laura's work.

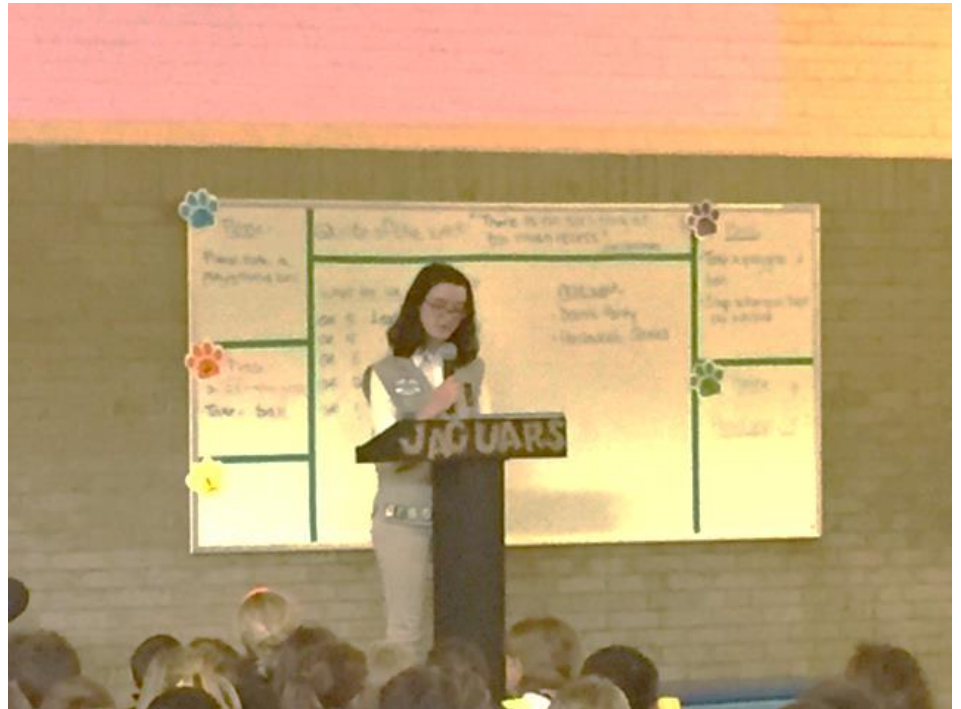


RMHS Senior Laura Richards and her Project Advisor Kara Gleason

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to boys & girls soccer, boys cross country, football, volleyball, and golf for wins this week.
- Congratulations to RMHS Seniors Patrick Laskey and Laura Richards who are this week's High Five.
- Congratulations to Laura Richards (a senior at RMHS) has been working on her Gold Scout Gold Award project which has culminated in a published historical fiction children's book on the life of Sergeant Joshua Eaton, who at age twenty was only Reading man to die in the American Revolutionary War.
- Kudos and thanks to RMHS teacher Kara Gleason for acting as Ms. Richard's advisor on her project.

Laura's work was based on a clear need to educate the community about the importance of the life of Joshua Eaton and why the school is named after him. This year, thanks to Laura's work, Joshua Eaton was recognized at this year's Town Memorial Day. To prepare for writing her book, Laura conducted extensive research on Eaton including use of Reading resources, visits to Lexington and Concord and Saratoga, NY, extensive consultation with Everett Blodgett, town historian, research at the Massachusetts Historical Society and State Archives, and use of many primary and secondary research sources. She received a historical preservation grant from the Town of Reading to help fund the publication of a high-quality, large, color, glossy edition of her book.



Laura Richards Speaks To Joshua Eaton Students at the Assembly

At the assembly on Thursday, Laura and Principal Eric Sprung led the all school assembly which featured a brief overview of her project work and a reading of selections from the book. Copies of her book will be distributed to the school and the public library. Laura continues to work to find a publisher for "mass market" copies of her book so as to get a classroom set and copies for the general public.

Congratulations to Laura on this important project and special thanks to Kara Gleason for her work as an advisor on the project.

Should Teachers Remain Neutral on Hot Political and Social Issues?

In this article in *AMLE Magazine*, author/consultant Rick Wormeli bemoans the "divisive, no-compromise rhetoric among political parties, the distrust among people of color and police officers, and the ugly, online vitriol against others spewed daily on social media...

Quote of the Week....



Problems are only opportunities in work clothes.

-Henry J. Kaiser

Each week's news reconfirms our worst fears that we're not the society we thought we were." Wormeli asks, "How do we help students find hope for themselves in such a world? We need to build compassionate character, civil discourse, respect for diverse opinions, and courageous action in students as never before."

Issues like evolution, climate change, racism, LGBTQ, and the current presidential campaign are tricky territory for teachers. It's tempting to share our views – "Being purely neutral on racism, sexism, religious persecution, bullying, and the leadership of our country comes across as inert and impotent, and we are neither," says Wormeli. But educators are authority figures and schooling is compulsory, so parents at all points on the political spectrum are right be concerned about undue influence on their children – especially in the middle grades, when young people often experiment with different values, beliefs, and personas. "Sometimes middle-level students try to one-up themselves in small groups with racially, sexist, or culturally insensitive put-downs," says Wormeli. "Though they would be horrified to learn the level of hurt these jokes create in their subjects of derision, they don't perceive it as harmful enough to stop telling the jokes or hanging out with these particular friends. Correcting what's wrong and standing up for what's right are still fragile acts."

The teacher's or administrator's dilemma is when to impose our own philosophy and values. If a student makes a strident comment about Muslims or the Iraq war, asks Wormeli, "Do we jump in and declare what is right and wrong? Do we allow students to know our political, religious, cultural stance? Do we remain neutral in all things because we are guiding sages and/or public employees? Or, do we have an obligation to demonstrate for students how to have a strong opinion and act upon it constructively yet remain civil with cynics of that philosophy?... How do we demonstrate for students how to believe in something politically, religiously, and culturally, yet also respect students and their families whose beliefs are diametrically different from our own?"

Here's one approach suggested by Minnesota middle-school educator Kim Campbell when confronted by a racist comment in class: "Wow, that comment does not feel kind to me. Can you help me better understand what you meant or were thinking?" Reflecting on the current political scene, Campbell says: "I work very hard at not bringing my bias into the conversation... Let's just say it has never been tested like it has been with this election. When you have a diverse classroom, as I do, it is important that I try as hard as I can to hear both sides of whatever issue we are discussing."

Disney Tweet of the Week



Show a friend how much you care.

—Pooh

Campbell has tried to create an environment in which students feel safe sharing what they are really thinking. One technique is to have students respond anonymously to prompts; then the teacher reads some of them aloud so students hear multiple perspectives, and the class moves into a Socratic discussion. It's also a good idea to draw Venn diagrams or pro/con charts and get students writing short essays from a point of view other than their own. A starting point might be, "I hear what you are saying, but you realize not everyone agrees with you. Let's explore the counter-arguments to your position." The key is disagreeing in a civil way, with the teacher insisting on fairness, respect, and kindness.

Another key objective is developing students' consumer savvy about the media. Wormeli quotes teacher/author Debbie Silver: "It's possible to teach about biased reporting, inaccurate statistics, and fact-checking without taking a stand on issues, and we should definitely do that. Our job is not to teach kids what to think but rather how to think!" Students also need to understand where opinions come from – family, media, friends, hearsay, personal knowledge, websites, speeches, tweets, YouTube, talk shows, news outlets, magazines – and how to respond when things get heated. Such discussions are teachable moments not only for discussion skills and critical thinking but also historical and civics content. A class might agree that certain words will not be used: *Racist*, *stupid*, *hater*. A helpful comment is, "I'm just trying to understand your thinking..." Wormeli recommends www.iCivics.org as "the number one place to start with great middle-level resources and online role-playing games that teach the kind of healthy, informed conversations we want to have in school."

While understanding the importance of respecting diverse points of view, Wormeli believes that "young adolescents are desperate for models on how to stand up to unfairness, bullying, racism, violence, and religious intolerance. They also want clarity on how to disagree with friends, family, and strangers with civility instead of violence. They want to participate successfully in their local communities, yet sometimes the only models of doing so are parents yelling at their sports coaches, personal attacks among adults at school board meetings, or the barrage of YouTube clips of media pundits and politicians talking over each other... Young adolescents are looking to their parents, teachers, and coaches for evidence that the world is fair and people are compassionate." Often schools are left to answer this plea, sometimes in explicit discussion of the issues, sometimes through literature that shines a light on the human drama.

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>

"Politics, Racism, Religion, Classism, Sexual Orientation: Do Teachers Remain Neutral or Share Their Beliefs with Students?" by Rick Wormeli in *AMLE Magazine*, October 2016 (Vol. 4, #3, p. 37-41), <http://bit.ly/2dvW4Fo>; Wormeli can be reached at rwormeli@cox.net. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 657.

Embracing Failure: Building a Growth Mindset Through the Arts

By Edutopia Magazine

At New Mexico School for the Arts (NMSA) -- a dual arts and academic curriculum -- failure is taught as an important part of the journey toward success. Understanding that mistakes are indicators for areas of growth, freshmen learn to give and receive feedback. By senior year, students welcome tough, critical feedback -- and even insist on it.

When Natesa, a senior at NMSA, arrived as a freshman, she had a hard time pushing herself in the areas that were difficult for her to master: choreography and getting into character. "Now, I feel like I can channel my inner self and my inner fierceness when I need it, and even my inner beauty," reflects Natesa. "I became more willing to take risks, and I think that taking risks is a big part of who you want to become, and who you're choosing to be."

Students audition to get into an NMSA program specific to their craft -- dance, theater, music, or visual arts. Each day, they have their academic classes from 9AM to 2PM, and after lunch, they have their art classes until 4:45PM.

"Students have to take risks," says Cristina Gonzalez, the former chair of NMSA's visual arts department. "That's something that is so unique to learning in the arts. Great art comes from risk taking, from being willing to fail. Maybe it will work. Maybe I'll discover something about myself, something about my capacity that I wasn't even aware of, and that's so exciting for a student."

If you want to help your students develop a **growth mindset** -- the belief that they can improve their abilities through effort -- helping them become more comfortable with risk-taking and modeling critical feedback through critique journals are two of NMSA's strategies that you can adapt to your own practice.

How It's Done

Teach Your Students That It's OK to Make Mistakes

Making mistakes, not knowing the answer -- this is part of the artistic process. "You're going to make bad paintings," says Gonzalez. "You're going to make bad photographs. You're going to fumble your way through it, and in fact, that's how you learn. You need to make those mistakes."

The idea that you learn from your mistakes is embedded into their entire arts curriculum. Teacher, expert, and peer critiques are innate to the arts process. Immediate feedback is part of the norm. You might pause your piano student in mid-rehearsal to say, "When you get here, make sure you get a really clean pedal on the B flat, but that was great. That's the kind of energy you want." In

dance class, you might tell your students how they need to rotate their legs differently when taking their demi-plié in first position.

When ninth-grade theater students rehearse their *Working in Silence* scenes, they perform in front of their peers and faculty, receive feedback from their teachers, and then re-perform the scene to immediately incorporate their feedback.

"Getting to do the scenes a couple different times really helps because then we get to take the feedback and we get to apply it, and that is the whole learning process," says Kara, a ninth-grade theater student. "If you fail, then you can do it again, and you could make big leaps and bounds and learn from that."

Related Article: [Teaching Students to Embrace Mistakes](#)

Teach Your Students to Take Risks

You can connect risk taking -- and helping your students build comfort around it -- to their interests outside of school. Gonzalez has students in her class who enjoy skateboarding. She draws connections to risk taking by referencing their experience with trying a new trick. "A skateboarder knows what it feels like to try a new trick, how scary it is that they actually might fall," she says. "They could get hurt, and all their buddies are watching. We ask them to do that every day in the art studio."

With any art form, students can fall into a pattern of doing what they're comfortable with or what they're good at doing without risking something new because they don't want to make a mistake. "It's our job as teachers to go, 'Do that new new trick. Go to the precipice,'" explains Gonzalez. By encouraging your students, you're helping them to explore their craft and expand their ability -- whether they execute a new technique right out of the gate or over time with feedback and practice. Either way, they see that taking risks pays off.

"Failure isn't the end of the road," explains Cindy Montoya, NMSA's principal. "You learn from failure. It gives you more information on how to do something better. It's fodder for success. It's a cycle of either learning about yourself, the content, or your art form."

Teach Your Students to Appreciate Feedback

Once your students go through the process of applying constructive feedback to improve their work -- and once they create something beautiful as a result -- they'll see its value. They'll learn to appreciate and even want feedback. "Being able to accept critique and not feel hurt by it is an important skill for us to learn," says Serena, a 10th-grade student. "We're taking those critiques and learning how to put them to use."

Creating something, receiving feedback, and revising their work is a natural part of the artistic process that your students can apply toward their academic classes. "The strengths and skills that these artists come to us with are hard work and a willingness to keep trying," says Geron Spray, an English and history teacher. "They have perseverance, they take constructive criticism well, and they build on it."

It's not uncommon to hear students say, "I'm not good at math," or "I'm bad at writing essays." An arts education helps students to see that they can improve at their craft with effort. They can become better at math. They can become better at writing essays. "They start to see that connection between struggling through the practice, getting feedback, going in for help, and the outcome," says Eric Crites, NMSA's assistant principal.

"It's just so great to watch a student go through that process of struggle, have a teacher believe in them, and then at the end, they have a result that they can be proud of," adds Gonzalez.

Teach Your Students How to Provide Critical Feedback

Model Critical Feedback Through Critique Journals

Give your students journals to write down the feedback they receive from you. It's a way for them to store immediate feedback from each day to review and apply later, and it also allows you to model giving constructive criticism. When providing feedback to your students, share both their successes and areas for improvement, and be specific.

"Feedback is fundamental to growing oneself as an artist," says Adam McKinney, the chair of NMSA's dance department. "I try to model what it means to provide critical feedback to my dancers." One way that the dance department models critical feedback is through dance journals.

Throughout class, students write their teacher's feedback in their dance journal. For example, says McKinney, a student might write, "'When I'm taking my demi-plié in first position, rotate from the top of my legs so that my knees are going over my first and second toes.' For me, that next level of cognition -- to understand the feedback, realize the importance of the feedback, and then to incorporate that into their bodies -- is essential as young artists."

Give Your Students Opportunities to Provide Critical Feedback

By giving constructive criticism to their peers, your students will learn to better appreciate receiving feedback and they'll improve their skills to self-assess their own work. "Having young artists provide critical feedback to each other provides a deeper understanding and another layer of what it means to get better as an artist," says McKinney. "That critical feedback is essential to improving one's art."

Related Article: [The Power of Critique and Redrafting](#)

NMSA develops students' abilities to assess their own and others' work through showing them examples of mastery, equipping them with technical vocabulary, and providing them with opportunities to practice peer critique through fishbowl discussions, Visual Thinking Strategies, and Post-it note critiques ([See Mastering Self-Assessment: Independent Learning Through the Arts](#)).

"Our students have learned that they can receive feedback -- even negative feedback," says Crites, "make a correction, and then come up with something amazing."

"We develop this idea of self-reflection very early in the department," adds McKinney. "Why are you a dancer? Why is that important to the world? I know that the power of art saves lives. I have several young people in the department -- and who have graduated -- who communicate that art has saved their lives, and it certainly saved my own."



Presents:

Anxiety and School Performance

October 25th @ 7PM

RMHS Library Media Center

For more information email sepacreading@gmail.com

Anxiety that students experience not only challenges academic progress, but also significantly affects behavior. This workshop will review how anxiety affects student behavior and performance, and strategies that can be employed to help students effectively manage the demands of school and home.

This presentation is brought to
you by Middlesex Partnership Youth

Middlesex Partnerships for Youth, Inc. is a non-profit 501.c(3) organization which closely partners with the Middlesex District Attorney's Office.

Reading Public Schools Happenings

Wood End Guest Readers

Recently, members of the Reading and Cambridge Police Departments spent some time at Wood End Elementary School to read to students and to discuss how to be a community helper and stay safe.



Birch Meadow, Killam, and Wood End Students Attend Camp Bournedale

Recently, Grade 5 students from Birch Meadow, Killam, and Wood End attended Camp Bournedale in Plymouth, MA where they experienced nature, environmental, and team building activities. Below are some pictures from the overnight trip.



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



RMHS High Five Club Students for This Week

Congratulations to RMHS Seniors Laura Richards and Patrick Laskey who are this week's High Five students. Their stories are below.



**LAURA
RICHARDS**
Class of '17

RECOGNIZED FOR: Laura Richards is recognized for outstanding contributions to RMHS and the Reading community. Here at school, Laura is an engaged and invested student who performs well across an array of challenging courses in our curriculum. Additionally, she is a member of the RMHS book club, and she plays trumpet in our marching band and jazz band. Just yesterday, Laura celebrated the completion of her Girl Scout Gold Award project, an ambitious undertaking that stands as a truly remarkable work of scholarship. Starting in 2015, Laura began researching the life of Joshua Eaton, the only soldier from Reading to die during the Revolutionary War and, of course, the man for whom one of our elementary schools is named. Her goal was to write a book that would educate current and future Reading residents about the man behind the name. After extensive reading, interviews, consultations with adult advisors, travels to historic sites, and multiple drafts, Laura completed her book: *Sergeant Joshua Eaton, Jr.* She presented her book at a special assembly for students at the Joshua Eaton School yesterday afternoon. Several hundred students and community members gathered to learn about Joshua Eaton and the work that went into producing this remarkable record of our town's history. At this time, Laura is undecided about her exact plans for next year, but she looks forward to attending college and pursuing a degree in the liberal arts.

Reading Memorial High School
HIGH FIVE CLUB



**PATRICK
LASKEY**
Class of '17

RECOGNIZED FOR: Patrick Laskey is a dedicated and loyal member of the RMHS class of 2017. In so many ways, Patrick is an outstanding model of the RMHS core values of respect, responsibility, and perseverance. Patrick is a valued and essential member of our football, basketball, and baseball programs; his commitment to the daily operation of these programs is a big part of what has made all of them very successful. Some of Patrick's best high school memories have come from his time in the athletic program, particularly being a part of the football team that made the state championship game at Gillette Stadium in his junior year. Beyond his contributions to the athletic department, Patrick is also a positive contributor to the school and community. In school, he is quick to offer a friendly or kind word to a classmate or teacher. Patrick is grateful to all of his teachers and friends, and cites Mr. Blanchard's History 11 class as the best class he's taken at RMHS. Out of school, Patrick has been a volunteer coach in the Special Olympics flag football program for several years, and he volunteered his time to help Mrs. O'Rourke with several projects around the school this past summer. With all he has learned from the classrooms and athletic programs as RMHS, Patrick is looking forward to all that the future holds.

Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Wood End Food Service worker **Karen Breton** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to RMHS Food Service worker **Murial Hall** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Killam teacher **Karen Douglas** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Director of Student Services **Carolyn Wilson** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Patrick Mahoney, Special Education Paraeducator, RMHS
 - ✓ Tracy Lockhart, Substitute, District
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Long-term Substitute Physics Teacher, 1.0FTE Reading Memorial High School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=176>

Long-term Substitute Grade 1 Teacher, 1.0FTE Joshua Eaton Elementary School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=177>

Special Education Learning Center Paraeducator, 60 hours biweekly
Coolidge Middle School
<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=178>

Blazing Trails....

"Education is a Team Sport." In this Connected Principals post, George Couros links education and Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick.

"Education is a team sport. Let's make sure that we each do our part and exceed the expectations of those that we serve. Every detail and job counts." [Read More](#)

"Paul Tough: The Best Ways to Transform Your Schools." In his follow-up book, *Helping Children Succeed*, the author discusses how to welcome children into school and put them in charge of their learning in this Scholastic Administrator article. [Read More](#)

It is all about relationships when it comes to education. This is probably something that you have heard a million times, but have you really stopped to think about the true effect relationships have on your students? In this Inservice post, ASCD Emerging Leader Rachael George shares tips to help you start building a solid foundation when it comes to relationships with your students. [Read More](#)

"Now Available: Videos & Photos of TEDxBoston 2016." What an impressive group of speakers there was at TEDxBoston 2016. Whether you watched it online during the livestream or were in the audience, you got a deeper appreciation of *How Far We've Come, How Far We Have To Go* with artificial intelligence and machine learning. Couldn't make it? Videos of all talks are now online at TEDxBoston.org.

"Should Schools Focus More on Student Well-Being?" Sir Anthony Seldon, a university head, mental health campaigner and former head teacher, marked World Mental Health Day with a call for more school data about student well-being. He suggested league tables, which list information about schools, should include measures of well-being. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!