



Pathways

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

October 2, 2016

Volume 3, Number 5

Upcoming Dates

- October 2 – Rosh Hashanah begins at Sundown
- October 4 – Rosh Hashanah ends at Sundown
- October 5 – Walk/Bike to School Day
- October 7 – (7:00 p.m.) Football vs. Belmont @ RMHS
- October 10 – Columbus Day – No School, Offices Closed
- October 11 – Yom Kippur begins at Sundown
- October 12 – Yom Kippur ends at Sundown; (after school) Secondary Building Meetings; (2:45 p.m.) Secondary SpEd Learning Ctr. Teachers & Curriculum Leaders Meetings
- October 13 – (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings; (2:45 p.m.) RISE/Elementary SpEd Learning Ctr. Teachers & Curriculum Leaders Meetings
- October 15 – (8:00 a.m.) RMHS – PSAT Testing; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Choral Fundraiser – Karaoke Night in the RMHS Cafeteria
- 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 19 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release Day; (after school) District PLC Meetings

Reminder: Accommodations for Students who are Observing Religious Holidays

There are many cultures and religions that celebrate holidays during the school year. The major non-national religious holidays, as defined in School Committee Policy, IMDA, are as follows:

Rosh Hashanah-Begins at sundown on **Sunday, October 2nd** and continues until sundown on **Tuesday, October 4th**.

Yom Kippur-Begins at sundown on **Tuesday, October 11th** and continues until sundown on **Wednesday, October 12th**.

Good Friday-Is observed on **Friday, April 14th**.

First Day of Passover-Begins at Sundown on **Monday, April 10th** and continues on **April 11th**. Passover ends on **Tuesday, April 18th**.

It is important to note that even though a holiday may end at sundown, students and families may still be gathering as part of the observance and will not be available to attend events and complete assignments.

Please note that this year, school will be in session on the religious holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Good Friday.

State and federal laws require schools to make reasonable accommodation to the religious needs of students in observance of holy days. With respect to students, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151C, section 2B reads in relevant part as follows:

"Any student in an educational or vocational training institution...who is unable, because of his religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study or work requirement on a particular day shall be excused from any such examination or study or work requirement, and shall be provided with an opportunity to make up such examination, study or work requirement which he may have missed because of such absence on any particular day....No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student because of his availing himself of the provisions of this section."

In addition, in 2014, the Reading School Committee approved Policy IMDA, *Accommodations for Religious and Ethic Observances*. The full

- 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

policy can be found at this [link](#). The main points of this policy are as follows:

- All students are entitled to individual accommodations which allow them to participate in their family religious or ethnic observances without detriment to their education or grades, including;
 - Extensions of due dates on assigned work (at a minimum the extension should be the number of days absent plus one additional day)
 - Opportunities to make up material missed in class, and
 - Reasonable accommodations as may be appropriate.
- Teachers, coaches, and advisors shall refrain from teaching difficult to make-up material, scheduling exam preparation, tests, quizzes, homework, as well as, scheduling other one-time events (field trips, athletic events, music performances, theatre plays and productions, auditions, and back to school functions), on major non-national religious holidays.
- Long-term and group assignments will not be due the day of or the day after a major non-national religious holiday.
- Any materials needed for make-up such as movies or media, should be easily and flexibly accessible within a reasonably determined time frame.
- The policy should not prevent coaches and advisors from holding practices or rehearsals for these events on school days during major non-national religious holidays. However, students whose conscientious observance of a religious or ethnic holiday conflicts with participating in a practice or rehearsal will not be required to participate nor penalized for their non-participation.
- Administrators, teachers, coaches, booster groups, PTOs and advisors shall refrain from scheduling parent, student or school community events on major non-national religious holidays.

Please note there will be several students who will be celebrating religious holidays in October and will not be able to prepare for any tests, quizzes, homework assignments or other assessments on those days or the following day. These students may require extensions of due dates on assigned work, opportunities to make up material missed in class, and reasonable accommodations.

As you are planning your curriculum and assessments, please be aware of these holidays and other holidays in the calendar that may affect some students. We may not always be aware of families who practice different religions. For example, an interfaith family who is both Christian and Jewish may attend both temple for services during the Jewish holidays and church for Christmas services. To that end, please provide accommodations for those students who are absent for religious reasons to make up any missed work. Also, it is recommended that you refrain from giving tests or making due dates

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to field hockey, boys soccer, swimming, golf, and volleyball for wins this week.
- Congratulations to RMHS Seniors Erin Hamlin and Niles Singer who are this week's High Five.
- Congratulations to Assistant Principal for Athletics Tom Zaya and the high school community for being recognized by the MIAA for magnanimous support by hosting quality MIAA tournaments.
- Congratulations to Superintendent John Doherty as the recipient of the Dr. Patrick A. Schettini, Jr. Distinguished Service Award from the Middlesex Partnership for Youth, Inc.
- To the RMHS Marching Band, under the direction of Joseph Mulligan, and the RMHS Color Guard for taking home the first place trophy, along with best music, best percussion, and best color guard at the NESBA show in North Andover on Saturday night.
- To Parker and Coolidge Music Teachers Cheryl Webster and Andrew Norton for their hard work in making Band Day a success, in spite of the weather.

for significant papers/projects on or immediately after major religious holidays.

I have provided four links for you to help you with advanced planning and description of major religious holidays.

- The link, [Massachusetts legal holidays and major religious holidays](#), provides you with a list of the major holidays through the 2016-2017 school years. This document can help with long range planning.
- <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/index.htm> -An interfaith calendar that provides you with a calendar of the major holidays and definitions of each holiday.
- http://www.shir-tikvah.org/images/uploads/Guide_to_Jewish_Holidays.pdf—A guide to all of the Jewish holidays.
- The Reading Public Schools Calendar with a list of the holidays is located [here](#).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your building principal.

State Release of Student Assessment Data

An Update from the Assistant Superintendent for Learning & Teaching

MCAS and PARCC results released

As you may know, the Massachusetts Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) released results today for last spring's state assessments. This includes Grades 3-8 PARCC results for both English Language Arts and Mathematics, the Science and Technology/Engineering MCAS results for Grades 5/8/10, as well as the high school MCAS results for English Language Arts and Mathematics. District and school accountability data were also released.

The PARCC and MCAS assessment data are assembled in several different tables at the following [link](#). In addition to the achievement levels in each content area, we have also created tables to examine the median Student Growth Percentile and the Composite Performance Index in all applicable areas, as that data also provide us important information. The Student Growth Percentile (SGP) measures how much a student's performance has improved from one year to the next relative to his or her academic peers (other students statewide with similar scores in prior years). The Composite Performance Index (CPI) measures the extent to which groups (districts, schools, and subgroups) are progressing toward full proficiency. When examining the data for student groups, the transitional CPI can be used for comparing *results* across years, and the median SGP can be used for measuring *growth* from one year to the next. (See the attached tables for further explanation of both SGP and CPI.)

Some initial findings

- In Mathematics, 93% of Reading high school students scored *Proficient or higher*, which includes 70% who scored at the *Advanced* level. This year's 2016 median SGP (at 55) also represents the highest median

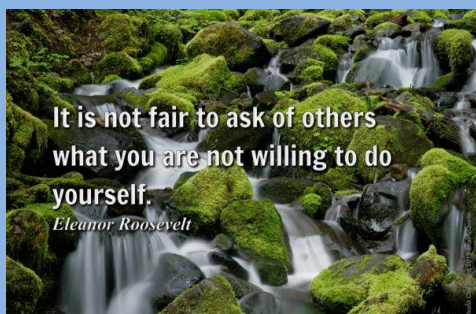
SGP for RMHS math since the state began reporting *Student Growth Percentiles*.

- In English Language Arts, 99% of our high school students scored in the *Proficient/Advanced* range—which includes 64% scoring at the *Advanced* level.
- In Science, 92% of high school students scored in the *Proficient/Advanced* range. The data for the elementary and middle level, however, continue to indicate the need to update our curriculum and instruction at these levels. This work began last year of course, and it continues to be a priority for the district in order to align with the state's new curriculum framework and revised assessment due in 2018.
- Thirty-two (32) of the 36 median Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) in ELA and Mathematics (across all three levels) are in the moderate or high growth range (with 13 of those in the *high* growth range).
- Reading students showed an overall improvement in twenty-nine (29) of the forty-four (44) PARCC assessments and five (5) out of ten (10) MCAS assessments.
- Fifteen (15) of the 30 Composite Performance Indexes (CPI) in ELA and Math for the elementary schools represent an improvement over last year.
- The CPI for the 8th grade Algebra I test is *100* again this year, meaning that *all* students in 8th grade Algebra I either met or exceeded expectations.
- According to DESE accountability ratings, RMHS moved from Level 2 to Level 1 this year. Joshua Eaton Elementary remains classified as Level 3, and all other schools are classified as Level 2. (See the Accountability Data table below for more information.)
- As the DESE Level 3 classification indicates a “focus” on the high needs subgroup, we are especially examining the data for this group of students. The “high needs” Cumulative Progress and Performance Index (PPI) ratings for Eaton indicate an increase from a 36 PPI in 2014, to a 56 PPI in 2015, and a 61 PPI in 2016. The district PPI index has also increased from 44 in 2014 to 57 in 2016. There is still progress to be made, however, in this area.

We are continuing to review all the information that has been released; and we also, of course, continue to improve the curriculum, instruction, and assessment in *all* content areas and grade levels. In upcoming weeks, the district, school, and student results will be used to identify our current strengths and weaknesses, review curriculum and instructional alignment, and identify appropriate interventions for students where applicable. We will also utilize released assessment items—including test questions, scoring rubrics, and examples of scored student responses—to inform our practice. The DESE has announced that *individual student* reports will be shipped to the districts this week, and so parents/guardians can expect to receive those reports in the beginning of October. An overview presentation of the district assessment data will be given for the School Committee later this fall, and each school will also be doing its own school-level presentation in order to more fully discuss and identify each school's individual progress.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact your school Principal or the district administration offices.

Quote of the Week....



It is not fair to ask of others what you are not willing to do yourself.

– Eleanor Roosevelt

Special Education Update

By: Carolyn Wilson, Director of Student Services

During the 2015-2016 School Year the special education program teachers met in vertical PLCs throughout the year. Last year's work focused on looking at the programs and developing entrance and exit criteria, program descriptions and information on the methodology and services provided in each program. This information will be put on the new Student Services website over the next few months. One of the important changes that came of this work are the program name changes. Based on the feedback from Walker the concerns are that as a District we refer to students by the program names versus based on the type of learner or student they are. By shifting to new program names I am hopeful that we can begin to focus on the specialized programming that occurs in each of these programs. These PLC groups are continuing to work this year and will be shifting to discussions of methodology, student progress, curriculum mapping and data review. It is exciting to see the progress they are making in examining practice to best serve the students in Reading.

New Program Names:

| New Program Name | Former Name | Location |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Compass | DLC2, ILP2, Compass | Wood End, Birch Meadow, Coolidge, RMHS |
| Connections | DLC1 | Birch Meadow, Coolidge, RMHS |
| Crossroads | ILP1 | Wood End, Coolidge, RMHS |
| Bridge | LLD | Joshua Eaton, Parker, RMHS |
| Therapeutic Support Program (TSP) | SSP/TSP | Killam, Coolidge, RMHS |

Harnessing Adolescent Rebelliousness

"The brains of adolescents are notoriously more receptive to short-term rewards and peer approval," says Amanda Ripley in this *New York Times* article, "which can lead to risky behavior." But young people are also very attuned to autonomy and social justice. "There are two adolescent imperatives," says Rob Riordan of High Tech High in California: "To resist authority and to contribute to community." Might it be possible to take advantage of these characteristics to bend teenage rebelliousness toward wholesome ends? A study just published in the

Disney Tweet of the Week



I don't care what anybody says, and I
don't care if no one believes in us,
because I believe.

—Kermit (The Muppets)

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences tested that possibility.

The researchers took 489 Texas middle-school students and had some of them read a typical health class article on eating a diet low in sugar and fat, with colorful pictures of fresh foods. The remaining students read an exposé of food companies reformulating products to make them more addictive and labeling unhealthy foods so they looked healthy. “We cast the executives behind food marketing as controlling adult authority figures,” said Christopher Bryan (University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business) and David Yeager (University of Texas/Austin), “and framed the avoidance of junk food as a way to rebel against their control.”

The next day, in a different setting, students were asked to choose which snacks they wanted in anticipation of a big celebration. Students in the second group were 11 percentage points more likely to forgo at least one unhealthy snack like Oreos, Cheetos, or Doritos and choose fruit, baby carrots, or trail mix. They were also seven percentage points more likely to choose water over Coke, Sprite, or Hi-C. These might seem like small differences, but the researchers say it would translate into losing about a pound of body fat every 6-8 weeks – a public health triumph! Bryan and Yeager plan a follow-up study to see if these healthy choices persist over time.

“What’s really exciting about this study and other work like it is that if you can appeal to kids’ sense of wanting to *not* be duped, you empower them to take a stand,” says Ronald Dahl (University of California/Berkeley). “If they are motivated, you can change their behavior profoundly.” A similar campaign against cigarette smoking showed students piling up 1,200 body bags outside the office of a tobacco company (the approximate number of deaths from smoking every day), with an African-American youth using a megaphone to call out the company and an older white man peering nervously out a window above. It’s estimated that the advertising campaign of which this spot was a part prevented 450,000 teens from starting smoking between 2000 and 2004.

Teenagers seem to be particularly sensitive to “even a whiff of mission,” says Reynolds. “Adolescents have this craziness that we can criticize – or we can tap into,” says Ron Berger of EL Education. “This is a time in their lives when justice matters, more than any other time.” Berger’s schools have worked this notion into the curriculum, spurring students in one Chicago school, for example, to engage in community activism and present their opinions to the mayor.

A big unanswered question is whether the positive behavioral shifts in the experiments will last more than a few hours; after all, almost no obesity prevention programs for adolescents result in long-term weight loss and there is a powerful consumer culture pushing young people in the other direction. The ultimate coup, says Reynolds, would be getting teens to see the food industry’s ads as a “booster shot of indignation, rather than temptation.” Then, says Bryant, “the food industry is paying to undermine their own products.”

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>

“Can Teenage Defiance Be Manipulated for Good?” by Amanda Ripley in *The New York Times*, September 13, 2016, <http://nyti.ms/2cr0T2s>
Reprinted from Marshall Memo 654.

A Message from the Traffic and Safety Officer

In an effort to maximize traffic safety town wide I wanted to keep everyone abreast of the aforementioned traffic safety advisory listed above. First, with the start of the school year, I have yielded many traffic complaints. This is particularly related to school traffic at the onset and outset of each school day. The list has been compiled for the shift officers, however since it is so extensive, some areas may not receive the requested coverage expeditiously. I am hoping that passing the information to the school community will be a positive measure to help drivers modify their own driving behaviors. The list of traffic concerns is pasted below:

- 1) Sunset Rock - Speed
- 2) Sunset Rock - Blocking driveways and blocking traffic circle
- 3) Parker - Parents not paying attention to do not enter signs at head of driveway from Temple Street
- 4) Speed - Birch Meadow Drive coming from Oakland Road
- 5) Haverhill Street - Speed in school zone
- 6) Haverhill Street at Symonds Way - Red light violations
- 7) Fox Run Lane - Improper parking at cul-de-sac
- 8) Shelby and Stuart - Time restricted do not enters
- 9) West, Willow, and Summer - Fail to yield to pedestrians
- 10) Auburn at Beacon - outset of school - Speed and failure to slow for intersection

Additionally, providing coverage for each and every school crossing post has been challenging. This is mostly due to illness and retirements. Currently, the Reading Crossing Guard unit has 19 posts. Most posts are two (1) hour assignments per day and other posts are three (1) hour assignments per day. This results in almost 8000 (1) hour posts per year. Moreover, when additional posts become open, the shift officers are assigned to cover the open posts. On any given day, staffing is appropriate and reasonable, but emergency calls take precedence over all other assignments and sometimes leaving school crossing posts unattended does occur.

The Reading Community has received a Gold Traffic Safety Award from AAA several years in a row, and it is communication and collaborations like these that help us maintain the highest level of safety.

Respectfully,
Traffic and Safety Officer
David V. Savio

Special Education Update

By: Carolyn Wilson, Director of Student Services

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Reading Public Schools Happenings

District PLC Meetings Began This Week

This week, the District PLC Meetings began with 36 groups meeting to set goals, share best practices, and align their work to the state frameworks. Each curriculum group is led by a teacher curriculum leader who works with the

group to drive the agenda for the school year. Below are some pictures from the first meeting.



Elementary Learning Center PLC



PreK-1 Literacy PLC



Grades 2-3 Literacy PLC

RCASA Annual Meeting Held Last Thursday

Last Thursday, the Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse held its Annual Meeting with a report on the Marijuana Ballot question by Senator Jason Lewis and a film screening of the movie, *Breaking Points*. **BREAKING POINTS**, is a short documentary film that raises awareness about the level of stress that high school and college students experience and the unhealthy ways that many of them cope. The film explores behavior that is becoming normalized among students - **abusing prescription (Rx) medicines** not prescribed to them, including Rx stimulants for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This movie will be shown again with a panel discussion on November 30th. Below is a picture of the RCASA Board of Directors and Senator Lewis. Special thanks to RCASA Executive Director Erica McNamara for her leadership on this Board.



RCASA Board of Directors

Contact Us

The Pathways newsletter is published weekly for the Reading Public Schools 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



Senator Jason Lewis Giving Report on Marijuana Ballot Question

Stepping Stones...

- Congratulations to Barrows teacher **Marissa Varey** on the birth of her son Jack Walter on September 16th weighing in at 7 lbs., 8 oz.
- Congratulations to Barrows teacher **Mary McGrath** on the birth of her daughter Maeve Dempsey on September 23rd weighing in at 9 lbs., 4 oz.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Director of Student Services **Carolyn Wilson** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Administrative Assistant **Linda Engelson** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Jesse Malonson, Custodian, Parker
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Guidance Secretary, Reading Memorial High School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=171>

Special Education DLC Paraeducator, 60 hours biweekly Reading Memorial High School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=172>

Blazing Trails....

"Connecting with Families Through Learning Walks." Families may hesitate to reach out to the school, especially if instructional or learning objectives are hard to grasp. One principal in this ASCD Express post removes barriers to school participation by inviting parents and guardians to observational classroom visits, or learning walks. These walks are like scavenger hunts where family members receive a menu of teaching practices to look for in the classroom. [Read More](#)

"Relationships First." Relationships don't just fuel student learning, writes ASCD author and presenter Rick Wormeli, they also invigorate teaching. "We are more willing to invest in students when we feel connected to them," he notes, and that mutuality helps carry teachers during the hard work ahead of them. This issue offers tips for strengthening classroom bonds through structured discussions, writing tasks, parent engagement, and restorative interventions. [Read More](#)

"Building Trust Through Service Tasks." How do you respond to students who seem frustrated, sad, and oppositional, all at the same time? One teacher in this ASCD Express post pauses to listen and look for positive connections, and discovers that small, service-oriented tasks create school connections and feelings of value for even the most disengaged students. [Read More](#)

"Boston Students Use Tech to Operate a Farm." Students at a school in Boston are operating an indoor farm, where they grow and harvest various produce. The farm is operated, in part, using technology to program simulated climate conditions and includes sensors that provide students with real-time data about growing conditions. [Read More](#)

"Lack of Education Harms Children, Countries." The world must ensure that all children receive an education or face the consequences of an uneducated populace, writes Gordon Brown, the United Nations special envoy for global education. Without education, children will be unable to fulfill their potential and will become "easy prey for extremists and terrorist organizations," he writes. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!