

Pathways

A weekly collection of information, thoughts, reflections, and accolades for parents of the **Reading Public Schools**

November 6, 2016

Volume 8, Number 10

Upcoming Dates

- November 6 (6:00 p.m.)
 RMHS Drama SITZPROBE in the Endslow PAC
- November 7 9 Art for the Sky @ Killam
- November 8 PreK 12 Inservice Day - No School; (7:00 am - 8:00 p.m.)
 Presidential Election in the Hawkes Field House
- November 9 (after school) Secondary Building Meetings; (7:00 p.m.) Informational Meeting for Parents of Incoming Kindergarteners @ Killam
- November 10 (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings
- November 11 Veterans Day

 No School/Offices Closed;
 (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama

 Presents "The Wedding

 Singer in the Endslow PAC
- November 12 (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Presents "The Wedding Singer in the Endslow PAC
- November 13 (3:00 p.m.)
 RMHS Drama Presents "The
 Wedding Singer in the
 Endslow PAC
- November 14 (7:30 p.m.)
 Town Meeting in the
 Endslow PAC
- November 16 (after school) Secondary Building Meetings – Collaborative Proposal Time
- November 17 (7:30 p.m.)
 Town Meeting in the Endslow PAC
- November 18 No School for Students – In-Service/Conference Day

Finance Committee votes 1.2 million dollars in cash reserves to help fund FY18 budget
Financial Forum Held on November 2nd

Last Wednesday, the first public step of the FY18 budget process began when the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and Library Board of Trustees met in a Financial Forum. This is the first of two scheduled Financial Forums (the other is in January) where all of the elected Boards meet to review the financial picture of the Town of Reading. This meeting, which is normally held in October, but was delayed pending the results of the override election.

At the Financial Forum, there was a review of the FY16 budget (ended on June 30), an update of the current FY17 budget, the revenue projections for FY18, the accommodated costs (health insurance, special education out of district tuition and transportation, debt, and energy) for FY18, a five year budget forecast, and a discussion about the FY18 budget projections for Town and Schools.

At the meeting, the following decisions were made by the Finance Committee in preparation for the FY18 budget, which will be a difficult budget due to failed override last month.

- 1. Moved .25% of Capital and Debt projects to the operating budget, which added \$250,000 more to the FY18 budget.
- 2. Voted to move up to 2.2 million dollars from cash reserves to help fund the 6 million dollar RMHS litigation settlement. The rest of the funds will come from the project balance (approximately \$800,000), debt, and some possible MSBA reimbursement.
- 3. Voted to use 1.2 million dollars from cash reserves to help fund the FY18 budget.

With these changes, the FY18 budget picture looks like the following:

	FY17	FY18	
Muni Govt OPER	\$20,473,984	\$20,729,908	1.25%
Muni Govt ACCOM	\$ 5,030,125	\$ 5,200,911	3.40%
Muni Govt TOTAL	\$25,504,109	\$25,930,820	1.67%
School OPER	\$36,570,352	\$37,067,981	1.36%
School ACCOM	\$ 4,127,314	\$ 4,333,680	5.00%
School TOTAL	\$40,697,666	\$41,401,661	1.73%

For the school department budget, the revised total is a \$703,995 increase from the current fiscal year or a 1.73% increase. This is approximately \$400,000 more than anticipated, but still well short of the amount needed for a level service budget.

- November 18 & 19 (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Presents "The Wedding Singer in the Endslow PAC
- November 19 (8:30 a.m.)
 Joshua Eaton Football
 Tournament
- November 20 (3:00 p.m.)
 RMHS Drama Presents "The
 Wedding Singer in the
 Endslow PAC
- November 21 (7:30 p.m.)
 Town meeting in the
 Endslow PAC
- November 22 (7:00 p.m.)
 School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- November 23 (9:30 a.m.) RMHS Pepe Rally in Field House; (11:00 a.m.) Early Release for PreK – 12 Students
- November 24 Happy Thanksgiving (10:15 a.m.) Football Game in Stoneham
- November 25 No School for Students & Offices Closed
- November 27 (3:30 p.m.) Annual Tree Lighting on Reading Common
- December 3 (8:00 a.m.)
 SAT Testing RMHS NOT a
 Test Center; (10:00 a.m.) REF
 Festival of Trees @ Parker
 Middle School

The next steps in the process is that the Superintendent will work with Principals, Directors, and Central Office Administrators to begin to develop an FY18 budget. This budget, the Superintendent's Recommended budget, will be presented to the School Committee in January. We will keep you updated as information becomes available.

Budget Parents Needed for FY18 Budget Process

As part of the FY18 budget process, the Reading Public Schools will be seeking parent volunteers to become a budget parent. Budget parents play a key role in the budget process as they develop an understanding of the FY18 budget process and then give timely communication to their school communities.

The specific information regarding budget parents is listed below. We are looking for two budget parents per school. If you are interested in becoming a budget parent, please contact Linda Engelson, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent at linda.engelson@reading.k12.ma.us or 781-944-5800.

Reading Public Schools Budget Parent Information

WHO

Any parent who has children in the Reading Public Schools may become a budget parent. We need two budget parents per school and two parents to represent the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC).

RESPONSIBILITIES

The budget parent responsibilities are as follows:

- Participate in meetings with the Superintendent of Schools and Director of Finance from December-March to learn about the school department budget and the budget process.
- Work with the Superintendent and the Director of Finance to review, critique and give input on the budget and the budget process.
- Understand how the budget process works and be able to explain the budget and the process to other community members.
- Act as a liaison between the school department and their child's school by reporting back to other parents both formally (PTO, School Council and SEPAC meetings) and informally.
- Attend School Committee meetings and other relevant meetings during the budget deliberations in January, February, and March.

WHEN

Meetings will begin in late November/early December and will occur prior to School Committee meetings. The month of January is a busy month with one to two

meetings per week. February and March will have a total of two or three meetings.

The following School Committee meetings in January, February, and March are dedicated to the FY16 budget. The Budget parents will meet at 6:00 p.m. prior to these meetings.

January 9, 12, 19, 23, 25 (Financial Forum), 26 March 15 (Finance Committee Meeting)

Please note that each budget parent does not have to attend every meeting. We would always like at least one representative from each school at each meeting.

Town of Reading Contracts With Interface

Need help finding mental health care?





INTERFACE Referral Service

The **Town of Reading** has contracted with a unique **HELPLINE** service staffed by **licensed clinicians** that can help children, teens, & adults in Reading become connected with **mental health care**. Get provider matches that meets your specific needs, accepts your insurance & has available appointments.

Call 1-888-244-6843 (toll free) • M-F • 9am-5pm

https://interface.williamjames.edu/

The Town of Reading and the Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse (RCASA) has contracted with a unique service staffed by licensed clinicians in Newton, MA that helps children, teens, & adults become connected with providers. Get a provider match that meet your specific needs, accept your insurance & has available appointments. As of 11/1/16, we are now able to offer the INTERFACE REFERRAL SERVICE to anyone in Reading (including Reading Public Schools staff) via the Freedman Center at William James College (formerly the Mass School of Professional Psychology) in Newton. Below is some information regarding the service.

INTERFACE REFERRAL HELPLINE- 888-244-6843 (toll free) or 617-332-3666 x1411 • M-F 9am-5pm • https://interface.williamjames.edu/community/reading

1. What should I use this for? This service is for non-crisis situations but is well suited for students and families that need help accessing quality mental health care. Please note, any student or family of the Reading Public Schools is eligible. For students that commute via METCO or other special programs,

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to boys' & girls' soccer, volleyball, swimming for wins this week.
- Congratulations to RMHS Seniors Corey Di Loreto and Andrea Fialli who are this week's High Five.
- Congratulations to RMHS teacher Angela Tenedios for being recognized as a RMHS High 5 celebrating her retirement.
- Congratulations to the swimming team for capturing the Middlesex League Championship and winning the League meet.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Cheering Squad for capturing the Middlesex League Championship.
- Good luck to swimming, volleyball, football and boys and girls soccer as they head into post season tournaments.
- Congratulations to the **RMHS Marching Band** and Color Guard, under the direction of Joseph Mulligan for receiving a gold medal and coming in 3rd place in their division in the NESBA finals on Sunday. Congratulations to Carter Newell who received the Best Drum Major Award and Thomas Gray who received a NESBA scholarship.
- Congratulations to the RMHS Football Team for winning the Division 1A North Sectional Semi-Finals on Friday night versus Chelmsford, 28-0. Reading will now travel next Friday to play Lincoln Sudbury in in the Sectional Finals.

- they will assist with locating providers near their home or school (based on the family's preference).
- 2. What can I expect when I call the helpline? Refer to the links below for information regarding the helpline.
 - 1. interface-reading-082916-v1
 - 2. what-to-expect-when-you-call-the-interface-helpline
 - 3. https://interface.williamjames.edu/community/reading
- 3. Is there a fee if a family calls the number? NO! The cost of the referral service is fully supported by an RCASA grant and The Reading Hospital Trust Fund. Once a family completes the phone intake, the helpline clinician will be sure to connect the family to a provider that accepts their insurance and the patient is responsible for co-pays and any additional costs. The helpline clinician seeks to offer each family at least 3 matches that serve as a starting point to access mental health care.
- 4. What if a person uses it once and needs it for another issue? People can call multiple times and information is kept on file to help coordinate services.
- 5. What is a person doesn't like the provider matches? The helpline clinician will keep working with a person to find options until they make a better match. The clinicians are also trained to discuss common concerns like accessing care when you have a busy schedule, cost, provider fit, etc.
- 6. What other communities are contracted to use INTERFACE? Below are a list of communities that currently use this service.



For further information, please contact the Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse, Executive Director Erica McNamara at emcnamara@ci.reading.ma.us.

Quote of the Week . . .



Surround yourself with those who bring out the best in you, not the stress in you.

-Unknown

More Than Just Praise: Practical Tools for Growth Mindset

By Erin Walsh for Mind Positive Parenting Blog



"My daughter is working hard and I am proud of her perseverance, but at the end of the day her performance isn't necessarily improving. Do I just keep praising her? This doesn't seem to be working."

These are the words of a parent who attended a talk last week where we talked about nurturing a Growth Mindset in kids. We've written a lot about the **power of praise** and the importance of recognizing effort over natural talent. But what happens when all that hard work doesn't seem to be paying off?

This is a good reminder that growth mindset is about more than just effort. Children need a variety of tools and strategies to succeed, and we need more than praise in our toolkit.

- 1. **Teach your children about their brains.** Don't keep the latest science a secret remind them that their **brains can grow**.
- 2. **Growth mindset isn't just about** *working* hard; it's about *thinking*hard too. This means reflecting on which learning strategies work and which ones don't and being willing to switch strategies and try new things to improve performance. Try asking, "What else can you try?" instead of simply praising hard work that doesn't seem to be paying off. Check out this feedback tool from Mindset Works.
- 3. Critical feedback isn't off limits. Growth mindset doesn't mean that you only offer positive praise, but be careful how you deliver tough feedback. Criticizing your child's character reinforces a fixed mindset (and undermines your connection). Offering feedback about the process reinforces the idea that a different set of choices could lead to a different outcome.
- 4. **Plan your response to, "I can't do this!"** Children say this for all kinds of reasons. This resource from **Edutopia** has some great ideas for how to respond.

Disney Tweet of the Week



Life can be stressful at times, but an optimistic attitude and a carefree disposition can go a long way.

-Pooh

- 5. **Normalize mistakes and struggle**, especially those that result from pushing themselves to try challenging things.
- 6. **But differentiate between stretch mistakes and sloppy mistakes.** Celebrating mistakes that result from being too tired, too distracted, or doing too much can backfire. Instead, encourage your child to glean lessons from sloppy mistakes. For example you might suggest that it is time to get more sleep or reduce multitasking during homework.
- 7. **Look in the mirror.** Carol Dweck herself **reminds us** that we are all a mix of both growth and fixed mindsets, so pay attention to your own fixed mindset impulses. Perhaps the most influential way to teach growth mindset is to model it and to acknowledge when we get "stuck" in fixed mindset thinking ourselves.
- 8. **Don't forget about the system.** Your children's minds are also shaped by the people and institutions around them so check to be sure that your child's school supports a growth mindset for all students. Keep in mind that it isn't appropriate to rely on a child's mindset alone to "overcome" persistent institutional barriers that get in the way of their success, or worse yet, blame a child's mindset for institutional failure. Growth mindset is no substitute for tackling issues like racial equity, gender stereotyping, and special education reform in our schools.

Five Steps to Addressing Implicit Bias in Schools

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, Sarah Fiarman remembers an epiphany she had as a teacher. Between classes, she expressed annoyance that a few students were frequently having side conversations while she was teaching. A colleague said she might be noticing this behavior among black students but not among whites. "Sure enough," says Fiarman, "when I observed more carefully in my next class, white students were doing the same thing. Without realizing it, I had selectively noticed the misbehavior of just one subset of students." As a white teacher who prided herself on racial sensitivity, she was chagrinned that she, like so many others, had absorbed an unconscious bias "in the same way we breathe in smog – involuntarily and usually without any awareness of it."

Implicit biases are present in people of all backgrounds – unconscious preferences based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity, usually favoring one's own group, but sometimes, among stigmatized populations, favoring the dominant group. Researchers have found that black students are often punished more harshly than white students for the same infractions, and there are differences in who gets called on in class, the level of questions, praise and correction, how educators communicate with families, and whether a parent's assertive advocacy is seen as pushy or appropriate. Fiarman's suggestions:

• Increase awareness. "School leaders need to help their staffs understand that unconscious bias is not deliberate," she says; "it doesn't reflect our goals or intentions. Normalizing talking about it allows educators to examine and discuss their biases more freely and productively." Two free online tools are

https://rework.withgoogle.com/subjects/unbiasing and

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html. Leaders can also suggest articles or books and give staff time to read, reflect, and discuss. This can lead to the kind of realization Fiarman had about her chatty students.

• Name it. The teacher who helped Fiarman see her blind spot wasn't trying to make her feel bad; she was being helpful and her words were received in that spirit. How does a school facilitate such interactions? Singleton and Linton (2006) suggest four agreements for courageous conversations about specific incidents:

- Speak your truth.
- Expect to experience discomfort.
- Stay engaged.
- Expect and accept a lack of closure.

Colleagues can work on being non-defensive and deal with questions like: What leads you to that conclusion? Would this decision be different if the family or child were of a different race or background? How would you make this decision if this were your own child?

Fiarman describes a tense meeting with an African-American family. As principal, she took a risk and said, "If I were in your shoes, I might worry that the school was treating my son differently because he's black. I want you to know that we're thinking about that too. We don't want to be the school that disproportionately disciplines black boys." This helped create a climate that produced a positive plan.

- Anticipate bias and create systems to reduce it. Forty years ago, symphony orchestras began auditioning musicians behind a screen, and the percent of female players increased from 6 percent in 1970 to 21 percent in 1993. In classrooms, calling on students using popsicle sticks eliminates the possibility of bias. It's also helpful for leaders to make decisions collaboratively, not in isolation or in anger, so there's time to slow down and hear from others.
- Build empathy. One study showed that when teachers administer a simple questionnaire to students and learn about common interests and experiences, grades and behavior among minority students improve and gaps close. Another study found that intentionally building positive relationships with students can cut the suspension rate in half. "When teachers simply had opportunities to relate to or consider the perspectives of their students and to be reminded of the value of this perspective-taking they were more likely to change their behavior," says Fiarman.
- Hold ourselves accountable. "Numbers keep us honest," she says. Tracking discipline referrals, the rigor of classroom questions, the quality of student work, and other data by race, gender, and other variables is a useful check on what's really happening.

"Deconstructing our unconscious bias takes consistent work," Fiarman concludes. "We can't address it once and be done. We need to recognize these unwanted, deep-rooted beliefs and limit their influence on us. Then our actions will match our intentions."

"Unconscious Bias" by Sarah Fiarman in *Educational Leadership*, November 2016 (Vol. 74, #3, p. 10-15), available for purchase at http://bit.ly/2f5GI9Q; Fiarman can be reached at sarahfiarman@gmail.com. Reprinted from Marshall Memo 659.

Perversions of "Data-Driven Instruction" – and How to Do It Right

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Susan Neuman (New York University) reports what her team of researchers saw in 4th- and 7th-grade literacy classrooms in nine New York City public schools:

- Low-level worksheets focused on decontextualized basic skills for low-achieving students, higher-level content for successful students;
- Instruction focused on skills, not comprehension or content;
- Excessive testing, rubric-scoring, clipboard note-taking, data-displaying, and rankordering with insufficient meaningful instruction for all students and follow-up with struggling students;
- Students engaged in lengthy periods of independent reading, some of whom weren't really reading, the rationale being to build stamina for state tests that were regarded by teachers with fear and loathing;

- Display of students' test scores, with students who were chronically failing publicly branded as such;
- Slouching, disengaged students staring into space or sleeping; they've given up;
- Extremely low achievement on state tests year after year.

Neuman reports the researchers' conclusion: these schools' interpretation of data-driven instruction was "failing our most vulnerable children and sucking the life out of meaningful, content-rich education for young learners." Too many students, she says, "are receiving the unintended message that reading has no real meaning, no delight, and no purpose other than answering one or two questions that are duly recorded on a clipboard."

But this doesn't have to be, Neuman believes: "Arguably, the theory underlying data-driven instruction makes sense" – using important information to continuously improve teaching and learning. Here are her suggestions for implementing data-driven instruction in a more humane and effective manner:

- Don't try to "motivate" students with data. Standardized assessment results can be helpful for teachers diagnosing needs and planning instruction, but they're not particularly helpful for students, says Neuman. "Struggling readers know they're struggling readers. They do not need to see this confirmed every day."
- Don't teach to test items. Particular words in standardized tests are there to spread students out on a distributional curve and establish norms. Schools may item-analyze tests and try to teach particular words, but students are likely to be blindsided by completely different words the next time around. In order to teach effectively, says Neuman, schools "need to focus on a much more comprehensive set of understandings, including developing background knowledge, applying it to text, and predicting what might come next. Students don't develop deep comprehension skills through quick hit-and-runs. They learn these skills through carefully crafted, systematic instruction."
- Be data-informed, not data-driven. Grade-level teacher teams should regularly look at students' work to inform instruction, asking themselves, "What are our key teaching points for the coming week?" and then the next week asking, "Were we successful?" and if so, "How do we build on students' learning?" These meetings are all about fine-tuning instruction to make all students successful. Neuman and her colleagues saw some of this kind of collaboration in the New York City schools but not enough.
- Broaden the definition of data. Defining it as "recorded information on student learning" is too narrow, Neuman came to believe. Teachers should be looking for "the looks on students' faces, the tenor of a rich discussion, or the smiles and signs of joy when students are learning something new," she says. "For the highly capable teacher, these observations are data. In fact, these observations may be the most valuable data for helping us understand what students especially struggling readers are telling us."

"Code Red: The Danger of Data-Driven Instruction" by Susan Neuman in *Educational Leadership*, November 2016 (Vol. 74, #3, p. 24-29), http://bit.ly/2e0jmn0; Neuman can be reached at sbneuman@nyu.edu. .Reprinted from Marshall Memo 659.

Reading Public Schools Happenings

RMHS Girls Volleyball Team Wins First Round Tournament Game

Last week, the RMHS Girls Volleyball Team won their first round tournament game, 3-1, over Haverhill. Below is a picture of the team, courtesy of Joe Brown.



Barrows Students Observe Veteran's Day

Barrows Elementary School enjoyed an early assembly to teach about the importance of Veterans Day. On November 1st Barrows Elementary School was honored to recognize Veterans from our Barrows families. We welcomed the following Veterans to our assembly; (Also included in the picture below with their children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren, Barrows Students)

- ♦ Corporal Justin Scott, Marine Corp
- Sergeant Richard Edmund Hillery, Army
- Boatswain Mate, 2nd Class, Bruce Russell, Navy
- ◆ 2nd Class Petty Officer Michael Delaney, Navy
- Sergeant Thomas George, Army
- ♦ Airmen Thomas Tassi, Navy
- Petty Officer First Class, Paul A. Hall, Navy
- ◆ SP4, Raymond Conwell, Army

Barrows 5th grade teacher Carina Becker invited her brother, an artist, to support our Barrows assembly through the creation of a unique Veterans Day chalk art; https://youtu.be/SedmBGkko3M

Pictures below include the listed Veterans and their Barrows Student family members. Additional picture includes 5th grade students Brian Ronayne and Astrid Puff holding a flag that was flown during the Iraq War for our school-wide Pledge of Allegiance.





Wood End Fifth Grade Students Learning About Orphism Style of Art Recently, Wood End Grade 5 students were learning about the orphism style of art, which focuses on abstract art and bright colors.

Contact Us

The Pathways newsletter is published weekly for Reading Public School Parents and the Community. If you have anything that you would like to share, please email your info to John Doherty at:

john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us



Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts go out to Joshua Eaton Custodian **Kevin Doherty**, for a speedy and healthy recovery from recent surgery.
- Congratulations to Parker teacher Lauren Luskin on the birth of her daughter Ava Maria on November 2nd weighing 8 lbs. 4 oz. and 20 inches long.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Jennifer Garey, Substitute, District
 - ✓ Shayla Leary, Teacher, Barrows Extended Day
- We have posted a new position. If interested, please visit https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx to view the job detail

Grade 2 Teacher, 1.0FTE Wood End Elementary School https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=185
Per-Diem Middle School Substitute Teacher and Paraeducator https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=186

Blazing Trails....

SEEM Offering SEI Course for Teachers

SEEM collaborative is offering an SEI full teacher course starting Monday, January 9th. For more information or to register please go to our online registration site at: https://seemcollaborative.gosignmeup.com/

Survey Open on History and Social Science Framework Revision:

Later this school year, ESE will embark on the revision of the 2003 Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework. The Department has named 44 panelists to serve on the panel that will recommend revisions to that document. While the panel includes representatives from higher education and nonprofit and community organizations, the majority of panelists are educators currently serving in pre-K–12 districts in the Commonwealth.

The panel will meet for three full-day sessions between January 1 and June 30, 2017 to develop recommendations for revising the framework. The Department is hoping educators and others will help inform that work by offering comments on and suggested revisions to the current framework via a survey. The survey will take approximately 10–20 minutes to complete and will remain open until February 6, 2017.

"These Are the 10 Best States For Teachers." Zippia, "the Career Expert," used the most recent data to determine the best states for Teachers to open up shop. One might be surprised where Massachusetts falls. Read More

"Fight Over Charter Cap Sparks Proxy War in Massachusetts." Education Week reports that the ballot measure in Massachusetts to raise the cap on the number of charter schools in the state has sparked "a national political battle between charter advocates" and opponents. Some \$33 million in spending from national advocacy groups has "come pouring into Massachusetts," with both sides launching "expansive campaigns to lobby potential voters door to door to vote their way on the ballot measure, known as Question 2." Meanwhile, Harvard education policy director and former Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville says the vote could reverberate nationally, saying, "If we have difficulty in raising the cap in a state with such high-performing charter schools, what does that say for the prospects of more charter schools in the places that have not done as well?". Read More

"On K-12 Education Issues, Are You More Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump?" Take EducationDive's quiz to find out which candidate's stance on the top issues best matches yours. Read More

"Research in UK Suggests Best Leadership Style to Turn around Failing

Schools." Researchers studied 411 leaders of UK academies and analyzed their short- and long-term impact on their schools

as well as student achievement, finding the one type of leader who was effective in the long-term was least appreciated. Read More

Have a Great Week!