



# Pathways

*A weekly collection of information, thoughts, reflections, and accolades for the Reading Public School Community*

December 4, 2016

Volume 3, Number 14

## Upcoming Dates

- December 4 – (10:00 a.m.) REF Festival of Trees @ Parker Middle School
- December 5 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting
- December 7 – Grades 6 – 12 Early Release Day; (after school) District PLC Meetings; (6:00 p.m.) Coolidge Middle School Grade 6 Winter Concert; (7:30 p.m.) Coolidge Middle School Grade 7 Winter Concert
- December 8 – (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings – Collaborative Proposal Time; (7:00 p.m.) Parker Middle School Grade 8 Winter Concert; (7:00 p.m.) SEPAC presents An IEP for my Child in the Superintendent's Conference Room; (7:30 p.m.) Special Town Meeting in the Endsloew Performing Arts Center
- December 10 – (8:00 a.m.) RMHS Drama Dickens Holiday Craft Faire
- December 13 – (6:00 p.m.) Parker Grade 6 & 7 Winter Concert; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- December 14 – (8:30 a.m.) Joshua Eaton Holiday Concert; (after school) Secondary Building Meetings; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Band Winter Concert
- December 15 – (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings; (7:00

## Reading's 2017 Ambassador Chosen for Project 351

Congratulations to Sarah Bacci for being Reading's 2017 ambassador for Project 351! She is an 8th grade Parker Middle School student who was nominated by her teachers for her outstanding leadership and school service.

Project 351 is a youth service nonprofit organization that develops a rising generation of "community-first" citizen leaders. Founded by Governor Deval Patrick in 2011 and now convened by Governor Charlie Baker, Project 351 fosters unity, promotes kindness, and strengthens the ethic of service through the leadership of remarkable 8th grade Ambassadors.



**Reading Public Schools Project 351 Ambassador Sarah Bacci**

## *Nick Boivin chosen to serve on School Committee until April* **School Committee Vacancy Filled**

On Tuesday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, at a joint meeting between the Reading School Committee and the Reading Board of Selectmen, Birch Meadow parent Nick Boivin was chosen to fill the seat vacated by Julianne Joyce. Five applicants were interviewed for the vacancy in public session on Tuesday evening. Mr. Boivin is a patent attorney for Merrimack Pharmaceuticals in Cambridge and has served as a budget parent in the past. Mr. Boivin will serve in the role until April when there will be an election for the remaining two years of the School Committee vacancy.

Congratulations to Mr. Boivin on his appointment to the School Committee!

## *Presentation Focused on ADHD and Dyslexia*

### **Dr. Roberto Olivardia Presents at SEPAC Meeting**

On Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Roberto Olivardia, a Clinical Instructor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School and Clinical Associate at McLean Hospital, presented on the topic of ADHD and Dyslexia. The presentation was sponsored by the Reading Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) and was held at the Reading Public Library Community Room. Over 100 people attended Dr. Olivardia's presentation.



*Dr. Roberto Olivardia*

You can access Dr. Olivardia's Power Point Presentation at the link below.

[http://www.reading.k12.ma.us/files/1514/8076/8261/Distracted\\_and\\_Dyslexic\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.reading.k12.ma.us/files/1514/8076/8261/Distracted_and_Dyslexic_presentation.pdf)

In addition, below is a link to an NPR story on Dyslexia.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/11/28/502601662/millions-have-dyslexia-few-understand-it>

Special thanks to the Reading SEPAC for arranging this opportunity.

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## **How Schools Are Helping Traumatized Students Learn Again**

By **Mary Ellen Flannery** for **NEA Today**

In the warren of Brockton Public Schools counseling offices, a police scanner flares. Somewhere in the city, a student's mother, father, aunt or uncle, faces a brick wall, wrists handcuffed behind their back. They're likely not coming home tonight.

But the counselors in these offices, heads tilted to the noise of the street, as well as Brockton's teachers, paraprofessionals, and other educators, are committed to making sure students who suffer traumatic experiences, like a parent's jail time, do not have their own

## Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the following Middlesex League All-Stars: Cross Country: Andrew Riffe and Jacquelyn Iannuzzo, Volleyball: Samantha Perryman, Nikki Wynns, Meghan Daley, Boys Soccer: Nathan Plano, Nick Rainville, Girls Soccer: Kayla Jose and Alex Maher, Swimming: Katherine Kneeland, Molly Jones, Anna Roberts, Jillian Rhodes, Maura Letendre, Kayla Loughman, Alana Loughman, Madeline Doyle and Kristen Stevens, Field Hockey: Courtney Cutone, Julia Hand and Kylie Bringola, Football: Corey DiLoreto, Nick DiNapoli, Jack Gohr, Ben Fischer, Anthony D'Avolio and Eric D'Agostino, Golf: Liam Dwyer and James Reilly,

development arrested. For a decade, educators in Brockton, 30 miles south of Boston, have worked to create trauma-informed learning spaces. More recently, NEA and its affiliates, such as the [Illinois Education Association](#) (IEA), have carried the issue to the forefront of public education.

The numbers are stark: One in four U.S. students will witness or experience a traumatic event before the age of 4, and more than two-thirds by age 16.

These children do not—they cannot—simply close their eyes to what they've seen or experienced. With each forced eviction, each arrest of an adult in their home, each abuse to their own bodies, an instinctive trigger to “fight or flee” is pulled over and again.

*Many educators know intuitively that no matter how hard they work, or all the different things that they try, there are still some children that they struggle to reach. Now, we know the science of why” – Audrey Soglin, Illinois Education Association*

Over time, a child's developing brain is changed by these repeated traumatic experiences. Areas that govern the retention of memory, the regulation of emotion, and the development of language skills are affected. The result is a brain that has structurally adapted for survival under the most stressful circumstances—but not for success in school.

“It was like an epiphany,” says Brockton teacher Michele Holmes, a veteran of 24 years, when she learned from the Massachusetts-based [Trauma and Learning Policy Institute \(TLPI\)](#) how the traumatic experiences of students affected their brains. “All of a sudden, everything made sense.”

In fact, kindergartners who have suffered traumatic experiences score below average in reading and math, even when influential factors like household income and parental education are factored in, according to a 2015 study published in the journal *Pediatrics*. They also are three times more likely to have problems with paying attention, and two times more likely to show aggression to their classmates and teachers.

Eventually, they become the students who get suspended too often, feeding the [school-to-prison pipeline](#).

Says Audrey Soglin, executive director of the Illinois Education Association, whose trauma-informed trainings have reached thousands of Illinois educators: “Many educators know intuitively that no matter how hard they work, or all the different things that they try, there are still some children that they struggle to reach. Now, we know the science of why.”

And now, with resources such as NEA's “[Teaching Children from Poverty and Trauma](#)” handbook, NEA members also can know the “how” and “what” of trauma-informed education. And what works for students with trauma also works for non-traumatized students, too.

With a mixture of empathy, flexibility, and brain-based strategies, trauma-informed educators are creating cool, calm classrooms that work for *all* of their students—a kind of “universal design,” says Brockton's head of counseling, John Snelgrove.

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### The Calming Corner

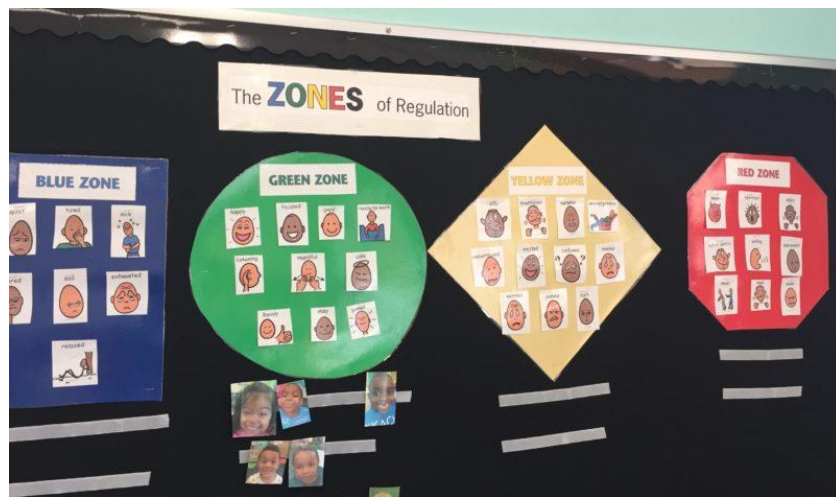
As a school-based counselor, Snelgrove worked years ago with a student who was quick to rage. “What's going on?” Snelgrove asked. The answer: the student, his mom and his infant

brother had lost their home and were sleeping in a laundromat during its closed hours—11 p.m. to 6 a.m.—then showering before school at a friend’s apartment.

Another parent told an administrator here, when asked why her child was sprinting home during school hours, that, “he’s been very needy since I was shot.”

These experiences directly shape your students’ brains. Consequently, the disruptive behavior that teachers often see—and punish—isn’t willful disobedience or defiance.

It’s a subconscious effort to self-protect. Their altered brains are screaming: Fight! Flee! Freeze! “It can look like these children are shutting down [or zoning out], but their brain is telling them, ‘you need to be safe,’” says Illinois special educator Kathi Ritchie, the facilitator of the NEA EdCommunities group on trauma-informed classrooms/strategies.



*In Alexandra Kay’s classroom, the “zones of regulation” help students identify their own feelings. Green includes happy and comfortable. There is no shame in saying you’re feeling more yellow or red. It’s a cue to take a break and calm down. (Photo: Mary Ellen Flannery)*

For example, “the behavior of wearing a hoodie pulled tight over their heads, curled up, head down on a desk...is similar to what they have had to do at home. They try to become invisible so that they are not seen by a drunken caregiver or abuser who comes home looking for a punching bag,” writes the author of the NEA handbook on teaching children from poverty and trauma.

So what is a trauma-sensitive educator to do? Instead of rushing to “punish, punish, and punish,” says Snelgrove, adults should respond in ways that make children feel safe. “Punishment alone, free from treatment and education, doesn’t change behavior,” says Snelgrove.

“Think before reacting,” says Holmes. “When the situation is charged, you have to step back and think ‘How can I bring this down and get back to learning?’”

In a corner of Alexandra Kay’s kindergarten classroom at the Barrett Russell School in Brockton, there’s a small tent where agitated students can curl up on a dimly lit pillow for a few minutes of quiet, and also a sand table, where they can run their



## Quote of the Week . . .



Look for something positive in each day, even if some days you have to look a little harder.

-Unknown

fingers through the cool grains. “A sensory break,” Kay calls it. For her kindergartners who need a more active break from their desks, Kay also has a small trampoline.

Keeping in mind that the brains of some traumatized students are ill-adapted for language development or memory retention, Kay’s room contains lots of visual cues. The day’s events are scheduled in advance, routinized, and posted in successive, simply illustrated pictures: first breakfast, then seat work, followed by circle time. Behavioral expectations are illustrated, too: quiet mouths, quiet hands, quiet feet.

Ritchie also recommends teaching strategies that include asking students to repeat verbal instructions, and using more written instructions or visual prompts for multi-step directions, like a sticky Post-it note on a desk. Thoughtful breathing or mindfulness exercises can be helpful, according to the NEA handbook.

At Brockton’s George School, every classroom has a “thinking island,” where raging or “deregulated” students can retreat, and each island is equipped with a sensory basket that might contain a piece of fleece or satin ribbons, a scented votive candle (wick removed!) and a plastic bottle with colored water and glitter inside. Tip over the bottle, watch the glitter slowly descend, and calm down.

Not long ago, one of Holmes’ 7-year-olds asked her for the Play-Doh. “I said, ‘you know it’s not a toy...’ and she said, ‘I know! It’s a *tool* to caaaaalm doooooown.’”

“If the kid needs the putty, let them play with the putty. If they need gum, give them gum! Be flexible!” urges Snelgrove. “We need to provide the materials, or create the conditions, that enable children to be successful.”

“Flexibility” is a word or phrase you’ll hear often when talking with trauma-informed educators. “Mindset” is another one. “Our kids” is a third.

### Three Things You Should Do Now

Learn more with these union-developed resources

1. Download NEA’s [“Teaching Children from Poverty and Trauma”](#) handbook for information about the symptoms of trauma in students and classroom strategies to build community, teach social skills, and also enhance reading and other academic skills. (One sample tip: Greet every student authentically. Another: Write new vocabulary words in icing on cake!)
2. Join the [NEA edCommunities](#) group on trauma-informed classrooms and strategies, so that you can join the discussion with your colleagues and also share in resources, like webinars and presentations.
3. Visit [Partnership For Resilience](#). The partnership, which has IEA at its head, has compiled a wealth of online resources, including explanatory videos and conference presentations.

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## The Ultimate Goal

The work of a trauma-informed educator isn’t about using a special “trauma curriculum,” it’s about giving students the support they need to access your regular curriculum, says Snelgrove.

## Disney Tweet of the Week



I always like to look on the optimistic side of life, but I am realistic enough to know that life is a complex matter.

- Walt Disney

“It can’t just be, ‘open your book, read the questions, and begin.’ I have 7-year-olds who think their parents will be deported,” says Holmes. They can’t learn until their fears are calmed and their attentions [are] re-focused. And they also can’t learn if they’re suspended or sitting in principals’ offices.

“The ultimate goal is to keep them in the classroom,” says counselor Kristin McKenna, of Brockton’s Arnone School, where the suspension rate fell by more than 40 percent after school-wide TLPI training.

This work also isn’t what people might imagine as typical “union work.” So why have NEA leaders and affiliates like IEA jumped headfirst into it?

In Illinois, it started with a conversation between IEA’s executive director and her pediatrician brother. It continued with IEA-sponsored film screenings of *Paper Tigers*, a school-based documentary from Walla Walla, Wash., that shows the impact of “one caring adult” in the lives of traumatized teens. Up to 300, 400, or even 500 IEA educators, parents, and community members were mesmerized at each showing, says IEA President Cinda Klickna.

“It was just so powerful—we had one [woman] who went to the screening and said, after 20 years of teaching, that it changed her entire thinking about what she does,” says Klickna.

Fueled by that kind of response, IEA’s work has rapidly expanded, in part through support from the [NEA Foundation](#), to include three pilot programs in the districts south of Chicago. In those places, IEA’s partnership provides members with the professional development they need to be ready to teach, *and* the services students need to be ready to learn—like restorative dental care and treatment for asthma.

“I say, and I keep saying, advocacy for our members includes professional development. And when you find a topic that really resonates, and this resonates, it’s very exciting. It’s what they need to be able to do their jobs better.

“To us, it’s about leading the profession,” says Klickna.

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## Keys to Classroom Engagement

In this article in *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Stacey Alicea and Sukhmani Singh (New York University), Carola Suárez-Orozco (UCLA), Tasha Darbes (Pace University), and Elvira Julia Abrica (University of Nebraska/Lincoln) report on their study of student engagement in 57 classrooms in several urban community colleges – work that has definite implications for K-12 schools. The authors used a classroom observation protocol and student surveys to measure three ways in which the class as a whole can be engaged – academic, cognitive, and relational:

- *Academic engagement* – The extent to which students and instructors are engaged in behaviors reflecting involvement in the classroom, specifically:

- Attentiveness – Students show they’re paying attention.
- Compliance – Students follow the instructor’s prompts.
- Authoritative content – The instructor delivers material authoritatively and responds knowledgeably.
- Engaging – The instructor shows enthusiasm for and interest in the content.
- Classroom management – There’s an absence of disruption.

## Important Websites

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

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

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

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

Interface Health Services  
<https://interface.williamjames.edu/community/reading>

### Need help finding mental health care?

 **WILLIAM JAMES COLLEGE**  
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 meet your specific needs, accepts your insurance & has available appointments.  
Call 1-888-244-6843 (toll free) • M-F • 9am-5pm  
<https://interface.williamjames.edu/>

At the highest level of the 5-4-3-2-1 observation rubric, this involves almost all students having attentive body language, following the conversation, leaning forward, taking notes, and raising their hands to volunteer answers, initiate questions, or make a comment.

- *Cognitive engagement* – This can be summed up as “mental sweat” – the level of intellectual challenge, higher-order thinking, analysis, and collaborative work students are doing – the degree to which they are thinking deeply about ideas and concepts, are curious about and interested in what they are learning and are reading widely, integrating knowledge, discussing ideas with others, and applying knowledge to real-world situations.

Key elements:

- Students show curiosity about the subject being taught.
- Students ask interesting questions.
- There is a balance of students participating in discussions.
- The content level is appropriate.

At the highest level of the rubric, this includes several students asking critical questions (beginning with *How* or *Why*), several students expressing opinions, guesses, and ideas related to the content, and at least one student asking a critical question challenging the reading or the instructor or providing alternative explanations.

- *Relational engagement* – The degree to which students appear connected to one another, providing academic support to their peers. “Relationships play a crucial role in serving to build confidence and encourage students to redouble their efforts when motivation fails,” say the authors. The key elements are:

- Comfort – Classroom interactions are relaxed, empathetic, and warm.
- Validation – Class members appropriately praise and support one another’s efforts.
- Equity of treatment – Class members treat each other equitably and there’s an absence of micro-aggressions.
- Fairness and inclusion – The instructor encourages participation by diverse participants.

At the highest level of the observation rubric, this includes members of the class appropriately praising and encouraging one another’s contributions and acknowledging when someone makes a positive contribution – for example, “That’s interesting” or “That’s a really good idea” or “I didn’t think of it that way.”

What did the researchers find? Classroom observations and student surveys confirmed the close association of academic engagement, cognitive engagement, and students’ perceptions of “instructor press” and classmates’ participation and preparation. The researchers found a less robust correlation among community college students in the relational area. “It may well be,” the authors speculate, “that students are well attuned to their own relational engagement with peers, but do not typically pay strong attention to relational engagement dynamics among others in the classroom.”

Alicea, Suárez-Orozco, Singh, Darbes, and Abrica believe their observation tool, developed specifically for this study, can help address the “complex and multifaceted crisis of low graduation and high transfer rates in community colleges.” They call for further research on the correlation between measured classroom engagement and GPAs, credit accrual, attendance, degree completion, persistence, and psychosocial outcomes.

“Observing Classroom Engagement in Community College: A Systematic Approach” by Stacey Alicea, Carola Suárez-Orozco, Sukhmani Singh, Tasha Darbes, and Elvira Julia Abrica in *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, December 2016 (Vol. 38, #4, p. 757-782),

available for purchase at <http://epa.sagepub.com/content/38/4/757.full>; Alicea can be reached at [Stacey.Alicea@gmail.com](mailto:Stacey.Alicea@gmail.com). Reprinted from Marshall Memo 663.

## Reading Public Schools Happenings

### Reading Football Coaches and Captains Attend Pre Super Bowl Event

On Tuesday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, the RMHS Administration, Football Team Captains, and coaches joined all of the other MIAA Super Bowl teams in a Pre Super Bowl Event at Gillette Stadium. Last night, the Rockets will played undefeated King Phillip Regional High School at Gillette Stadium in Foxboro in a hard fought game, but lost 21-18. Congratulations goes to Coach John Fiore, his staff, and his players on reaching the Super Bowl and having a successful season.



*RMHS Football Coaches and Captains*

### Barrows Students Practicing Prefixes

This past week, Barrows students in Grade 2 were practicing their prefix skills. Great job!



*Barrows Grade 2 Students*



### REF Festival of Trees

This weekend, the Reading Education Foundation is holding its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival of Trees at Parker Middle School on Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> from 12:00-9:00 p.m. and on Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Please come and support the Reading Education Foundation which benefits our teachers and students!



### Stepping Stones...

- Congratulations to Wood End paraeducator **Leslie Smith** on the birth of her granddaughter, Emily Kathleen, born on November 16<sup>th</sup> at 6 pounds 9 ounces and 19 inches in length.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Central Office Human Resources Generalist **Sean Donahue** on the recent loss of a loved one.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
  - ✓ Lynne Cerretani Clarke, Guidance Secretary, RMHS
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

Long-term Special Education Paraeducator, 58 hours biweekly Joshua Eaton Elementary School <a href="https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=192">https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=192</a>
Long-term Substitute Reading Specialist, 1.0FTE JW Killam Elementary School <a href="https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=193">https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=193</a>
Special Education Therapeutic Support Program Paraeducator, 60 hours biweekly JW Killam Elementary School (Repost) <a href="https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=194">https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=194</a>
Assistant Girls Spring Track Coach - RMHS <a href="https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=195">https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=195</a>

## 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 info to John Doherty at: [john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us)

## Blazing Trails....

- **Did You Know?: Public Lookup Tool for Licensure**

On November 23, 2016, ESE announced the creation of a **lookup tool** on their website that allows the general public to find basic information about public school teachers' licensure status.

The Department frequently receives questions about individual educators' licenses. In creating the public lookup, we are making that information easier for the public to find and joining the majority of states that already offer such a tool.

The new public lookup is designed only for basic inquiries, so school leaders and hiring officials should continue to access the broader information available to them through the Educator Licensure and Renewal (ELAR) system.

- **Buzz: ELA and Math Learning Standards, Proposed Educator Evaluation Regs Out for Public Comment**

On November 29, 2016, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to send out for public comment the **proposed Revised English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks and proposed amendments to educator evaluations**. A public comment form for the curriculum frameworks is available online at <http://sgiz.mobi/s3/Public-Comment-Draft-ELA-Literacy-Math-Frameworks-2016-2017> and will be open until February 17, 2017.

Public comment on the proposed amendments to educator evaluations will be open through January 27, 2017 and can be sent to [edevalcomments@doe.mass.edu](mailto:edevalcomments@doe.mass.edu). The Board will most likely vote on the final draft on February 28.

- **New Resource: Graphic Organizers and Reference Sheets for MCAS**

The Department has developed new **ELA graphic organizers and mathematics and science and technology/engineering reference sheets** for use by students with disabilities who will take the spring 2017 MCAS tests in **grades 3-8**. Students who use these tools for MCAS testing must have accommodation A9 (from the *Accessibility and Accommodations Manual for the Spring 2017 MCAS Grades 3-8 Tests*) listed in their individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan. These pre-approved graphic organizers and reference sheets replace those that were submitted to ESE for approval in prior years and may not be altered.

More information about MCAS **accessibility and accommodations** is available online, as is 2017 next-generation MCAS test information for grades 3–8 **English language arts** and **mathematics** tests. The information includes the test design, number of sessions, and question types. More information about the next-generation MCAS and other assessments is available in the latest **Student Assessment Update**.

**Have a Great Week!**