



Pathways

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

February 12, 2017

Volume 8, Number 23

Upcoming Dates

- February 13 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Guidance Junior Parent Night in the Endslow PAC
- February 15 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release (1:15 p.m.) RISE/Elementary District PLC Meetings; (1:30 p.m.) Secondary District PLC Meetings; (7:00 p.m.) SEPAC Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- February 20 – President's Day – No School/Offices Closed
- February 21 – 24 – Winter Break – No School for Students/Offices Open
- February 26 – (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Sitzprobe
- February 27 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- February 28 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS – Future Freshman Night I
- March 3 – (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Winter Musical "1776" in the Endslow PAC
- March 4 – (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Drama Winter "1776" in the Endslow PAC

FY18 Budget Update

An Update from the Superintendent

I want to update you on everything that has transpired this past week at the School Committee, Board of Selectmen, and Finance Committee meetings, regarding the budget for the upcoming year. As you know, our community has been facing challenging times due to limited revenue. As a result, both the town and school departments have not been able to sustain level services and have been forced to make reductions over the last several years—with tremendous impact to our district at all levels for FY18, including significant reductions at the middle schools. After many discussions however, and with the collaboration of our Town Manager, our town boards, and many community members who so tirelessly advocated for solutions, I am pleased to provide an important update. **In summary, the 7.0 FTE reduction at the middle school that was originally part of the reductions for the FY18 budget has been restored for next year**—and we have been able to inform all staff members who would have been impacted by the planned reductions at the middle level that their positions will remain.

The details are a little complex, and so I will explain further below—but most importantly, I want to first express tremendous gratitude to our Town Manager for his willingness to address this important issue and for his dedication to our entire community. As I mentioned to you in last week's *Pathways Newsletter*, the Reading School Committee voted to support an *unbalanced* budget, by including an additional \$588,000 in order to restore the 7.0 FTE middle school reduction (at \$438,000) and to fund the next phase of the science curriculum update (at \$150,000). In order for this to occur, the proposal relied on accessing additional cash reserves from the town, with approval of the Finance Committee and ultimately Town Meeting in early May. Knowing that this proposal came with some risks and that we would not know the outcome until mid-May, the Town Manager proposed an alternative solution at Tuesday evening's Board of Selectmen's meeting to address the \$588,000 increase in the School Committee budget.

On Wednesday, Director of Finance Gail Dowd and I met with the Town Manager to discuss the proposal and how it could be implemented for next year. We walked away feeling very positive about the potential of this proposal. On Wednesday night, School Committee Chair Jeanne Borawski, School Committee members Elaine Webb, and Linda Snow Dockser, Gail Dowd, and I then met with the Town Manager and the Finance Committee to discuss further the advantages and details of this proposal. In summary, this proposal consists of the following two components:

FY18 Budget Links

- Superintendent's Recommended Budget
- January 9th Presentation
- January 12th Presentation
- January 19th Presentation
- Full FY18 Budget Presentation (January 9-25)
- Q and A Document for FY18 budget

1. The Town Manager will request \$150,000 at this April Town Meeting to fund the second phase of the Science Curriculum. This will be for materials and training which will be encumbered prior to the end of this fiscal year (June 30th) and will be to continue science funding at K-2; 7-8; and/or 9-12 for the 2017-18 school year. We did something similar last year, and Town Meeting was very supportive because it is a one-time expense instead of a recurring part of the budget.
2. The Town Manager will also put forward and endorse the original budget total that was originally recommended by Finance Committee in the fall (which is lower than the School Committee approved budget), and explain that the funding for the middle level FTEs will instead be attained through a collaboration and careful management of both Town and School budgets. Over the first several months of the fiscal year, both Town and School will explore all possibilities for savings, which could include the withholding of one time purchases on the Town side, salary savings resulting from retirements or other staff turnover, or any other areas that have sometimes provided some savings in the past. If enough savings are generated, then there will be no need to request additional funding through cash reserves at Town Meeting. If sufficient savings are not able to be generated, however, then we will go to either the November 2017 or April 2018 Town Meeting to request any remaining difference to balance the school department budget at that time.

The biggest advantage to this proposal is of course that the 7.0 middle school teachers are able to be notified immediately that their jobs are secure for next year. Any other solution would have required us to wait until after Town Meeting in May to notify teachers. The rest of the proposal is very similar to the proposal that Mr. Robinson proposed at the School Committee in that both may require the use of free cash. Mr. Robinson's proposal would request free cash at the front end of the process, while the Town Manager's plan proposes using free cash at the end of the process, if necessary.

I want to emphasize that this proposal is still a one-year solution, but it became very clear at all three meetings last week (School Committee, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee) that there is growing interest and support for an override election in the next 14 months. Because this is clearly a revenue problem, it is understood that the challenge must be addressed through either an override or some other revenue-generating method, if the community wishes to sustain the current level of services in Reading. As we move forward however, I am both heartened and grateful to see such a dedicated collaboration in our community to tackle these issues. I look forward to working together as we all seek a longer term solution for our entire community.

While we still face challenges in the year ahead, our school district has a lot to be proud of, and we see it each and every day in our classrooms. This is due to our dedicated and hard-working teachers, administrators, and support staff who work tirelessly in the best interest of all of our students and our parents, who dedicate time and resources to support our schools. In addition, we have an excellent working relationship with town officials who see education as one of the core priorities of our community. I am so proud to be part of this outstanding community, and I believe together we can conquer the challenges ahead.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Reading Public Schools Administration Offices at 781-944-5800 or by contact at <http://www.reading.k12.ma.us/about-us/contact-us/>. And most importantly, thank you for all you do every day on behalf of Reading's children.

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to the gymnastics, girls basketball, swimming, girls hockey for recent victory.
- Congratulations to the boys hockey and girls basketball teams for qualifying for the MIAA Tournament.
- A special thanks to Director of Finance Gail Dowd for all of her hard work on the FY18 budget.

Together for Tewksbury Planning Meeting

As you know, Birch Meadow teacher, Jolene Tewksbury, passed away unexpectedly in July. To celebrate the life and work of Mrs. Tewksbury, we have planned a Together for Tewksbury walk and community event on Saturday, April 29th with proceeds going to the Jolene Tewksbury Scholarship. The Jump Rope challenge in the late winter will raise funds for this scholarship as well.

On **Wednesday, February 15th (please note date change)**, there is a meeting to plan Together for Tewksbury and get community input. This meeting will be at 6:30 p.m in the school library. This is a rescheduled meeting from January 19th; that meeting was rescheduled due to a conflict with a School Committee meeting.

We will need many hands to plan and orchestrate this event. Please come on February 16th if you are able to donate your time and gifts in honor of Mrs. Tewksbury.

Teaching Argumentation Across the Curriculum

“There has never been a more important time to teach young people to suspend judgment, weigh evidence, consider multiple perspectives, and speak up with wisdom and grace on behalf of themselves and others,” says Mary Ehrenworth (Columbia University) in this article in *Educational Leadership*. A key priority across subject areas, she believes, is teaching debating skills – giving students “structured opportunities to engage in deliberative exploration of ideas, evidence, and argument.” The key skills of thinking, arguing, and writing aren’t innate: students need to be explicitly taught to use logic and reasoning to:

- State a specific claim;
- Support it with evidence;
- Correlate evidence to support different ideas;
- Cite authoritative sources to bolster the argument;
- Create questions to deepen their understanding and illuminate complexity;
- Revise their ideas and evidence to make a logical and compelling sequence;
- Lead their audience through their argument with a clear introduction and sophisticated transitional phrases;
- Consider opponents’ strongest points so they can acknowledge or refute counterarguments;
- Acknowledge nuance and conditionality.

Drawing on her work with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, Ehrenworth shares some insights about developing students’ argumentation skills:

- *Start with talk*. One of the best ways to develop students’ ability to argue in writing is to improve the level of spoken argument by having small groups of students engage in quick, one-on-one “flash debates” (see below for suggested topics). As students conduct these mini-arguments, the teacher circulates, commenting on effective and less-effective approaches.

Superintendent's Office

Hours this Week

All are welcome

2/14 (7:45-8:45 a.m.)-
Joshua Eaton Elementary
School

2/16 (5:30-6:30 p.m.)-
Reading Public Schools
Administration Offices

2/17 (7:15 – 8:15 a.m.)-
Wood End Elementary
School

- *Develop a strategic curriculum.* Students need lots of practice to get better at arguing, so schools should make sure students have opportunities to hone their skills in English, social studies, science, math, and other subjects as they move through the grades. For example, a middle school could have students in ELA debate the pros and cons of interscholastic sports, in social studies whether the American Revolution radically changed conditions for many people, and in science which forms of renewable energy citizens should adopt.

- *Choose and prepare content.* It's important to get students debating meaty topics that are open to legitimate dispute – not, for example, whether the Holocaust happened. Here are some possibilities:

- Is this story more about x or y?
- Which character has the greatest impact on events?
- Are zoos good or bad for endangered animals?
- Are rats friend or foe to humans?
- Overall, are cell phones in schools helpful or damaging?
- Was westward expansion a force for good?
- Athens or Sparta: which is a better model for today's youth?
- Was the U.S. Civil War won more through strategy, supplies, or ideas?
- Which NASA proposal should be funded: space stations, asteroid mining, or terraforming?
- Bottled water or tap water: which should the United Nations fund abroad?
- What is the best way to limit climate change: control carbon emissions, limit greenhouse gasses, or ...?
- Should we protect wolves in national parks?

Then it's important to seek out or develop sets of relevant texts. "You'll save yourself frustration later if you make sure there are good texts for your students' age and reading levels before you commit to a unit of study," says Ehrenworth. "Gather texts that provide a variety of perspectives, levels of nuance, and degrees of objectivity or bias." She and her colleagues have found that having students surf the Internet is not a good use of valuable classroom time. Better for students to be reading, critiquing, thinking, and writing with a well-chosen set of texts with which the teacher is familiar. With well-chosen material, even students in the primary grades can engage in making claims, making logical arguments, and citing sources.

- *Teach students how to apply their skills in new situations.* This might involve charts with major reading and writing strategies in an argument unit, student-made props with effective strategies, teaching tools on specific small-group and conference skills, mentor texts incorporating strategies, exemplar arguments, and writing checklists. It's also a good idea for teachers to share their tools to coordinate between grades and avoid duplication.

"Why Argue?" by Mary Ehrenworth in *Educational Leadership*, February 2017 (Vol. 74, #5, p. 35-40), available for purchase at <http://bit.ly/2jQ7o3X>; Ehrenworth can be reached at mary@readingandwritingproject.com. . Reprinted from Marshall Memo 672.

Quote of the Week . . .



No one can go back and make a brand new start; however anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.

-Carl Bard

The Real Super Bowl Lesson Wasn't About Revenge

By Kevin Cullen for the *Boston Globe*

Being human, we look for deeper meaning in all our cultural experiences, whether a movie, a song, or a sporting event.

Here, in New England, the lust to beat the Atlanta Falcons rested on the unshakable premise that the Patriots and their quarterback, Tom Brady, had been treated unfairly, even grotesquely, by NFL commissioner Roger Goodell.

So in living rooms from Rhode Island to Maine, Patriots fans loaded coffee tables with hot snacks, but reserved the coldest dish — sweet revenge — for the game's end, knowing that and so much more would be theirs when Goodell was forced to hand over the trophy to Patriots owner Robert Kraft.

But when the smoke cleared and the confetti fell, after the Patriots had completed the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history, the lessons left for us to chew on were more fundamental, more noble, appealing to our better angels, not our coarser thoughts.

It was as if everything our parents, our teachers, our coaches had tried to teach us transpired in the last 18 minutes of this magnificent spectacle, this Super Bowl. In the end, it wasn't about revenge. It was about not giving up, about perseverance, about not panicking, about having a backup plan if the original plan isn't working, about believing in yourself and your ability and in one another.

The facts spoke for themselves: The Patriots were down 21-0, then 21-3 at the half. No team had ever come back from a deficit of more than 10 points in any of the 50 previous Super Bowls, a fact repeated by television commentators to the point that it became a mantra, an article of faith.

But, like promises and hearts, precedents are made to be broken. The Patriots refused to give up, as surely many teams would have.

Patriots safety Duron Harmon walked into the locker room at halftime and loudly proclaimed, "This is going to be the best comeback of all time!"

Who knows if it was prophecy or lunacy, but it was inspirational.

After falling behind 28-3 midway through the third quarter, the Patriots began a comeback for the ages.

You saw it. Danny Amendola hauled in a 17-yard pass on fourth down. Dont'a Hightower forced Matt Ryan to fumble. Brady kept marching the offense up the field. The defense pushed the Falcons out of range for a field goal that would have iced it. Julian Edelman made a spectacular, ridiculous, circus catch that kept alive the 91-yard drive that tied the game. James White, James White, James White.

No individual won the game for the Patriots, but every individual was essential to win. The defense and offense were entirely dependent on each other; one could not succeed without the other.

The roots of the comeback were embedded in another of our parents' mantras: that you lay the groundwork for success in ways you often can't see, simply by persevering. Even after they had fallen behind by so much, the Patriots were controlling possession and running the

Disney Tweet of the Week



Remember, the journey
of a thousand miles
begins with the first step.

—Rafiki (The Lion King
1½)

Falcons defense ragged. In the fourth quarter, and especially during the winning drive in overtime, the Atlanta defenders were gassed, exhausted.

When the Patriots won the coin toss and got the ball to start overtime, even most Falcons fans had to know the Patriots were going to win.

Which brings us to the flip side of all these lessons learned. It wasn't just about the Patriots not giving up and giving in. In the Falcons initially impressive, ultimately unsatisfactory performance there were lessons, too. About finishing what you started, about not being complacent, about not getting ahead of yourself.

The Falcons owner, Arthur Blank, left his comfortable box and went down to the field long before the game ended, wanting to be among his players celebrating a victory that seemed inevitable. As the Patriots kept scoring, the camera kept drifting back to Blank and his wife standing there on the sidelines, a growing sense of dread spreading on their faces. The final camera shot gave new meaning to the term Blank stare.

It's not as if the thirst for revenge was entirely quenched by watching the peerless comeback. Patriots fans, who were a majority inside NRG Stadium, booed Goodell lustily and mercilessly, drowning out his congratulatory words to Kraft and the Patriots.

Kraft called the win "unequivocally the sweetest," and made an oblique reference to the satisfaction of winning it all during a season when Brady was suspended by Goodell for four games over Deflategate.

"A lot has transpired during the last two years," Kraft said. "And I don't think that needs any explanation."

What also needed no explanation was the sight of Brady's mother, Galynn, walking gingerly onto the field to find her son after the game ended, a kerchief covering her head.

Galynn Brady has been undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments, Kraft said, and that burden was as obvious as the smile on her face.

"She's been through a lot," Brady said Monday, after collecting the Super Bowl MVP trophy from Goodell. "Way harder than what I went through last night. Way harder than what our team went through last night."

By her sheer presence, Galynn Brady provided the last, most profound lesson in all this: perspective.

So many of us had assumed that Tom Brady wanted to win this game so he could rub it in Goodell's face. But it turns out he really wanted to win the game to put a smile on his mother's face.

There's something much stronger, sweeter, and more satisfying than revenge. It's called love.

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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>

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

Need help finding mental health care?



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/>

CAUSE AN EFFECT



Make dinner a selfless act by joining us for a fundraiser to support Reading Robockets. Come in to the Chipotle at **46 Walkers Brook Drive** in Reading on **Friday, February 17th** between **4:00pm** and **8:00pm**. Bring in this flyer, show it on your smartphone or tell the cashier you're supporting the cause to make sure that 50% of the proceeds will be donated to Reading Robockets.



If placing an order online during your fundraiser, please note you must choose the pay in-store option and inform our cashier of your participation before paying. Gift card purchases during fundraisers do not count towards total donated sales, but purchases made with an existing gift card will count.

Reading Public Schools Happenings

Happy Valentines Day From RISE Preschool

Students in the RISE Preschool celebrate Valentine's Day by creating the photo below.



Youth Art Month

Youth Art Month (YAM) is a month long celebration in March to promote art education in the United States. As part of this celebration, six Coolidge students will have their artwork featured in this year's statewide Youth Art Month Exhibit, "United Through Art." Congratulations to Nameka Despeignes, Thomas Gallegos, Weston Lewin, Samantha Lyons, Anabel Moda, and Samantha Panaritul.

The YAM show will be located on the second floor of the State Transportation Building in Boston. The exhibit will be on display weekdays 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., February 13-March 31, 2017. Some of their art can be previewed below.

Kudos to Coolidge Art Teacher Sarah Doane for working with these students and bringing out their true artistic talent.



Stepping Stones...

- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Gary Reardon, Math Teacher, RMHS
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

0.6FTE High School Business Teacher, Reading Memorial High School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=231>

Special Education Therapeutic Support Program (TSP) Paraeducator, 59 hours biweekly Killam Elementary School

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=232>

Special Education Therapeutic Support Program (TSP) Paraeducator, 60 hours biweekly Killam Elementary School (Repost)

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=233>

Long Term Substitute Special Education Program Paraeducator, 60 hours
biweekly Wood End Elementary School (Repost)

<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=234>

Blazing Trails...

"10 Things I Wish Teachers Knew." Pennsylvania Principal and blogger for "Four O'Clock Faculty," Rich Czyz discusses the important pieces teachers should know and do in their classrooms. "I was recently asked what 10 things I wished teachers knew by a friend looking to share the answer with undergrad teaching candidates. So, here is my list." [Read More](#)

"Popsicle Sticks and 'Hands Down' are not Cold Call: Key Differences & Why They Matter." This Teach Like A Champion blog post by author Doug Lemov discusses the differences in what can be considered "Cold Calling" students. "Cold Call is one of my favorite techniques- meaning that it's one of the techniques that has the greatest potential to increase the rigor and engagement in a classroom. I also love that it can be used by almost any teacher and in concert with almost any other approach. You don't have to change everything about your class to get the benefits. You can do what you do and add Cold Call to it tomorrow." [Read More](#)

"When Does Optimal Learning Occur?" Spending an additional 20 minutes practicing a newly mastered skill may have lasting benefits, according to a study in Nature Neuroscience. Researchers studied optimal conditions for learning, noting that "overlearning" yielded gains for skill retention. [Read More](#)

"Boston Schools Consider Investments for Homeless Students." School officials in Boston have included \$1 million in the proposed fiscal year 2018 school budget to help meet the needs of homeless students. The funds could be used to support food pantries and the provision of household items such as soap and toothpaste. [Read More](#)

"'We're Not Hippies, We're Punks.' School that has Projects, Not Subjects." "New core curriculum for basic education emphasizes the joy of learning," reads a recent headline on a government education website. This new, more joyful curriculum, it says, is based on "positive emotional experiences, collaborative working and creative activity." It is, of course, the Finnish Board of Education's website. Finland has given its schools a new curriculum with a reduced subject content and is encouraging them to teach to "competences" through project-based learning. [Read More](#)

Contact Us

The Pathways newsletter is published weekly for the Reading Public School Community. If you have anything that you would like to share, please email your info to John Doherty at: john.doherty@reading.k12.ma.us

Have a Great Week!