



Pathways

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

May 7, 2017

Volume 8, Number 33

Upcoming Dates

- May 1 – 12 – RMHS AP Testing
- May 7 – (2:00 p.m.) RMHS Drama Production of “The Taming of the Shrew” in the Endslo PAC
- May 8 – (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Music - Grade 5 Instrument Night for Barrows, Birch Meadow & Wood End at Coolidge; (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent’s Conference Room
- May 9 – (2:00 p.m.) RMHS Music – MAJE Junior Jazz Festival @ RMHS; (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Music - Grade 5 Instrument Night for Killam and Joshua Eaton at Coolidge
- May 10 – (after school) District PLC Meetings; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Scholastic Awards Night in the Endslo PAC
- May 11 – (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings – Collaborative Proposal
- May 16 – 17 – MCAS Testing @ RMHS
- May 16 – (6:30 p.m.) RMHS AP Art Show; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Spring Awards ceremony
- May 17 – (after school) Secondary Building Meetings; (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Band Spring Concert in the Endslo PAC
- May 18 – (3:00 p.m.) Joshua Eaton Jaguar Jog; (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings; (7:00 p.m.)

Town Meeting Approves School Department Budget *School Department Budget Overwhelmingly Supported*

On Thursday evening, Town Meeting approved the FY18 School Department Budget of \$41,401,661, which is a 1.6% increase from the current fiscal year. This budget keeps all of the core structures in place for one more year. Unfortunately, this budget reflects a \$907,000 reduction from a level service budget which results in 10.9 FTE positions being eliminated of which 6.4 FTE of those positions being teachers. These reductions will result in less course sections in High School art, business, physical education, foreign language, social studies, science, and English and the elimination of 2.0 FTE teachers at the elementary level. There is also a reduction in cleaning services at the High School, professional development and math coaching support for staff, technology, building supplies and technology support for all schools. There are also fee increases for full day kindergarten, RISE preschool, High School athletics and extracurricular activities. The budget does keep the 7.0 FTE middle school teachers and the 3.3 FTE Kindergarten Paraeducators that were originally eliminated in the Superintendent’s Recommended Budget.

Although this was a very difficult budget process that has lasted 11 months, there was a high level of collaboration between Municipal and Town officials. Without this collaboration, the outcome of this budget could have resulted in more staffing reductions as the Municipal budget is holding back \$132,000 in purchases for next year.

A special thanks goes out to Director of Finance Gail Dowd who has worked tirelessly since she was hired in August to develop a budget and a process that was transparent and informative. Over 150 questions from School Committee members, Finance Committee members, Town Meeting members, and the community have been asked, answered, and documented to inform the public and the community about the complexities of this year’s budget.

Reading Schools Salute Special Olympians *Reading Students Shine at Event*

A sun-splashed day at the Special Olympics Massachusetts Games in Malden on Thursday, May 4 was capped off with an enthusiastic and warm reception at Reading’s Wood End Elementary School. Applause, high fives, applause, and chants of “Wildcats!” were the order of the day at Wood End, as the whole school lined the courtyard and hallways to celebrate the accomplishments of the school’s Special Olympians. ,

RMHS Choral Spring Concert

- May 19 – Last Day of School for Seniors
- May 20 – (all day) RMHS Drama Broadway Trip
- May 22 – 25 – RMHS Senior Finals
- May 24 – Grade 6 – 8 Early Release; (after school) Secondary Building Meetings – Collaborative Proposal; (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Spanish Honor Society Inductions in the Endslo PAC; (6:30 p.m.) Birch Meadow Open House
- May 25 – (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings – Grade Level; (6:30 p.m.) Coolidge Open House; (7:00 p.m.) Parker Open House
- May 26 - (6:30 p.m.) RMHS Senior Prom at the Fairmount Copley Plaza
- May 29 – No School/Offices Closed. Thank you to all of our Veterans for their Service
- May 30 – (5:00 p.m.) RMHS Senior Boat Cruise and All Night Party; (6:00 p.m.) Instrument Rental Night @ Coolidge
- May 31 – (9:00 a.m.) Parker Writing Celebration; (7:00 p.m.) Reading Scholarship Foundation Awards Night in the Endslo PAC
- June 1 – (after school) RISE/Elementary Building Meetings – Grade Level Common Time
- June 2 – (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Senior Class Day in the Endslo PAC; (8:30 a.m.) Joshua Eaton Author Fest; (6:00 p.m.) RMHS Choral Celebration in the Endslo PAC & Main Street
- June 3 – (8:00 a.m.) SAT Testing – RMHS NOT a Test Center



Reading Students Proudly Displays Banner at Olympics



Kamilla Mejia-Melendez finds a warm reception upon returning from the Games.



Wood End Elementary students eagerly away the arrival of their classmates.



Patrick Connors basks in the moment of returning from the Special Olympics Massachusetts Games.



Franco Pannullo, medals in hand, finds a warm reception from the rest of the Wood End student body.

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulations to baseball, boys and girls lacrosse, boys and girls tennis, boys and girls track on their wins this week.
- To the Cast and Crew of the RMHS Drama Club Spring Show, *The Taming of the Shrew* for an outstanding show this weekend.

Kelley Bostwick Appointed RISE Preschool Director

Birch Meadow and Wood End Team Chair to Begin on July 1st

The Reading Public Schools is pleased to announce that Kelley Bostwick will be appointed the RISE Preschool Director to replace Debbie Butts, who is retiring on June 30th. Kelley is currently the Special Education Team Chair for the Birch Meadow and Wood End Elementary Schools for the last four years and has worked in the Reading Public Schools for the last six years. Previous to her role in Reading, Ms. Bostwick has been a Special Education teacher in Ohio, Maryland, and Massachusetts. She has a Bachelor's Degree from Kent State University in Special Education and a Master's Degree in school administration from American International College.

Kelley will begin her new role on July 1st. Congratulations to Kelley on her new role in the Reading Public Schools!

RMHS Boys Swim Coach Recognized

Kendall "Ken" Holbrook, the head coach of the Reading high school boys' swim team, has been awarded the "Priscilla Davis Silver Service Award" by the Eastern Massachusetts Interscholastic Swim Coaches Association (EMISCA). The award is for 25 years –or more – of service to the Mass. swimming community for coaching, officiating and other areas of the swimming world. The award was presented to him at the annual EMISCA banquet on April 27.

Holbrook has been the Reading boys' swim coach for 25 years, but his contributions to the swimming world go back even further. He was the first person to try to get high school swimming into the Reading sports program. His first attempt in 1984 failed, but two years later he was joined by five others in the Reading swimming community and they succeeded in getting the program accepted. The girls' team started in the fall of 1988 and the boys' team came into existence a year later.

He was also on the Pool Committee whose three years of work resulted in what is now the Burbank YMCA pool.

He began his coaching career at the North Suburban YMCA in Woburn where, beginning in 1981, he officiated every meet held there for ten years. He also became an assistant coach and US Swim coach under head coach John Henriques. During this time he was President of the Y swim parents association for nine years. From 1988 to 1991 he was assistant coach and then head coach at Meadow Brook Golf Club in Reading.

His first high school coaching job was with the girls' team at Randolph high school in 1990. Then from 1990 to 1991 he coached the Framingham North boys' swim team in their last year before they combined with Framingham South to become Framingham high school. His team of 17 finished third in the Bay State Conference and seventh at North Sectionals.

He began his career in Reading in the 1992-1993 season. In the fall of 1993 he began a 10 year career with the Framingham high school girls' swim team. He took that team from a bottom three team in a nine school Bay State Conference to a top three team in an eleven team conference. For his efforts he was awarded Coach of the Year in 1994 by the *Metro West News*.

Superintendent's Office

Hours this Week

All are welcome

5/8 (5:00 -6:00 p.m.) –
RPS Administrative
Offices

5/11 (7:30-8:30 p.m.)-
Killam Elementary School

5/13 (9:00-10:00 a.m.) –
RPS Administrative
Offices

In his 25 years at Reading he has achieved a 150 – 102 – 3 won, lost, tied record. He has two Middlesex League dual meet championships and three Middlesex League Championship meet wins. He has coached four North Sectional champions and his teams have finished as high as third at North Sectionals and as high as fifth at State Division I championships. He was selected as Coach of the Year in 2011 by both the *Boston Globe* and EMISCA.

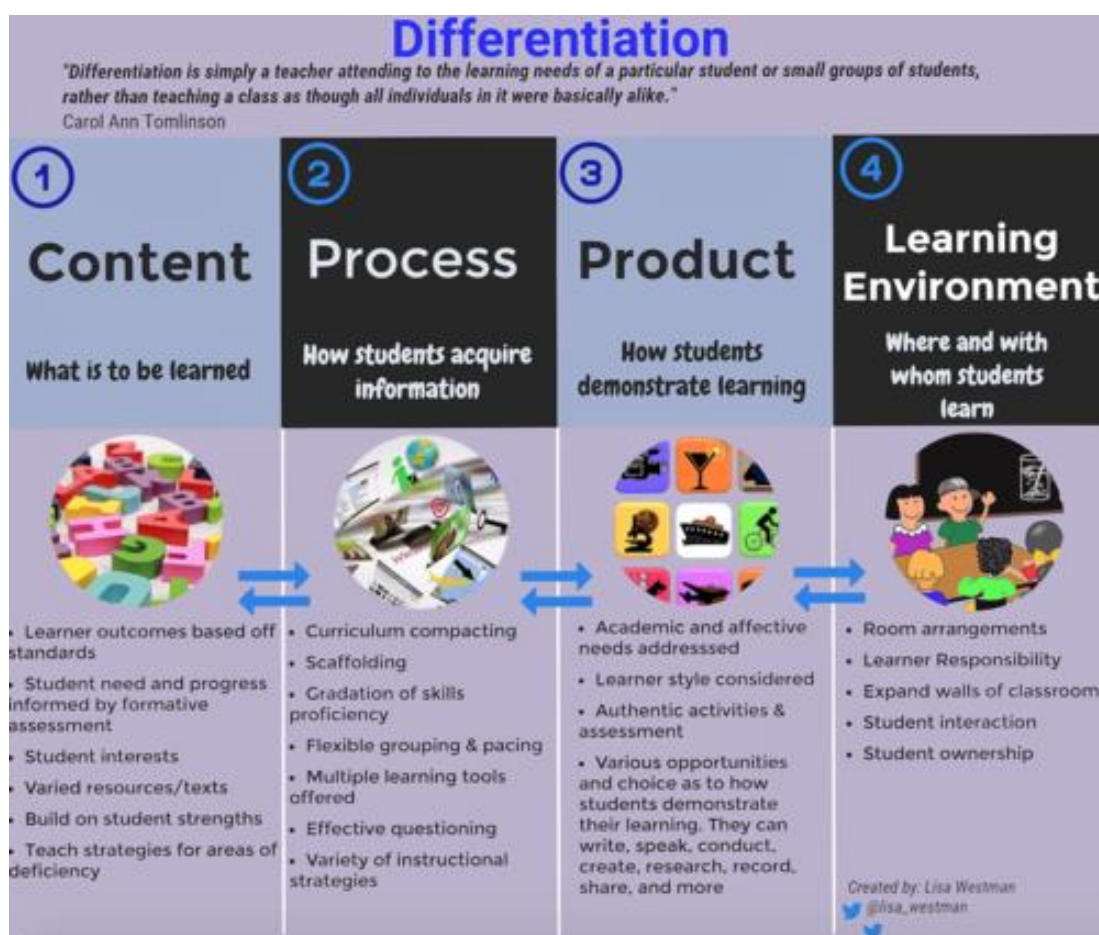
Ken has also been a high school official for over 25 years as a member of the Eastern Mass Swim Officials Association. As a coach he is a member of the National Interscholastic Coaches Association and the American Swim Coaches Association.

He is a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the U. S. Air Force Reserve. On active duty for eight years he flew KC-135 tankers in Southeast Asia. For this he was awarded the Air Medal as well as other awards.

He is widowed and has a son Kyle in Schenectady, NY and daughters Heather in Reading and Hilary in Brunswick, ME.

Yes, Differentiation Is Hard. So, Let's Get It Right.

By Peter DeWitt for [Education Week Blogs](#)



Today's guest post is written by Lisa Westman. Lisa is an instructional coach specializing in differentiation for Skokie School District 73.5 in suburban Chicago. She taught middle school gifted humanities, ELA, and SS for twelve years before becoming a coach.

I must admit, I love a good challenge. I love the learning that comes from trial and error. I love hitting roadblocks and finding detours. This probably explains why I also love differentiating instruction. I equate differentiation to a giant jigsaw puzzle with student needs being the pieces. Once I fit the first pieces together, the next few pieces fall into place. There are moments of frustration as mistakes I inevitably make mistakes and completing the puzzle may take a while, but the result is always worth the effort.

Like puzzles, differentiating instruction can be a complicated endeavor. In fact, a [2008 report by the Fordham Institute](#) found that 83% of teachers nationwide believe that differentiation is "somewhat" or "very" difficult to implement. Subsequent differentiation statistics support the 2008 finding; educators continue to consider differentiating instruction as strenuous. These results are not surprising. As one of differentiation's foremost experts, Carol Ann Tomlinson explains, "I absolutely understand that differentiating instruction well is not easy. But then, I've never felt that teaching should be easy."

Teaching is not easy. Teaching is a career that requires a physical, emotional, and mental commitment. Teachers are used to things being "hard". So, why should differentiating instruction be the exception? This leads me to wonder: "Is watching students struggle because their needs are not being met easier than differentiating?"

In January of 2015, educational expert [Rick Wormeli tweeted](#), "far from being a detriment to student learning [differentiated instruction] is the only way we can teach all students, not just the easy ones."

Wormeli's tweet is a call to action. Differentiation is our puzzle and as dedicated educators, we certainly can solve it...one piece at a time. We just need the right pieces. Ironically, I have found this is precisely the issue with many educators' perception of differentiation. They have the wrong pieces of information. Teachers operating under a set of fallacies will often disregard differentiation entirely or ineffectively implement with no clear benefit to students.

To avoid exerting coveted time, energy, and resources for naught, I would like to clarify some common misinterpretations of differentiation.

#1: "Differentiation means I have to plan something different for every student."

Clarification: Differentiation means that your students are engaged in learning that is appropriate for their readiness level, and they can learn at their pace. Differentiation also considers student interest and preferred learning style. These criteria can be addressed without planning for each student individually.

Now, what? Pre-assess students. Look for patterns of performance to initially group students. Then, formatively assess students and regroup them as their needs change. To incorporate student interest, look at The Common Core Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and the C3 framework as a gift. The majority of these standards are concept or skills-based rather than rooted in specific content. Use standards as a springboard for planning relevant, skills-based learning experiences. Allow students to have an influence on the content by asking them targeted questions to determine their interests relative to standards being assessed.

#2: "I differentiate by grouping students by reading ability and giving them leveled readings."

Quote of the Week . . .



Before you talk, listen.
Before you react, think.
Before you criticize, wait.
Before you pray, forgive.
Before you quit, try.

Unknown

Clarification: This may seem like differentiation, but in actuality this is tracking within the classroom setting. Leveled texts don't necessarily address the specific needs of students which are often unrelated to reading ability. All students deserve access to challenging and interesting material. Differentiation comes into play with how students interact with the text.

Now, what? Differentiate the process (task) and product (how learning is demonstrated) for students. Consider the level at which students will engage with the text and how they can best show their understanding. The same text can be used by most students by compacting the curriculum for high-achievers and scaffolding for students who need more support. Refer to [Webb's Depth of Knowledge](#) and [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) in conjunction with student conferencing to co-evaluate student progress and co-design their learning process. Not only is conferencing a type of formative assessment, but it is an opportunity to model effective questioning, gain insight into students' thought processes, and offer students ownership of their learning.

#3: "I can differentiate effectively using one data point."

Clarification: Impossible. First of all, there is quantitative data (think numbers) and qualitative data (think observations). To differentiate most effectively a combination of data types should be used. Additionally, multiple formative assessment results need to be examined to allow for flexible pacing and grouping which are the hallmarks of differentiation.

Now, what? Think about the data you are currently using. Is this data giving you information about the whole child on a day-day basis? What does this information tell you? What other information do you need? Work to eliminate meaningless data points, offer a multitude of formative assessment types, and use academic data as well as affective data to get a clear picture of each student.

#4: "Differentiation is easy, just give the high students more and the low students less."

Clarification: Differentiation is not more or less. Differentiation is challenging a student just enough so that it neither impedes learning if too hard or causes apathy if too easy or redundant. ([Cash, Richard](#)).

Now, what? Think quality over quantity. It is quite possible that one high-level question is more challenging than twenty low-level questions. Plus, being asked to show mastery of a concept or skill twenty times builds frustration for high-achieving students because they don't need the practice and similarly produces frustration for struggling students because they are practicing the skill incorrectly 20 times.

#5: "I don't need to change anything about my instructional practices to effectively differentiate."

Clarification: Frankly, the factory model of teaching is not appropriate for today's learners. If at any point while reading this blog post you thought, "Well, I can't do that because what would the rest of the students be doing...?" this misinterpretation may be subconsciously preventing you from truly differentiating for your students.

Now, what? Don't beat yourself up; you are not alone. The first step in change is recognizing the issue. Take small steps and allow yourself time to learn and practice. If your district employs instructional coaches, partner a coach in an authentic coaching cycle. If your school district does not have instructional coaches, partner

Disney Tweet of the Week



Don't you ever stop dreaming. You can be anyone you want to be.

—Travers Goff (Saving Mr. Banks)

with a colleague. Engage in [a book study](#) and try something together. Lastly, I encourage everyone to build a global PLN (professional learning network) by connecting with other educators on social media.

As you begin the school year, try to reconcile these misconceptions by attempting to implement one of the clarifications. Be patient and if a piece isn't fitting, reflect and try another piece. Differentiation may never be easy, but it will always be worth the effort.

Questions about this post? Connect with Lisa on Twitter @lisa_westman.

Reading Public Schools Cafeteria Manager Wins National Recognition

Dianne Ferguson named SNA Northeast Regional Manager of the Year

By [Elizabeth \(Reading Patch Poster\)](#) —



The national, non-profit School Nutrition Association (SNA) has awarded Dianne Ferguson from Barrows Elementary School in Reading Public School District, MA, the Northeast regional Manager of the Year Award, considered the highest honor a school nutrition manager can earn. The award recognizes a cafeteria manager who has demonstrated dedication and ingenuity to improve his or her school meal program.

Truly invested in her students' lives, Dianne Ferguson knows more than just their names, but the specific needs, interests and medical challenges of her students. As cafeteria manager, safety is a top concern. Ferguson works collaboratively with

Important Websites

RPS District Website

www.reading.k12.ma.us

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/>

families to ensure all students have access to a safe meal; from translating for a family or working with food sensitivities due to specific needs/disabilities, to working with a family of a child with Celiac disease. Ferguson makes herself available during, before, and after paid hours to meet with parents who have questions and concerns about their child's diet and options.

Known for her informational bulletin boards, Ferguson recently created a board depicting foods of the world - showing where that food can be found and interesting facts about the native areas. She has helped with a number of health and nutrition programs in the school, including a student group to create a healthy snack program, the Smarter Lunchrooms initiative and the school's Wellness, Allergy, Safety, and Health committee (WASH), taking her contributions beyond the kitchen to the wider school community.

"Dianne Ferguson shows a true passion for her students, with special attention to the safety and dietary needs of the children at her school," said SNA CEO Patricia Montague, CAE. "Creating a positive and educational environment, she helps to not only provide healthy school meals, but she feeds the minds of the students who come through her cafeteria every day."

The Manager of the Year Award is given in honor of Louise Sublette, a leader in school nutrition in her state and in the national School Nutrition Association. During her 43 years in the profession, Sublette worked in many areas of foodservice—public schools, colleges, hospitals and elderly feeding programs. Sublette dedicated her career to honoring school nutrition professionals and ensuring those who work in school cafeterias have access to professional development opportunities, empowering them to help their school meal programs flourish.

In July, Ferguson will be honored during the Awards Ceremony at the School Nutrition Association's Annual National Conference in Atlanta, GA.

About School Nutrition Association:

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) is a national, non-profit professional organization representing 57,000 school nutrition professionals across the country. Founded in 1946, SNA and its members are dedicated to making healthy school meals and nutrition education available to all students. For more information on school meals, visit www.SchoolNutrition.org/SchoolMeals.

Watch the heartwarming video of a little girl showing her friends her new prosthetic leg

By Colby Itkowitz for the Washington Post [*Inspired Life*](#)

In a heartwarming video making its way around the Internet this week, a little girl named Anu proudly shows off her new hot pink prosthetic leg to her classmates on the playground. The other kids gather around her and, overwhelmed with excitement for their friend, hug her warmly and run with her around the pavement.

The video was posted by BBC Midlands, which interviewed the British family after 7-year-old Anu received a new sports blade from the government, which, she said, allows her to run faster and dance.

Her right leg was amputated after she was born, and while she's had prosthetic legs before, this one was made especially for her through special funding the United Kingdom's National Health Service set aside last year. These blades need to be replaced every two years, and the BBC reports that there's no guarantee that the government will maintain the funding stream. The blades can cost \$2,500 to \$6,400.

If government funding doesn't come through, Anu's father told the BBC reporter, he'd be willing to sell his house if that's what it would take to give Anu a normal life.

The BBC Midlands video showing the elementary school-age students rallying around their friend with genuine happiness and acceptance, while Anu exudes pure glee at the positive attention, is generating all the feelings. It has been viewed more than 2.2 million times on Facebook since it was posted Wednesday morning.

With all the negativity in the world, the 37-second video is a beautifully simple reminder that we could all take lessons from kids on how to treat one another.



You can access video [here](#).



Civil Civics Series

May 3 | 7:00 PM

LIVEWIRES

The Honest Truth about Fake News

(Mis)information and How it Spreads

A dynamic line-up of media experts tackles the current news landscape: social networks, investigative journalism, information literacy & why it matters to our democracy. Q&A to follow!



Dan Kennedy, Professor of Journalism NE University, author, and panelist on WOBH's Beat the Press.



Takis Metaxas, Professor of Computer Science Wellesley College. Co-creator of TwitterTrails.



Melissa Zimdars, Professor of Communication & Media Merrimack College. Director of OpenSources.

This program is free of charge thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Friends of the Reading Public Library.

64 Middlesex Ave, Reading, MA 01867
 781-944-0840
readingpl.org



Reading Public Schools Happenings

RMHS Students Participate in Biogen Lab Experience

Students in the History & Science of Epidemic Disease Class recently visited the Community Lab at Biogen in Cambridge to learn about the work of this global biotechnology company in developing, marketing, and manufacturing medicines for people living with serious neurological, autoimmune, and rare diseases. In the lab students conducted an ELISA test which is used to determine whether a specific target antibody has been produced by a person or animal. As such the ELISA test is used to determine whether a person has been exposed to a pathogen such as HIV or the H1N1 virus.





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

RMHS High Fives for This Week

Below are the RMHS Seniors who have been recognized as the High Fives for this week. Congratulations to these students!

Lily Tyler, Class of 2017

Lily is being recognized for her outstanding achievement in academics, athletics, and leadership. Academically, Lily is a positive and diligent Honor Roll student in the top 20% of her class. During her four years here at RMHS, she has been a member of the Century Club and has exemplified perseverance throughout her high school career. In her junior year, Lily was selected as the Team MVP for her creative and positive attitude during the annual *Real World Problem Solving* event. This year, Lily has particularly enjoyed her Anatomy class and intends on using it in the future as she pursues a career in dentistry. Athletically, Lily has been a 3 year varsity athlete on the winter track team, competing in the hurdles event and earning an invitation to the state track meet last season. Lily has also been a 3 year member and captain of the girls' varsity softball team. Her proudest accomplishment as a member of the softball program was reaching the state championship game in her sophomore season. In terms of service and activities, Lily is an officer in the *A World of Difference Club*, which is committed to embracing diversity and confronting and eliminating discrimination. She also volunteers at the food pantry at the Old South Methodist Church in Reading and volunteers with the Miracle League in Acton to help children with disabilities play baseball. In the fall, Lily will be attending San Diego State University and majoring in bio chemistry. Congratulations, Lily!



Lily Tyler

Connor Mulligan, Class of 2017

Connor is being recognized for his accomplishments in academics, athletics, and service. Academically, Connor is an Honor Roll student who has challenged himself in his senior year by taking three Advanced Placement Courses in Computer Science,

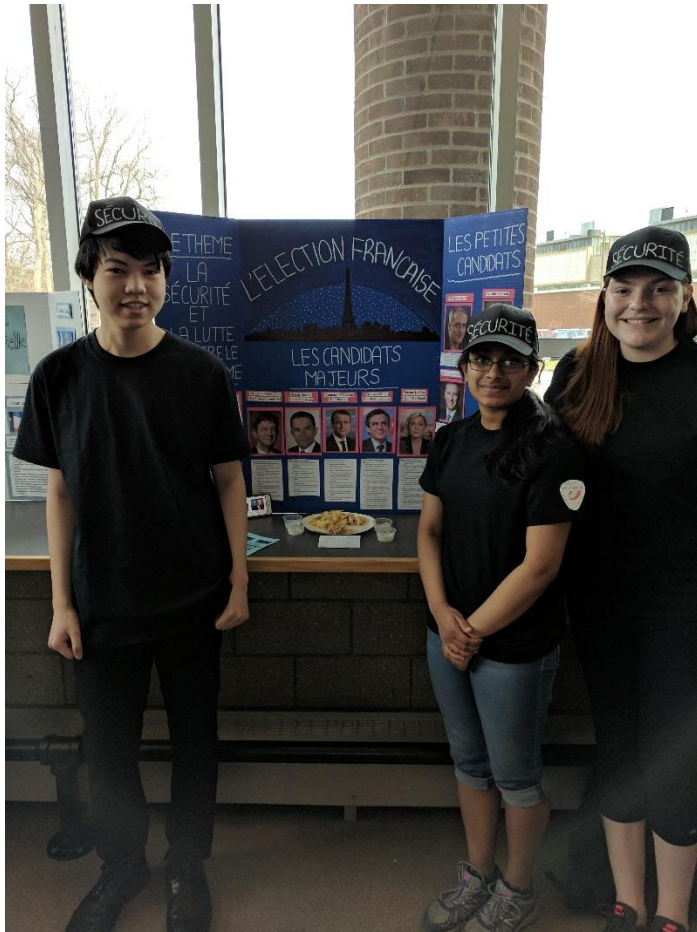
Statistics, and Calculus. He has particularly enjoyed his Honors Accounting coursework, which has helped inspire him to pursue a career in business. Athletically, Connor has been a member of the varsity baseball team for the past three years and is a co-captain this season. He was a key part of the Rockets' regular season and post-season success last year, as the boys posted impressive regular season victories over two Division 1 bound pitchers from Wilmington and Belmont and eventually advanced to the Division 2 North Final. Connor has been named as a Middlesex League All-Star for the past two seasons and has helped lead the Rockets to a first place standing with their impressive 7-0 start—most recently posting a big victory against Belmont. Connor is also very involved in community service and mentoring in the Town of Reading. He is a member of Samantha's Harvest Club, participating in the annual walk and helping to organize various fundraisers in an effort to promote awareness and support for children with Down Syndrome. He also enjoys coaching and mentoring elementary and middle school age children during the summer at baseball camp. Next year, Connor will be attending Bryant University and will be pursuing a major in finance.



Connor Mulligan

RMHS French Students Participate annual *Jour de la Culture Francophone* event

On Thursday, April 13th, the RMHS French Department held its annual *Jour de la Culture Francophone*, this year's theme being the French presidential elections. Students showcased their research on subjects ranging from the early leaders of France to today's presidential candidates and the issues, culminating in the actual voting process, which is somewhat different from our own... (And for those who are interested, the winner was: *Emmanuel Macron*!). A special thanks goes out to RMHS French Teachers Emeline Festa, Janet Kline, and Tanya McSorely for coordinating and planning this event.





Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts go out to Barrows teacher **Mary McGrath** on the loss of a loved one recently.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - ✓ Nicholas Bonfanti, Night Shift Custodian, Birch Meadow
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

1.0FTE Long Term Substitute Latin Teacher, Reading Memorial High School 16-17 school year

https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=263

1.0FTE Elementary School Psychologist (one-year assignment), Joshua Eaton Elementary School 17-18 school year

https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=264

1.0FTE Special Education Math Teacher, Parker Middle School 17-18 school year

https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=265

Blazing Trails...

"Boston Charter School Teacher Named 'National Teacher Of The Year.'" The 2017 'National Teacher of the Year' award has gone to a public charter school teacher in Dorchester. Sydney Chaffee of the Codman Academy Charter Public School is the first National Teacher of the Year from Massachusetts since the inception of the award 65 years ago. She's also believed to be the first from a charter school to win the award. [Read More](#)

"The Science of the Individual (Why Average Doesn't Make Sense in School)." No one is average according to educator and author AJ Juliani. The assumption that metrics comparing us to an average-like developmental milestones, GPAs, personality assessments, standardized test results, and performance review rankings-reveal something meaningful about our potential is so ingrained in our consciousness that we don't even question it. That assumption, says Harvard's Todd Rose, is spectacularly-and scientifically-wrong. The end of average - as Todd Rose puts it in his book - is a huge shift in how we think about medical studies, designing fighter jet cockpits, and our current educational system. [Read More](#)

"Never Mind the Students; Homework Divides Parents." The New York Times reports on the "debate over young children and homework" in New York public schools, where some schools have proposed or followed through with eliminating homework for early grades in order to encourage students to pursue their own interests. There is a "war" between parents who believe reducing the burden of take-home worksheets allows students to spend time reading or doing tech-related activities and those who worry the "less affluent families that could not afford extra workbooks, or software programs to supplement" their child's after-school education. Noting that "there is no official tally on the number of the city public elementary schools that are altering their approach to homework" and that the Education Department "does not mandate amounts of homework," the story says questions about elementary school homework have become a national issue as standardized testing and global competition puts more stress on parents and children alike. [Read More](#)

"Rethinking Homework for Student Success." In their interactive ASCD Empower 17 session "Hacking Homework," authors Connie Hamilton and Starr Sackstein asked participants to divide into the four corners of the room based on whether or not they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with statements about homework. [Read More](#)

"Whole Child Symposium: Confronting Inequity." Join ASCD on May 10, 2017, at ASCD's Whole Child Symposium for a conversation about equity in education that will cover issues of race, economics, culture, gender and more. This discussion will feature a diverse group of panelists who will address some of the various factors that should be considered when working toward equity in education. Attend the event in person in Washington, D.C., or stream it live. For more information, visit the [Whole Child Symposium website](#).

"Here's What the U.S. Can Learn About Teaching Quality From Top Countries." States and districts, plagued with recurring waves of teacher shortages in certain subject areas (namely science, math, and special education), have come up with short-term solutions like hiring teachers with emergency or temporary credentials or using substitutes. Teacher-preparation enrollment numbers have dropped in recent years, and surveys of U.S. teachers show a growing discontentment with the profession. Is there a better way? Education researcher Linda Darling-Hammond's new book, "Empowered Educators: How High-Performing Systems Shape Teaching Quality Around the World," is a three-year study into how seven high-performing jurisdictions recruit, develop, and support high-quality teachers. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week!