



Pathways

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

September 17, 2017

Volume 9, Number 3

Upcoming Dates

- September 19 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Guidance Financial Aid Night in the Performing Arts Center
- September 20 – Rosh Hashanah begins at Sundown
- September 21 – 22 – Rosh Hashanah Celebrated
- September 25 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- September 27 – Grade 6 – 8 Early Release; (6:30 p.m.) Middle School Back to School Nights
- September 28 – (6:30 p.m.) RCASA Annual Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- September 29 – (sundown) Yom Kippur Begins
- October 3 – (7:00 p.m.) Community Planning Committee Event in the Endslo PAC
- October 4 – (7:00 p.m.) Reading SEPAC Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- October 7 – (8:00 a.m.) SAT Testing – RMHS is a Test Center
- October 9 – Columbus Day No School/Offices Closed
- October 11 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (7:30 p.m.) Financial Forum @ Senior Center
- October 14 – (8:00 a.m.) RMHS PSAT Testing

Providing Accommodations for Students on Religious Holidays

Over the next few weeks, there will be teachers, students, and their families who will be celebrating and observing two major religious Jewish holidays where they will be missing school. During this time, families will be attending temple services and gathering with families during the evening hours. The full School Committee Policy, IMDA is found [here](#). For planning purposes, the following upcoming holidays are recognized by the Reading Public Schools as major religious holidays:

Rosh Hashanah: Begins at sundown on Wednesday, September 20th and ends on Friday, September 22nd.

Yom Kippur: Begins at sundown on Friday, September 29th and ends on Saturday, September 30th.

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

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

As a result, the following accommodations will be in place for **ALL** students on the following dates:

No assignments will be due for any student the day of or the day after the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur holidays. **Therefore, there will be no assignments due in any classroom in the Reading Public Schools on September 21st or 22nd.**

No tests or quizzes will be scheduled on the days of Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. **Therefore, there will be no tests or quizzes scheduled on September 21st or 22nd.**

No one-time events such as field trips, music performances, theatre plays and productions, auditions, and back to school functions will be scheduled on the days or eves of Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. Therefore, there will be no one-time events scheduled on **the evenings of September 20th and 29th and September 21st, 22nd, and 30th.**

Absences on Religious Holidays

Parents and students (if age appropriate) are encouraged to notify the school in advance when their child will be not be attending school because of religious or ethnic observance.

- October 16 & 17 – (all day) Grade 8 Challenge Day @ Coolidge
- October 18 & 19 – (all day) Grade 8 Challenge Day @ Parker
- October 16 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- October 17 – (6:30 p.m.) RCASA/RMHS Guidance Speaker Lynn Lyons in the Endslo PAC
- October 18 – (6:30 p.m.) Annual College Fair at the Shriner's Auditorium; (6:30 p.m.) Performing and Fine Arts College Fair @ Boston University
- October 20 – (7:00 p.m.) RMHS Choral – Karaoke Night in RMHS Cafeteria & Room 239
- October 21 – (8:00 a.m.) – Parent University at RMHS

Discrimination against any student, because of such individual's religious/ethnic belief or practice, or any absence based on said belief or practice is prohibited.

1. Any pupil absent from school because of a religious holiday may not be deprived of any award or eligibility or opportunity to compete for any award because of such absence;
2. Students whose conscientious observance of a religious or ethnic holiday conflicts with participating in a school-scheduled event such as tryouts, athletic contests, theatricals, or concerts, will not be required to participate nor penalized for their non-participation;
3. Any absence because of religious or ethnic holiday must be recorded as an excused absence for religious observance in the school register or in any group or class attendance record.
4. Parents should follow the normal procedures when their child is going to be absent to observe the religious holiday and call the parent verification system at the school on the day of the absence or notify the school in advance by email, written note, or phone. If a child is to receive an excused absence for religious observance, the parent must indicate that information in the correspondence with the school.

If you have any questions, please contact your building principal.

Kindness in the Face of Devastation

By: Dr. Robert Brooks

Article date: September 13, 2017



My September article has typically been devoted to educational issues to coincide with the commencement of the new school year. My intention was to follow that tradition again this year. However, the recent devastation caused by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma has prompted me to bring a different focus to this September's article, namely, what I believe to be the inherent kindness of people and the importance of cultivating this attribute in our lives and the lives of our children.

As I write this column the extensive damage and loss produced by Harvey and Irma and the amount of time that will be required for recovery and repair are becoming increasingly apparent. One cannot help but be saddened by scenes from the past couple of weeks of people, many with young children, waiting desperately in line for hours to enter an evacuation center, of flooding even in those areas that have not witnessed such flooding in the past, of a woman relating how she had saved for years to purchase her first home and now it was gone and she did not have flood insurance, of a mounting injury and death toll, and of the destruction of hundreds of homes, schools, and businesses. The uncertainty of what lies ahead in terms of rebuilding structures and restoring basic services magnifies an ominous feeling of dread captured by one woman in Florida who simply and plaintively said, "I have nowhere to go."

Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulation to the swimming, golf and volleyball teams on their wins this week.
- Special thanks to RMHS and RISE @ RMHS for holding successful curriculum/back to school nights.

In the past I have written about ways for coping with natural disasters such as hurricane Katrina (please see my October, 2005 article) and man-made disasters such as the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (please see my September, October, and November, 2001 articles). In my writings and presentations I have suggested specific strategies we might adopt to help ourselves and our children confront such terrifying events and become increasingly resilient. I would like to share a few additional thoughts in this column.

The Kindness and Courage of Strangers

One phenomenon that was emphasized in the media both during and after the wrath of Harvey and Irma was the incredible kindness of strangers, including those who rescued people who were trapped in their homes or sitting on roofs as the floodwaters rose dangerously high. Individuals who owned boats voluntarily traveled throughout neighborhoods to provide assistance to anyone in need. They did so hour after hour. In one interview a man said he could not remember when he last slept, but he knew that there were people in distress that he could save.

I marveled at the heroism of first responders, including those in helicopters who were literally plucking people from the rooftops of homes and from cars in dangerous weather, often placing their own lives at risk. I was equally impressed as I watched volunteers going door to door to do whatever they could to ensure the safety of others.

A number of stories of generosity and caring were reported. One that especially stood out was that of Gallery Furniture owner Jim “Mattress Mack” McIngvale in Houston. He enlisted volunteers and also used his large delivery trucks to rescue people from the flooding. An article that appeared in *USA Today* noted that at one point 400 people were staying at his two stores. In 2009 someone set a fire in his warehouse causing millions of dollars of damage. Houston customers kept him in business so McIngvale wanted to support the community during the impact of Harvey. Many volunteered to help him so that he was able to provide free breakfast, lunch, and dinner to those who sought shelter at his furniture store.

McIngvale said, “Sitting in a perfectly normal house one day and then, 10 minutes later, you’ve got three feet of water in it is very stressful. We’re trying to help them out because they’ve done so much for us over the years.” This is certainly a vivid example of “paying it forward.”

In an interview broadcast on NPR’s “All Things Considered” hosted by Ari Shapiro and Kelly McEvers, McIngvale offered the following perspective: “The people of Texas are resilient, so are the people of this country. And, you know, my daughter’s favorite saying is if not for my struggle, I would not have known my strength. All of us in Texas are struggling right now. But it will help us to be more resilient, strong human beings who can help out the community.” McIngvale continued, “We believe it takes an entire village to raise a child, and that’s why we’re letting these people in here. And it’s a win-win for everybody.”

Divisiveness vs. Connectedness

As I reflected upon McIngvale’s words and the many examples of kindness and courage displayed in the aftermath of Harvey and Irma, I was absorbed by several thoughts. During the past year I have discussed the divisiveness, mistrust, and hostility that exist among residents of the United States. We witnessed with pain and anxiety the strong wedge that divided people of different political views during the last presidential election, a wedge forged in anger in which civility and trust became lost commodities. As we know, these kinds of negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are not unique to the United States.

In contrast to this increased divisiveness is my experience and research as well as that of others that indicate enriching the lives of others is a key ingredient in nurturing meaning and purpose in our lives and strengthening our own resilience. In several books I co-authored with my colleague Dr. Sam Goldstein, including *Raising Resilient Children* and *The Power of Resilience: Achieving Balance, Confidence, and Personal Strength in Your Life*, we proposed that there is an inborn need or desire in children to help others. If you observe young children you will see many examples of this desire to engage in what I have labeled “contributory activities.” The enthusiasm and joy children display, for instance, when helping parents rake leaves, bringing holiday meals to people who are unable to leave their homes or apartments, and donating toys or clothes to those who have suffered losses or are less fortunate, are very apparent.

Superintendent's Office

Hours this Week

All are welcome

9/19 RPS Administrative
Offices
(5:00–6:00 p.m.)

9/21 Wood End School
(2:45 –3:45 p.m.)

Yet, at times, divisiveness has appeared to be a more powerful force than those actions that bring us together as a caring community. Thus, it was encouraging to witness the empathy and compassion demonstrated by so many during the latest natural disasters. And, very importantly, one could not help but notice that those who provided rescue and comfort comprised people of different races and most likely, different religions and backgrounds; the same was true of the beneficiaries of these acts of generosity and courage.

I am certain that none of the rescuers considered a person's race, religion, or political beliefs as they pulled that individual into a boat or onto a helicopter. I am also certain that those being rescued had the same attitude about those to whom they owed their lives. This kind of "blindness" was apparent in charitable events held throughout the United States to raise money and essential products for hurricane survivors. It was uplifting to hear a child in Massachusetts who was involved in one such event assert it was important to help others, while an adult reported that more trucks than anticipated would be needed to transport all of the goods that had been collected to Houston.

Caring in the Absence of Disasters

Without wishing to minimize in any manner the acts of bravery and charity we have seen in the past few weeks, I would be remiss if I did not mention an observation expressed by others, whether after 9/11 or Katrina or a similar event—namely, that it is unfortunate that it often takes the impact of a catastrophe to break down the everyday barriers that divide us and encourage us to connect with each other. It is not unusual to find that emotions and actions associated with kindness elicited during times of crisis often wane as things return to what might be considered "normal." I have often wondered, "How can we stop this from happening?"

In considering a response to this last question, I have emphasized the significance of "personal control." This concept involves the belief that while we have little, if any, control over certain events that occur in our lives (hurricanes are but one illustration), what we do have control over are our attitude and response to these events. Guided by a belief in personal control, I think it is incumbent upon all of us to consider what we can do to sustain the coming together of people even in the absence of devastating events.

I typically suggest that we begin slowly and engage in what I have referred to as "seemingly small gestures." I first used this term years ago when I conducted research to discover what people considered to be their best and worst moments in school that involved a teacher or administrator. I was impressed with how many people who completed my questionnaire vividly recalled a single comment or gesture on the part of an educator—both positive or negative—that continued to have an impact on them decades later.

I advocate that we consider what small gestures we can initiate that will serve to fortify bonds of caring and trust. One simple but powerful gesture is to create opportunities for both our children and ourselves to enrich the lives and well-being of others.

Such a gesture should not be considered a one-time occurrence but rather become a regular practice in families, a practice that will reinforce empathy and caring. Acts of kindness can be accomplished through our places of worship or our involvement in our favorite charities. In nurturing caring we must also be vigilant about the words we use and actions we take so that we avoid establishing a "we" or "they" mentality. Instead, we must learn to honor our differences while at the same time appreciating the many commonalities that bind us.

"Our Common Humanity"

Dr. Emma Seppala, science director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University, in an article published in *Scientific American* and titled "How the Stress of Disaster Brings People Together," offered the following research-based observation:

Acute stress may help remind us of a fundamental truth: our common humanity. Understanding our shared vulnerability—life makes no promises—may be frightening, but it can inspire kindness, connection, and desire to stand together and support each other. Acute stress, as unpleasant as it

Quote of the Week . . .



If you have talent, use it in every which way possible. Don't hoard it. Don't dole it out like a miser. Spend it lavishly like a millionaire intent on going broke.

Brendan Francis

may be, may also be an opportunity to experience the most beautiful aspects of life: social connection and love.

As I read Seppala's thoughtful words, I thought again about the question I raised earlier in this article, namely, how to maintain and strengthen connections and love even in the absence of disasters. If we subscribe to a belief in the inherent goodness of people and also accept personal responsibility for demonstrating kindness and compassion, we will be in a better position to create strong, positive connections rooted in empathy and compassion. Such a creation will serve not only as a gift for ourselves but, as importantly, for our children.

Reading Public Schools Happenings

RMHS High Fives for the Week

We will continue this year in the Journey to publish the RMHS High Five for the Week. Students chosen for this recognition are RMHS Seniors who have shown strong leadership qualities and have made significant positive contributions to the school. Special thanks to RMHS Teacher Steve McCarthy for providing this information each week.

Molly Jones, Class of 2018



Molly is being recognized for her excellence in academics, athletics, and service. Academically, Molly is in the top 10% of the Class of 2018 and has distinguished herself as a member and officer of the National Honor Society. She has earned High Honors consistently throughout her career at RMHS, and this year has continued to challenge herself by taking a rigorous course load including four Advanced Placement courses. She was also awarded a Bronze Medal last year for her outstanding performance on the National Spanish Exam. In terms of extracurricular activities, Molly has excelled as a member of the Girls Varsity Swim Team since her sophomore year, and helped the Lady Rockets win the Division 2 State Championship last year. She also swims for the Burbank YMCA Bluefins, placing in the top 10 in the 100-yard backstroke and the 200-yard freestyle at the 2017 YMCA New England Championship Meet. Musically, Molly performs as the 2nd chair trombone for the RMHS Jazz Ensemble, which was awarded a Gold Medal at the Massachusetts Association for Jazz Education State Finals in both 2016 and 2017, and later went on to play at the Hatch Shell in Boston. She rounds out her musical accomplishments by playing euphonium in the Symphonic Band. In terms of service, Molly volunteered in the summer as a Leader-in-Training at the Joppa Flats Mass Audubon Camp, helping children ages 6-13 to explore the North Shore habitats and wildlife. She also works and coaches at the Boston Rock Gym as a belayer and assists as a summer camp counselor at the International Rock Climbing School. Molly even finds the time to coach a swim team for the Burbank YMCA Bluefins, as well as helping to run band competitions here at the high school. Next year, Molly hopes to attend the United States Naval Academy to pursue a degree in ecology, environmental science, or oceanography.

Disney Tweet of the Week



What I really wanted was to prove that I could do things right, so that when I looked in the mirror, I'd see someone worthwhile.

—Mulan

Charles Wang, Class of 2018



Charles is being recognized for his outstanding achievement in scholarship, athletics, leadership, and service. Academically, Charles is in the top 10% of the Senior Class and is a member of the National Honor Society and Spanish National Honor Society. Earning High Honors throughout his career at RMHS, he has consistently challenged himself--taking eight Advanced Placement courses and receiving Century Club recognition for his academic performance. Last year, Charles earned the Scholarship Award in Mathematics, as well as the University of Rochester George Eastman Young Leaders Book Award. He was also awarded the Middlesex League Service, Integrity, Leadership, and Spirit--or SILS Award-- for his well-rounded accomplishments and leadership. In terms of extracurricular activities, Charles has proudly served as the President of the Class of 2018 for the past three years. He also serves as president for both the Red Cross Club and Chess Club. Athletically, Charles has been a two-year captain of the Boys Varsity Tennis Team, and has earned Middlesex League All-Star recognition over the past two seasons. He is most proud, however, of last season's night match that showcased the Rocket Tennis Team defeating a talented St. John's Prep Team. In addition to his activities, clubs, and sports, Charles makes time to volunteer at Lahey Clinic, assisting at an in-patient unit, as well as helping at the Directory as needed. He also has volunteered as a camp counselor over the past four years with the Cross Bridge Church in Lexington, where he helped facilitate bible study, as well as games and activities. This past summer, Charles continued his commitment to service and his church by helping economically disadvantaged children in Brooklyn by serving as a camp counselor and religious teacher for two weeks. He also volunteers at a food pantry in Lynn and tutors his peers in Chemistry, Algebra 2, Pre-calculus, and Geometry. Last but not least, Charles did an outstanding job this past Wednesday evening as the "Voice of the Bell" at the Back to School Night event. Next year, Charles will attend college and is currently undecided but is considering a career in medicine, as a pediatrician.

RMHS Volleyball Community Service

Last Sunday, the RMHS Varsity, JV, and Freshmen teams all turned out on Sunday to support the EMARC Road Race. They were the course marshals. Below is a group picture of the team.



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?

 **WILLIAM JAMES COLLEGE**
INTERFACE Referral Service
 **PARTNERS IN PREVENTION**
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, accept your insurance & has available appointments.
Call 1-888-244-6843 (toll free) • M-F • 9am-5pm
<https://interface.williamjames.edu/>

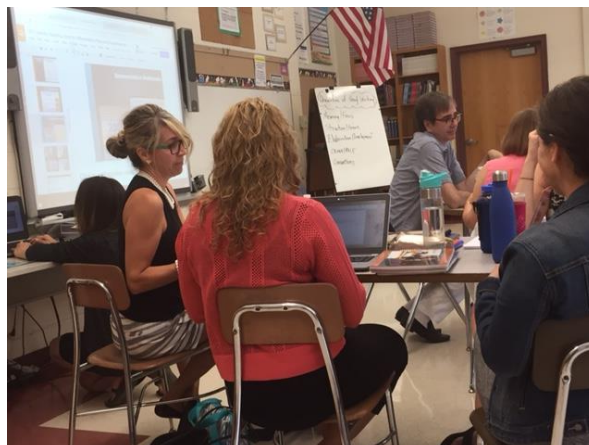
Barrows Kickoff Assembly

On Thursday, Barrows had their first school wide assembly which focused on their core values. Students viewed videos of how students modeled core values at the school. Congratulations to Barrows Grade 5 Teacher and Assistant Principal Andrew Herlihy for emceeing the assembly.



Grade 4 and 5 Teachers Work with Literacy Coach on Writing

Last Thursday and Friday, Grade 4 and 5 teachers worked with Literacy Specialist Maggie Roberts who modeled writing lessons with our Grade 4 students from Barrows.





Killam's 2017-18 Superheroes

Killam recently held their opening school wide assembly and introduced this year's TRRFCC Superheroes.



Stepping Stones...

- Our thoughts go to Community Education Billing Specialist **Vivian Tringale** who lost a close family member recently.
- Our thoughts go out to Killam teacher **Catherine Rice** who lost a close family member recently.
- Congratulations to Parker Grade 6 Bridge Program teacher **Alison Sanchez (Donlon)** on her recent wedding.
- Congratulations to Parker Grade 6 teacher **Lauren Iannacci (Luskin)** on her recent wedding.
- Congratulations to Joshua Eaton Learning Center teacher **Brittany Kurtz (Nachamie)** on her recent wedding.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
 - Catherine Horan, .8 Crossroads Teacher, Wood End
 - Barbara Voyer, PE/Health Teacher, Parker Middle School
 - Hannah LeBlanc, Assistant Girls Soccer Coach, RMHS
- **We have posted** a new position. If interested, please visit
- <https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx> to view the job detail

- High School Special Education Paraeducator - Language Based Program, Reading Memorial High School (repost)
<https://reading.tedk12.com/hire/ViewJob.aspx?JobID=379>

- **New Resource: Quick Reference Guides to the 2017 English Language Arts Curriculum Framework-** Over the summer, DESE updated their [website](#) overall and with new resources, including four [quick reference guides to the 2017 Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy](#). The first, "[Massachusetts Anchor Standards for Reading](#)", shows how the 10 anchor standards work together to define what and how students should read in school. Two additional quick reference guides, one tailored to the [elementary grades](#) and another for the [secondary grades](#), describe the role of close reading in the standards and in the classroom. A fourth, "[Text Complexity and the Growth of Reading Comprehension](#)", provides guidelines and resources designed to help educators choose appropriately complex texts for their students. Each two-page quick reference guide is designed to be widely accessible and easy to distribute, and additional guides will be released on a rolling basis throughout the school year.

Blazing Trails...

"4 Reflections for a Positive Outlook for All Learners." Four reflection questions provide a positive frame for developing relationships between exceptional students and their teachers and peers. These questions ask educators to consider what students and teachers have in common, how students are grouped, what strengths learners possess, and how to reframe language to be more student-centered in this ASCD Express post. [Read More](#)

"Don't Get Rid of Grades. Change Their Meaning & Consequences!" Thomas R. Guskey, Ph.D., Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Kentucky and known throughout the world for his work on student assessment, grading and reporting, professional learning, and educational change is the guest author in this EdWeek post on the idea of grading in our schools. [Read More](#)

"Innovate One Thing." George Couros discusses how even a simple change, tweak, movement in an innovative way can help in developing our students' learning mindset. Couros challenges educators (including himself) to look at just one thing people are doing in their classes/schools and ask, "Is there a better way?" [Read More](#)

"How Project Slides Help Expose Teachers and Students to PBL." Educators should experience project-based learning with their students, but time for such efforts may be lacking, asserts instructional coach Andrew Miller. In this Edutopia blog post, he writes how project slices can help give teachers the student perspective. [Read More](#)

"Mexico Overhauls Tech High Schools." Some schools in Mexico are crediting fewer student dropouts, in part, to a redesign of technical high schools. Some programs now offer real-world work experience such as internships, which one student said helped him stay in school. [Read More](#)

Have a Great Week Ahead!

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