



# Pathways

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

October 29, 2017

Volume 9, Number 9

## Upcoming Dates

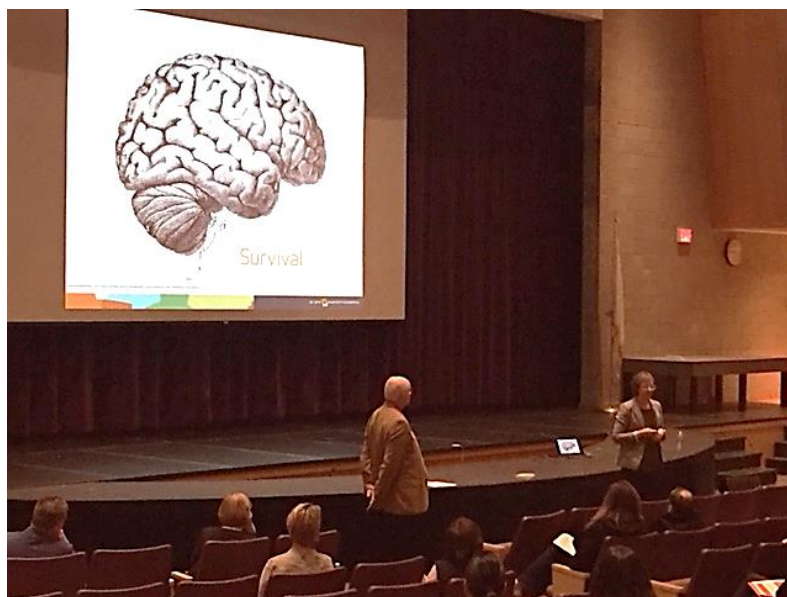
- October 30 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- November 1 – Grade 6 – 12 Early Release; (after school) District PLC Meetings; (5:00 p.m.) Parker School Council Meeting; (7:00 p.m.) Parker PTO Meeting; (7:00 p.m.) Incoming Kindergarten Parent Information Session @ Killam
- November 2 – (7:00 p.m.) Killam PTO Meeting
- November 3 – (9:00 a.m.) Joshua Eaton Veterans Day Assembly
- November 4 – (8:00 p.m.) SAT Testing – RMHS is a Test Center
- November 6 – (7:00 p.m.) School Committee Meeting in the Superintendent's Conference Room
- November 7 – Election Day – No School for Students; Teacher In-Service Day
- November 8 – (after school) Middle & High school Collaborative Planning Time Meetings
- November 9 – (3:10 p.m.) RISE/Elementary Collaborative Planning Time Meetings
- November 10 – (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Musical Pippin in the Endslo PAC
- November 11 – Veterans Day; (7:30 p.m.) RMHS

## Parent University Draws Over 150 Attendees

On Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, over 150 people attended the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Parent University, sponsored by the Reading Cooperative Bank. The goals of Parent University were to be able to:

1. Provide the Reading Public Schools a way to educate parents on important topics,
2. Create stronger relationships with parents, teachers, students, and the wider community, and
3. Help parents gain more confidence and become more engaged in their child's academic programs and larger community.

The event began with a keynote by Dr. David Walsh and Erin Walsh and continued with two workshop sessions which ranged in topics including raising students in the digital age, intentional parenting, the 2017 Youth Risk Survey Behavior Results, Middle School Transition, Middle School Advisory, Anxiety in Elementary Aged Children, School Budget 101, and Raising Hardy and Resilient Children and Youth.



*Dr. David Walsh and Erin Walsh Present at Parent University Keynote*

The evaluations that were received revealed an overwhelming appreciation for the variety of workshops that were offered and the importance of connecting as a community. It is evident that parents want this to continue. Below are some highlights as well:

#### Musical Pippin in the Endslo PAC

- November 12 – (3:00 p.m.) RMHS Musical Pippin in the Endslo PAC
- November 13 – (7:30 p.m.) Town Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- November 16 – (7:30 p.m.) Town Meeting in the Endslo PAC
- November 17 – No School for Students; Teacher In-Service/Conference Day; (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Musical Pippin in the Endslo PAC
- November 18 – (7:30 p.m.) RMHS Musical Pippin in the Endslo PAC

1. 97% of respondents had an Excellent or Very Good experience at Parent University (78% of those are Excellent)
2. The keynote speakers were an important piece of the Parent University success. 100% of respondents Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the information they presented was useful (81% Strongly Agreed).
3. Parents liked the variety of workshops and wished they could have attended more.
4. Parents liked the opportunity to interact with other parents.
5. Parents appreciated the ability to interact with local organizations during the break.

A special thanks goes to Community Education Director Sandy Calandrella, Rich Belmonte, Annmarie Johnson, and Vivian Tringale for all of their help in making this a complete success.

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## Killam Wins \$100 Award For Poetry Project

*One of the top 10 schools in nation for contributing authors*

Last April to celebrate National Poetry Month, Killam's second through fifth grade students learned about all different types of poetry and wrote their own poems during their Media Center classes. Their original poems were submitted to the National Schools Poetry Project sponsored by the Young American Poetry Digest. The National Schools Poetry Project has been reviewing and selecting young authors' poems for publication for the past twenty-three years. Their reviewers selected 109 of our Killam students' poems to be published in the *2017 Young American Poetry Digest*. Killam School was just awarded a \$100 prize for being one of the top 10 schools from across the Nation with the largest number of published student authors. Our school name will be on the Young American Poetry Digest website listing our accomplishment as a top 10 contributing school. I just wanted to let you know how proud I am of our talented young student authors for earning this \$100 award for Killam School.

Here are some of the published poems of our talented Killam students:

*Night of Peace* by Lily Powell

In the small, dark pond  
Water drips peacefully and  
The petals drop down

*Rain* by Medjine Moise

Rain, rain go away  
But why do you run?  
It's nature's bath time

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## Chad Hymas Coming to Reading Middle Schools on Nov. 2

Understanding Disabilities is proud to announce that Chad Hymas will be coming to both Reading Middle Schools on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Chad will be speaking at Parker beginning at 8am and at Coolidge beginning at 1:15pm.

Chad is a great example of how to deal with change and challenges. On April 3, 2001, Chad's life changed instantaneously when a falling one-ton bale of hay broke his neck leaving him a quadriplegic. Doctors said he would never walk again and that for the rest of his life he would be confined to a wheelchair. But Chad's dreams were not paralyzed that day.

## Kudos and Accolades

- Congratulation to the swimming and field hockey teams on their wins this week.
- To all the Parker teachers, administrators, and parents who recently chaperoned the overnight Nature's Classroom Grade 7 Trip. Thank you for taking time out of your schedules to provide this experience for our students.
- Congratulations to the golf team for finishing 5<sup>th</sup> in the State sectional tournament.
- Kudo to golfers Jimmy Murphy and James Henry who advanced to the State Finals in Worcester next week.
- Congratulations to the girls swim team for capturing the Middlesex League title finishing with an undefeated record.

Chad is now a world-class wheelchair athlete playing basketball, full contact quad rugby, and he races marathons. He set a new world record by wheeling a personal marathon of over 500 miles from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas. Yet Chad counts as his greatest accomplishment the fact that he remains a devoted husband to his loving wife, Shondell, and proud father to their three children.

Chad will be coming to Reading to share his powerful messages of understanding and dealing with peer pressure, how to build and maintain self-esteem, how to set and achieve goals, and staying positive around negative people.

We are excited to bring Chad to Reading to speak to our middle school students. A special thanks to Understanding Disabilities from sponsoring Chad's visit to Reading.

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## Trauma Studies Courses

There has been a great amount of interest for the district to bring back the Lesley University Institute for Trauma Studies (LIFTS) courses. Lauren Sabella, the Behavioral Health Coach for the Reading Public Schools is currently in the process of scheduling the 4<sup>th</sup> class due to high demand. The class will be 3-4 full days to be scheduled during the school day. The instructor reported that he will be available to hold this class in the Spring, most likely starting in January after the holidays.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the program, the "LIFTS" Trauma Certificate Program is a graduate level 4 course program that Reading has been able to access thanks to grant funding. If you are interested in taking the 4<sup>th</sup> Trauma course, you need to have completed the previous courses 1-3. If you are interested and eligible, please send Lauren an email at [Lauren.Sabella@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:Lauren.Sabella@reading.k12.ma.us). In addition, if you are interested in taking any of the other classes 1-3, please let her know.

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## Budget Liaisons Needed for FY19 Budget Process

As part of the FY19 budget process, the Reading Public Schools will be seeking parent and community volunteers to become a budget liaison. Budget liaisons play a key role in the budget process as they develop an understanding of the FY19 budget process and then give timely communication to their school communities and peers.

The specific information regarding budget liaisons is listed below. We are looking for two parents per school (one preferably from each PTO or School Council), up to four members of the community, and two parents from the Special Education Advisory Council (SEPAC). If you are interested in becoming a budget liaison, please contact Linda Engelson, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent at [linda.engelson@reading.k12.ma.us](mailto:linda.engelson@reading.k12.ma.us) or 781-944-5800. The deadline to submit is **November 1st**.

## Reading Public Schools Budget Liaison Information

### WHO

Community members who do not have children in the Reading Public Schools or parents who have children in the

## Superintendent's Office

### Hours this Week

*All are welcome*

10/30 Superintendent's  
Office  
(4:30 – 5:30 p.m.)

11/2 Barrows  
(7:45 – 8:45 a.m.)

11/6 Superintendent's  
Office  
(5:00 – 6:00 p.m.)

11/8 Joshua Eaton  
(12:30 – 1:30 p.m.)

11/9 RMHS  
(7:00 – 8:00 a.m.)

Reading Public Schools may become a budget liaison. We need two parents per school (one preferably from the PTO or School Council), up to four from the community at large and two parents to represent the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC).

**RESPONSIBILITIES:** The budget liaison responsibilities are as follows:

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

#### **WHEN**

Meetings will begin in mid-November. The month of January is a busy month with six meetings in ten days. February will have one meeting.

The following School Committee meetings in January and February are dedicated to the FY19 budget. The Budget parents will meet prior to these meetings.

January 8, 11, 13, 16, 18, 24 (Financial Forum)

February 7 (School Committee FY19 Budget Presentation to Finance Committee Meeting)

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

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## **WE'RE HIRING!**

### **The Reading Public Schools is Hiring**

#### **SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS & SUBSTITUTE PARAPROFESSIONALS**

Exciting daily substitute opportunities available each day with the Reading Public Schools.

As a daily substitute you will enjoy:

a flexible schedule

in-person training

ongoing support to develop your skills as an educator

**APPLY NOW**

## Quote of the Week . . .



"Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm."

Winston Churchill

## REF Grant Cycle Now Open

Dear Teachers and Administrators,

Reading Education Foundation 2018 Grant Cycle is now open! The application is available on our website from this day forward. The deadline for the Superintendent's submission to REF is January 12, 2017. Please check with your school principal for their internal schedule, as they have to approve the application before submitting it to the Superintendent's office for final approval. All applications must be submitted through the superintendent's office.

We encourage you to visit our website at [readingef.org](http://readingef.org) for more information. Feel free to contact us with any questions.

We look forward to reading your creative and innovative proposals to enhance our children's educational experience.

Regards,

Nancy Dieselman  
REF Grant Committee Chair

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## Suspensions Don't Teach

*Restorative practices—an alternative to punitive justice—keep kids in school, where they can learn how their behavior affects others.*

By [Ryan Wheeler](#) for [Edutopia](#)

The world of education is alive with buzzwords like innovation, inclusion, and mindfulness; another term gaining traction is restorative practices, also called restorative justice. Restorative practices are a burgeoning alternative to traditional punitive justice such as suspensions (both in school and out of school) and other exclusionary forms of discipline.

Many states are legislating a movement away from prescribed punitive justice for misbehavior in schools, and restorative practices are gaining in esteem as an evidence-based intervention that has proven successful when implemented correctly. Major school districts in [San Francisco](#), [Denver](#), and [Houston](#) are implementing restorative practices to combat inequalities in suspension and disciplinary referrals. These districts are finding that restorative practices, once understood, can be implemented with just a few simple steps.

### A Worst-Case Scenario of Punitive Justice

Punitive justice is based on the consequences administered by our American justice system. When a student misbehaves at school they are sent to the office. After a generally brief investigation, a consequence that fits within [a code of conduct](#) is given. In the case of removal from class and suspension from school, the student is excluded from campus activities—including instruction.

When the duration of the consequence is over, the student is inserted back into the flow of school without learning any replacement skills or exactly how their behavior affects others. In fact, for kids without good parental support or whose parents work, that suspension can look more like a PlayStation vacation, thereby nullifying any negatives associated with getting in trouble at school.

Studies routinely show that students who are removed from school for misbehavior are more likely to end up at risk, eventually placed into alternative disciplinary schools, or



## Disney Tweet of the Week



"Sometimes the right path  
is not the easiest one."

-- Grandmother Willow  
(Pocahontas)

worse. This is referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline and, while it's a worst-case scenario, it is a grim reality for many students.

Restorative practices differ from punitive justice in that the ultimate goal is mediation rather than punishment. Students may still go to the office when misbehavior occurs, but the procedure is much different from an investigation followed by a consequence. Serious offenses will still accrue severe consequences, but the majority of offenses can be adequately handled with restorative practices.

As an elementary administrator, I dealt with all kinds of discipline issues that often accrued a consequence. I loathed suspending students from school because school is where the misbehavior occurred, and the replacement behavior needs to be learned and practiced in that same setting. In lieu of utilizing removal as a punishment, I strove to determine the cause of the conduct and look for solutions.

One very effective practice was to bring the conflicting students together and mediate a resolution. After asking for the students' permission to mediate, we would have an open and safe discussion about the causes of actions and reactions and reach an understanding that was agreed upon by all parties. These agreements looked different based on the situation, but the process was always similar in that a discussion took place, grievances were safely aired, and an agreement for moving forward was achieved. Even though I didn't know it initially, this is the foundation of restorative practices.

### **The Five Steps of Restorative Practices**

Restorative practices can be implemented in five steps that are rather simple to describe but can take some effort. First, the group gathers in a type of circle or around a table with clear sightlines between all participants, and the adult leader sets the purpose of the meeting. The purpose can be to build a learning community in the classroom or among a particular group, or it can be to address a pressing concern. Second, some type of token or totem should be used—the person speaking holds the token, and only the person with the token is allowed to talk. This skill should be explicitly taught and reinforced.

The third step: Once the purpose of the meeting is established, that should be the sole focus of the discussion—any deviation should be redirected to that focus. In this way, a very specific issue is the only topic discussed. In the case of addressing a concerning behavior, only one skill is addressed, which helps students understand its pointed importance.

Fourth, teach students to use "I feel" statements as those can better lead to empathetic growth when the problem is the behavior or actions of a select few students. When those individuals feel how their actions affect the other students in the group, they're more likely to change their behavior. Herein lies the true power of restorative practices: the building of family, community, trust, and understanding.

Finally, once everyone wishing to speak has been allowed to have their say, the group agrees to any changes that will occur, accepts moving forward together, and forgives transgressions. This is of paramount importance to let all members move forward and not hold lingering resentment. Everyone needs to practice forgiving as well as letting themselves be forgiven from time to time—this is a hugely important life skill.

A new understanding is igniting in the minds of educators today. Long have the best teachers recognized that relationships are the driving force behind real learning and growth

## Important Websites

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

for students. This revelation is actually the very old truth that is the kernel of a renewed emphasis on connection and understanding as cornerstones of school community. Restorative practices let schools grow as a community and give students permission to learn from failure and forgiveness rather than punishment.

## Reading Public Schools Happenings

### RMHS High Fives For This Week

Below are this week's RMHS High Fives for the Class of 2018.

#### Lucy Johnson, Class of 2018



Lucy is being recognized for her excellence in scholarship, activities, leadership, and service. Academically, Lucy is in the top 5% of the Class of 2018 and continues to pursue a challenging load of classes during her senior year, taking four Advanced Placement courses. Last year, she was inducted into the National Honor Society and the Spanish National Honor Society and also received a Bronze Medal for her performance on the National Spanish Exam. An Honor and High Honor student all four years, Lucy became a Century Club member in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and was awarded the Mount Holyoke College Book Award in her junior year. In terms of activities, Lucy is an accomplished dancer who performed competitively with Wilmington Dance Academy until her junior year. Last year, she joined the prestigious professional ballet company: North Atlantic Dance Theater and became an apprentice--now training and performing alongside of accomplished professional dancers. As a part of North Atlantic, Lucy performs in *The Nutcracker* each year, as well as two other ballets. Over the past few summers, she also attended ballet programs at Brooklyn Ballet Theatre and Joffrey Ballet School. In spite of her demanding schedule, Lucy still finds the time to volunteer as a mentor both at Coolidge Middle School, providing students with homework help, and at a local dance studio helping to develop young ballet dancers. She also volunteers at the Mission of Deeds Gala fundraiser to assist underprivileged families and at the Greater Boston Food Bank organizing food on a monthly basis. Next year, Lucy will be attending college and will be pursuing a major in engineering.

**Connor Ehl, Class of 2018**

Connor is being recognized for his outstanding achievement in academics, athletics, leadership, and service. Academically, Connor is in the top 10% of the Class of 2018 and has continued to challenge himself this year by taking a rigorous course load.



He is enjoying the challenge of studying four AP courses including: AP Physics, European History, Spanish, and BC Calculus. Last year, Connor became a member of the Century Club as a result of his academic success over his first three years at RMHS. He also earned a Silver Medal for his high achievement on the National Spanish Exam last year. In terms of athletics and activities, Connor was a member of the RMHS Golf Team for his freshman, sophomore, and junior years and he has been a four-year member of the Boys Varsity Swim Team. This year, he will serve as one of the swim team's captains and is looking forward to an exciting 2017-18 season! He has also been a member of the National Honor Society and the Spanish National Honor Society, and is currently representing NHS as its Treasurer. In spite of his busy schedule, Connor still manages to find time to give back to his community by mentoring 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at Coolidge Middle School. Additionally, over the past two summers, he has worked as a Tour Guide at the State House, answering questions and providing information from the center of Massachusetts government. Finally, Connor volunteers at the Reading YMCA, swimming with children with special needs. Next year, Connor will be attending college and is currently undecided about a college major. Congratulations, Connor!

**RMHS Volleyball Team Celebrates Volley For Cure**

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, the RMHS Volleyball program, under the direction of Head Coach Michelle Hopkinson, hosted their Annual volley for the Cure! It was a great event. Well attended and supported by the Reading and Winchester community. We raised over \$1,500.00! All proceeds will be donated to the MGH-ESSCO Breast Cancer Awareness Research Fund. To date, the program has raised over \$14,500.00 towards important research. We are so proud of our Rockets!!





#### **Varsity Girls Soccer Team Participate in Coaches vs. Cancer**

The Varsity Girls' soccer team played their Coaches vs. Cancer game on Thursday, October 19 against the Woburn Tanners. The girls raised money and played their game in honor of Joe D'Alessio, father of Jill D'Alessio who is a current member of the Varsity team. All money raised will be donated to the American Cancer Society.

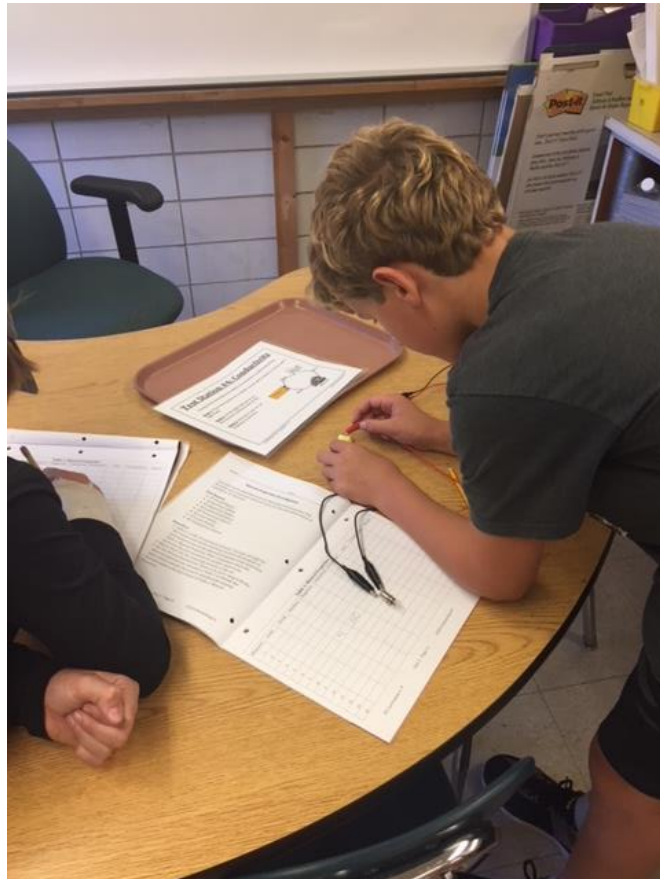


## Contact Us

*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)

## **Future Mineralogists at Killam**

On Friday, students in Joellen McGinnity's and Ann Sweeney's classes were performing a variety of mineral tests as they made the links from properties of matter to minerals.





## Stepping Stones...

- Congratulations to Parker Teacher **Meg Kiser** on the birth of her daughter Hazel Frances on October 21<sup>st</sup> weighing 7 lbs. 8 oz.
- Congratulations to Killam Teacher **Christen Pegoraro** on the birth of her son Porter Ash on October 24<sup>th</sup> weighing 6 lbs., 13 oz.
- Congratulations to RMHS Administrative Assistant **Carmen O'Rourke** on the birth of her 5<sup>th</sup> grandchild Georgia Katherine on October 22nd weighing 6 lbs., 11oz.
- Our thoughts go out to Barrows paraeducator **Carol Sandberg** who lost a close family member recently.
- We want to thank Technician **Karen Sawyer** for her 10 years of service in the Reading Public Schools. Karen's last day was Friday. We wish her the best of luck in future endeavors.
- We welcome the following new staff to the Reading Public Schools:
  - Philip Logsdon, Long Term Physics Substitute, RMHS
- **New Resource: Special Education Professional Development Series**-The Department's Office of Special Education Planning and Policy Professional Development Series (formerly known as Special Education Summer Institutes) offers free training opportunities for Massachusetts educators, paraeducators, related service providers, and administrators throughout the year. The 17 courses have varying start dates and focus on topics ranging from educational equity to integrating social and emotional learning. More information, including [course descriptions](#), [dates](#), and [enrollment information](#), is available online.

## Blazing Trails...

**"Growing Number Of Massachusetts Schools Expand Recess."** The Boston Globe reports a growing number of Massachusetts schools are expanding recess to not only "encourage students to be more active but also to teach them a host of skills, such as how to get along



with their peers, control their emotions, and take leadership roles." The trend is a "response to growing concerns about increased anxiety, stress, and depression among students, while the Legislature is pondering a bill that would require 20-minute recesses at all elementary schools." A 2009 study published in the journal *Pediatrics* found recess can even "reduce discipline problems in the classroom." The study also "revealed an alarming socio-economic divide: Students without recess tended to be black and from households with low incomes and low levels of education in urban areas, where schools have been under pressure to increase academic performance." Still, "the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, which has been pushing more teaching of social-emotional skills, questions whether the recess bill is necessary." [Read More](#)

**"New Hampshire High School's Transition To 'Student-Centered Learning' Yields Success."** NPR's "NPR Ed" reported New Hampshire's Pittsfield High School once had among the lowest standardized test scores in New Hampshire, gaining it a reputation as a so-called dropout factory. Over the last six years and with "more than \$4 million in government and foundation grants," the school adopted "student-centered learning," an approach that replaces traditional classes with "a more personalized approach, where students have a much greater say in what they learn and how they learn it." NPR noted that "a growing number of schools across the country" have similarly adopted the model. In Pittsfield, student test scores and graduation rates "greatly improved," and one study "found big improvements in math and reading among kids who participated in personalized learning." Because of the lack of comprehensive studies on the matter, however, the success of this approach "is hard to measure." [Read More](#)

**"Think Inside the Box."** In this ASCD Ed Leadership article, educator, author, presenter John Spencer discusses how he helps his students to embrace the limits of creative constraint as one key to problem solving. "The frequently heard advice 'think outside the box' conjures up an image of the lone inventor in a lab creating something radically different that will rock the world. However, creativity isn't always like this. Instead of thinking outside the box, innovation often involves thinking differently about the box." [Read More](#)

**"Massachusetts' School Effort Reduces Water Bottle Waste."** Two water refill stations have been installed at Swampscott Middle School. The stations -- or types of water fountains -- are designed to refill water bottles, and in the month since their installation have refilled about 2,600 water bottles. [Read More](#)

**"Facebook Seeks to Curb Cyber-Bullying in the UK."** Facebook has announced a £1 million effort in the UK to provide online and classroom training in schools aimed at curbing cyberbullying. Officials say the funds could go to support "digital safety ambassadors" in schools. [Read More](#)

**Have a Great Week Ahead!**